

# Mission UpReach Newsletter

## Update on MUR's funding needs



*By Phil Waldron*

In an online article by Philanthropy News Digest, it was reported that results from a large survey of non-profits showed that, “more than seven in ten respondents (72.6 percent) said they had seen a drop in fundraising revenue (up from 67.9 percent in March).”

Anecdotally, in our own experience, there is evidence that the Pandemic is affecting the giving to both churches and to non-profits. As a result, some churches that normally support MUR are having to adjust their spending and budgeting for the year. Thankfully, since March, we have had several individual donors and a couple of churches that have given special one-time donations which have really blessed our ministry.

A few of the donations were given in the form of a challenge as a way of motivating others to give at the same time. This is such good stewardship, in our minds, because the original donor, acting as an investor in the Kingdom, is multiplying his or her donation dollars and the following donors are, in effect, doubling their dollars as they give in response to the challenge. We thank God for the partners, donors and supporters that we have. Without them we could not be doing what we are doing.

Please keep Mission UpReach in your prayers. There is no doubt that there is a lot of need at home in the United States right now, which is where all of our donations originate. This could potentially alter our ability to sustain ministry programs drastically. The need in Honduras in normal times is great due to the

poverty and systemic corruption. Now though, it has been 5 months since most people have been able to work, and those that have been able to work, for the most part, are not working a full week. Few in our culture today can remember the Great Depression and the poverty and hunger that prevailed throughout the United States during that time. If there is no immediate relief to the conditions that Hondurans are faced with presently, it is very possible that Great Depression type food lines and hunger will result.

I would like to personally thank each of you who have participated in giving over the past several months. You have been a part of providing much needed stability for our ministry and those whom it supports. May God bless each of you as we continue to faithfully move forward in the midst of uncertainty.

# Redefining who We are

By Scott Bedichek

Now is cause for reflection. This year will mark the first year I have not been to Honduras since 2012. I have been to Honduras with Mission UpReach in some capacity on 14 different occasions in the last 8 years. My family has been to Honduras every year since 2015. In America, we tend to

focus on what we do as our identity. When you go to an event with multiple new people, after someone asks your name the next most likely question is, "What do you do?" For years I have considered myself a short-term missionary. Over the last several years I have been on anywhere from 2-4 short-term mission trips each year. I would often describe my situation to acquaintances by saying, "I work as a dentist so I can go serve on the mission field." With the pandemic, however, I have had to

redefine who I am, or at least who I thought I was.

In Luke 9:23, Jesus tells his followers they "must deny themselves." In this time of reflection, I have realized Jesus is calling his followers to be defined by who God says they are, not by what they do, even if what they do is a noble act for God (like being a short-term medical missionary). That distinction seems to be at the core of Jesus's teaching. We must define ourselves by who God says we are, not by ANY external system. Now that I can't go serve with my talents in Honduras, what do I do? Anyone who knows me knows I do not like to sit on the sidelines! I want to be "on the field" right in the middle of the action of bringing God's Kingdom into this world, but I have had to face the hard question of what that looks like in light of the current situation. Until now, one of the main ways I have helped in bringing God's Kingdom to Earth has been alleviating pain and infection from the poorest of the poor. As much as it hurts, I recognize I must deny myself and listen to the ways God may be calling

our family to serve those same people from afar.

In the first three centuries after Christ's death, the Roman Empire experienced outbreak of horrible diseases. These diseases left many dead, and great fear gripped the empire. In his book, "Rise of Christianity," Rodney Stark attributes exponential growth in the Christian movement to the three major plagues which the Roman Empire

suffered. Because of the way Christians denied themselves, put themselves in danger, and cared for the sick and destitute during these disease outbreaks, pagan Romans realized a difference in the Christian way. Those early Christians exemplified exactly what Jesus did on the cross; they demonstrated co-suffering love.

In this time of uncertainty, I am tempted to save all I can because we don't know what tomorrow will bring. This is a

practical thought, but I wonder...I wonder what it would look like for me and my family to act like those early Christians in the Roman Empire. I wonder what would happen if Honduras saw "Christians" like those at Mission UpReach continue to provide for others in a time of uncertainty and even increase their efforts. What if instead of saving for the uncertain future, I invested in God's Kingdom work, even though I will have to do it from the "sidelines."

Faith is a scary thing. It calls us to be uncomfortable and invest in things that don't seem practical in this world, but it also leads to a wonderful encounter with God. I know from previous experience that when I step out in faith it is hard, but I ALWAYS experience growth in my relationship with God. I want to invite you to join me in using your gifts to participate in God's Kingdom work both here in the States and also in Honduras. (Even if we have to be "benchwarmers" this year.)





## Deaf students persevere through challenges

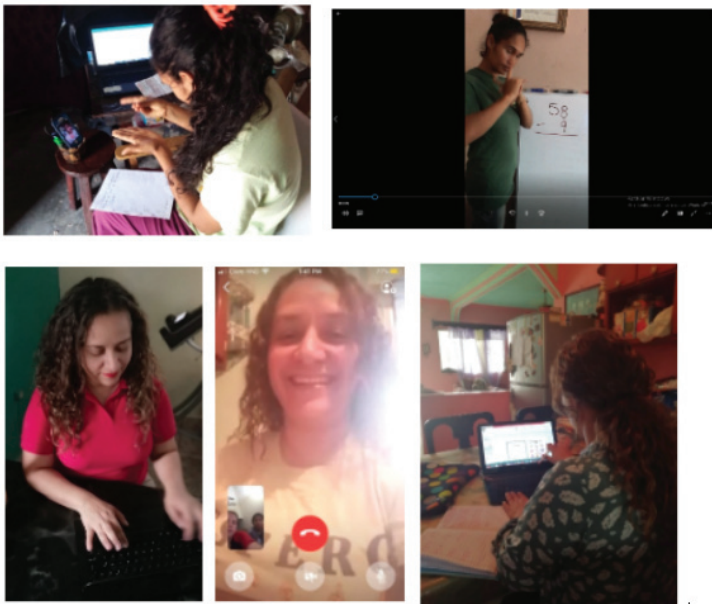
One of the many benefits of our deaf school for adults is that we have helped the deaf come out of isolation and have taught them a common language. It's amazing to witness how having a language and being surrounded by others who understand that language sets people free. Our students have to work very hard to learn their language while learning to read and write at the same time. Many of them work all day and then attend school at night, and several have spouses and children. However, being able to join a community of people who are like you and being able to find your voice is so liberating.

Imagine how this current crisis of staying home is impacting the deaf we serve. They are once again isolated and missing their newfound family with whom they can express themselves. On the other hand, the isolation has had

a positive impact to a certain degree. The deaf have shown their commitment to doing school through video chats and completing their assignments daily. This has resulted in the majority of our students staying on track so that they will not miss an entire school year. However, the negative impact of their isolation has resulted in increased anxiety and frustration that is often manifested in their relationships at home. I (Donna) have spent some time with several of our students helping them learn new coping skills during their isolation.

Additionally, the spiritual needs of our deaf have been challenging to meet. Because most of them do not know how to read (the ones who do, read on a 2nd or 3rd grade level), even reading the Bible is difficult. Our church, like most, wasn't prepared for the long-term adjustments of not having in-person worship. Our church offers voice recorded segments of a typical worship that can be accessed through WhatsApp. Obviously, this does not help our deaf. Zoom, commonly used in the US, is not accessible for the majority of our church due to lack of internet and/or the funds to have enough data on cell phones to be able to watch videos or participate in a Zoom meeting. This has left a void for our deaf that our leaders are currently working to resolve. Our leaders and church members have made sure that each of our deaf brothers and sisters are given monthly provision in the form of food and personal hygiene items. You can imagine the excitement and love they feel when a few of our members show up at their homes with the delivery.

Please pray for our deaf brothers and sisters during this time of extreme isolation for them. Pray our church will effectively attend to their spiritual needs. And pray for our deaf teachers and interpreters as they work extra hours to ensure each student gets the teaching they need to meet the requirements for the school year.



## Subida Coffee continues to grow

As of the writing of this newsletter, Subida Coffee is available in 35 grocery stores in northern Alabama and middle Tennessee. Getting stores to stock our coffee is a great accomplishment, but it's only the beginning. Learning how to promote and market the coffee is a challenge we are working on currently. We are finding that people love the story behind Subida Coffee, knowing that all profits go directly back into our programs. The fact that it's also very good gourmet coffee is also in our favor. You can purchase Subida Coffee online at [subidacoffee.com](http://subidacoffee.com) or Amazon and enjoy a great cup of coffee while knowing the profits are going toward something eternal and life changing. Subida will be making an exciting

announcement in the next couple of months that we believe will help us in our efforts to spread the word about our great coffee with a great cause. Perhaps you can help us as well.



## A note from Donna



Phil and I have had the time and freedom to travel this month, visiting many of our supporters. Many times, Phil travels alone due to my need to stay in Honduras and attend to my responsibilities. Obviously, this time we are together due to our continued inability to return to Honduras.

For me, it was so encouraging and uplifting to talk with some of our supporters, which I prefer to call

“friends.” One of our friends, Jonita Thomas decided to make cloth masks for our employees in Honduras. She recruited another friend, Rayla and her daughter Brandy, and together they made 270 masks that Phil and I were able to ship to Honduras. This will be a great benefit for us and the people who receive them. These ladies were so inspired and encouraged that they have now embarked on a new batch of masks that may reach as many as 600.

Partnering with individuals like Jonita, who use their talents for others, is inspiring and humbling. Phil and I are in Chattanooga for a couple of weeks before we take off again. We will continue to visit friends and do what we can to recruit more friends and partners like Jonita. Our plan is to travel from Chattanooga westward, eventually arriving in Texas. If you are along our path, or even a bit off our path, and would like to visit with us, please contact me at [donna.w@missionupreach.org](mailto:donna.w@missionupreach.org). If due to Covid-19 you are not receiving visits, we completely understand. May God continue to bless you and keep you!

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## Please contact us:

*Our mailing address is as follows:*

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*Please send all checks, donations and correspondence to this address.*

## Other Giving

*Mission UpReach is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. We can assist you to designate MUR in a corporations' matching gifts program, or giving through a United Way campaign, or as you prepare wills for your estate.*



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