



# Outreach Jamaica

JAN - MARCH 2020

**OUTREACH JAMAICA  
CONTACT  
INFORMATION:**

## UPDATE

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*If you would like to send a donation, please make checks payable to Outreach Jamaica.*

*You may also donate through PAYPAL at [agapeharbor@yahoo.com](mailto:agapeharbor@yahoo.com)*

*All donations are tax-deductible.*

**Dear Friends and fellow Kingdom-workers,**

**We trust this finds all of you doing well under the current situation we find ourselves in. What an opportunity we have to be representatives of God's light, grace and peace to a frantic, scared world.**

**Unlike most of our updates, I'm going to start with current events and move backwards over the past few months.**

**I (Bev) am currently in Wyoming. I arrived in early February with Shamar to spend some time with my mom who is facing some ongoing health challenges. Our plan was to take this time with mom and also file for Shamar's US citizenship. He'll turn 16 next month!! We have been homeschooling him this school year which takes up more of my time than I had imagined, but both of us are learning a lot together! This is not the time of year that I would normally travel to Wyoming...we've had to buy everything from shoes and socks (our sandals and flip-flops haven't cut it so far!) to winter clothes and coats to try to get by until warmer weather comes, hopefully soon! Mom is in assisted living, which has been in lock-down for 10 days now, so I can only speak with her by phone. Frustrating, to say the least...I could be doing that from home.**

**We left Jamaica before all of the Covid-19 scare began internationally. Here is the latest as to what is happening in Jamaica:**

**There are currently 22 known cases of covid: so far, one death linked to it. Schools have been closed for 2 weeks, today starting week 3. The tourism industry is completely closed down and all workers laid off indefinitely. All public gatherings are now limited to no more than 20 people by law, including grocery stores. (Breaches can result in fines of up to JA \$1 million and/or imprisonment of up to 12 months.) Food stocks for the island are estimated to be about 2-3 months. (Given that nearly everything in Jamaica except some meats, fresh fruits and veggies are imported, it's not a great supply). The military and police are keeping 2 communities with cluster infections quarantined at this time...nobody in or out; neither of them are in our Parish of St. Ann.**

**(continued...)**

Jacques has been trying to buy bulk quantities of food to stockpile for aid to community members and those in need if/when the situation worsens. He is already receiving daily requests for help, but unfortunately, the stores are not allowing him to buy bulk amounts to distribute at this point. Our church building may become a distribution point for government and NGO's in the future. Jacques held services yesterday in Beecher Town and 8 people attended. We've requested that all of our senior saints stay home, and he delivered communion to each of them yesterday and had prayer with them. We are setting up a Whatsapp group and group texts to keep in touch with members regularly. We've been able to identify only 2 members of our congregation who are still employed...we have teachers, hotel workers and small business owners that are all un-employed or unable to work, and several seniors who are drawing a small pension, which is being held up at this point. Jamaica, as is the case in most 3rd world countries, has no social security system to help those most vulnerable. A large population of rural Jamaicans lives day-to-day, and some meal-to-meal. Panic is starting to set in in some communities where access is limited, and rumors are spreading fast.

One of our foster sons who lived with us for several years, Kamar, works on a cruise ship and has been quarantined on the ship in Florida for almost 2 weeks. The Jamaican government has closed all air/sea ports as of last Saturday at mid-night, so unless they allow a special flight in for returning nationals, he will be stuck in the US indefinitely. Please pray with us for him, that he'll be allowed to come back home. Please also give thanks with us that the infection rate is still relatively low at this point, and that so far there is no civil uprising. Please pray with us that these trends continue! Please pray for opportunities for Jacques and others to minister and reach out to those in need, and wisdom and discernment on how best to handle logistics of ministry during this time.

If you would like to assist with funds to help in the purchase of food items to be distributed by our congregation, please send it through our forwarding agents in WY with a notation "Jamaica Feeding Program".

Now to catch you up a little on what else has been happening!

## School Feeding Program

Before school ended for the Christmas holiday, we once again requested a list of children from both the Beecher Town Primary and Early Childhood Basic School who were 'at high risk' of hunger over the holiday. . Last summer, we received 18 names...before Christmas we received 44 names from 21 different families...quite a substantial increase! Our congregation purchased staple items and 7 church members were involved in helping us package and deliver them to the schools for parents to pick up. We were able to provide the following items to each family, at a total cost of JA \$45,000 (US \$380):

\* rice, flour, sugar, cornmeal, canned mackerel, canned corned beef, oatmeal, milk powder, romaine noodles, dry chicken noodle soup, crackers, and sweet biscuits.

A few of the families who received them came to church the weeks following and have expressed their appreciation for the assistance. We were looking towards assisting those in need again over the 10 day Easter break April 3-14, and as it seems like school will likely still be out of session until after that break, we will be including these families in any assistance we can give in general food distributions.

We are still mentoring and giving assistance to 5 young mothers who attend Beecher Town Church. Unfortunately, one of them with a 2 year old is pregnant again. We will continue to counsel, encourage and assist as the Lord provides. While I'm here stateside, I hope to be able to meet with some ladies from my home church to learn more about the "*Embrace Grace*" program, and see what we might be able to implement into our ministry with young mothers in Jamaica.

## In Other News....

In January, Jacques began preaching at the Northview Christian Church in St. Ann's Bay (appx 40 minutes from Beecher Town) every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month. Northview was the church I helped plant during my first visit to Jamaica in 1985, and Jacques was instrumental in holding a 6 week Crusade to launch it later that year. Our service in Beecher Town begins at 9 am and Northview at 11, so he leaves Beecher Town after preaching and travels to St Anns Bay in time to preach, which makes for a long day. We have 2 men in the congregation in Beecher Town that Jacques has been working with in hopes that they will be able very soon to fill in with the preaching on the Sundays he needs to be absent, as well as help fill pulpits in some of the rural churches.

January 26 was our annual Harvest Thanksgiving Service in Beecher Town. Beecher Town Harvest Service kicks off the Harvest 'season' for the Churches of Christ in Jamaica for the year. Harvest is an entire weekend for our congregation: purchasing over 100 fresh coconuts on Thursday, cutting and grating them on Friday, baking and cooking items with it on Saturday, then the worship Service on Sunday afternoon. We had 16+ congregations from across the island represented at the Worship Service, and the items we baked along with other produce from farmers was sold. Proceeds go to help finance our evangelistic programs throughout the year. It was a wonderful service.

January 28 we experienced something new for us. Jamaica had a 7.8 magnitude earthquake just off the north coast. We felt a relatively minor tremble in Beecher Town, and thank God that the island was spared any major damage. The scariest part for us was the tsunami warnings that we received from the US Embassy and other foreign news agencies, while local agencies were reporting little to no information as to what to expect. All 5 of our children with us attend school or work along the coast, so we frantically tried to locate and get all of them home, not knowing what to expect. After a very long 4 hours, we were able to find all of them and get them home, and again, praise God, there was no major impact from a tsunami. We appreciate all who attempted to make contact with us and prayed for us during the whole ordeal.

In January, a lady from our community informed Jacques and me that she was being evicted from her current home. She asked us if we could come and look at a house-site and see if we could assist her in building something for her and her 7 children and 2 grand-children. She had less than 2 weeks to move into it. After the initial visit and checking out other possibilities for housing, we advised her we would help with zinc roofing, cement for the flooring and doors and windows. She was able to secure some ply from our Member of Parliament. She was able to move in 2 weeks and 2 days later. She is profoundly grateful and says they are much more comfortable in this house than in their old one, which had cardboard walls and old tarps on the roof.



initial site visit



finished and moved in

# Upcoming Events....?

Both Jacques and I are again on the camp planning committee for summer youth camp. Plans are well under way towards 3 weeks of camp in July, Lord willing. Jacques is also on the National Convention planning committee- Convention taking place in October each year. This has him making frequent trips to Kingston where most of the other members are. We will continue with plans for both events at this point via texts and conference calls, praying that things will have started to return to normalcy by then.

Until a few weeks ago, we had a very busy schedule of events planned for this year, both within our congregation as well as Nationally: crusades, camps, youth retreats, VBS, Conventions, leadership training seminars, as well as Jacques pulpit-filling at various churches and holding down the ministry in Beecher Town. Proverbs 16:9 says that "We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps." We will continue to adjust plans for ministry as things develop, asking God to direct our steps and open doors of opportunity for Jacques in Jamaica, as well as for me here while we wait this out.

Please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers as well! This historic event has been an equalizer to us all....everyone is in the same boat! We pray for God's protection, provision and health for you as you do the same for us and the brethren across the world.

In closing, please know how much we appreciate your continued prayers, support and encouragement for us and the ministry here! We could not minister in Jamaica without you! To say that we are a little apprehensive about what the closing of churches will mean in regards to monthly support for the ministry is a bit understated. We know many of you may be facing challenging times financially as well. We stand in faith believing that *HE IS ABLE* to take care of all of us through these circumstances, and in anticipation of seeing how He chooses to do it!

God Bless and Keep You All!

~ Jacques and Bev