

March 5, 2020

To: All AM International Workers

Fr: Tim Crouch, VP for AM

RE: Coronavirus (Covid-19) impact for IWs

Importance: High

Dear colleagues around the world,

The spread of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) is in the news today all around the globe. With the number of new daily cases outside of China surpassing those within, and with the number of countries with confirmed cases on the rise, AM leadership wants to communicate some key facts and leadership perspective with all of you around the globe.

This letter fills four pages that are important for you to read. So let me start with a concise summary of what I will outline below.

*While this virus is spreading further and more rapidly than the SARS and H1N1 flu viruses of the past, and is more fatal than normal flu viruses that affect the world annually, **we believe a best strategy for most of us is to exercise wise precautions in the locations where we live.***

This is the case because the virus will likely affect a high number of locations before it diminishes, making lots of temporary relocations less logical. We reach this conclusion because one of the most-risky challenges for us all is the impact of the virus on travel. Therefore, I urge that most of us consider, and even discuss together, how we can best adopt preventative measures in our ministry locations. However, I will also outline the types of cases in which we have already taken, and will perhaps take, alternative actions. I also address concerns related to travel, in affected areas and globally.

Please read this document in full. For Field/Team/Site leaders and other key voices where IWs live in proximity, I am asking that you help the group of IWs in your area to consider and implement the advice and resources in this letter.

Some Basic Facts of the Coronavirus (Covid-19)

As of this writing, there have been over 92,000 confirmed cases and over 3,200 deaths—80,100 of the cases have been in China, as were 2,900 of the deaths. While the virus is spreading to other locations rapidly (over 73 nations now), only South Korea, Italy, and Japan have recorded more than 1,000 confirmed cases. A vast majority of deaths are occurring among elderly populations and among those with vulnerabilities in respiratory and/or immune systems. Outside of China, spread of the virus is growing, but with infection statistics among populations far lower than we have seen in China. Meanwhile, good efforts to contain the virus are significantly impacting travel, with many airlines cancelling flights and some governments closing their borders to passport holders from nations with confirmed cases. These facts lead AM leadership to evaluate current risks, and recommend approaches for our safety, as follows.

IW Presence in areas of Concern

AM views the current areas of concern in two categories: 1) significant, localized outbreaks and 2) more general, ongoing spread of the virus. In practice this means that we have and will recommend specific alterations to travel or presence in fewer locations that are experiencing significant outbreaks. However,

our basic perspective for most IW locations is that the growing concern of this virus is best dealt with through wise measures taken in the locations where we live.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is the key source of information and recommendations we are following. The CDC uses a three-point scale of alert regarding travel to/presence in countries/territories with specific health concerns: 1) Practice Usual Precautions, 2) Practice Enhanced Precautions, and 3) Avoid nonessential travel to this destination. (See <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices#travel-notice-definitions>.)

Category 1—Area of Concern for AM: Response in areas of significant outbreak or heightened risk. AM will regard *Level 3 warnings* as likely for significant, localized outbreaks. We will analyze locations of significant outbreak in these countries with reference to the location of our IWs. *It is in these cases that AM may, on a case to case basis, make recommendations regarding travel and presence of IWs.* As of the writing of this letter, the CDC Level 3 warning levels concern four countries—China, South Korea, Italy, and Iran. So far, AM has made specific recommendations regarding presence of IWs in normal locations in only one of these countries. We have also made recommendations to avoid travel that includes layovers in any of these countries.

Category 2 Area of Concern for AM: Response in areas of lower risk of significant outbreak. *AM will regard the CDC’s Level 1 and 2 warnings as situations in which the threat is best dealt with through wise measures taken where IWs live.* These are locations where AM is not at this time recommending temporary alteration to IW presence, but where we may advise restrictions on travel. Today, Japan is the only country listed at Level 2 and only Hong Kong is listed at Level 1. As numbers of cases and/or local government steps impact more IW locations, AM leaders will interact with teams in those locations regarding particular developments.

Travel in these Areas of Concern

As of this writing, AM leadership is concerned about difficulties that can be experienced in travel. *This concerns not only exposure, but the risk of becoming stranded in travel or facing costly rerouting.* Some countries are beginning to restrict entry of travelers bearing passports from countries with confirmed cases, including U.S. passports. Also, many airlines are canceling flights. The potential difficulties associated with travel to or through affected areas are numerous.

Today, we recommend not flying through Korea, Italy, and China based upon the Level 3 warning in place by the CDC. For those flying through Japan or Hong Kong, please study and practice the [recommended CDC guidelines](#) for travel in countries with a Level 2 warning. It is also important to be aware that “affected areas” may not be located in Southeast Asia. Italy is a good example of a location outside of the original region that escalated to a Level 3 warning quickly.

We recommend that non-essential international travel to China/Southeast Asia and to other Level 2 and 3 locations be rescheduled. Conferences, study trips and personal trips that can be changed would help avoid unnecessary travel through these parts of the world with the highest concentration of concern.

Travelers already ticketed should check with airlines and/or travel agent about the possibility and cost of changing tickets *in order to avoid Level 3 areas.* In the next three months, before ticketing travel to the China/Southeast Asia region, we suggest consultation with your supervising AM Director (Regional Leadership Couple or other Specialized Structure Director). This will allow discussion of routing and consideration of purchasing changeable tickets or trip insurance in order to avoid the possibility of costly

changes. AM cannot guarantee reimbursement of costs related to cancelled flights or out-of-location stays. Should you be in a situation of needful travel that could include such risks, please speak to your supervising AM leader (Field/Team/Site Leader and Regional Leadership Couple or Specialized Structure Director) before traveling.

Wise Measures where We Live

Many of us live in countries where some Coronavirus cases have now been confirmed. *AM recommends that IWs in such locations should practice [recommended CDC guidelines](#) for prevention of the disease.* If you are co-located with other IWs, please take time with your team or group of IWs, to review the information at this link. While basic, the disciplined practice of recommendations found at this webpage are some of the best preventative steps you can take. Decide together as a group and/or household how you will put these measures into practice.

A gathering of the team or group of IWs in your location is also a good time to review the written contingency plan your team has. It is likely that contingencies you planned for may not have included impact by rapid spread of virus or disease. What parts of your contingency plan could help you think through the current potential risks? What new thoughts, precautions, or trigger-points for particular steps might be wise in your current situation? Reflecting on how recent communities, cities, and governments have responded might give you a clue as to what might happen in your context. If reflection on these questions leads you to identify new wise points or plans for your situation, share these with your supervising AM leaders.

Special care should be also taken regarding gatherings of people in countries with confirmed cases. Good ideas for schools, workplaces, healthcare settings, and large events are addressed at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>. Another helpful resource is the OSAC information page that is updated daily: <https://www.osac.gov/Content/Announcement/fee23fa6-8c30-44ae-985f-180e3ce9635e>.

For information on other preventative measures that may be recommended in your specific location, please contact the U.S. Citizen Services at the U.S. Consulate(s) in your country.

AM leaders also recommend that each IW unit consider their individual situation. In light of the current level Coronavirus threat in your location, consider your age and health (especially respiratory and immune system health). Situations of individual or family concern should be discussed with your supervising leader on location, and perhaps with your AM Director (Regional Leadership Couple or Specialized Structure Director).

Again, AM leadership is expressing that concerns in countries with less than a Level 3 CDC travel warning are best dealt with by wise measures taken by IWs in locations where they live. At the same time, we want to act with sensitivity to IWs who may have particular vulnerabilities and/or who live in locations without access to adequate medical facilities. Any IW unit with heightened concern for their individual safety may express their concern to their leader on the ground and/or AM Director (Regional Leadership Couple or Specialized Structure Director). IWs who feel they must choose to leave a ministry location may make needed plans in consultation with these leaders and may relocate without stigma.

Travel outside the Areas of Concern

All travelers of any destination or routing should practice [recommended CDC guidelines](#) for prevention of the disease. If any person is uncomfortable with the potential risk, we recommend they do not visit, or

travel through, the destinations causing concern. We recognize that the worldwide coronavirus situation is changing and could get worse. We will be reviewing this recommendation regularly and let you know if it changes.

We recommend reevaluating non-essential travel in general, keeping an eye on current travel warnings for the areas you would go and/or transit through. Of course, this is more critical in areas already affected, but it would not be surprising to see more cases in Africa, Latin America, and the United States in the weeks to come. Please think through the implications, weighing the risks, if a conference, study trip, or personal trip could cause complications.

Other Issues that May Concern You

- *TCKs*: Within our global family are many TCKs who study at boarding locations. Families of such students should be in contact with dorm parents and school administrators to understand issues that could impact your child's experience at the school and/or travel. In situations where complications arise, families should consult with their supervising AM Leader(s) (Field/Team/Site Leader and Regional Leadership Couple or Specialized Structure Director).
- *Medical Personnel*: IWs who are medical professionals serving in medical/healthcare settings will do well to discuss preparedness for the potential of treating Coronavirus patients. Particularly in settings where Alliance IWs are serving in decision-making roles regarding the medical work, we encourage these steps be taken in interaction with supervising AM leaders.
- *Short-term ministries*: In destination countries where Coronavirus cases are confirmed and/or where travel of short-term teams would be through areas of CDC Level 2 travel warning, we recommend IWs consult seriously with team members prior to final decisions about the trip. Wise decisions should be made, in keeping with CDC recommendations and the above AM principles. Travel anticipated through areas of CDC Level 3 travel warning should be rerouted.
- *News reporters*: Sometimes in cases of difficulty or risk, IWs are approached by reporters for interview. Answering interview questions about your experience is your right and can be an opportunity to give glory to God. At the same time, AM leadership would ask that questions about our organization's thinking and practice in the face of risk be deferred to Alliance leadership at our National Office. Within our office we are equipped to handle such inquiries.

Thank you for taking time to read through this document. It is our prayer that it will aid you in the specific steps you may need to take in your location. For those who feel little impact from the spread of Coronavirus, we are glad to help you be aware of steps your colleagues may be taking in areas of greater risk. Please be in intercession for one another, and especially those in higher risk locations. Also know that our National Office will be communicating to districts and the greater Alliance family the basics of our approach.

Lastly, please keep in mind that, even while we take wise precautions, the spread of this particular virus presents opportunities as we minister to people. Whether in places where people are directly impacted, experiencing sickness and perhaps loss of loved ones, or in places where the virus is simply in the news, many opportunities for addressing people in love and pointing them to the Savior and Healer will come our way. This reality informs the wisdom of taking good measures where we live as much as does the assessment of the situation described above. While the situation, as well as our AM approach, could change, we are seeking to equip you well for your own safety and for these ministry opportunities.

We love you all and all that you are doing!
Tim Crouch and your AM leaders