



THE APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Friday, 22 May 2020

REPORT ON THE VIRTUAL MEETING BETWEEN THE STATE PRESIDENT AND THE INTERFAITH LEADERS ON WEDNESDAY 20 MAY 2020 AT 18H30

The President of the country, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa held a virtual consultative meeting with the Interfaith Leaders on 20 May 2020 at 18h30. The State President was accompanied by several Ministers who included Dr NC Zuma (Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs) and Dr ZL Mkhize (Minister of Health). The AFM was also invited. I and the General Secretary participated in this meeting. In his opening remarks the President thanked the Religious Leaders for their cooperation and support on the Government's effort to slow down the spread of the coronavirus. He acknowledged the huge sacrifice that the Religious leaders and believers made, especially those of the Christian Faith who had to cancel their Good Friday gatherings. He then requested Dr Mkhize, the Minister of Health to share statistics and projections regarding Covid-19. Dr Dlamini-Zuma was given an opportunity to share with us Government's intention to ease the current restriction by going to Alert Level 3 from June 2020.

A plea for the recognition of religious leaders as part of the essential services was made. Religious leaders also requested the gradual opening of gatherings in the places of worship while keeping in place strict safety regulations like social distancing, hygiene, and the wearing of masks.

The President mentioned that Government was alerted and concerned about the spikes in infections which resulted from Religious gatherings in places like South-Korea and in the Free State, but that he clearly, heard the requests of the Religious Leaders.

He assured us that our recommendations would be considered. He acknowledged that he had also received written submissions from the Religious Leaders. He requested time to go through these and the impact they will have on the containment of the pandemic.

Prior to this meeting the Presidium of the South African Council of Churches requested a meeting with the President which was granted. Some of the issues raised with the State President were:

- *That religious worship be reopened more broadly in the next Level 3 of the risk-oriented, phased-in approach of the lockdown, subject to compliance with Covid-19 safety regulations and that the churches be accountable for safety, for reducing the rate of infection and the well-being of their members and all South Africans.*

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- *That the churches be accredited and allowed to designate selected clergy, lay workers, and volunteers as a service corps of “essential church frontline workers” to carry out spiritual and pastoral work as essential services under COVID-19 safety measures.*
- *That SACC-affiliated churches be granted the opportunity to self-regulate for COVID-19 compliance as suggested above. This we would ask for any other formation of religious communities (of any faith tradition) that can satisfy appropriate COVID self-regulation measures.*
- *That churches be considered for financial assistance under COVID-19 related provisions, including Temporary Employee/Employer Relief Scheme (TERS) and other support for essential church workers (ministers) who offer essential pastoral services, including workers such as caregivers and counsellors.*

The meeting agreed that a day of national prayer be held on 29 May 2020. The purpose hereof, will be to pray for God’s intervention and for all fellow South Africans who have been infected, the bereaved families, as well as the frontline workers such as doctors & nurses.

Past. M.G. Mahlobo
(President of the AFM of SA)

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