

# COVID-19: Response of the local church

1 Corinthians 16:13, 14

<sup>13</sup> *Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.* <sup>14</sup> *Do everything in love.*

As the world endeavours to arrest the spread and limit the impact of COVID-19, we are facing an emerging unprecedented global crisis with unfathomable economic and social consequences that will extend way beyond the immediate health impact of the virus. The world needs the Church like never before. At this time of great need, let us not withdraw from the community but ramp up our engagement and service.

In determining the response of the local church:

## 1. Start with you purpose

Revisit your purpose – the reason why you exist – and the overall purpose of *The Church* to love God, love others as yourself, make disciples, establish God's Kingdom on earth and live the *Fruit of the Spirit*. Make all decisions in the context of your purpose and the biblical imperatives for the Church.

## 2. Don't just cancel, replace

Don't abruptly cancel all activities and services of the church without carefully planning how you can continue to provide equivalent support, relational engagement and outcomes for the people served by each activity or service. Be creative. When you communicate with the church and extended local community, focus on what you are going to do for them, not what you are not going to do. Assure all segments of the church community that you will be there for them. Ideally, provide more, not less.

## 3. Have a staged response

Design your response to be scalable with various levels of service and activity modification in accordance with the directives and recommendations from government sources.

## 4. Provide ongoing community

Provide opportunities for ongoing connectedness of people served by the various activities of the church, such as meeting in smaller groups, zoom conference calls, and outdoor instead of indoor gatherings. Set new goals of engagement, such as everyone in the church community, especially those in the outreach groups, receiving a phone call every week from a leader/connector in the church.

## 5. Provide opportunity for sacrificial service

Invite church members to give generously of their time and resources to serve those in the extended community of the church, especially those isolated and in need. Possibly, ask all members to regularly bring some essential household items such as toilet paper, tissues, eggs, rice, pasta, tinned goods, etc to the church, and then locate people in the community who need these items and drop them off. Keep this practice going until the need has abated.

**6. Care for the vulnerable and isolated**

Through weekly/regular contact with church members identify those in the circle of influence of the church who are isolated, unable to provide for themselves, or undergoing economic stress due to loss of income, and respond to their need.

**7. Address injustice**

Intervene when you encounter injustice, where the most vulnerable and needy in our community are ignored or pushed aside and denied equal access to services and goods. Advocate for support and assistance packages to be delivered to those that most need them.

**8. Care for the sick**

For those who are isolated because of illness, whether that be COVID-19 or some other unidentified viral disease, rather than withdraw from them, care for them. Whilst observing all government recommendations, you can still visit people, look after their families, call them regularly, and provide what they need.