

# SCALPEL'S EDGE

COVID-19  
EDITION



A GIFT OF LIGHT, HOPE AND SURGERY TO PERU

SUMMER 2020 | ISSUE 31

We share this special COVID-19 issue of Scalpel's Edge from the heart of our medical mission. Please note that content was submitted on or before May 15, 2020. Grace and peace to you and yours.

— Peggy Gasior, Editor

## COVID TOPPLES AND GOD REIGNS

*By Peter A. Cole, M.D. - President, Scalpel At The Cross*



Scalpel At The Cross is gaining strength with every week since March, as if the Lord purposed to emerge from the crisis a more significant ministry. There should be no surprises that people find their Lord in desperate times, that our faith emboldens as fears surge, and that Jesus is vivid in the blazing wildfires of life. The living word of God has hundreds of such accounts from Noah to the Red Sea, locusts to frog-plagues, Jonah to Psalm twenty-three, from crucifixion to Hell; and then what? God reigns. God reigns every single time, and I am not worried.

Within days of an April campaign to the jungle, we had to make the difficult decision to cancel the trip for a large medical team full of anticipation and hope to heal the maimed and injured patients of Pucallpa, several who had been counting the days to our arrival. Dreams of first timers were shattered, pictures of crying patients came in, thousands of dollars were already spent on travel and lodging. We prayed. Our prayer list was long, but our Prayer Posse bent its knee! "You will pray to him, and he will hear you, and you will fulfill your vows." (Job 22: 27) And that's what we've done.

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**T**oo numerous to count are the blessings that keep pouring in even as the little virus plies civilization with collateral damage never witnessed in history. It's really not necessary to spend another sentence here on the ravages. You got plenty of that stuff yesterday, and this morning, and there's plenty more to come. Be heartened, for God is the ultimate lemonade-maker, and the results are savory.

# COVID TOPPLES AND GOD REIGNS

We immediately assured our desperate jungle friends at Hospital Amazonico, “We’ll be back in August to take care of you! Hold tight-pray’n hard!” Our fearless Director, Kara Rodriguez, ran air-traffic control with our Peruvian team leaders, Isaac Mendoza and Laines Scharff; our campus overseers, Michael and Tiffany Simmons; our Prayer Posse Director, Nancy Cole; and our grand-central communications strategist, Esteban Cardona. Nancy specified emerging needs to our Posse intercessors, from patient complications to airline refunds to ministry donations. Esteban revamped our social media messaging, our critical donor conversations, and our patient follow-up strategy. Isaac was running interference with hospital leaders who were cobbling their own approach to the pandemic. We worked with a dozen other stakeholders on our Board, South America Mission, the bank, our SPP Stewardship Partners, and new volunteers. Meanwhile, Director Karita and a couple of our Board members (Bob and Tim) vetted loan forgiveness programs and lenders to race early applications for government Personal Payment Protection (PPP). Kara began negotiating with airlines, truck-rental agencies, and hotels for refunds, providing justifications using a chaotic tangle of internet madness; and the Board of Directors was pulled into emergency action for direction, wisdom, and prayer.

For you football fans, I feel as though I have been calling audible after audible in a ten-week, hurry-up Scalpel-offense, and the COVID-defense is brutal; but Goliath must have seemed that way to the young David drawing the slingshot from his loincloth. Yes, God is faithful, and our team is great! We’re still catching glimpses of the end zone; and we’re still alive, unharmed, determined, and gaining ground with our Lord’s reinforcements, as if fresh players

“In conclusion, I need to announce that COVID just toppled another Scalpel medical trip today, planned for mid-August. Though people will despair, God reigns. With each caving plan made on the fleeting thoughts of man, God will reign again and again all the way to eternity. I am not worried in the slightest; in fact, there is great anticipation of the “something better” which will follow this news.”

keep coming off the bench. To give you an understanding that the chains indeed are advancing, we have recovered almost every dollar spent on trip plans way back in April, have received our forgivable PPP loan and are meeting its conditions, and have seen faithful donors come forward on a pace ahead of last year, even several weeks into the pandemic. Please do prayerfully consider what you can do.



In conclusion, I need to announce that COVID just toppled another Scalpel medical trip today, planned for mid-August. Though people will despair, God reigns. With each caving plan made on the fleeting thoughts of man, God will reign again and again all the way to eternity. I am not worried in the slightest; in fact, there is great anticipation of the “something better” which will follow this news. I am confident that Scalpel At The Cross has not stopped sharing the love of Christ through a medical mission in the Peruvian Amazon as our mission statement exclaims. Nor has any aspect of our vision been thwarted. The blueprint for our new campus expansion is bringing into view our work to come in 2021; we are planning a virtual medical conference and Scalpel reunion with our Peruvian hospitals and teams; and we are fired up for an October trip with our new Oklahoma team led by Dr. Clayton Nelson. Be encouraged friends of Scalpel. Despite these two months of mayhem, there’s more lemonade to drink together; indeed, so many blessings to come. It may take forty days and nights (Genesis 7:12, Exodus 24: 18), or forty years (Deuteronomy 8:25, Judges 13: 1), but something better’s going to happen. And I hope to be here this side of eternity to witness it! ✝

# THROUGH CRISIS COMES OPPORTUNITY

By Kara Rodriguez, Mission Director

On March 12, I woke to three separate emails inquiring about the status of our campaign. Dr. Cole and I scheduled a call for later that morning, and as soon as he picked up, he said the five words I had hoped we would be able to avoid, “Kara, we have to cancel.”

The day was March 11. We had recently returned from a successful campaign to Peru and had immediately shifted gears, planning for our next campaign scheduled to depart on April 1. Concerns of an unknown and harmful virus were slowly taking over the news. It felt like a distant threat, yet one we should be aware of. While it was inching closer to the Americas, what little we knew about the virus led me to believe it most likely wouldn’t affect our ability to travel on April 1. To my knowledge, Scalpel At The Cross hadn’t postponed or cancelled a campaign in 15 years of service to Peru, and I wasn’t looking to add that to my list of accomplishments in my first year as the new Mission Director.

I thought it important to connect with Dr. Cole to discuss the virus and its impact. “Hi, Kara!” Both of us were surprised - he by my unannounced call (I’m more of a texter) and me that I managed to catch him between surgeries. We discussed the virus, our perspectives melding nicely under the banner of risk management balanced by his years of medical training and my background in international education and travel. We played through various scenarios and concluded that our team was low-risk. We were healthy, with little-to-no underlying health conditions, and from areas with minimal exposure. In monitoring the situation, we determined to move forward with plans for traveling to Peru on April 1.

That night, however, something changed. Colleges and universities started cancelling in-person classes, shifting to online and distance learning. Travel restrictions were



imposed, and borders closed. Professional sports organizations postponed or cancelled major events. Up until March 11, I hadn’t received questions about our ability to travel in April. On March 12, I woke to three separate emails inquiring about the status of our campaign. Dr. Cole and I scheduled a call for later that morning, and as soon as he picked up, he said the five words I had hoped we would be able to avoid, “Kara, we have to cancel.” This decision was not made lightly, nor without difficulty. We already had three patients from our February campaign waiting for follow-up

procedures. Tears streamed down one of their faces as Isaac Mendoza, our Peruvian medical coordinator, broke the news we were unable to travel. Team members, who had diligently raised support for their first medical mission trip to Peru, saw their dreams come to a screeching halt as we discussed the hope of rescheduling, everything still so uncertain. What does cancellation of the first medical campaign in the history of the mission, in the midst of a global pandemic, mean for Scalpel? How do we continue to be a lighthouse in the Amazon of Peru when we are unable to travel?

Through crisis comes opportunity. In the days, weeks, and now months since that conversation on March 12, Scalpel has continued to share hope in the midst of pain and uncertainty. Our patient follow-up program continues as Isaac is in consistent communication with patients through WhatsApp, ensuring they continue physical therapy routines. While our hope is that patients find physical healing, these challenging times have opened the doors for conversations about faith and hope, with Isaac’s encouragement through prayer and scripture.

As the virus continues to ravage the community of Pucallpa, Hospital Amazonico has been experiencing a shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and we were able to make a donation of gowns, masks, and face shields (pictured on next page). While this was only a small drop in the bucket of need, our dear friends and colleagues were grateful as they serve on the frontlines, attending to COVID-19 patients.



# THROUGH CRISIS COMES OPPORTUNITY



This unexpected grounding of travel and upending of our daily routines has provided opportunities for reflection and connection. Through calls to donors, past team members, and friends of the mission, we’ve learned first-hand how the pandemic is affecting our Scalpel family. While we’re all experiencing loss in some form, there has also been unexpected joy and new-found free time. Although confined, many expressed gratitude for the “forced break.” They have enjoyed “the most free time

since starting med school”, exploring new hobbies and spending extended time with family. We have prayed with parents of small children for an extra dose of grace and patience, and we have provided a listening ear to those caring for aging parents, fearful of the virus finding its way to their home. Words can’t fully express how grateful we are for our Scalpel family.

A unique aspect of Scalpel At The Cross is our unwavering commitment to the people and community of Pucallpa. We’ve built and nurtured relationships with local missionaries and the church family at Mil Palmeras, and our desire to support them and their work. How do we serve the community we love so much from afar? In numerous updates from those on the ground in Pucallpa, one comment has struck me the most. *Many in Pucallpa live hand to mouth and are more afraid of starving than catching the virus.* To this end, Mil Palmeras is collecting food donations to share with some of the neediest in Pucallpa, and there are a host of others with

great need under the care of the missionary community. We have set up a COVID relief fund to support their efforts during this time when we are unable to send medical mission teams; donations made to this fund will go directly toward providing immediate relief and meeting basic needs resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak.

While we may not be able to travel to Peru, our work still continues. The beauty of our mission is that we didn’t cancel our campaigns to never meet the people we intended to serve. We have been serving in Peru for 15 years, and we will be back. Until then, we wait. We lament. We pray. And yet we have hope. Through crisis comes opportunity.

“I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:19-23) †



# SUCH A TIME

By Amy Chien  
February 2020 medical mission team member

The 30-year-old patient said, “I wasn’t like this before. I was independent, doing everything for myself. I even did martial arts.” Another patient stated, “It felt like there was glue in my mouth - I couldn’t taste anything. I also felt like there was something in my lungs or on my body because it was so hard to breath; I kept looking down at my body to see if I had any outer physical injuries.” Or the doctor now turned patient, “Why is my heart beating so fast? Is it because of COVID-19 or because I just walked?” The voices of anxiety, fear, shock, trauma, depression and so on, resonate loudly in my ears whenever I walk into a COVID patient’s room. How are such needs to be addressed? Though I have been educated and trained to work with physical, emotional and mental disabilities, this was beyond the norm.



I work at Boston Medical Center (BMC) as an Occupational Therapist (OT). I see patients from a holistic perspective and focus on getting them back to engaging in their self-care and improving their overall quality of life. Patients with coronavirus benefit from OT by relearning how to feed themselves, tolerating positions for using the toilet, getting dressed and so forth, because they have become so deconditioned and have poor oxygen reserves for performing such basic and simple tasks. However, this population group, with their dire diagnosis, seemed to need much more than just a few OT sessions. In fact, it was more than any rehab or other resource our hospital could provide. Everything about this diagnosis was new, with many unknowns regarding managing and treating it, as well as unknowns for proceeding to prevent additional spread. It was scary and overwhelming when the first batch of COVID



# SUCH A TIME

patients arrived in our hospital. Overhead, the “code blue” calls became numerous; these patients needed to be revived quickly with only a few minutes of grace before the resuscitation team quits due to risk of exposure.

Research has shown that patients who spend more time in the ICU are at higher risk of developing depression, anxiety and PTSD, with a third of them never returning to work, post discharge from hospital. Now we are adding COVID-19 into the mix - can you imagine the future outcomes for these survivors? I also cannot begin to imagine the grieving process for families/friends who cannot properly grieve for their loved ones - this is trauma too: to the mind, body and soul. I was more and more anxious with all these thoughts swirling in my mind and the latest medical news updates on coronavirus.

Adding to this stress, like most hospitals, our hospital was not well-prepared for this situation and did not provide proper guidelines nor support to the staff - the very people who were essential to helping COVID-19 patients. My manager asked if any of us wanted to be part of the rehab team specializing in caring for these patients. You would think I should and would, as a Christian; after all, isn't it the “right thing to do”? Nope; not me. I thought, God did not call me to throw myself into such a reckless situation without support or personal protective equipment (PPE) from the hospital.

Though I was not on the team, within 2 weeks, I had been exposed at least 7 times to multiple COVID-positive and pending patients (this was before the hospital started testing all patients for COVID), and I was not wearing any PPE. It may have been more exposure, but we were all

losing count. I had multiple discussions with my manager regarding the inadequate policies regarding protection for employees; however, no changes were made other than the addition of staff testing. By God's grace and His protection, I was spared from the virus, as I tested negative.

At that time, my sister and I started discussing exactly where God wanted me to be, now that we saw God's hand of protection. I began praying anew for God's leading on whether or not to join the COVID team. God opened the door by answering/confirming my prayers: (1) as the coronavirus began taking a toll on our staff, our hospital adopted policies to protect staff and patients; and (2) my manager was hand-selecting and re-asking staff to join the COVID rehab team.



Now I am on the COVID team and, as mentioned, many patients are traumatized and do not know how to move forward. I am powerless because this is an issue that cannot be resolved in 1 to 10 treatment sessions. But when I looked to Christ for help, I was reminded how He can heal (Exodus 15:26), provide (Genesis 22:14), restore (Jeremiah 30:17), is ever present (Ezekiel 48:35), breathes life into dry bones (Ezekiel 37:5-6), and gives real satisfying hope (Romans 15:13).

During this pandemic, God has reshaped my mindset and perspective:

- I had become fixated on PPE as my protector, forgetting that God is truly our protector. We do not go into battle naked; we must be prepared as well and take the proper weapons. But we need to keep in mind that **the battle belongs to the Lord**.
- God is the God of hope. And His hope is not the same as the world's version of hope, which wishes for something desired to come to pass, but is uncertain if it will. God's hope looks forward with desire and reasonable **confidence it will come to pass**.
- God is using this opportunity to call our attention to Himself and to remind us that we are only humans. This is beyond our control; we need to look to God as **He is the answer**.

By the Holy Spirit, I have been able to share His hope, encouragement and comfort with these patients who are alone, scared and mourning. I know I was called for such a time as this; Christ's Church was called for such a time as this, to minister to those who are so in need. My hope is that you will step out in faith to reach out to those around you and share the hope that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

“For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14) ✝



# BEAUTY OF THE LEAST OF THESE

By Danielle Ellerbe, Board Member



I am many things...a woman, wife, Christian, student, sister, leader. But during this season, one of the most marked characteristics of “who I am” is a nurse. I work at Boston Medical Center (BMC), New England's largest safety-net hospital in Boston's urban center, existing primarily to care for the most vulnerable and at-risk populations in our city.



Simply, the majority of my patients are made up of those living without a home, battling mental illness, or struggling with addiction, as well as immigrants or those without financial resource. The systems of capitalism and power were not built for them; borrowing Jesus' words, they

would be termed as “the least of these.” In Matthew, this word is “*elachistos*”, meaning “smallest and least in amount, in importance, in authority, in the estimation of men, in rank and excellence, in dignity.”

Unfortunately, in 2020, being *the least* means you have not, and having not limits one's job security; one's ability to gain and succeed; one's family unit, access to nutrition and shelter; one's mind, health and happiness. And during a pandemic, being *the least* means being most exposed to a worldwide virus and being least capable of doing what you need to protect yourself. You are most likely to have comorbid health conditions, making you most susceptible to death if you contract COVID-19.

I am privileged enough to be able to live day to day, should I choose, blind to the gross injustices of our world. Pointedly, though, over the last couple of months, the intersection of my journey as a nurse with COVID patients has allowed me to witness the sickness and suffering of “the least of these.”

Reflecting in service to the least of these, God has revealed to me where His hope lies in a suffering world through the following invitations:

**INVITATION 1:** *Believe that the least of these were made in His image.* “As you did unto him, as you did unto her, as you did it to the least, you did that unto Me.” There is something striking and provocative, maybe even controversial, about this statement from Jesus Christ as He likens Himself to the least of these. In fact, it highlights the stark distinction of the God of the Christian faith from every other god and prophet and religion. That is, Jesus did not separate His holiness, His glory and His perfect kingdom from an unholy and imperfect world. He is not a distant god, Who calls you to earn His love and blessing, Who asks for your perfection because He is holy. No, Jesus Christ flipped all of religion on its head, descended from heaven, humbled Himself in the likeness of man, submitted to humanity's bondage and suffering, and conquered the one thing that could destroy us, death. “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female, He created them.” (Genesis 1:27) There is an inextricable tie between humanity and God, because we have been made in His image. Society forgets, and often we too, that the beggar, the drug abuser, the prisoner, the naked, even the least of these, was created in His image. As we do unto the least, we do unto Jesus, for the least of these was created with the imprint of Almighty God.

**INVITATION 2:** *Glorify the holiness of God in the least of these.* Because the least of these was made in the image of God, when we serve and tend His creation with care, we acknowledge, glorify and make known, the Deity of God. When we acknowledge, glorify and make known the Deity of God, provides to the body that is sick but whose heart is still beating...we acknowledge the divine image of God in life and in humanity itself. We declare that yes, this one too was fashioned and formed with life and purpose by The Creator, Who loves deeply



# BEAUTY OF THE LEAST OF THESE

and intensely desires oneness with His creation. Through serving the least of these, we affirm their souls too have an insatiable longing. His name is Jesus, and they too were made for Him.

**INVITATION 3:** *The doorway to the kingdom is in service to the least of these.* Do not misunderstand that we earn our way into the kingdom through works. Jesus is very clear that it is by grace alone, through belief in Him as Lord, that we enter eternal life. However, Jesus says here in Matthew, that those He calls to enter, who are named blessed by the Father and will inherit the kingdom, those are the ones who fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, invited the stranger, clothed the naked, cared for the sick, and visited the prisoner. He later distinguishes the unbelieving as those who did not do for the least of these, and thus did not do for Jesus (v.45). This communicates that, in our choice to take action on behalf of the least, our hearts are laid bare. The genuineness of our love is tried. The contents of our hearts are unearthed. In service to the least of these, we attest our heart’s belief that Jesus is Who He says He is.

**INVITATION 4:** *Know the heart of God in the suffering of the least of these.* Jesus tying Himself to the identity of the least of these unveils much about the heart of God. It proves Jesus’ words, “I am gentle and lowly in heart. I give grace to and exalt the humble. Blessed are the poor in spirit. It is in weakness that My power is made perfect.” These are the truths gleaned when entering into suffering, touching the wounds, serving the least of these, first. We embody and know more of Who God is, what He cares for, and how He loves; we enjoy the fruits of His heart. And we have the opportunity to believe, hope, and watch God exercise His presence and power.



**INVITATION 5:** *Believe that a kingdom is being prepared for us as we serve the least of these.* Scripture promises a coming glory that we have not yet tasted or seen. There is eternal life waiting, a kingdom actively prepared for us, at the end of this. And in this kingdom, we are all called brothers and sisters, family; there is no distinction of least or greatest. We will all exist, from every nation and tongue, to share in the great glory of our amazing God.

These are the invitations God has graciously extended to me through my work as a nurse these past couple of months, through the beautiful “least of these” whom I have had the gift of caring for at different moments:

Sometimes ordinary...bathing patients underneath layers of gowns; facetimeing a patient’s family via the hospital iPad; rushing to don the “COVID gear” for the

fourth time in the last hour because the forgetful patient is trying to get out of bed again; heating meals and delivering them bedside; saying “Good morning” and “Good night” as the only live human contact for the day; choosing to stay longer because this patient has no one to talk to about their fears and concerns.

Sometimes urgent...calling a rapid response for the anesthesia team because the patient cannot maintain their oxygen level without intubation; calling the “code blue” and beginning chest compressions because the patient was found down without a heartbeat.

Sometimes solemn...silently, prayerfully tending the body of a deceased patient knowing, in a pandemic where a virus rages, there will be no funeral, and this is the only opportunity to pay respects to the body; gathering the patient’s belongings and delivering them to the family downstairs; comforting a wife and a daughter saying, “I am so sorry for your loss. But I want you to know, they were not alone, and I held their hand as they passed.”

And sometimes holy...singing Amazing Grace through two masks and a face shield as I clean an old man whose body is terminally failing; acting as chaplain and speaking final prayers because the priest requested by the family cannot enter.

Ordinary moments, urgent moments, tragic moments, and holy moments all graced with His presence, transforming ordinary to divine, drawing my eyes upward out of their suffering, to the kingdom to come. Oh, how wonderful is the God I know through the beauty of “the least of these”. ✝



# THE PERFECT STORM

By Shad Welsh, Pastor, Mil Palmeras Church  
Pucallpa, Peru

What would be the “perfect storm” environment for a COVID-19 outbreak? A large metropolis area in a remote, underdeveloped Amazonian city? Check. A too-little-too-late response by local authorities with lax enforcement of social distancing? Check. A total of 3 ICU beds designated to COVID cases for a population base of about 350,000 people in the city? Check.



Welcome to Pucallpa, Peru, where life is relaxed, and the steady humming buzz of insects blends with the pulsating roar of motorcycles to create a symphony of sounds that never seems to rest. Unfortunately, this relaxed, live-in-the-moment pace has combined with a plethora of other complexities to create a medical crisis with one of the fastest growing outbreaks of COVID-19 in the country.

Within a few weeks of the first recorded case being registered, we’ve seen the number of infected individuals jump to over 600+, and testing is still only sporadic. The three local hospitals have repeatedly shut down their emergency rooms and turned patients away, as they are out of beds and lacking the protective gear necessary to treat the infected. Currently 40% of the city’s doctors are infected, and panic has set in.

The daily news is saturated with the grisly images of people dying at home, on the streets outside the locked emergency room entrances, and inside the hastily assembled COVID ward at one of the main hospitals.

Local private clinics have closed up shop, and even some police stations have been abandoned as the panicked officers refuse to come to work and risk further exposure. The local funeral homes have run out of coffins and are pleading with the Department of Agriculture to release confiscated lumber from its stockpile to make more.

As the government scrambles to respond to the burgeoning medical needs and enforce the national quarantine regulations, one may be asking: “Where is the Church in all of this?”



History has taught us that the Church thrives and matures explosively under persecution or crisis, and this has certainly been the case for the Church in Pucallpa.



Church-based social media groups are abuzz with prayer requests being shared and encouragement being offered through Bible passages and prayers. Fear is giving way to galvanized faith as believers are seeing this as a chance to stand in the gap and be welded together as a body of Christ whose hands and feet are reaching out to the most vulnerable.

We’ve seen pastoral groups formed to pray with and for the doctors, patients, and family members of the infected. We’ve watched local bodies of believers expose themselves to risk as they gather food and funds to distribute among the poorest and marginalized sectors of society. Local congregations are sharing their prayer requests with other local congregations, and the result has been an unmistakable realization of how much we need each other and how there is only one body of Christ regardless of denominational flavors.

As the storm rages around us, we are emboldened in our efforts to share the message of hope with a lost and hurting world that is hungry for answers, and whose attention has been turned to thoughts of eternity and life after death.

Our prayer is not only for God’s healing hand to rest upon our city, but for His passionate fire not to be extinguished from our hearts when the storm is past. May we continue to be a light in the darkness even when the dust settles from COVID-19’s global frenzy. May shattered families find purpose and healing through a personal relationship with the very author of life. Please lock arms with us in prayer for our community here, as we serve where God has placed us. ✝



# DIVINE DISTURBANCE

By Nancy Cole, Director of Halo Ministries  
Prayer Posse



The word corona translates “crown.” Biblically speaking, the Crown of Life is referenced in both James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10 as bestowed upon those who persevere under trial. In framing coronavirus for myself, I try to focus my gaze upward, praying for stability of soul marked by crown jewels of faith, hope, joy, and peace. A crown-ward view allows me to interpret this period of world history from my perspective as a Christian counselor, and thus affords meaning to my otherwise disrupted plans. With the reality of global suffering before us, my recent clinical work has been that of helping undergird my clients with the unflappable truth of God’s Word. Despite adversity caused by this virus, my prayer has been that a message of hope would prevail, and heartened with faith in Christ, we might suffer well together. When suffering people magnify the Lord amidst sorrowful

conditions, it augments the view of Christ for those looking on because it defies logic. Not personally on the frontlines, my desire has been encouraging believers to remember that God is sovereign over all hardship in this fallen world, and that our afflictions accomplish purposes often hidden from understanding. As our roots, unwittingly grounded in health and materialism and self-reliance, are exposed, we have opportunity to replant them in the unshakeable Glory of God’s grace...namely, we have been forgiven and loved with a staying power that will hold us through eternity.

In family systems therapy there is a technique called, “creating a crisis.” In some instances, families get stuck in their dynamics, unable to pull out of this state of equilibrium that has become engrained into their natural manner of conduct. The clinician works as a catalyst in bringing forth some crisis, pushing the family into new functional, healthier patterns. Though I do not profess to know the Lord’s intent with this pandemic, I have noticed a growth mindset...a renewed sense of clarity regarding what truly matters. Suddenly, life has become crystal clear. Our daily rhythms have been upended, and this necessarily brought both new behaviors and realizations. We’ve been humbled by how stupefying this disease is and how ill prepared we were for its sudden appearance. Our human frailty has been exposed as we’ve lost all illusion of control. We’ve learned to appreciate small things, cooperate with people otherwise considered adversaries, and innovate as a means of pressing through. We’ve begun to see good ebbing from the lens of hard. We may even find ourselves sharing in the affections of the Apostle Paul when

he wrote to the Corinthians, “In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.” How durable Paul’s joyful outlook...not based on the reality of dire circumstance. May that be us, and may we show others how to turn to our Lord and Savior as the only source of hope in this life and the one to come. Without denying very real hardships, may we lean into the comforting arms of our ever-present Companion, in dependent faith as hopeful gospel carriers to those needing to experience Jesus. May our shared brokenness globally, be the site where God’s redemptive work and beauty germinate from ashes of heart-wrenching loss, in whatever form that has taken. And may we sink our roots into God’s profound promises, like those found in Romans 8:32, “He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?” God never wavered from His mission to sacrifice His Son on our behalf, and we can trust with rock solid assurance that He will continue gracing us with everything that is needful.

“ Pray for Peru! Pucallpa has been on a government-imposed lockdown since March 16, with a recent extension of lockdown to June 30. ”

Pray for Peru! Pucallpa has been on a government-imposed lockdown since March 16, with a recent extension of lockdown to June 30. As of May 1, officials said there were roughly 765 cases, but that was speculation because testing has not been available. Specifically, pray in these ways:



• That the COVID temporary hospital set up in a town parking lot will be able to accommodate those seeking help; it has a 41-bed capacity for a population of nearly half a million in the Yarinacocha district, which includes Pucallpa. The three local hospitals, Amazonico, Regional, & Essalud, lacked proper personal protective equipment to accept suspected COVID patients, resulting in deaths at the ER gates of all three. Two of the three hospitals folded under demands for care coupled with many staff succumbing to COVID. Pucallpa has now begun digging mass graves for bodies since funeral homes have been overwhelmed.

• That resources and materials from the Peruvian Ministry of Health to Pucallpa will be distributed to meet intended needs.

• That hospital and clinic administrators, as well as local government officials, would have hearts to help those in need with gifts and resources rather than line their personal pockets.

• That people may return to work soon, as even before this pandemic, Pucallpans lived a precarious day to day existence in this developing world, jungle town. People are lining up for blocks at banks to try and withdraw funds or collect government financial aid. Social distancing isn’t an option, and people are without masks so many wear what they can devise (i.e., bandanas).

• That groceries/markets, pharmacies, banks, and gas stations will remain open, at least 2-3 hours/day, so basic human needs will be met. There are no domestic flights or busing to or from Pucallpa, which remains isolated from potential assistance.



• That ministries who co-labor with us, such as South America Mission, are able to effectively reach and distribute food to the Santa Teresita tribe across the lagoon from our home, given the shortages of many bulk supplies.



• That the people, being hungry, sick, and desperate, will continue to testify that God is good, as they witness His care for them during this seemingly impossible time. That their hearts would be fortified by passages such as Isaiah 43:1, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are MINE,” and Psalm 27:13, “I would have despaired unless I believed I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”

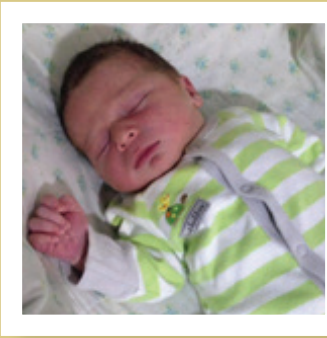
## ALONGSIDE THESE PRAYERS, PLEASE GIVE PRAISE FOR THE FOLLOWING:

• That we were between medical campaigns when this pandemic struck.

• That we have been able to weather the storm financially and make payroll, as a result of assistance from the government and generous giving from faithful Scalpel stewards.

• That our frontline workers and Scalpel staff have thus far remained healthy, as we’ve prayed for protective hedges about them.

• That a new baby boy, Luke Pete Simmons, was born May 7 to beloved Michael & Tiffany, who oversee our property and teams at Cashibococcha in Pucallpa.



# COVID-19 MISSION VITALS

During COVID-19, Scalpel continues to operate, and its facilities maintenance and administrative costs remain. The need for surgical care in Pucallpa continues to grow.

**21** 

AVG. SURGICAL  
PATIENTS PER TRIP  
SINCE 2018

With two cancelled trips, at least 42 potential patients are not receiving orthopaedic care.

**63** 

NO. OF PATIENTS  
NEEDING VIRTUAL  
FOLLOW-UPS

Finalizing the new electronic medical record app is critical for proper patient care.

## COVID-19 effects on the people of Peru

**~ 70%** 

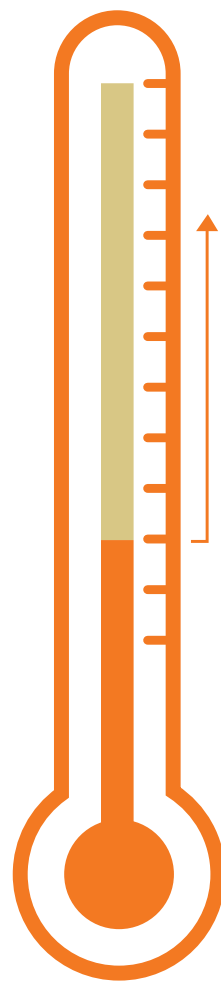
OF PERUVIANS DEPEND  
ON DAILY WAGES

Peru has been on lockdown since March 16, 2020.

**1 OUT OF 3**

HOSPITALS IN PUCALLPA IS  
CURRENTLY OPERATIONAL

Hospitals are running low on medical supplies and personnel.



**\$200K**

2020 EST.  
OPERATIONAL  
BUDGET

**\$125K**

NEEDED

**\$75K**

RAISED TO DATE



*Please support our mission*

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