

"He is the one we proclaim, admonishing & teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ."
Colossians 1:28 05/2020

New Lifestyle Under the Pandemic

The novel coronavirus has brought an unprecedented change to the world. Germany began implementing the "Stay-at-home order" in mid-March, & the situation is roughly the same as in Canada: closing schools & various public facilities, prohibiting groups & religious gatherings, maintaining social distance, & most people need to work from home.



Shopping during the Pandemic

Under the pandemic, the sun shone brightly throughout March & April in Germany. The flowers & trees added some new colors to the scenery. Lewis would choose to go out for a run when the weather was good; while Felain would choose to stay at home fighting pollen allergies.

During this time, most of the brothers & sisters stayed home obediently. Fortunately, there were a lot of sunny days this spring to sweep away any depressing mood from the long period of social distancing.

The German states gradually lifted the prohibitions in early May. This applied to schools, shops, & certain public activities. People were still required to wear masks in public areas & to keep a distance of at least 1.5 meters from each other. Restrictions in religious gatherings will also be lifted, but churches must continue to comply with various regulations, such as: social distancing, discouraged hymn singing, no group activities other than worship service, etc. However, the Chinese are generally more conservative. Many friends & family likely will not attend worship gathering immediately. Therefore, we will maintain the online gatherings in May, hoping that there will not be a second wave of outbreak. We will also

continue to observe the situation & then decide when to resume the physical church gatherings in the two cities.

New Ministry Under the Pandemic

The pandemic does not solely put our immune system to the test, but also our mental well-being, our plasticity, our resilience to deal with stress, & definitely the adaptability of our church ministry. We observed 2 extreme situations: (1) Students/Singles: The university cancelled the exams due to the pandemic & dismissed students for early vacations; many office employees transitioned to working from home. This group of people were mostly idle during the social distancing period, they have a lot of time to spare. (2) Families: Children had no school to attend. Parents were taking care of their children while working from home. It was as if parents & children were trapped playing gladiator at home every single day. They were going mad. Through it all, on top of maintaining our regular gatherings, we also had to be ready for other ad hoc pastoral needs. As frontline missionaries, there was no opportunity to sit idle, we had to respond to the increased demand.

Church Meetings Done Fully Online: On March 13th, the state government mandated the closure of religious sites starting March 14th. Fortunately, we had started to transition our gatherings online a week prior. Meetings of Kassel Fellowship & Göttingen Fellowship were successfully held online on the 14th & 15th respectively, without major disruptions. Afterwards, we invited 2 other fellowships – Marburg & Heidelberg (the mission field of Pastor Gang Xiaodan & Pastor Ye Yuanchuan of CBM missionaries) to join our four regions virtual conference for worship & Sunday school. Other activities, such as prayer meetings, Bible study groups, workshops, training, etc., are now delivered online as well.

Christian retreats waived their fees & offered free virtual sessions: including the German-wide Chinese Christian **Discipleship Camp** in April & the **North Germany Joint Retreat** during Pentecost at the end of May. Physical interaction in a traditional retreat setting was replaced by gatherings held in the comfort of one's own home. For many years, families with young children may have found it difficult to attend church retreats, but this year, thanks to virtual meetings, they have an opportunity to fill up spiritually! If we consider the Discipleship Camp, in the past, the retreat was usually held over 5 days with 300+

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*Meeting with Everyone
via CBM Facebook LIVE*

adult attendees. However, the virtual retreat was simplified into 4 days this year & it is estimated that over 600 participated. Seeing how willing the German Chinese missionaries are to share the resources, & to serve the flock with a united heart, we give thanks to God wholeheartedly!

The series consisted of 8 teachings that directly tackled a number of hot topics: World’s View of Sexuality vs. Christian’s View of Sexuality; Premarital Cohabitation; Premarital Sex; Date Rape; Long Distance Relationship; Masturbation; the Entrapment of Sexuality & the Redemption through Grace; Setting Boundaries before Marriage & Establishing Commitments after Marriage, etc. The series guided believers back to the Biblical perspective of sexuality, filtering through the secular views brought by the pop culture. The message emphasized again & again: whether sin was committed before or after believing in the Lord / past or present, we are not to stop at conviction or remain in a state of shame, but to turn back & be redeemed! There were about 60 to 70 participants each week; they included believers from other regions. The feedback from the congregation said that such bold & comprehensive teaching on the subject was rare. The series busted many myths of believers who were singles, changed past values on sexuality & corrected unhealthy beliefs influenced by the pop culture. Couples who were dating repented & chose to discontinue premarital sex or cohabitation. There were also singles & married couples who vowed to distance themselves from temptations & devoted to living holy lives.

Online Teaching - “My Family of Origin”: The online course was structured for believers in Göttingen & Kassel. It consisted of two lessons per week, a total of eight lessons; 20 hours of teaching. There were a total of 20 students from different places of origin: China, Taiwan, Malaysia & Hong Kong. As they uncovered the root cause of problems stemming from their families of origin; inevitably, they had to address issues such as divorced families, domestic violence, suicide, sexual assault, left-behind children, mental illness, family grievances, & various addictions, etc. We did not stop at theoretical analysis or case discussions; rather more importantly, we learned to be a companion to one another on this journey through prayers. The in-depth sharing revealed vulnerabilities with such honesty & trust, beyond the typical spiritual connections experienced in any Bible study groups or prayer meetings. Where it was impossible for man to do (forgiving those who had hurt you; overcoming self-pity / blind spots, interacting with wounded family members in mercy & grace), the believers leaned on God. Submitting to His presence, they denied their old selves, broke away from the influence of their past, & headed towards a wholistic person development.

Daily Spiritual Feeding - A Psalm A Day / One Proverb Every Day:

We have tried different programs in the past to encourage regular daily reading of the Bible. We were able to tap into a variety of Bible Study resources, but they did not yield effective result. This time, Lewis challenged himself & encouraged the congregations to read with him. As of mid-March, we proposed a daily reading of five Psalms. Lewis shared his devotion on one of the five Psalms by posting to various social media groups of the fellowships daily. Based on the reading plan, brothers & sisters read through 150 Psalms within one month. In the beginning of May, we started the reading plan of one Proverb per day. Similarly, Lewis will read & share his devotion on the Proverb each day, encouraging our flock with God’s Words.

Joint Adult Sunday School - The Online Challenge & The Cycle of Redemption:

The Sunday school series - “Sexuality was originally Holy” launched in March & coincided with the challenge of a new gathering format – online learning. At first, there were struggle & hesitation as to whether this topic was suitable for online delivery. The content touched on a number of sensitive topics. Unexpectedly, Felain found that her sharing delivered through a monitor lessened the sense of embarrassment, & encouraged a more regular participation from brothers & sisters. It actually seemed more appropriate to be teaching this topic online; as many could reflect on whether their past & present ways of living were pleasing to God, in the comfort of one’s own home. The days of social distancing could easily make one feel empty & bored. It could also be a dangerous time when sins & temptations occupy one’s time & overtake one’s mind.

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Calling Out to the Brothers – “Men’s Circle”: The men are the largest number of “missing people” during the pandemic! Women tend to seek help proactively when they experience emotional challenges or problems in life. They may meet online (to complete an essay together, or even to simply enjoy a meal together), to reduce the chances of any psychological issues by being in an extended period of physical isolation & losing touch with other people. It’s not that men don’t experience struggles. They’re just more subtle, passive & hidden! It was the first time that Lewis called out to the brothers in Göttingen to form the “Men’s Circle”. There were 10+ brothers ended up joining the Circle to discuss topics relevant to them. Men typically displayed an image of reason, strength, dominating, bravery, competitiveness; hesitancy in sharing feelings or to shed a tear, etc. It would not be easy to establish the “brotherly love” in the Circle. Deep inside, the brothers yearned to connect through encouragement & sharing, and to build friendships with one another. Keep up the good effort, Brothers!

Self-initiated – “Bible Study Group, Devotion Sharing”: In these days of self-isolation enforced by the “order to stay-at-home”, believers from both cities self-initiated Bible Study Groups & Devotion Sharing as a mean to watch out for & encourage each other. These small gatherings continued until the start of the new academic semester in early May.

A Variety of Counselling, Mentoring, & Pastoral Challenges: The pandemic revealed some critical issues of believers, which were overlooked when they were occupied with busy schedules during the normal days. When life’s pace slowed down, many believers thought they were experiencing psychological issues; in fact, they were confronted with neglected life problems that snowballed over the years. God used this opportunity to knock & disclose the innermost issues in the hearts of new & also long-time believers. He even took them through a complete transformation, tackling issues head-on, & uprooting the causes! As the servants of our Lord, we were thankful to have witnessed His grace, faithfulness, mercy & power on brothers and sisters, as they addressed issues stemming from their family of origin; uncovered sexual sins & wounds from years ago; confronted by the double-edged sword of God’s Words; or entangled in a spiritual warfare with demon possessed. These amazing cloud-like testimonies would take us beyond the page limit of this I

letter. We will share them on our next newsletter. The past two months of “online ministry” was not only a change in format, but also a challenge in content – “never a dull moment”! Though we were exhausted physically; our spirits were being renewed day by day.



*Göttingen University under the Pandemic
An Empty Campus*

Prayer Requests

Pandemic in Germany: As of early May, Germany has taken gradual measures to re-open services & businesses to the public. May God protect & guide all in establishing proper preventive measures, to avoid a second wave of community outbreak in Germany.

Status of Believers: The actual date of returning to physical church gathering is still unknown. May God guard the spiritual well-being of believers, so they won’t allow the comfort of online gathering to replace their commitment & ministry at church.

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