

Dear Mr. Steve Pearce,

I greatly appreciate the understanding and sensitivity that you have shown for the Church of South India's desperate needs of the hour. The help that you have assured, I am sure, shall be the life sustaining one for the many people who have sought our help. These help seeking people are not confined to our flock only. During these appalling conditions of starvation, the Church simply could not afford to confine its relief work within its own circles. We are indeed thankful for the Almighty that we were able to extend our helping arms to those outside and were able to spread the love of Christ at this desperate time of crisis. The relief work of the Churches was on two fronts. On the one hand, they had to keep their own flock spiritually and physically nurtured and cared for. Secondly, they also had to show the concern and the love of Christ to the people who are yet to belong to the flock of Christ. We will be sharing with you some images and short videos about the relief work of the Churches.

The CSI Churches were the first ones, among the innumerable social organizations in India, to grasp the grave situation arising out of the Covid19 lockdown. This is because, the major portion of the income of the churches come, not from the rich who are not many, but from the poor working-class Christians who form the majority of the membership. The CSI is sustained through the selfless contributions of the daily wage-earning workers and those monthly income earning lower middle classes who struggle to make both ends meet. The sudden close down has hit them hard, since these our people live from day to day. They cannot store for the next day. The churches too were hard hit due to this sudden closure of the worship places during festival season. Nevertheless, the churches delved into their reserve funds to plunge into the relief work. It is also worth mentioning here to thank those urban churches who, however small in number, have unreservedly made available their contributions to feed the hungry in the rural churches.

It is in these past two months when the churches were closed down, when there was nil income coming into its coffers, that the churches have truly listened to our Lord's words from the Seat of Judgement, "Whatever you do to one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you do to me." The churches, without any worry for tomorrow, have drawn on their reserves and have been feeding the hungry. The abject poverty that has gripped the members of CSI has moved the churches to deploy their angels of life with life sustaining help. The following pages provide some of the images and reports of a crippled church feeding its hungry sheep belonging its fold and also others. These reports, which have to be very selective due to the space constraint, inform us about how the churches were working on war footing to combat and to stall the deathly march of hunger and starvation. **(The video link <https://youtu.be/TB-ce3Q397Q> depicts the Church actively involved in alleviating hunger for its own members as well as non-members)**







Despite the severe restrictions, CSI already able to reach most of the areas to distribute food and are courageously taking risks and increasing their efforts. Every Diocese continuous to support vulnerable people whose livelihoods have been greatly impacted by the Coronavirus helping them with emergency food packets.





Some in our rural churches feel a sense of helplessness during this evolving situation. But, in the midst of all this uncertainty, Churches mutually learnt from one another about best practices and effective strategies to reach and help the Poor, Marginalized Migrants and Daily labours.



As the lockdown continues the State and Central Govts. made announcements to provide food materials free of cost through its Public Distribution Systems and to provide help money for the Below the Poverty Line families. The reality is that many of the poorest of the poor, who migrate out of their domicile for work, may not be eligible to benefit from this relief. Of concern is the plight of millions of Migrant Workers who are not registered in the Public Distribution System in the places they migrate to. Therefore, there has arisen an atmosphere of protest demonstrations which were handled violently by the state machinery. Hearing about food material distribution through the local Churches, the migrant workers and others living in and around the vicinity flock to the Churches to receive help. **(We include the story of Mrs. Suseela who sought help through local Church in the video link attached <https://youtu.be/4-6jNMSm9Lw> )**

The post-Corona era will be a vastly changed one. We will not be able to wake up to the pre-Corona days of life again. The changed reality will be a harsh one for the people who make

up the lower rungs of the society. Most of them may not be able to go back to their work again. The world has witnessed the plight of the millions of the migrant labourers during the sudden lock down. Starvation and death will stare at them in their faces. Human rights abuses, loss of labour rights, exploitation of labour and violence will be rampant. The plight of working women, who have to earn bread for their hungry children at home, will be pathetic. Severe exploitation and abuse will be their daily experiences. It is harrowing to think of the plight of a morsel of food to the hungry household. The elderly, unable to work and earn, will be looked upon as a burden to the family and society. The Dalits and the Adhivasi people will again find their hard earned social and economic advancement evaporate into thin air. The post Covid19 world will be a severe one for them to live in.



During the Post Covid19 times, a new phase of responsibility and activism will dawn upon the Church of South India as well as for churches world over. The churches will be continuously required to sustain the poor and the hungry who may not be called back to work again. The millions of migrant workers who have either returned or rendered jobless will need to be looked after and provided for. The elderly, women and children will be looking up to the churches to sustain them for a few more months till they get their livelihood back. The mission of the Church of South India will be reformulated to cope with the situation and to be a real witness to the love and kindness of the all accepting Christ.

The Church of South India will surely stand up to the challenges of the times with the help of the Spirit of God who brought us together. We are only waiting for the times to get normalized to bounce back to our vibrant best in mission. Until the Churches open and get functional, we need to sustain the mission of Christ as the life ensuring gospel. The Church, as a very present symbol of such mission of life among those facing bleak life ahead, needs to augment its resources from anywhere. Any help at this time of crisis will be a great witness of the Church in a country which poses many challenges for its existence as a religious minority. Now is the time to witness who we are and what our gospel is.

Once again, many thanks on behalf of the Church of South India for your continued concern and support.

Yours Truly,

C. Fernandas Rathina Raja  
General Secretary  
Church of South India