

Resuming Bad or Good Normalcy

Rev Christopher Chia's Pastoral Letter on ARPC's Response to COVID-19
(27 Feb 2020)

Dear ARPC members and friends,

COVID-19: Local and Global Status

I pray that you are experiencing the precious peace of our Lord Jesus in the midst of COVID-19. All of us are understandably up to date with the latest local and global situation.

Locally, we praise God for these promising trends and signs: fewer infections, more COVID-19 survivors and more discharged from the National Centre of Infectious Diseases (NCID). The medical authorities have also thankfully established the crucial link between the church clusters.

Globally, the situation is more worrying. The ongoing outbreaks, exponential infections and increasing fatalities in South Korea, Japan, Italy and the Middle East are causes for our deep concern and earnest prayer. Are we on the verge of a pandemic? The verdict is still out there.

A Godly Response

This is our latest prayerful advisory regarding our Services and ministries. **The main issue is not whether we continue with suspension or resumption of our Services, but how we continue to humbly practise "faith in God expressed in love for one another" (Galatians 5:6).**

In the light of the improved local situation yet worrying global uncertainty - which may further impact Singapore medically, economically and societally - **ARPC has decided on a scaled-down resumption of our Services and ministries.** We do this by balancing the advisory from the National Council of Churches of Singapore with our unique demographics, responsibilities and risks.

We continue to pray that our decisions and actions will be faithful to our God, loving to our church and responsible in helping our nation's detection, isolation and containment efforts (DICE) to overcome the COVID-19 threat.

Resumption with scaled-down Services & continuation of our live-stream

1. Resumption of our Services with heightened precautionary measures

ARPC@Adam: Resuming Saturday 5pm & Sunday 9 am Services.

ARPC@Bishan: Resuming Sunday 9 am Service.

Mandarin Ministry: Resuming Sunday Service at 9.15 am at the Praise Hall in The Chapel in Bishan.

We will resume Services with these precautionary measures to aid our national DICE:

- temperature screening, contact tracing efforts, suspending the serving of food and using cashless offering.
- Congregants who are unwell with cough, cold, sore throat and/or fever should see a doctor, rest at home and not attend church. Those who have travelled or been in contact with people who have been to mainland China, South Korea, Iran, Italy and Japan are encouraged not to attend services but to monitor their health for 14 days.

2. Continuation of our "Live Stream"

We praise God that the “live stream” of our Services & sermons over the past 2 weeks have blessed thousands of people! Our members, regulars and their friends were blessed by listening to God’s Word and the gospel in our “virtual house church” experience.

As such, we will continue live streaming to bless as many people as before at our normal Service times of Saturday@5 pm, Sunday@9 am and Sunday@11.30 am. Our Mandarin Ministry will also be live streamed @ 9.15 am on Sundays.

3. Continued suspension of our Children’s Church (CC) for this week

As a heightened pre-cautionary measure, the MOE has directed for school sports halls to be closed to the public. This is to minimise public exposure and possible infection. ARPC, as a responsible Anchor Church to Kuo Chuan Presbyterian Secondary School (KCPSS), will do our part to minimise usage and contamination of the school premises (from the canteen to other rooms). Living Praise Presbyterian Church (LPPC), the Anchor Church to the primary school, will also be resuming Services at the Chapel while refraining from using any school premises.

ARPC will likewise be suspending our CC at ARPC@Bishan and, hence, also at ARPC@Adam to prevent any inadvertent overcrowding and heightened risk at Adam. We will also not use the canteen, auditorium and the KCPSS gate at Bishan this week. We pray that the new pre-cautionary measures and cleaning regime will facilitate the resumption of CC and our full suite of ministries soon.

4. BASIC (our youth ministry) – which meets at KCPSS on Saturday evenings – will resume with small group meetings in homes and ARPC@Adam.

5. Resumption of Our Discipleship Groups (DGs)

- a. We encourage our DGs to resume physical meetings.
- b. We encourage larger DGs to exercise caution and split into smaller groups, if need be.

We are so thankful to God and so encouraged by our DGs over the past 2 weeks! So many have been so lovingly committed to and creative in their study of God’s Word, prayer and love for one another through “new” technology platforms like Zoom, Facetime and Hangouts.

The Pastoral Team is creatively trying to compensate for the lack of our physical presence with virtual Bible devotions to supplement our weekly sermons. A small example was the engaging Children’s Church sermon on Genesis 3 last week which was much appreciated. We continue to pray and seek new ways to bless our children, youth and adults with Bible material to keep us growing spiritually strong. **What an opportunity for our personal faith and family life to blossom!**

Return to Bad or Good Normalcy?

Most, if not all of us, are longing for life to return to normal. Yet, we need to discern between bad and good normalcy. Bad normalcy is when we normalise our forgetfulness of God. This is, when we ignore God’s warnings of our real enemies of Satan, sin and death, and belittle his gracious offer of salvation through Jesus’ love, suffering and death.

Good normalcy, on the other hand, is when we are awakened and sensitised to God’s wrath and God’s mercy through a global health scare such as COVID-19. Oh, how we desperately need to ponder our fragility and mortality! Sin has a 100% infection and mortality rate. Only Jesus can grant us the “new normal” of eternal life with God where there will be no tears, pain or death because the old order of life without God has passed away (Revelation 21:1-4). Amen.

Loving you for God's Glory, Pastor Christopher Chia
for our Elders & Deacons Court (EDC) & Pastoral Team