



NEW UPDATE

ACSA COVID ADVISORY GUIDELINES

10 July 2023

Synod Resolution on mandatory vaccinations for clergy – Implementation update

It has been some time since we have communicated around this issue, but we have continued to assess the conditions on the ground to ensure that we provide appropriate guidelines for the church.

We are now living in a post pandemic era, but COVID still remains a reality for many people. While we do not have ongoing statistics, evidence would suggest that there is only the occasional instance in which people become gravely ill.

As a result, we have had a conversation with our advisors in this regard who have strongly suggested that, given where we are in the trajectory of this virus, **compulsory vaccination is no longer required.**

The reasons for this are as follows:

- a) At the height of the pandemic vaccination was the only effective tool and it saved countless lives. Also at the time, and in the absence of something more effective, the decision to insist on mandatory vaccination had merit.
- b) Vaccinations also reduced risk of infection and substantially reduced risk of death.
- c) Our clergy and members formed part of the vulnerable groups (aged and comorbidities) and given the nature of our ministry, this posed a high exposure risk and so under these circumstances, the decision to vaccinate was a responsible one.
- d) Vaccination does however not prevent infection or transmission but there is an immense personal and public health benefit to as many people as possible being vaccinated.
- e) Then there is also the responsibility we as church have in leading by example in a time of crisis.
- f) The members who heeded the call to vaccinate we owe a debt of gratitude to in terms of the role they played in saving lives and preventing our health services from being overwhelmed.
- g) Scientific evidence now shows that the virus is changing its genotype and protein configurations regularly as new variants and subvariants emerge. This will continually lesson the efficacy and effectiveness of the vaccine. However this may be

compensated for by past infection-so that persons who are vaccinated and have had prior infection are better protected from new variants.

- h) Evidence also suggests that most if not all persons carry some COVID antibodies - either through exposure/infection and/or vaccination.
- i) Recent trends indicate that vaccinations and changing variants show a milder form of disease and therefore risk of death and severe disease is low.
- j) In the light of the above, vaccination and booster vaccinations remain **advisable** for all persons, but is no longer mandatory for ministers.

ACSA COVID-19 Team

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