

When business as usual doesn't work, new doors open for followers of Jesus to walk alongside their neighbours. Intercultural Worker Bee and State Director Andrew Palmer share from their experiences.

Door Number Two

Bee

SOUTH EAST ASIA

Cases continue to rise at a rate of 3000 per day across our home in South East Asia. Early on, our province went into a six week lockdown to try and prevent further spread. However, with an already weak economy, and a stuttering governmental assistance program, this pushed many thousands of people into poverty. As such, with many restrictions in place, the government has reopened the economy to get people working again.

But through it all, we see God's hand at work. These challenging circumstances enabled us to support the café staff in practical ways. When many businesses were closing, by God's provision, we remained open and continued paying wages. This built trust and has proven our reliability. The crisis has meant we are required onsite a lot more frequently than before and this has provided more opportunities to share love and hear stories. We have experienced a strengthening of relationship with the local staff during this time; a level of trust which normally takes years to establish has been fast tracked as we have endured this significant crisis together.

We cannot underestimate the value of walking alongside people during tough times. Shared experiences like this open unique doors that just wouldn't exist otherwise. For this, we are so thankful.

Andrew Palmer

SEAFORTH BAPTIST CHURCH, SYDNEY

As COVID restrictions took hold we became acutely aware of a spike in anxiety within our wider community. **Christian faith speaks so clearly into fear... but how could we connect with each other in a safe way?**

Our pastor Christine began a group called 'Big Questions'. This group was designed for folks who had found themselves in the midst of COVID hitting some pretty big hurdles of fear, loneliness and isolation. The agenda is simple: the group comes together and shares some of their personal story and then shares some 'big questions' that have been challenging for them in their lives. These included questions like the nature of evil, is God trustworthy and whether the pandemic would be the end of our communities. This space each week was simple, unhurried, group led and deeply respectful. It was never about 'Christian education' so much as holding that God was right there in the midst of the big questions.

So, what happened? Well – community happened! People who had never previously met came together and developed trust and respect and care – and yes, people had a sense of the presence of Jesus. The kingdom of God, on earth as it is in heaven.

