



## Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID 19 has finally made “landfall” on our shores in North America with incidences of “community outbreaks”. This means that infections have developed to such a point that authorities are unable to trace the origin of an infection. At the time of writing, California, New York State, Washington State, Florida and Colorado have declared states of emergency and churches in those states are making contingency plans to deal with the fallout from the pandemic to protect their congregants and their communities. Some churches have taken the drastic step of calling off worship services altogether.

### *What can your church do when your community is impacted?*

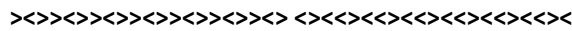
What can your church do about this outbreak when your community is impacted? Apart from following the guidelines from the health sector to pay attention to safeguarding your own health and those around you, you and your church need a perspective that is beyond simply reacting to the epidemic. Writing in the March 8, 2020 issue of his Sunday Weekly Bulletin and looking at the bigger picture, Rev. Ting Leung, Senior Pastor of the Crosspoint Church situated in the heart of the Silicon Valley in the San Francisco Bay Area, suggests we do the following in the event that we need to curtail the gathering of congregants in our churches:

1. **Make use of the Internet:** The Internet is not a substitute for personal contact, but it is a viable alternative in the event of reduced or cancelled gatherings. Brothers and sisters should become familiar with online worship, group meetings, bible studies, offering, pastoral communication, ministry meetings, etc. I encourage you to start experimenting with these activities online, and when we do end up like churches in many countries, we can still connect closely and seamlessly with our spiritual home.
2. **Build your Family Altar:** (When) church and personal activities outside the home are affected by the epidemic, people would stay home (and) family life would be more closely linked. This is a good time to set up a family altar... Using the Internet to worship together, using the courses and materials provided by the church to learn together, and praying together for the church and its members is a great opportunity to build a family altar.
3. **Care for the Needy:** (As) the gathering activities of the church are reduced, ... group leaders and members are encouraged to take the initiative to inquire and care for the members and our related seekers in need of pastoral care, especially for the elderly, the sick or those facing the crisis of life. A hello call from you, a prayer on the Internet, and a social media connection can be a source of inspiration and comfort in their (time of) weakness. The “goodness” of ... (members of your church) should be expressed in the plight of others (and reaching out to seekers to share with them the love and the witness of Jesus Christ.
4. **Grow in the Lord:** Fewer church meetings means you have more time to enjoy solitude. Why not use the time to learn and grow in the Lord? Focus on discipleship, focus on sermon review, and various forms of online learning resources. You can ask your ... pastor how you can grasp the crisis of this epidemic and (use it as) ... an opportunity for your (personal) growth in Christ.

These are helpful hints for your church as well. Start experimenting with the above suggestions and build your church spiritually. In any crisis, there is always “danger” and “opportunity”. Let us use it as an opportunity for spiritual growth for the glory of God.

For a helpful overall understanding of what COVID-19 is and how churches could evaluate their own situation and respond appropriately, watch this very helpful YouTube livestream recording of the “COVID-19 Town Hall: Responding Together as The Church” meeting on March 9, 2020 at the University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, WA by following this link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuwBsHjOxgE> Lifeway has come up with a training resource for free to churches to help pastors and church leaders respond to pandemics such as COVID-19. It contains training videos and checklists that are immediately applicable for your congregations and a sample pandemic policy that you can contextualize for your church. Visit: <https://ministrygrid.com/coronavirus>.

**Editor’s Note: Please comply with your local government directives with regards to COVID-19 and act accordingly for the well being of your congregation and your community as a positive witness for Christ.**



## **Ministry to those Affected by COVID-19 in China**

Since the first reported outbreak of the new coronavirus, COVID-19, in Wuhan, China in December 2019, we have been exploring ways through which we can do our small part to help alleviate the suffering there and to share the love of God with them. We recognize the immensity of the needs and ponder how we might make an impact with whatever we send just like what we did during Hurricane Harvey in the US, 2017. After some research, we are ready to make two recommendations to you:

- \* In the shorter term, we recommend that churches that want to contribute financially to help those in need there to do so through the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. They have contacts on the ground and 100% of what they receive goes directly to those in need. Please visit this link for more details: <https://www.imb.org/2020/02/24/coronavirus-response/>
- \* In the longer term, and as the waves of infection ebbs as it appears to be doing now with a reduction in the number of infected and with the number of reported deaths abating, we will be able to see more clearly what the real needs are on the ground. We expect many physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs to surface as a result of the epidemic. We believe that that would be the most strategic time to help and with the greatest impact made, especially on our brothers and sisters there. Therefore, in view of prevailing conditions, we advise patience and watchfulness. We do not want to be in a position where we have funds collected but are unable to dispense them.

In time, we will be sharing with you what our plans are when we are more certain about what we collect will be eventually distributed, reaching the intended recipients.

Pray with us for wisdom to do the right thing at the right time. Pray for our brothers and sisters there. Pray for ourselves here as we face COVID-19 on this side of the Pacific that our faith in the Lord remain strong and steadfast, seeking the lesson of faith He wants us to learn to build His church for His glory.

## 應對新冠狀病毒流感 COVID-19

新冠狀病毒, COVID-19, 終於在我們的北美海岸“登陸”，並發生了“社區暴發”事件。這意味著感染已發展到當局無法追蹤感染源的程度。在撰寫本文時，加州，紐約州，華盛頓州，佛羅里達州和科羅拉多州都已宣布進入緊急狀態。這些州的教會正在制定應急計劃以應對這種流行病的影響。一些教會已經採取了完全取消禮拜等嚴厲措施。

### 若你社區受到影響， 你教會應如何應對這次爆發？

如果你的教會受到影響，你會如何應對這次爆發？除了遵循衛生部門的指引，來注意保護自己和周圍的人的健康以外，你還需要一種不僅僅是對流行病做出反應的觀點。位於三藩市灣區矽谷心臟地帶的匯點教會主任牧師，梁庭益牧師在 2020 年 3 月 8 日的主日週報上撰文，點出一個整體的畫面，指出若教會需要減少會眾的聚集時，需如是行：

- 善用網絡: 網絡不能替代個人的接觸，但在聚會減少或取消的情況下，是一項可行的權宜計策。弟兄姊妹應開始熟習在網上進行崇拜、小組聚會、聖經學習、十一奉獻、與教牧溝通、事工會議等等。我鼓勵大家開始運用網絡試用這些活動，當我們真的要像很多國家的教會要停止所有公開活動時，我們仍能與屬靈的家繼續結連。
- 家庭崇拜: 教會及個人外出的活動受疫症影響，人留在家中，家庭生活聯繫卻會更加密切。這是一個很好的時機去建立的家庭祭壇。...（信徒靈命的成長）不只是限於教會的聚會及活動，而需要在家庭中建造起來。一起運用網絡去敬拜、採用教會提供的課程和材料去一起學習，一起去為教會及肢體們祈禱，是你建造家庭祭壇的好機會。
- 主動關懷: 教會的聚集活動減少，對有需要牧養關心的肢體們和未信慕道友們，需要各小組組長和成員主動作出查問和關心，特別是老弱、病患或生命面對危機的肢體和慕道友們。你的一個問候電話、網路上的代禱、社交媒體上的連繫關心，都會成為他們軟弱中的激勵和打氣。...(基督徒)的美善，應該在別人的困境中表達出來，播下福音的種了（成為日後的莊稼）。
- 主裡成長: 教會聚會減少，即表示你有更多時間空間獨處。何不好好運用這些時間去在主裡學習成長？（教會）...的門徒訓練、...講道重溫、網上各類不同形式的學習資源，你可以向你...牧師查詢，如何可以把握這次疫情的危機，成為你在基督裡成長的契機。我鼓勵...（你）開始試行以上的建議，一起更深度建造我們的教會。

