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ගෞ. ජේවනති ඩබ්ලිව්.පී. එබෙනෙර් ජෝසප් - මහා මන්ත්‍රණ සභාවේ මහාධික  
அருள்திரு. டபிள்யூ. பி. எபனேசர் ஜோசப் - திருப்பேரவை தலைவர்  
Rev. W. P. Ebenezer Joseph - B.D.(Seram) M. Th.(Seram) - President of Conference

March 11, 2022

**To : All People of the Methodist Church**

Dear Friends,

We are living through another period of Lent and all our churches have planned systematic programmes to help our people to reflect and strengthen their relationship with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

## **Lent to Pentecost**

We are hoping to publish some simple guidelines for prayer and reflection, to be used from the beginning of the Holy Week leading up to the Pentecost Sunday, in order to enable our people to prepare adequately for the Pentecost and in a small way take steps in the right direction towards the renewal of our Churches.

We would be grateful if you could promote and use these guidelines in your Churches in a systematic way to strengthen Christian discipleship, and enable our people to be revived and renewed to meet the challenges in our daily life.

## **The Context We Live**

We live through very uncertain times. A chain of events, especially since the Easter bomb attack in 2019, has resulted in totally confusing social conditions. We are still faced with the effects of the Covid 19 Pandemic while the foreign debt crisis, and depreciation of our foreign exchange reserves are now causing havoc in the lives of many of our people. Our experience in the past few months of shortages, queues and panic buying now culminating in the fuel crisis which has severely hampered, the supply of electricity and crippling the transport sector as well. These developments have caused a sense of frustration and hopelessness among all people. The poorer sections of our people are pushed to the margins of poverty and despair. There are multiple challenges we have to face as a nation.

## **Our Tasks Ahead**

The need to understand and analyze the trends in the arena of social political and economic sphere of our life is important and vital to respond to the crisis we are now experiencing. It is important that we do not get carried away by all what haunts the social media and our gossip sessions. We need to search and understand the truth in order to be objective and relevant. It is also equally important to focus on long term and short-term responses. We need to embark on practical ways of responding to this crisis.

On the other hand, we need also to realize that we are a faith community, placed in a place and time like this, to be the light and the salt. We as a community depended on the grace and

Page 1 of 4

mercy of our God, need to mercifully address the pain and anxieties of our people. We as a sacrificial community rooted and sustained in the sacrificial love of our Lord Jesus Christ, need to be examples of sacrificial living so that all people receive their basic needs. We as a community beyond the divisions and distraction of class, caste, race, ethnicity need to embrace every one at a time like this.

Our primary duty as a caring community is to bring solace, relief and hope to the thousands of the poorer people, who are farmers, workers in the plantations, fisherman, artisans, daily wage earners, labourers and so on. We as a prophetic community need to stand for 'Truth' and become the voice of the voiceless. We need to expose the powers of evil, so that we live the words of our Lord's prayer, 'Deliver us from evil'. We as an inclusive community need always to work for peace and harmony among the various ethnic, linguistic and religious communities.

We have to be engaged in acts of hope and love however small it may be, for it is the mustard seed that grows to be a big tree, where all birds of the air find a resting place. We need, at least begin by lighting a candle, so that the forces of darkness are exposed.

### **A Praying Community**

It is important at a time of hopelessness and despair to transform ourselves into a praying community. A praying community that is not inward looking and praying for air find our needs but praying together with one accord and one mind, for our people and for our communities. It is the collective cry of the Israelites in bondage in Egypt that touched the heart of God.

It is important that we pray with a focus, in a spirit of humility acknowledging our own mistakes and failures that have contributed to the present dilemma our country. We all have been silent collaborators or spectators that have led to this pitfall. We need to pray with a spirit of sacrifice so that we can begin to share the little we have, like the boy who gave the 'five loafs and two fish' he had, which led to the feeding of the five thousand.

We need to pray in faith, a faith that will disturb our comfort zones of complicity. a faith that will lead us to plunge into the miseries of our people and enable them to move ahead in hope. We need to take the first step, in the assurance that God is ahead of us and 'God is with us.

### **Begin Small**

We are experiencing shortage of sugar, flour, milk powder, rice, gas and now fuel leading to unprecedented power cuts, etc. The poor and the vulnerable are the most affected. Many suffer silently. Always remember that our little acts of sacrifice will contribute to relieve the pain and suffering of at least one another



We also need to give immediate attention to the following as well:

- Avoiding wasting food at home and Church related functions.
- Use paper sparingly.
- Avoid using bottled water, unless clean water is not available in your areas.
- Do not waste water.
- Use electricity sparingly. Switch off all unnecessary lights.
- Take some practical steps to help the poor and hungry

We continue to appeal to all our Churches to encourage our people to be involved in home gardening and the Churches to use all cultivatable land. Kindly refer to the last pastoral letter, where practical suggestions were given.

On the other hand, can we sacrifice something that we are used to in our daily life, and utilize the money saved to relieve the hunger of a child or redeem someone from a small debt burden?

Such small steps will no doubt, lead to bigger miracles. We have to begin small.

### **Our Individual and Family Life Style**

We all need to sincerely examine our life style. The period of lent is ideal for that. There are many souls piercing questions we need to ask and sincerely respond, such as,

How much of money do we utilize to purchase unwanted luxury items?

Are we addicted to 'branded clothes' when equally good clothing is available at a cheaper price all around us?

How much of our food habits are rooted in imported and unhealthy items? How much of money we waste in extravagance related to our fancy functions such as birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, etc.? Aren't there ways of doing the same, maintaining the same level of joy and fellowship but adopting cheaper means?

Let us remember that our life style is related, not only to the unnecessary expenses we incur, but is directly linked to the preservation of our environment as well. Being driven by consumerist values of the world is a deeper faith question Our life style is also part of our Christian witness.

There is always a beauty in simplicity and a joy in sharing. There never can be contentment in a greedy and craving life style. Extravagance never brings lasting happiness. Our life style should match the spirituality based on the core values and ethics of the New Testament. A simple life style is also an inherent part of our Methodist heritage as expounded by Rev. John Wesley.

**Truth will set us free**

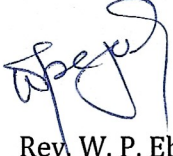
**Always seek the truth and discern God's Will. Give voice to the truth and live by it, for  
Truth will make us free.**

**"Lent is a season of preparation. As the days lengthen and green leaves begin to peek  
through the soil, we prepare for both the darkness of Good Friday and the joyful  
flowering of Easter."<sup>1</sup>**

**Let us prepare for the dark days ahead but with hope and joy as an 'Easter Community'.  
Let us always be beacons of hope for the darkness will not prevail forever.**

**With all God's blessings and prayers,**

**Yours Sincerely,**



**Rev. W. P. Ebenezer Joseph**  
**President of Conference**  
**METHODIST CHURCH SRI LANKA**  
**[Lent 2022]**

*Rev. W. P. Ebenezer Joseph*  
President of Conference  
**METHODIST CHURCH SRI LANKA**

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<sup>1</sup> Creation justice Ministries, Common circular letter, 8<sup>th</sup> March 11, 2022