

PRECAUTIONARY GUIDELINES FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS, INSTITUTIONS & FAITH COMMUNITIES AGAINST COVID-19

What is COVID-19?

On 30th January, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak. COVID-19 also known as the corona virus is a new illness that affects that lungs and airway. This virus, which is said to have mutated from animal corona virus and crossed into humans has no cure so far. Since it is new among humans, the people have no immunity built against it.

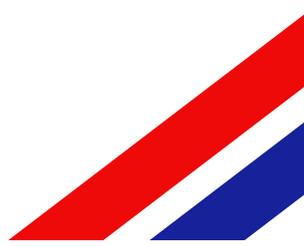
The symptoms of COVID-19 are;

- Fever. A high temperature of at least 38 degrees
- Shortness of breath
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Other flu-like symptoms like running nose, sneezing and body weakness

Why should we be concerned?

According to the World Health Organization, there 109,577 confirmed cases with 3,993 new infections and 3809 deaths globally. These statistics are as of March, 9th 2020. There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. The most hit countries are; Italy, South Korea, France, China, Germany and Spain.

Were as Uganda has no confirmed case of COVID-19, this disease is traversing the world and therefore should remain vigilant.



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How does it spread?

The corona virus is a relatively new and evolving virus and still under study. The Ministry of health and Center for Disease Control and Prevention has stipulated ways in which the virus can spread;

- Person to person spread. When a person gets into close contact with an infected person.
- Through mucus or fluids from an infected person when they cough or sneeze.
- The virus can also spread through contact with contaminated surfaces or objects like door knobs, hankies used by infected persons, chairs, metallic surfaces.

What should we do?

It is with in our mandate as religious leaders, to ensure the spiritual well-being of our congregants, but also ensure that they live healthy lives.

While the Ministry of Health has issued guidelines to help prevent COVID-19 spread, as members of the Inter Religious Council of Uganda Council of Presidents, we have drafted supplementary guidelines that are anchored within the scripture for our religious institutions to adhere to.

Quran 94:5-6, *“So verily, with the hardship, there is relief. Verily, with the hardship, there is relief.”*

Ezekiel 33:3-4, **33:3-4 says**, *“when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, 4 then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head.”*



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Below are the draft guidelines for our religious institutions and faithful;

1. Offer prayers to seek the Lord's guidance and intervention amidst the corona virus outbreak so that God can heal our land.
2. Create awareness on COVID-19 through our pulpits, fellowships and other religious related gatherings.
3. Accord specific slots to medical personnel during services and Khutbahs or special announcements to educate congregants on how they can stay safe.
4. Mobilize volunteers at churches and mosques to champion proper hygiene like handwashing for congregants and proper waste disposal
5. Until the virus is contained, we should avoid hugging and shaking hands during time for wishing each other peace or any other greeting.
6. Ensure that all religious institutions; churches, mosques, synagogues, hospitals, schools, cells, fellowships have chlorinated water, soap and sanitizers and sensitize on their use.
7. Beware of false information and remedies. Ensure that all faith-based media houses report approved information on the COVID-19
8. In the event that you are visiting those sick with the virus, ensure that you use protective wear like mouth and nose masks.
9. Until the virus is contained, religious leaders should avoid touching congregants when blessing them, baptizing, officiating marriages among others
10. Religious leaders should disinfect their hands before handling holy communion
11. Religious leaders and indeed all the faithful should live by example!
12. Religious leaders should frequently caution congregants to stay vigilant and adhere to preventive measures and guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health.

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