

## **INTERFAITH COUNCIL FOR CORONA PANDEMIC RESPONSE**

**PRESSER 29<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020**

### **Preamble:**

Yesterday the 28th September, we as the Interfaith Council for Corona Response had the opportunity to participate in the Covid 19 Conference Presided by the President Uhuru Kenyatta. The aim was to review our response as a Nation to the threat of the Covid Pandemic. We were able to make some contributions and also appreciate the many lessons learnt and many more yet to be processed, that have arisen from the efforts to contain this epidemic.

We in the Interfaith Council have also done some soul-searching and introspection on how we have tackled the challenges presented by the Covid Pandemic to Worship and to our places of Worship.

### **Phased reopening of Public Worship**

The closing to the Public of places of Worship, and of gatherings of prayer was perhaps the most heartbreaking reality for many Kenyans when the fear and uncertainty of the pandemic was at our door. People found themselves disoriented and having no place to seek assurance and solace. The subsequent economic down-turn for many, the loss of jobs, the closing of businesses, the family financial challenge, the idleness of youth at home with the mischief it brings, only made the desperation more acute.

The Interfaith Council guidelines on the resumption of Public Worship met the real needs and longings of Kenyans. We thank God we managed to meet these objectives, and induct Religious leaders in all Counties. We now also have functional County Covid Interfaith Committees that monitor compliance with the Interfaith Guidelines. We are sincerely grateful to all Religious leaders, for their cooperation and collaboration in the process of phased reopening of Public Worship. Compliance of guidelines in places of Worship has been over 95%. The reopening of the places of Worship, on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2020, has brought hope to all Kenyans.

It is amazing to see the sacrifices Faith communities made and their innovation in order to be properly prepared and to meet the requirements of the guidelines. The responsibility shown by our Religious leaders and our faith communities have been outstanding.

### **Transition to Phase Two of Phased reopening**

The Covid Conference was held not to celebrate accomplished success but rather to take stock of where we are and how we have managed the Covid situation in its complexity. The daily statistics are also revealing a certain containment as the President had

occasion to refer in His speech, from batch positivity rate of 13% in June 2020 we are now at 4.4%. This indicates that we have been able to flatten the curve through the efforts made so far. However Covid 19 is not over. It is still with us and still a threat to our lives.

Let us all thank God, who has protected us and has been very gracious to us as a country. It is He who has saved us from a catastrophic calamity. We also applaud so many Health workers and other agents who have worked tirelessly in fighting this pandemic.

In our guidelines, the major criteria that determined the phases were the number of new cases, the number of daily deaths and other indicators like the positivity rate. After due deliberations and following the indications given by the President, we have decided to transition to Phase Two of the Phased reopening as from Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020.

**Phase Two will have the following characteristics:**

- 1. All the current requirements from the Guidelines of hand washing or sanitization stations in the compound, and where possible temperature checks, will still continue in force.**
- 2. All requirements of sanitization of the premises, non-sharing of items and use of common elements will also continue in force.**
- 3. The limit of the time duration of Worship session will now be 2 hours.**
- 4. We will now welcome the elderly over 65 years and young ones under 6 years to the worship. However the Vulnerable and Sick will continue Worshipping at home to avoid contagion.**
- 5. We will also allow group meetings and special service for youth and special groups provided they follow the other criteria of social spacing and duration.**
- 6. The number allowed in any space of Worship will now be determined by 1.2m social distancing.**

We now have an opportunity to address the underlying social problems involving our youth in educative and empowering spiritual ministry programs that will strengthen them and recover them from social ills.

## **Funerals**

Funerals still continue to present the biggest danger in the gathering of prayer. We are sincerely and passionately appealing to you dear Kenyans to consider the dangers our irresponsible behaviour in our funerals can cause. We love our dear ones who have passed away, but we do not want the funeral to be a cause for other funerals we can avoid.

We have unfortunately witnessed not only a total flouting of all Covid guidelines, rules and protocols, but even the total lack of decency and respect especially from the political class. We continue to appeal on the same discipline we are following in the places of worship.

**In Phase Two the characteristics for funerals will be:**

- 1. All the current requirements from the Guidelines of hand washing or sanitization stations in the compound, seating at 1.5m social distancing, and where possible temperature checks, will still continue in force.**
- 2. The number of those attending is raised to 200, with 50 allowed at the graveside.**
- 3. The duration of Funerals must not exceed 2 hours.**
- 4. NO FOOD shall be served in Funerals**
- 5. The Body will be transferred straight to the place of the service**
- 6. We must recover the meaning of the funeral as a prayer gathering, and not a political, status, or public spectacle platform. Funerals must return to be Funerals.**

## **Weddings**

**Phase Two characteristics for Weddings will be:**

- 1. All the current requirements from the Guidelines of hand washing or sanitization stations in the compound, seating at 1.5m social distancing, and where possible temperature checks, will still continue in force.**
- 2. The number of those attending is raised to 200.**
- 3. Food is only served to the extended family.**

We remind all Kenyans that we are still in Covid times. We especially urge the Religious leaders to continue to follow the Guidelines strictly, even when we continue to witness a total disregard especially among our political class. We cannot get tired of giving good examples.

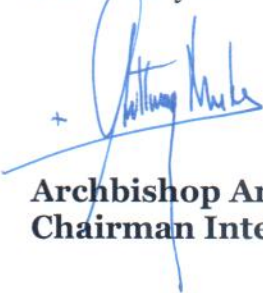
However, on behalf of all Religious leaders in this Country, we wish to appeal to you our dear political leaders that we should not gamble with the lives of Kenyans. Please, we ask you in this Covid time, please postpone your public gatherings that put our people at risk, because they gather without masks and without social distancing. We need you to give us an example of compliance beyond wearing masks. Consider putting all your political on hold, until we are fully out of the woods in this Corona pandemic.

### **Conclusion**

We know how the last six months have been filled with fears, anxiety and sufferings. We however also celebrate the great sense of solidarity we all have experienced. We still need to walk together, and protect one another. We as Interfaith Council urge you to continue praying fervently for an end of this pandemic. Let us also hold on to Hope, as God continues caring for us. With hope we can rise from the various situations, and praying together move towards the recovery from so many blows at the financial, economic and family levels, and forge once more a better future for our children.

May God continue to protect and guide our Nation. May we also be responsible for the lives of our sisters and brothers.

God bless you

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Muheria', with a small cross symbol to its left. The signature is written over a horizontal line.

**Archbishop Anthony Muheria  
Chairman Interfaith Council**