

OCTOBER 2020

“Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.” – Acts 8:4

Dear Friends,

What a year 2020 is shaping up to be. From wildfires in Australia, the emergence of COVID-19, the shooting down of a Ukrainian airliner in Tehran, and the impeachment and acquittal of President Trump in January and February, to a global lockdown beginning in March as the pandemic exploded to over 185 nations and the world's stock markets lost a third or more of their value.

The start of summer saw the tragic death of George Floyd and the ensuing *black lives matter* protests across the USA, accompanied mostly by peaceful demonstration, but also violent incidents. Various natural disasters, including an earthquake in Turkey, locust plagues in East Africa, and flooding in Indonesia, increased the stress of an already locked-down populace. Wildfires erupted in California, Colorado, Oregon and Washington states, some of which continue to burn.

In August, a massive explosion rocked Beirut, Lebanon, killing hundreds and leaving hundreds of thousands displaced. Protests continued across the USA. The hurricane season is still going and we are already using Greek alphabet names. In addition to all of this, because this is a Presidential election year, every issue in the USA is amplified, and to top it off, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg passed away in September, leaving a vacancy on the Supreme Court. Thankfully, God knows what the rest of this year will bring.

In the midst of this unprecedented year, our Advocates across the globe continue to face extreme challenges. Religious persecution in many nations increased. The genocide of Christians in Nigeria has not subsided. Proposed new legislation in India will require anyone who receives assistance from Christian ministries to report what kind of help they got. Pastors in Nepal remain under threat of arrest. Underage girls in Pakistan are abducted and forced to marry against their will and convert, and then courts there are ruling for the perpetrators. Pray with us for our Advocates who, despite all of these things, stand up for the voiceless and oppressed.

2020 is not all bad news. An encouraging silver lining is that numerous Advocates fellowships grew due to the lockdowns. While it may sound counter-intuitive, this development is actually right on par with what the New Testament church experienced: in Acts 8:3-4, when the early church was persecuted by Saul, they scattered and preached the word, helping the church to grow across the known world. Advocates colleagues, “scattered” by lockdowns and prevented from meeting in person, resorted to virtual meetings. We are encouraged to see that engagement and fellowship online increased among colleagues who might otherwise be too isolated to gather.

In spite of the travel restrictions that postponed most of our in-person Advocates gatherings until 2021, our monthly Advocates prayer calls continue and you are always welcome to join together with us as we pray for one another. Please let us know and we'll be sure to add you to the email invite lists.

Advocates Africa hosts prayer calls every two weeks, on Saturdays, beginning at 8 pm Kenya time. Advocates Asia hosts prayer calls on the last Tuesday of each month, beginning at 8 pm Jakarta time. Advocates Europe prays on the last Wednesday of each month beginning at 8 pm Frankfurt time. Advocates Latin America hosts its prayer calls on the second Thursday of each month, beginning at 8 pm Rio time. Finally, Advocates North America & Caribbean pray together every Friday at 4pm Washington, DC time.

This year's Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom is being hosted by Poland. While the in-person meetings are no longer possible, the entire event will be live-streamed on November 16 & 17, from 8 am – 1 pm EST. In addition, we are planning to join with several ministry partners to hold a virtual side event on legal aspects of freedom of religion during that week. We'll be sure to provide further details.

Finally, we are encouraged to let you know that we met our challenge match, but we are still behind our projected numbers for 2020. If God blessed you above and beyond your expectations this year, would you please consider helping us to meet our budget with an additional year-end investment? We are currently looking at a shortfall of about \$50,000, and every extra gift can help us end this year and help us continue to Inspire and Mobilize Advocates Globally to Do Justice With Compassion into 2021.

Thanks for your continued prayers and ongoing financial support. Please let us know how we can pray for you and your family during the rest of 2020. Send us a note, call us at **571-319-0100**, or email Jon at jparamore@advocatesinternational.org.

May the Lord bless and keep you in His perfect . . .

Grace and Peace,



Brent M. McBurney
President & CEO



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