



THE UNITED
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA

Monday, February 15, 2021

Dear friends

Thank you to all of you who participated in the UPCSA's Day of Prayer and Fasting on 11th January 2021. It seems that we have crossed the high point of the second wave and the numbers of infections, hospitalisations and people in ICU are dropping steadily. We thank God for His answer to our prayers and we note that it is interesting that 11th January was something of a turning point in this second wave, particularly in South Africa, and it looks like that trend is also being seen in the other countries in which the UPCSA is active as well.

In this month's letter, I want to focus on the issue of vaccines. While each country in which the UPCSA has congregations will have a different vaccine roll-out strategy, I want to address the issue of vaccines in principle. The SACC put out a very helpful document which was compiled by an ecumenical task team entitled, "SACC Position Statement on the Church and the COVID-19 Vaccine". In this document the SACC deals with some of the misconceptions about the COVID-19 vaccine, including, COVID-19 vaccine and "mark of the beast", SC and its implications on COVID-19, Coronavirus was made in a lab, Vaccine and population control, Vaccine and DNA and vaccines are made from aborted fetus. I would suggest that people across that document if they are interested in these various topics.

Many members of the UPCSA might have concerns about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines. We must realise that the various pharmaceutical companies that have developed vaccines have done extensive research and conducted large-scale trials to determine the safety and efficacy of the vaccine. Some people are concerned about the speed at which these vaccines were developed. What we must note is that most vaccines are not financially viable to produce and the development of a vaccine is usually not financially supported by governments. So, the development of new vaccines is not a top priority for most diseases. However, in the case of COVID-19, because of the extremely disruptive nature of recurring lockdowns on the economy, many countries have financially contributed to the development of the vaccine and committed themselves to paying for the vaccine once developed. This has enabled the vaccine to be developed in record time, but no corners were cut with regards to safety and testing. Millions of people have received these vaccines across the world and very few have had an adverse reaction.

We must note that certain side effects have been reported, such as fever, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches, fatigue and headaches. Most of these side effects occur within the first two or three days after vaccination and last only one to two days. These adverse side effects are, in the most part, the body's immune response to the vaccine. All the vaccines are safe and effective in dealing with the virus and the side effects are worth the effort to save lives.

We have lost too many lives and livelihoods because of this pandemic. COVID affects the dignity of human life, forcing people to be admitted to hospital and to suffer alone. Those who succumb to the virus are condemned to die alone; their loved ones are unable to be with them in their time of death or after. Funerals are stark and sterile affairs, marked by limited numbers, social distancing and restricted time. Many have lost their income or their employment and are struggling to find alternative sources of income or new work opportunities.