

Winter 2021

Listening *World*

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From the Chief Executive Officer,
Dr Russell Farnworth.



Fear has gripped the world like nothing we have seen in a long time. The coronavirus outbreak has impacted our lives and the lives of countless millions around the world.

In times like these it can be difficult to know how to respond as Christians, but there are so many ways we can harness the peace of God and spread it all around us!

In this issue of **Listening World** we take a look at the way TWR is speaking hope and bringing “the peace that passes understanding”.

As the Covid-19 pandemic has swept around the world, governments have clamped down with restrictions, instituting strict lockdowns to help quell the spread of the deadly disease. Churches are not immune, joining businesses in closing their doors. But quarantines can't keep believers from worshipping God, growing in Christ or sharing their faith.

As you read through, may I encourage you to pray for our vital ministry at this deeply uncertain time – now more than ever, our broadcasts play a vital role in meeting individuals in their isolation with the hope of the Gospel.

Here's how you can be praying:

- Pray for the health and safety of all who find themselves in affected regions.
- Pray that their hearts will be open to the Lord and that he will become their source of peace through this difficult time.
- Pray for our teams and specialised programmes, that they will be a voice of hope and truth through all of this uncertainty.

Thank you for standing alongside us – we couldn't carry on without your prayers and support.

Yours in Christ,

TWR's bank account for the UK is:

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Thank you for your ongoing support which makes it possible for us to continue reaching out and touching hearts with the Gospel.

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Food for the Body and Soul in Bangladesh

The coronavirus pandemic has caused major disruptions in daily life around the world, ranging from anxiety and loneliness to job loss and death. In Bangladesh, the government-ordered lockdown measures resulted in many families in this country of more than 160 million people struggling to find food to eat. In late March, the local **TWR Bangladesh** ministry teams began hearing from leaders of radio home groups that their members, most of whom already struggle to make ends meet, were having a hard time providing three meals a day.

Radio home groups bring together neighbours for a time of fellowship and learning about God's Word while listening to solid teaching on TWR-provided digital devices. TWR isn't a relief organisation, of course, but the local workers were committed to finding some way during this unprecedented crisis to materially aid these brothers and sisters. Echoing others, one member told TWR, "Some days we have food, and some days we do not have any food."

The local staff consulted with radio home group leaders and area pastors to identify the most vulnerable families and then bought groceries and distributed them during April and May, the heart of the lockdown.





“We had rice in our house to last for only four days, and we would eat rice once a day due to the shortage of food,” one radio home group member told TWR. “In the meantime, **TWR Bangladesh** came and stood by our side. They have helped us a lot and gave us almost everything we needed.”

Another wrote, “I am a day labourer and live from hand-to-mouth ... I lost my daily income and did not have enough food for myself or my family. But I did not lose my belief in God, and by his grace, **TWR Bangladesh** surprised me with a food package.”

The bags of groceries, which included rice, lentils, oil, potatoes, flour and other items, were given to 709 families comprising over 3,300 individuals.

The blessings didn't stop there. Even “the least of these,” as Jesus called them in Matthew, chose to be generous. Pastor Lucas,* who was helping **TWR Bangladesh** with the outreach,

distributed bags to several radio home group members and later was approached by 13 women who were not members but needed food. Pastor Lucas had to tell them the supplies were all gone.

Hearing that these needy women had been turned away, the radio home group members who had just received small bags of essentials for their own households gave whatever money they could scrape together to Pastor Lucas. When he purchased more food and called the 13 ladies to come back, they brought another 12 women with them.

“Although those packets were very small, we were encouraged that our radio home group leaders and members took the initiative to share their blessing with others,” **TWR Bangladesh's** report about the initiative concluded.

*A pseudonym used for security reasons.

TWR: The People Behind the Scenes

TWR is known for its global transmitter coverage, but it's the combined effort of people around the world who make our mission work. We catch up with a few people 'behind the scenes' of TWR to find out more about how they serve our mission around the world.



LEANNE TAN

For Leanne, taking on the responsibility of speaking hope to the world was intimidating, but this Covid-19 summer of 2020 has taught her that it's a burden to be shared. Leanne left her home in Malaysia

to study journalism and sociology at Messiah University in Pennsylvania, USA. During what turned out to be a highly unusual year, Leanne was invited to serve as an intern with TWR in Cary, North Carolina. As her time serving as a marketing and communications intern came to a close, she told us a bit more about herself and reflected on her experience.

Q&A By David McCreary - TWR International's Director of Communications

Q: What brought you to intern with TWR this summer?

I wanted to learn to integrate faith and work, and I thought TWR was a good place to do just that.

Q: What have you worked on over the summer?

Most of my assignments have revolved heavily around writing and proofreading. I have crafted

written content for the TWR website, magazine and mass e-mails that go out to TWR donors and supporters.

Q: How does your internship align with your passions and calling?

One of my goals in life is to use whatever I have to bring honour and glory to God – whatever that may look like. I think being able to utilise my writing skills to help advance TWR's mission of speaking hope to the world lines up with that goal pretty well.

Q: What is one thing you have learned this summer?

I've come to realise how rewarding it is to work alongside others toward a common goal that is bigger than what I can achieve alone. At TWR, every person contributes their time and talent to bring the Gospel to the darkest corners of the world. It is a daunting task and sometimes it is easy to get caught up with our inadequacies and think we're not capable of accomplishing the work that lies ahead of us. But that's why we have God and each other. Working with other people means we're not in it alone, and God equips people as he sees fit. I think if we divert the attention we've placed on what we cannot do to what we and others can do, maybe we'll find that our shortcomings aren't that significant in the grand scheme of things.

Leanne is serving in North Carolina (A on the map overleaf)

TWR: The People Behind the Scenes



**HANNAH
McGURK**

For a long time, Hannah knew she wanted to do two things: art and full-time ministry. But she wasn't sure how she could simultaneously

pursue both – until she came across **TWR Motion**, the visual media arm of TWR. “I hadn't seen many other ministries that were embracing the [arts] field,” Hannah said. “It never occurred to me that you could do ministry and art at the same time. That was pretty cool, actually.”

The holder of a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Washburn University in Kansas, USA, Hannah first learned about **TWR Motion** through her parents, Nate and Janette McGurk, who are missionaries with TWR. In 2018, she applied to serve with **TWR Motion** and began her support-raising journey. In July, Hannah joined the **TWR Motion** team as an assistant video producer, utilising her fine arts background to contribute to projects involving digital

illustration, animation, video production and photography. She describes her decision to serve with **TWR Motion** as a no-brainer.

“I get a lot of satisfaction out of creating something beautiful and helping other people see the world the way that I see it,” Hannah said.

Hannah grew up as a TWR missionary kid in Guam and South Africa before returning to America for college. She spent the last seven years working as a customer-service trainer for a health insurance provider. Before Hannah started her work with **TWR Motion**, Ministry Director Candace Mackie said, “It's always exciting to add another member to our team, and I think Hannah will be a great fit. In her past employment, she was a highly valued team member with a lot of responsibilities. That speaks to her character as a hard worker and someone who is willing to learn and try new things. I'm looking forward to all the Lord has in store for Hannah and excited that she can use her skills in fine arts to make the Gospel known among the least reached!”

Hannah is serving in North Carolina (**A** on the map above)



ZACHARY

Zachary is **TWR Canada's** newest missionary intern who is currently serving in Eswatini. Zachary is from Winnipeg, Manitoba and is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in

Mathematics at the University of Winnipeg. He has a love for patterns and has been fascinated by maths since he was young.

Before attending university, Zachary went to a discipleship school in Manitoba that focused on teaching its students to deeply know God and reach out into their cities for the Lord. After finishing this training, he felt called to go to Eswatini.

“I didn't know where it was, and I had to look it up. I started researching ministries, praying some more about where I was called, and waiting. Eventually, I read an email from Ethnos360 that had prayer requests for **TWR Eswatini**. Catching my eye, the email led me to TWR's website and prompted conversations with my

family, mentors, and church elders, and that led me to apply as an intern. TWR fascinated me because it was the only ministry, at the time, that I could find that was up to date with Swaziland's name change to Eswatini. I wanted to participate in a ministry that was properly honouring the country it was in. I prayed and in his still small voice, the Holy Spirit nudged me to apply. I did and the rest is history!”

Zachary has been working with the engineering team on the repair and maintenance of the antennas. “I have loved working on the antenna”, said Zachary. “Recently a storm took down one of our antennas and while that is horrible and I'm sad that programmes were not aired because of it, I had so much fun helping put it back together. Any situation where time is running out and we've got to run to get things finished has brought me so much joy.”

Zachary had the opportunity to leave the country early, due to Covid-19 concerns, but believes that God has asked him to stay. “Covid-19 is a catalyst for many things. I'm excited to say the cliché, ‘the safest place is in God's will’ and it's true.”

Zachary is serving in Eswatini (**C** on the map above)



PENNER FAMILY

The Penner family have been serving with **RTM** (TWR in Spanish) **Bolivia** since 2015.

An hour outside of Santa Cruz, the Penners live near the main transmitter for Low German and Spanish programmes. Their main ministry is to those who live in the Mennonite Colonies and speak Low German, but the language of the land is Spanish.

Before Covid-19 struck Bolivia, Henry was working at the station every day, doing programming and live hosting. When the country entered a period of lockdown in March, Henry only had a permit to drive until noon, so he could go to work for a half-day. However, the government cancelled a lot of these permits, so for several weeks, Henry worked from home. "I recorded my audio files at home and through my computer I was still able to do most of my radio programming, but the internet was very slow at home," said Henry. After this strict three-week

lockdown, Henry was allowed to drive to the station again, and was also able to stay at the station guest house to focus on getting more work completed. "I am making sure that the radio is programmed and getting the much-needed message out during this time of crisis", Henry said.

More recently, Henry has been commuting to work as normal as the restrictions have eased in the countryside compared to the cities. Henry has been doing a live update to the Low German listeners two times a day, six days a week on local and national breaking news. The pandemic has not had a large impact on the Mennonite communities because they all live on self-sustaining farms in the countryside. It is in the big cities where Covid-19 has hit the hardest. There has been an increase in conspiracy theories concerning the virus floating around on social media. "What we try to do at the RTM station here is bring hope during these times, not confusion," said Henry. "We as a family are doing well and we are healthy. We stay encouraged because we know we have an anchor in Christ. It has taken some time to get into a routine with five children in the home, but most of all we are very grateful for the health that God has blessed us with," Henry and his wife Anna reported.

For weekly updates on the TWR-UK schedule as well as news from TWR around the world, subscribe to our e-bulletin.

Simply input your details on our website or email to twr@twr.org.uk with your details.

Replacing Alcohol With Real Meaning in Life

A listener testimony

Milind* doesn't shy away from the hard truth about his earlier days: alcohol pretty much made life liveable. Drinking was a regular part of every week. But when the coronavirus struck his region of India, alcohol was mostly unavailable and that led to depression.

"In this situation, I started to think that life is meaningless and a waste," Milind said. One day while sitting in the field that he farms, Milind was approached by the leader of a radio home group who played recordings about God's Word. Thousands of these groups, which bring together friends and neighbours to hear and discuss audio recordings of *Thru the Bible* in the listeners native tongue, have been initiated by **TWR India**.

"Earlier I felt that life was difficult to live as I was totally addicted to alcohol, but now the messages through the radio home [outreach] have turned me to the true living God," said Milind, who listened in the language of his Banjara people.

"Especially during this corona crisis, I am unable to go out. But in this situation, I have realised how much precious time I have lost with my family because of my drinking habits." As significant as it is, overcoming his alcohol problem hasn't been the most significant transformation in Milind's life. Now he and his family have accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

* A pseudonym used to protect his privacy

Hope for a New Future

TWR work alongside Together Network in North Africa and the Middle East to provide training conferences

Even before the chaos of a global pandemic, in a country which has been ravaged by war, hope is hard to come by. As Syria begins to rebuild, many people are discouraged. The prices of goods have skyrocketed, but the Syrian pound has remained the same. Families are struggling to provide for themselves and the situation seems dire. Seeing a future for yourself is hard when you don't even know what this week may hold.

In partnership with **Together Network**, TWR has been sharing the hope of Jesus to the people of Syria and others across the Middle East and North Africa. As **Together Network** partners with local churches, we can equip them with resources to provide hope, such as *Discipleship Essentials*.

Throughout the Middle East and North Africa, we hold a variety of training conferences to equip the church. The majority of conferences are designed for pastors and church leaders, but others are focused on specific groups of people, like young professionals or Muslim-background believers.

At a conference in Syria last summer, 220 young professionals gathered for a 4-day training conference. Fifteen churches were represented, all of whom continued to be involved in discipleship training over the following year. A brother and sister who attended the conference together left feeling encouraged and inspired to grow in their faith and walk a path of discipleship: "This conference gives us a new hope for a new future. In Syria, there is no future for us, there is no hope. But this gives us an eternal perspective and hope. We have a future with God."

Most discipleship training conferences, though, are designed for pastors and church leaders. Using *Discipleship Essentials* as a guide and tool, local partners like **Together Network** instruct pastors and church leaders on the importance of discipleship. The conference trainers also spend time with the participants, helping them to create a strategic plan for implementing discipleship in their churches and ministries. Using a train-the-trainer format, each pastor and church leader is then challenged to go out and

train other key leaders in their churches to begin discipleship groups, with the goal of multiplication.

Two pastors recently shared the impact that they saw this training having in their churches and ministries: "We have never had in our hands such a discipleship curriculum guiding our thoughts and directing our futures. We are seeing the end before the beginning, walking through the process of discipleship." Before even implementing what they have learned, these two pastors already see the impact of the training!

Because of the area of the world in which they work, **Together Network** also has a key focus on discipling Muslim-background believers. This focus led us to start discipleship schools for a select group of believers from a Muslim background. The goal is for these believers to become stronger disciples and better leaders and coaches for their people. The schools take the format of smaller groups of believers gathering for five days of intensive learning and training three times throughout the year.

Between these sessions, students work with a coach/mentor and have online access to materials for ongoing follow-up. They are trained using lessons from the *Essentials for Spiritual Leadership* course from *Discipleship Essentials*, in order that they can then go out and disciple others using the material from the *Essentials for Christian Living* course, which is meant for new believers.

As a result of the training conferences and the subsequent growth and multiplication of groups, **Together Network** reports more than 6,500 discipleship groups across the Middle East and North Africa. Praise God for the growth in faith which is occurring across this region of the world! *Discipleship Essentials* is simply a tool: it is God who is doing the real life-changing work and providing hope for a new future.

“This conference gives us a new hope for a new future. In Syria, there is no future for us, there is no hope. But this gives us an eternal perspective and hope. We have a future with God.”

Prayer Matters Bangladesh

From January to March we invite you to join us in praying for TWR's ministry in Bangladesh and (at the weekends) in the UK. You can read more about TWR's work in Bangladesh on pages 3 and 4 of *Listening World*.

PRAYER DIARY

MONDAYS

Pray for the TWR team in Bangladesh as they seek to serve their communities and spread the good news of the Gospel.

TUESDAYS

Praise God for the impact radio home groups have had in local communities. Pray that their reach would continue to grow.

WEDNESDAYS

Pray for those struggling to provide for their families. We ask that they would know God's ultimate provision.

THURSDAYS

Praise God for the ways the TWR team in Bangladesh have been able to care for people in need around them. Thank God for the generosity in the community.

FRIDAYS

As the impact of Covid-19 continues, pray that the work of TWR would continue to reach those that don't yet know Jesus, and that people of Bangladesh would know God's unfailing strength.

WEEKENDS

Please pray for TWR's ongoing work in the UK.

We thank God that the work of the TWR-UK team has been largely unaffected by Covid-19, and that we have been able to continue broadcasting.

Pray for those involved in programme content and production. We ask that God would give them wisdom and insight to share God's truth in relevant and meaningful ways.

Prayer is the backbone of TWR – and we are so grateful that **you** stand alongside us in intercession! God delights to change people's lives and we are amazed and humbled that He allows TWR to be a part of it all.