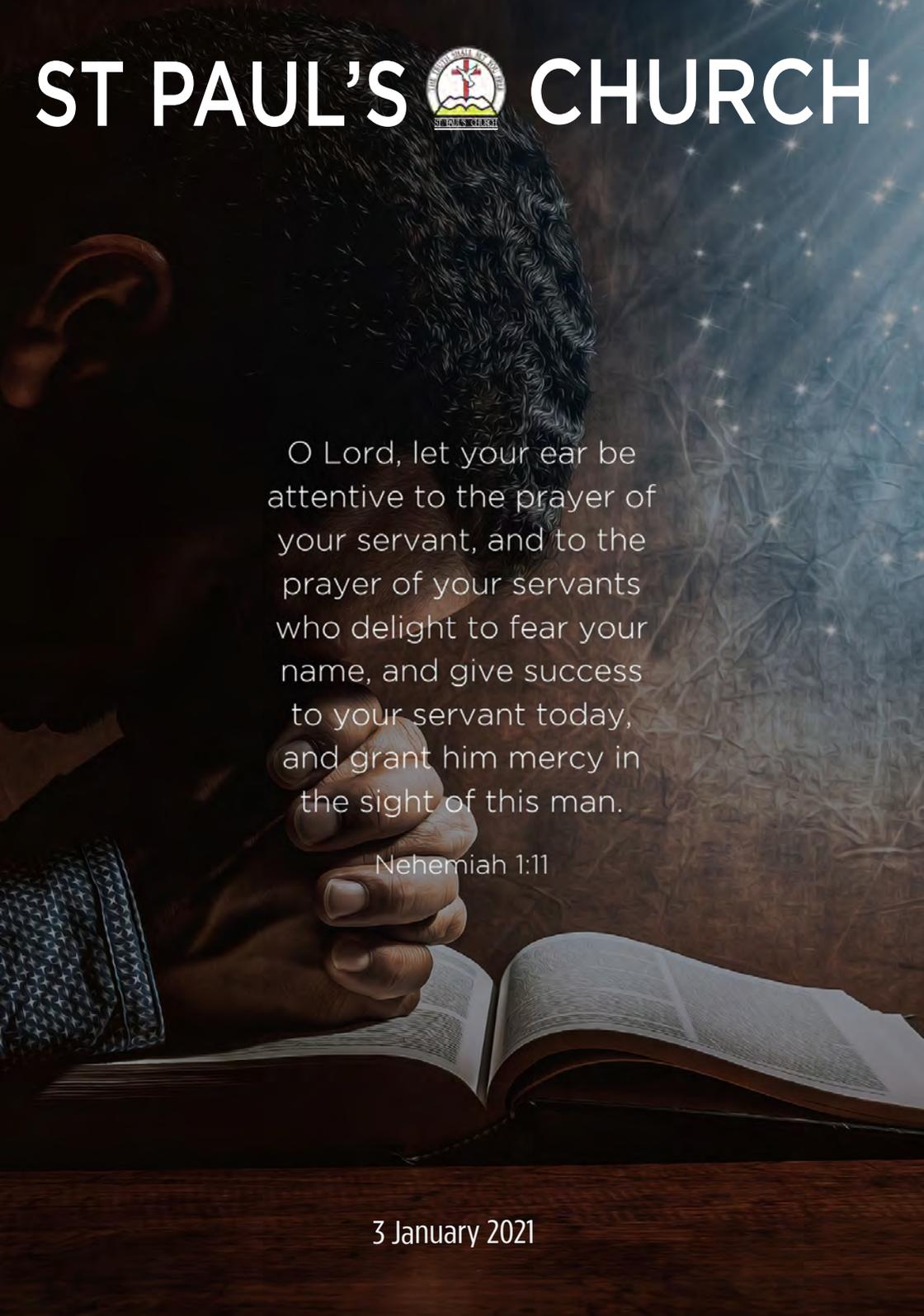


ST PAUL'S CHURCH



O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.

Nehemiah 1:11

3 January 2021

2nd Sunday After Christmas Day

Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son shared at Nazareth the life of an earthly home: help us to live as the holy family, united in love and obedience, and bring us at last to our home in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Readings

First Reading: Nehemiah 1:1-11

Gospel Reading: John 2:13-17

Today's Sermon

A Passion for God and His People
by Rev Jeremy Ponniah

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a white surgical mask. The person is wearing a white, fuzzy-cuffed sleeve and dark blue jeans. The background is blurred, showing an outdoor setting with a building and some greenery. The text is overlaid on the image.

The Phase 3 Dilemma: A Time to Be Watchful

by Leslie Koh,
ourdailybread.org

It's something we've all been looking forward to: a further easing of the restrictions that have made daily life often challenging in the midst of this Covid-19 crisis.

Now that we can meet in larger groups of up to 8, and church services can resume with bigger congregations of up to 250, there is a palpable sense of life returning to normal even as the battle against Covid-19 continues.

Phase 3 is very much welcome because with the economy and precious jobs at stake, we cannot afford to live with restrictions for too long, even though they have been necessary to curb the spread of Covid-19.

Yet, I'm sure some of us may be wondering: Would the relaxation of restrictions also lead to a resurgence in infections? Would it encourage some people to be complacent, and forget that the risk of coronavirus spreading is still very real?

This is not just a difficult dilemma for policy-makers and leaders in companies and churches, but also for each one of us. Should we go ahead and meet our families and friends in larger groups? Should we go back to church every week? Should we resume some of the activities that we have held off for almost a year? Or should we continue to stay at home as much as possible, to reduce our risk of exposure?

This is not a question, I think, that can be answered easily. It depends on our individual needs and situation.

In some ways, this dilemma is like the one all of us face as followers of Christ.

As believers, we have been given great freedom resulting from God's grace and justification. Our walk with God is not defined by a set of strict religious rules and long list of dos and don'ts, but by a loving relationship with Him.

But, as Paul warns us, we are not to abuse this freedom. Just because we can do certain things, he says, it doesn't mean we should. As he points out in 1 Corinthians 10:23: "I have the right to do anything... but not everything is beneficial. 'I have the right to do anything'—but not everything is constructive."

Instead, we are called to use our freedom wisely, and choose to do what is right and good.

That's been a good reminder for me. But what strikes me even more is Paul's related instruction in Galatians 5:13, where he says: "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love."

How insightful! Apart from choosing to do what is holy (Romans 6:22), we are

also to choose to do what is beneficial to others— “serve one another humbly in love”.

That, I think, is a good principle for me to keep in mind when making decisions on what to do in Phase 3. When there is no clear right and wrong, we have another guideline: Whether I stay in or go out, whether I meet someone or not, would be well guided by the question, “How am I serving someone else humbly in love?”

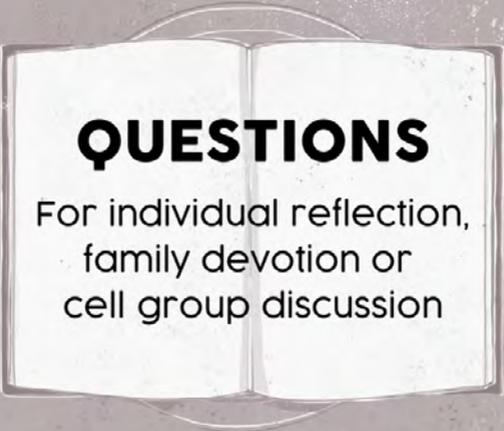
The other lesson that has struck me is that knowing that we have a freedom to choose—both in life and in Phase 3—gives me a greater impetus to be watchful. Because we have greater freedom, it can be easier to go wrong in simply doing what I want, even when it isn't pleasing to God.

And so we are to watch—to watch out for temptations to do as we like, and watch our own behaviour. Titus 2:11–12 is a great reminder to keep drawing on the grace of God and strength of the Holy Spirit to control my thoughts, attitudes, and actions:

*For the grace of God has appeared
that offers salvation to all people.
It teaches us to say “No”
to ungodliness and worldly passions,
and to live self-controlled,
upright and godly lives
in this present age.*

May we make this reminder our personal prayer today:

*Lord, thank You for Your grace.
Please teach me to say “no” to ungodliness
and help me to control my passions,
so that I will be upright and godly.
Help me live a life that is pleasing to You
as I humbly serve others in love.*



QUESTIONS

For individual reflection,
family devotion or
cell group discussion

Nehemiah's passion for God and His people was rooted in his identity as a servant of God (Neh 1:6 & 11) and not as cupbearer to the king. Reflect and share on what challenges you face in having a core identity as a servant of God.

Nehemiah was a servant who cared deeply for God's name and his people. How is this shown in Neh 1? What steps can we take to grow in our care and concern for God's Name and His people?

There is a period of about 4 months between Neh 1:1 and Neh 2:1. What enabled Nehemiah to persevere in prayer during this period? What lessons from Neh 1 can we apply in our lives to strengthen our prayer lives?

1

Our Vision

To be Ambassadors for Christ in the Community

2 Corinthians 5:20

Therefore, we are Ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

2

First Pillar

Being Spirit-Filled

Galatians 5:16

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

3

Second Pillar

Imitating Christ

Luke 9:23

And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

4

Third Pillar

Persevering Prayer

Colossians 4:2

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

5

Fourth Pillar

Serving All

Mark 10:45

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

6

Fifth Pillar

Living Witness

Matthew 5:16

let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.



*Welcome
Rev. Peter
Manimuthu*

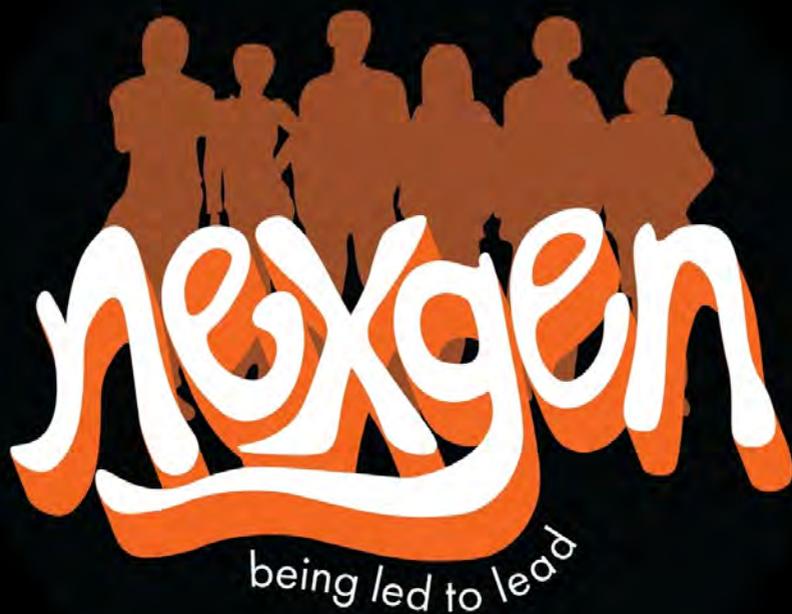
Bishop Titus Chung has appointed Rev. Peter Manimuthu as Honorary Priest to St Paul's Church with effect from 1 Jan 2021.

We warmly welcome Rev. Peter and his beloved wife, Tryphena to St Paul's Church.

Rev. Peter is an ordained clergy with Diocese of Singapore for the past seventeen years. He had served as Chaplain to the seafarers for 8 years prior to his current assignment as Chaplain to St Andrews Nursing Home-Buangkok.

He loves to walk, travel, play Soccer and enjoys a game of Chinese Chess.

He looks forward to serve God and His people and be part of God's family here at St Paul's Church.



NexGen
Fellowship

3.00 to 4.30pm,
9 January, Saturday
at the NexGen Hub,
Ages 13-25



CONTEMPORARY SERVICE

**SATURDAYS, 6 FEB ONWARDS,
5PM, SECOND SANCTUARY**

A monochromatic, teal-tinted photograph of a person with long, wavy hair seen from behind. Two hands are placed on their shoulders, one from the left and one from the right, suggesting a supportive or comforting gesture. The background is softly blurred, showing other people in a group setting.

Pastoral Care

For those who require prayer or pastoral care, do drop us an email at contact@stpaulschurch.org.sg or contact the respective pastoral staff directly.

Rev Jeremy: 9477 5476

Pastor Leon: 9199 3815

Pastor Leroy: 9710 2900

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Please indicate "S2" under Reference No. The code "S2" refers to the English Congregation. Other information like specific giving (e.g. mission, building, etc.) as needed. Names are optional.



GIVE BY CHEQUE

Made payable to "St Paul's Church" and mailed to our Church address - 843 Upper Serangoon Road Singapore 534683. Kindly indicate English Congregation at the back of the cheque.