



Antidote to Stress & Anxiety

~David Chiang,
CIM Board member

The past two years were tumultuous times in the U.S. In 2020 we saw the onset and spread of the coronavirus that caused massive chaos. The presidential election later that year was the most contentious in history and bitterly divided the country. Then in 2021 the coronavirus vaccine became available, but a segment of the population felt the government's health orders violated their personal rights and led to more division in the country. All of which persisted into 2022.

The evangelical church has been a key participant in both the political and public health debates at the national level. At the local level, some churches openly proclaim their views and defy the laws they disagree with. Other churches ban discussions to avoid confrontation, but that just push the arguments into online chats among the congregation. We thank the Lord that even though fellow Christians have strong but opposing views, yet that hasn't divided the church, although the mid-term election later this year and the surge of the new omicron variant are already elevating people's angst. Psychologists say fear of the uncertain future leads to stress and anxiety in people, and we should acknowledge that has been building within the church since two years ago. However, as an antidote we can revisit Psalm 23, which David wrote by drawing upon his childhood experience as a shepherd. This very familiar psalm reminds us of the blessings from God that are greater than all the troubling events.

"The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want." God is David's and our personal shepherd, and God will provide for all of our spiritual needs. It's interesting that sheep is used to represent us in the Bible. Sheep is the only animal that doesn't have a wild counterpart like the wild goat, meaning a sheep isn't capable of living in the wild by itself. Thus a sheep without the care of the shepherd is doomed to die.

"He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul." Sheep eat standing up and lie down when they're full and satisfied. Sheep is a skittish animal and is frightened easily, such as by fast rushing water. God promises to make sure we're well taken care of when He restores our soul – something important to us – after a trial like going through the current pandemic. How wonderful is that?!

"He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." Israel is mountainous so a shepherd needs to lead the flock through valleys when moving between high and low ground, and the valleys can be dark because high mountain walls block out the sun. But remember we're being led by God our shepherd. Naturally, God will take us on the paths of righteousness, but moving through the valley of the shadow of death is also by design. We can't go from one mountain top to the next without going through the valley in between, and God is walking with us for the days or however long it takes, which could be like the unknown duration of the current pandemic, or wondering when there'd be peace in the national political standoff. Also the shadows cannot harm us physically but could make us fearful, such as the threat of contracting COVID-19 and serious illness. But God's power is shown as the shepherd's rod, which is used to fight off attacks on the sheep, and God's grace is shown through the shepherd's staff that's used to direct the flock or to retrieve wayward sheep back onto the right path. Notice also David switched to use the pronoun "you" instead of "he", which emphasizes the closeness to God and His protection in our stressful times.

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." Shepherds often have to go ahead of

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the flock to ensure water is available and to prepare the pasture by removing debris. Shepherds also anoint sheep's heads with certain oil in ancient time to keep the flies away from pestering them or infecting sheep with parasites. Likewise, God will prepare for us, even as we're under attack, and bless us with love for His flock that's more than what we asked for.

“Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.” Shepherds in David's time practically live with their flock in the rugged outdoor. The weather can be too hot or too cold, and the ground is never comfortable to sleep on. So as a shepherd, David looked forward to live in God's house in comfort, where no tear and sorrow exist. The word “surely” conveys a promise, and David was certain of God's mercy in his later years even though he has made many mistakes in his life. We can also count on God's promise for goodness and mercy to follow us, despite our own missteps and failures, and not because we earned it but because God knows we need it!

PRAYER REQUESTS

1. The first-level policy of lockdown in South Africa continues to be postponed. The government said it will open soon. We also look forward to, praying to God, and hope to resume normal in-person gatherings in early March. May God's gracious hand help us.
2. Pray for Mrs. Wu, Whitney, who still has discomfort in her abdomen. Ask God to protect her and heal her physically, mentally, and spiritually.
3. Please pray for the PECCC Church's reopening in-person worship end of January. May the Lord keep the on-site meeting safe and encourage more brothers and sisters to participate in the on-site worship and service.
4. Please pray for Isaaca, of pastor Alex Ko and his wife, Nicole. Recently, she has been frequently dizzy and the doctors cannot yet find the cause. She has an appointment to see a specialist for diagnosis soon. Ask the Lord for healing.
5. Please pray for Rev Jorge Loo's visit to *Belo Horizonte Church* for missions in mid-March.
6. Pray for Rev Jorge Loo and his wife to go to *Belem and Sao Luis* for short-term missions in April.
7. Pray for Rev Loo's heart health.
8. CIM Canada's Roma ministry partner in Ukraine is facing much stress and tension with increasing pressure and now invasion from Russia finally began already. Our ministry partner told us that about 80 children from eastern Ukraine will be evacuated to the west to stay with them at the Mercy Camp. Pray for CIM ministry partner: House of Mercy and their ministries in Ukraine including their humanitarian and refugee support for the Ukrainian near the war zone.
9. Pray for CIM supporting Roma pastors and their families.
10. Pray for the recruiting effort underway to fill job vacancies in CIM for a Director of Ministry to oversee STM and daily operations, and an Executive Director successor.
11. Pray that God will move more brothers and sisters to join the ministry so God's kingdom would be more prosperous. Pray for God's abundant provision for all the financial needs of CIM.

NOTE

Please call 408-596-4567 to contact CIM for questions or comments. Thank you for your continual support.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Jan 2022

	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expense</u>	<u>Balance</u>
General	\$3,112	\$1,381	\$1,731
Missions	\$7,072	\$14,146	-\$7,074
Total	<u>\$10,184</u>	<u>\$15,527</u>	-\$5,343

To contribute to CIM ministries:

- 1) Make checks payable to “**CIM**” and mail to: P.O. Box 700185, San Jose, CA 95170-0185, USA
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