

14 March 2020

EFI STATEMENT AND ADVISORY ON COVID-19

In the wake of the COVID-19 situation, the Evangelical Fellowship of India calls on its member churches, organizations and individuals to escalate their efforts in playing an active role in curbing the spread of the contagious virus. We call on congregations to promote, instruct and endorse the health advisories published by the Government of India, State Governments, the World Health Organization and other healthcare organizations at national and local levels.

We also call on churches across the denominational spectrum to cancel or postpone all public gatherings like retreats, seminars, conferences, conventions, etc. up to an indefinite period. It may also be wise in the prevailing conditions to exercise precaution while gathering for the regular Sunday worship services or even house meetings during the Lenten season. A safe distance between individuals in the congregation and the use of alcohol-based disinfectants/sanitizers/soap as per government guidelines would be a prudent measure. Many churches have taken practical steps in offering the communion only on the palm and church members have been asked to clean their hands with sanitizers before accepting the communion. All churches in the evangelical constituency may explore these and other measures – avoiding handshakes, hugs, passing of the peace, etc. – to exercise caution and care.

EFI also condemns any form of racist, xenophobic or geographical connotation to the spread of the virus. It is shocking and disheartening to learn that people belonging to the North-Eastern region of the country were faced with hatred and ire in other parts of the country, linking them to the spread of the virus. It goes beyond doubt to say that the virus knows no geographical or racial boundaries. We all must deal with it as one society.

The Lord Jesus warned us in the Sermon on the Mount that we must desist from judging. Many Christian families have chosen to avoid church services or weekly gatherings to protect themselves and their loved ones. As the Body of Christ, we are called to be slow to judge and respond with empathy and care towards each other.

The one theme in the Bible that resonates throughout its pages is the phrase “Fear not.” In these trying times when panic and hysteria can set in, we call on Christians to find strength in God’s promises. We pray that the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and our thoughts in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. (Psalm 46)

As people of God, we are called to view the crisis as an opportunity to serve sacrificially. Christians often have been the first to help in a crisis and the last to leave. Let us be bearers of hope and pray for the end of this pandemic. Let us be a non-anxious presence and show the difference that Jesus makes in the face of crisis. And may our hope and love be contagious.

Released by:

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