



Witness Mercy Life Together Witness Mercy Life Together Witness Mercy Life Together
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Sheltering Out of Place

Dear Christian friends and ministry partners,

Steph and I were quite content to just shelter in place in our 5th floor Brazzaville apartment. As I write this on Maundy Thursday afternoon, Congo-Brazzaville still only has 60 confirmed cases of Covid-19. In fact, by God's grace, much of the map of Africa is still showing low numbers. However, on March 24, our US Embassy in Brazzaville sent me an email informing us that, in collaboration with the embassy across the Mighty Congo in Kinshasa, they were arranging a repatriation flight for American citizens to return to the States. It quickly became clear that, if we didn't accept their offer and go, we could possibly be stuck in place for months.

It was Steph's mom who tipped the scale on the decision really. She is 84 years old and on oxygen as she suffers from severe COPD; placing her in an extremely high-risk category to catch COVID-19 and die from it. We just couldn't bear the thought of this dear woman being hospitalized and dying while we were stuck in the Congo and not able to return for weeks or maybe even months. Plus, we've been contemplating for a while helping her make a change in her long-term living situation anyway. We are in the midst of applying for Medicare for her and hope to be able to visit Assisted Living facilities as the lockdown hopefully begins to ease. We were going to be doing all of this during our planned home service in the fall. Who knows what's going to become of that now?

With our inability to travel, about 58% of our job activity was shut down anyway. We have much better internet in Brazzaville than we had in Ouagadougou. We were just going shelter in place, do email and zoom conferences, and work on long-term projects. For example, I began the laborious task of updating and translating into French my 36-week Introduction to Biblical Theology course that I call "Thru the Bible", which I developed while still in the parish. We have 7 seminaries in the region now. A good thorough-going swim through Genesis to Revelation tying everything together as God intended and seeing Christ at the center of everything is just what the doctor ordered for these young churches. I'm also thinking of, when this is done, if I have spare time, making voice-over videos out of the PowerPoints and starting my own Thru the Bible YouTube channel. Meanwhile, Steph was doing a ton of translating of CHE materials as well as preparing for two upcoming MMTs, which have now been cancelled.

As the Lord would have it, we are not sheltering in place in Brazzaville as planned, but rather sheltering out of place at the Extended Stay America in Maryland Heights, MO. Tomorrow will be the end of our two-week isolation and we will join Steph's mom at the mission apartment on Concordia Seminary St Louis campus, where we frequently stay while in the States. Meanwhile, we are both still doing a lot of the same stuff I just described, only some 7,700 miles further northwest and about a hundred feet lower in elevation from the street. The zoom conferences have increased exponentially!

And with 2 MMT's canceled, we still wanted to show our people some love. So far we've approved and funded grants for hundreds of handwashing stations with accompanying safety flyers in Sierra Leone, Guinea, the Congo, and we're working on Togo!

Our 42-hour repatriation trip odyssey was interesting, to say the least. I'm going to use page 2 to share it with you in pictures. Continue to be safe! The Lord remains in control! A blessed Holy Week and Easter to all of you! **Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support!**



Obviously, the whole world needs prayer right now.

But please say a special prayer that God would graciously spare Africa from this plague. Driving through Kinshasa and seeing its wall to wall people even during a lockdown made our hearts sink!

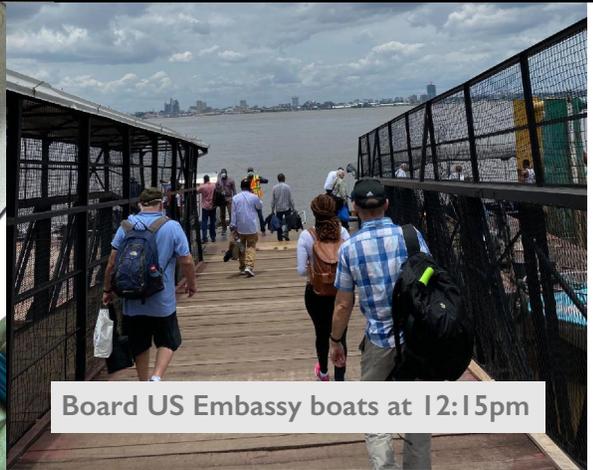
There can be no social distancing in African cities! And poor Burkina Faso, with 1 million displaced already due to Muslim militancy and an already devastated infrastructure, may their 440 cases and 24 dead as I write not lead to it being the epicenter of a plague of biblical proportions!



Meet at US Embassy Brazzaville at 10 am.



15 minute van rides for our delegation of 22 to the Congo River dock @ 12pm



Board US Embassy boats at 12:15pm



12 mins to cross the Congo



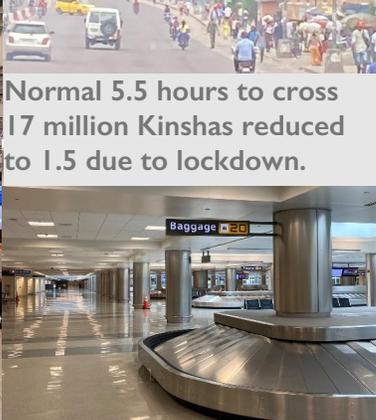
Normal 5.5 hours to cross 17 million Kinshas reduced to 1.5 due to lockdown.



Airport arrival @ 2pm for 12:30 am flight. Lots of Embassy truck unloads the Brazza delegation's luggage standing! Disinfecting crew. at 5:17 pm.



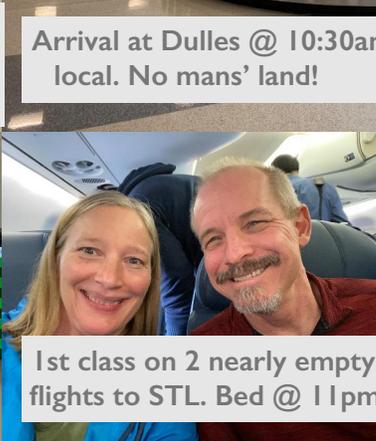
Finally check in at 9pm with hundreds from the other Congo for 14 hr flight to Dulles.



Arrival at Dulles @ 10:30am local. No mans' land!



Only 2 flights on the board! Wow!



1st class on 2 nearly empty flights to STL. Bed @ 11pm.

Your Joyful Response?

If you would like to support our work as we continue the bringing of Christ to the nations, you may send a tax deductible gift either to:

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
P.O. Box 66861
St. Louis, MO 63166-66861

or

Mission Central
40718 Highway E-16
Mapleton, IA 51034

<https://missioncentral.us/schulte/>

writing "Support of the Schultes" in the memo line.

Or give online @ lcms.org/givenow/schulte