

16 March 2020

Dear Pastors, Elders, Church Boards and Members,

 **RE: URGENT ANNOUNCEMENT: NATIONAL STATE OF DISASTER DECLARATION – COVID-19**

The Northern Conference of South Africa (NCSA) would hereby like to inform all Seventh-day Adventist church members, churches, sub-organizations and entities of the National State of Disaster declared in South Africa by President Cyril Ramaphosa pertaining to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The NCSA supports the strict mechanisms implemented by the government in order to address the risk posed by the COVID-19 outbreak to the citizens of our country. The NCSA would therefore like to advise you of the following mechanisms, guidelines and instructions on compliance that needs to be adhered to immediately:

1. All churches that have a hundred or more members in attendance will be transitioned to small groups and home churches, and will remain closed until further notice. Members affected by this decision should not attend smaller open churches, thus placing them in the same situation. Churches may also consider having multiple smaller services on a Sabbath.
2. Churches under a hundred members that continue to meet need to ensure that stringent hygiene principles are followed and adhered to including:
3. No shaking of hands or hugging.
4. Extra caution to be implemented with baptisms, communion, funerals and weddings.
5. Treasury teams handling and counting envelopes/money should have sanitizers at the place where the cash is being processed.
6. All kids’ classes should have sanitizers for use when entering and exiting classes.
7. Potlucks/lunches should not continue for the foreseeable future.
8. All camp meetings will be cancelled effective immediately, and will remain so until further notice.
9. All our schools will close from Wednesday 18 March 2020 and will reopen on Wednesday 15 April 2020.
10. There will be training for small groups and home churches for the next few weeks so that churches are able to go ahead in smaller groups thus changing the threat of the virus into an opportunity for people to go back to the Biblical model. For those that will be interested and require advice, and guidance, please feel free to contact Shandrell Penniken on pennikens@nc.adventist.org in this regard.
11. We are encouraging the affected churches to live stream their services to members who have access to smart devices and large bandwidth. Centralized sermons on online platforms will be communicated in due course. Please contact Ps. Corrie Venter on venterc@nc.adventist.org for more information on the hardware and operation of the live streaming.
12. All visits and ministry to correctional facilities are suspended until further notice.
13. Members that will no longer be gathering, that are not currently remitting their tithes electronically need to please do this as soon as possible, and should they have any questions need to contact their local church Treasurer.
14. Please refrain from the exclusive use of natural remedies to combat the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak. As part of our health message natural remedies should be used to augment conventional medicine.
15. We are requesting our members to not add to the panic by forwarding unverified information on social media.
16. A weekly day of fasting and prayer will be called on Wednesdays, and we ask all members to please join us as we fast and pray collectively as a conference for all those that have been affected and will be affected by this virus. Please contact Estelle Baker on bakere@nc.adventist.org for more information.
17. We have already sent out a document from our health department regarding the health implications of COVID-19. Please contact Connie Penniken on pennikenc@nc.adventist.org for more information.
18. Please see the attached document from our legal department regarding the outbreak of COVID-19.

We pray for our country in this time of crisis and especially for our government who will be leading the combat against the spreading of this virus.

I trust that the above has provided some clarity for you and your churches and should you have any questions I encourage you to contact my office. Please keep your eyes open for future NCSA information.

Yours faithfully,

Pr. Mornay du Plessis on behalf of the officers of the NCSA

**President: Northern Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church**