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G'day Praying Partners,

I figured I better get an email update out so that you, our praying partners, can be praying effectively. We do depend on your prayers – never forget that!

The definition of isolation is “the state of being in a place or situation that is separate from others”. In Victoria we are 1 week into Stage 4 lockdown. This means you can only leave your home for 1 hour of exercise per day. Only 1 person can go to the grocery – and it must be within 5 km of your home. Most shops are now closed except for grocery, pharmacy, liquor (of course) and petrol. Only those deemed “essential” are working (and they’ve made that a VERY strict criteria this time) – and must have a government permit on their person to show to the police to prove it. Because our daughter, Stefanie, is working for a place that cares for animals, she is allowed to go to work. School is closed and doing remote learning (only children of essential workers are allowed – I think there’s only around 30 kids there). We haven’t had a “live” church service since March. This is supposed to be for 6 weeks, but there are no guarantees what things will look like after that. To say that it is getting discouraging would be an understatement. (I hesitate to share some things because we know that so many of you are doing it tough as well, but, as I said, effective prayer!) I mentioned a couple of months ago that the only other missionary family with BMM had gone back to the States because of health issues. They have taken a job with the mission and won’t be returning. We are beginning to keenly feel the “aleness” of being the only missionaries here in Australia with our mission. No international flights for the foreseeable future – we struggle with the knowledge that if something happened to our family we literally couldn’t get back. Nor could anyone get here if we needed help. In the midst of all this, we found out we have a large financial debt with the mission – no way for us to return to raise support, etc. Thankfully, some of our supporters have given to bring that down a bit. To say that the enemy is working overtime to discourage us would be an understatement. We are feeling the effects of “isolation” for sure.

We would just ask you to pray for wisdom and grace as we work through this process. Believe me, we haven’t lost hope! Continually God is working around us and through us and we are so incredibly blessed for those encouragements that come our way. Our church family is struggling, too, and it’s been an honour to minister to them as best we can. And, as we struggle, we lift you up as well! We’ve tried to keep track of what is happening in the US and faithfully pray for God to act.

Although this is not our typical prayer letter, we want you to know that God has used His Word over and over to encourage our hearts. Just in the last week we’ve read 2 Cor. 12:9 “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” What a great promise! And how incredible is it that we have HOPE. That’s one thing our church family has noticed about those around us – they have no hope. One of the ladies said she wanted to put a sign on her shirt “I have hope”! Our encouragement to you – carry that hope out into the world (however you’re allowed) and proclaim it!

Shining the Light Down Under,

Rob and Jackie