

ministry news



fromheheart



Commission meetings, held online, bring together experts from around the nation in the fields of medicine, economics, government, business, disaster relief, education, and religion.

National Coronavirus Recovery Commission

ack in March, on the first day of sheltering-in-place, Our Commission included national experts in medicine, my friend Kay James of *The Heritage Foundation* contacted me. "Joni, we want you to serve on the National Coronavirus Recovery Commission (NCRC). We need you and your team's expertise to ensure that seniors and people with disabilities are protected in the next wave of coronavirus!" I jumped at the chance.

economics, government, business, disaster relief, education and religion. "Decision-makers in all levels of government, including the White House, are looking to our group for guidance," Kay explained. And guidance is desperately needed. Looking back, consider this...

- The brunt of COVID-19 hit the medically fragile and seniors the hardest. One-third of all US coronavirus deaths were people who either resided or worked in nursing homes.
- Most stay-at-home Americans did not receive the basic

healthcare they would have under normal conditions. Under the widespread shelter-in-place orders, America's healthcare took a step backward.

- The coronavirus caused a huge disruption in social and educational services for children with special needs, placing an enormous burden on parents. Trying to work from home while doing 24/7 homecare pushed many families to the breaking point.
- Lack of integration among public services meant that people with disabilities had no access to much-needed services or were completely overlooked.
- The uneven triaging of healthcare services had an adverse impact on the chronically ill and elderly. And when people with chronic conditions *did* receive treatment, hospitals would not allow family members or personal care helpers to attend them.

We must do better on the "other side" of COVID-19. In the future, our leaders must not respond with a 'sledgehammer' approach. It's why our report, Saving Lives and Livelihoods: Recommendations for Recovery is so critical. Our Commission adopted a 5-phase plan to reopen America and combat the coronavirus. The plan is about empowering individuals, families, churches and businesses – the bedrock of America – to make informed decisions as we navigate our way through the post-COVID-19 world.

During the entire shelter-in-place, I could only talk to my 92-year-old mother 12 feet away as she balanced on her walker behind a screened window. It's so frustrating and even sad that just when our elderly parents need us the most, their care centers forbid family members to support them. Surely, as we move forward into future crises, there must be a better way we can serve and support aged Americans."

Lorraine Floreen, Camarillo, CA

(Proverbs 31:8). This ministry is having a national impact in supporting people with disabilities and the elderly in the name of Jesus!

My fellow Commissioners

responded to my concerns

for the elderly and those

with disabilities. Your

Joni and Friends team

and I were able to "Speak

up for those who cannot

speak for themselves,

for the rights of all who

are destitute. Speak up...

for the poor and needy"

enthusiastically

As we move forward, we must safeguard the vulnerable, the weak and medically fragile, the disabled and the elderly who are our nation's heritage and who deserve our protection, respect and gratitude. I am confident that as our nation 'puts to work' our Commission's recommendations, we will prayerfully survive and thrive in the years to come. And Lord willing, we shall see America at her best.

I want you to have your personal copy of Saving Lives and Livelihoods: Recommendations for Recovery. Download the document at *joniandfriends.org/ncrc* and share these 300 common sense recommendations with your state legislators, mayor, city councilmen, and other decisionmakers. Together, let's help America do better. And thank you for your prayers and gifts which help us champion the cause of Christ among our nation's most vulnerable citizens... you are part of the Joni and Friends' team and we couldn't do it without you!



Read the full National Coronavirus Recovery Commission report at joniandfriends.org/ncrc



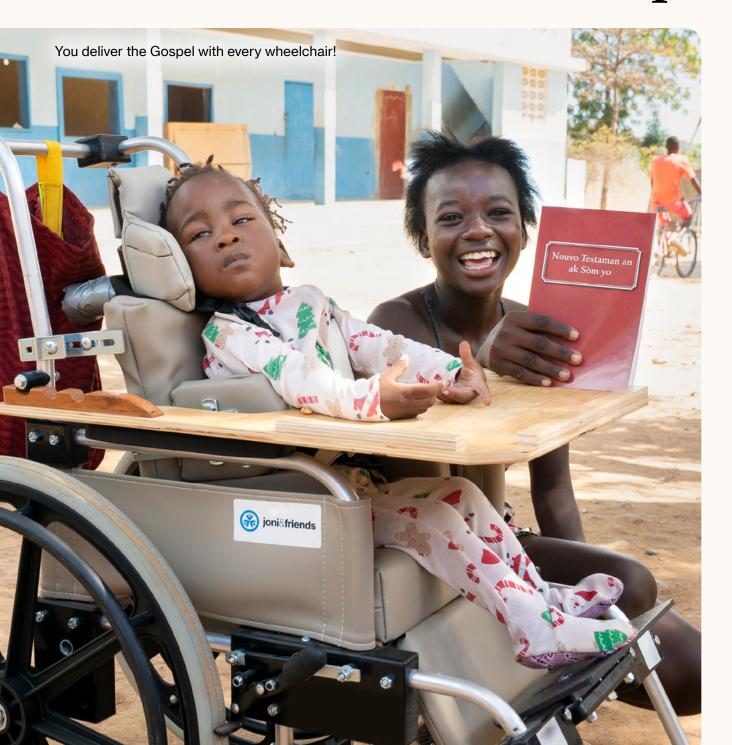
Yes, seniors are more at risk from this virus, but that doesn't mean you can imprison them in their end years and deprive them from everything that gives them pleasure." Carol Healey, April 13, 2020

You will not fear... the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.

PSALM 91:5-6

You Live out the Cospel With Its

With Its Sleeves Rolled Up!



od is using you to deliver so much more than wheelchairs! When three-year-old McKensley arrived at our *Wheels for the World* outreach in Haiti, it soon became clear that he rarely – if ever – sat upright. His body was so rigid from disability and neglect that our volunteer therapists took great time and care in massaging every muscle in his body before placing him in his very first wheelchair.

Disabled from birth, McKensley was unable to walk, so his mother and aunt needed to carry him everywhere. Including him in family life was an ever-present struggle. The fact that McKensley couldn't tolerate the sitting position meant he would remain isolated and alone on the floor or in bed. His future looked bleak and despairing.

But all that changed as our *Wheels for the World* team gave McKensley the gifts of therapy and mobility. McKensley received his very own wheelchair and learned how to sit upright so he could engage with his family and environment. And our therapists gave his mother and aunt extensive training on how to care for McKensley to help him maintain that sitting position. He may have been crying when he arrived at our outreach, but his face glowed by the time his customized fitting session was complete.

As we shared the Gospel with his family, we learned that they longed to go to church, but were told they were not welcome – simply because they did not have "church clothes."

Because Jesus expects us to take these simple needs seriously, our team quickly responded by giving McKensley and his family the clothing needed to attend church and eliminating all barriers to a relationship with the Lord. "Belonging to the community of Christ has nothing to do with disability or clothing," explained one of our *Wheels for the World* team members. "It's all about the grace and mercy of God."

With this new understanding of who Jesus is and the value of their little boy, McKensley's family left with an entirely new perspective on life and hope for their future.

COVID-19 Update

Haiti needs your ongoing prayers today. It is believed that the worst is yet to come in Haiti regarding COVID-19, as thousands of Haitians are being sent back home from the Dominican Republic. With no real enforcement concerning wearing masks or social distancing, our brothers and sisters in Haiti are facing a tremendous amount of fear and uncertainty. Yet through your support, our in-country partners were able to send hundreds of masks to local churches for distribution throughout their communities, and they are ensuring that the most vulnerable people – those who are medically fragile and have disabilities – will receive those masks first. Thank you for sending practical help and the hope of Jesus to Haiti!





I needed clothes and you clothed me.

I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.

MATTHEW 25:36, 40

through this Pandemic



ven when COVID-19 prevented our staff from traveling abroad, our international ministry remained strong thanks to your steadfast prayers and continuous support! Our in-country partners are faithfully sharing the love and hope of Jesus with families struggling with disabilities every day, proving once again that coronavirus cannot stop the love of God.

In El Salvador, Joni and Friends Regional Coordinator for Central America, Claudia Aguirre, has been leading our *International Family Retreat* for ten years now. Claudia became a quadriplegic herself when she was only 11 years old after she had a diving accident much like Joni's.

When she was 12 years old, a friend gave Claudia the Joni book, and Joni immediately became her role model — inspiring Claudia to overcome life's obstacles and share the love of Christ through serving others. And when Claudia got to meet Joni as our ministry began in El Salvador, "It was a dream come true." God is using her to transform the lives of children and adults with disabilities all throughout her country through *Wheels for the World* and *Family Retreat*.

"People with disabilities in El Salvador are neglected and discriminated against," explains Claudia. "But at Family Retreat, they learn that the Lord has a purpose for every life. We spread the Word of God to families like Andy's."

Andy was born without arms. Life was incredibly hard for him and his parents. In fact, Andy's dad was so discouraged that he didn't even want to attend *Family Retreat* with his family. But he eventually agreed to attend, and he met the Lord as he spoke to the other fathers of special needs children. And when it came time for the Talent Show, Andy's dad got on stage and praised the Lord with the other fathers! His life and faith were completely transformed at *Family Retreat*. Now Andy's dad sees the value of his son, his family and himself.

"Joni taught me that there is a purpose for my disability; to point other people to Christ," continues Claudia. And that is exactly what she does all throughout the year through church equipping trainings and even by translating Joni's radio program into Spanish so it can be heard on radio stations in El Salvador.

Thank you for serving children and adults with disabilities in El Salvador – during this pandemic and all throughout the year! You are making an eternal investment in the Kingdom of God! Through all of this adversity, you are showing the people of El Salvador that God is sovereign and faithful. God

is using you to turn tragedy into triumph. In Claudia's own words, "You are giving these families opportunities they could never even dream of."

You can learn more about Claudia and our ministry in El Salvador by watching her video at *joniandfriends.org/claudia*

COVID-19 Update

Like everywhere else right now, times are especially difficult in El Salvador due to COVID-19. Plus, El Salvador has recently been hit by more than one tropical storm, leaving thousands of people homeless. "They have lost everything," Claudia explains. "They are living in shelters. But even through this crisis and the pandemic, the Lord is opening doors."

"We are learning to adjust to our circumstances," said Claudia. "And many families with disabilities who have never attended Family Retreat are now being served through Facebook Live events. The Lord has given us more exposure so we can reach more families. And for those who have lost everything in tropical storm Amanda, we are working with the churches to provide food, clothes, and medicine for families who have none."

"The special needs families here are from very poor backgrounds. They usually never have the opportunity to leave their little houses, but Joni and Friends donors make it possible for them to go to Family Retreat where their lives are transformed," shares Claudia. And now under the strain of coronavirus and tropical storms, you are providing spiritual refreshment and the practical needs required for daily living. Instead of questioning God, people are accepting Christ as their Savior.



I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.

JOB 42:2

The Luke 14 Project



isability transcends nationality, race and class – affecting one in seven people worldwide. In every corner of the globe, children and adults with disabilities remain untouched and are seldom spoken to... they are invisible, rejected and discarded.

This is the global epidemic that never ends, and it demands an individual response.

That's where the Luke 14 Project goes to work. Joni and Friends provides a wheelchair and the Gospel message that all people are fearfully and wonderfully made by God. He has a purpose for every life!

Together we can do more. Together we can be a friend to the friendless.
Until his house is full.

Learn more at joniandfriends.org/luke14

Honor a Loved One, Transform a Life

We gratefully acknowledge contributions given in memory or in honor of loved ones to further ministry in the disability community. To give a gift in memory of a loved one or in honor of a special occasion, visit **joniandfriends.org/donate** or contact Joni and Friends at **818.707.5664**

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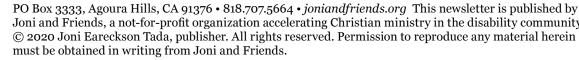
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A Brand New Scarf Designed By Joni

aken from Joni's *Glory to God* painting, this elegant silk scarf is sure to become one of your favorite wardrobe accessories. Woven in rich tones of blues, teals, yellows and pinks, it's an elegant, colorful gift, that will add a fun flare to any outfit! This scarf is the perfect accessory for any season. Your purchase from Joni and Friends goes directly to supporting ministry to children struggling with disability worldwide.

Just For You!

- 100% silk / Dry Clean Only
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