



The Corona Initiative

Updated: 7 March 2020

Background

Singapore has been in DORSCON Orange since 7 Feb 2020, and the COVID-19 disease has become a global public health crisis.

Health care workers (HCWs) faced work-related stress, public fear and discriminatory distancing. Panic buying and hoarding, and the ensuing scarcity of personal protection equipment, have rendered the less economically fortunate to have least access to basic necessities.

This current situation will persist for at least a few months. Already, people from different sectors have been significantly affected. This includes the tourism industry and all other businesses which rely heavily on the regular flow of tourists (for instance, airline industry, local retail businesses, private transport hires). [Freelancers in some sectors](#) have also been hit hard. We may see more people with financial hardship as businesses retrench or fold.

Left to itself in a time of crisis, society tends towards individualized care which typically leaves the ones on the fringe less cared for and most people concerned with self-preservation. There may also be an increase in mental health issues.

The Church can play a part in practicing charity and hospitality, and countering the negative narrative with a narrative of grace. Such practices should flow from the Church's sense of calling to be salt and light, and the foundational belief that our God is a God we can trust and one who cares even for our daily needs (Matthew 6:25-34).

In **Phase 1** of the Corona Initiative, Micah Singapore helped to spark off the effort to deliver [messages of appreciation](#) and encouragement to the HCWs at National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID) and Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH).

It is time to move into Phase 2.

Phase 2

The main activities we would like each church to carry out are:

- Each local church to **notice its neighborhood and spheres of influence**;
- **See** who the **vulnerable or needy** are; and
- **Respond** with love.

In this way, the Corona Initiative is decentralized and the local churches assume ownership, while Micah Singapore serves as a resource provider or catalyst.

There are a few ways this may be done:

1. Heart for Healthcare Workers in the Neighborhood



This idea simply extends what we did in Phase 1 by decentralizing and empowering local churches to bless the hospitals and medical institutions in their neighborhood.

1. **Micah Singapore will ask** the relevant administrators of other hospitals and medical organisations about how best we can encourage their HCW. We will obtain the relevant contacts from Healthcare Services Employees' Union (HSEU).
2. **Churches develop response plan** based on requests from hospital / medical organisation.
3. **Churches liaise** with hospital / medical organisation to deliver.

N.B. While any proposed plan is a one-off gift for a felt need, and not a systemic solution, it's still primarily a token of encouragement, not meant to meet needs or solve problems on a long-term basis. So, it would be helpful to ask these recipients what their actual, practical needs relate to.

E.g. On Tuesday 25 Feb 2020, Christ Methodist Church showed their support for the HCW at Changi General Hospital (CGH). The church approached the hospital administrators for their suggestion as to what might be a good way of showing appreciation for their hard word during

this time of COVID-19. They have come back and requested for ice-cream (instead of things like flowers and Brand's essence of chicken). So on 25 Feb, the church distributed Udder's ice-cream to the hospital staff.

E.g. Yio Chu Kang Chapel has asked members who are nurses if Small Groups (SG) in the church can *adopt* their teams of colleagues in their wards. If they agree, the SG will give that team care packages and encouragement notes from time to time, ask them if they have errands they can help the nurses run, pray for them according to their needs.

2. Community Listening

In brief: Churches to go to communities in respective vicinity and **actively listen** to their concerns and needs, share with us (to share with other churches & community groups) for sense-making, so that we can learn how best to respond to the community in this time and better understand where the various needs lie.

2A. BLEACH: BLESS A Cleaner or Homeless

A joint initiative by Homeless Hearts of Singapore (HHOS) and Micah Singapore

In brief: Local churches & groups to distribute masks and encouragement notes to cleaners, hawkers and homeless (CHH) and other vulnerable persons in their vicinity, and listen to their needs, and explain and assure them. This one-off act is with the view to build relationships with, and love, these community members on a long-term basis.



Details found here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TKgjm3HS4LS0239dzbNYce-R2xxnCuV0QZlqBivXWr8/e/dit?usp=sharing>

2B. Vulnerable Persons

We have heard that certain vulnerable persons are especially affected during this period.

1. Elderly who are not well informed of the situation and not physically mobile to collect masks from the CCs. Also, they may not have a good



understanding of hygiene practices and MOH advisories, which are often disseminated through media and networks more readily accessible to a certain demographic.

2. Financially disadvantaged may be adversely affected in terms of work.
3. Migrant workers. “On 22 Feb 2020, Cornerstone Cares (CC) went down to a dorm at Sungei Kadut to assure the workers that they were not in significant danger of the virus. The migrant worker population is presently steeped in fear because of the case of the Bangladeshi worker in ICU+ the 4 other workers who're sick. Their mothers, wives and sisters, fearing for their safety are asking that they return home. Many are resigning from work, foregoing their deposits because of fear of contracting the virus, and fleeing home to India. [CC] went to tell them about the healthcare provisions made for them and the healthcare protections that they need to care for themselves with. And after that, a meal [was shared].”: Timothy Weerasekera.

3. Support Freelancers

In brief: engage freelancers for small paid jobs.

Freelancers such as theatre actors, drama educators, event photographers, graphic designers have lost their work and sources of income for the first half of the year due to cancellation of productions and events. Christian itinerant children ministry [The Treasure Box shared](#) about how their two months' income was lost from event cancellations.



One way that churches and businesses can support local freelancers is to engage them on small projects during this period.

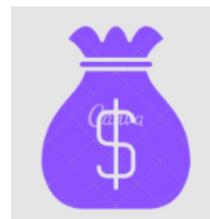
E.g. churches can engage actors / drama educators to conduct half-day drama workshops for children during the school holidays or on weekends (with necessary precautions).

E.g. churches and Christian business people can commission freelance photographers or designers during this season to help them with taking corporate photos or developing marketing collateral.

We have contacts to theatre actors who may be in such circumstances. Please contact us if interested.

4. Micah Corona Fund

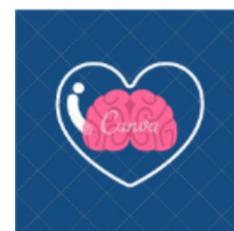
In brief: Micah Singapore will administer a small fund maintained by Ray of Hope with crowdfunded contributions from Christians and churches to pay for implementation of Micah Corona initiatives by participating churches.



1. Micah Singapore will set up crowdfunding campaign on Ray of Hope (ROH). All monies will be held and administered solely by ROH. Micah Singapore will not touch the money.
2. Churches who participate in Phase 2 of Initiative 1 (Heart for HCWs) may draw on funds, subject to Micah Singapore's approval, to pay for implementation costs, e.g. purchase care package items.
3. Participating churches should make a written request to Micah Singapore with details of proposed expenditure and supporting documents before incurring expenses.
4. If there are sufficient funds and the request is deemed suitable, Micah Singapore will approve expenditure.
5. Participating church will proceed to implement and incur expense first. Church will then claim reimbursement from ROH by submitting documentary proof of payment e.g. receipts.
6. If at the end of this whole season, there's excess funds, Micah Singapore and/or ROH may direct the excess funds to any charitable or Christian organisation or cause they deem fit.

Reflection on Praxis

Where churches are now forced to confront the practical difficulties and limitations of bringing people *to* church, it is a critical and opportune time for us to consider how we are bringing the church *to the people*.



Micah Singapore therefore plans to develop **theological and critical reflections** on the current and proposed praxis of Micah Singapore, churches and community groups so as to engage widely with more Christians and deeply in spiritual formation.

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For more information or to participate in the above, please contact us:

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