



PASTORAL LETTER

TO THE FAITHFUL FROM THE MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GHANA

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Peace of the Lord be with you

Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again" Exodus 14:13 (NIV).

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today is the first day of "lockdown" for Accra and Kumasi areas, due to the spread of the COVID19 in our country. We are grateful to the Lord for an opportunity to be alive during this period of "lockdown". In Christian terms we may call it a period of retreat where we pull back from the exigencies of life to do introspection and commune more with the Lord. Jesus used to do that a lot. At one time he did it for forty days and forty nights (Luke 4:1-2).

Let us change the terminology from "lockdown" to retreat so that we can refocus and use the period well for good spiritual exercises, especially as we are still in lent.

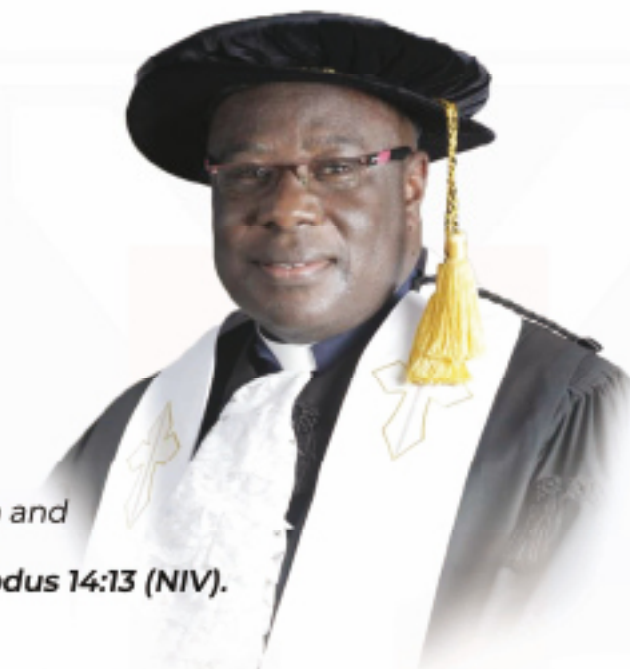
Here are some ways by which you can use the days ahead more effectively:

1. Stay at home; just be obedient and stay at home. You will save lots of life when you stay at home. It has been well said that the virus does not spread by itself, it is human beings who spread it. So stay at home;
2. Carefully follow all the protocols on hygiene given to us by the Ministry of Health including washing our hands often with soap under running water, cleaning our hands often with alcohol-based sanitizers not touching our faces with unwashed hands, social distancing, etc;
3. Increase your personal times for prayer and for studying the Word of God; if you can, I encourage you to read through the whole New Testament during these two weeks of "lockdown".
4. Have daily Prayer and Bible Study together with your household;
5. Get a reading list: spend time to read good literature;
6. Spend time with your family: you can play (indoor) games together or watch television together or just chat together;
7. Communicate with relatives, friends and church members on the phone, particularly those you haven't spoken to for a long time;
8. If you can afford it, send lunch to one or two poor families who cannot afford it;
9. Get unto your local church's prayer network and join them in prayer and conversation.
10. Session members should do shepherding by making sure that each group of twelve (or up to 24) church members has a "shepherd" who calls them often and prays with them.
11. Exercise your body often;
12. Drink lots of water and eat good food.

May we all come out of this retreat more refreshed than before. I wish you a good retreat during this period of lent.

Thank you and stay blessed in Christ.

Rt. Rev. Prof. J. O. Y. Mante, PhD
Moderator of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church of Ghana
30th March 2020



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GHANA

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March 17, 2020

Our Ref: _____

Date: _____

PASTORAL LETTER TO THE FAITHFUL FROM THE MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GHANA

Dear Beloved Partners in Christ,

The Peace of the Lord be with you!

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." Psalm 46:10 (NIV)

- I. As you are aware by now, the world has been plagued by the devastation of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) since the beginning of the year. This outbreak is proving to be more than an ordinary challenge to the world, especially in the kind of globalized world in which we live.
- II. The Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) is a newly identified virus that is highly contagious, spreads rather fast and capable of causing serious health challenges, including death. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the effect of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) as a pandemic, that is, the disease is spreading in many countries around the world at the same time.
- III. On behalf of the General Assembly Council of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, I extend heartfelt consolation to families everywhere in the world, and especially our members around the globe who may have lost a relative to this pandemic. I also encourage those already affected to be strong and continue to hold on to the God of hope for deliverance as they cooperate with the healthcare personnel helping them.
- IV. Following my earlier brief messages sent on various traditional and contemporary media platforms, and developments in Ghana, I hereby present this Pastoral Letter to strengthen and admonish the faithful.
- V. On Sunday 15th March 2020, the President of the Republic of Ghana addressed the nation, the second time within a week on the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). After carefully listening to the President, the health technocrats, and suggestions from well-

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Our Vision: To be a Christ Centered, Self-Sustaining and Growing Church

meaning Church members, it seems to me that the real precautionary measures against the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) are mainly two, namely:

1. Social Distancing, and
2. Personal Hygiene.

VI. The nature of our Church is such that we do everything by social togetherness. I suggest that we take these two precautions very seriously and not take anything lightly, under the cover of any false spirituality. We should drastically change the way we do things, at least, within these four weeks. We are not in normal times; we should follow all the precautions given by the Ministry of Health (MoH).

VII. It is true that we should take all the necessary precautions, yet it will be suicidal for Christians not to pray about the problem on hand. In fact, everyone is looking up to us to pray. I suggest, therefore, that we:

1. Seriously encourage individual and private prayers;
2. Encourage daily (at least 15 minutes) prayer sessions by families in homes for these four weeks; and
3. Open our Chapels for individual prayers. These prayer sessions should focus on the health of the nation, the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and on the Church.

VIII. In the light of the gravity of the situation regarding the current pandemic, the PCG leadership directs, until further notice, as follows:

1. The PCG affirms the directives issued by the President of the Republic of Ghana to suspend all Congregational Services and meetings. For us, this includes, actual Sunday Morning Worship Services, Church Group meetings, Revivals, Lent Prayer, Children Service and Easter Monday Picnics for four weeks. PCG Schools will remain closed until further notice. Agents are to strictly comply with these directives.
2. All official PCG foreign trips are hereby suspended until further notice, unless with the stated approval of the Principal Officers of the General Assembly, and all members of the Church are strongly advised to refrain from embarking on foreign trips or local trips unless they are extremely necessary. Additionally, we should discourage travel into the country by our Foreign Partners in the meantime.
3. Observation of the following personal and respiratory hygiene practices, among others, as recommended by the Ministry of Health (MoH) is crucial:
 - a. Avoid handshakes and unnecessary close contacts.
 - b. As much as possible do not touch your face, nose, and eyes.
 - c. Wash your hands frequently with soap under running water and use alcohol-based hand sanitizers. In places where taps with running water are not available, Veronica Buckets and other improvised means for hand washing under running water and soap should be made available on our Church premises at visible locations.
 - d. When it becomes very necessary to administer sacraments during this period, as much as possible, it should be limited to Ministers who are to ensure that they wash their hands with soap and running water or use the sanitizers before

handling the Communion elements and to remember to keep appropriate social distances.

- e. Church cleaners/ushers should, at least, clean the door handles, rails and washrooms located on Church compounds very often. The environment of the Chapels and our institutions should also be kept clean. Let us use this period to enhance the Cleanliness Campaign the Church is embarking on.
- f. Use tissue to cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, and this should be discarded appropriately after use. In the absence of tissue, one may cough into the inside of the bent elbow if one is wearing a long sleeve top, or into a cloth. These should be washed or hanged in the sun as soon as one gets home.
- g. As much as possible, avoid overcrowded spaces and ensure you are in well-ventilated environments.
- h. Funerals, weddings and naming ceremonies are to be suspended or at best held privately.

- IX. The PCG strongly discourages the spreading of wrong information, and rumors and statements that would cause fear and panic among members, and in the communities in which we are set. We request all Agents and members who do not have professional competencies on the disease to desist from making public statements on it.
- X. We wish to commend our members who are health professionals and who are working hard to ensure that everyone is safe. We encourage them that they should continue to do their best for God and the world at large. We also commend the Government for various interventions to help halt the spread of the pandemic. **We however call on the Government to extend the limit placed on the number of people who can congregate at a place to cover all social gatherings, including pubs, night clubs and drinking bars.**
- XI. During this four week period, Agents are to use traditional and contemporary media to reach our members and others with the eternal gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Agents are to use their phones to offer pastoral care. All Presbyteries and Districts are to do weekly radio broadcasts in their catchment areas. Agents are also encouraged to use media such as Information Centres, Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp videos to reach all our members and our world with God's eternal word, especially on Sundays. It may mean more work for we the preachers but this is a good time to make our calling sure. Special Services through the media should be conducted for the Children Service.
- XII. In such difficult times, we encourage our members to intentionally give their financial resources to support the mission of the Church.
- XIII. The PCG will monitor the situation and issue further directives as and when necessary.
- XIV. Church members are encouraged to take personal responsibility to continually update themselves on the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) from the Ministry of Health sources (www.moh.gov.gh) and respond appropriately. Members can contact the numbers

provided by the Ministry of Health (055 222 2004; 050 949 7700) or your local Agents if you need further information or clarification.

- XV. We are not living in normal times but I do firmly believe that God is still on the throne and we are also assured that Jesus has promised us *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid"*. John 14:27(NIV). Let us keep our faith in the God of hope during these challenging times.

Now, may the God of hope who raised from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ sanctify and keep us wholly until that blessed resurrection morning. To Him alone be all the glory now and forevermore.

Thank you and stay Blessed.



Rt. Rev. Prof. Joseph Obiri Yeboah Mante

Moderator of the General Assembly

17th March 2020