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Floyd assures leaders of love, care on COVID-19 prayer call

by Diana Chandler, posted Thursday, February 13, 2020 (2 months ago)

NASHVILLE (BP) -- More than 30 ethnically diverse leaders joined Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee President Ronnie Floyd praying Thursday (Feb. 13) for global healing, comfort and salvation in the midst of a COVID-19 outbreak that has killed more than 1,100 people.



Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee President Ronnie Floyd (left) and Peter Yanes, executive director of Asian American relations and mobilization for the SBC EC, hosted a call with more than 30 ethnically diverse leaders to pray for global healing, comfort and salvation in the midst of a COVID-19 outbreak that has killed more than 1,100 people.

Photo by Rebecca Manry

"I want to remind all of us on the call, that regardless of how despairing the news may be, or some of the hope that may be even lost in your heart, that there is a God Who lives, there is a God Who cares, there is a God Who is with you everywhere you go," Floyd said during a 30-minute conference call held from his office at SBC headquarters in Nashville.

"And that even though you walk through that valley, you will fear no evil, for He is with you," Floyd said, evoking Psalm 23. "Your rod and your staff, they will comfort you. And so I'm just praying that God will do this for His honor and His glory."

Floyd arranged the call after hearing the concerns of pastors from among 2,000 Asian Southern Baptist churches who, along with families and friends in Asia and elsewhere, are suffering panic, fear and xenophobia in the midst of the crisis that the World Health Organization said might have sickened more than 60,000 in China and 23 other countries. Only 15 cases have been reported in the U.S.

He encouraged Southern Baptists to continue praying for those impacted by the virus, and to include the concerns in congregational prayers Sunday (Feb. 19).

"To all of you on the call, what we want you to know is that you matter to us, we care for you, we love you, we're praying for you, we're standing in

the gap for you," Floyd said.

Leaders on the call represented groups comprising the Southern Baptist Asian American Fellowship, including Filipino, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian and Japanese, said Peter Yanes, executive director of Asian American relations and mobilization for the SBC EC.

Participants included Amos Lee, executive director of the Chinese Baptist Fellowship of the USA and Canada; Jeremy Sin, a national church planting catalyst with the North American Mission Board; Carter Tan, English ministries pastor at Grace Chinese Baptist Church in Richmond, Va.; and Andy Liu, pastor of Chinese Baptist Mission in Shreveport, La., and a native of Wuhan, China, where COVID-19 cases were first reported.

Asian pastors reported updates from Chinese communities in the U.S. and in Asia regarding the virus, with Sin reporting he had searched two weeks to find surgical masks to send to his family members in Hong Kong. He mailed the masks, he said, just an hour before the call.

Floyd called on participants to pray for key concerns, including healing for those diagnosed with the virus and those quarantined; for hospitals and medical personnel; for Asian churches and pastors abroad and in the U.S.; for the Asian community of believers and the unsaved.

Yanes prayed for a medical breakthrough in treating the virus.

"With your guidance and with your provision Father, the cure will be discovered sooner," Yanes prayed. He asked that those hurting conclude that God is in control and powerful, "and every heart will return" to the Lord.

Also participating were EC staff members including Willie McLaurin, SBC EC vice president for Great Commission relations and mobilization; Julio Arriola, SBC EC executive director of Hispanic relations and mobilization, and Ashley Clayton, SBC EC executive director for church affiliation.

Floyd prayed that God would use the crisis for His glory.

"I pray Lord today that people will come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, even through the challenges, the fears, the anxieties that are created through this virus," Floyd appealed to God. "And Lord with the threat of death upon some people that various people on this phone call know about, or members of family that they've already lost, friends across the world, may God comfort them and may the peace of Jesus Christ be with them."

With reports of as many as 60,000 cases globally, 46,997 of those have been confirmed through laboratory testing, WHO said in a Thursday press briefing. The remaining 13,332 cases, reported from China's Hubei province, are instead clinically confirmed and likely represent cases seen from the beginning of the outbreak, WHO said.

"In Hubei province only, a trained medical professional can now classify a suspected case of COVID-19 as a clinically-confirmed case on the basis of chest imaging, rather than having to have a laboratory confirmation," Michael Ryan, executive director of WHO's Health Emergencies Program, said at the briefing. "This allows clinicians to move and report cases more quickly, not having to wait for lab confirmation, ensuring that people get to clinical care more quickly, and also allows public health responses in terms of contact tracing and other important public health measures to be initiated."

However, WHO only includes the lab confirmed cases in its daily numerical tracking of the disease.

No deaths have been reported in the U.S., but fear and xenophobia have risen, according to news reports. Some Chinese American Southern Baptist churches have reported lower attendance during the outbreak, with members holding small-group meetings, meeting electronically or staying home.

In addition to China, the Philippines and the U.S., COVID-19 has been reported in Singapore, Thailand, Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Australia, Vietnam, Germany, France, in 12 other countries and at sea on cruise ships.

WHO provides daily updates on the virus.

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