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AUSTRALIA

Dear Friends and Faithful Supporters:

Greetings to you in Jesus' name from sunny Sydney! First of all, I must apologize for the long lapse since my last letter. Things and circumstances seem to change from day to day as governments and businesses try to navigate through the COVID era. Owing to the Australian government's lockdowns early on and the fact that Australia is an island continent, we are faring better than many. But like most of you, I'm sure, we have had to "roll with the punches." And, despite the news that we will soon be able to be vaccinated, there is still no end in sight.

It's been a year or so now since this thing seemed to have caught the world "flat-footed." I must confess that I did not appreciate then how serious this pandemic could be. It is obvious that most world leaders didn't either. But I nowadays often remind myself that none of this took God by surprise.

In spite of the many inconveniences and disruptions we can see that God has been and continues to be at work in and through it all. I have reported to you how Annette's daily Bible classes from her preschool have been going into the homes of many of the children whose parents are unsaved. That continues, and we have seen some of the fruit from that over these past few months.

Though small churches often struggle in a variety of ways, there are also some upsides. Because our Sunday services normally consist of less than 50 people, we were permitted to resume our regular Lord's Day services and weekly prayer meetings earlier than some of the larger churches. We have actually attracted some new people during these days of disruption.

My Tuesday evening classes at the Vietnamese Christian Mission have also continued. Almost all the students who began last year continued to finish the two semesters. They then invited me back to continue this year with some newcomers in the class. The pastor of their church is also in the class. He was never able to go to a Bible college or seminary and is almost entirely self-taught. It was he who organized this project and asked me to come and help his church grow in their understanding of God and His Word. Their church meets in a part of the city that is heavily populated by cults. So he asked me to teach a course of theology which would help the more committed of his congregation to understand the key doctrines of the Christian faith. Tomorrow evening I will be teaching the doctrine of the Trinity.

I continue to marvel that the Lord has open this door for me at this stage of my life. I mean, here I am, approaching middle-age, and I have been given an entrance into a community that is not always open to Westerners. Some of my younger students have called

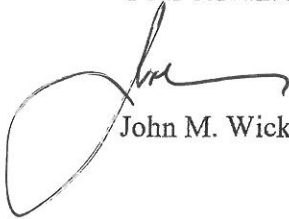
me "Ong Giang," which translates to "Grandpa John." I enjoy the classes with them and do hope that they will all grow more mature in their faith as a result of all the time and energy.

Today marks the official beginning of Autumn here. We are grateful to have been spared the terribly hot weather and the fires that so often result from it. At every change of seasons I am reminded of God's promise to be with His people. Annette and I are so aware of God's provision for us. We are both in reasonably good health and able to continue in the avenues of service given to us.

One of the things that has been a blessing in my life has been to spend some time with a Malaysian Chinese man whom I've known for about 20 years or so. He is a businessman whose ambitions have brought him a lot of stress. And his busy-ness has kept him from attending church and has eroded much of his spiritual life. In the providence of a loving God he and I share an interest in music. He and his wife owned a music shop in Kuala Lumpur before coming to Australia. He is an amazing guitarist. I enjoy playing guitar, banjo, and more recently mandolin. So he and I get together every few weeks and play music together. Interestingly he loves American country music, so I have been reconnecting with my Appalachian roots. But of late we've been playing more and more Gospel songs. Last week as we finished an old Gospel tune, "In the Sweet Bye and Bye." He told me that he had been praying more and more in recent days. I pray for him daily, and hope that maybe our continued playing might prompt him to getting back to the life of Christian worship.

Once more I want to thank you for your continued support, both financial and in prayer. The work that Annette and I do here may be less than spectacular. But we continue to minister to churches and to individuals, and we rejoice for the doors that the Lord opens for us. You help to make all of this possible, and we are truly grateful. May the Lord bless you for your goodness toward us! I remain yet . . .

Your servant for Jesus' sake,



John M. Wickline

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