



CCM SUNDAY MESSAGE



CCM Sunday Message from General Secretary

We live in apocalyptic times. There has been a trade war raging between China and the USA for several years now. Sri Lanka has been declared bankrupt. Many other debt-strapped countries may follow suit. The ice-caps in the North Pole are melting. The forests are burning. Tsunamis and earthquakes occur with regular frequency. Temperatures in many countries have soared. Heavy rain resulting in floods constantly wreak havoc in countries around the world including our own.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought the world to a standstill. Economies of countries around the world tumbled during the lockdowns needed to contain the pandemic. And despite these enormous challenges facing the world, we have Russia invading Ukraine resulting in the loss of countless number of lives and driving inflation to unheard of levels around the world. Subsequent sanctions and actions by the nations involved have caused shortages in fuel and food in many countries. With unaffordable food prices, constant food shortages and short supply of fuel, it is dreadful to think how the nations in the Northern Hemisphere are going to weather the coming winter.

The lives of people around the world and in Malaysia have been severely shaken by floods, fires, earthquakes, landslides, disease, death, loss of jobs, downturn in the economy, unemployment and poverty. **In the midst of these turmoil and a world gone awry, the Church exists and ministers.**

The CCM being an association of churches and Christian organisations in Malaysia believes Christians are a redeeming community in the midst of society. Malaysia, our nation, may have been derailed from its much admired economic, social and political progress in the 1980s by the lack of political statesmanship, corruption, disregard for inclusiveness, and poor governance. Yet there is hope for salvation and redemption for the nations of the world and for Malaysia.

Hence the 17th Triennial General Assembly of the CCM in April this year, recognizing the *“promises of God through the simplicity of the gospel message of Jesus Christ for the world that is lost and suffering, reeling in fear from the threat of a never-ending pandemic, a third world war and growing ecological disasters because of man’s greed and irresponsible stewardship of God’s creation”*, chose *“Come Holy Spirit, Heal, Renew and Reconcile the Whole Creation”* as the theme for the Triennium, *“an invocation of the Holy Spirit to lead us boldly through the present challenges in faith, hope and love”*. We believe that the humble faith, prayer, service and ministry of the Christians in engagement with good people of different faiths can meet the challenges facing the world and the nation.

Hence, I would like to remind the churches of the decisions of the 17th General Assembly:

First, CCM will continue to be a prophetic voice, speaking justice and righteousness, as our God is righteous and just. Issues such as enforced disappearances of Pastors Raymond Koh, Joshua Hilmy, Ruth Sitepu and activist Amri Che Mat, and the mistreatment of refugees and migrants, will continue to receive our attention.

Second, CCM intends to recover the seasons of fasting and prayer in the life of the Church, to groan in prayer for the healing of our suffering world, and to follow up with practical action to serve, especially the poor, vulnerable and marginalised communities.

Third, to take lessons from the pandemic by spearheading responsible stewardship of God’s creation in taking up issues such as climate change and battling corruption.

Last, but not least, to faithfully proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to a dying world in need of salvation and eternal hope at such a time of great shaking.

My humble request is for the churches to heed the call of the CCM General Assembly, and for us to work together, blessed with the Lord’s grace and the counsel and guidance of the Holy Spirit, to carry out the above decisions of the General Assembly this year and in the coming years.

Finally, I would bring the attention of the churches to religious freedom and our role in being eternally vigilant to safeguard it.

Article 11 of the Federal Constitution guarantees religious freedom in Malaysia. Article 11(1) states that every person has the right to profess and practise his religion. Article 11(3) provides that **every religious group has the right—**

(a) to manage its own religious affairs;

(b) to establish and maintain institutions for religious or charitable purposes; and

(c) to acquire and own property and hold and administer it in accordance with law.

During the pandemic, the right of the churches to manage our own religious affairs was affected as we had to accommodate the various requests and directives issued by the Ministry of National Unity in consultation with the various religious organizations including the CCM, to contain the pandemic. These directives were then enforced by the police who entered some of our churches.

Earlier, a number of churches had the experience of the Inland Revenue Board (LHDN) entering some of churches and educational institutions established by our churches to verify income and taxation payable. This is a matter which may impinge on the churches right to manage their own religious affairs.

It is important the various CCM members consult one another and the CCM as well as the Christian Federation of Malaysia, the CFM, in resolving these issues of religious freedom. If need be the CCM, CFM or the Majlis Perundangan Malaysia Agama Buddha, Kristian, Hindu, Sikh dan Tao Malaysia (MCCBCHST) has to engage with the various government departments or agencies to resolve these issues.

It is important for the churches to bear in mind all the time that while issues are best resolved by the local church which is the primary organ for the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is important that issues relating to religious freedom be handled collectively by the CCM, CFM or the MCCBCHST.

With that, I wish you a great time of worship and reflection on this CCM Sunday.

Soli Deo Gloria

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General Secretary

Council of Churches of Malaysia