

## Dear SJSMers,

As you would have known by now, the alert level set by the World Health Organisation on the status of the pandemic has been steadily rising. It is currently at the penultimate level of Stage 5, which means that a pandemic is imminent. The Ministry of Health in Singapore has set the local alert level at Yellow, which means there is some risk of the virus being imported here through human-to-human transmission, but there is no widespread infection here yet.

The Vicar and Division Leaders met earlier today to agree on the immediate measures we are taking for the SJSM community. We have resolved to adopt a cautious stance, while not being overly alarmist. We are monitoring the Government websites to see the latest Advisories that are relevant to our circumstances and have also resolved to comply with any Government Advisories that apply to us.

This Swine Flu is harder to combat than SARS in that people may be infectious before they even exhibit flu-like symptoms. Here are some of the measures we are implementing with immediate effect:

### **1. Self-regulation**

*We urge all SJSMers to check your own temperature before leaving home for a church service or cell or any other gathering. If your temperature is 37.5 degrees Celsius or higher, it is best that you not attend the service/ meeting, but rather seek medical attention. If you have just returned from one of the countries affected by the Swine Flu (as listed in the WHO website), you should monitor your own health. If you develop a respiratory illness with fever within seven days of your return, you should put on a surgical mask and seek medical help immediately.*

### **2. Temperature-taking stations**

*We are seeking to set up such stations outside each service to allow for those who did not measure their own temperatures to do so before entering the meeting place. We ask that if any be found at these stations to be running a fever, that they would not insist on entering the meeting, but will have regard for the community and quarantine themselves by returning home.*

### **3. Holy Communion**

*Until further notice, we will discontinue the practice of sipping from the cup during Holy Communion, and allow only intinction (dipping the wafer in the wine). All those administering the Bread and Wine will be briefed on proper hygiene in the handling of the elements. We are also looking into making a hand spray available for those coming up to receive communion.*

#### **4. Children**

*All rooms and equipment used by children will be disinfected as we would if there had been a Hand Foot Mouth Disease (HFMD) case among the users of the rooms. Parents are urged to monitor the health of their children and not bring them to church if they seem unwell. It will not be sufficient to withdraw the unwell child from joining in the Junior Church program and bring them into the Sanctuary where the adults are gathered. Unlike HFMD which affects only children, the Swine Flu could easily pass from children to adults and vice versa.*

#### **5. Baptism**

*Until further notice, we are modifying baptism by immersion to baptism by pouring instead. The water that is poured on each individual will be fresh and not recycled from earlier pours. A clean scoop will be used to effect the pouring. This is to ensure that baptism candidates are not subjected to increased risk of infection, should one among the group be unwell.*

#### **6. SJSM Website**

*Members are urged to consult the SJSM website for the latest updates on the measures adopted by the church. We will also use email and sms to disseminate information. In the event that the local alert level is raised even higher, schools will be shut down and public gatherings (eg church services) may also have to do likewise. In such a scenario, the website becomes a vital link between SJSMers and the leadership.*

Let us step up prayer to the Lord for wisdom and mercy, as we brace ourselves for what could be a very challenging time ahead. Please let us go out of our way to support and help those who are in need. By our trust in the Sovereignty of God over all things, let our light so shine before men that they in turn glorify our Father in heaven.

Peace be with you!

Pastor Joshua

*Psalm 46*