

Three Things We are Doing in the Face of COVID-19

BY KEVIN HIGGINS

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Dear Colleagues and *Mission Frontiers* Readers,

Given the timing for editing a production like *MF*, by the time you are reading this much will be known about the outcomes and results and implications of the COVID-19 crisis. As I am writing this, however, it is mid-April and we are still in the midst of social distancing and shelter-at-home mandates.

This edition of *MF* is trying to describe how we think about and practice “mission” in a time like this. Many have already been reflecting on these questions, and by the time you get this, there will have been many more. We don’t want to simply add to the volume of ideas and reflections. Instead, we are trying to compile things that may not be discussed in other settings. In particular, we want to bring you a sense of what is happening at the edges, at the frontiers, among the least reached.

Since I have an article devoted to that topic, I won’t say more here. Instead, I want to just briefly touch on what we at Frontier Ventures and WCIU are beginning to think about. I will refer to three things:

1 COVID Rapid Innovation

We have begun an initiative we are calling COVID Rapid Innovation. This is a product of a collaboration between FV’s Winter Launch Lab (WLL), an FV initiative called Health for All Nations (HFAN, which is headed up by FV member and WCIU Board chair, Mike Soderling), and FV and WCIU member, Lowell Bliss.

COVID Rapid Innovation is following the **Peer Consultation** process, developed by the Kansas Leadership Center (<https://kansasleadershipcenter.org>). The process is called Quick Response Innovation (QRI). Our initiative “aims” this peer consultation process especially at leaders

who are facing unprecedented challenges in the light of COVID-19, helping them to see their challenge and the issues at stake from new perspectives, leading to new insights, next steps and emerging solutions to complex challenges in this crisis season.

Find out more at: <https://www.winterlaunchlab.org/quick-response-innovation>.

2 Short Term Immediate Help to Agencies and Movements at the Front Edge

Just two days before I wrote this we finalized setting aside funds from both FV and WCIU to be given immediately to organizations working to respond to one of the issues you will hear more about in this *MF* edition, an issue “upstream” from COVID and creating a barrier to stemming the spread of the virus: hunger.

We are focusing our funding on projects serving the most vulnerable, giving special emphasis to least reached peoples and those in urban slums. In these contexts, while the danger of COVID is very real, people are faced with the decision: do I (even if it were possible!) practice social distancing and not go to work (if I have it) and face the *certainty* of hunger and the high likelihood of starvation (I am not being dramatic here), in order to avoid the *possibility* of catching a virus that *might* kill me or my family?

As you will hear, there are leaders serving in such contexts who are seeking to bring innovative solutions and facing risks themselves as they do so.

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3 Virtual Franciscans?

St. Francis and his comrades became beggars, going about door to door on behalf of others. One of my colleagues here at WCIU, Viv Grigg, wrote me to suggest a vision of raising up a new movement of such Franciscans, seeking to raise funds for the poor, for the most vulnerable among the least reached and especially in the cities.

While social distancing suggests this would be fraught with challenges if taken literally, I began to think: what if we raised up a band of “virtual Franciscans”, who instead of going door to door, went Facebook to Facebook, Twitter to Twitter, Instagram to Instagram, in a virtual wave of “go-fund-me” style “begging” for the most vulnerable?

This would include all sorts of initiatives, not controlled by any central organization, though many (including us here) may well launch versions of it themselves. Just do it.

I will be encouraging more of us in FV and WCIU to launch into this as well. Maybe by the time you read this there will be rumors of what we are up to!

In my own way I started yesterday, on behalf of those I know in South Asia and the Horn of Africa, leading movements to Jesus among unreached peoples and doing their best to respond with other leaders to serve the hungry and to prevent the spread of the virus.

More about them in my article!

Conclusion

Since I cannot hazard a guess as to what the state of the COVID-19 crisis may be by the time this goes to print, I want to end with something that might provide a word of wisdom regardless of the detailed state we find ourselves in at that time (or, at this time as you read). This word seems especially fitting as we all seek to discern how to respond:

“With this in mind, we constantly pray for you...that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and *every act prompted by your faith.*” (2 Thess.1:11 NIV)

Prayerfully,
Kevin Higgins 

