

The

Christian

Voice

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COVID-19
WATCH

▶ 51
cases

18
recoveries

4
deaths

ON A WEEKEND

Resumption dilemma for Churches

Zimbabwe has been in a lockdown since the beginning of March and churches have not met for almost two months

HARARE: Churches are pondering on how to continue to operate amid the Covid 19 lockdown impetus.

In an interview with The Christian Voice, the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe Secretary General Pastor Blessing Makwara, said that Covid 19 lockdown has taken its toll on the church resources as people will give less because they are not physically meeting.

“Giving for most churches has gone but the administration costs and paying for staff remains the same and this is proving to be difficult for the churches,” said Pastor Makwara.

Pastor Makwara said that churches were in a dilemma because there is also general recognition that Covid-19 positive cases seem to be on the rise possibly due to the influx of returning residents. For some of the churches who have now thought of resuming services within the accepted requirements there will be a need to invest heavily in sanitizers, PPEs and training of church members on how to ensure that people don't get infected.

The impact to ban gatherings has impacted the church because the church thrives on physical fellowship which has been suspended.

It has been noted that online gatherings and

Facebook live streaming has unbearable costs for most struggling churches. Costs of running churches have not ceased as some have to pay rentals and this has been an insurmountable challenge.

A lot of church resources are being redirected to deal with the emerging humanitarian crisis to feed hungry citizens. Pastor Makwara pointed out that there is fear that opening as winter is proving to be difficult as cases start to increase.

Therefore the debate on whether churches should open has a widely divided opinion amongst the clergy.



Pastor Blessing Makwara



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Will people self-regulate following the ease of police roadblocks

BULAWAYO: Scores of people were seen today walking from the high-density suburbs to the Central Business District (CBD) following the reduction of police roadblocks along major city roads.

Bulawayo police spokesperson, Inspector Abednico Ncube, in an interview with Cite revealed that police had reduced roadblocks to focus on fighting crime. He urged residents to continue observing the lockdown regulations as it was for their good.

“We want to believe that our people appreciate the lockdown and practice self -constraint. We are looking at the community, as Zimbabwean people, who do not need to be pushed around to conform to the laws so they can protect themselves against covid-19,” he said.

He said people should not take advantage of the reduced roadblocks and say the lockdown has been lifted. Those who are expected to be at home are encouraged to remain at home whilst those who want to travel should have a valid reason.

“Social distancing is also mandatory, it’s a requirement. We also wish members of the public to understand and appreciate the extent of dangers posed by this pandemic. Those that defy or fail to comply with regulations would surely be arrested but we expect our people to

practice and follow guidelines that have been laid down,” he said.

The situation on the ground however shows that people are already taking advantage of the situation as many people were heading to town including children. Vendors were also back in the streets with most of them playing cat and mouse with the police.

“This is our only chance to travel since the police officers are not on the road. My grandson has been with me since the lockdown and I could not take him back to his parents because I did not have a pass. It’s not that we are just leaving our homes for no reason, but we had been in a

situation where we could not move because of the need for a permit,” said Gogo MaSiziba.

Due to the increase in the number of people in the CBD, comes a lot of demand for transport. Private cars have begun transporting people to their different destinations and social distancing is not observed as they load people in their cars.

“What can we do, transport is scarce and if we do not take the offer from private cars then we will spend the whole day waiting for Zupco buses. At times we just jump into trucks and bear the winds as we go home but at the end of the day our children need to eat and we need to go to work,” said Cynthia Tazarurwa.

...people should not take advantage of the reduced roadblocks and say the lockdown has been lifted. Those who are expected to be at home are encouraged to remain at home whilst those who want to travel should have a valid reason.

Churches call for national day of prayer

HARARE: Churches will hold this year’s National Day of Prayer through facebook live and through zoom as a result of the covid-19 lockdown and stay at home policy.

The National day of prayer is usually held at a stadium or churches in different provinces. The focus for this year’s day of prayer will cover church unity, governance and economy among other issues that will see the participation of all the mother bodies which include Evangelical

Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Zimbabwe Catholic Bishop Conference and UDACIZA.

The prayer will run under the theme “Rebuilding the Nation through Prayer”. Facilitators for the prayer will include the EFZ president, Bishop N Muparutsa praying for church revival and Bishop Gatsi praying for the nation.

The prayer meeting will start at 9am and end after 1600 hours.

Clarion call for NPRC Commissioner's replacement

HARARE: The National Transitional Justice Working Group Zimbabwe (NTJWGZ) is calling on stakeholders to nominate persons to serve on the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) following the resignation of one of the commissioners.

According to the public announcement that was shared by NTJWGZ, the subsequent departure of one of the commissioners from the NPRC in March 2020 has left a vacant place within the commission. Commissioner Mrs Netty Musanhu left the commission in a huff in February this year.

"The Committee on Standing Rules and Orders of the Parliament of Zimbabwe is mandated to nominate persons for appointment by the President to serve as Commissioners on the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission in terms of section 237 and 251 of the Constitution. This is done after receiving nominations for consideration for appointment from the public," read the announcement.

There are specific requirements that the candidates applying for the post should

have include good social standing, apolitical, passionate and should have a good track record in the promotion of and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms.

"According to section 251 (4) of the constitution, members of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission must be chosen for their integrity, knowledge and understanding of, and experience in, mediation, conciliation, conflict prevention, and management, post conflict reconciliation and peace building," read the announcement.

A nomination cover letter or justification must be a typewritten submission of not more than two pages stating why the person nominated is a suitable candidate and attach a filled in nomination form, accompanied with the nominee's curriculum vitae.

The closing date for the submission of nominations is 12 June 2020 at 16:30 hours. The nominations can be hand delivered at Parliament Building or can be sent via email hrvacancies@parlzim.org or clerk@parlzim.gov.zw

Cities and Towns Updates

REDCLIFF: Bell Hospital and Medical Centre have been identified as centres that will be used for quarantine. Hub pastors in that area are set to conduct prayers at the hospital. The District Development Coordinator said there was a need for payers and pastors were welcome to conduct them but have to inform the Town Clerk.

PLUMTREE: After a week without sugar, Gain Cash and Carry and Greens supermarket had sugar. Long queues were seen at those shops as people scrambled to buy sugar. Pastors had arranged to have psychosocial sessions with returnees at Plumtree School, but they were not allowed. They were advised by the District Medical Officer to make an application to the Provincial Medical Director for clearance.

TSHOLOTSHO: The indefinite lockdown has affected people both in the business sector and the ordinary citizens. Those who operate shops are having challenges with restocking their shops whilst the ordinary citizens are failing to get basic commodities from the shops. The few shops that have goods are very expensive and are being sold in forex. Many people depended on their children in South Africa but now it is difficult for them as they are also not working or sending groceries. There is nothing in the fields as there were no good rains and there are chances of losing livestock to the drought which is looming in some areas. People have not received any help from the government. Dams and boreholes are drying up when we still have almost half a year until the next rainy season.

Interdenominational support for Masvingo residents

MASVINGO: Pastors in Masvingo have expressed gratitude for the training on psychosocial support which they described as a life skill for them that will come in handy in their fight against Covid-19.

For the past two days, the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance in partnership with professional counsellors have been training pastors on how to provide psychosocial support to communities during the national lockdown.

The Masvingo Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) chairman, Gibson Maponga said the training that they received during the two days has been easy to grasp. He said the training was practical and showed them pointers that they can use when tackling everyday issues.

"We have had training on psychosocial support with other institutions, but it was too academic and not easy to follow. But thus, training helped me because it's practical and I know what to do because we have learnt how to tackle issues we are facing day to day," he said.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) chairman, Bishop Philip Mahove also said the training has motivated them to go on the ground and help people who are going through different circumstances of life. He promised

to engage the provincial administrator on the need for partnership between churches and the government in providing psychosocial support.

"I felt challenged that in some districts pastors are way ahead of us as far as covid-19 work is concerned. At one-point certain stakeholders challenged us during the Cyclone Idai disaster, if we knew what psychosocial support was when we were counselling some of the survivors. The tools we got today have sharpened us and we are geared to go on the ground and work," he said.

Some of the pastors felt the sessions that were done during the meeting were very helpful as they managed to let out the negative energy that they have been bottling for a long time.

"We always encourage people to talk about their feelings, but we do not practice what we preach. The sessions we had during the training helped us let out the negative feelings by talking about them," said one of the pastors.

The training also included coping mechanisms that they can use when people are dealing with different situations.

"The session that I enjoyed during this training was on coping strategies. I always thought that it was difficult or expensive to address some of

the issues that we face in life but today I realised that it was easy. We just need to be creative as we use the available resources," said Reverend Mutimbairi.

However, during the evaluation process, the pastors noted that the training should not be limited to 18 people only but should be extended to such programmes to other pastors as it will be beneficial to many people in different communities.

"The training was therapeutic for us pastors, as we have found our relevance in this time. Most of us were feeling depressed because of the situation that is making us out of control. I also feel there is a need to target more pastors and they acquire the training that we got today," he said.

At the end of the meeting the Pastors shared that they were now able to deal with issues related to trauma, stress, depression and anxiety as it was clear to them.

"We have realised we are suffering from stress, depression and trauma, we now know how to manage them. The screening tool for anxiety and depression will go a long way in helping people relax and face their fears," said Reverend Mutimwii.