



The Methodist Church of Southern Africa

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Communique: MCSA Response to Covid -19

Preamble

As governments, public health officials and communities respond to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) globally, including the countries of our Connexion, the Bishops of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa had a tele-conference to discuss doing church during this period of crisis. The Bishops were due to meet this week in the Queenstown Synod, but in light of the urgency of the situation the Connexion faces, decided to rather tele-conference. Taking into consideration the current public health authority advice from all 6 countries of our Connexion, and after consultation with the Bishops, the Presiding Bishop, Rev Purity Malinga, gave the following directives:

Sunday Services

Services are encouraged to continue but with the following adjustments:

- As per government edicts, that no more than 100 people attend any given service, and where possible that social distancing is practiced in the church and the high hygiene protocols be upheld.
- We call upon ministers with societies that have more than 100 congregants to become creative in devising ways of meeting the congregation's spiritual needs. We propose that the congregation be divided into groups of less than 100 where church building sizes allow and even less where they do not, and the number of services on a Sunday (and possibly other days of the week) be multiplied. Remember that it's not just about numbers of people in attendance but also about space and proximity. This also presents an opportunity for us as Wesleyan followers to use our class meetings and cell groups effectively.
- We encourage all ministers to access the latest information on Covid-19 and provide regular updates to their congregants.
- In Societies where a member/members have tested positive for Covid -19 and the said member/members came into contact with a large number of the congregation that a call be made, with the assistance of health authorities, for all affected members to self-isolate and be tested.
- We also encourage E- worship where possible as a creative alternative to physical gatherings.
- Those handling communion should maintain the high hygiene protocols and individual communion cups are still considered the safest. However, these will need to be sterilised after use so they can be used again in another service. Communion can be postponed when the situation does not allow for it to be celebrated safely.
- Disinfecting communion rails, pews/chairs and all other surfaces should also become the new norm in fighting this virus that can, depending on the surface, survive up to three days.

A Christ-healed Africa for the Healing of Nations

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Conventions and Youth Synods

- All Conventions and Youth Synods are postponed with immediate effect until further notice.
- Convention reports should however still be submitted to the relevant Synod Officials so as not to hamper or delay administration.

Circuit Quarterly Meetings

- Circuits are encouraged to look at creatively holding their April CQM's while still abiding to the no more than 100 persons edict.
- The Synods through the Office of the Bishops will provide guidelines to superintendents about how to reduce the attendees to the meeting without losing the value of broad participation and contribution.
- The highest levels of hygiene must be upheld at all these meetings and anyone who feels unwell and presents with flu like symptoms is requested to self-isolate.

Easter

- All combined Good Friday and Easter Sunday services are cancelled.
- There will be no circuit gatherings for Easter this year; however we encourage societies to still have short, impactful services with 100 or less congregants at a time.
- There should therefore be no extended 7 Words services that require catering.
- Creative methodologies such as live streaming and recordings will be utilised to ensure that no one is left out during this very important time in the church calendar.

Funerals, Weddings and Baptisms

- We call on all ministers to educate families about the need for reduced numbers as funeral gatherings at home as well as at the actual funeral. The number, as with all other gatherings should not exceed 100. The same has to be upheld with weddings.
- All baptisms must be postponed with immediate effect.

Opportunity for prayer

- The pandemic provides us with an opportunity to not only go back to basics, but to join in solidarity and prayer for those affected and impacted by Covid -19 and for all the nations of our Connexion and the world at large as we together fight the debilitating effects of this scourge.
- The Presiding Bishop calls on all the People called Methodists to join together in prayer on **Thursday 26 March at 12H00** wherever we are.

Final reflections

In the midst of this global concern is the profound realisation that we are in this together and that we are indeed our sister and brothers keeper. It will call for leadership on the part of our ministers and creative synergies from all role players. We are at this time reminded of our individual responsibility for the wellbeing of all of humanity. We urge everyone to stay informed and below are some links to resources and guidelines that are available to us.

The office of the Presiding Bishop will continue to disseminate updates as the situation evolves. There is no better time for us as a church to live out our vision and mission of "A Christ healed Africa for the healing of nations" as we "proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ for Healing and Transformation."

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

<https://www.unicef.org.au/blog/news-and-insights/march-2020/how-to-talk-to-your-children-about-coronavirus>

Child Friendly Explanation of Corona Virus WWW.MINDHEART.CO



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<http://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/covid-19/covid-19-prevention/>
<http://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/covid-19/frequently-asked-questions/>

“Shaping tomorrow today- walking humbly with God”

Kind regards,

Rev. Purity Malinga
Presiding Bishop

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