



S H A R E

SHARE Newsletter

April 2020

Editor's note: On the Sunday before Lent this year, like many Christians in Hong Kong, I participated in church's worship by watching the live webcast. The sermon delivered by the preacher impressed me a lot. The preacher said, "The peace we have in our faith does not come by owning, but by remembering the need of the others." At the time of writing (i.e. the early March), the outbreak of novel coronavirus has spread to many countries across the globe. The situation has been most severe in China, where the epidemic first occurred. In Hong Kong, with the increasing number of infected people, the shortages of surgical masks and hand sanitisers caused a great panic in society. This difficult period may be regarded as a test of our faith. In the face of unknown future, let us go beyond our fear by not focusing on personal affairs, but also taking care of the underprivileged people in society and other regions adversely affected by the virus. May we always remember our little brothers in battle against the virus.

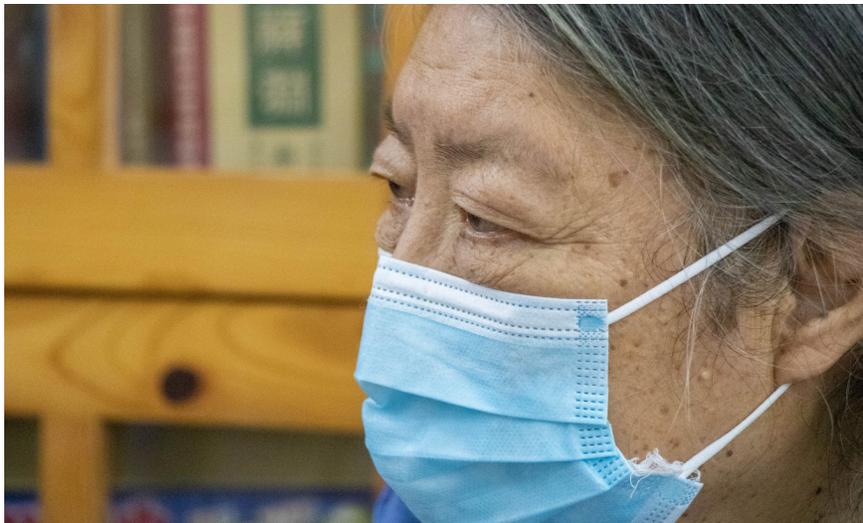
Love in the Time of COVID-19

Written by Edward Lai (Senior Communications Officer)

In China, the coronavirus has rapidly spread across the country's territories. During the early stage of outbreak when anti-virus materials were lacking in China, CEDAR made an allocation of approximately HK\$513,000 to provide emergent relief aid in Hubei, Yunnan and Sichuan provinces. Through the local networks of our Christian partners in mainland, we provided medical personnel, disinfection workers, impoverished families, as well as civil servants who were on shift duty to combat the disease, with hygienic and protective supplies. We also mobilised volunteers to care for the poor families and offer living supplies. As the novel coronavirus is highly contagious, our partners strove to keep person-to-person contact to a minimum during distribution. Instead of directly entering the community, they distributed materials to beneficiaries via hospitals, institutions and community units in need.

"I hope everyone can start doing by themselves. Each one donates a little bit of masks so that 'many a mickle makes a muckle'!"

- Clara Chiu, Head of Partnership Development, CEDAR



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(CEDAR's partners in China transported hygienic and protective supplies to hospitals)

As of early March, we have distributed 4,600 masks, over 1,400 goggles, 400 sets of protective clothing, 420 anti-bacterial hand sanitisers and 450 kg of disinfectant powder. At the time of publication, some supplies such as masks, gloves and protective clothing were still in transit. We would closely follow up the transition process and ensure that supplies reach the recipients. Please support our work: bit.ly/cedar-china-anti-virus (Chinese only).

With the soaring price of masks in Hong Kong, there were media reports at the end of January that some grassroots reutilised their remaining masks at homes after cleaning them with firewater, as they could not afford purchasing expensive masks. Some parents even reutilised their children's masks on a regular basis. In view of the foreseeable impacts to the grassroots once the virus spread in local community, we decided to launch a mask donation campaign called "Love in the Time of COVID-19" after the Lunar New Year holidays. In less than two weeks after initiating the campaign on Facebook, we collected thousands of masks and some disinfectant wet wipes. All of these preventative materials were sent to our partner Christian Concern for the Homeless Association (hereinafter referred to as CCHA). CCHA then distributed the donated items to the needy they serve, including the homeless and the grassroots living in cubicle apartments and subdivided flats.

Clara Chiu, Head of Partnership Development, who coordinated the donation campaign described, "The idea of this donation campaign comes from the story of five loaves and two fish in the Scripture. I hope everyone can start doing by themselves. Each one donates a little bit of masks so that 'many a mickle makes a muckle'!".

Clara also donated some masks from what she had in hand personally. She said, "When you see the grassroots wearing the same mask for three consecutive days, their urgent needs will make you smash the fear of not having enough masks in the future. The fear entangles you like a demon, irrespective of the fact that it is not necessarily the case."

Five Loaves and Two Fish

Thanks God. Our mask donation campaign received an overwhelming public response. CCHA stated on 18th February that they had sufficient masks for distribution in the next two months. Yet, the needs of the poor in Hong Kong were still substantial. After careful consideration, we decided to cooperate with the Centre for Refugees managed by Christian Action, that served the neglected groups of locals, namely the refugees

and asylum seekers. As of 26th February, we delivered more than 3,000 masks and some hand sanitisers to the centre.

Apart from initiating mask donation, with the referral from the local media outlet *HK01*, we transferred 2,500 masks, 250 kg of white rice, and some soda biscuits that were collectively donated by *HK01* and a social enterprise to the MEVCC Hing Wah Neighbourhood Elderly Center in March. On 2nd March, the centre workers, together with the donor, staff of *HK01* and CEDAR, distributed the donated items to the elderly they served – the solo-dwelling elders, elderly couples and elders who were in adverse and destitute situations. It was estimated that 250 elders would be benefited.

While the external environment is getting more fragile under the threat of coronavirus, we should continue to help each other and leverage the networks of local organisations to help and protect the community. We sincerely hope that the elderly and other disadvantaged groups will not have to stand in queues early in the morning or even queue up overnight in order to buy masks.

Joint Appeals

With the aim of encouraging Christians to join hands to assist the poor and the needy, CEDAR and several Christian organisations have issued two joint appeals ("7 Things Essential to Combat the Disease, Responding to Your Neighbours' Needs and "Caring for Your Neighbours, Fighting the Disease Together") to all Christian groups and individual believers in Hong Kong respectively. The initiating organisations also shared stories of supporting neighbours on the Facebook page "Affection in the Outbreak of Disease: A Testimony of Unity" (translated from the Chinese title: 疫裡有情·合一見證). In addition, CEDAR and other front-line organisations issued a press release on 18th February to urge the Hong Kong government to respond to the needs of the citizens as soon as possible to alleviate their anxiety and distress.

Under the spread of COV-19, everyone's life suddenly varied, pressing us to rethink our attitude towards life. As said by Suvan Lau Sui-wan, Acting Director of the CCHA, our partner organization of mask distribution, "The disease can isolate and alienate people, but also in the epidemic, it can reinforce interdependence and love among individuals." [1] I look forward to the day we do not need to wear masks, and on that day we reminisce every action with love and every heartfelt greeting.



[1] Watch the full interview by RTHK's *This Morning* on 18th February. Programme link: bit.ly/rthk-report (Chinese only)

Serving beyond Your Ability

Written by: Raymond Kwong (Chief Executive)

Over the past nearly 30 years, CEDAR has participated in over 100 relief campaigns and the most touching thing for us is seeing the disaster-stricken victims help each other. They do not worry about what will happen to them next, instead, they make every endeavour to help those around them. Even though they barely have enough for themselves, they still try to help others, which is not an easy thing to do. This spirit of selflessness is a grace from God.

In the Bible, the Macedonian churches are an exemplar of selflessness. In 2 Corinthians 8, the apostle Paul described how the Macedonian churches served the poor Christian believers in Jerusalem. Back then, there was a great famine in the land of Palestine. With that and the long-standing religious persecution, the Christians in Judah were living in extreme poverty. Therefore, when Paul was preaching, he encouraged churches in other places to lend a helping hand to the churches in Jerusalem. The Macedonian churches were among those who responded to Paul's appeal.

After Macedonia was defeated by Rome, the region became very poor and the local churches were in extreme poverty, and were facing a "very severe trial" of religious persecution (v. 2). Even when they were unable to fend for themselves, the churches in Macedonia still made donations to the churches in Jerusalem. They even urgently pleaded with Paul for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people (v. 4). Therefore, Paul testified that they gave as much as they were able, and "even beyond their ability" (v. 3), which is the kind of attitude of serving that is pleasing to the Lord.

Over the past few months, COVID-19 has made people in Hong Kong feel helpless, worried and even frightened. While we rely on God to face challenges during this long and arduous period, we can also learn to practise the spirit of serving "beyond our ability". Sharing your stock of masks with others is one example. Apart from the needy in Hong Kong, people in other countries also need our care and services, especially our neighbours in mainland China - one of the places most severely affected by the coronavirus. We cordially invite you to pray for them, and find ways to show them your care. If everyone serves "beyond their ability", we will still be able to experience the joy and grace from God during this difficult time.

I Decided to Return and "Give"

Written by: Gloria Li (Pastor, Western District Evangelical Church)

Evening, Friday 7th February

I had just one box of masks left at home, which was to be shared between my domestic helper and I. We were counting down the number of our masks and mentally preparing ourselves to reuse them when our stock ran out. The two batches of masks that I had ordered in early January, as shown on the computer, left Japan a long time ago, which meant that they must have already arrived in Hong Kong. Did that mean they had been "hijacked"? While waiting for the delivery, there were rumours that masks were banned from entering Hong Kong due to the anti-extradition law protests. So, I was quite concerned. (Editor's notes: With regard to the rumours, the Hong Kong Customs clarified on 28th January that surgical mask is not included in the lists of controlled / prohibited items, and that the Customs would not hinder importation of such product into Hong Kong.)

However, this morning I decided to give two masks and HK\$50 as Lai See to the two cleaners on the street. I was thinking, the minimum wage in Hong Kong is HK\$37.5, but as outsource workers, these cleaners may not even be protected by this regulation! Isn't it a tragedy that in Hong Kong the minimum hourly wage does not even pay for a box of masks? Even though I barely had enough masks at home, sharing with others was a shot at wealth equality.

Under the present circumstances, having the protection of a mask when we go out to work is fundamental human dignity, and sharing our masks with others paints a beautiful picture of the sharing society. Should I contract coronavirus because I do not have a mask to wear, I have faith that God will look after me for remembering the poor in His name!

I decided to share my worries not because I wanted people to give me masks! I still believed in the Hong Kong Post and I would wait for the delivery from Japan. By sharing how I learned to have faith, I hope to encourage others to lend a helping hand to the needy. I believe that the situation with the coronavirus in Hong Kong was an opportunity for us, as Christians, to take actions to share what we have with others.

Morning, Saturday 8th February

The next morning, on my way to church, I saw two cleaners opening up a manhole to clear treat some sewage. With my hand firmly pressed on the masks in my handbag, I asked myself, "To give or not to give"? I had already walked past them, but I decided to turn back and "to give"!

Everyone was under so much stress, the masks were just a small gift to show my support to the needy.

When I got to the office, there was a huge parcel waiting for me. I was overjoyed. It was a great and abundant gift from God. I immediately thought of CEDAR's mask donation campaign, and I promised myself that I would share my gift!

Glory be to God.



An Urgent Expectation & Appeal from Frontline Service Organisations to the Government

Below are the frontline service organisations' demands to the HKSAR Government, as stated in press release on 18th February:

1. Delivering masks to every student
2. Cracking down on price-gouging vendors
3. Creating short-term and part-time job opportunities

Full text of press release in Chinese:
cedarfund.org/press-0219

Supporting Cedar to Respond Swiftly to Disaster

With impending rainy season, many Asian countries are always subject to extreme weather and natural disaster. We would like to invite you to donate to support our “Emergency Relief and Disaster Preparedness Fund”, thus helping us to swiftly respond to the catastrophes in different nations and aiding our community-based disaster mitigation.

**Act Now: bit.ly/cedar-online-donation
(Choose “Relief” to donate)**



CEDAR Wedding Favour

CEDAR encourages each new couple to share their love and joy of marriage with poor communities through our wedding favours.

**For details: cedarfund.org/wedding
(Chinese only)**

