

The Bishop of False Bay
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Diocese of False Bay Bisdóm Van Valsbaai Idayosisi False Bay

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Tuesday, 25 August 2020

Ad Laos

Dear Clergy and Parishioners across the length and breadth of False Bay Diocese,

Greetings in the name of God, in whom all things are possible!

We have been in lockdown for nearly six months. There is the fear of not being able to return to a life without the coronavirus. Regardless, we should press on and not allow ourselves to be imprisoned by such thoughts. And not succumb to “pandemic fatigue.” Virtual broadcasts have achieved amazing results. We have managed to reach vast numbers of people, including parishioners, during the period of lockdown.

Thank you for all that you are doing to continue the spiritual disciplines of our faith.
This letter follows on from the two statements previously received by you.

COMPLIANCE OFFICER TRAINING

This training is essential. Every parish must ensure that its participants attend these training sessions. Without it, our ability to open all our Churches simultaneously, will be frustrated.

The first online training session was held on Saturday 22 August 2020. Fifty participated. Apart from a few technical difficulties, the training session fared very well. Our next training session will be held on Saturday 29 August 2020 from 10am to 11:30am. Invitations to attendees will be sent on Wednesday 26 August 2020.

Please provide the Administrator with the names and email addresses of all the compliance officers in each parish by tomorrow morning. The participants in the remaining parishes must be ready to attend this session. A certificate certifying that compliance officers attended the training session will be issued. A short video has been prepared to assist in protocol planning and has been sent to clergy by their Archdeacons.

RECEPTION OF THE SACRAMENT

Our Churches re-open on 1 September 2020. Current Government regulations permit only fifty (50) persons in attendance at any service. Government officials have already been to our Churches to determine whether we comply with funeral regulations. Officials may very well check on our Church services and gatherings to determine compliance. A failure to comply with the regulations could result in the Church service being stopped. And failure to comply with the regulations also attract large fines. Please bear with us as we comply with the regulations.

The consecrated sacrament will be distributed in one kind only (bread only) at public worship beginning in September. No person is obliged to participate in the celebration or reception of Eucharist unless they **choose** to do so. Clergy are reminded that by distributing the sacrament, they are responsible for ensuring that the health of each person committed to their spiritual care is not compromised. In this regard, we rely on your utmost co-operation. We continue to build our community. We avoid division and self-interest to the detriment of others. We must take the utmost precaution in preparing for, and in celebrating Holy Eucharist. The precautionary measures include the following:

1. Every person involved in any aspect of the preparation for, and the celebration of, the Holy Eucharist, shall wear a mask and thoroughly sanitize or wash their hands before handling elements and vessels.
2. The Celebrant alone will set the altar and be the only person to stand at it for the Great Thanksgiving.
3. The Celebrant alone will handle the elements, and only after sanitizing his/her hands.
4. The Celebrant will elevate, and alone will consume the "Priest Host" and the wine.
5. The bread for all other communicants will be in the form of wafers and brought to the altar for consecration in a covered ciborium or similar vessel and remain covered throughout the consecration until it is distributed.
6. Distribution will be at a station at the front of the chancel. The altar rail will not be used.
7. Communicants will come forward individually, wearing masks, whilst complying with safe distancing of at least 1.5 metres.
8. The Celebrant will gently drop the consecrated wafer into the open hands of the communicant without touching them.
9. The communicant will lift the mask, consume the sacrament, replace the mask, and return to the pew, providing as much safe distancing as possible.
10. Following the service, a dedicated Sacristan or Lay Minister will wear gloves when cleaning vessels and divesting the altar of linens and other articles.
11. Online worship offerings will continue for countless communicants who cannot risk public gatherings.
12. Where possible, only clergy will distribute previously consecrated hosts to the homebound and those in hospice care. Extreme caution must be taken not to put the cleric or communicant at risk. Clergy are reminded to have as little contact as possible. We suggest that clergy wear a plastic apron and not to touch the host. A family member, who has sanitized their hands thoroughly could be asked to place the host in the sick person's mouth. Private communion services are not encouraged.
13. Attached is a brief liturgy for the blessing of the Easter Candle, for those who have not yet had the opportunity to do so.
14. The Holy Oils will be decanted by our Senior Priest and will reach Archdeacons next week for handing out.

PEACE GREETING/ OFFERINGS/COLLECTIONS/PLEDGE

No physical contact between parishioners during the peace greeting is permitted. Parishioners will acknowledge each other by bowing to each other.

To eliminate or minimize contact, collections and offerings must be placed in a collection box placed at the entrance to the church. They do so upon entering the Church. Collection boxes must be sanitized before and after each service. Only sides-persons are permitted to take the collection for blessing during the service. Parishioners are encouraged to pledge using an electronic funds transfer system employed by their banks. If this is not possible, pledge envelopes may be placed in the collection box at the entrance to the Church. Counting teams must sanitize their hands and wear masks throughout the counting process. Counting must take place in a room with sufficient ventilation.

SEATING

Seating arrangements must allow for a minimum of 1.5m between persons. This means between the persons in the same pew and between persons in successive pews.

MARRIAGES AND FUNERALS

To maintain services of reasonable duration, we recommend that marriages and funerals are not combined with a Eucharist for the duration of Alert level 2.

CONFIRMATION SERVICES AND BAPTISM SERVICES

We shall prepare a new schedule for confirmation services which we could not have during the period of lockdown. Please notify me in writing before the end of the week whether you intend to proceed with bookings made for the remainder of this year. There is a strong likelihood that I shall be the only bishop able to manage episcopal visits and Confirmation services in our Diocese.

Clergy are reminded that baptism services should not form part of a main service. During the baptism, the child should be held by a parent over the font and the cleric will limit touching the child to anointing the child with the oil. Do not scoop the water from the font and use it for the next candidate.

CHILD CARE AND PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

All persons responsible for children in child-care and preschool programmes must ensure that they comply with any relevant regulation in place. At a minimum, all safety protocols regarding handwashing and sanitizing as well as social distancing measures must be complied with.

OUTGIVING MINISTRY FUND

Parishioners in three different Parishes in our Diocese have lost their homes and belongings in fires these past two weeks. In Rusthof, Strand and Khayelitsha, a father and a baby lost their lives in the fire. I encourage each Parish in the Diocese to establish a fund to be able to assist those in distress, beyond their own Parish.

FIFTY GOBBETS FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT

Scripture forms one of the basic principles of our Christian faith. Readers may find this booklet written by our own Revd Canon John Suggitt, of interest. Please see flyer attached.

DIOCESAN OFFICE

Will re-open on Monday 31 August.

CONCLUSION

The availability of a vaccine is still uncertain. Even with one, the curing process will, depending upon the demand for it, be long. Notwithstanding, we arise, knowing that God will protect us and help us. "Great is thy faithfulness!"

Please be assured of my continued love and prayers for you, the congregations in which you worship and the communities in which you live and serve. By God's grace, your continued faithful service and generous kindness, we persevere, and believe that we shall get through this time stronger, and more connected to one another and to God.

Peace, Prayers and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret" with a small cross symbol to the left. The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

BISHOP MARGARET B VERTUE

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