



THE METHODIST CHURCH IN MALAYSIA

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AN EPISCOPAL PASTORAL LETTER TO THE METHODIST CHURCH FAMILY IN MALAYSIA

Dear Members of the Methodist Church Family

Warm greetings.

Thank you all for doing your best in complying with the directives of the Movement Control Order [MCO] from the Government for the past 8 days. By the grace of God, we shall by patience and perseverance – live with its just announced **extension till the 14 April 2020**.

This is a doubly immense challenge to all of us, as we have to make the necessary adjustments for an even longer period – for the sake of self, family and the residents in our beloved nation. However, I am reminded that at this moment of the COVID-19 Pandemic - staying at home and thereby contributing to the breaking of the “chain of transmission and infection” - is the **required social justice we can each do** for the equal good of everyone in our land.

As we continue in this Season of Lent of repentance, returning and realigning with God, let us then take this opportunity to **“redeem the time”** in our *“enforced homestay”* - by making it a *space for transformation*. This need to be done with *intentionality* – in reading the Bible, prayer, reflection, reading, engaging in enriching spiritual exercises, “recharging”, and spending meaningful time with family and loved ones. While we must pay attention to what is happening to us in the current situation, we should pay even greater attention to **how we choose to react or respond to what is happening**.

As we look forward to **EASTER** [12 April 2020] – this year we shall celebrate it as a *“church without walls”*. As God’s Church, in spite of the need for mandatory social distancing – we remain **“socially distanced but spiritually close”** to one another as God’s people. Praying for one another and keeping in touch with one another through various communicative means are necessary expressions of this closeness and oneness as the Body of Christ. Let us be unceasing in being our “brother’s [and sister’s] keeper” – especially those who are more vulnerable in our midst. At large, we thank the Lord for Methodist initiatives that have been started to meet the various urgent needs such as providing Personal Protective Equipment [PPE] and other necessities for our hospitals and front-liners, supplying the daily needs of migrant communities, the elderly etc. **Wherever we are, let us be generous in giving to and supporting such initiatives to “love our needy neighbors as ourselves”**.

Please continue to follow the various electronic and digital resources provided by your local church and Annual Conference pastoral leadership for worship services and devotional needs and celebrations within your family, homes or living quarters. Our GC Family



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Inter-generational Discipleship Task Force has provided our respective Annual Conferences useful and relevant materials for **Family Altar** celebrations in our families and homes.

Congregational-based celebrations such as the sacraments of **Holy Communion and Baptism shall be postponed until after the 14 April 2020.**

We continue to give our support to our Presidents, Pastors, Lay Leaders and L.C.E.C as we adjust to finding new ways of expressing our faith, offerings and commitment to the Lord and His Church. Pastoral care shall be on-going. I thank the Council of Presidents, the Council of Laity and our district and local leadership of pastors and lay leaders for their vigilance and conscientiousness in caring for our Methodist Church Family at this time of unparalleled crisis. Thank you all for standing together in unity and compliance as we continue to guard and experience **“strong unity in unprecedented adversity”**.

Let all believers especially God’s people called Methodists be **healing, responsive and fruitful “social capital” for this beloved country of ours**, as we cooperate with the authorities for the recovery of this nation. May we be redemptive witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by our proclamation and responses of faith that *take note of headlines but do not live in fear of them*. May we re-prioritize our lives to bear *“fruit that last”* as we face off with a *“death at the door”* pandemic that reminds us of our *mortality*.

May our prayers be unceasing and embracing of all who dwell under the arch of this colossal catastrophic pestilence – especially those who sacrificially work at the frontline of this pandemic and those whose livelihood have been incapacitated. Let us join other global Christian communions to seek in unity, especially on the Lord’s Day /Sunday, our Sovereign God’s mercy in overcoming this pandemic.

Now may the God of peace-- who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and ratified an eternal covenant with his blood--²¹ may he equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him. All glory to him forever and ever! Amen. [NLT Hebrews 13:20]

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [ESV Philippians 4:7]

Bishop Ong Hwai Teik
The Methodist Church in Malaysia

Dated: 25 March 2020