

1 February 2021

Dear PBC family,

From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, declared by the World Health Organization from 11 March 2020, and the first Malaysian Movement Control Order (MCO) from 18-31 March 2020, there seems to be not a day passed, that we did not have many postings on the subject, with the subject changing and evolving on the information of the virus, the experiences and action responses from various parts of the world and now the latest, the hope and some despairing reports in vaccination results.

And no, for this short note, I am not summarising or condensing the known or accepted information on the whole COVID-19 situation.

The BIG issues and decisions are made at international, national and Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) levels. Our COVID-19 Management Committee (CMC) reviews and advises on the position, advice and action and activities relevant for us at Pantai Baptist Church or at other church group levels.

And, our Welfare Ministry receives pleas and applications for help and provides monetary and other coordinated assistance within its various portfolios.

The CMC is watching and monitoring the KKM reports and directives on COVID-19 infections, the decisions on management of the mild or asymptomatic Categories 1 & 2 COVID-19 infected individuals, the various channels of assistance for those with evolving and deteriorating status while being monitored on home quarantine, the important phone contacts (i.e. 999, COVID-19 Assessment Centres, MySejahtera and Hospital Kuala Lumpur and Hospital Sungai Buloh) and also forwarding important, relevant information to PBC members on what professional recommendations are proposed to be taken or complied with to mitigate and improve on outcomes while in the home quarantine monitoring state. The latest included information and advice on the proposed vaccination programme, which had not been rolled out yet in Malaysia (I believe a trial programme using Sinovac's vaccine had just been started by 12 KKM hospitals in 4 states in West Malaysia).

Our Cancer Support Group also organised a talk on Zoom entitled "COVID-19 Pandemic: When will it get better? Vaccines?" on 17 January 2021.

Our Welfare Ministry had since the first MCO in March 2020 seen a major shift in areas of reported needs, and had to learn to assess and source new partnerships in most of these non-PBC members and non-PBC mission fields, which included displaced, marginalised individuals or people groups, refugees, foreign workers and students, charity-supported homes and also victims of recent floods. Under MCO and Conditional MCO conditions, verifying such requests depended a lot on information provided by the introducers.

Those who received regular support from our Welfare Ministry continued to remain on the support list, and recommendations from our various congregations were all looked into. Past support list constituents were reviewed, with their introducers contacted regarding the need for continued support. Our Cancer Support Group was put on alert on the name list reported and prayed for on our Weekly Prayer Focus bulletin. Financial assistance and visitations (when allowed) were duly provided and conducted. Our New Hope Ministry, engaging differently abled adults, could not have regular monthly fellowship meetings. Christmas and Chinese New Year gifts were thus prepared for our 21 members to give cheer to them and their families.

Financing such assistance and relief work required careful assessments and approvals per established guidelines. The budgeted amount for the year was quickly exhausted. Our Welfare Ministry committee had to draw on accumulated funds from past years to continue providing assistance.

It was also noted that the usual funding for our Welfare Ministry, which came from tithing on the first week of the month, was drastically reduced. It was clear that the economic downturn, reduced business or even professional income, pay cuts or job losses had affected our tithing. It was also suspected that online and ATM tithing may have made specific tithing a little less user friendly, resulting in lower tithing for Welfare (Benevolent) and also for Missions.

Yesterday, we heard from the pulpit about our Lord Jesus, the model for compassion. Through the lips of our Secretarial Deacon Shaun Ling, we were reminded to not forget those in need, e.g. the widows, the orphans, the foreigners and the poor. "Not forget" means to provide for, take care of, and show love to them.

Let us at PBC, in obedience to our Lord Jesus, continue to work and serve together for those in need, and demonstrate our faith by our works.

For His Glory alone.

On behalf of the CMC and Welfare Ministry,

Dr Alan Tan
Welfare Deacon