



Dear Pastors and Praying Friends

August 2020

Greetings from Korea! As it is now August, that means we are in the very hot and very humid summer here. For several weeks now, we have been going through our annual monsoon season with torrential rains almost every day, on and off on some days. The rainy monsoon season typically starts at the end of June and lasts for at least a month. This year was no exception. Even as I'm writing this letter, our forecast shows rain starting tomorrow and lasting for at least a week. So, we are still going through (hopefully) the tail end of the rainy season.

Back at the beginning of July, the Korean government tried to apply stricter enhanced guidelines to many churches in the area of slowing the spread of the Covid-19. Even though they did not label churches as "high-risk" facilities, they announced they would be banning them from organizing gatherings, such as Bible studies or choir practice, other than regular worship services. Churches were also to be banned from offering group meals, and required to install quick response (QR) code-based registration systems for visitors. Even during regular worship services, church members were advised to refrain from praying aloud or singing together. Church members were also required to wear face masks and keep a distance of at least one meter from each other. Any violators of those guidelines could face a fine of up to \$2,500 and the administration could issue a "no-assembly" administrative order for the church, practically banning its operation.

Right after this announcement was made, many churches here in Korea spoke out against it. They demanded the government to lift the ban which not only infringes on the rights of churches but also puts the unfair blame of virus spread on them. Many churches had already been complying with government requests to limit extra meetings, even cancelling typical summer programs including Bible camps and have been following the recommended guidelines in church services such as wearing masks, using hand sanitizer and social distancing. Churches opposed the ban because the government was trying to label churches as the main hotbed for the virus spread, while seemingly ignoring other events and facilities that could be considered possible sites of infection and spread. Thankfully, about 1.5 weeks ago, the government lifted their stricter ban on churches. But even after the central government-level removal of the ban, however, regional administrative bodies will remain entitled to issue their own administrative orders to prohibit church gatherings if that is necessary.

As far as our church is concerned, we have not had any interference from the government at all (probably because we are in an area not really affected by the virus much and our congregation is small). But we are happy to announce that all of our members have been back in attendance for about a month now! We have not been having our usual after-service meals and try to follow the recommended guidelines of hygiene and have been enjoying seeing each other for limited fellowship during worship service time. Our people have been faithful in attending, giving, and reading their weekly Bible passages. Just recently, one of our elementary school children has shown a desire to trust Christ as Savior. His name is Subin and this coming Sunday Michael will talk with Subin about receiving salvation.

Our English academy continues on. One new student has joined, a sister to a boy who has already been attending. This week we are on our summer break, but will start back up again next week. All school children are on their 3-week summer break right now as well, including our daughters. When school is in session, they still have a "1-week study at school/1-week study from home" schedule. That will probably last all year.

Thank you all for your continued prayers and support for us. We pray God blesses you and keeps you safe.

God bless, The Yoo Family

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