

# The Bishop of False Bay The Rt Revd Margaret B Vertue

Diocese of False Bay Bisdóm Van Valsbaai Idayosisi False Bay

P O Box 2804  
Somerset West  
7129 RSA

Tel: + 27 021 852 5243  
Fax: + 27 021 852 9430  
Email: [bishopm@falsebaydiocese.org.za](mailto:bishopm@falsebaydiocese.org.za)



Wednesday, 24 June 2020

My dear Clergy, Churchwardens and Chapelwardens,

I thank you for being the shelter in the Covid-19 storm. Please draw very near to God's heart and stand deep within God's shelter yourselves. With God's help, we will not be overcome with the drenching pain of life.

## **COVID-19 PATIENTS IN HOSPITALS, CLINICS AND AT HOME**

We pray unceasingly for all who have tested positive to the Coronavirus. Clergy may not visit the hospitals or pop in at your home but we, of course, remain deeply caring and prayerful. Clergy and laity in self-isolation at home, please calmly remain in strict lockdown.

**Canon Xola Mlandu** has been tested positive and is self-isolating at home **Revd Dean and Lyn Farrell** isolation period is over. **Deborah Meyer** is making small steps of recovery at home. We are all in this together. We embrace each other with warmth and prayers.

We continue to pray for all Frontline workers. Their levels of stress are more than normal.

We thank God for all patients who have recovered.

## **REOPENING OF CHURCH BUILDINGS FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP**

Given recent developments in the spread of the Coronavirus, we are likely to reach a spike and in the light thereof, we would assess **mid-July** whether to open our Churches.

You have risen to the challenges of finding new ways of meeting for worship and reaching people with the love of God. When we eventually do open, it is my wish that online services and the ways in which clergy have been reaching their congregations, will continue, particularly as numbers attending will be limited and it will be safer for some to stay home.

This has been an incredibly difficult time for the whole country, especially for those who have been ill, those who have suffered financial hardship and the loss of livelihoods. I am enormously grateful for the way that the more affluent parishioners have made goods and money available for soup kitchens and food parcels. Immense gratitude also to the sacrificial giving of our people who are doing their utmost to keep up with their pledges.

**DIOCESAN SURVEY WITH ADDENDUM  
DIOCESAN CHURCH READINESS CHECKLIST**

Thank you for the returns that we have already received. Please be sure to fill in and attach the Addendum.

Fogging for COVID-19 is not recommended by the WHO, United Nations, CDC and EPA. For this reason, we may not use an industrial spray fogger as we would not want to further complicate respiratory conditions. Deep cleaning by wiping is more effective and recommended. The same source tells us that utilising a professional company may eliminate the risk on Church personnel, however, this is not proven effective in the disinfecting of COVID-19. Please adapt the form accordingly. We are all learning as we go along.

**GENDER BASED VIOLENCE**

Please widely disseminate the attached letter. It is in the three languages of our Diocese, thanks to Canon Cheryl Uren and Revd Luleka Nyhila.

**FUNERALS OF PEOPLE WHO PASSED AWAY FROM CONFIRMED OR SUSPECTED CORONAVIRUS.**

Firstly, be assured of my prayers for all of you. Many of our clergy and people are traumatised with the many funerals taking place at this time due to the pandemic that has come home. We are experiencing the peak that was projected by the scientists and medics. Many of the people passing away are known to us.

In the interest of health and safety, no coffins of people who have died from confirmed Covid-19, are allowed to be brought into Church. The deceased's body may not go home as this is far too dangerous. There is no viewing of a loved one who has died of Covid-19. The service at the graveside must be brief. The coffin is sprinkled while it is still in the hearse. Give way as the coffin is lowered into the grave and once it has been covered a little bit, do the committal. Presently it appears that the number of attendees is limited to 50. We need to be sensible and sensitive about numbers, as with social distancing, 50 around a grave may not be possible. Then it is better to restrict the number to close family. Please remember that the 50 attendees, includes clergy, church officers and funeral undertaker staff. We are at all times to co-operate with the Funeral Undertakers who are trained to manage such scenarios.

Cremation is the preferred method for a funeral but if a burial is preferred by the family, then all attempts should be made to have a burial within 3 days. Please follow the correct use of person protective equipment (PPE), including that the clergy wear gloves. No one who is not wearing a cloth mask over nose and mouth, should be allowed to participate. Night vigils are still prohibited. The funeral at the graveside is to last less than 30 minutes. Ask mourners not to attend if they are sick.

I am constantly updating our Chapter Members with latest information regarding Covid-19 funeral protocols. Please check with them or me if uncertain about anything.

We silently place into the hands of God our dearly beloved who have left us. May their dear souls Rest in Peace and Rise in Glory. We pray for their families who may be feeling as if a brick wall has unexpectedly collapsed on them. Dear God remove their darkness and may they awaken to solace.

## **BEREAVEMENT, DEPRESSION AND TRAUMA COUNSELLORS**

If there are any professional counsellors who would be willing to offer their services to the Diocese on a pro bono basis, please get in touch with me. We can have a conversation about what is possible for you.

**Dear Clergy and Wardens**, we have not travelled this road before. It is a particularly difficult path. We also have no idea of how much further but we pray that it not much further. Some are getting weary and worn out. Take heart. I appreciate your compassion and the beauty of your talents. We will never be the same after this powerful, transfiguring experience that will change our inner selves for ever.

God is with us in a surprising closeness previously unimagined.

Thanks, Love, Peace, Prayers and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Margaret". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

**BISHOP MARGARET B VERTUE**

Encl