



MOSAIC

@ HOLLAND VILLAGE METHODIST CHURCH

Where loving God and loving others matter

*I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God in whom I trust." (Psalm 91:2)*



COMPANIONS IN CHRIST

A PUBLIC DECLARATION
OF MY FAITH

REFLECTIONS FROM
THE COVID FRONTLINE

A WHOLE
NEW WORLD

THE 'CIRCUIT
BREAKER'
EXPERIENCE

June 2020

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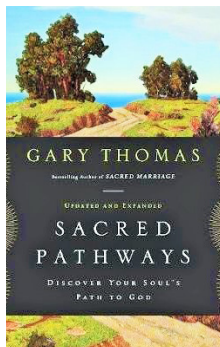
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THE NEW NORMAL?

Life has changed tremendously in the past few months. I remember reading of a pneumonia-like illness spreading in China only last year, and now it is within our shores. Every country in the world is fighting this pandemic; every country has lost its countrymen to this illness. Airlines are grounded, people are stockpiling, schools have stopped and cities are in lockdown.

Everyone is talking about the same topic – this pandemic – at the same time. Everyone is now meeting online via video conferencing. Hugs and handshakes seem a thing of the recent past! “Is this the ‘new normal’?” everyone asks.

When I read the Bible, I get the sense that God's definition of ‘normal’, is not the same as mankind's definition of ‘normal’. After all, in the Bible, an old man becomes a father, a little boy slays a giant, slaves become a chosen nation, a carpenter saves the world, and fishermen become the founding leaders of a faith community that would spread through the entire world and lasts till today!

This situation today is not normal to us. But I am sure God can still accomplish His purposes despite the present challenges. So I ask myself, “Where is God leading us to, with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in our world?”

In Jeremiah 32:27, God Himself says, “I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?” Maybe when we look at a situation, we look at the talents and resources available, and the number of supporters on our side, before we reckon if the challenge can be adequately handled. But God does not look at a situation in the same way we do. He doesn't look at manpower or resources – He just looks at Himself and who He is, as the Almighty God, and nothing is too difficult for Him.

So in the same way, I would like to encourage you to focus on what matters. Focus on God who is bigger than the virus, and has more abilities and resources than the entire world's governments combined! Look up to the hills...your help comes from the Lord!

Pastor Joel Yong



新常态？

在过去的几个月里，生活发生了巨大的变化。我记得刚在去年才阅读到有关中国有传肺炎类似的疾病事件，现在这病毒已经在我国传播了。世界上每个国家都在与这种冠状病毒斗争。每个国家都有自己的国民因此而身亡。航空公司停止飞行，人们惊慌储粮，学校停课，甚至城市也被封锁。

人人都同时在谈论同样的主题 - 冠状病毒事件。现在，每个人都在使用在线视频来开会。连拥抱和握手似乎已成为过去！每个人都有疑问，这是否将是生活的“新常态”？

当我阅读圣经时，我感觉上帝对“正常”的定义与人们“正常”的定义有所不同。毕竟，在圣经中，我们可以看到一个年迈老人成为父亲、一个青年男孩击杀一个巨人、奴隶成为被上帝拣选的国家、木匠拯救了世界、渔人成为了一个信仰团体的创始领导人，使这个信仰广传全世界，直到今时！

今天的这种情况对我们来说并不正常。但是我相信，尽管面临当前的挑战，上帝仍然可以实现他的旨意。因此，我问自己：“随着这世界性的冠状病毒疫情，上帝将会怎么引导我们呢？”

在耶利米书 32:章27节，上帝如此说：我是耶和华，是凡有血气者的神，岂有我难成的事？也许当我们考虑一种状况时，我们会考虑到可用的资源、一个人的才能、我们拥有多少支持者 - 然后我们才断定是否可以适当应对挑战。但是上帝并没有像我们一样看待局势。他不看人力或财力，只看自己和自己的本性。作为全能的上帝，对他来说，没有什么是难成的事。

因此，我想鼓励大家，应当注视在关键的事。定睛在上帝 - 因为唯有上帝比病毒更大，并且他拥有的能力和资源比全世界政府的总和还要多！让我们向山举目，我们的帮助从耶和华而来！

杨治伟牧师





A School WITH A MISSION



HVMC celebrated ACS (International) Sunday on the 1st day of Lent, 1 March 2020. It was a joy and privilege to have Bishop Chong Chin Chung with us, as well as the School's Chairman Mr Tan Wah Thong, Principal Mr Rob Burrough, Vice-Principals Mr Gavin Kinch and Dr Kris Achter, and students from the Christian Fellowship. This vividly illustrates the strong bond that ties the School and the Church, and this truth permeated the various messages that were delivered.

Mr Tan, in his speech, shared a challenge that the School was facing. ACS (International)'s favourable results were presenting a "problem" in that there are far more applicants than there are places in the School. Mr Tan shared options the School was considering to meet this challenge, and it will be exciting to see how God will lead the School and its leaders in their deliberations.

Bishop Chong's sermon, entitled "The Gospel to the Nations", reminded us that while the call for all Christians to bring the gospel to other nations still stands, God has providentially brought the nations to HVMC's doorstep through the multinational students attending ACS (International).

More than 1,000 students pass through the School's gates every day. They will, eventually, return to their own countries and communities. How crucial it is, then, to plant the gospel seeds while they are in the School. Many who come to Christ later in life, point to Christian influences early in life; seeds of faith planted in their youth finally taking root and bearing fruit. We cannot predict how God's Word, planted in the minds of students now, will impact lives when they bring

the gospel with them to their respective nations and communities.

Missions, as Bishop reminded us, is spreading the gospel across cultures or borders. Missions is not created by the Church; the Church was created by missions and for missions. Missions is not a side ministry of the Church; it is its core business.

The Methodist Church in Singapore was established by missionaries obeying the call of God to bring the gospel here. Today, Methodists form the largest denomination, having under its charge 15 schools and 12 pre-schools - more than 23,000 students and their families as part of the harvest field. Both ACS and MGS were started in similar fashion, by missionaries obeying the call of God.

The apostles in the early Church travelled widely, proclaiming the gospel wherever they went. How can HVMC be a mission-conscious church, following in the footsteps of forefathers who planted the gospel seed in Singapore?

Regardless of race or culture, all must be given the chance to be followers of Christ. The Church has a crucial part to play - through finance and resource, through hands and feet, and through prayer.

At HVMC, we have the opportunity to minister across boundaries - geographical, social, cultural and economic boundaries. How are we, bearers of the gospel message, traversing these borders with the good news of Christ?

Eugel Yeo

Different ... BUT THE SAME



Do you remember the song that goes, “Put your hand in the hand of the man who stilled the water”? And the line that asks you to “take a look at yourself and you can look at others differently”? That line never resonated as deeply as it did after I attended the *Sacred Pathways* workshop conducted at HVMC.

Based on the book of that title written by Gary Thomas, my eyes were opened that morning with the reminder that we all seek to draw nearer to God - but the paths we each take may be very different because we are unique creations. So while we converge in our love for God, we may not conform to each other in the way we express it.

As Sarah Gan, our Lay Ministry staff, started the workshop, she asked an intriguing question: “Where is your Gethsemane?” She referred us to the place Jesus often went to be with his Father. Prayer in a place of silent solitude was how Jesus related the most profoundly to Him. Using this example, nine different pathways were described, each representing a different way in which people lovingly relate to God according to their natural “spiritual temperaments” :-

- 1 **Naturalists** commune best with God, surrounded or near to nature - what God has created
- 2 **Sensates** find God in sights, sounds and even smells. Music and singing ring strongly for them
- 3 Others find rituals, symbols and sacraments to be the structured way of **traditionalist** worship
- 4 For **ascetics**, their love for God is felt best when they are left alone in simple, quiet introspection
- 5 Confronting injustice, often through social and evangelistic ways, is how **activists** love God best

- 6 **Caregivers** seek to express their love for God by serving others, especially those who are needy or poor
- 7 As the very name implies, **enthusiasts** are excited by joyful celebration as “cheerleaders for God”
- 8 Adoring God with the deepest love relationship is how **contemplatives** find their sacred pathway to God
- 9 **Intellectuals** find their greatest fulfilment through academic study and spiritual concepts relating to God.

As I ticked off my own scores for each sacred pathway, I gained a new awareness of who I am and why I enjoy time with God in a certain way. My way is different from that of others I know and care for, and I humbly asked God for forgiveness for judging others – for thinking that some worshipped too loudly while others seemed not to show any outward expression at all – instead of seeing them through the loving eyes of our loving God.

So, as I head out to make my personal T-shirt that proclaims my ascetic, sensate and naturalist leanings (in descending order of magnitude), I thank Him for the precious message that was conveyed through the workshop. I bought the book and continue to re-read it as I draw grateful reassurance that “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

Low Wye Mun

EVENTFUL

Companions IN CHRIST



When I was approached to join the inaugural *Companions in Christ* course, I was experiencing a yearning to deepen my relationship with God. Nothing I was doing at the time was yielding any fruit, so I accepted the invitation, believing it to be God's way of granting me "the desires of my heart".

The whole idea behind *Companions in Christ* is that we need a community of faith to reach our full potential in Christ. The course, spread over 28 weeks, takes us on a journey of discovering new dimensions of communicating with God. The goal is spiritual formation through spiritual exercises that mould us increasingly into the image of Christ. The spiritual exercises immerse us in "streams of living water". Spiritual formation itself is a lifelong pursuit, so the course aims to equip participants with skills that lead to a deeper communion and wholeness in Christ.

The first lesson introduced us to the idea that our lives are constantly moving, from being oriented, to becoming disoriented and finally, to being reoriented. It is an inevitable part of the Christian life, so when life confounds, God is really reorienting us to a deeper, richer faith in Him. I was going through my own season of disorientation at the time, so it encouraged me to know that God was reorienting my life towards a deeper meaning and purpose.

As the weekly lessons began with each person sharing his / her reflections from the daily exercises, I was amazed at how God spoke differently to each member, teaching me an important lesson in "spiritual listening". The course handbook was augmented with supplementary material and practical exercises which reinforced the week's lesson. Each of us kept a journal to record personal reflections, prayers and to crystallize our thoughts. The

spiritual exercises that shaped me the most are the breath prayer, Lectio Divina and Examen. The breath prayer is an intentional way to be present before God. The phrase can come from tradition, scripture or a hymn. Lectio Divina taught me to focus on a small passage of scripture. By asking the right questions, I can really sense God's Word speaking to my current circumstances. I use Examen as a way to reflect on the events of the past day or week and to discern God's involvement in it.

We were blessed to have Pastor Loretta, Jenny Bose and Sarah Gan skilfully lead us through the exercises. Their familiarity coupled with their own intense desire to pursue God, made the lessons transformational. I was privileged to be surrounded by such a deeply committed group. Our struggles and challenges may be different, but our thirst for God was the bond that united us. I will always cherish the time spent and friendships made during this course.

In the end, what impressed me most was knowing that God was ever ready to deepen my relationship with Him, no matter how little or how much I think I love Him. I am accepted and loved by God simply for who I am. As a result of the course, I have a lower propensity to sin, because I don't want anything to break the fellowship with God I am now enjoying. I would strongly recommend this course to anyone who desires a more intimate relationship with God, but be prepared to make a commitment and to experience some disruption, because true faith never grows in comfortable soil.

Vinnu Vas



A PUBLIC DECLARATION



Of My Faith



devoting our time and talents to Him, and trusting that He will honour everything that we give. A key event was the mission trip to Chiang Mai, as it led me to mature in faith and understand the importance of prayer and servanthood. I learnt that sometimes God calls us to serve in order to teach us valuable lessons. I remember praying for people from the Shan hill tribe in Chiang Mai and empathizing with their situation. Although they did not understand our prayers, they were visibly encouraged and touched, and I witnessed the power of prayer and God's love, which transcends linguistic and cultural barriers and can be experienced by everyone.

These four years in HVMC have led to a tremendous growth in my spiritual journey, as I can now say that I have a personal relationship with God and want to seek Him all the days of my life. I always seek His guidance whenever I am faced with troubles, no matter big or small, and trust in His perfect plans and providence. I now don't just pray out of routine but yearn to have an open and authentic relationship with God, finding comfort in His peace and wisdom.

Therefore, when given the opportunity to be baptised, I decided to do so without hesitation, as I wanted to take ownership of my faith through a public declaration. I chose to be baptized by immersion on 21 March 2020, as it presented a greater symbolic meaning of Jesus washing away my sins and justifying me before God.

Ian Tham

Being born into a Christian family was a privilege for me. From a young age, my parents had instilled key Christian values into my character, and I had no doubt that God sent His son, Jesus, to die for our sins. I was taught not to lie, to love others, respect those in authority and pray every night. I attended Sunday school every week and graduated to the Youth group in my neighbourhood church in Hong Kong. I knew God was real as He healed me when I was sick, comforted me when I missed home on school camps, and delivered me through tough times in my life. I knew many Bible stories and truths about God through church and BSF. However, I lacked a personal relationship with God throughout my 11 years there.

When I moved to Singapore in 2015, my family decided to join HVMC. I settled in the Youth group and made many friends there. From my involvement in planning events and activities, most notably the 2019 Youth Camp, I have learnt that serving God doesn't just entail putting money in the offering bag, but involves

Reflections from the COVID FRONTLINE



Coronavirus, an organism invisible to the naked eye, has brought the world to its knees. Like many amidst this unprecedented pandemic, I have been compelled to reflect on my role as a frontline healthcare worker in a pandemic medical clinic as well as the professional and spiritual values I seek to uphold.

The medical profession that first attracted me was one of altruism, compassion and healing. 35 years on from my graduation as a Doctor, these remain at the heart of my practice. The COVID pandemic has been a poignant reminder to me of the true and unchanged core of my chosen life's work.

Serving others in this work sees compassion as a hallmark of being a "good" doctor, just as Jesus Himself was often moved by deep love, caring for people. Good knowledge or being able to come to the correct diagnosis doesn't make someone a good doctor. Having to don personal protective equipment (PPE) – especially wearing a mask – has underscored just how important facial expression is to conveying compassion in a clinic consultation.

This was most evident in the initial weeks of COVID presence in Singapore. Patients were fearful and panicky. Those who had no symptoms suggestive of the contagion thought they had fallen victim to the virus; others who should be tested for COVID refused to do so out of fear of a positive test result. Masking during such one-on-one encounters deprived me of an important means of conveying reassurance and care while allaying fear in patients who were anxious, unreasonable and demanding.

At those times, there was no place for irritation and impatience. Compassion had to be conveyed through words and how they were spoken. Prayer before each clinic session helped me to deal with difficult situations when these arose, and I placed my clinical skills and judgement into His hands rather than rely on my presumed knowledge or ability.

Finally, I have been asked, "Aren't you scared of contracting COVID infection?" To be honest, fear has never entered my heart at all. Perhaps it was because I have faith in the PPE I wear? But I think not. The faith I feel is more simple but deeper than that:

I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust." ... and I "will not fear the pestilence that stalks in the darkness nor the plague that destroys at midday" (Psalm 91: 2,5,6).

Lee Tang Yin



Stories from THE FRONTLINE



This big COVID-induced “pause” upon civilization looks more like a congested traffic jam at times. As a physician, I am uniquely positioned to bear witness to some of its casualties.



“Doctor, I am very worried lah. I have depression and take pills from my doctor in Malaysia but since lockdown, I cannot,” said M, a 33-year-old Malaysian bus driver. He was one of 300,000 Malaysians who travel across the Causeway daily, and who was affected by the sudden closure of the border. The announcement resulted in many having to make quick decisions on which side of the border to be on. He had left his wife and seven-year-old daughter in Malaysia. “I am the only breadwinner lah. My contract will end if I stay in Malaysia, cannot work,” shared M.

Here was a father and husband, separated from his family for an indeterminable period of time, unable to be physically present with them, yet reading of the rising number of COVID cases across the border.

“Hello, doctor! I have runny nose,” said A. I asked her the standard questions - whether she has symptoms of the virus, had contact with COVID cases and her recent travel history. She replied, “No. Doctor, I ok one. I still can go out jogging every day.” After a thorough examination, I ascertained that she was otherwise well, and informed her of the mandated 5-day legal requirement to stay at home. She teared up, explaining, “Doctor, I have major depression and I need to jog!” I weakly offered indoor, probably ineffective options. I quietly prayed for her, that she holds out during this period.



“Doctor, I have leg pain. I got a hole in my foot because of safety shoes,” explained J, a shelf-packer at a grocery store. He had an ulcer on the top of a red, swollen foot. He has diabetes and both feet were numb; thus, he was unable to feel pain. He could end up walking with unhealed wounds that become severely infected, and necessitating surgery, sometimes amputation. I advised him to rest to allow his wound to heal and offered him medical leave. “Doctor, crazy at work. Because people stockpile ah, aiyo, need to bring a lot of things from the warehouse quickly,” he lamented. Gradually, he was persuaded but I’m not sure if he complied - I can only admire his fierce tenacity to continue serving at his frontline.

“Doctor, my son got fever,” said a mother of an 11-year-old son. “Also got a lump on his leg,” she revealed. This child looked well but had registered a temperature of 39 degrees. The “lump” was a painful abscess on his thigh and the likely cause of his fever. I told his mum that the abscess could only be treated under anaesthesia, in a hospital. She shook her head vigorously and replied, “I won’t bring him to hospital!” I understood her concern but explained that there was no other way to help her son.



Amidst all these very real stories, Hebrews 11 brings me strength and hope. We see a long list of Bible heroes who ran hard ahead of us, not seeing the fulfilment of the promise, yet running in obedience to God’s call. And in about AD 33, centuries after their life of sacrifice, we see the ultimate fulfilment, embodied in the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We, each, amidst this global “pause”, still have a race marked out for us to run. We are not left to run this alone. Hebrews 13 tells us how we are to run, whether under quarantine, or as a frontliner. Let us then run with perseverance, the race marked out for us...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author, and perfecter of our faith.

Michelle Ting

GOD ANSWERS PRAYERS In Unexpected Ways!



It has not been an easy time and Christians have not been exempted from the impact of the virus nor the measures taken. Loss of income and/or employment, housing rearrangements, separation from family and loved ones, are but some of the fallout. Our family has also not been spared but we will count the ways God drew our family closer to Himself this Lenten season and Holy Week.

On the first Sunday of Lent, our daughter, Jessica, was seriously injured in a motor accident. After emergency surgeries and a five-day stay in hospital, she continued her recovery at home. Caring for a young adult with multiple fractures and internal injuries at home was a daunting task. But God is faithful. He healed her steadily over the next six weeks. The body brace she wears to stabilize her spinal fractures and internal injuries reminds us of divine mercy and grace. Whenever we recall the accident scene, we are so grateful. The loving care and support of our pastors, the prayers, thoughtful gestures and encouraging messages from HVMC brothers and sisters helped us experience the Lord holding our family in the hollow of His hand in unexpected ways.

In addition to online work training and meetings, and caring for a sick aunt's physical and spiritual needs with safe distancing, the Lord allowed us to complete our HVMC **Companions in Christ** course which began in August 2019. We continue to be comforted that God will see us through, for He has promised to finish the good work He began in us.

Our Life group meetings have also been regular with full attendance all through Lent. God patiently changed our mindset to embrace fellowshiping in a virtual room so we need not compromise our group bonding and dynamics. He equipped us with the skills to handle the technology.

Our greatest joy is the gathering of our family to "attend" every online Holy Week and Sunday service. God had answered our prayers for our children to "attend" regular church services with us and freed up time for family bonding.

We learn God cares for people, the state of our relationships with Him and each other, as well as His creation at large. We marvel at how the skies look bluer and the air smells fresher.

As we consider the signs of our times, we are also reminded of our frailty for it is one thing to know God's promises but to wait on Him is still very much a work in progress as He allows novel circumstances to compel us into prayers of reliance on Him. But then again, is this not the grace of learning to hide in the shelter of His wings?

The 'Circuit Breaker' will come to an end and we will face a different world. There will be new realities and we will continue to be confronted with uncharted challenges. May we allow God our Father to lead us each step of every tomorrow in the stabilizing peace of Christ by His unfathomable faithfulness.

"I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge---that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:16-19).

Jeffrey and Jenny Bose

Blessings AMIDST CRISIS

How has the COVID-19 affected the world of academia? Here we have a teacher, and her daughter, write about their experience



At the time of writing this article, more than two weeks of home-based learning (HBL) would have passed. How has the new normal affected us? Let me count the ways.

- 1 I am a teacher. I must declare that God's wisdom helped me to plan in advance so that the weighted assessments that involved my students carrying out practical skills could go ahead till the last day of school on 7 April. I did not anticipate that all schools would be closed from 8 April. On hindsight, I marvel at God's grace and sufficiency.
- 2 My family was suddenly thrown into a new way of working and learning from home. Things panned out nicely with no arguments as Aaron, my husband, got that spot by the living room window; Sarah, our secondary one daughter, has her room while, Samuel, our primary five son, and I, claimed the dining table.
- 3 We also had the self-imposed measure of having all windows closed in the house due to a dengue outbreak in the neighbourhood. The house became really stuffy but we adapted by having the air-conditioning on occasionally, but we mostly coped with fans on high speed.
- 4 We had to contend with a steep learning curve. I, for one, had to grapple with different online platforms, for myself, my kids' school and tuition work. Having a new routine for work and learning through technology took some getting used to.
- 5 I miss classroom teaching. Face-to-face interaction is so much more intuitive. My children miss meeting their friends. They complain about how boring HBL is. Meeting your friends in school versus chilling with them on Google Meet or Microsoft Teams are two very different things.
- 6 We are saving time on travelling. I do not miss the time lost travelling to and from work or driving the kids to tuition. However, it does, at times, translate into more time spent working at home.
- 7 I have rekindled my interest in musicals. Since entertainment venues are closed, my family has had to find another way to entertain ourselves. Thanks to Andrew Lloyd Webber's 'The Shows Must Go On'

initiative, we watched 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat' over the Good Friday weekend, reminiscing with the kids about the then blossoming romance between their parents when it played live at Kallang Theatre.

- 8 When I have to find "me" time and there's no spot to run to (besides the toilet), I find comfort in playing Scrabble by myself, with myself, enjoying the solitude of discovering the meaning of words and earning a higher score.
- 9 Going out for groceries now feels like taking a breath of fresh air, albeit with mask on. It also gives me a chance to check in on my parents who live nearby.

As the hymn lyrics go, "Count your blessings, name them one by one", I thank God for His protection, grace and peace in keeping my family safe, sane and together through this time. In His time, He will make all things beautiful again.

Karen Chong

C.O.R.O.N.A.V.I.R.U.S.

- C**ircuit breaker; the government's directive for everyone to stay at home.
- O**bey the strict measures or risk getting a warning or a fine.
- R**estricted to the confines of our homes.
- O**ther than this, our day-to-day lives have become more mundane.
- N**ot being able to meet my friends has made me realise...
- A**lthough being alone may seem appealing at this time, it is not. I desperately need some
- V**ariety in my current life. With all the work given from teachers for HBL,
- I** get easily confused and lost. However, we must
- R**emember that God is with
- U**s; we should continue to worship and praise Him as much as we can,
- S**inging worship songs and praying that the coronavirus situation will get better.

Sarah Chong



A WHOLE NEW WORLD...

Post COVID-19



When COVID-19 was snaking its way around the world, makeovers of popular tunes from musicals surfaced. I waited in vain to see if anyone would come up with a take on Aladdin's "A Whole New World".

This thought arose after WHO had declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic and lockdowns were taking place. What was the Lord saying to us all? The way the world has been hurtling along at breakneck speed, it was as if God had pressed the "Pause" button to give us a chance to reflect, reboot, recalibrate and revert to factory settings. We are now able to Rest.

Today, commentators talk about the "new normal" that will emerge post-COVID. Already, structural changes are taking place. Zoom is here to stay, F&B outlets will be aggressively developing their online presence and entertainment will be delivered directly to our homes even more.

But are there going to be deep-seated changes around values and perspectives that bring about renewal, rejuvenation, and regeneration of a lasting nature, or is it going to be, God forbid, another R word: a Return to the old ways, after the grip of COVID fear is over? Will there be a return to normalcy for a world that's decided that enough time has been lost combating the virus, and it needs to make up for lost time, to live life with a vengeance, "chiong" to pursue career goals, and travel like there is no tomorrow?

The world, left to its own devices, will revert to its old ways. BUT in this climate of anxiety and vulnerability, the opportunity is there as never before to change it for the better. In Luke 21:13, Jesus says, "It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony".

And what does the Lord require of us in the post-COVID world, but to "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). This imperative came to mind

as stories broke around the rapid spread of COVID-19 in the crowded worker dormitories here. I felt convicted, as an individual, and as a member of a church community, that I had turned a blind eye to the plight of the foreign workers in our midst. I was led to seek out Deuteronomy 24:14, which said starkly, "Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns".

Now that this underbelly has been exposed, what should our response be? During pre-COVID days, our dear sister, Mui Choo, had noticed the Myanmarese painters in her estate and supplied them with drinks and food whenever the opportunity arose, along with flyers in their language from Bible Society. With a ready stock of flyers in different languages, she does this similarly for the other blue-collared workers – the security guards, cleaners and the like in her estate.

The Christian Pandemic

Interestingly, I came across a paraphrase of a comment from eminent Oxford evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, that religion was a virus that needed to be expunged. That is an atheist's view of Christianity. However, as the early church spread from 12 men to the entire world – today, perhaps we as Jesus' followers can follow suit, as we intentionally go about shedding the love of Jesus Christ abroad, in our hearts, for the lost amongst us. How wonderful it would be if we become the epicenter of the spread of the Christian faith in our part of the world, creating our own pandemic. But it has to start with each one of us purposefully determined to share the love of Christ to a broken world, so desperately in need of Him in these times. And then maybe, just maybe, we can hope for a whole new world, post-COVID.

Yeoh Chee Koon



A Time For REFLECTION



A few months ago, none of us would have ever imagined life in isolation. Leave of absence, stay home notice...these were foreign terms. Video conferencing while in existence would not be the norm and we attended seminars not webinars. Plus, wearing masks was something only bank robbers really did!

Yet in a short span of time, we've seen our lives turned upside down and literally put on hold. The streets are empty, shops are closed and our lives to a large extent, have come to a standstill. And in a way, it's probably been good for many of us. It has made us take a pause in life and given us a chance to rethink how we live our lives.

In short, here are some of the lessons I've learnt:-

Change is inevitable and unexpected

We had no choice, so we changed our lifestyles and began living simpler lives. That means, if we want to, we can choose to lead simpler lives. But the question is, do we want to? Most of us don't. Many of the things we have, we don't really need. But we enjoy these "extras" in life and it isn't entirely wrong. I guess it's only when these "extras" get in the way and become an obstacle in life (just like the man who could not leave his riches behind to follow Christ) –then, yes, it becomes a problem.

Absence makes the heart grow fonder

The first week home was a luxury. You could wake up late, there was no need to ferry the kids around, family meals were unhurried. Then, with each passing week, seeing each other 24/7, having to worry about every single meal, chasing the kids to ensure they do their HBL (home based learning), I was ready to pack the kids off to boarding school! (Thankfully I can't afford it). The novelty had worn off, and the saying, too much of a good thing, is indeed true. Short breaks (absences) allow all of us to stay sane.

This isolation period has taught me that life is all about compromises. Sometimes, we need to give more than we take. In fact, sometimes we just need to give without expecting anything in return. Only when we have this give / take equation constantly working, can a family truly work well together.

Time to smell the roses

We were forced to slow down. There was time to smell the roses...but you know what, I really don't enjoy doing that. I'm not a "slow down" kind of guy; I'm more of a "hurry up" type.

I don't really enjoy sitting around at home doing nothing. My idea of relaxing is fixing up stuff around the house. I'll be eating breakfast, looking around, and in that moment decide that the walls need a new coat of paint. Or I'll see a few cracks in the corner and decide I need to find the wall plaster to seal it up. I'm always "up" to something and I enjoy being that way. So, slowing down was, and is difficult.

There is time, but what we choose to do with that time, that is much harder to change. We may have the opportunity, but we must want to make the changes ourselves otherwise the extra time is of no use. So, I'm not smelling roses yet, but I am walking instead of running these days.

We have had time for reflection and reflection is good. But in my opinion, reflection must come with action. Reflecting in itself is pointless if all you are going to do is "reflect". Get up and make the change and turn reflection into action.

As it's written in the book of James 2:17, "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead". And as the famous marketing slogan would say, "Just do it!"

Steven Chia



LOCKDOWN...

But not locked out

We've been on many holidays together, my husband and I, but those were halcyon days full of fun, food and discovery! But having him home with me 24/7 for a whole month? That would present a whole different ballgame... a sobering thought, a veritable challenge...

When the 'Circuit Breaker' measures were announced, I literally had a panic attack! How were we going to share our living space amicably? What would our daily life be like? Would we do our own thing, only to pass each other along the corridor, and exchange inane pleasantries? What about lunches – I'm not a big fan of lunch, and normally grab something on the go, while for him it's a meal. He's a morning person...and I'm not!! And the list goes on – you wouldn't believe we've been married for over 30 years! Vive la difference, as they say in France.

There have lately been newspaper reports in Japan and the UK of a marked increase in domestic violence, and I gave a stern warning to my husband that I might start physically abusing him if he were to give me too much grief, and not play by MY rules! Afterall, he's the one invading MY space: how would he feel if I were to spend a month at his office?

He's up, as usual, at the crack of dawn, while I, with my chronic insomnia, might have just fallen asleep. Then my day starts slowly, sometime after 9 am, whilst he's already done half a day's work! Our body clocks are completely out of sync!! He's ready for lunch at noon, while I've just had breakfast!

Anyway, as I write this, he's hijacked the dining table as his office, (which actually works out well, as I then have the study to myself), and I had to say goodbye to the idea of doing 1,000 piece jigsaw puzzles, as the table cannot accommodate the both of us.

I'm a creature of habit, and normally spend a large part of my day at my studio (which is not at home), where I paint or draw in absolute silence – not even with music. But now I can't work from home as my art creates a lot of residue, from charcoal dust to oil paint spills.

So no art...what then? I guess books would have been a logical alternative. But we live in an apartment, and when he's on his conference calls – which is most of the time – the voices resonate throughout the apartment, and I can't concentrate, I'm distracted.

But, hey, don't take me too seriously...it's all tongue-in-cheek! I'm just trying to make fun of our circumstances and not be too serious in an otherwise dire situation, where thousands have lost their lives to the virus.

I have to proclaim we are indeed blessed. We are healthy, we have food on the table, a roof over our heads, and are happy together; our daughter is studying in New York City, and she, too, is safe. So I am ever so grateful for His grace and mercy. All I do every day is to turn to Him with all my concerns and trust His promises. Philippians 4:6-7: "Do not be anxious about anything but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

May Oon

A NEW FATHER

Copes In Challenging Times

A week before our country entered into 'Circuit Breaker' (CB) mode, God's blessing came to my family, as we celebrated the birth of our first-born baby girl, Eliza, on 23 March! Rachel and I praised our Heavenly Father as the Bible reminds us that "Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him" (Psalm 127:3).

During the Chinese New Year and even before that, I remember working on a long to-do-list which included what and when to purchase essential baby paraphernalia. I was already planning a number of celebratory activities for Eliza such as her one-month birthday bash! But I eventually told myself and my wife to relax and enjoy the process and that everything would fall into place.

However, God brought Eliza into the world a week earlier, and the CB followed closely the same week. I was feeling panicky, and within days, before we, together with the nation, retreated into our caves, I scrambled to get everything done! And thank God I completed most of it in the nick of time!

As a first-time father, I have anxieties on how I can support my wife in taking care of Eliza. Friends, who are seasoned fathers, tell me that it's only normal, and one wise Christian brother even said, "Support your wife and God will support you!" While I agree with my encouragers, I was also concerned about the virus and how to protect my family.

Besides using Eliza's UV steriliser box as a germ buster for everything and anything, except my mobile phone, I carefully reviewed my activities, coming up with a new set of Do's and Don'ts! For example, I would shop for groceries once a fortnight, instead of twice a week - I also go the extra-mile by shopping at 5am in the morning! Prudence and vigilance in going about were constantly on my mind, to the point of my reusing an N95 mask over a new surgical one!



On the third week of adjusting to this new normal, I woke up one morning with itchy and watery eyes, and an irritable throat! My immediate fear was that I might have caught the virus! A thorough medical examination, which included a lung X-ray, showed that it was just an allergic reaction to dust mites that could be treated with antihistamine. Thank God!

As I share, we are still in CB mode and living in challenging times, especially in welcoming a newborn baby into this world. But as afraid as I am, God reminds me to pray. *"If 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" (2 Chronicles 7:14). "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).*

Friends, especially those who, like me, are fathers of young children, be encouraged and look to Him - for our Heavenly Father is the Big Dad who will look after all of us. *"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3).*

Kevin Foo

More About The 'Circuit Breaker' Experience From Our Church Members....

The Joys of the 'Circuit Breaker'

Re-discovering the marvels of Creation. We spent hours watching two sunbirds building a nest in our garden, their chicks hatching and feeding until they learnt to fly.

Contemplating. We listened, script in hand, to Handel's Messiah and Bach's St Matthew's Passion. We watched sermons by our church pastors, Bishops, Pope Francis...

Methodically exchanging love, encouragement and hope. We had 3 long FaceTime / landline chats each day, with friends and family in various parts of the world.

Virtual grandparenting. Joyfully watching my four grandchildren (aged 7 months to 10 years old) learn to crawl, learn a new song, delight in a thunderstorm, and discuss The Diary of Anne Frank.

Online managing. Remotely helping with the finances, fundraising, and well-being of residents in St John's Home for Elderly Persons.

Relishing seldom-tasted heritage curries prepared by our longtime helper.

Vijendran Alfreds

I like staying at home. I can read more. But I miss seeing my friends. It gets a bit boring after a while. I also miss seeing the alley cats as I have not been out of the house in weeks. But I managed to bake cookies for the first time when before this, I had never bothered to try. So, in a way, the Circuit Breaker is both a good and a bad thing.

Hannah Lum (aged 12)

During this pandemic, Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want..." came alive for me. The lease for our apartment was expiring in May and we started praying and asking Father God to guide us, not realising at that time, the extent of disruption the virus would cause. Fortunately, our property agent advertised early and found a new tenant just before the Circuit Breaker (CB) hit. We found a new apartment in time and a mover to help us on 29 April, during the CB. Praise God for His provision and His perfect timing.

Imelda Fyffe

This period has taught me to have a heart of gratitude. When I get frustrated about the overloaded internet connection affecting my work, media reminds me that there are others who worry about their job security. There are also many others living in cramped spaces needing to share one laptop for home-based learning. Being in the comfort of our homes, it really puts our lives into perspective. Whenever we slip into the familiar (be it complaining, lamenting, getting frustrated), it is time to take a step back, take a deep breath and thank God for what we have, while praying for those who are struggling during this period.

Janice Lie

