



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE ANGLICAN BISHOP DIOCESE OF JOHANNESBURG



Our Vision is: To Achieve the Practice of the Ministry of All Believers

PASTORAL LETTER

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COVID19 - UPDATE

Dear Saints

I am sure you will all join me in welcoming the announcement by the President on Wednesday evening this week that the lockdown regulations will be eased from midnight, Sunday 20 September. He rightly noted that we as a country have been through a tough period during the six months in which lockdown has been applicable at various levels. For my part as your bishop I wish to thank you for all the hard work you have done in taking the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people and doing as best as you could to keep your parishes, schools and organisations as operational as possible.

Among the regulations changed in terms of Lockdown 1 is that people are now free to gather for meetings in groups as long as the number of people does not exceed 50% of the capacity of a venue, up to a maximum of 250 for indoor gatherings and 500 people for outdoor gatherings. The maximum number of people who may attend a funeral is increased from 50 to 100. Up until now the rule has been that we were not allowed to gather in groups of more than 50. As you know, we were not permitted as Church to have worship meetings so we were unable to meet face to face as congregations at all. We therefore really have no idea or experience of how worship services would have been conducted on a long-term basis even with just 50 people present.

The President was at pains to point out that we all still have to act with the utmost care so that we continue to contain the spread of this deadly virus. He underlined the need to take every precaution to prevent a second wave of Covid 19. I have no doubt, given the experience many of us have in ministering to those affected by this terrible pandemic,

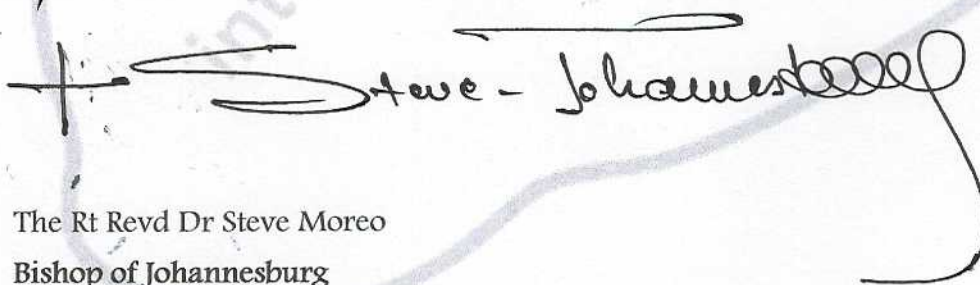
that we too do not want to see a repetition of the heart rending events that have accompanied Covid 19. As a diocese, our watchword must continue to be caution.

As you know, parishes may begin services as in the past from the first Sunday in October. However, in consultation with Chapter, I have decided that these services must still be restricted to no more than 50 people, including priests, lay ministers, servers, musicians and members of the congregation. We must still practice strict social distancing, i.e. a distance of at least 1.5 m apart, and all other Covid 19 safety protocols, especially wearing masks, sanitising, and washing hands regularly. You will have previously received information regarding communion and you are asked to familiarise yourself fully with the protocol in this respect. There shall be no singing yet.

I know that this may come as a disappointment to many who were hoping to have services of more than 50 people in Lockdown 1. I ask for your continued patience and cooperation as, together as a diocese, we plan the way forward in a way that will care for everyone's spiritual health and physical wellbeing. Please continue to minister to the elderly of our parishes, who are advised not to take part in large gatherings because of the risks associated with them. Please also continue to keep in your prayers all the frontline workers who care day by day for those suffering from Covid 19.

Our prayers have been answered in so many ways during these past six months. I am sure you have experienced many instances of the presence of God. Let us remain faithful to and trustful of the Lord we serve as we move to the next point, in due course, of the full re-opening of our churches. I am reminded of the words in Lamentations 3:22 - 23, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness".

Yours in His Service



The Rt Revd Dr Steve Moreo
Bishop of Johannesburg