

Newsletter - April 2020

Dear Friends!

What a month this has been. We are so desperately sad to see how hard the UK has been hit by Covid-19. It is impossible to not be affected by this situation, and we are thinking of you all, whatever situation you are in. This time will pass.



'Everything will be okay'

Brazil

Brazil's president Bolsonaro continues to dismiss the Coronavirus as a 'sniffle' not taking responsibility for the spread. He recently attended an 'anti-lockdown' rally against state governors who have already put lockdowns in place. I mentioned last month that there were two extremes in attitude - those taking it very seriously and those not at all. With such mixed messages from the government, it is not surprising that this continues.

Yet, the sad reality is that by not taking these rulers seriously, the virus is getting worse. The latest figures show almost 9000 deaths, and some scientists are saying it could be up to 15 x more than this number because of the lack of reporting and testing.

The virus has now reached a handful of the poorer communities here, most likely because these people do manual jobs and can't just stay at home despite this month the government agreeing to a monthly handout. There are various food donations located in our area, one even in our block of flats for the guys who live on the streets close to us, and our church too is helping with one specific favela.

So far we have been helping financially with the church project but not in person. We would happily help if we are needed but 'needed' being the crucial word as the fewer people going

into these communities, the less likely the spread, and the best for everyone involved. We have really struggled with this because we are torn with wanting to help and get involved with everything that's going on. However, we do feel able to support through giving to the church and the food packages that our flat is putting together.



Food donations in our area

Revive

We are still unable to see the girls at Revive which is sad but we try to stay in touch through technology. We still do treasure hunts and on Easter Sunday we made a huge batch of chocolate nests which were their 'treasure' at the end of an Easter story hunt! When we dropped these off we had to of course keep our distance but it didn't stop some of the girls jumping on us, wanting hugs - and it was extra difficult after so long apart to not be able to reciprocate.

The girls are however doing really well. They still have educators with them in the house (like the house mums!) and they are doing some school work from home and lots of different activities - some of which we send through online, and are currently VERY excited that they will be getting a new addition to the house very soon - a puppy!!

THE BAYFORDS



The girls with their chocolate Easter nests!



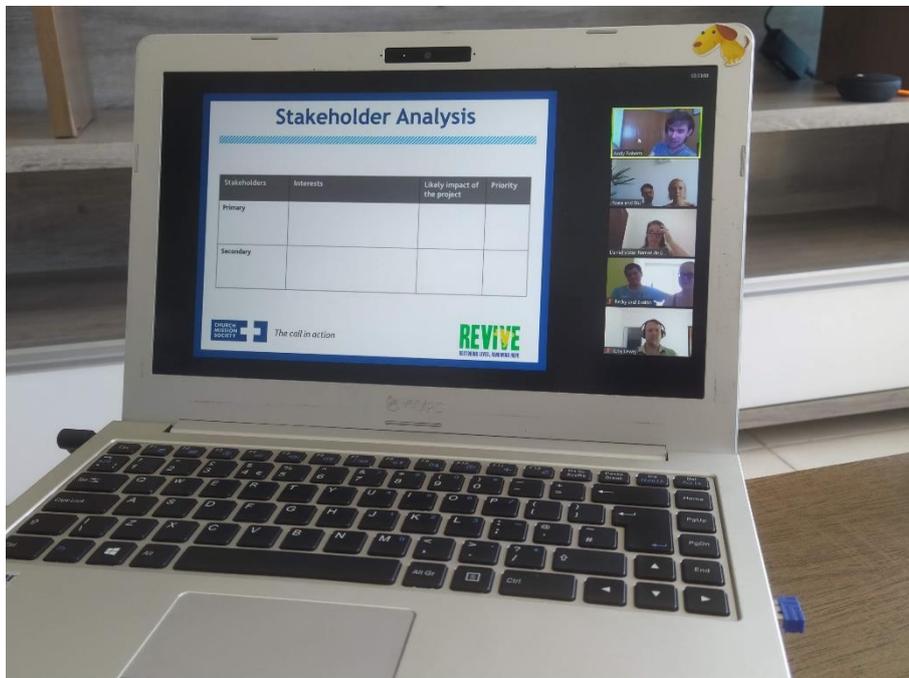
Kennel ready for the puppy!

Some of the girls' court cases are still ongoing during this time. Just yesterday the eldest girl in the house, B, had an online hearing and the judge accepted Revive's recommendation for her to go and live with her new guardians: a family that she has been visiting for a while. After 4 years at Revive and at almost 17 years old, this is really wonderful news because the care system beyond 18 is sadly a fairly hopeless place. We were very sad not to say goodbye in person but are so happy for her and are able to stay in touch with her too.



Saying goodbye to B on Zoom

Our training with Revive is on the home straight as we finish the course in June! This last month we've been learning all about the detailed practicalities of starting a community project, from log frames to stakeholder analysis and mapping. It's been really interesting and we can see how it will help us in the future.



Training via Zoom

Network

We are also continuing work with the Shine network and have had various online meetings during the lockdown, and Stu has been able to do a lot more work on the website. The last six months have been busy and the website has often moved down the 'to do' list so Stu especially is very grateful for this time to focus on this. I'm having a go at creating a new logo for the network (you can see the old one below is somewhat outdated!) which is fun!



The Network Website

Friends

Our friends Heather and Dom who just recently had their lovely little baby Lia have a social enterprise called 'Okira' which sells cosmetics. However, sadly they have had numerous attempted break-in's and have had to rent other accommodation as they try to make their house more secure. In the meantime, while Stu is busy, I have more time so am enjoying doing their packaging and postal deliveries.

Laura and Tony and their girls made the decision to go back to the UK on Sunday, so we actually spent the weekend helping out with the girls while they packed (we have both been self-isolating for the last few weeks and felt it was an important exception).



Okira Products

Family

Thank you so much for praying for those friends and family we mentioned last month. Stu's Granny, Pauline, who is in a care home had many virus symptoms last week, but the tests came back negative, so that's wonderful! But please still keep her in your prayers as she is struggling with the situation. My Mum's friend Belinda with M.S is not well with low oxygen sats so please keep her in your prayers too.

However, on a positive note, our brother-in-law who is a physio at York ICU likely had it a few weeks ago (the testing wasn't available but he had all the symptoms) but is well now and back to work again! And somewhat ironically my other brother-in-law broke his wrist (and three fingers!) falling off his bike last weekend while cycling, and our niece Daisy was in A&E after a bad trampoline fall within days after - but thankfully both are well and on the mend now!

Grateful

We continue to be SO grateful for our flat. The beach is now closed but we do some exercise every day in the car park downstairs (nice just to have a change of scenery!), and are able to be fairly flexible with our work, training and catching up with people on zoom chats and quizzes!

We've also enjoyed being creative; we are dreaming up a board game (Stu does the details, I do the design!), cooking and baking (and delivering so as not to eat it all!) and we've a few online courses on the go too - which we tend to have a go at in the evenings.



Chocolate Cake - baked goods are shared with neighbours!

Prayer

We continue to ask for prayer for the poorest communities here in the favelas. For protection over them as social distancing and self-isolation are near impossible in these areas, often with little or no sanitation. For the government making decisions about how to best protect the Brazilian people. There is a lot of political tension here and we would love prayer for peace.

We mentioned last month that there has been a spike in crime and violence since this crisis began. We don't see this every day but we are all too aware of it, and sadly can't see things changing anytime soon. Meanwhile, the healthcare system is getting full and a lot of hospitals now have waiting lists which is a bit scary.

We had to reapply for our visas in Jan but we attached one of our documents to the wrong form, so they were both rejected. We appealed and the online system shows that Stu's appeal has been registered but mine has not. Please pray that this can be resolved.

With all this in mind (and more), we are weighing up whether to stay here or potentially fly back to the UK (while we still can!). We were planning to visit this year anyway, but we are still thinking and praying this through. Prayer for this would be greatly appreciated.



Incredible sunset last night

As always, thank you SO much for your messages, thoughts and prayers.
We are thinking and praying for you for peace, safety and protection.

With ALL our love and hugs,

Rosie and Stu x