



新加坡长老会伯特利堂
BETHEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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11th Apr 2020, Saturday

To: Pastors, EDC, worshippers of Bethel Presbyterian Church,

Dear brothers and sisters, shalom!

Learning to wait patiently: Israel was lost in BC 722 while Judah in BC 586. Israelites asked God, “How long more?” A child on a road trip asked his parents impatiently, “How long more?” Church may ask the same, “How long more?” How long more before we could raise our voices to worship and pray, read and proclaim Your Word aloud, comfort, reassure and edify with Your Word... how long more?



Imagine the Eleven: The Lord is dead; the Rabbi is no longer. Now, what shall we do? Jesus could heal the blind and the cripple walk, calm the storm and cast the spirits, even raised the dead alive. Not even He can restore Israel, “how long more” do we wait? How did the Eleven go through the day after Jesus was buried? The pictures in my mind are filled with darkness, despair, despondence and desolation... “How long more” must we wait?



All local churches have stopped on-site services, but none stopped worshipping God, Bethel included.¹ Wave upon wave, advisories have changed, pushing the day of on-site worship resumption further away. Now, we hear increasing number of confirmed cases, recording new daily records. Clusters sprouted and more unlinked cases emerged.² If “Circuit Breaker” is not working as it should be, there is a greater chance to intensify and prolong this measure.³ “How long more” must we endure?

Wait upon the Lord: No matter if it is 3 days or 2,000 years, waiting for the realisation of a promise is an endless journey. Which disciple remembers Lord Jesus says three times over of His impending death and resurrection?⁴ Who knows the ancient state of Israel will be restored 2,000 years later in 1948?⁵ Once a promise is realised, wait will turn into exaltations!

While waiting in the unknown, it is natural for us to focus on the bad news. Naturally, we will be impatient; and we also know, the more impatient we become, the more anxious we get. Logically, we will be frustrated; and we also know, the more frustrated we become, the more despondent we get. But once all these are over, we shall sing songs of pure joy!

In this pandemic, several members learnt valuable lessons, that we have to wait upon the Lord and seek refuge in Him. The Psalmist recaps, “The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” (Ps 18:2) And, even though “they confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the Lord was my support.” (Ps 18:18)

We seek refuge in God because we believe He is sovereign. The Psalmist claims, “The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord is enthroned as King forever.” (Ps 29:10) And right after this verse, the Lord enthroned promises us that we can receive

¹ <https://www.google.com/search?q=MCCY+adviosry+to+RO&oq=MCCY+adviosry+to+RO&aqs=chrome..69i57j5503j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8> , taken on 11th Apr 2020, 3:31pm.

² <https://www.gov.sg/features/covid-19> , taken on 11th Apr 2020, 3:33pm.

³ <https://www.straitstimes.com/politics/circuit-breaker-may-be-extended-if-virus-not-controlled> , taken on 11th Apr 2020, 3:42pm.

⁴ “22 When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. 23 They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life.” And the disciples were filled with grief.” (Matt 17:22-23)

⁵ <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/state-of-israel-proclaimed> , taken on 11th Apr 2020, 3:43pm.



and experience, "The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace." (PS 29:11) In this period of difficulty, our Lord strengthens and blesses us with peace, amen!?

Challenges in Preschool: We have 2 preschool centres, totalling nearly 200 lovely children. Due to "Circuit Breaker", we have 8 children from parents working in essential services. The ratio between child and teacher is 1:1. If the siblings are coming together, they will be assigned with a teacher. Off-site teachers will be conducting classes on-line from home, while taking care of their broods at home and juggling household chores. Occasionally, they will have to communicate with the parents too. Let us remember the teachers and children, the cook and co-labourers. May our Lord bless them and keep them.

God is Jehovah Jireh: God provides all Bethel needs. I believe this year is no exception. Usually, there is no hefty surplus or deficit in our church finance. Our reserves are not massive, and the interim relief packages provided by the government are of tremendous assistance. At the moment, apart from staff salaries, mission and ministry make up most of our expenses. Frankly, in view of today's situation, it is naturally that our pastors and leaders are concerned of our financials.

In the 137 years' history of Bethel, we have witnessed the protection and provision from God. "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" (Matt 6:26) Not too long ago, concerned for the cash flow of Bethel, a worshipper electronically transferred offering for the first time and ensured it was received. Another, wanted to help make sure that once live-streaming is possible in Annex Hall, the best lightings will be installed. Before Matt 6:26, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." (Matt 6:24) Dear brothers and sisters, I do not know of their financial situations. It could be a case of the "poor widow with 2 copper coins" (Luke 21:2-4); or, the situation of a rich but repented and restored Zacchaeus, giving "half of my possessions to the poor" (Luke 19:8). But I believe, "in the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy



and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.” (2 Cor 8:2). For that, I am thankful to God.

Economists are pre-empting us a great depression, while the government is preparing us to brace the economic impact. Some companies have to lay off workers, cut pay, reduce work days and take no-pay leave. We have heard and maybe personally been involved. A good government takes care of its citizens. Recently, our Finance Minister has announced 3 relief packages, totally \$59.9 billion.⁶ Whether the package do assist the citizens and enterprise, I think only the beneficiaries will be grateful. But I ask ourselves to direct our eyes and fix on our Lord, in faith we pray, “Give us today our daily bread.” (Matt 6:11)

Restoration of freedom passed: A sister revealed in tears, that once she could freely enter the market, but now has to pass through “gantries”. Will this image invoke complaints, or instruct us to treasure what we hold? In future, I think I will be more hospitable, I will hug my parents warmly, I will regard our relationship in Lord more importantly, I will be more optimistic at every corner of life’s journey. From a certain angle, does it look like a life who has just experienced resurrection, revival and restoration?

On-site worship service will be restored in the days to come. Although the meaning of worship includes worship our God together as a Body of Christ, but let us not forget, at any point in time, Covid or not, we can live a life befitting as a disciple of Christ! Let us take full advantage of this historical moment in Holy Week and ponder: When freedom is restored, what would we want ourselves to transform and renew into? May the Lord bless you and keep you.

Humbly yours,

Rev Lim Tau Wei

⁶ <https://www.businesstimes.com.sg/government-economy/singapore-budget-2020/solidarity-budget-governments-response-to-covid-19-to-cost>, taken on 11th Apr 2020, 3:48pm.