

Third Pastoral Letter to the Wesley Church Family on the Covid-19 Situation (12 Mar 2020)

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



Dear Friends and Members of the Wesley family,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. By now, you would have read or heard about the latest remarks made by our National Development Minister, Lawrence Wong, at the most recent press conference. He noted that as the virus spreads worldwide, Singapore's approach must shift from maintaining basic surveillance at borders to doubling down on measures within the country. Going forward, he highlighted that the government would be looking at a fuller range of social distancing measures that they can put in place for public events, community activities, school closures, workplaces, as well as religious services too. At the same conference, Health Minister, Gan Kim Yong, stressed that the Covid-19 situation remains unpredictable, given the rapid developments globally and experts saying the outbreak could last till the end of the year. Two days after our Singapore Ministers' press conference, the WHO (World Health Organisation) declared the Covid-19 outbreak a pandemic. This evening (12 Mar), our Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong went on air and said that religious services may need to be shortened and attendance at faith-based gatherings reduced.

In view of the latest remarks by our ministers to prepare our nation for the possible increase in social distancing measures, the extended season of disruptions and WHO's declaration that COVID-19 outbreak is now a pandemic, we wish to update all of you on what our Church has been doing and will be doing.

Reminders

- 1. Practise Social Responsibility** – We wish to urge all Wesleyans to continue to play our part by practising 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 unable to come to church for any reason, do join us in worship through the online streaming of our worship services at <https://wesleymc.org/worship>.
- 2. Keeping Updated** – We will continue to keep our community connected through our website at <https://wesleymc.org>, and our latest communications channel using the Telegram app. We encourage you to download the Telegram app (from your phone's app store), search for our church's Telegram Channel, 'Wesley Methodist Church (SG)', and click 'Join' to stay updated with the latest news and connected with links to our sermons, daily prayers and BRD devotional guide.
- 3. Live Preaching** – All our pastors have been rostered to preach 'live' for a maximum of two worship services on any given weekend. Where there are no 'live' preachers, the congregation will listen to recorded sermons. As we have two forms of worship services (Traditional and Contemporary) what this means is, at the:

- a. **Traditional services on Sundays (Sanctuary)**, the pastor assigned to preach will always preach ‘live’ at the 7.30am worship service, and for the second ‘live’ preaching, he or she will preach at one of the other three Traditional services (9.30am, 11.30am & 5pm).
- b. **Contemporary services (TSS (The Saturday Service), Prayer & Praise (P&P) and Wesley@Cathay)**, the pastor who is assigned to preach will always preach ‘live’ at the TSS at 5pm on Saturdays, and for the second ‘live’ preaching on Sundays, he or she will preach at one of the other three services (9.30am Cathay, 9.30am P&P or 11.30am P&P).

This measure is to minimise our pastors' exposure to large crowds, in line with MOH's advisory on preparation for business continuity and social distancing. We ask for your kind understanding.

4. **Cancellation & Suspension of Events & Meetings** – We have cancelled most of our large-scale church-wide events and activities such as Church-Wide Alpha, Church Camp, etc. including all senior activities and programs as our seniors are in the vulnerable group. For our Small Group meetings and Bible-Study programs, we have not suspended such meetings as we are following MOH advisory that there is no necessity to suspend such small meetings and gatherings. At this moment, we have left the discretion to our Small Group and Bible-Study leaders to decide if they wish to use video conferencing for the session. Groups choosing to meet physically have been advised to take strict precautionary measures. However, in the light of recent announcements by our ministers, we will be encouraging all our Small Groups and Bible Study groups to do practice run for virtual meetings to prepare for an eventuality that we have to stop all physical meetings.

Upcoming Plans

1. **Resumption of Children's Ministry and BeBetween Ministry** – When the COVID-19 situation was raised to DORSCON Orange, our leadership decided to suspend all our Children's and BeBetween Ministry as at that time we thought it was the wisest thing to do because of the vulnerability of our children. In hindsight, we now know better that we should have followed the guidance from our Singapore schools and childcare centres that have not been ordered to close. Thus, at our last meeting of our Local Church Executive Committee (LCEC) on 10 Mar 2020, the decision was taken to resume our Children's Ministry (Primary 1 and older) and our BeBetween sessions on Sunday 29 Mar 2020. This decision was also made to ensure that the spiritual growth of our children is not neglected in any way. Whilst we plan to restart our Children's and BeBetween Ministry, we will continue to follow closely our government and MOH's (Ministry of Health) advisory for any closure.

For your information, we are one of the only three out of 21 TRAC (Trinity Annual Conference) churches to suspend physical CM/BeBetween sessions during DORSCON Orange.

2. **Live Streaming All Worship Services** – Currently, we are only able to live stream our worship services at TSS (The Saturday Service) (Sat 5pm) and Traditional Services (Sun 7.30 & 9.30am). Rest assured that we have plans to live stream all our worship services once issues such as vendor availability, hardware procurement vs rental, manpower needs, etc. are ironed out. Do pray with us to overcome all these teething issues to enable live streaming for all our worship services soon. This step is to prepare our church for the possibility of any changes in social distancing measures in Singapore, which may affect religious services.

The above are the updates that I have for you for now. On behalf of our pastors, staff and leaders, I wish to express again our heartfelt thanks to all of you for continuing to be with us and supporting us in this journey of transitions and adjustments. I know for many of you, it has taken you out of your comfort zone, particularly for those who are not tech-savvy. Yet, you have shown your love for our Lord and our Church through practical ways, by joining us in our online worship services, as well as your continued giving of your tithes and offerings through the electronic means. We are overwhelmed by your love, faithfulness and generosity.

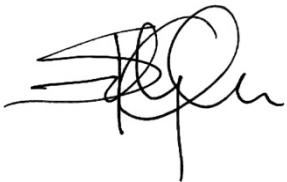
As I reflect on all that has happened the past few weeks since DORSCON Orange alert was raised, I see all of you living out the words of our Lord Jesus when He said in John 17:21 "I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one – as you are in me, Father, and I am in you...." (New Living Translation). For this, I am humbled and deeply grateful to our good Lord for giving me this privilege and honour to be one of your pastors in such a time as this. It makes me proud to be a Wesleyan. My prayer and hope is that this spirit of oneness that we are experiencing right now will continue long after this Covid-19 crisis is over.

Finally, I wish to claim this promise from **Psalm 133** for all of us who call ourselves, Wesleyans:

***How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!
It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard,
running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe.
It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion.
For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.***

To God be the glory!

Yours-in-Christ,



Pastor Stanley Chua

Read WesleyMC's Church Advisory on Covid-19 here <https://wesley.sg/covid-19-advisory>

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