



The Methodist Church of Southern Africa

Tel: +27 11 615 1616
Fax: +27 11 615 1511

Methodist Connexional Office
33 Ernest Oppenheimer Ave
Bruma Office Park, Bruma
Private Bag X11
Garden View 2047

16th April 2020

To all Synod Bishops, Synod Officials, Superintendent Ministers, Circuit Officials and Ministers

Dear Fellow Pilgrims,

Warm Easter Greetings to you with our very best wishes and prayers in this post Resurrection period as we celebrate the promise and hope that the open tomb offers us especially in these very challenging times amidst COVID-19.

We celebrate the manner in which many of our churches proclaimed through various media forms the Gospel of salvation, resurrection, life and hope during the most unusual Passion and Easter season we have ever encountered. The various messages, worship aids and services conducted encouraged the church of God and her people to “*hold fast onto the faith we profess for God can be Trusted to keep His promise*” (Hebrews 10:23). Thank you to all our ministers, preachers, worship and technical teams and all our lay leaders!

We are encouraged by the courageous work undertaken in various local congregations across the Connexion, engaging in significant acts of love, service and justice. The caring for the vulnerable, women and children facing abuse and violence, and in assisting with that which is one of the greatest challenges at this time - providing food to many who are starving. We commend to you the various resources and tools offered through the SACC website <https://www.coronachurch.org.za>. We wish to continue encouraging our local churches with the assistance of their Mission groups and service units to explore ways of participating in the various ways of serving the most destitute and vulnerable as advised through the communique issued by our Mission Unit. As we do this, let us ensure that we wear protective gear! Safety from the virus remains a priority until a cure or a vaccine is found.

The MCSA joins the voices of many in offering our sincerest condolences to the families who have lost loved ones especially through COVID-19, with the continued assurance of our prayers for those affected even as we lift in prayer and light the many serving our nations as front-line staff, often at great danger to themselves and those closest to them.

During the past weekend, we further learnt that the various lockdowns in our Connexion were extended for periods up to two weeks; and six months in some countries, and that the lockdown regulations will be lifted slowly and incrementally over a period of time when announcements to that effect are made. To this end given the various uncertainties, we have resolved after consultation with various Connexional leaders and Bishops to the following plan in respect of our Missional and Administrative meetings, all subject to the regulations governing the countries in our Connexion at the time:

A Christ-healed Africa for the Healing of Nations

Presiding Bishop: Rev Purity N Malinga
e-mail: presbish@mco.org.za

General Secretary: Rev Michel W Hansrod
e-mail: gensec@mco.org.za

General Treasurer: Mrs Thini Ngonyama
e-mail: finance@mco.org.za

1. **April Circuit Quarterly Meetings:**

It is recommended that Circuit Quarterly Meetings be held as soon as the lockdown regulations are relaxed especially those governing gatherings. Where the delegate numbers are large, Circuits may instead delegate and authorise the responsibilities to the Circuit Executive and a smaller representative body to transact the essential business which includes Invitations to Ministers, Probationer Reports, Finances and matters referred to CQM's, by conference on their behalf. Superintendents shall consult the Synod Bishop for guidance. The minutes of this meeting will be distributed to all members of the CQM immediately thereafter. In the event that physical gatherings remain banned the CQM may use electronic and virtual media to conduct the meeting, ensuring that a proper record is kept.

2. **Annual Synod Meetings:**

Annual Synod Meeting are postponed until the latest during the week ending Saturday 18th July 2020 as determined by the individual Synod Managements and their readiness.

Synod Secretaries will complete the Blue Book containing all matters as are normally required for publication and electronically or otherwise distribute it to all registered members of the Synod meeting.

Immediately after Lockdown small committees in respect of EMMU may meet to finalise amongst others the examination of probationers, Ordinands screening and such matters as determined and referred by the Synod Management.

The Annual Synod Meetings are to be planned and shaped as per the regulations governing the holding of gatherings at that time, dealing only with essential business identified connexionally as:

- EMMU matters,
- Finance,
- Stationing,
- Formation of New Synods and Boundaries,
- Elections and Appointments and
- Responses to Conference 2019 resolutions.

The discipline and accountability questions may be done electronically prior to the physical gathering and a report tabled by the Bishop. These may include an indication of goals set by Ministers as per the Review of Ministry process. A format to be used will be developed by EMMU and sent to Synod Bishops.

Failing the holding of an actual physical gathering Synods are to explore alternative electronic means by which the business shall be conducted.

3. **Conference 2020**

Conference, subject to the regulations governing the countries in our Connexion at the time, has been postponed to the week ending 17th October 2020. The planning and format will be determined by the conditions prevailing then. Failing the holding of an actual physical gathering other electronic means are being explored with special care being taken in considering how the Ordination Service will be conducted.

We find ourselves in the midst of an unusual and unknown phenomenon, in many ways restricting our ability to act and do things in the usual manner. We appeal to all our ministers and members to work towards a spirit of unity, co-operation and service as we **"Together walk humbly with God,"** - who remains our only source of hope, light and love!

We remain in prayer for all God's people and encourage everyone to be safe, maintain social distancing and practising safe hygiene.

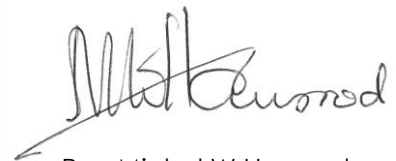
We share with you a Prayer offered by the British Methodist Church for Easter:

***“Gracious God in the darkness of the Tomb
In the silence of the night when all was empty all seemed lost,
when hope was but a memory, You were there,
Living Lord in the glimmering of the dawn in the sorrow and the mourning
when the tomb was empty, and certainty was stolen,
You were there and You are here today in our fear and our laughter,
our silence and our singing, our loving and our caring, our dying and our living,***

***Risen Lord you are here,
Alleluia!!!
Christ is Risen
He is Risen Indeed
Alleluia !!!”***



Rev N Purity Malinga
Presiding Bishop



Rev Michel W Hansrod
General Secretary