

SACC Position Statement on the Church and the COVID-19 Vaccine

SACC Ecumenical Theological Task Team - February 8, 2021

Preamble

The novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has plunged the global community into an extraordinary crisis; turning the world upside down. Life for humanity has grounded to a sudden halt as the Coronavirus takes total control. Humanity has been brought to its knees by the microscopic virus. The personal, social and economic impact of COVID-19 is incalculable, unlike anything experienced by the world in nearly a century. Christians and other people of faith have prayed and continue to pray ceaselessly for God's intervention. The scientific community has worked around the clock and God is answering our prayers. Thankfully, vaccines have been developed within a year of the outbreak of the pandemic, which is no mean feat in the history of vaccines. As South Africans we have wondered if no shortcuts were taken to occasion this. Different trusted South African scientists have severally assured us: "The research was done faster with large numbers of people ensuring safety and efficacy measurements were not compromised"; and "The trials were totally ethically and scientifically sound and the licensing completely thorough. The speed of development is really a reflection of the level of scientific advancement we are now at rather than it was in any way recklessly rushed through." The rollout of vaccines is already underway and we have a long road yet ahead of us.

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However, the development of the vaccine has brought a lot of uncertainty, anxiety, confusion and fear among South Africans. Concerns are circulating all over social media, instilling fear and panic in the minds of many. While many are warmly embracing the vaccine, still many are resisting this advance in medical science, and at times.

It is against this background of the apparent resistance to the vaccine and concerns raised by Christians and South Africans in general, that the leaders of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), set up the Ecumenical Theological Task Team comprising theologians from a broad spectrum of the Christian churches affiliated to SACC: Anglican, African Independent churches, Catholic, Charismatic, Evangelical, Lutheran, Methodist, Pentecostal, and Reformed traditions. They met on Wednesday 3 February 2021, to discuss and come up with a united churches' response to the COVID-19 vaccine. Chaired by Prof. Simangaliso Kumalo of the University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal, the Task Team included: