

# Witness in a COVID-19 World

*Sian Yee recently retired as a staff with the Christian Outreach and Social Concerns (COSC) Ministry at Wesley Methodist Church after serving for over 10 years in a full-time capacity.*

## HOW WILL YOU REMEMBER 2020?

Chances are, 2020 will be etched in our minds as the year where the novel coronavirus pandemic, known as COVID-19, brought the world to its knees, causing over a million deaths globally by mid-October 2020 and threatening to plunge the global economy into its greatest recession since World War 2.

In Singapore, there was the initial frenzy of panic to stock up on face masks, hand sanitizers, toilet paper and food. Soon enough, our new normal included a slew of acronyms to pepper our conversations, such as LOA, PHPC, WFH, CB, HBL, SHN, NCID, DORSCON – no prizes if you got them all right!

As Christians, the impact of COVID -19 was most keenly felt when physical worship services and physical gatherings had to be abruptly suspended for a season, thereby disrupting the “sacred rhythms” which many of us rely on to practice our faith.

As devastating as COVID-19 has been to the world, our nation, and our religious gatherings, we must not allow it to hijack or dictate the narrative of our lives, or our faith. The Christian life must be viewed and lived, within the context of a story that is far bigger than the pandemic i.e., the story of God. With all the uncertainty, fear, suffering, and hopelessness



Mid- Autumn Celebrations had to be scaled down, but volunteers continued to bring cheer to the elderly with mooncakes donated by a volunteer

caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there has never been a more urgent time for our generation to live out the Gospel of hope.

It is heartening that instead of retreating in fear or simply looking after her own, many churches in Singapore have been seeking the welfare of the city, demonstrating hospitality, service and love to the most affected and vulnerable in society. While this article seeks to share various initiatives taken by Wesley Methodist Church, as an expression of her faith and witness to Christ, we do so acknowledging that we are but one of many parts of the Body of Christ in Singapore that is seeking to be a faithful witness to the Son, who is full of Grace and Truth. All Glory be to God!

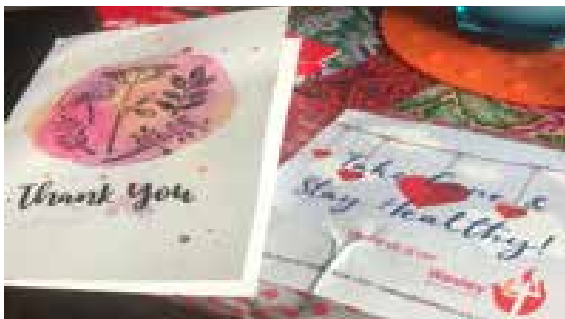
## VULNERABLE WITHIN THE FAITH COMMUNITY

Noting that there were vulnerable within our midst, a "Call to Care" initiative was undertaken to connect with over 3,000 members and friends who were not actively part of a support network.

The aim was to ascertain their well-being, provide support for any social or spiritual needs as well as to help them stay engaged with the faith community via online worship. Many appreciated the expression of care and pastoral visitations were made to some upon their request, when permitted.

## FRONT-LINE WORKERS

The Missions Ministry rallied members to help make cards for those who were working at hospitals and clinics to show their care and support. Over 300 cards were hand-delivered to our frontline heroes. Cleaning staff at a few government hospitals were also given care packages.



Cards of Appreciation to Frontline workers personally signed by our PIC

## MIGRANT WORKERS

COVID-19 exposed the plight of the many thousands of migrant workers living in dormitories. COSC, with the support of the Small Group Ministry, sought to care for hundreds of migrant workers in various ways as they wrestled with feelings of anxiety, fear and isolation. Fruits, food, care packages and cards were delivered periodically to them at dormitories where they were isolated.



About 300 Deepavali meals were delivered to Pandan and Tuas dormitories in support of the project by AGWO & MOM.



Fruits sponsorship by Small Groups

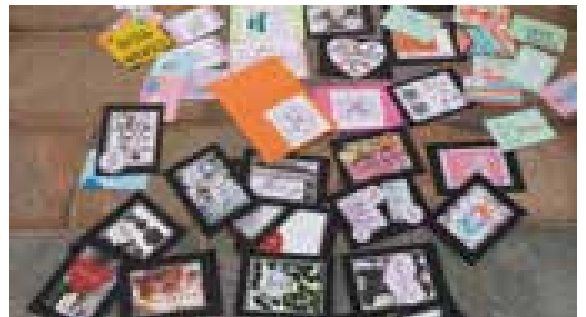
## ELDERLY IN THE COMMUNITY

Wesley Befrienders to Older Persons (WBOP), a sub-ministry of COSC that has been supporting the frail elderly living in rental flats in Indus Road, King George's Avenue and Jalan Berseh, stepped up its activities to ensure that the elderly were cared for. During the circuit breaker period, the younger pool of volunteers made phone calls and delivered necessities like groceries and sundries to the elderly.

The WBOP Ministry found creative ways to stay connected to residents in the nursing homes (such as MWS Bethany Nursing Home and Green Avenue Home for the Elderly) when visitations were suspended due to COVID-19 measures. They made cards and delivered them to the home; they also recorded songs on video for the residents, to be played by staff at the homes. Special food treats such as Old Chang Kee curry puffs and bean curd were delivered periodically as gestures of love, care, and friendship.



WBOP befrienders delivering meals and fruits and checking in on elderly living alone in rental flats after the circuit breaker.



Cards made by volunteers for nursing home residents.

## CHILDREN, YOUTHS & THEIR FAMILIES IN THE COMMUNITY

The Wesley Youth Centre (WYC) at Jalan Berseh arranged for tuition to continue online for about 40 young people preparing for major examinations. The Owl Reading programme, a reading programme for younger children in the community, continued via Zoom.

In July, volunteers and staff also connected with families in Jalan Berseh through phone calls and followed up with delivery care packs to the homes.



Owl Reading on-line



WYC Carepackage delivery

## CHRISTMAS SEASON

2300 Christmas cards were personally made by members to be sent to migrants, elders, and families in the community with other gift items contributed by members.

While 2020 has certainly drawn us all closer to our human frailty, our hope is that these cards and gifts will draw them to the hope of the Incarnation.



Cards personally made to share the hope of Christmas.

### LET US NOT MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY TO BE WITNESSES!

Jesus did not come to bring hope to a world where things were going well, but to a fragile and broken world — one full of fragile, damaged and sinful people. And what Jesus says to us is “do not fear.” He tells us that, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

Amidst the “shaking” caused by this pandemic, the world is looking for hope, direction, and purpose. In this hour, family, friends, neighbours and the vulnerable in society need to experience the tangible love of Christ more than ever. Now is the hour for bold and courageous Christian witness!

While we give thanks for various church-wide initiatives to witness to the love and hope of Christ to society at large, the clarion call is for more believers to appropriate the Kingdom assignment to be witnesses to Christ in our personal lives, rather than simply leaving it to church leaders and staff to initiate.

The Christian ethicist, Philp Turner, reminds us of the importance of personal witness when he says, “The exemplary power of lives well lived, is perhaps a key way the church models the truth of the life and death of Jesus Christ.” Christians show they are people of love and hope by following Jesus and living out his teaching to love our neighbour in tangible ways, especially the vulnerable, poor, and marginalized in our homes, offices and neighbourhoods.

Christian witnessing starts by taking baby-steps intentionally: a word of concern or encouragement, a listening ear, a much-needed meal, an embracing gesture of hospitality, an act of kindness, a gift of time and availability or a prayer of intercession. All these offered in servanthood to Christ and our neighbour, can be used by the Lord to lift the spirit of the weary traveller to take another step, and to move closer to the Kingdom.

Let us, the people of God, not squander this moment to be faithful witnesses to our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not waste a pandemic.