



Pastoral Letter

from the Moderator

Our Responsibilities in COVID-19 Situation

The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.⁶ The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.⁷ So the LORD said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.” - *Genesis 6: 5-7 NIV.*

Likely forty years ago in the year 1981, a novelist named Dean Koontz prophesied the Coronavirus epidemic. Like his novel and according to the Book of Genesis of the Holy Bible, the Coronavirus pandemic is spreading all over the world. The death toll is rising higher every day and there is no sign of declining. The government of Bangladesh, like the rest of the world, is concerned - although in Bangladesh, COVID-19 is still under control. All this, while the world is mourning and anxious about the pain of losing their loved ones every day – and whilst the world is preparing to observe Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter and while Muslim societies around the world are waiting for Holy Ramadan and the Eid. During the Corona pandemic, I request that all religious worship and festivals be followed maintaining social-distancing as directed by the government and pathologists. There already exist modern technology opportunities available for the church leaders of some bigger cities, including Dhaka and the divisional metropolitan cities, which are conducting worship using social media and live-streaming.

The Vulnerable Communities to Coronavirus

Like all the world, in Bangladesh, everything has been stopped and stagnated. The government has declared a common holiday to avoid the community spread of COVID-19 so that everyone can stay home and maintain social distance. As a result, day laborers, slum dwellers, domestic workers, ill-paid workers, small and medium traders, rickshaw drivers, construction workers, shopping mall workers, sales assistants, bus drivers and their assistants, farmers and other low income people are being affected most. The elderly are at high risk and all those who have co-morbidities such as diabetes, heart disease and asthma who have already been suffering a lot during the shutdown.

Let Us Extend a Helping Hand to the Victims

In the meantime, the government, all non-governmental organizations, the army, the police, the local administration, councilors, youth organizations, sports and cultural organizations, and social services organizations are cooperating with the government to assist the poor segments of the country with their very best efforts. Apart from the Government's different departments, there are volunteers providing daily necessary commodities and food support, though it is not enough.

What We Can Do As Congregations

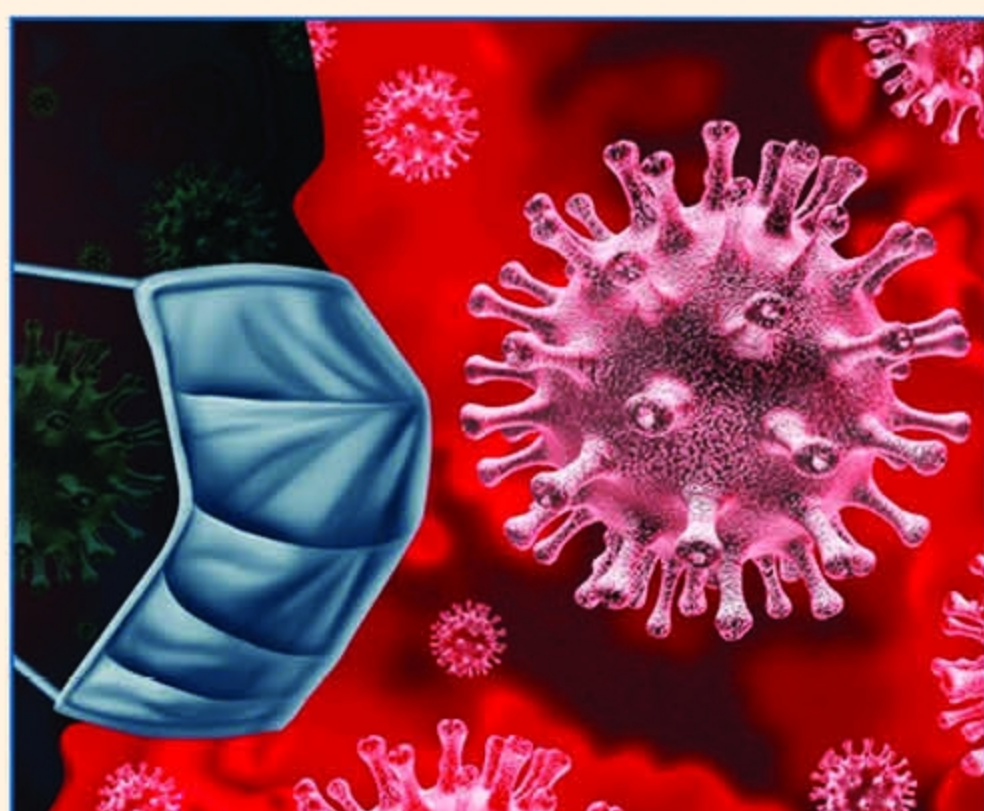
In almost every parish, we have primary schools, boarding hostel, some clinics, youth organizations, and Shalom's regional offices. We can contact local administrations to make them ready for use at any emergency time. In large hospitals like the Christian Mission Hospital in Rajshahi and Bollobhpur Mission in Meherpur area, we should make ready a few wards for isolation or treatment or institutional quarantine if the Government want. We hope that many nurses and doctors from our congregations who are serving in different government and private hospitals can also share their experiences in clinics and hospitals in their respective areas. We must educate about prevention as well as treat illness.





Immediate Initiatives

- Enhancing awareness of COVID-19 symptoms and how it spreads in order to fight against coronavirus in remote areas
- Under the supervision of the Honorable Dean and the Diocesan Clergy, we hope to enlist at least one financially stable family in each parish who might take responsibility for feeding one family in need per day
- The youth clubs and groups may take initiative to create successful sanitizers
- Making non-medical facial coverings at area-based sewing training centers
- Providing food assistance to poor students in parish-based primary schools
- Providing financial assistance for the poor patients undergoing treatment
- Those who work in various ministries of the church - we may pay at least one day's salary. Those who are paid more or are in the field of business may also contribute one day's salary or a portion of their income to the Coroner's Assistance Fund of the Church.



Emergency Instruction

- All government instructions will be followed
- Maintain social distance of one meters between each person at all times
- Only leave your home and yard for essentials: food, medical treatment, medicine, or essential job positions sanctioned by the government
- Wear mask and use gloves when you go out
- When coming in from outside, wash your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds after handling anything
- Try not to touch your face, eyes, or nose. Disinfect your phone when possible and before holding them to your face.

Prayer

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29: 11 NIV)

**By maintaining physical-distancing for COVID-19,
The love of the heart is stronger.**

God Almighty, save us from this crisis.

The Most Reverend Samuel Sunil Mankhin

*Moderator and Bishop of Dhaka, Church of Bangladesh
(Lent 2020 AD)*

