

# ACSA COVID-19 ADVISORY TEAM UPDATE

18 MARCH 2021

NB: Some questions have been asked and concerns raised as to the status of these guidelines. We wish to reassure all that this is the Archbishop's Advisory Committee and when guidelines are issued, they are formally approved and sent from the Archbishop's office.

## 1. CONTEXT

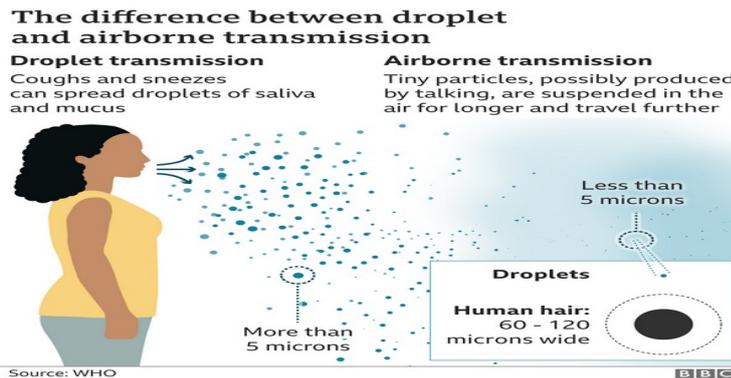
- a. It is hard to believe that it is almost a year since we have had our lives disrupted by the global COVID pandemic.
- b. Some of the disruptions have helped us to do things better, reconsider our expectations and realise what the things are that truly matter.
- c. The impact on our ways of worship and means of mourning have been hardest hit and has in some ways added to our sense of disconnection and uncertainty. We are all experiencing varying degrees of COVID fatigue, and must not underestimate its impact.
- d. The need for us to be gentle with both ourselves and each other is greater than before.
- e. Now more than before, we need to remember that God is with us in all our mountain and valley experiences, is neither punishing us nor forsaking us in this time, and continues always to seek us where we are.
- f. These guidelines have been prepared following a meeting of the Advisory Team on the evening of Tuesday the 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2021, to update ourselves on the latest developments, research and statistics.
- g. Failure on our part to observe or comply with any of the gazetted regulations may result in criminal convictions or sentence.
- h. This information, together with the applicable regulations, was then discussed and the risks for our church members were assessed. The route needed to save lives is the guiding principle in arriving at these guidelines.

## 2. STATUS OF THE PANDEMIC AND WHAT TO EXPECT NEXT

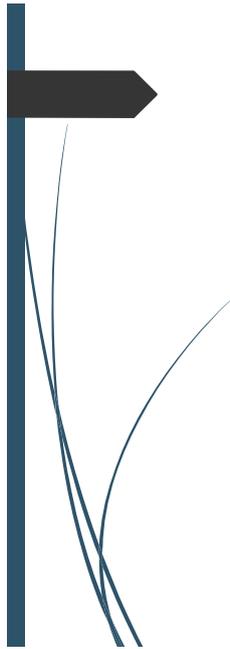
- a. The Government has in terms of the risk-adjusted strategy placed the nation on the lowest risk level, which is Level 1. A

number of leaders and experts in the field have pleaded that we continue do what we need to do to save lives and preserve jobs.

- b. What we must however not forget is that the virus continues to behave as a virus and even now has made further mutations. It is not at its lowest risk level and our behaviour and conduct will determine how we get through the public holidays and long weekends coming up and do what we can to at least delay, if not prevent, the inevitable third wave.



- c. Our only defence remains a massive vaccination program and we are presently way behind where we need to be to achieve the targeted 67% to achieve herd immunity. Some calculations are that at our present roll-out rate, it could take years to reach this level. While we are aware that there are people who for any number of reasons are uncertain about the vaccinations, the team is willing to host a number of online forums in which you would have an opportunity to raise your questions and concerns in order to make an informed decision.



## VACCINES AVAILABLE

### APPROVED LISTS

<b>ASTRA ZENICA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 22% EFFECTIVE MILD/MODERATE</li><li>• EXPECTED HIGHER EFFECTIVENESS AGAINST PREVENTING SEVERE DISEASE / DEATH</li><li>• FULLY EFFECTIVE AGAINST OLD VARIANT (OVER 90%)</li></ul>
<b>JOHNSON &amp; JOHNSON</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 57% EFFECTIVE AGAINST NEW VARIANT</li><li>• AVAILABLE NOW</li></ul>
<b>SINOPHARM</b> EFFECTIVE AGAINST NEW VARIANT AVAILABLE SOON

### APPROVED LISTS

<b>SPUTNIK V</b> EFFECTIVE AGAINST NEW VARIANT NEGOTIATIONS ADVANCED
<b>MODERNA</b> MOST EFFECTIVE AGAINST NEW VARIANT - NOT AVAILABLE TO SA - AMERICAN GOVT OWNED - POLITICAL PRESSURE APPLIED
<b>PFIZER</b> EFFECTIVE. AVAILABLE SOON

- d. Churches are still seen as super spreaders and have been identified as one of the high-risk areas that can accelerate the third wave.



- e. Extra concern was expressed about Easter Services and the risks that these and the long weekends present.
- f. This means that we need to remain vigilant and continue to do the following things:
- Wear masks whenever we are out in public, the mask to cover both nose and mouth at all times. If even one of the persons present in your company does not wear a mask properly, you are all still at risk.
  - Masks must NOT be removed or hung around the neck, as that is not wearing the mask at all.

## Face Masks & Distancing Reduce COVID-19 Risk

Chance of COVID-19 transmission based on the following scenarios\*

### Physical distancing



### Face masks



### Eye protection

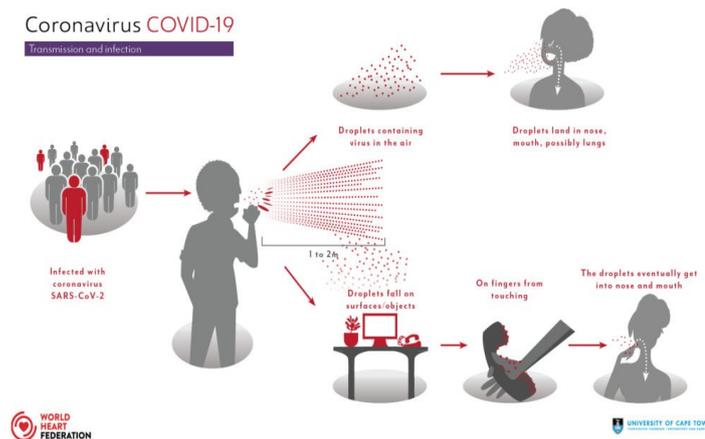


\* Based on a systematic review and meta-analysis of 172 observational studies  
Source: The Lancet



statista

- iii. Hands must be washed **frequently** with either soap and water for 20 seconds or sanitized with a sanitizer that has at least a 70% alcohol content. All other health protocols must be observed.



- iv. A physical distance of at least 1,5m (2m is preferable) must be maintained at all times.
- v. No touching, hugging or physical contact is allowed. (Except of course for family and people in your safety bubble).
- vi. People over 65 and those with comorbidities are encouraged to stay home and avoid any physical contact or visiting public spaces unless this is **essential**.
- g. The daily infection rates have come down but a concerning increase has been reported in Nelson Mandela Bay region in particular.

- h. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2021, the rate of new infections **nationally** had increased to 1531 from 933 the day before.
- i. Many people will be travelling over these long weekends so we need to acquaint ourselves with the infection rates of the areas we are moving to or through and take the necessary precautions, especially in those areas declared a hotspot.
- j. In light of this information, the team have arrived at these unanimous guidelines:

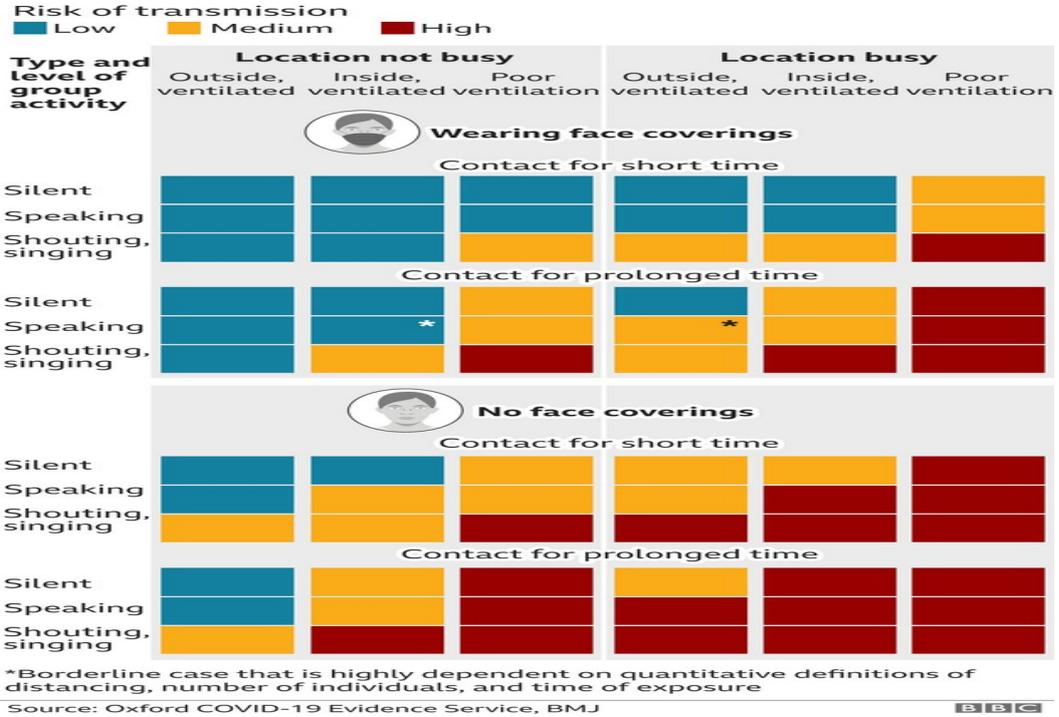
### 3. SERVICE GUIDELINES

- a. The new national curfew is 00:00 to 04:00 but activities to cease by 23:00 to ensure travel time, and so any activity planned needs to comply to these times.
- b. The maximum number of attendees at an indoor service is restricted to the **lesser** of 100 people or 50% of what the venue can accommodate.
- c. Screening of attendees to be done at the door or entrance. Any person coughing or showing signs of fever or difficulty breathing **MUST** be denied entry and either taken to an isolation room, returned home or sent to hospital. The same principle to be applied to people who answer any screening questions in the positive. Compliance officers to be vigilant in this regard.
- d. At least two compliance officers must be appointed in writing for each service.
- e. The name of the officers and the maximum capacity of the gathering to be attached outside of the building and prominently displayed.
- f. Indoor gatherings are to be for the shortest time possible and a maximum of 60 minutes (1 hour) is the recommended time.
- g. Communion in **ONE** form only to be given and hands to be sanitised before receiving.
- h. The Bishops are preparing guidelines in terms of the Maundy Thursday Blessing of Oils and Renewal of Vows service and these will be announced shortly.
- i. Maundy Thursday evening service- NO WASHING OF THE FEET as this is likely to cause touching, albeit unintentionally. Parishes are encouraged to consider innovative ways to show the humility and servanthood which Christ demonstrates in this action, in other ways.
- j. The stripping of the alter to be done following strict health protocols. This service may likely be a little longer but should

not exceed 90 minutes maximum. The longer people are in closed spaces, the higher the risk of infection.

- k. NO SINGING IS ALLOWED - Pre-recorded, instrumental or other music forms may be included in the service.

**Behaviour and location affect risk levels**



- l. Given the change of season and the times of services parishioners are in all likelihood going to request that doors and or windows be closed. This means that our places of worship will be poorly \*ventilated (cause air to enter and circulate freely in a room).
- m. In preparation for Holy Week and the Truduum, we recognise that more than one service may be necessary to accommodate the the size of the parish and the numbers who wish to attend.
- n. Places of worship to be properly cleaned between services. As we previously advised, our guidelines are modified as we learn more about the behaviour of the virus and we adjust our guidelines accordingly.
- o. Here are some practical guidelines to assist. Please note that fogging and expensive cleaning are no longer needed.



*(No comments on gender bias please...)*

- p. It is important that common places used and touched be properly disinfected and cleaned. Pay particular attention to the following areas, apart from lectern and microphones.



**What type of disinfectant can I use to wipe down surfaces to protect against COVID-19?**

If a surface is dirty, first wipe it down with regular household soap or detergent and rinse with water. Then use a regular household disinfectant like bleach – its active ingredient (sodium hypochlorite) kills bacteria, fungi and viruses. Always protect your hands when using bleach (e.g. wear rubber gloves). Dilute bleach with water according to directions on the package.

#COVID19

World Health Organization  
Western Pacific Region

We are aware that some of these cleaning materials may be costly so here are some alternative suggestions:



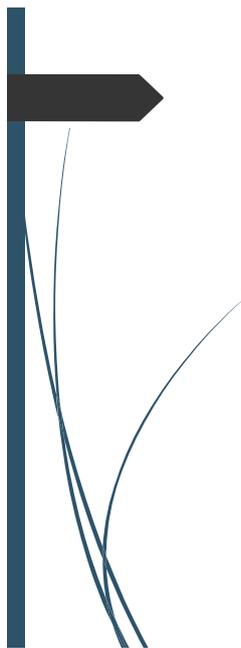
#### 4. FUNERALS

- Funerals must be held in full compliance with all health protocols.
- A designated compliance officer must be appointed in writing.
- Attendance at funerals restricted to **100** if venue can accommodate 100 while maintaining a social distance of 1.5 m between all attendees.
- Smaller venues are restricted to 50% of capacity of the venue.
- These numbers to include ministers and altar parties.
- Masks **must** be worn at all times.
- No singing** is permitted.
- Recorded music may be played.
- Funerals to be completed within **two hours**. *One hour* for the actual service and the *next hour* for the committal or cremation service.
- No night vigils are allowed.
- A memorial service may be held and is limited to one hour.
- When going to sympathize or express condolences to the family, please keep visits short, observe social distance, sanitize and wear a mask. Try to ensure areas are well ventilated.
- No social gatherings to be held in the homes too.
- No after-tears gatherings, including lunch or tea etc.
- Undertakers may have specific rules but the latest agreement with undertakers is published on the website to assist all.
- The body of the deceased may enter the church.
- This applies to all causes of death, including Covid.

- r. No special PPE needs to be worn to carry the coffin into the church and normal pall bearers may be used. Need to sanitize before and after.
- s. The face of the deceased may be viewed if precautions of a viewing window is available - so a plastic or glass covering is needed to avoid any touching of the body of the deceased.
- t. Compliance officers need to be strict on this.
- u. At graveside, if at all possible, the last respects in terms of petals or handfuls of sand also need sanitizer before and after.
- v. If burial, then if possible, get a grader to complete the filling of the grave.
- w. If going to use mourners to do so, then spade handles, and the hands of the diggers need to be sanitized before and after digging and filling.
- x. The same number who attended the funeral need to attend the burial or cremation. Crematoria are often smaller than churches so this needs to be taken into account when planning.
- y. Police stations in some areas are requiring the affidavit we completed before again for their records, so please just check this out.
- z. In order to reduce pressure on mortuaries, every effort to be made to conduct **funeral within five days**.

## 5. CHILDREN'S CHURCH

The team gave consideration to the attendance of children at church and the re-opening of children's church.



## CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHILDRENS CHURCH

### TEACHERS

- ✓ TRAINING REQUIRED - KNOW REGULATIONS
- ✓ ABILITY TO ENFORCE REGULATIONS

### CHILDREN

- ✓ ABILITY TO ADHERE TO REGULATIONS
- ✓ ASYMPTOMATIC SPREADERS
- ✓ NEW VARIANT MORE INFECTIOUS IN YOUNG INDIVIDUALS
- ✓ ALREADY AT RISK BECAUSE OF SCHOOL
- ✓ TIME (CANNOT BE SAME TIME AS CHURCH)

## 6. IN SUMMARY



### ACSA GUIDELINES – ADJUSTED LEVEL 1

- ✓ WORSHIP ALLOWED – 50% OF CAPACITY, MAXIMUM 100 INDOORS, 250 OUTDOORS
- ✓ APPOINT COMPLIANCE OFFICER TO ENFORCE RULES
- ✓ CLEAN BETWEEN SERVICES
- ✓ ENFORCE MASK WEARING, SOCIAL DISTANCING
- ✓ NO TOUCHING. NO SINGING. INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC ALLOWED
- ✓ SCREENING.
- ✓ MAINTAIN REGISTER
- ✓ VENUE WELL VENTILATED
- ✓ TIME LIMIT 1 HOUR
- ✓ COMMUNION IN ONE KIND. SANITISE BEFORE RECEIVING.
- ✓ BIBLE STUDY / RETREATS / LENT COURSES ALLOWED – ADHERE TO REGULATIONS. CONSIDER VIRTUAL MEETINGS
- ✓ BAPTISMS / CONFIRMATIONS ALLOWED – STRICT CONDITIONS
- ✓ CHILDREN SERVICES – NO RECOMMENDATION OTHER THAN NO CHILDREN AT FUNERALS
- ✓ FUNERALS – TO ADHERE TO REGULATIONS. MAY ENTER CHURCH. SAFE VIEWING PERMITTED. NO SOCIAL GATHERINGS AFTER

**Anglican Church of Southern Africa**

**Provincial Covid-19 Advisory Team**

**18 March 2021**