



The Methodist Church of Southern Africa

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Moreleta Circuit 1102

To: All Societies

I greet you all in this Covid-19 coronavirus period in the powerful name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is indeed a time of learning, a time of being innovative for all sectors of society, including the Church due to the spread of the virus. It is such a joy to note that despite the complications that came about with Covid-19 coronavirus and the country's lockdown, our Churches continued with the mandate of being a Church in the world. Sermons were preached, the poor and needy were fed and the bereaved were comforted and supported despite coronavirus wreaking havoc in our midst.

On the 28th May 2020, our ministers met for their zoom staff meeting after the Hon. Cyril Ramaphosa, the President of the Republic of South Africa had announced on the 26 May 2020 that Churches and places of worship will be re-opened in level 3 of the lockdown the 01st June 2020. His address sparked a countrywide debate on whether it was a correct decision or not. Social media and the media in general have been depicting the two opposing schools of thought on the debate whether to re-open Churches and places of worship. I will refer to these schools of thought as "conservatives" vs "liberals". The conservatives said "great shot Mr. President, let us open up the Churches and places of worship, the nation needs God more now more than ever. Let us go back to Church, we can't let a mere virus close up our doors. We have to gather and worship God".

On the other hand, liberals said: "Don't open up the Churches or places of worship because it is dangerous, you are going to exacerbate the spread of Covid-19 coronavirus. Many people will be infected and possibly die in huge numbers." The unfortunate Bloemfontein Church gathering is always mentioned when this point is made. The liberals say to the conservatives "you are reckless". Whilst on the other hand, the conservatives are also saying to the liberals, "don't you believe in God? Is your God afraid or inadequate to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic?"

Whilst the Church and other quarters of society are debating this, ministers in Moreleta Circuit chose the middleground on this issue. Our zoom staff meeting resolved not to rush in opening up our Churches. There's a lot at stake here. We believe that God has given us experts to listen to for a reason and to do this prayerfully as well. Therefore, instead of opening up our Churches abruptly only to regret at a later stage, let's rather take our time to prepare ourselves better and to study the direction the Covid-19 coronavirus will take. The rate of infections and death cases are skyrocketing throughout the country, even as we enter into level 3 of the lockdown on 1 June. The virtual Circuit Quarterly Meeting which took place on the 29th May 2020, endorsed this decision from our clergy. The following were taken into consideration:

Circuit Superintendent: Rev. Smanga Bosman

Circuit Stewards: Mr Jos Charle 073 816 4483; Mrs Brenda van Wyk 083 453 8365; Mrs Wilma Cloete 082 570 0837;

Circuit Treasurer: Mrs Renny Stoltz 082 653 4356

- The role of the Church is not only to feed the soul of her members but to care for their entire wellbeing, especially those who are high risk. The route the Circuit chose emphasizes this fact.
- Not all societies are ready with all the necessary precautionary measures and that will need some time, as such measures need us to be thorough.
- Tshwane is amongst the identified hotspots in South Africa and this fact cannot be ignored.
- The rate of infections is expected to spiral upwards as winter season sets in.
- It will be unfortunate if we allow our Churches to be gateways to the grave for our people. It can never be, that as a Church we allow our time of worship to be a time of infection.

Having said this, all societies are advised to put together committees made up of medical professionals to advice on how to follow the government protocols and to put in place the best precautionary measures before we even attempt to open our doors. In the meantime, let us continue to pray for our leaders and country. We cannot afford to be in a situation like Italy found itself in, where our health facilities would not cope. That would be a disaster for our country. All Methodist people in Moreleta Circuit are encouraged to join the country on the 31st May 2020, to pray for God's healing over our country and the world: "Real prayer is life-creating and life-changing" (Foster 1982:30).

As a circuit, we say together with the psalmist (113:5, 6): "Who is like the Lord our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?" This psalm encourages us to exalt the name of our God, to trust and lean on God despite the circumstances we may find ourselves in. Secondly, our circumstances do not change who God is. God remains enthroned on His throne even during the time of Covid-19 coronavirus. Having said that, all Methodist people in Moreleta Circuit are urged to continue praying at home till further notice from their respective ministers.

Please stay home and leave only when it is essential to do so. Wear your mask always and wash your hands regularly and keep the social distancing. Government Gazette for the opening of Churches is attached for all leaders to read carefully.

Yours in Christ's Service

Rev Smanga Bosman, Circuit Superintendent

On Behalf of the Circuit Leadership