COVID 19 - The Short-Term Missions Game Changer

by David Nakhla, Coordinator, OPC Short-Term Missions and Disaster Response

No doubt there are many wondering today what the coming summer holds, even though it’s just a few short months away. Will I graduate? Can I take my family vacation? Will I still be in school given all the time lost? Will I still have a job? Can I even leave my home?

And some readers of the STORM Report might be wondering, will I still be able to participate in short-term missions?

With the virus looming darkly over us, the one thing that is clear is that no one but God knows the answer to all of these questions. From our limited, human perspective, everything is up in the air and anything is possible. While some mission fields have already chosen to cancel their summer teams, for most it’s simply too early to decide. Can I encourage you in the thought that the Lord, in His divine providence, has opened up a short-term mission field to you right where you are -- right in your own neighborhood?

One of my roles is to serve as the OPC’s Disaster Response Coordinator. In that capacity, I am privileged to enter into a disaster that one of our churches might be facing, to advise them on how to prepare for the weeks, months, and possibly years ahead, and to coordinate assistance to bring them through it. With a local disaster, it’s important for a local church to consider that most likely their ministry has instantly changed from what it was before the disaster. The normal lives their congregants once enjoyed have been stripped away. They all now suffer as affected persons, suffering the trauma of one of the most difficult things to have lived through, and possibly suffering additional trauma as the effects of the disaster are uncovered bit by bit.

In a similar fashion, we are now living through a disaster of sorts. COVID-19 is a special kind of disaster, and the aftermath it’s leaving in its wake looks quite different from a hurricane, and yet, it’s dramatic nonetheless. What’s so unique about this COVID-19 disaster is that it is not bound by a local or regional area. Nearly the entire world is suffering from it directly. Further, it’s a disaster that is still unfolding. We can sense that the tide is rising and that it’s rising fast, but it is so hard to see or measure. This is certainly evidenced by the drastic, and even draconian, measures being taken by governments around the world. These measures are incurring unknown harm to our economies and financial systems as...

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