



## ST COLUMBA'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HATFIELD PRETORIA

(A Congregation of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa)

**SESSION CLERK**  
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**MINISTER**  
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PBO NO. 930007457

19<sup>th</sup> March 2020

**Members and Visitors of St Columba's Hatfield**  
**Tshwane Presbytery**

### COVID-19 UPDATE

Dear Members,

You would have seen all the media correspondence over the past two weeks regarding the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) has called for reactions and responses from different sectors of our societies, including church leaders. Our government and President of the Republic has taken drastic steps to arrest further spreading of the virus.

I have been working tirelessly around the clock with a number of colleagues, retailers and senior government officials, till the early hours of each morning, ensuring the safety of our 82,000 staff members and the thousands of our customers, and ensuring we keep food on our shelves for the citizens of our country. I have also been involved in a few initiatives in the UPCSA ensuring our General Assembly, and congregations can communicate quickly and efficiently, should the need arise. I am humbled by the work done by many retailers, manufacturers, doctors, nurses, hospitals, etc. in trying to keep the country going. A lot of these people have not been home to see their families for a number of days, working tirelessly around the clock serving humanity. We give God thanks for their loyal service while sometimes placing their own lives at risk.

Coming closer back to home, I have discussed this issue with our Minister, and Session and officially provide the following update below.

As a precautionary measure, as we are an ageing congregation and **a number of our members are at risk**, we are following the approach taken by some of our sister congregations with **a large number of members in the high-risk category**.

In consultation with our Minister, the Session have decided that there will still be a service this coming Sunday (22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020), which includes a Baptism, but that there will be **NO worship services at St Columba's on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and 05<sup>th</sup> April 2020**. Further communication will follow for Sunday's thereafter.

**If you are feeling ill, or are feverish or are not 100% healthy, please do NOT come to church this Sunday.** We need to contain any infections as far as possible.

**SESSION CLERK:** Ryan Johnson **ELDERS:** Nana Agyei, Vivian Agyei, Tshinanne Mutshatshi, Emmanuel Mwendera

**ELDER EMERITUS (Pastoral)** Paula Cross **CHAIRMAN STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE (Acting):** Craig Morrison

**TREASURER:** Fungelelani Mulaudzi

Members are also requested to space themselves out in the congregation and sit 2m apart from each other. The service will follow a series of prayers and hymns.

**We will provide a further update in due course, regarding our Easter week services.**

The summary of the sermons will still be sent to you and we are currently investigating other means of making "live" services available should it become necessary to extend this arrangement. This may seem a radical step, but it is not made from a position of fear or panic, but in the interests of our congregation and to contain the spread of the virus. In this situation we would rather err on the side of caution than expose our members to risk.

We have also sourced sanitiser from Durban (the only place it is now available) and this will hopefully be delivered to us in the next few days. Please ensure if you have access to hand sanitiser that you bring it with and sanitise as much as possible. Please be cautious touching surfaces at Church, etc. and once our sanitiser is available **it will be compulsory for members and visitors to sanitise prior to entering the sanctuary and office buildings.**

**Serving of tea after service will be discontinued with immediate effect.** We ask members once the service has ended that you please greet one another in passing and vacate the premises prior to the next 2 groups coming onto the premises. We need to ensure minimal interaction with as many people as possible.

**All other church activities that meet on our premises have also been stopped with immediate effect.** Please contact the leader of the group to which you belong for further information.

I would like to suggest to all members that **we spend some of the time that we would have been in church in the next few Sundays in prayer, for each other as a church family at St Columba's**, for many of our fellow citizens for whom the current measures will bring more hardship than for ourselves, and for all the medical and research personnel and everybody else tirelessly working to ensure our safety. Please continue to promote good personal hygiene both in your home, work and church environments.

The government has also set up a WhatsApp number for people to contact, and by sending a message you can go through several menus to get the information you require. Firstly, the number you want to save in your contacts is **060 012 3456**. All you need to do is message the contact by saying "Hi". Save it as Corona Support SA or something along those lines. Follow then the prompts that follow.

**We have also decided to set up a "group whatsapp messaging service",** to which you will be automatically added. This group will **ONLY be used to communicate urgent and quick communication to members surrounding the COVIT-19 issue and how it affects our congregation** and the operation thereof. If you do not wish to be part of this group, please un-subscribe from this group once you have been added. I apologise in advance, that we could not obtain your permission prior to this, but we don't have time on our side, so if you are not wanting to be in the group please un-subscribe if you are added.

**In order to manage communications, please only correspond with the Session Clerk, the Minister, or the Church Office if you are unsure as to anything contained in this letter, or you wish to enquire about any Church activities.**

**We further ask that our members remain faithful in giving and financial stewardship**, especially in view of the financial challenges faced in the wake of this crisis and that we still need to pay our Minister and employees in our congregation.

We will provide you with another update in due course. Please be assured that we will return to "normal" as soon as possible. In the meantime, please remember all the precautions and please contact us if anyone has specific needs in this time with which we can assist. **Please assist the elderly and people less fortunate, wherever possible**, both in our church community but also in our country, if you are able and willing to.

Please continue to pray for our congregation, our city, our country, and the world at large. We serve a faithful and loving God! May God protect, heal and guide you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Sincerely



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Ryan Johnson  
Session Clerk

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Craig Morrison  
Minister