



## ACSA COVID ADVISORY TEAM

30 August 2021

### Updated Guidelines

### Call for Vaccination information Sunday and then a vaccine “support service”

The ACSA Covid Advisory Team has continued to measure and monitor events around this pandemic especially the development of new variants and the cycle of waves. The fourth wave is expected round about October or November 2021. We can however slow the rate of infection and even avoid a fourth wave altogether if we continue to follow the health protocols and most importantly, get vaccinated.

Getting vaccinated does not mean that we are scared or have no faith. Getting vaccinated is an act of faith and love. We have faith and all wear seat belts, check before we cross the road and lock our doors at night. Science we believe is a gift from God (and as we know, human beings are prone to sometimes using the gift other than for what it was intended). That does not however change the intention of the gift. The science and body of knowledge around this virus indicates that getting vaccinated is our best defence against severe infection and death. Most importantly, it also limits the opportunities for mutation and further waves.

The team also updates its advice to the church as new research is confirmed and to consider how best the church can live out its witness and ministry and demonstrate our love for God, each other and ourselves.

Our departure point remains to save lives and avoid unnecessary deaths. Our last update was in May 2021 and we are grateful for the ongoing support and commitment to this imperative being demonstrated largely through-out the Province.

This guideline however is different, as it calls for active advocacy on our part and some practical things we need to do too.

The team has prepared a vaccine information video which has been approved by the Archbishop and shared with the Synod of Bishops. A request has also been

made to Bishops to please issue a letter to their respective dioceses that will instruct that the video is played at every service. A copy of the video can be found on the ACSA website as well as information about the vaccine in various languages that has been made available by Government.

We need to remain vigilant as our rates of infection have not come down as expected and are still a cause for concern.

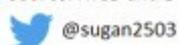
The table of recorded infection rates is shown below:

## COVID - 19 STATISTICS IN SOUTH AFRICA

25 August 2021

#	Province	Cases last 14 days	Cases		Deaths		Vaccines(Pfizer + J&J)		Current Hospital Numbers		
			Total	New	Total	New	Total	New	Admitted	ICU	Ventilated
1	KZN	45 933	463 483	+3 627	13 798	+96	2 012 128	+31 099	2 533(-13)	296(+1)	134(+5)
2	W. Cape	42 564	473 468	+3 338	17 762	+117	1 837 310	+50 175	3 487(-214)	466(+2)	189(-7)
3	E. Cape	22 491	260 111	+1 783	13 544	+55	1 443 586	+36 844	1 069(+33)	101(+1)	114(+2)
4	Gauteng	19 028	900 916	+1 317	26 302	+46	2 878 543	+70 520	4 144(-66)	768(-18)	425(-16)
5	Free State	10 196	144 322	+979	6 206	+29	598 859	+14 540	671(+27)	81(+2)	58(-1)
6	Mpumalanga	9 400	141 764	+637	4 003	+23	558 896	+12 869	490(+15)	100(+3)	53(-1)
7	North West	7 397	141 080	+563	4 036	+12	595 362	+14 782	820(+8)	87(-6)	60(-2)
8	N. Cape	7 090	78 199	+727	1 951	+18	220 551	+6 140	214(-4)	32(+3)	28(+2)
9	Limpopo	3 863	118 859	+280	4 531	+16	1 218 575	+30 019	318(-14)	35(-4)	25(-3)
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>167 962</b>	<b>2 722 202</b>	<b>13 251</b>	<b>92 133</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>11 363 810</b>	<b>266 988</b>	<b>13746(-228)</b>	<b>1 966(-16)</b>	<b>1 086(-21)</b>
<b>New tests</b>		<b>Tests and positivity for the previous 7 days</b>							<b>Recoveries</b>		
<b>66 244</b>		<b>Tu:55 678</b>	<b>M:37 789</b>	<b>Su:51 830</b>	<b>Sa:63 830</b>	<b>F:66 380</b>	<b>Th:68 540</b>	<b>W:66 645</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>New</b>	
<b>20.0%</b>		18.6%	20.2%	20.7%	20.8%	21.6%	19.9%	22.1%	2 474 245	+9 636	

Source: NICD and Department of Health



Having long advocated the need for vaccination, we are asking Parishes, Archdeacons and Dioceses to assist us in getting our people vaccinated. We are aware that there are many videos doing the rounds which contain misinformation and theories that have been debunked. The only doctor in South Africa who has made anti-vaccination statements has been found to be filled with untruths and misinformation and is presently being investigated by the Health Professions Council. At present, we only have 17% of our population vaccinated and while this situation prevails, we will remain at limited numbers for worship service and have the ongoing restrictions around singing and communion.

We now know that COVID is airborne and that the delta variant is highly infectious as the viral load in it is very high, hence we are seeing the increased numbers of infection. The longer we delay in vaccination, the more waves we will

have and the more variants will be able to mutate and develop. This means that each time we have a wave of infections, we deal a further blow to our economy and we will see an increase in unemployment rates which now officially stands at 42%! We all know that the unofficial rate is even higher.

In addition, when we look at the year on year daily infection rates we will see the following:

- 25 May 2020 – 1032 and we were in hard lockdown level 5 as compared to
- 25 May 2021 – 3084 at level 1 lockdown
- 25 August 2021 – 13,251 at level 3 lockdown

This upward trend and the sharp increase in infections is a concern, especially as many of our churches are operating with the maximum number allowed under the country's level 3 lockdown rules. Winter is coming to an end and so we are likely to see many instances of social gatherings with largely unvaccinated people and this brings an even greater danger of increased infections and opportunity for mutations.

At the same time the Team also considered the harsh economic reality that is being faced by many parishes and dioceses; the challenges around the cost of and access to data; the possible disturbance to the rhythm in having just gotten more people to attend church as well as the deep seated need for some form of normalization.

The reality is that we will only be in a position to work towards return to regular worship at church, once we have vaccinated at least 90% of our members. Until that point is reached, we need to continue to err on the side of caution and do what we must to save lives.

This number will not be achieved unless we start doing something towards achieving it.

### **Education and information**

We need to start off by getting better reliable information to people in order to make informed decisions. In order to do so. The video, information leaflets below as well as information sessions will go some way to addressing this.

### **Action and response**

We have asked that each diocese appoint a vaccine co-ordinator and we will then work with them to get information on the ground and devise responses to assist in addressing fears and concerns that contribute to vaccine hesitancy.

Until we have sufficient members vaccinated, the following guidelines remain in place

The COVID Advisory team advises as follows:

1. The maximum number of people at all services to a maximum of 50 , if the church is able to accommodate 50 people within the COVID guidelines. In the event that the building is smaller and not able to accommodate 50 people then to a maximum of 50% of the capacity of the building. This is as per Government Regulation.
2. Social distancing of 1,5 meters has to be enforced even for members of the same family, as if they are allowed to sit together, then the 1,5m distance between them and other worshippers is not being maintained.
3. Every service must have 2 dedicated COVID compliance officers who will ensure that:
  - a. A register and contact details is taken at every service. (These need to be kept safely and may only be destroyed seven(7) months after the State of Disaster has been lifted.)
  - b. All individuals coming into the building are screened, including the priest, lay ministers and altar servers.
  - c. The maximum number of 50 to include the priest and worship parties.
  - d. Masks to be worn at all times, covering the mouth and nose.
  - e. Hand sanitisers to be used upon entry to the church.
  - f. The Church must be well ventilated
  - g. Church mics, pulpit and lectern must be sanitised after each use.
  - h. **No singing allowed** - the virus is airborne and singing means able to spread further.
  - i. Communion in one kind only.
  - j. Other sacraments to be performed within these guidelines.

We also continue to call on all our church members and communities to please consider being vaccinated and to register on the EVDS system. All persons over the age of 18 are now eligible for vaccination and will be vaccinated at any centre.

Recognising that vaccination is the best way to get us back to some semblance of regular worship, it is in the interest of every parish to try to reach 90% coverage of vaccinated parishioners. In this light, we encourage every parish to have a registration drive to register all eligible parishioners and to support vaccination centres to run as efficiently as possible,

The vaccine information that has been made available from Government and can be shared with our congregants is also available on the website..

Bishops are hereby requested to please ensure adherence to these guidelines.

**COVID Advisory Team**

**Anglican Church of Southern Africa**

