



Hi John,

I pray you are well.

I do not know about you but so much has happened since the last time I wrote to you.

We have experienced a worldwide pandemic, lockdown, and the loss of many lives. We have seen church services move from in person to online. We have seen people in our local church community who have had a hard time trying to be a part of community because of distance and joining in with our online connect groups, online prayer meetings and after service online foyer calls (which is our way of trying to have that after service conversation time we would normally have in person). I have had more meetings than I normally would have as I can schedule more because there is no travel time. So I have been feeling the Zoom fatigue.

I felt disappointed about the lockdown because we were having such great momentum with new students joining our student group. Students being encouraged and envisioned at the Student conference and then it all stopped. International students went back home and in-person meetings ceased. But the good news is we have been able to continue meeting via online connect groups and we have had some of the international students join us from Romania and Texas, USA.



We have also been doing a biweekly Webinar series called ‘In the Midst of...’ This series is a way to help encourage students during this pandemic by having interviews with our campus ministers in other countries and sharing stories of how their faith has helped them overcome difficult times. **Our first interview was with our campus minister from China.** He shared stories of how they have

been ministering to the needs of the people they had been engaging with in Wuhan before the lockdown (as they were in the process of planting a church there before the lockdown happened). ***I would show you a screenshot of the call but because for safety reasons, we didn't take a picture.***

Part 2 of our series was with our campus minister Irma Widiyanti from Indonesia (Group photo on the left). Amazing story of a woman whose father is an Iman, and while attending a Muslim University she came to faith. She shared about her persecution that happened during her last few years of University and also the amazing favour God gave in sharing her faith with her Muslim professors. She shared how her father attended her graduation from the Every Nation School of World Mission and cheered her on. An amazing redemptive story God has done in her life, especially her family.

Part 3 of our series was all about mental health. I interviewed my good friend, Josh Hvidding who was born and raised in Waianae, Hawaii and is now a Child and Adult Psychiatrist for the USA Department of Defence (Group photo on the right). He shared about the role of the church and its importance in helping people talk. That as we listen to people it helps bring healing more so than drugs that help people to cope (not saying that for the people who have hormonal problems, but people with trauma).

He also gave some practical steps to stay mentally healthy, which I have been implementing at different stages and now trying to be more regular in using them. **Here are the steps he shared:** 1. Sleep (7 to 9 hrs); 2. Exercises (2-4 times a week) and 3. Talk to people. He also told me about a 4th one that he forgot to mention on the call, and that is diet.

I don't know if you all remember that last year I told you about **my health journey**. Well I am still on it, exercising 6 days a week and 11kg (24lbs) lighter. I have recently been sleeping a good 7 to 8hrs, this is apart of new and health boundaries.

Lastly, I wanted to mention the protests that have been happening in the USA sparked by George Floyd's death and Amy Cooper's call which have really saddened me and made me reflect a lot about systematic racism. My experience has been 30/70. Meaning 30% of experiencing and seeing racism when I was a kid and my uncle being forced to the ground, having racist remarks made to me here in London at a party I was invited to by a friend who was attending a different church. The 70% has been me not experiencing racism much, because I lived in Hawaii and my friendship groups have always been diverse (maybe because of my missionary heart), intentionally.

Becoming a Christian at age 17 and being discipled by Japanese American Christians I saw the beauty of God's family being one people, with multiple tribes and tongues. In recent years with all the shootings of African Americans by police officers, I began to fear that something might happen to me on my trips to Hawaii (mostly during my layovers on the mainland US). I recall one time when I was so afraid I shared with a friend at church who was Scottish and he prayed for me and the peace of God came over my heart so strongly. I flew out, not fearful but joyful looking forward to connecting with all my Hawaii family (friends that are so close they are like family to me).

I know these things are sad and we don't know what to say or how to respond but I found this video conversation with [Christine Caine and Dr. Anita Philips](#) was super encouraging and helpful. Also Dr. [Tony Evans'](#) biblical response to racism and how to protest in the right way. There are many other resources or sermons that I have listened to that have helped me learn more about my own culture as there was and is a lot I don't know but I know that I can't ignore it anymore and I have to help our students learn how to Biblically engage with this and righteously pray. So we can see change. If you have any questions or just want to talk to me about my views and what God has been doing in me or you need help to process things because I too have been on a journey of processing my feelings during this time, please let me know.

I love you and I hope you are well and healthy.

Blessing
Tharshish



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