

Address of District Apostle Kriel via NACTV, 07 June 2020

Introduction

This announcement serves as information for our members in South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, eSwatini & Namibia

Firstly, I wish to thank all our frontline workers who are fighting the disease and those who have made this lockdown period bearable for us. Thanks to all citizens who abide by the regulations and wear their masks, wash hands regularly and practice social distancing. The virus will remain with us. Let us learn to live with the virus.

We continue to pray that a vaccine may soon be found. Until then, preventing the spread is the desired response. If each one does this, we will all be better off.

Word of thanks

I wish to say special THANK YOU to the many who are caring for those in need. During this time, mental and emotional support is as important as providing a meal for the natural body. Many are lonely, many have no emotional support and must deal with the stresses of the pandemic while being isolated from society.

Thanks to the Parents, Sunday school teachers and ministers who are doing their best to provide learning material to our children in the home-schooling initiative. For the first time the material is available in all languages used in our church.

The young people continue to add value and support each other in this time.

The music leaders have continued to keep the musicians active in this time. Providing much joy to all.

We are thankful to all our broadcast partners who allow us to transmit our divine services. On any given Sunday, we are reaching hundreds of thousands of participants via the Internet, satellite, radio, and telephone broadcast.

I am truly thankful to the administration staff who have adjusted their homes into their new place of work. Thanks to their families too, for this new way of working while we are in this coronavirus crisis. *I think we all are working much harder during this time...* We are in the final stages of our annual audit by the auditing firm Deloitte and this year was the first time we had a virtual audit. Thanks to all those who needed to go the extra mile.

Recommencement of Divine Services

We are all aware of the South African President's announcement that religious organisations have permission to gather for church services from the 1st of June 2020 subject to certain conditions. These conditions include:

- the attendance of no more than 50 people
- temperature screening at every service
- health questionnaire on entry to church
- sanitizing protocols for members and facilities
- wearing of face masks
- no group singing
- no touching & laying on of hands
- risk management in the event of detection

After much discussion, we decided that we need to approach the return to divine services with extreme caution. We must be careful that we do not undo all the sacrifices so many have made up to now. The medical realities currently point to increasing infection and death rates. The areas with our highest membership density are also the areas with the highest incidents of COVID-19.

Given the aforementioned, I have decided along with the Apostles and Bishops that we will not be returning to church services during June and July 2020. This does not imply that we will return in August. We will assess the situation and advise you.

We will use this time to prepare our churches and train our ministers so that we are able to comply with ALL legislative requirements.

Funeral divine services

All the above legislation which applies to church services also apply to funerals. Here I would like to recommend that as far as possible the lowest possible number is invited. 50 is not a target but a maximum. Over the last few days, we have had incidents of members attending funerals who were COVID-19 positive. This resulted in huge stress for other attendees, the church needed to activate tracing and sanitizing protocols and health officials are now in the process of tracing all attendees to manage the spread. In the incidents above the members were not displaying any symptoms. During this period, all funerals are allowed to be broadcasted live – please use this option.

While I am talking about funerals; a reminder that the annual burial subscriptions are due by 30 June 2020.

What can you expect during this period?

1. We will continue broadcasting our divine services from Cape Town and Johannesburg as we have been doing since the commencement of the lockdown. We are expanding the language offerings so that each one has the opportunity of hearing God's word in their home language. At present, there are members we are not reaching on the existing broadcast platforms. We will also use this time to explore all avenues to ensure that not one is left out. We endeavour to ensure that all members receive a summary of our divine services during this time. Here I wish to remind you to update your email address and mobile phone numbers so that you receive all communications from the church.

As announced previously, we have established a national committee tasked with advising on all aspects of our return to church activities. They have been working diligently in the past few weeks and reporting weekly to the Apostles and Bishops meeting. Details of the required measures for each congregation along with training for our ministers will be shared with your Rectors.

2. Another ruling of the President related to the designation of church ministers as essential service workers. We welcomed this ruling. The ruling however only applies to South Africa.

For the New Apostolic Church South Africa, all active Priestly ministers are designated as essential service workers. This does not mean that physical SCV will now take place. In the event of any spiritual emergency that cannot be resolved in any other non-contact way, this enables the priest to be in contact with his members.

The rules which apply to churches will also apply to the Priests including sanitizing, face masks and social distance.

Sacraments & Blessings

Holy Baptism – is not permitted at home or churches and will be attended to when legislation permits.

Holy Sealing - is not permitted at home or churches and will be attended to when legislation permits.

Holy Communion - As there is increased risk of the transmission of COVID-19, we will not be able to celebrate Holy Communion at this time.

We all long to celebrate Holy Communion. To those who await baptism for their children and Holy Sealing, I wish to comfort you with the assurance that our God is aware of our situation. His grace and the love of Jesus will cover us.

Acts of blessing

Wedding blessings, wedding anniversaries, prenatal blessings and all ministerial acts are not permitted during this time.

Those who wish to conclude their marriage legally, can do so at home or church in consultation with their local marriage officers. In South Africa, the stipulation is for a maximum of 5 persons (a marriage officer, the couple and two witnesses).

3. Offerings

I would like to make use of this opportunity to thank all who continue to offer faithfully under very trying circumstances.

We realise that for many of our members cash offering has not been possible. Some have migrated to electronic offering. I remind you again, that this is preferred by the church as it removes the security risk of carrying and handling cash.

To respond to our members who would love to bring their offerings but cannot do so electronically, I am pleased to advise that we have contracted Easy Pay. It is now possible for members to deposit their offering at more than 9,500 outlets throughout South Africa.

Your Rectors and Priests will receive a communication on how you could use this facility. Simply speaking, you can deposit your offering at most retail outlets in South Africa (this is unfortunately not available in Botswana, eSwatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, and Namibia). I do realise this is a major change for us. We remain with the teaching that our offerings are a product of our thankfulness to God; and is an expression of our faith and trust in Him. For those who have limited access to electronic banking, this arrangement is preferred as the handling of cash also poses the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

To those who find themselves in the unfortunate situation where they cannot bring an offering or can no longer offer for whatever reason. I want to remove any feelings of guilt you may have. Please know that we pray every day for your situation to improve.

The Lord knows your heart and His hand is never too short to bless you.

4. Church finances

The church derives its income from the faithful offerings of God's people. It is a fact that the income of the church has significantly reduced over the last few months.

I can confirm that we have cut all our operating expenses and as a result all staff made salary and benefit sacrifices.

5. Announcements

Chief Apostle service – on 14 June at 09h00, from Strasbourg for Zambia – conducted in English.

On the 21st June 2020, Apostle Nene will conduct a divine service from Silvertown. This divine service will be conducted in isiXhosa and be translated into English.

On 28 June 2020, Apostle Swartbooi will conduct a divine service from Sandton. That divine service will be in Afrikaans and be translated into English.

I will serve you on the 5th of July 2020. After that divine service I will update you on our plans to return to church services.

DA John Kriel

07 June 2020