

## UPDATE ON COVID GUIDELINES 5 APRIL 2022

STATE OF NATIONAL DISASTER IN SOUTH AFRICA ENDS!

### 1. Introduction

After 750 days, with effect from midnight on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2022, the National State of Disaster for South Africa was ended. While we welcome this with open arms, we must remain mindful that the pandemic is not at an end.

The progression of the pandemic to date has made it possible for the State of Disaster to be ended and the ongoing management of the pandemic will be done via Regulations to the Health Act. We are not out of the woods entirely due to the unpredictable nature of the virus. Scientists and epidemiologists continue watching the trajectory of the virus. In other countries there has been a resurgence of infections, requiring them to go into lockdown again. The prevailing strain is the Omicron variant, which we have already come out of in our fourth wave. There is also a prediction of a possible fifth wave in May 2022, so we need to proceed with caution and continue to observe health protocols.

### 2. Transitional Arrangements:

***Covid is an airborne disease and Vaccination remains our best defence against it.***

The State of Disaster Acts make it possible for transitional arrangements to be put in place.

1. The following Transitional Arrangements are in place for the next 30 days only. (indications are that these to be included in the Health Act Regulations and we are submitting comment on the proposed measures.)
2. All gatherings are limited to 50% and subject to strict observance of physical distance and health protocols.
3. In the event that either proof of vaccination or a negative Covid test, not older than 72 hours, is required for entry to a gathering, then there is no upper limit on numbers, but it is still limited to 50%.
4. If no vaccination certificate or a negative Covid test is required, then indoor gatherings are limited to the lesser of 50% or 1000 people indoors or 50% or 2000 people outdoors.
5. The wearing of masks indoors remain mandatory. Children under 6 are exempted.
6. Masks are not required outdoors but all health protocols and a physical distance of 1m must be observed.
7. Health protocols include:
  - a. Vaccinate as soon as you are able to.
  - b. Wash hands regularly or sanitize
  - c. Avoid crowded spaces
  - d. Maintain a physical distance of 1m
  - e. If you feel ill, remain at home.

### **3. Impact for churches:**

Church Services are considered gatherings and so:

- a) We are limited to 50% and required to maintain a distance of 1m.
- b) Wearing of masks is mandatory for indoor services- but not for outdoor services; but 1m distance must be enforced.
- c) All health protocols must be observed.
- d) There is no need to do screening or maintain registers of attendance. (A list of names of people who booked for the service may still be necessary due to 50% limitation).
- e) As far as possible, the church building or venue to be well ventilated-during services- attendees to be asked to please dress warmly.

#### **Palm Sunday Services:**

These may take place in keeping with tradition whilst maintaining the health protocols and physical distance as set out above.

#### **Good Friday Services:**

We may have our three hour service, but the veneration of the cross is to be done taking into account health and physical distance protocols. Kissing of the crucifix is not permitted.

#### **Sharing of the peace**

This is limited to the forms we currently follow- we continue to wave to each other. If people feel comfortable, may do a fist or handshakes should we feel so inclined, keeping 1m distance. Hugging is still not permitted.

#### **Communion:**

We have in wanting to show unity and support on this matter, despite opposing views, advocated for communion in one kind only.

As the prohibition on sharing of substances has been done away with, we may with care and mindfulness, re-introduce the reception of communion with the common cup starting on Palm Sunday.

Communion in two kinds can be made available **for those who wish to share in the common cup.** As has always been the case, persons who wish may continue to choose to receive communion in one kind only.

Intinction (by placing the host into the blood by either the minister or the communicant) is not permitted for health reasons. The person's hand touching the contents of the cup or the cleric touching the communicant's mouth is too risky.

Individual communion cups are not to be used.

## **Funerals**

These to be held with the limitation on numbers and observance of health protocols. Vigils and after funeral gatherings as per community customs, can resume.

## **Other sacraments**

These to be resumed bearing in mind the health and physical protocols.

The team will continue to update these guidelines as events progress and we need to be mindful of the need to be nimble and agile in our response.

We wish you a meaningful and joyful Easter.

ACSA COVID-19 Team