



May 24, 2020

Seventh-day Adventist Churches  
South Leeward Conference

### **NOTIFICATION TO ALL SDA CHURCHES RE: COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS)**

Dear Brethren,

The Seventh-day Adventist church recognizes the serious implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and is fully prepared to make the necessary adjustments to ensure that the members of our congregations are safe, protected and supported as this virus spreads around the world. Members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are reminded that we must not panic, but remain calm during this pandemic.

As we attempt to keep our members safe, all Seventh-day Adventist churches must adhere to the following guidelines:

#### **Provide adequate hand hygiene facilities:**

- Hand washing and/or sanitizing stations must be present at all entrances with outlined procedures being observed by all before entering the sanctuary. If unable to have a hand hygiene station at a previously designated entrance then this entrance should no longer be used. Entrances and Exits must be appropriately labelled and members encouraged to use as labelled.
- Appropriate signage must be displayed at all hand hygiene stations, that clearly demonstrate a stepwise approach to hand hygiene whether with liquid soap and water or hand sanitizer. (signage are attached)
- Drying facilities must be placed in immediate proximity to handwashing stations, with an appropriate receptacle to receive waste. It must be ensured that there is minimal handling of paper/hand towel; therefore wall mounts, caddies or paper towel holders can be used. Cloth towels/re-usable items should never be used to dry hands.
- Churches need to ensure that there is running water in all bathrooms and kitchens and that repairs are made to taps that are not working. If water is stored the appropriate adjustments should be made with the necessary adjuncts being placed to ensure that water can be free flowing and turned on and off. Dipping of water from stored water supplies is not allowed.
- A regular stock of liquid hand soap must be available in all bathrooms, kitchens and hand washing stations (Please remember to replenish regularly). This should never be diluted.

- Hand sanitizers should also be placed in all foyers, bathrooms, kitchens, church halls and meeting rooms.
- Note that hand gels are most effective when they contain a minimum of 60% alcohol.
- Hand gels that state “kills 99% bacteria and viruses” and are between 60 - 95% alcohol based are best.
- Compliance officers should be selected. These officers may include members of the deaconry, risk allowance team, health and temperance department or sanitation team. It is important to note that as these members will be at the helm of the response that they should not be considered high risk, i.e. with comorbidities to include heart disease, or diabetes, should not be over the age of 65 or pregnant. Their responsibilities are as follows
  - Ensuring adherence to protocol at hand hygiene stations, regarding use of mask, orderly entry and exit, and appropriate seating with appropriate physical distancing.
- Hand hygiene practices should also be observed on entering and leaving the sanctuary.

### **Greeting each other:**

To protect personal space and prevent the spread of the virus, please adhere to the following:

- Absolutely no handshakes, hugging and kissing.
- Alternatives would be to smile, wave or nod as you greet each other

### **Personal Hygiene:**

- Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and dry thoroughly.
- Regular hand washing throughout the day is advised.
- Use toilet tissue to touch toilet handles, bathroom taps and open bathroom doors.
- Use hand sanitizers after touching surfaces.
- Use knuckles to operate light switches if concerned.
- Open doors with elbows or tissue.

### **Personal behaviour:**

- Avoid touching your face. If touching face is necessary, sanitize hands immediately before and after touching face
- Viruses can live on surfaces for a few days. When we touch surfaces where the virus may have been deposited and then touch our eyes, nose or mouth, the virus can enter the body.
- Avoid the exchange and distribution of the following: writing materials, snacks, sweets, and passing of note etc.

## Face Mask:

- In Accordance with and subjected to the Public Health ACT (Amended)
  - A person shall wear a face mask when in any public place.
  - No person is permitted to be in the Sanctuary without wearing a face mask.
  - Special allowance is granted to Pastors/Ministers/ Preachers to present their messages without the mask but should ensure that they have a minimum of twelve feet (12') distance from congregants during their presentations. Where the podium is less than 12 feet from the first bench/pew/seat, adjustments must be made to ensure that the specified conditions are met. For example: the podium can be shifted or rows of chairs removed.
  
- Appropriate signage should be displayed regarding wearing the face masks
  
- It must be emphasized that if a mask is temporarily removed during ministry that it should be placed in a zip lock bag with sanitization of hands post removal. Once mask is replaced, hands must once again be sanitized.
  
- Bibles, hymnals and quarterlies should not be shared.

## Church services

The following provides a guideline for gathering in the sanctuary.

- Size of church gatherings is dependent on the size of the churches physical structure. The guidance regarding size of the sanctuary and the size of attendees allowed is as follows as outlined by the Ecclesiastical Commission and the Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment:
  - Small (not larger than 30'x24') – 27 attendees
  - Medium (not larger than 60'x40') -80 attendees
  - Large (not larger than 120'x70') – 280 attendees
  - Extra-Large (not larger than 155'x85') – 439 attendees
  - Larger than above would require review by the governing bodies
  
- Once the quota outlined based on the size of the physical structure is met, then any additional attendee will not be allowed to enter. This of course must be approached with love.
  
- One family is allowed per bench with a bench in between, Chairs should be placed a minimum of six feet apart.
  
- Keep a register of attendees
  
- Screening of attendees on entry though ideal is optional at this point. Infra-red thermometers are recommended when recording temperatures. It important to note that all temperatures should be logged and accounted for through documentation with the screener's initials. A temperature of  $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$  or  $100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$  is in keeping with fever, and if noted

then that member/visitor will not be allowed to enter, but instead would be advised to return home and contact their health care provider or the hotline as indicated.

- Ensure that all members maintain physical distancing of no less than six (6) feet
- Services should be no longer than 90 minutes and leadership is advised to keep the services as simple and meaningful as possible
- All attendees should leave immediately after the service; and mingling should not be allowed. Exits must be clearly labeled and as much as is possible the crossing of paths should be minimized while attendees exit. A maximum of 30 minutes will be allotted to allow departure.
- A minimum of 90 minutes should be allotted between services to facilitate appropriate sanitization of the sanctuary. Keen attention should be paid to high touch surfaces and bathrooms. See sub section – *Church Cleaning* below which will offer guidance regarding cleaning agents.
- Mikes must be individualized throughout the service i.e. there should be no sharing of mikes. If mikes are insufficient, and have to be shared they must be sanitized between use. It is prudent at this time to revise the number of song service/praise team members utilized in an attempt to curtail exposure
- If services are being broadcasted/ streamed; filming should be done either with a fixed camera or by one film crew member assigned to one camera.
- If you are using candles, then take care not to light them immediately after using hand sanitizer gel, especially if this has alcohol in it.
- Gatherings should be limited to one day per week initially. Additional services will continue to be held remotely. This will subsequently be revised by the South Leeward Conference.
- The use of air conditioning units is discouraged.

### **Weddings /Funerals/Baptisms**

There must be no more than 25 persons congregating at any one of the above church services. Great care must also be taken in ensuring appropriate physical distancing at such functions. Considering the legal consequences of non-adherence, pastors are advised to inform the president of the Conference of such gatherings whenever they are planned.

### **Church cleaning:**

As COVID-19 (Coronavirus) lives on surfaces for a few days, it is advised to ensure a thorough cleaning of the church premises each week.

- It is important that church cleaners/caretakers use rubber gloves and wear masks while cleaning in order to help to protect themselves
- The church caretaker/cleaner/deaconry should be advised to undertake a thorough cleaning between each service as previously outlined and each week paying particular attention to benches, door handles, church rails, light switches and all surfaces in bathrooms, kitchens and meeting places.
- Deacons and deaconesses may need to assist in the general cleanliness of the church environment, and attend to surface cleaning as advised above.
- All buses should be sanitized before and after use (include wiping hand rests, door handles, rails and other surfaces. Drivers of church buses should be trained on the correct sanitization methods and there must be someone assigned to ensure that the requirements are correctly adhered to.
- It is very important that in cases where church buses are used to transport members that physical distancing protocol for bus transportation is practiced. 14 passenger buses should carry no more than 7 and 21 passenger buses should carry no more than 12.
- As much as possible windows should be kept open to allow for fresh air ventilation, while transporting members.
- Sanitize all surface areas for example desks, tables, pianos, organ, pulpits, etc.
- Visibly soiled surfaces must be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection
- Agents appropriate for cleaning include but are not limited to the following: Clorox wipes, Lysol bathroom cleaner, Comet disinfectant bathroom cleaner, Cleancide wipes, Arm & hammer essentials disinfecting wipes, Purrell professional surface disinfectant wipes, etc.

The Centres for Disease Control offers an exhaustive list of agents which can be used and can be found at the following website <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>.

- If the above agents are not available then alternatives can be used to include:
  - 1/3 cup of bleach added to a gallon of water or 70% alcohol solutions. Bleach solutions are effective for 24 hours.
  - Never mix bleach with any other disinfectant- dangerous fumes may be released

### **Collection of tithes/offerings**

Deacons and deaconesses may use a collection bag where a long stick is attached that would allow for persons to drop in the envelope. Where this is not possible, it is encouraged that tithe and offering collection is modified to the use of a stationary collection system. Receptacles should **NOT** be passed along the aisle, where persons have to touch the offering plate/bag and pass on. Hands should be sanitized after tithe/offering submitted. Members are encouraged to use the online giving platform as far as possible.

Persons counting funds after collection should wear gloves where possible and wash hands upon completion.

### **At Risk Groups: Older members (>65 years, individuals with chronic illnesses, pregnant members and children < 16 years**

It is important to keep in touch with the aforementioned members who are considered to be at risk. They are the most vulnerable to the virus and should be advised to worship at home. Please note that such individuals, should they choose to attend the congregational worship, do so at their own risk, or in the case of minors, at the risk of the parents/guardians.

It is extremely essential to keep in touch with them so they do not feel isolated. You may do this through regular phone calls to see how they are doing and to ensure that our elderly and shut-ins have adequate resources and essential items such as food, water, toiletries and medical supplies.

It should also be noted that there will be no children ministries services being physically held at any sanctuary, online meetings via varied platforms are encouraged. Children under the age of 16 will therefore not be allowed to attend church services at this time.

### **Feeling Unwell/Symptoms:**

If you are unwell, and have symptoms such as a temperature of 99 Fahrenheit or above, coughing, sneezing and a runny nose, please worship at home and watch services online. If you are experiencing difficulties breathing or breathlessness, call 911 for attention and advice.

### **Self-isolation:**

If the above symptoms are present and you are concerned that you may have the virus, please remain at home and call 911. You will be assessed and advised as to whether you need to be tested for the virus. Do not attend your doctor's or General Practitioner's office, but rather call your General Practitioner to let them know.

During self-isolation, or if quarantine is advised by a health professional, you should not use public transport, attend public places, or go into work, college, university or school. This could be for a period of 2 weeks.

### **First Aid:**

Each church is mandated to name a qualified first aider/medical personnel to be on duty for each gathering and provide protective gear to ensure the safety of such person(s) on duty. A functional first aid kit must be available. Also, congregations can ensure that they have the contact number of the community nurse on duty, in the event that a qualified medical professional is unavailable.

A place of isolation must be identified in each church in the event that a person becomes ill during the service. Ensure that gloves are used when attending to anyone who is ill.

**Social Distancing:**

The recommendation by the World Health Organization (WHO) and department of Health (DOH) is to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet (six feet) between individuals. This is so that you can avoid breathing in tiny droplets which may contain the virus when people cough and sneeze.

**Gatherings:**

Avoid all large gatherings: No Communion, potluck, agape feasts and similar events should be arranged or held.

Training should be offered to the following personnel prior to the opening of church to ensure clarity and smooth flow of protocols established

- Deaconry and Elders
- Health and Temperance/Risk Assessment/Sanitization/Compliance Team

**Training is Available for all Relevant Persons**

Churches may consider using, Ministry of Health or members of the Health Association of South Leeward Conference to assist with training of the relevant personnel. Members must be made aware of all protocol prior to the opening of churches.

**Announcements:**

Please make verbal announcements about hand hygiene, physical distancing and greetings as mentioned above. Church bulletins should be suspended until further notice. Such announcements must be repeated each week for absent members and visitors.

***It must be noted that All Sanctuaries must be inspected by the public health department of the Ministry of Health Wellness and the Environment, with the necessary approval given, prior to the commencement of church services.***

**Prayer:**

We stand on the power and promise of His Word in Psalm 91 as we embrace the protection that God offers us as we abide in Him: “No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”

Psalm 91:10,11.

Let us commit to lifting up prayers for those impacted by COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and the families, friends and communities who are grieving the loss of loved ones as a result. We continue to petition God in our daily prayers as we seek His intervention to halt the spread of this virus.

**Updates:**

Further updates will follow.

Please listen for updates on the coronavirus daily on the Second Advent Radio Station

Sincerely,

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Health Director

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President