

Dear Brethren,

Greetings in the Lord!

Thank you, Brethren, for your fellowship in the Lord and prayer as we also assure you of our prayer in your behalf.

There is no need to say that these last two years have been trying years for churches globally. The pandemic with the associated lockdowns has displaced many of us distracting us from functioning fully the way we know church life and ministry is all about. Our case can even be seen as worse because we lost our meeting place. But the Lord who establishes the end from the beginning has prepared us for this situation; He, a year earlier has introduced to us a private family resort that has all the features needed to be able to gather and at the same time observe health protocols. The place with an open-air auditorium has room enough to accommodate all members of the church and visitors even with proper social distancing. In fact, we were even able to have a joint worship with a church from Taytay. Those who are exposed to possible infection can still attend just staying in their cars park in front. We are truly thankful for this development. We are able to hold both the morning and evening services face to face but we still hold Prayer meeting online and have transferred our Sunday school on Saturdays and is held online

In the area of evangelism, this pandemic expectedly hindered us from our regular evangelistic activities, yet it also brought unexpected blessings. One of these blessings was the online evangelistic Bible study, which was designed to take advantage of lockdown making families stay together. This was designed to give families something to watch and discuss about while together at home. But the Bible study spread even to those whom we do not know and right now we get many interactions. Two ladies from Alabang, who regularly watch this Bible study painstakingly travel on motorbike to attend our services (and yes, they were already told that there is a church nearer to them)

On a personal concern and as you already know, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. At the start this really did not affect much, except, of course, my family who was devastated by the news: I was not in pain, and no visible manifestation was observed. But soon when I started my treatment I begun to feel weak, I've lost 4 kilos, and the regimen required from me much amount of time. All these took a toll on my ministry; I had two episodes of severe weakness that I was not able to fulfill my task. The church offered me indefinite leave but at first, I did not see it necessary but soon I realized that my objection is more of pride that I can still manage rather than zeal for the church so I accepted the entire May leave, humbly acknowledging that the church is not dependent on me and that I am dispensable as anyone else.

Yet again even in this situation, good things are coming out; some of our men rose up to take responsibilities like teaching and preaching, and sister Churches have generously been helping us by sending preachers and these seem to be the set up for a very long time for the treatment, according to my doctor may take even up to 6 years. But of course, God is not limited to anything and can change the course of events and conditions according to His perfect will.

Our concerns for prayers:

1. That we find a more suitable meeting place. Without experiences and the cosmopolitan nature of our church, we are open to any place even outside Metro Manila.
2. That we see genuine salvation from among those we were able to reach with the gospel through technology
3. Salvation as well for the children of Members and aging parents almost all active in participating in our services either face to face or online
4. That the Lord raise up men for church office especially eldership. Several names have been put up for nomination; one for the Eldership and 2 for the diaconate. Please pray that the church be guided in the process.
5. With regard to my condition, while I desire and ask God for healing, I am more desirous to see this illness used by God for his glory, the sanctification and growth of the church, my family's sanctification, and of course my own sanctification...Please pray not only for me but with me in these concerns

Thank you brethren for your expression of concerns and your fellowship in the Lord.

*Ephesians 3:20-21* 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

In His Service

Pastor Rene Maramara

On behalf of Sovereign Grace Church