

Fourth Pastoral Letter to the Wesley Church Family on the Covid-19 Situation (20 Mar 2020)

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



Dear Friends and Members of the Wesley family,

On Wednesday 18 Mar 2020, our newspapers reported 47 new COVID-19 cases, taking the total in our country to 313. This is the highest number of confirmed daily cases reported so far. According to the authorities, of the new cases, 33 are imported, and includes 30 returning Singapore residents who were infected overseas. Considering this recent development, our Bishop has issued an advisory (Annex A) to suspend all worship services in church for two weeks beginning this weekend (21/22 March 2020). This is an extract from Bishop Dr Chong Chin Chung's advisory:

"As Christians, we have to seek the welfare of the city that God has placed us in, and if this means foregoing the privilege of gathering together to worship our Living God as one body for a season, we will do our part to help. We are fully committed to working with the authorities to promote the physical distancing measures advised by MCCY. We will suspend all worship services for an initial period of two weeks and plan to resume services on Palm Sunday (5 April) with all precautionary measures put in place. We will still provide pastoral care and prayer support through means that do not require large face-to-face gatherings. Please do not attend another church during this period of suspension as that would defeat the purpose and sacrifice we are making to break the chain of infection."

As part of the Methodist Church in Singapore, our Church will be suspending all our worship services in church from this weekend for two weeks. Aside from the suspension of our worship services, here are the other measures that we will be introducing for the next two weeks beginning from this weekend (21/22 March 2020):

1. **Suspension of all activities on WesleyMC's premises** – We will suspend all Church activities (i.e. Small Groups, Bible Study Groups, etc.) on our Church premises and those held at external venues for two weeks. However, all Small Groups and Bible Study groups are still encouraged to meet either physically in homes or through video conferencing. For those doing physical meetings, please ensure that all precautionary measures are being observed.
2. **Weekend Online Worship Streaming Services** – Our online weekend worship services will be live-streamed for two services: TSS (The Saturday Service) at 5pm and Sunday 7.30am Traditional Service. **Please do not come to Church as the Church will be closed and all our worship services in church will be suspended.** Join us in worship at the above-mentioned two online worship service timings. If you are unable to avail yourself for the two specified worship online timings, not to worry, you can still access the online worship services throughout the day. We understand that last weekend several of you have given us feedback that you were not able to access our Church website. We apologise for the inconvenience caused. Please use these links to access our webpage for online worship services (<https://wesley.sg/worship>, and alternate link <https://wesleymc.org/worship>)

Apart from the above two measures that will take effect this weekend, here are the rest of the other updates:

3. **Continued Suspension of Children's Ministry (CM) and BeTween Ministry** – In view of the recent MOH advisory, our Church leadership has decided to rescind our previous decision to resume our CM and BeTween on 29 March 2020. We do apologise for any inconvenience caused. This decision was made in light of the MOH advisory to reduce our worship assembly to below 250 participants. Thus, to avoid unnecessary flip-flops in our decisions which may confuse and frustrate our congregation further, we will continue to suspend our CM and BeTween sessions until further notice. Do check the CM (<https://wesley.sg/cm-updates>) and BeTween (<https://wesley.sg/between-updates>) webpages for the latest updates and resources for your children.
4. **Wesley 'Latest Updates'** – To keep all Wesleyans and friends updated on our Church weekend services (e.g. change of service timings, new MOH advisory measures, etc.), we have started a regular communication channel, "**LATEST UPDATES**" on our website (<https://wesley.sg>) and through our Telegram channel (<https://wesley.sg/telegram>). This will be updated every Friday at 12 noon.
5. **Resumption of Worship Services in church** – Unless there are new advisories for further suspension of our worship services in church, we will resume our normal worship services on Palm Sunday (5 April 2020). Please look out for details of this announcement on our new "**LATEST UPDATES**" channel.

Finally, this has been another roller-coaster week for all of us. Amid the evolving Covid-19 situation, hardly a week goes by where there is no new advisory that surfaces. It appears to me that it is becoming increasingly very challenging, not only for our nation and the world at large to do business as usual, but the Church is affected as well. I am finding it increasingly challenging to conduct worship services with so many restrictions. I am not complaining as these precautionary measures are needed, and I am supportive of it. All of us should play our part to stop this Covid-19 virus from spreading. But like all of you, your pastor here is still human. I do get stressed and I do get worried, particularly, for those decisions that I have made, wondering if there will be any repercussions in the future. But amid all the cacophony of noises from views on advisories and worries about decisions made and the future, the Lord spoke to my heart this morning in our Bible Reading Drive on Proverbs 3. Proverbs 3: 5-6 (NIV) "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

These two verses in Proverbs 3 remind me of what I am going to preach this weekend and one of the things that the Lord has impressed upon my heart is this:

We will never have to live on yesterday's mercies. They are new every morning.

God's mercies are never early, and they are never late. They are new every morning.

Today's mercies are for today's burdens. Tomorrow's mercies will be for tomorrow's problems.

What we need is to trust Him one day at a time and He will make our paths straight.

With this, I end by thanking all of you for your continued patience, support and love to all of us. A gentle reminder to continue to worship online with us this weekend at our usual time of worship services. Even though we are not able to meet physically to worship together, nevertheless, there is nothing to stop us from worshipping together from different parts of Singapore and the world online. Let us continue to be strong for one another and let us continue to pray that indeed God will bring us through this rough storm.

To God be the glory!

Yours-in-Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Stanley Chua', written in a cursive style.

Pastor Stanley Chua

Read WesleyMC's Church Advisory on Covid-19 here <https://wesley.sg/covid19-church-advisory>

Contact / For Enquiries

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20 March 2020

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Methodist Church in Singapore,

A meeting was held with the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) and various church leaders on Thursday, 19 March 2020.

As Christians, we have to seek the welfare of the city that God has placed us in, and if this means foregoing the privilege of gathering together to worship our Living God as one body for a season, we will do our part to help. We are fully committed to working with the authorities to promote the physical distancing measures advised by MCCY.

We will suspend all worship services for an initial period of two (2) weeks and plan to resume services on Palm Sunday, 5 April 2020 with all precautionary measures put in place. We will still provide pastoral care and prayer support through means that do not require large face-to-face gatherings.

Please do not attend another church during this period of suspension as that would defeat the purpose and sacrifice we are making to break the chain of infection.

When the physical church cannot congregate, the spiritual church must elevate. I urge each of you to spend a determined time in prayer for our church and country that we may emerge stronger than ever. Reflect on the Word more deeply in this season of Lent, and repent, revive and restore your faith as we await our Lord's return. We must remain one in the unity and bond of the Holy Spirit.

Listen to your pastors and leaders and follow their advice as they strive to minister to you during this time. Look out for neighbours in need and be God's light and love to them in small, practical ways. Join one of the podcasts or live-streams from our Methodist Churches accessible at <https://www.methodist.org.sg/livestream> or your own church's arrangements for your spiritual feeding and growth. If you are not already in one, join a care group of believers so that you may experience and express God's love with His people in smaller groups.

We look forward to the day when God's people can come together again to worship Him.

2 Samuel 10:12 (ESV)

Be of good courage, and let us be courageous for our people, and for the cities of our God, and may the LORD do what seems good to Him.

Together in Christ,

Bishop Dr Chong Chin Chung
The Methodist Church in Singapore