



Care in a time of CORONA

Guidelines for Pastors

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE INFORMED THAT SOMEONE HAS DIED?

“This is a very difficult time when sadly many people are losing their lives to the coronavirus. Even during bereavement, we must protect people we love. There is no school for funerals in a time of Covid-19.

For most pastors, when it first happens, you don't know what to do.”

- Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana, SACC



As a pastor you play a central role in supporting families when a loved one has died. You provide counselling and comfort in these very difficult times.

But in this time of Covid-19, you also have to help families follow the government's regulations. And the regulations for funerals are not easy to enforce!

When you are informed that someone in your congregation has died, assume that it is potentially Covid-19 related.

Take the necessary precautions when you visit their home to protect yourself and them. Everyone should wear a mask and wash or sanitise their hands.

1. BEGIN BY MAKING SURE THE FAMILY HAS:

- Informed the authorities so that they can come and collect the body. Help the family by liaising with the police and undertaker.
- Called a doctor who must certify the death before the undertaker removes the body.

2. EXPLAIN WHAT IS AND IS NOT ALLOWED

REMEMBER!

The government's funeral regulations are not meant to disrespect people's traditional burial practices. They are there to stop the virus from spreading.

- Family members may view the body at the mortuary or undertaker's premises.
- Family, friends and neighbours can show their love by calling or sending WhatsApp messages and prayers.
- Under Covid-19 there can be no 'umlindelo' or night vigil.
- People may NOT come to the house to view the body.
- People may NOT visit the house.

3. HELP THE FAMILY PLAN THE FUNERAL

Have a funeral planning meeting with the family.

- Sit outside in the open to discuss funeral arrangements, and explain the Covid-19 regulations.
- Place chairs at a distance from each other outside. Everyone should wear a mask.
- Help explain the regulations to the family.

Refer them to the Funeral Guidelines for Families on churchinaction.org.za.

- Discuss with the family where to hold the funeral.

Everyone in the venue must be 1.5 metres apart in all directions. Therefore, the number of attendees is based on the size of the venue. But no venue can have more than 100 guests.

If possible, it is even better to have the service outside.

- Encourage the family to have the funeral as soon as possible.
- Consider organising a video streaming of the funeral for those who cannot attend.

THE FUNERAL SERVICE

“My pastor colleagues, you and I will face these challenges. Our situation demands the ultimate rule. Safety first for all. My guiding verse is: ‘For God did not give us a spirit of fearfulness, but of power and love and a sound mind/ self-discipline’ (2nd Timothy 1:7).”

- Pastor Reiner Focke

PREPARING THE PLACE OF WORSHIP

You are responsible for preparing the place of worship where the funeral will take place. Check the regulations.

You must:

- Screen all entrants for Covid-19 symptoms.
- Keep a register of attendees with names, addresses and contact details.
- Make arrangements for physically distanced seating.
- Ensure the number of attendees is not more than 100, including the pastor and family members.
- Ensure that adequate supplies of sanitiser and hand washing facilities are available.
- Clean the place of worship regularly.



ON THE DAY OF THE FUNERAL

- Singing is such a traditional part of a funeral service. But it is a big way that the virus spreads. Encourage people to sing silently in their hearts. Or record a choir or solo singer beforehand and play the recording.
- Keep the service to no more than an hour. The longer people gather together, the more opportunities the virus has to spread.
- Everyone attending, including those presiding over the service, must wear a mask and practice physical distancing.
- No social gatherings or activities are allowed after the funeral.
- No slaughtering, tea, or buffet meal are allowed before or after the funeral. *That is because you can't wear a mask and eat at the same time! Sharing cutlery and cups is also very risky.*
- Make the family and guests feel okay that there is no food at the funeral. It is not a lack of hospitality or against the spirit of ubuntu to have no food. It shows your concern for friends in a time of Covid-19. You want to protect them.
- If a funeral attendee tests positive for Covid-19 within 14 days of attending the funeral, they MUST inform you.