



THE UNITING
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA

30th May 2020

TO ALL IN THE UPCSA

UPCSA LEADERSHIP GUIDE ON THE OPENING/NOT OPENING OF WORSHIP PLACES FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP

In the recent communiqué communicating the decision of the RSA government to open places of worship, it was mentioned that the SACC is still working on a handbook on "Norms and Standards to Self Regulate for COVID 19 Compliance". The document has been finalized and is hereby shared with all, with the SACC media release about the same document. This document is an initiative taken by the SACC to assist its member churches to ensure safety of everyone's life. In addition to that, we have attached the RSA Government Gazette on regulations applicable for the opening of worship places. Please read the two documents as you contemplate the safest action to take regarding to opening or not opening the places of worship for public worship.

The announcement by the President of the Republic of South Africa to open worship places has been received with mixed reactions both within the UPCSA and in the South African society at large. We appreciate the calls and messages through which Presbyterians articulated their respective views on the matter. All the views are respected as existential, as they come from different experiences and realities on the ground. We have grown in our understanding that we are a diverse community.

The Sessions are urged to assess the situations and make responsible decisions on gathering or not gathering people for public worship, whether 50 people or less. The Sessions are charged with the responsibility to regulate public worship in each congregation, in terms of the Manual of Faith and Order Chapter 7, articles 7.2 and 7.3. Where it is not possible to guarantee the safety of the people, in terms of the provisions of the Government Gazette and the Norms and Standards, Sessions are advised not to arrange public worship, even for 50 people or less. The SACC General Secretary, Bishop Mpumwana averred: "Churches should not be gateways to the graveyards and ministers should not be angels of death but angels of life". In light of this statement, we repeat our assertion: COVID-19 has not made any relaxations. It is still merciless. We should not put people's lives at risk.

Yours in Christ

Rev Dr Peter D Langerman
MODERATOR

Rev Dr Lungile Mpetsheni
GENERAL SECRETARY