

Report from the Serving Brothers in the Church in New York City

Dear Brothers,

We wanted to give you a brief report concerning how we have been led to take the church in New York City on as we face the current health crisis. We have been shepherded by [your prayers](#) and the expressions of your love and concern.

With regard to the health of the saints, from the beginning we have been encouraging the saints to exercise the strictest precautions to take care of their health in accordance with the CDC- and state-issued guidelines. Up until now, as far as we have come to know, six saints have tested positive for COVID-19. Four of these saints have required hospitalization. Two have begun to show improvement, while the situations of the other two remain quite serious. Several other saints, about a dozen, had been or are exhibiting symptoms, but these are all self-quarantined at home. Thus far none of these have had to go to the hospital, and all seem to be recovering well. We are aware that the saints here have been and are still being covered by the prayers of many saints and churches throughout the recovery.

In the midst of this crisis, the Lord has been taking the church in New York City on. We thought that it might be an encouragement to you to know a few details of how the Lord has been leading us. The following is a summary of 16 items touching various areas of the church life in NYC:

1. One accord—Before touching upon any of the practical matters, we would like to mention that in our estimation one of the main underlying factors that has enabled us to proceed very positively during this recent period of time has been the one accord of the leading ones that has been built up over the past several years. We can testify that the Lord has been able to bring in a sweet one accord among the leading brothers.
2. The raising up of the district serving brothers—Our situation is that we currently have 9 meeting halls, with more than 130 brothers bearing responsibility in the 9 halls (this includes 36 serving brothers functioning as elders and the rest being what we refer to as "district serving brothers"). Over the past 3 years the church has experienced an accelerated expansion with 5 new halls. This has created an environment in which many more brothers have been thrust into responsibility, and the vast majority of them have really risen to the occasion. This has become a blessing to the church. The brothers meet by district each Monday. This practice continues online during the shutdown that we are facing in NYC. Our practice has been to gather all the brothers together monthly. These monthly gatherings have often had an element of training for the brothers, as many of them are very new to the matter of bearing responsibility in the church life. We thank the Lord for how He has led us and for His raising up of these brothers over the past several years. Without them and their faithfulness, we would not be able to care for the church in a proper way during these challenging times.
3. The strengthening of the fellowship between the serving brothers—There are 36 serving brothers who are functioning as the elders of the church. Six of us have been meeting on a weekly basis every Tuesday morning for the past several years in order to have more thorough prayer and fellowship concerning the direction of the church. We have also been having a monthly meeting with the 36 brothers. Beginning on January 28,

2020, the majority of the brothers began to gather on a weekly basis in order to have more learning regarding how to oversee the saints and church affairs. The majority of these brothers are in their 30s and 40s. We feel that this was a very significant step in the carrying out of the administration of the church not only during the period of the present crisis but also in the long run for the future of the church here.

4. The elderly saints—We have a good number of elderly saints, and we have much concern for them. On a regular basis **in the past**, as many as 100 retired saints have gathered at Hall 1 each Wednesday morning for prayer and fellowship (approximately 70 Chinese-speaking saints and 30 English-speaking saints). These gatherings are still going on virtually, and many of these saints are still participating. Before the stay-at-home order was issued, we tried our best to ensure that all our elderly saints were connected with someone and had a way to contact the serving brothers if any need arose. On an ongoing basis we are trying to gauge whether any of these dear ones have any practical needs. This is being carried out by the brothers serving in each hall. We are broadcasting programs daily via YouTube in order to nourish the elderly Chinese-speaking saints, and we are beginning to build up shepherding networks among the elderly English-speaking saints. When the stay-at-home order was issued, we began to carry out a daily roll call to check on many of these saints in order to be more assured of their well-being and to offer help for the meeting of their practical needs.
5. The children—Realizing that **moving** the Lord's Day church meetings to the homes would interrupt the children's meetings, we met with the group of brothers and sisters who are overseeing the local children's work and encouraged them to prepare videos which could be shown in the homes each Lord's Day morning or afternoon. These saints have brought in a good number of serving saints to coordinate together to produce a new video each week. The videos are about 30 minutes in length, and each one contains some singing (each song being sung by a different family), the presentation of two lessons (one for younger children and the other for older children), a memory verse section, and a craft. Under the direction of these key serving ones, the responsibility for the producing of each video is being rotated among the serving saints in the 9 halls. The videos are posted on the church's website (**www.churchinnyc.org**). We also encourage the families to watch the video for that week again sometime during the week as a family and to use it as a basis for establishing a weekly time of family worship. We found out that these videos are being viewed by saints in other localities in the U.S. and even in other countries. We also encourage the serving ones in each hall to do their best to connect the families together at various times on the Lord's Day or on other days.
6. The young people—The weekly young people's meetings in each hall and the bimonthly citywide gatherings have also been interrupted. Now several of the halls are having regular online young people's meetings. On Saturday, April 4, a regional young people's conference series was begun. This series is being held in lieu of the canceled Northeast Spring Young People's Conference, which is usually held at Camp Penuel. It is much like the Young People's Spring Pursuit being carried out in Southern California. The conference is being held online via Zoom, and the invitation went out to the churches in the Southeast and the Midwest. In the first conference session 792 devices were logged on to the Zoom call. And in many places siblings or families were participating together,

so it is possible that there were over 900 participants in this first conference session. The series will go on for another 3 weekends.

7. The families and young couples—Realizing that because of the lockdown, families will be at home together more than they have ever been before, and that in many young families it is a great challenge to have the children carrying out their classes at home while the parents are also working from their homes, we have been very burdened for all of our families, particularly the young families and families with young children. Two weeks ago we invited many young couples to join a Zoom conference call in order to have a brief fellowship and word of encouragement for them. A total of 124 couples joined the one-hour call. It was joyous and chaotic as all the children greeted one another for the first 5 minutes. Once we dismissed the children we encouraged the saints to seize this opportunity to build up their family life, to strengthen the relationships between the spouses and between the parents and the children. We encouraged them to stand with one another and support one another, and, if possible, to offer practical suggestions to each other regarding scheduling and managing the home under the challenging circumstances. Many expressed appreciation for our holding this session of fellowship.
8. Church finances—Although we established the possibility for online offering some time ago, we did not use this widely until two weeks ago. We know that a number of other localities have such an option in place for the saints, but until recently, because of security concerns, there was a hesitation among some of the brothers to allow this option. We recently came to a consensus to provide this option more widely, and once the lockdown began we were ready to initiate this. Thus, now the saints have the option to mail a check to one of the halls, arrange for their bank to mail a check to the hall, or offer electronically via various apps. We have also encouraged all the responsible brothers to be alert regarding the needy saints among us. A number of saints among us have been laid off because they work in restaurants and other places of business which are considered non-essential and have been ordered to close because of the lockdown. Financial help has been provided to the first group of needy saints based on the suggestions of the serving brothers in the various districts. The brothers will continue to monitor the situation, and it will be an ongoing process. We are prepared to receive any needy saints and families at Camp Penuel (KPCC) as well and care for them there under a corporate living arrangement.
9. The church website (www.churchinnyc.org)—In December 2019 we launched our updated church website, which now contains much current and relevant information and which many saints now look to a few times a week for updates regarding the going on of the church. We have a team of saints working on this. Over the past few weeks we have posted various announcements, such as the cancellation of the meetings in the halls and the need to move the meetings into the homes, the children's videos referred to above, short videos containing words of encouragement for the saints (see point 11 below), and the announcement concerning the burden of the co-workers for the 21-day, around-the-clock global prayer.
10. Weekly newsletter—In December 2019 we also issued our inaugural Weekly Newsletter. We know that the church in Anaheim and many other localities have had the practice of

issuing weekly newsletters for some time now. We began this practice only recently, and the saints seem to appreciate this very much. The Newsletter contains the prayer burdens for the week, attendance figures, important announcements, and a ministry excerpt.

11. Words of encouragement—When the decision was made to move the meetings to the homes, we felt that it was necessary for the saints to receive a word directly from the leading brothers in order to provide both comfort and direction to the church. For each of the first two weeks three of us coordinated to speak a 30-minute word for the saints. Many watched those videos during their Lord's Day morning meetings in their homes. The burden for the first week was primarily to comfort the saints and encourage them to experience the peace of Christ. This was particularly important as the saints began to realize that NYC was becoming the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak in the U.S. The burden for the second week was to encourage the saints to seize the opportunity to enjoy the church life "day by day" and "from house to house" via electronic means. We also encouraged the saints to seize the opportunity to build up their family life for the church life and to "take root downward and bear fruit upward" (Isa. 37:31). This past week we spoke a word to introduce the burden of the 21-day, around-the-clock global prayer. We also are arranging each week to record two brothers giving a brief opening word along the line of the Holy Word for Morning Revival. We are currently in Week 6 of the December crystallization-study training on Deuteronomy.
12. The church meetings—For four weeks now all the meetings have been in the homes, with most of the meetings using Zoom. We do not have a uniform way of meeting among the 9 halls. On the Lord's Day a couple of the halls have one larger Zoom meeting that includes all the saints in that hall for the Lord's table portion and then has breakout rooms for prophesying, in some cases by language. In most of the other halls the saints are meeting according to their small group meetings or neighborhoods. The prayer meetings are also by hall or by small groups. It seems that we now have more saints involved in the online prayer meetings than we had when we were meeting in person. On Lord's Day, March 29, we sent out an announcement with a Zoom link and encouraged all the saints from all 9 halls to call in at 12 noon so that all the saints and families could see one another and greet one another. It was 5-10 minutes of glorious chaos as everyone was unmuted and so many were greeting one another. Many children were calling out to their friends when they noticed them on the screen. Our estimate is that we had about 750 saints and children on the call. Our burden is to foster and maintain a sense of "the whole church" (1 Col. 14:23). On Lord's Day, April 4, we practiced this again; however, after some initial time for mutual greetings, a brother spoke a brief word of greeting and encouragement to the saints for 3-5 minutes, followed by 1-2 minutes of sharing on the statistics of the past week's online meetings and 1-2 minutes of encouragement for the saints to continue in or to join the 21 days of global prayer.
13. The Lord's Table—According to Acts 2:46, we have felt to give the saints the freedom to break bread in their homes. Some saints have been breaking bread, while others have not. We are leaving it up the saints or the small groups to decide what they would like to do. The more than 130 responsible brothers are all in one accord concerning this matter, so we feel that this will safeguard the oneness in the church during this period

of time. We also encourage the brothers to pray together before the Lord's Day meeting to coordinate by districts.

14. The church service office—We are encouraging some of the serving brothers and district brothers to hold "office hours" at set times during the week in order to be available for the saints to seek them out for fellowship or prayer. We brothers always try to be available to the saints for this purpose, but as the church has grown in number and spread to the 9 halls throughout the city during these past few years, the need is now very great, and it is not easy or practical for all the saints to travel to Hall 1 to meet us. Thus, we are encouraging more of the serving brothers to set up these "office hours" in order to better care for the church. A conference call number is provided to the saints to call in. We are grouping together older and younger serving brothers to cover these "office hours." Sometimes we are able to have an older brother, a middle-aged brother, and a brother in his 30s or early 40s serving together. When they are not answering calls from saints, the brothers pray together, pursue together, and have fellowship with one another.
15. Reaching the saints who have not been meeting regularly—We have encouraged all the saints to reach out to those who recently have not been meeting regularly. All of these saints are also under lockdown in their homes. All of them have been affected by the pandemic, and many of them are also anxious and uncertain. We have already found that many of these dear ones have been very appreciative of the contact from the other saints, and a number have started to join the online meetings.
16. The gospel and reaching seeking believers—We have encouraged the saints to seize every opportunity for the gospel during this time. Also, with the realization that during times of trial such as these, the Lord has a way to stir within His believers the desire to seek Him and to seek the truth more, we are trying to prepare the brothers to receive seeking believers. It is entirely possible that some Christians might become detached from their denominations during the lockdown, during which time church groups are not allowed to gather for in-person services. We want to have something available for such cases. We are considering some designated efforts which would foster gospel preaching and truth propagation.

Well, brothers, these are just some of the ways we have been led over the past few weeks. We apologize that this report turned out to be longer than we had anticipated, but we hope that this would be an encouragement to you. Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, dear brothers.

In Christ,

The serving brothers in the church in NYC