

May 2020

"God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus" Phil 4:19



Julie Lutz, LCMS missionary in Papua New Guinea

Peace be yours,

We are in a different world from when I last wrote. The global coronavirus pandemic is upon us, whether we have seen COVID-19 up close or not. I try to keep abreast with US and international developments over the internet. What a changing scene! As numbers shift, I'm dismayed, heartened, prayerful... In the end, I cling to hope!

In whatever challenges you are facing in this unprecedented time, I pray that you will continue to turn to our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ, trusting Him for protection, strength, and peace. A line from a prayer in "For All the Saints" devotional book resonates with me, "Give me an answer of peace to these my prayers."

Here in Papua New Guinea, we have yet to see the coronavirus clearly. It is a "storm on the horizon." Perhaps. We have had 8 test-positive cases as of today, the middle of May 2020. The country responded in March with a State of Emergency, various travel restrictions, school and business closures, testing and isolation for those in contact with the positive cases-- all the measures of containment we have seen around the world. This was helpful, for PNG does not have a robust health care system. Should COVID-19 break loose and run rampant through the population, we would not be able to curb the potential devastation no matter how diligently the health teams will try. I am thankful the leaders of Papua New Guinea are making decisions to avoid that storm to the best of their ability. They face tough choices, as do leaders around the world.



Early on, Anton produced a number of public health pieces for coronavirus awareness. This one addresses a very common belief I hear daily: "We're Christian; God won't let COVID-19 come to PNG."

Redhead: I don't think the sick will come. PNG is a Christian country. God's here!

Doctor: Therefore, you can disobey the doctor's talk?

Redhead: Aiyoo...

Doctor: You pray, but the virus is still on your hands.

Doctor: It's good you pray. But it is even better if you follow advice and wash your hands.

In another series Anton created, simple figures convey the health messages.

These public awareness pieces along with others are great on social media, but the messages still have to reach the general public who continue to gather in groups and believe PNG will be miraculously spared. Handwashing, masks, social distancing have not become common practices.





Even though PNG has not yet faced the coronavirus head on, many are already itching to loosen the restrictions and get back to normal. After several Sundays of discussion, our congregation took physical distancing seriously and met outdoors to worship for two weeks-- but this past Sunday they again worshipped inside the sanctuary. Schools started again this week! Have we made a wise decision?

That is a question people around the world are asking as tensions rise about the path forward: Do we ease the lockdown which has social and economic costs-- or will more lives be lost if we do? I certainly do not have the answers, and so I pray with you for leaders- and individuals- as they respectfully consider differing values and compile the data of the health, safety, economic, and social impacts to chart the road forward. Each of these arenas has undoubtedly affected you in ways I cannot know. I pray that God has and continues to comfort, safe-guard, heal, ease your mind, and strengthen you for each day's challenges.

My family is safe and healthy- \* My youngest son David and his family are in PNG. As a manager for Rural Airstrip Agency, he furloughed the field staff early to prevent inadvertant transmission of the coronavirus to remote airstrip communities. \* You see some of Anton's work, above. He and I are currently the only LCMS missionaries physically in Papua New Guinea. \* Laura and Paul's families in the US are safe, though staying close to home. The US families both have ample yard space for gardens and play, so the Grandkids are cheerfully livin' life!

Thank you for your thoughts, prayers and support for me and LCMS missions in Papua New Guinea and around the world, especially when there are so many pressing concerns in your own lives.

May God fill your needs today. May your eyes be turned to Him with thankfulness and hope; and may He grant you peace.

Lord Jesus, who dost love me, Oh, spread Thy wings above me  
And shield me from alarm! Though evil would assail me,  
Thy mercy will not fail me: I rest in Thy protecting arm. TLH 554, v 5

## Julie Lutz

The orchids? Simply a pleasure I've enjoyed watching unfold over the past few days. Enjoy!



The missionary service of Julie Lutz can be supported with a monthly, quarterly, or yearly giving plan or with a one-time gift. Visit [lcms.org/lutz](https://lcms.org/lutz) or call LCMS Mission Advancement at

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