

AN INVITATION TO THE MALAYSIAN CHURCH TO CONTINUE IN PRAYER AND FASTING **THIS HOLY WEEK FROM PALM SUNDAY, 5 APRIL 2020**

We continue to give thanks for the wonderful response to the last two Sunday Invitations to Pray and Fast together in fellowship in the midst of the Covid-19 Coronavirus pandemic.

This coming Sunday is **Palm Sunday**, the start of the Holy Week that leads to Easter, where we celebrate Jesus' triumph over death. Yet again, we invite you to join us to follow through this week's journey in unceasing prayer during this unprecedented season of restricted assembly due to the coronavirus.

On Palm Sunday, we remember that Jesus willingly went to Jerusalem in obedience to the Father, knowing that he was on a journey toward the cross. Walking through the suffering and death of Christ will be an important personal experience for each one of us after all that families, churches and nations have endured because of the coronavirus. Observing this Holy Week will remind us of our hope in Christ, and to move from death to life.

As we celebrate Palm Sunday in our homes, let us be a light in the place of darkness, to let our neighbours know that Jesus Christ is victorious over death, as well as over all of the troubles and sorrows that we have experienced in the previous weeks and months.

Let us make this season of prayer a time to intercede for ourselves and the many, far and near, who are troubled and anxious - calling upon our Sovereign God, wherever we are, individually and in our own household, to bring salvation, peace and healing in our families, our country and the world.

A DAILY ADAPTABLE PRAYER GUIDE [P – R – A – Y]

An adaptable/flexible Prayer Guide for personal and family use during this time of restricted movements.

PAUSE PRAY Psalm 11 aloud

BE STILL Breathe deeply, and welcome the Holy Spirit.

REPENT As a symbolic act, wash your hands as you read these verses and say a quiet prayer of repentance before the Lord.

ACTS 3:19 NIV - Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

JAMES 4: 8 NIV - Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

1 John 1:9 NIV - *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

LIGHT A CANDLE OF HOPE [optional symbolism]

John 8:12 NIV - *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

Light a candle in the windows of your homes when you are praying in the evening as a visible symbol of the light of life - Jesus Christ, our source and hope in prayer. **OR,**

TIE A RED RIBBON OF HOPE [optional symbolism]

1 John 1:7 NIV - *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

Tie a red ribbon on your gate, door or window of your home as a visible symbol of the blood of Christ purifying our hearts and homes, and to attest to His power to protect us in this pandemic. **ADD,**

TIE A PALM CROSS OR HANG PALM LEAVES [optional symbolism]

John 12:13 NIV - *They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the king of Israel!"*

Tie a palm cross or hang palm leaves (if you don't have any, use leaves from green plants in your home, or cut out from paper and colour them) on your gate, door or window of your home as a visible symbol of the joy in our hearts and homes, and to attest to His saving power over death.

REJOICE /WORSHIP

PRAY (aloud) Psalm 118

DECLARE (aloud) Matthew 21:9

"Hosanna to the Son of David!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

SING Song[s] of worship about the love of God in sending His Son Jesus to die for us on the cross. Examples include:

How Deep the Father's Love for Us – Stuart Townend

Hosanna (Praise is rising) – Paul Baloche

Raise a Hallelujah – Bethel

Blessed is He Who Comes – Paul Wilbur

All hail King Jesus – Dave Moody

Hosanna (be lifted higher) – Israel Houghton

PRAISE AND GIVE THANKS with prayers and songs of thanksgiving and praise [Example: blessings received, answered prayers even in this season].

ASK (A time of Intercession) – We suggest you use your own sincere and simple words as you pause over these suggested verses for your reference and meditation:

1. PRAY FOR SELF AND OTHERS AFFECTED BY THIS TIME OF ISOLATION

James 1: 2-4 NIV - *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you encounter trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Allow perseverance to finish its work, so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

Ask God to make His presence felt in times of being alone & in solitude. Ask Him to help you be fruitful and productive during this time of quiet, especially in listening to His Word. Ask God to help you build up spiritual disciplines that will strengthen you and help you endure future times of trials.

2. PRAY FOR THE SICK

Isaiah 53: 4-5 NIV - *Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

Ask God to make His presence felt in this time of illness, and to protect, strengthen and heal the infected and their families.

3. PRAY FOR THE ANXIOUS

1 Peter 5:7 NIV - *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

Ask God to take away the fear and anxiety and give a sense of thanksgiving, purpose and peace in pursuing God, improving health and protecting others from exposure to the disease.

4. PRAY FOR THE ELDERLY AND THE INFIRMED/ VULNERABLE

Psalms 46:1 NIV - *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*

Note or write down [optional] the names of the people you know who are elderly or have an under-lying condition that may make them susceptible to the Coronavirus. Ask God to protect them from infection. [Option: text/call them as moved].

5. PRAY FOR POLITICIANS AND NATIONAL LEADERS

1 Timothy 2:1-2 NIV - *I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.*

Ask God to give exceptional wisdom to international, national and local political leaders as they make decisions to protect people, and to bring excellent advisers to guide them to take and organise actions.

Ask God to give them the ability to communicate clearly and compassionately to the public.

6. PRAY FOR THOSE AFFECTED FINANCIALLY

Philippians 4: 19 NIV - *And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.*

Ask God to provide for those in financial difficulty because they are unable to work, and for business leaders as they face such unprecedented disruption to life.

Pray especially for those who are dependent on daily wages, hawkers, small business operators, migrants and refugees who are badly hit by the lockdown. Pray for aid to be made immediately to them, and for the church to rise up to serve them.

7. PRAY FOR HEALTHCARE/ FRONTLINE PROFESSIONALS

Isaiah 58: 10 NIV - *and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.*

Ask God to protect the health professionals (doctors, nurses, ambulance crews, researchers, national security, police, immigration, fire, cleaners and more) caring for those affected by the virus, as they deal daily with the rising number of cases and the intense pressures that come with this crisis.

Ask God to give them peace, wisdom, and strength, and to anoint them for their jobs and to protect them from infection. Pray for protection for their families as well and to honour them for their commitment and sacrifice.

8. PRAY FOR ADJUSTMENTS TO THE “NEW NORMAL” FOR ALL

Isaiah 40: 29-31 NIV - *He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. ³⁰Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; ³¹but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

Pray especially for the young and those overwhelmed by the information overload and feeling the restriction of movement.

Ask God to bless and guard families adjusting to everyone being home as businesses and schools close. Ask that He will guide people in their new realities. Pray that spouses may be gracious to each other, and help worn-out parents to speak words of kindness and encouragement to their children.

Pray for the young to find creative ways to experience the presence of God and the beauty of all that He has created and to continue learning.

9. PRAY FOR THOSE HURTING AND FEELING THE PAIN OF SUFFERING LOSS OF LOVED ONES AND BEING QUARANTINED

Psalms 23:4 NIV - *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

Ask God to comfort those grieving the loss of loved ones, those facing uncertainty while in self-quarantine and those whose friends or family members are in hospital.

10. PRAY FOR THE EFFECTIVE AND QUICK CONTAINMENT OF THE VIRUS AND COMPLYING WITH RESPONSIBLE CIVIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Pray for a miracle, we still believe in miracles

2 Chronicles 7: 13 – 14 NIV - ¹³*“When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, ¹⁴if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

Ask God to slow and halt the spread of the Covid-19 Coronavirus. Take a moment to pray for God's particular intervention in other nations most affected, especially Italy and Spain. Pray for the forecasted next epi-centre, that is, South Asia, especially India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Pray also for countries that ended up importing the virus from the event that was held here in the *Sri Petaling* mosque in Kuala Lumpur, e.g. Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore, Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand.

We pray for compassionate governments, such as those of India and Indonesia, in the light of the difficulties faced by the poor, the homeless and the displaced refugees caught under the movement restrictions.

Pray for the people to comply and be responsive to the instructions of the authorities to ensure containment and mitigation of the situation.

11. PRAY FOR 5 FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO FIND PERSONAL CONNECTION WITH GOD THROUGH SAVING FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST ESPECIALLY IN THESE TROUBLED TIMES

John 3:16 NIV - *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

At such a time as this, let us lovingly press in to pray for our family and friends to come to the joyous saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Write down at least names of 5 persons and uphold them in prayer daily.

YIELD

Let us yield ourselves to God – our hearts, our minds, our voices, our hands and our feet. Let us ask God to use us to be a people called by His name, who reflect His beauty, holiness, grace and love.

FOR THE CHURCH TO GAIN A REFRESHED VISION OF BEING A HOLY PEOPLE OF PRAYER

That Christians will take this time of restricted movement to be a people of unceasing prayer - to stand in the gap for family and friends, and for the nation, during this time of global volatility and national instability.

Pray that the Church will rise up IN JOY AND IN FAITH as God's voice of hope and peace in THIS SEASON OF PREVALENT fear of the coronavirus pandemic.

FOR THE CHURCH TO BE A WITNESSING PEOPLE THROUGH FAITH, HOPE, LOVE AND COMPASSIONATE ACTION TO ALL AND SUNDRY

That God may grant us strength and wisdom, and help us to be a people of faith and hope, especially in our interactions in social media.

Alongside our prayers, let us ask God to give us the wisdom, compassion and generosity to take this opportunity to GO OUT OF OUR WAY TO telephone or email someone who is isolated, maybe buy some additional food for our local foodbanks, poor communities, daily wage workers, and migrants and refugees. Or offer to deliver shopping for an elderly or sick neighbour.

FOR THE CHURCH TO BE UNITED AND FAITHFUL IN OUR WITNESS IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

Even as churches cannot come together in community during this most important celebration of the Christian calendar, let us continue to pray for unity and to be faithful in our witness. Beyond our moral and civic duty to be obedient to the authorities during this time of restricted movements, we pray that we will be mindful of our continuing duty to the witness of Christ, being careful not to be reckless and end up heaping shame on the name of Christ by our careless actions that will affect the witness of the Malaysian church and the reputation of the Gospel in our communities.

Ask God to help Christians to be examples of good disease management and to maintain a good witness through our care for the sick, the poor and needy.

Pray for opportunities to show that our Christian faith motivates courage, sacrifice, compassion, and love in times of danger.

PRAY THE BLESSING OF NUMBERS 6:24-26 OVER EACH GROUP COVERED

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

SING A CLOSING SONG OF PRAISE

We lift up our eyes / Father we declare – Tom Inglis

FINISH BY SAYING THE LORD'S PRAYER (Matthew 6: 9-13 NIV)

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

BE STILL

Breathe deeply, thank God for His presence and release into His hands all you've prayed.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR CREATIVE WAYS OF PRAYING THROUGHOUT /DURING THIS HOLY WEEK

Prayer doesn't just mean words. This creative prayer guide will help you to engage creatively in your relationship with God: a way to help you pray without ceasing right through the day. Feel free to adapt as you go along.

1. SET YOUR ALARM TO SAY THE LORD'S PRAYER 7 TIMES A DAY, AND AT NOON.

Psalm 119: 164 NIV - *Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws.*

Set your alarm – especially using your mobile phone – to pray The Lord's Prayer (Our Father). *You may set it say: 8am, 10 am, 12 noon, 2pm, 4pm, 6pm and 9pm.* Set it at a time that helps you build a momentum in unceasing prayer.

2. SAY THE LORD'S PRAYER EVERYTIME YOU WASH YOUR HANDS

As washing our hands with soap and water is important during this time of fighting the Covid-19 virus, let us say The Lord's Prayer as often as we wash our hands. That will also help to keep our hearts and minds on God, and help us to wash our hands properly as we slowly pray through The Lord's Prayer.

3. GIVE THANKS BEFORE MEALS AND EACH TIME WE OPEN THE FRIDGE OR THE PANTRY!

Let us pause and give thanks for God's provisions during this time of uncertainty. Thank God for the essential services that are still being provided, such as water and electricity when we turn on the tap or the lights. Place drawings and verses of thanksgiving on your fridge door to encourage anyone opening it.

4. DESIGN A CREATIVE PRAYER SPACE IN YOUR HOME THROUGH THIS HOLY WEEK

Take up the challenge to designate a prayer space/spot for your own use, and perhaps make it one that the whole family can use as a small prayer area. Decorate this prayer space with creative ideas throughout the Holy Week.