

Pastoral Letter to the Wesley Church Family on the Covid-19 Situation (14 Feb 2020)

(By Rev Stanley Chua, Pastor-in-Charge)



Dear Friends and Members of the Wesley family,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus! I am sure for many of us, watching the latest news on the COVID-19 situation is the new norm of our daily lives. Indeed, this is a trying time not only for our Church but for our nation and the world as well. In the past two weeks, you have all received our Church's advisory* and on the various measures that we have taken and implemented at all our worship services, Church activities and gatherings. I wish to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your kind understanding and patience as you cooperated with our staff in the implementation of the temperature screening and contact tracing last weekend. We have received positive feedback from many of you who appreciated the dedication of our staff and the prompt response that we made as a Church when the DORSCON level was raised to the Orange.

I am aware that despite the measures that have been implemented and undertaken, there are still some of you who wonder if we should have done more. As your Pastor-in-Charge (PIC), I must confess to you that I struggle at times on what is the right balance between faith and fear. I really need your prayers. I can imagine how if as a pastor of a Church I struggle with this, what more our government and our national leaders. They also need our prayers so please remember them in your prayers too.

I shared a devotion at our last LCEC (Local Church Executive Committee) meeting on 11 February 2020, that in times like this, we need to especially have the wisdom from God to know how to strike the right balance between a measured response and an extreme response that might cause unnecessary panic and fear.

“Do not be over righteous, neither be overwise – why destroy yourself? Do not be overwicked, and do not be a fool – why die before your time? It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. Whoever fears God will avoid all extremes.”

Ecclesiastes 7:16-18 (NIV)

Indeed, we need God's wisdom to avoid all extremes and to strike a right balance between faith and a healthy fear. Pray for me as your PIC and our leaders that God will continue to grant us the wisdom to avoid all extremes. Join me in praying the Serenity Prayer:

**“Lord, Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”**

All I can encourage you at this moment is that we can only take one step at a time and we will respond accordingly when the situation changes. I remember what one of my professors at Asbury used to say, “God reveals enough about the future to give us hope but not too much that we don't have to walk by faith.” I believe he is right. Let us keep close to God and pray without ceasing and I believe He will give us the wisdom to respond accordingly.

Finally, I believe, inherent in this crisis that we are facing as a nation, is also a present opportunity for us to excel in our witness for God. As Charles Dickens wrote in his famous opening paragraph of his novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, ..." As a people of God, we can either shrink in fear and complain about our present situation or we can rise above our present situation and make the best opportunity to exercise our faith in God. How do we do this?

First, let us all play our part by practicing our social responsibility in taking care of our health. If you are sick or not feeling well, please do not attend any Church activities and worship services. If you are not able to come to church for any reason, please do log onto our Church website for the sermons and continue to be part of our Wesleyan community. We are trying our best to implement live streaming for our worship services; however, we are facing challenges of licensing issues (e.g. copyrighted songs). Nevertheless, we will be trying our best to overcome this issue and we appeal for your kind understanding and patience.

Second, let us grow our faith in living out the two greatest commandments that our Lord has given us which is also the mission of our Church in Mark 12:30-31 (NIV) **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"** We do this by firstly, taking time to reflect on the transient nature of this earthly life and set our minds on things above (Colossians 3:2). We of all people should realise that we have been saved from the greatest human condition and that is, saved from eternal death because of our sins. Therefore, we should not be afraid of death at all, instead, we should rise to be a living testimony to others because of the hope we have in Christ Jesus as we face this life-threatening virus. Second, we should do our part to help others, by not succumbing to panic, fear and xenophobia. For example, we should not go on a buying frenzy and hoard essential goods or items and exhibiting selfish and xenophobic behaviour towards China nationals and those in our health professions. Instead, this is our golden opportunity to show the best side of our Christian faith by living out our love for others in practical and tangible ways to "Impact our World."

So Church, let us arise and go forth in faith. As the Lord said to Joshua in Joshua 1:9b (NIV) **"...Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."** So, with this confidence in God, let us continue to play our part and importantly, let us continue to pray unceasingly to God that He will see us as a Church, as a nation through this crisis and help us be His salt and light to the world.

Yours-in-Christ,



Pastor Stanley

*Read WesleyMC's Church Advisory on Covid-19 here <https://wesleymc.org/church-advisory-covid-19>