

Bondage Of Fear During The Pandemic

By Elder (Dr) Alex Tang

We are living in fear. One tiny RNA virus named SARS-CoV-2, averaging 0.125 micron in length, brought our civilization as we know it to its knees and caused great health and socio-economic disruptions. With the COVID-19 pandemic infecting 35 million people with more than a million deaths, all of us irrespective of our social status, ethnicity or country's healthcare level of care are at risk. Especially vulnerable are those who are over 65 years of age with co-morbidities. Countries, states and cities are forced into lockdowns where everyone is confined to their homes to prevent the spread of the virus. The economic ramifications of the lockdowns with retrenchments, closing of companies and millions falling below the poverty line is a sad unfolding drama. For many of us, our fear is our constant companion in these times. We are fearful of our health, our safety, our future and of the future of our communities. After about seven months, this fear has permeated into our subconscious and is manifesting as irritability, anger, anxiety and depression. Often we do

not know why we are feeling the way we do. Some people have cleverly named it "Covid-19 fugue" but it is actually a bondage of fear. This bondage of fear kept us blind to the very thing we need – hope.

Zephaniah, a minor prophet speaking at a time of great socio-economic disruptions caused by the Babylonian conquest (death, pestilence, famine), noted, "The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in

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his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing” (Zephaniah 3:17 NIV). While we are in bondage, it is easy to lose sight of the Lord who offers hope. Instead, we are drawn into the downward spiral of fear, anger and anxiety to deep depression. This depression is different from the medical condition depression which needs expert psychiatric/psychological help and sometimes medications. This depression caused by the bondage of fear is caused by our present circumstances, the resilience of our spirits, and the power of principalities and power that hold sway in this fallen world.

Paul writing to the Corinthian Christians who lived in a world similar to ours with its natural and socio-political disruptions explained how to break the bondage of fear in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NIV)

³ For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

With the spiritual weapons supplied by the Holy Spirit, we can take

responsibility for our mental health by breaking the bondage of fear. There are three steps we can take to break this bondage of fear.

First, we name the fear. Naming, in the biblical sense, is knowing. We have many fears so it is helpful for us to ask the Holy Spirit to help us identify or name them. Then we subject each of these fears to the following rubric.

	CAN CONTROL	CAN'T CONTROL
CAN ACT	Situation Mastery	Ceaseless Striving
CAN'T ACT	Accepting	Letting Go

1. A fear situation where we have control and can act – situation mastery

This is a situation where we have the ability to control and to take action. One example is washing hands, wearing masks, staying at home, social distancing and attending services online. Here we have situation mastery. There is no need to fear being infected by the virus.

2. A fear situation where we can't control but can act – ceaseless striving

A situation where we can do something but are in a situation

where we have no control over. One example is a person suffering from cancer. That person has no control over the cancer in his/her body. However, the person can do something about seeking treatment. Often, many people are not satisfied with sticking to the treatment of a medical oncologist. They will try alternative medical treatments, faith healings, herbs and even some obscure claims from the internet. This is ceaseless striving. Our fear drives us to keep striving, often in vain.

3. A fear situation where we can control but can't act – accepting

Here is a situation where we have control but can't act. This is often a very fearful situation as our natural instinct is to do something. Not being able to do anything is very stressful and anxiety provoking. One example is if we own a hotel, we have total control over the total operations of the hotel. Unfortunately, our hotel is in a country or city under pandemic lockdown. We cannot act to get guests because of the movement control order. We fear that we will lose the hotel to the bank. Millions of business owners, especially the smaller ones, live with this fear. It is also likely that many churches will be closing because of the pandemic.

4. A fear situation where we can't control and can't act – letting go

There are situations we find ourselves in that we have no control over and there is nothing we can do about it. Some of us live in fear for our loved ones who live in another country or city. We not only worry for their safety but we fear for them too. These are very fearful situations but if we are able to name them, we can break the bondage of these fears.

Second step after naming our fears is to befriend them. If our fear falls under the category of situation mastery, do something about it. We will find that the hold fear has on us, as we do something about the situation, lessening. In the ceaseless striving category, we should choose to be realistic and not just act to do something. In the last two category, it is about accepting and let the Lord do what He has purposed for our lives. This is where trust and hope come in.

The third and final step is to continue praying. Fear will always try to keep us in bondage and away from our trust and hope in God. We have to be vigilant in our thinking. Do not be distracted and let our thoughts be drawn to where our fears dwell, especially in ceaseless striving and areas where we must let go and let God. It is so easy to be drawn back into the bondage of fear. Paul has the antidote for us in Philippians 4:6–8 (NIV)

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.



We are living in difficult and fearful times. Frederick Buechner in *Beyond Words: Daily Readings in the ABC's of Faith* writes, “Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid.” It is easy to let our fears take control of our lives. We may be living in bondage to fear without knowing it. God has given us the means to break this bondage and the freedom to live with our fears. The key is trust and hope in the Lord. May we live in freedom from fear. Reinhold Niebuhr's Serenity Prayer is a good guard against living in bondage of fear.

God, give me grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed,
Courage to change the things which should be changed,
And the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.

Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
Taking, as Jesus did,
This sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it,
Trusting that You will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will,
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.

Amen.

From A Pastor's Desk



By Rev (Dr) Chuah Seong Peng

Heaven is Real

Is heaven real, something you live with and look forward to? Jesus makes it very clear – heaven is real. He told the disciples in John 14:2-3 that heaven is a real place where He has gone to prepare a place for them and will come back to take them to be with Him. The disciples were reminded and assured again of heaven in Acts 1:11b by the angels as Jesus ascended to heaven, *“This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”*

The Bible is full of saints in the Old and New Testaments who lived with the reality of heaven that spurred them on to live righteously in

obedience to God because they had a clear hope of the future. By faith, Abraham left his home country to go as a stranger to a foreign land because he was looking forward to the city of God – heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 11:10). King David was comforted to accept his son’s death because he knew he would see him again in heaven (2 Samuel 12:23). The psalmist in Psalm 73 found relief in his distress over the prosperity of the wicked when he realized that their final destiny is in God’s hand and he will be vindicated. As for himself, he knew God was always with him and would finally receive him into paradise. In the New Testament, Paul, Peter, James and John were certain of heaven and were living, looking forward to it especially in times of sufferings. Paul says in Philippians 3:13-14, forgetting what was behind, he pressed on heavenward to win the prize God has called him to.

Living with Hope of Heaven

For some Christians today, heaven can be more of a theological concept than a living reality that holds little relevance to how they live. This is unfortunate, for heaven is such a rich spiritual blessing and resource God has provided for us to live in this challenging world. What happens when we live with this rich spiritual resource of a sure hope of heaven?

Let me briefly share some perspectives that will be altered and the ways our life on earth will be wonderfully changed as we set our hearts and minds on things above (Colossians 3:1-2).

Firstly, our posture toward God and the world will be radically changed. When we are consumed by the reality of God in eternity, we will see things on earth as God sees. We will see and live for things of eternal value and not of the temporal that will not last. We will pursue things in this life that is of eternal value and will not be caught up in the rat race of the world and find rest for our souls.

Secondly, our perspectives on possessions will be revised. We will see our time, talents, material possessions and finance as commodities for investment into the kingdom of God rather than just for personal consumption and gain. We will not just be using them for some good but investing them into something of eternal value and greater return.

Thirdly, our perceptions of people will change. We will have new perspectives of the importance of salvation, for everyone to join us to share in this great eternal life and live with the urgency to be His witnesses

in the last days. We will pray more fervently for them; and will act and respond more readily with unconditional compassion, generosity and love towards them.

Fourthly, heaven changes our perspective and understanding of pain and pleasure. We will be better equipped to deal with pain and suffering. As Paul wrote in Romans 8:18, *“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”*

A clear view of better and glorious things on the other side encourages and enables us to persevere on this side. Furthermore, we know that whatever suffering we endure is temporary.

When it comes to pleasures on earth, we soon learn that as Paul tells us, on this side, pleasure no matter how good is only fleeting. The depth of these pleasures cannot compare to the ongoing pleasures we will enjoy forever in heaven. In fact, whatever we enjoy here is merely a reflection and a foretaste of the better things to come. This thought of a better and more fulfilling lasting pleasure of pure joy will surely spur us to live for heaven. The thoughts of better work, food, holiday, friends, leisure and

even pets waiting for us may be food for thought and great motivation for some of us!

Finally, we will have a transformed sense of identity and security. We will have the full right of the citizenship of heaven where we are children of God who belong to Him. We will not be '*pendatang*' or aliens and enjoy the full privileges of citizenship. We will have a place that we can truly call our home to come back to. This is not counting the great pleasure and joy of being with God and the people whom we know and love when we are 'home at last'.

Living with the reality of heaven has tremendous implications and relevance. It will change radically our posture toward God and the world, our views of possessions, people, pain, pleasure, identity and security. How do we know that we believe in heaven and live with this reality in our life? To do so, let's examine the ledger of our checkbooks and daily planners of our life. Do we invest our time, energy, talents and resources into things of lasting values? Do we see heaven in how we view people and the way we live with them especially in the light of the importance of salvation? Are we experiencing peace and joy in the midst of pain and suffering or are we

bogged down with fear and anxiety? Does earthly pleasure stimulate our hearts toward a thirst for the better pleasure forevermore in heaven? How much do we live like Paul who wants to go and willing to stay, rather than wanting to stay and willing to go to heaven?

When hope of heaven is a reality in our hearts, we will love more freely, give more generously, worship more deeply, pray more fervently, suffer and sacrifice more readily. Indeed, when we believe the other side of heaven is better and real, everything on this side will be lived radically rearranged, according to His kingdom values and purpose. We will live the full life in Christ as He has promised us and enjoy and glorify Him forever. Indeed, heaven is such a beautiful and wonderful place God has prepared for us. Let us live with hope of heaven in our hearts! Maranatha!



Racism - The Curse Of Mankind

By Dr Ngeow Took Fah

A recent video that went viral on the internet showed a black American overpowered by a white policeman whose knee relentlessly pressed against the neck of the man lying helplessly on the ground. Three other police officers stood by and heard the man pleading repeatedly 'I can't breathe'. They took no action and poor George Floyd died 8 minutes later from asphyxia.

This senseless and brutal act of American police promptly led to protests all over the world with people marching and displaying 'Black Lives Matter' slogan. Such a movement against racism has been a common sight in American cities from north to south. It's recurrence is an indication of the deep rootedness of racism in American society.

Indeed racism has a long history in the United States. With the arrival of English colonialists in the eighteenth century, land was opened up, churches were planted and in every home and farm, negroes laboured incessantly, their lives shrouded in total darkness. Originating in West Africa, these negroes were transported to the English port Liverpool where the long and

perilous voyage began. One of the many slave traders was John Newton, who later realised his inhuman business, repented and transformed to be a notable preacher, better known by his hymn 'Amazing Grace'.

Many slaves died before reaching their new world. Life was equally tough for those who survived and arrived. But the negroes were docile and tolerant people, never complained about their harsh white masters. Their fate was lucidly told by Stephen Foster who wrote the song 'Old Black Joe' in the year 1860. He was said to be inspired by the slave working for his father-in-law. The mood of the music is one of gentle melancholy, of sorrow without bitterness. Yet there is a wistful tenderness in the song. I used to sing this stanza in my childhood.

'Gone are the days when my heart
was young and gay,
Gone are my friends from the cotton
fields away,
Gone from the earth to a better land I
know,
I hear their gentle voices calling old
black Joe.'

Abraham Lincoln, a lawyer deeply committed to humanity, was elected the sixteenth president of the United States in 1861. He was zealous in his campaign for abolishing slavery but faced tremendous opposition from the southern states. Two years later, he

succeeded in getting his Emancipation Proclamation passed and physical slavery was officially abolished. A bitter civil war then erupted with the eleven southern Confederate States.

Lincoln delivered his 272 word Gettysburg address in 1863 to commemorate the fallen soldiers. Besides affirming the birth of a new nation of freedom, and that all men are created equal, his speech ended with the oft quoted saying about the gist of democracy: government of the people, by the people and for the people.

After his assassination in 1865, several civil rights bills were passed but poorly enforced. African Americans had to wait for nearly 100 years before they found a leader in Martin Luther King. He led them on a massive March on Washington in 1963, demanding job opportunities and freedom for the black people. He made public his secret wish in his speech 'I have a dream', in which he dreamed for a United States devoid of segregation and racism. In recognition of his non-violent fight for civil rights, he was awarded the 1964 Nobel Prize for peace. Like Lincoln, he was also assassinated, in 1968.

Today, African Americans still suffer from police brutality, judicial injustice and social segregation. For

example, out of 15 high profile police shooting deaths of black Americans, only one officer faced prison time. The Economist reported that for young black Americans, being killed by police is now the sixth leading cause of death. Such indiscriminate killing results in the eventual creation of 'Black Lives Matter' movement.

Published in 1960, Harper Lee's novel 'To kill a mockingbird' gives a vivid account of prejudice and discrimination, symbolic and symptomatic of racism, permeating through all strata of American society. Atticus, a brilliant and upright lawyer, failed to defend an innocent black man, who was falsely accused of raping a white woman of dubious character. The all-white jury found Tom guilty as charged even though the evidence produced was in favour of the accused. The book was so popular that it was ranked as the most read book in America. Lee was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and her novel became a prescribed text for GCE O Level English Literature.

Pope Francis commented: 'we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form, and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life'. In the same vein, someone wrote in MALAYSIAKINI YOURSAY: 'You can't be a member of a race-based party and be honourable and fair to others.'

Racism can be defined as discrimination on account of race, based on certain physical characteristics such as skin colour, or cultural practice. Racialism refers to belief in a theory that race determines human traits and capacities. Since 1989 when Oxford Dictionary Second Edition included the term racism, it is now accepted as synonym of racialism. Unlike racism which applies to individuals, racialism pertains more to a racial group or a political party, and could have been Hitler's elaborate rationale for the extermination of six million Jews.

Individually, the racist exhibits discriminatory or abusive behaviour towards others of a different race. Systemic or institutional racism refers to discrimination through legal provisions involving various fields such as civil service, education, job opportunities, public amenities, etc. A good example of racism in law enforcement is seen in Australia where the aborigines form only 2% of the population but account for 28% of adult prison inmates. So the United States, the self proclaimed guardian of human rights, is not the only country guilty of institutional racism.

While a long held belief in racialism theory may be popular in the West, colonialism soon leads to the emergence and growth of racialism in the third world countries. Besides

robbing the natives of their natural resources, the colonialists turn their servants and workers into slaves without any rights. Some unscrupulous politicians deliberately create racialism in their multiracial country so that they can perpetuate their divide and rule policy. In the case of coloured people who abide in white supremacy rule, the crux of the matter is their having internalised the ideology of assumed superiority of their master.

Racism becomes a barrier to mutual understanding between people of different ethnicity, language, culture and faith. It is universal and no longer confined to black and white. Its manifestation and severity can vary from trivial verbal abuse to genocide through ethnic cleansing.

To Christians racism is a sin. However, there are Christians who are also racists. Regardless of their faith, the fundamental problem with racists is their inability to love others of different race, because their hearts are choked with prejudice, ignorance, arrogance and hatred. To love someone whom you hate is humanly impossible. Only with the power of the Holy Spirit can a stony heart be rendered soft and tender. In this respect, some scriptures that convey biblical truth may help to enlighten the bigoted mind.

1. 'So God created man in his own image' (Genesis 1:27). Since every

person bears the image of God, he is equal to another person and in that sense has equal rights. That all men are created equal is also enshrined in the American Declaration of Independence. What an irony!

2. 'And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself' (Matt. 22:39). By fulfilling these two greatest commands, love for God and for neighbour, a person has no problem keeping all the other commandments and is well equipped to nip racism in the bud.

3. 'God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right' (Acts 10: 34-35). God is impartial and 'colour blind'. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. (Psalm 89:14). So fair play on level ground should be the guiding principle of life.

4. 'Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres' (1 Corinthians. 13:6-7). Godly love as narrated by Paul is directed outward towards others, not inward towards ourselves. We can do this only with God's help to set aside our desire and instinct, and to love without expecting anything in return.

5. 'For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall

of hostility' (Ephesians 2:14). Believers and non-believers can coexist and in peace because Christ had broken down the walls of prejudice and hostility, reconciled believers to God and unified us in one body.

6. 'Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble' (1 Peter 5:5). The powerful must not be arrogant and lord over the weak. The majority must take care of the minority, and safeguard their rights such as freedom of worship and existence of vernacular schools.

7. 'The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all, he has compassion on all he has made' (Psalm 145: 8,9). It is important that we remember God's attributes so that we, having been made in His image, may share many of His characteristics, thus providing a solid basis for our self-worth.

So how should Christians face the problem of racism? I think we should emulate the example of the Good Samaritan in Jesus' parable (Luke 10:25-37), and let our love for neighbour overcome the racism in us. But ultimately the solution hinges on the willingness of people, whatever their skin colour, to yield to God our Creator, who looks not on our outward appearance but on our hearts (1 Samuel 16:7).

Teo Family Update

A heart of gratitude and thanksgiving

After attending the online GO Conference, there was also the Get Ready Conference where 4 new Canadian recruits were preparing to serve overseas. Chris was able to also join the 2 week online course to learn more about how these orientations are done in OM Canada. During September, there were also some personnel changes in the office as a colleague just retired and another will move on to serve at the international level. A new People Services Director has just joined the team and she will oversee the personnel department of which Chris is a part. Pray for us as we go through all these transitions and leadership change.

During September, we were also helping Leanne with the preparations for her wedding which just took place on 26th September. Our hearts are filled with thanksgiving and gratitude to our Lord for the many blessings that He has showered us with.

Count Your Blessings, Name Them One By One

- We thank God that we can be together with the children at this phase of our lives, after having been away physically from them for many years.
- We thank God that we can attend Leanne's wedding during this



time of pandemic when travel restrictions are in place.

- We thank God that we can experience how He has taken care of our children since taking them with us on missions when they were so young, and they are now both adults and married.
- We thank God for the open door to serve with OM Canada and continue to be involved with cross cultural missions.
- We thank God that He has enlarged the place of our tent to now be on the sending side of the missions spectrum, and to use the experience we have had to now send workers to the field.
- We thank God for protection and health during the pandemic and for patience and grace during the waiting and transition period over the last one year.
- We thank god for the churches, family and friends who have

come alongside to partner with us in prayer and finance.

- We thank God that next month on October 6th, we celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary and Chris turns 61!



- We thank God for a new chapter in life and ministry and we look forward to what He has in store for us in the coming years.

Yes, our hearts are filled with thanksgiving and gratitude to our Lord, and it has been our privilege to embark on this faith journey and to be able to keep on, keeping on after 20 years. It indeed has been a road less travelled and we have experienced the faithfulness and grace of God. We acknowledge that this faith journey would not have been possible if not for brothers and sisters who have sacrificed their resources, loved us and trusted us as we continue on this path. We give God the glory and praise for



your partnership in the work of the gospel. God bless you all and continue to protect us all during these challenging days.

We always welcome friends to keep in contact with us and share how we can be praying for you all regularly as well.

Blessings and Shalom,
Chris and Joo Ping
September 2020
molek27@gmail.com

Human Intelligent Thoughts On Artificial Intelligence (AI)

By Elder (Dr) Alex Tang

John Wyatt, pediatrician and research scientist, conducted an excellent webinar on “Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Healthcare”. This webinar is part of a helpful series of webinar by International Christian Medical Dental Association (ICMDA) which has been held weekly since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Focusing on healthcare, Wyatt highlighted the rapid progress Artificial Intelligence (AI) has made in healthcare. Initially using machine learning on algorithms and pattern recognition, it improved much since then. AI now appears in the real world as Babylon, a phone app that diagnoses medical conditions better than general practitioners (GPs) in the UK and Woebit, another phone app that talks and encourages the depressed. This is only the visible part of the iceberg. Thousands of AI are already embedded in medical devices and robotic machines in the hospitals and are actively engaged in diagnosis, ensuring patient safety, and even in surgery. Wyatt’s Christian response to AI in healthcare is that AI does not provide the human solidarity

that face to face with another human being provides.



source: economictimes.indiatimes.com

John Lennox, apologist and mathematician, wrote in his 2020 book, 2084: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity, about the rapid rise of AI especially since 2012 with deep learning, the evolving of neural networks seems to be beyond human understanding. While acknowledging the use for AI in a wider perspective in general, especially in our social media, surveillance, big data, and self-driving cars, Lennox is careful to point out:

It is clearly one thing to try to build AI systems that seek to mimic aspects of what the human mind can do; it is an entirely different thing to try to

recreate what it feels to be human. Consciousness bars the way (kindle 153, 2020).

Lennox made the argument that (1) AI can mimic the human mind in thinking but (2) AI cannot have what we call consciousness. AI with pattern recognition and algorithm needs a lot of data input before it can 'think'. Even in deep learning, it will need to be programmed with millions of possible outcomes before it provides an outcome of its own. Hence AI 'thinking' is different from human thinking. As one AI expert pointed out, a young child can be taught what an elephant is by giving that child one picture of an elephant. An AI will need input of millions of photos of elephants just to be able to identify the animal. The other argument is that an AI cannot have a consciousness or a soul no matter the type of programming it receives. Consciousness is what distinguish a living human brain and a dead human brain.

One discussion that Lennox gave a lot of space to is whether AI can evolve into a superintelligence like God. Lennox argues against that, stating that the created cannot surpass the creator. In my article Artificial Intelligence and God I offered a different argument. A superintelligence, if it is even possible to build, cannot transcend space and time. Whether it will

possess the will to power and dominate like human beings is best left to science fiction writers and their dystrophic futures.

AI is an emerging technology and as responsible stewards, we are to control and guide its development. Like any technology, AI has the potential to improve human flourishing. It also has the potential for human destruction. Therefore, like any technology, it should be used to serve human beings.

The Hokkien Service

By Grace Soon

The sudden onset of the Covid19 pandemic has taken us all by surprise. Initially, much peace and faith were shaken, as fear set in for some of us, because we do not know where or when the Covid 19 virus could strike us. Reflecting through these eight months, surely it's the Lord's mercy that saw us through. His compassion and peace have enveloped and carried us through such a time as this, as we cried to Him and looked to Him daily for strength and courage.

Under the MCO, all the church and house fellowship gatherings came to a halt. But thanks to God, through the electronic devices, we are able to continue our church services online. The other church group gatherings, except the Hokkien Service, met over Zoom.

Now, with praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, our English services have commenced meeting physically in the Faith Hall following strict SOP. Likewise, the KBM services too have also began meeting physically. For those who are unable to attend the services, live streaming and recording of the weekend worship services are available. The CELLS and Children Ministry continue to meet over Zoom.

WHATS THEN WITH THE HOKKIEN SERVICE ?

Though the Hokkien Service could not meet physically, the Lord is watching over her with His banner of love. We are keeping in touch with most of the members and friends.

The Hokkien Service is yet to meet physically because of its unique fellowship, in the sense that the congregation are all senior and some are in the ninety plus age group. Most of them need walking aids like walking sticks, walkers or wheelchairs to move around. They fall under the vulnerable age group, not advised to be outside their homes during this period of Covid 19 pandemic. But they are well remembered and are kept in touch in various ways. Visitations to the Hokkien members' homes are not encouraged by their family members.

During the MCO, Pastor Gan (who mostly did it alone) and some of us delivered food gifts from the Hokkien Service to the families who do not mind our presence. We stood at the gates and exchanged greetings and it was really good to see them physically. We hope our short drop-by visits did express some care and encouragement to them. We also made a delivery to an elderly Hokkien speaking pre-believer lady, mother of our former church member, whom I have been following up for

many years. She was taken by surprise and was happy that the Hokkien Service showed such a kind gesture to her.

We also keep in touch with our members by making frequent phone calls and forwarding of some short and appropriate video sermons to those who have smart phones or family members to help out. Lately, we also sent the weekly short Hokkien homilies given by a pastor in Singapore. These homilies are encouraging and laced with much humor. Pastor Gan obtained these talks for us.

The other half of the Hokkien Service people are the Hillville residents. Since the start of the Covid19 pandemic, we have also stopped conducting the monthly Bible Study and ministry in Hillville. It is good to see the familiar faces again over the Hillville Facebook site, viewing them in their daily activities with singing and devotion led by the staff of the home. I was told that there is a lady resident, who was regular in the Hokkien Service, kept lamenting “why no more Hokkien Service!”

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints” Psalm 116:15

This year several of our beloved members and friends from the Hokkien Service were called home to glory to be with the Lord. This

hymn came to mind as I was writing this sharing:

*“For all the saints who from their labors rest,
Who Thee by faith before the world confessed,
Thy name O Jesus, be forever blest:
Alleluia! Alleluia!”*

We remember these faithful and lovely elder children of the Lord. We thank the Lord for their friendship and fellowship. Their presence in the service had been an encouraging one. This is a short eulogy of each one whom I remember fondly.

Aunty Leng Eng, beloved mum of our Rev Dr Chuah. She was a regular worshiper and always had a sweet smile and gentle greetings for us. When she was not able to join us in the service because of her physical frailty, she continued to enjoy singing the Hokkien songs and praying when we visited her in the house. She went home to the Lord on January 31, just 2 months short of 92 years old. Her body was taken back to Taiping, her hometown for burial.

Aunty Myiow Kheng, was a Christian when she joined us at the beginning of our Hokkien Service. Her former church Hokkien speaking group closed down due to lack of workers. She was faithfully and regularly attending our services. Although she was the only Christian

in her family, her faith in Jesus was one of trust, always saying “ Ya Soh pang mong wa” (Jesus helped me) in her daily life. She posted our contact numbers and the photo she wanted for her funeral on the calendar in her house, ready for her children in the event she passed away. She lived with a son and a grandson, who were at work during my visits. I last visited her just before the MCO and she was fairly weak and believed that Jesus would help her home to Heaven. Indeed, she was called home to glory a month later at the age of 90, the 9th of May. At her funeral I was surprised (during the MCO) to meet a ‘multitude’ of more than 50 persons from her family, including all the in-laws. Praise the Lord, they were so attentive to the funeral gospel message given by Pastor Gan.

Brother Yong, attended the Hokkien Service some years back when we engaged his transport for some of the members. Last year, he accepted Jesus as his savior and was baptized in September. At the service he was attentive to the sermons, absorbing the teaching. Sometimes we discussed some of what he learned during the car ride. I noticed that he was always cheerful and pleasant over our conversation and was very patient in waiting for our senior aunties to get in and out of the car. We were all saddened when we heard that he was taken ill quite suddenly, because he was still transporting us

before the service was closed down. He did not complain of any physical pain then. I am glad I spoke to him, keeping social distancing, at his house when he was on hospital leave. The following week, he went home to eternal rest in the Lord on 30th June, at the age of 68.

Aunty Lai, was a Christian, resided in our Hillville Aged Care Home, and had been attending the Hokkien Service. She was soft spoken and can speak many dialects. In the earlier years before she was wheelchair bound, we could have quite a long chat together. Later, after she had a fall, she became rather quiet and smiled only when greeted. She went home to glory on July 19, aged 87 years.

Aunty Lau, age 97 years, was the oldest person in our congregation. She was a Cantonese speaking lady, a Christian and resided in Hillville. She was very regular in attending the service, usually seated at the back of the church in her wheelchair. She had an attentive mind and on some occasions she would verbalize her thoughts, even correcting some words she heard in the service. A faithful friend of our service, she was called home to glory on 9th August.

Aunty Tin Soon, beloved mum of our Rev Gan, was called home to glory on 8th October, at age 94. From the many tributes paid to her at the

wakes and funeral by family members, we knew she was well loved and cared for, just as she had also given them the same during her time with them.

Aunty Tin Soon and her husband uncle Gan, were baptized in our church. They first attended the Hokkien Service when it was held at Berea. After the home going of uncle Gan, aunty Tin Soon was more regular in joining us in the service whenever she came down to Johor Bahru. The Lord had sustained her with a strong body even though she had some heart problem. Whenever she was with us, we enjoyed her friendly company with her caring demeanor.

Praise God for all the people at the Hokkien Service. Surely, the Lord will continue to be our strength and guide us through this time until we could meet together in our service again.

NB: Contributions to Sinews newsletter, via email to spcheong88@gmail.com (in Microsoft Word format), in the form of articles, testimonies and original photographs (with captions) are welcome, but we reserve the right to edit them in the interest of HLCE. Views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent that of HLCE or the editor.

The Church Annual General Meeting

Sunday, September 20, 2020

