



# BMC

## Black Methodist Consultation

*A formation within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa*



CONNEXIONAL  
OFFICE  
2017/18 - 19/20  
T2

26 March 2020

CIRCULAR 028\_26/03/2020 COVID - 19 RESPONSE [CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC]:  
MCSA RESPONSE AS AT 25 MARCH 2020

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To the MCSA – Connexional Leadership

RE: MCSA COVID - 19 RESPONSE [CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC] AS AT 25 MARCH  
2020

SECRETARY  
GENERAL  
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Warm Christian greetings to you **Leadership**, from MCO to Synods heads.

The Black Methodist Consultation (**BMC**) noted and here acknowledges the MCSA Letter dated 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020 response on the twenty-one-day (21) National Lockdowns *aimed at disrupting chain of transmission for the Corona Virus (Covid – 19)* as announced in SA, Namibia and Swaziland as well as many other countries.

RECORDING  
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Corona Virus confirmed infected people worldwide as we are writing this letter were at 510, 528 with 38, 560 new infections diagnosed today only globally; 23, 028 already died (1, 750 *died today only still counting*). BMC celebrates the recovery globally of 122, 232 (24%) people from Covid-19.

TREASURER  
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In South Africa alone Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> Mar confirmed Covid-19 infections were just **over 500** while Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> Mar there were **709 confirmed infections, today Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> Mar RSA has 927 confirmed infections with covid-19 still counting** as confirmed positive results are received from the laboratories. *Today only the number of confirmed positive Covid-19 infected persons increased by 218 compared to Yesterday 25<sup>th</sup> Mar.* BMC celebrates the recovery in SA of the 12 people from Covid-19.

*“The MCSA Lilifa  
Labazali Bethu; Lefa  
Labatswadi Barona”*  
[https://blackmethodist  
consultation.org](https://blackmethodistconsultation.org)

BMC agrees with the MCSA and commends MCSA leadership for the observation that *“the numbers of infected people are rising at alarming rates worldwide dictating stringent and swift measures ...”*.

**BMC further applauds the MCSA on the following decisions made: -**

1. Declaring that there would be no gatherings for worship on Sundays or any other day in strict observance of state guidelines ... as well as promoting creating methods to be used to maintain worship and prayer within our communities;
2. Recognising the need for continued pastoral support and counselling to the extent of promoting use of information and communication technology to provide for such need;
3. Suspending all other events like weddings, unveiling of tombstones until after the lockdown;
4. Promoting that Methodists adhere to permits for funerals ... with stringent rules to hygiene and restricted number of mourners;
5. Recognising the great impact of Corona Virus on the vulnerable .... elderly, orphaned, the sick, unemployed, children of the poor, landless, waterless etc.;
6. Encouraging societies to open MCSA Church Properties where necessary to meet the needs of the poor ...;
7. Upholding the need for ecumenical cooperation as people of faith.

The BMC is in full support of the MCSA leadership that all the above must be upheld and be implemented by all Methodists to the fullest, not only in strict observance of the MCSA discipline but also recognising that the Church needs to lead by example and thus actively promote that ***'People should stay home and be safe'***.

BMC believes that the evident magnitude of the impact of the increasing Covid – 19 transmissions in the World, in the African Continent generally and in Southern Africa in particular would surely mount an unimaginable humanitarian crisis where hundreds of thousands of people could die untimely due to the Corona Virus Infections and related complications like organ failure.

BMC believes that the crisis at hand as evidenced by the alarming increased rates of Covid – 19 infections ***dictates even more stringent and swift measures by the Church*** in addition to those done by various governments.

BMC further believes that the increased Covid–19 Infections at unprecedented rates in Southern Africa, *three-fold infection increases compared* to other countries like China, South Korea, Italy *and the likes*. BMC believes the alarming infection rate increases are fuelled by developmental challenges with significant lack of access to basic services like running water and sanitation; overcrowding and lack of adequate housing as evidenced by thousands upon thousands of people who live in squalor and or who reside in the many under serviced informal settlements.

Moreover, basic healthcare needs and basic hygiene/sanitation needs *competes* for priority and attention with unmet economic needs and or economic deprivation where the need to secure the next meal far outweighs such needs. It is in this context where BMC believes the situation dictates even more stringent and swift measures by the Churches Ecumenically and by the MCSA in particular.

BMC calls upon the MCSA leadership to consider to reconvene, *as per latest normal processes* that led the letter(s) dated 25<sup>th</sup> March and the earlier letter dated 16<sup>th</sup> March. To review and or possible resolve and or at least start the critical conversations and enact processes towards finding collective solutions for some of the gaps below. The BMC believes the Covid – 19 Public Health Threat demands *extra-ordinary measures* by the Church in its response at this time: -

1. BMC believes that MCSA and all Churches should make Church Properties available **on offer** to government authorities to be used for *Quarantine, Isolation and or any use* during the Covid – 19 Humanitarian Crisis Response;
2. BMC believes that the call to *“to open MCSA Church Properties where necessary ... for food kitchens and or testing centres” falls short of the mission agency expected of the Church* in this crisis especially for the thousands upon thousands of people who reside in the informal settlements; the homeless, all the marginalised poorest of the poor; *where would these people be quarantined and or be isolated?* if the Churches makes it optional with the decision on the necessity possible open to the discretion and or determination of the resident minister(s) and or local leadership;
3. BMC believes that the Covid–19 humanitarian crisis exposes the deep-seated developmental issues, challenges that are underpinned by inequality and economic deprivation in some of the communities generally and *in the MCSA in particular. **Silence on Economy by the MCSA in its letter(s) on Covid – 19 Response has become loud***, as if the MCSA does not have economy. BMC Believes that the posture taken per the letters *totally contradicts* our own balance sheets as declared to government tax authorities and annual financial statements.
4. BMC believes the Local Churches that have financial reserves will surely be able to meet assessments *cushioned by the reserves for the next three or even up to six months*; However the reality is that majority of Churches that barely survive on a month to month to make ends meet for the assessments to be remitted to MCO *will*

*surely collapse economically owing to Covid – 19 disaster and the lockdown that shall negatively impact local Church giving.*

5. The BMC calls on MCSA to consider granting amnesty for the normal monthly assessments for the months of March, April and May 2020 in respect of shortfalls and arrears through budget re-prioritisation and or re-allocation of available funds at MCO level.
6. BMC believes the task of relooking and or reviewing MCSA Assets and Liabilities in response to Covid – 19 should perhaps be outsourced to an independent objective think tank that could derive possible scenarios and or options for the MCSA leadership to consider with advantages and disadvantages for various options.
7. BMC believes '*the MCSA call for the Mission Unit Director to work with Synod Mission Secretaries on Crisis Groups*' falls short of the *extra-ordinary measures* that we believe as the BMC are demanded by the crisis, *in fact to the contrary*, the call seems to normalise the crisis within the normal MCSA structures
8. BMC further calls on the MCSA to establish ***Covid – 19 Mission Response Fund***, *that would be open to all Methodists for donations* in order to resource Food Banks at Local Church Level for Children who depended on School Feeding Schemes for food; same fund could assist with Water and Sanitation needs during the lockdown; buy soap and Sanitizers in bulk ...etc.;
9. BMC would withdraw an amount of R100, 000 from its own investment reserves to contribute once the proposed ***MCSA Covid – 19 Mission Response Fund*** has been agreed upon and or established and or announced *as per point 8 above*;
10. BMC would further engage and actively encourage Methodists and other Organisations *internal and external to the MCSA* to contribute to the proposed ***Covid – 19 Mission Response Fund***.

The BMC is available and open to further engagements and discussions on these issues as highlighted, we believe *now more than ever before it is urgent* for all Churches ecumenically to discuss continued unsustainable total economic dependency by the Church for maintenance and mission on the regular giving by the poorest of the poor, whom many live in abject poverty, are unemployed, small businesses and township economy *barely coping*.

Perhaps Covid – 19 gives an opportunity f the Church to give back to communities at the time of national disasters, sickness and death; renew herself and re-engineer models of doing Church at the height of inequality, poverty and unemployment.

Various governments in announcing lockdowns recognised the unintended economic consequences *then erected an economic scaffolding as a Safety net. Does the MCSA not recognise the economic impact of the lockdown for the Church? What’s the economic scaffolding? and the Recovery Plan?*

To God Be the glory, great things He had done!

Yours in Christ Service



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**Mr Xhanti T. Mhlubulwana**

**Secretary General**



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**Rev Mzwandile Molo**

**Chairperson**