



# The Methodist Church of Southern Africa

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## A Pastoral Letter to all Methodist Ministers

Dear Friends in Christ

Easter Greetings to you all! Christ is risen indeed!

You have received a number of letters from the MCO since the outbreak of the Covid -19 pandemic in our Connexion- all giving instructions and guidance on how to continue with the ministry despite the restrictions and disruptions imposed by the coronavirus. We were all abruptly thrust into the un-known; deep, murky un-chartered waters, where we had to focus on at least being present with the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the midst of confusion and panic!

With this letter however, I wish to acknowledge, affirm and salute you as ministers! Thank you for the efforts you are making every day and every Sunday to minister to the Methodist people! When the worship we knew was about gathering together- we have had to learn to lead worship for imagined congregations! While some of our churches have adequate resources for virtual services, many do not, and yet you continue to do your best to offer messages of hope, Bible studies, counseling etc. You continue to comfort and to be there for those who mourn! The words I remember as I thank you on behalf of the MCSA are those of the Son of God to the church in Thytira;

***"I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first". (Rev 2:18)***

Keep up the good work!

The period of lockdown has been challenging to say the least. In South Africa we will be going into Level 4 of the Alert System of Covid-19 from 1 May, in Namibia lockdown ends on 4 May and in Botswana it has been extended to 7 May after which a phased easing of restrictions will be instituted.

This period brings with it much anxiety and uncertainty! People's movement remains curtailed and gatherings are still prohibited and so it will be a while before we are able to gather in worship as we used to! As some people begin to go back to work, infections, sickness and deaths shall rise! While the lockdown has helped to flatten the curve-

*A Christ-healed Africa for the Healing of Nations*

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according to scientists who have studied the spread of this disease, the peak of the pandemic is yet to come! Who knows what it will look like in our contexts with our limited resources and capacity? We however, cannot live in fear but in faith. We continue to proclaim the gospel of love, life and hope! Our Lord lives! As the people in our communities go through this difficult time- to which we ourselves are not immune- they will continue to look to us as representatives of Christ, for accompaniment, comfort and hope. It is my prayer that at this time- while our "doing" ministry is curtailed, we will be strengthened in our "being in Christ". Let us use this time of staying home and curfews to forge a closer and humble walk with the Lord, who alone will strengthen our resolve to follow Him, and empower us to offer meaningful ministry at this time.

There are ecumenical conversations going on about different ways of ensuring that worship happens at this time- the outcomes of which will be shared with you when available. I believe that the main ministry that every church must offer at this time is- prayer! The world needs God's intervention! The Continent of Africa needs God's intervention! The poorest of the poor in our communities will survive this pandemic and its effects only by God's grace!

The economic impact of Covid- 19 is reverberating throughout the world and the church will not be left unscathed. We need to intensify prayers as individuals and as Methodists!

**I therefore, call upon all Methodists to set aside every Thursday at 12h00 NOON as our collective Methodist time of Prayer- beginning with prayer and fasting this Thursday, 30 April 2020.** At this time when our intercessors and prayer groups cannot come together in churches to pray- we can all with unity of purpose lift our prayers to God! Where ever we are as Methodists, at 12noon every Thursdays, let us stop whatever we are doing, and call upon God to intervene in this Corona crisis! **I call upon those who are able to fast, to fast from sunrise until after they have prayed.** Our God hears prayers and answers them! If we "humble ourselves and pray", God will heal our communities!

Prayer focus areas during this crisis are countless e.g.

- Wisdom for leaders and parliaments of all nations- especially of the nations of our Connexion
- Protection and strength for those in the frontline of this battle with the virus
- Healing for the infected and sick from the virus
- That a vaccine or cure be found.
- Those solutions be found to deal with the impact the pandemic has had and will continue to have on education, the economy, faith / religious life etc.
- Care and protection for the most vulnerable in society; the poor, women, the elderly, those with other illnesses etc.

I trust you to communicate this call to Prayer and encourage your congregations to be involved.

Let us continue to be exemplary and diligent in abiding by the regulations- staying home, washing hands, keeping social distance, wearing masks etc. This too shall pass! I continue to pray that we ministers remain agents of hope and healing at this time. I pray that we are



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granted the necessary grace through the Holy Spirit- so that Christ is indeed proclaimed through our words and deeds.

Grace and Peace to you!

Yours in Christ

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Rev Purity Malinga  
Presiding Bishop

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