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I S S U E 6 7

# THE PARTNERSHIP CONNECTION

## 2020: A Very Good Year!

by Jeff Townsend, Director of Field Development (DFD)

This time last year we only had a hint of what was ahead in 2020. What a year! Unquestionably the craziest year out of my 72 on the planet! Health wise, the year has to rank as the scariest since the polio epidemics of the 1940s and 50s. Many succumbed to the COVID virus and many more had long, complicated, and expensive bouts with the disease. Everyone I know who has had it says: take it seriously! Financially, the year was an unmitigated disaster for many families and small businesses, in spite of government stimulus checks. Then there was everything else that happened in 2020: racial injustice, civil unrest, and all the tumult surrounding the election and its results. Given all that, you might expect giving to be down. But, as Pat Kershaw, Retired Director of Field Development, always says, "God is not broke." And He moved mightily on the hearts of His people to meet the needs of ISI, and then some. The current estimate is that overall giving to ISI was up 3-5%. That is an incredible reason for praise! And a great encouragement for all of us in PD to keep on keeping on.



## PD in 2021

Speaking of keeping on with PD in 2021, what are some things we should keep in mind in light of 2020? The number one thing I would urge us to do is to continue to pastor people. The estimate I have heard is that one out of every two people is suffering emotional aftershock from 2020. We cannot expect COVID to go away and everything to return to the life of 2019. Counselors I know are still way overburdened and overbooked. It almost seems like half the population is suffering some form of post-traumatic stress disorder. Therefore, start your contacts with donors and potentials donor using pastoral care.

The second thing is to be thankful for how God provided through your donors in 2020.

Third, be ready to answer their questions about how ISI's ministry did at reaching international students during the COVID pandemic. We did well, by the grace of God. I have never seen so many unique and effective modifications of our ministry approach.

And even though the students numbers were down, the depth of discipling relationships was up!

Fourth and finally, if you are like me, you did very little travel to visit donors in 2020. As the virus winds down (hopefully), more and more people get vaccinated, and herd immunity grows, get out and visit your supporters in 2021. There's nothing like the personal touch to let them know you care and are thankful. Remember to take along a small gift as a token of your appreciation.

## My Most Unusual PD Story

by Pat Bull, Atlanta Area ISI Campus Staff



It was my first semester on International Students, Inc. staff, and I was in the Partner Development phase. One weekend, I flew from Dallas to Atlanta to help my daughter move to a new house, and I took along the drink coupons from Southwest Airlines which I knew would expire before I'd be flying again. I thought I'd ask whomever sat next to me if I could order them a glass of wine. I'd never done that before, but I do hate to throw away free stuff.

As it turned out, the couple sitting next to me on my return flight had identical coupons, and we started talking. They asked what I did, and I shared about joining the staff of a Christian organization that reached out to international students on university campuses, and so forth. It ended up their daughter was working on a PhD degree at UT Dallas where I would be serving. They were committed believers, and we exchanged information so I could connect with their daughter.

I am not sure how it happened that I shared my ministry newsletter with them, but from that time until now, this amazing couple has surprised me with donations to my ministry. But not only do they contribute as God leads them to, but **they call me** and check on me and my ministry. I only met them that one time, and I have never seen them again. **But we are friends.** They actually pray for the students I write about in my newsletters, and they ask me about them. And they tell me how to pray for them and their family members.

It was, and still is, such a random gift from God. They recently compared our meeting to Stephen and the Ethiopian Eunuch...**a God thing.**

Now,  
I am no Stephen,  
and they aren't passing by in a chariot  
in need of someone to explain the Scriptures to them,  
**but God connected us...**  
and I am still amazed,  
and so very grateful,  
for their friendship,  
and that they chose to join the ministry team of **a stranger**  
sitting next to them  
on a plane  
**6 years ago.**

That's my most unusual PD story, what's yours?

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Compiled by  
**Jeff Townsend**  
Director of Field Development (DFD)

Designed by  
**Jennifer Meuli**  
Ministry Advancement Specialist



International Students, Inc. | 719-576-2700 | [team@isionline.org](mailto:team@isionline.org) |  
[www.internationalstudents.org](http://www.internationalstudents.org)  
PO Box C  
Colorado Springs, CO 80901

Jeff Townsend, Director of Field Development | [jtownsend@isionline.org](mailto:jtownsend@isionline.org)