

That They May Have Life and Life In Abundance

PACIFIC CHURCHES RESPONDING TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC



ISAIAH 58: 6-12

6. Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?
7. Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
8. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.
9. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, ¹
10. if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.
11. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.
12. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

REFLECTION ON PROTECTION

- Protection. Cleaning hands with soap and water or using sanitizer, keeping physical distance from others outside your immediate household (at least 2 m), wearing a mask and avoiding crowds and closed spaces.
- These protective behaviours have become common during this year of COVID. Because of the urgent need for COVID-19 vaccines, never seen before financial investments and scientific collaborations have helped fast-track their development, whilst maintaining all the rigorous safety tests required for new vaccine development.
- Vaccines save millions of lives each year through a simple method. Vaccines teach your body to recognize specific germs and how to fight it off.
- When you get a vaccine, your immune system responds by recognizing the invading germ, such as the virus, and producing antibodies, the body's natural defenses. If you are then exposed to the virus in the future, your immune system can quickly fight it. For COVID-19, these vaccines provide the best protection against becoming seriously ill from COVID-19.
- Since the earliest Chinese and Indian methods of inoculation, the methods of vaccination have become routine. But a closer look reveals a strange logic. The cause becomes the cure.

REFLECTION ON PROTECTION

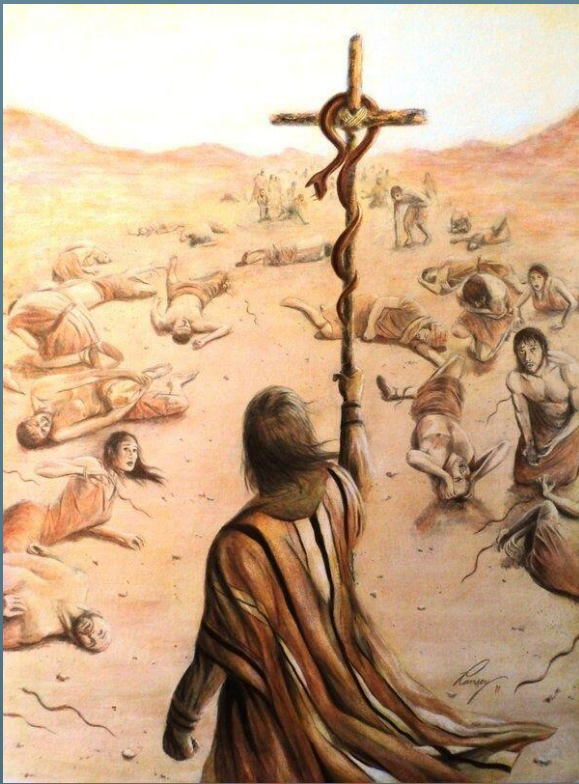
Numbers 21:4-9 recounts a story when the Israelites were in the midst of the Exodus. Suffering from thirst and hunger in the wilderness, a new threat emerged. They encountered poisonous snakes with deadly venom. What to do? The Lord told Moses to fix a serpent to a pole. When a serpent bit someone, they should look to the serpent on the staff, and they would be healed. The cause becomes the cure. Today a snake on a pole is a symbol for the medical profession. This *caduceus* is a symbol of healing.



THE CADUCEUS



THE ROD OF ASCLEPIUS



REFLECTION ON PROTECTION

- The Gospel of John (Jn 3:14-16) does not miss the parallel between the *caduceus* and Jesus being lifted up on a tree. The cross is the sign of cosmic healing for all who look upon Christ and remember. But a closer look reveals that Jesus's message of healing also operated by a strange logic.
- Religious and social laws of the day demanded that the sick or "impure" be kept at a distance. In an honour/shame system, a touch of impurity would contaminate the pure. But Jesus proclaimed a message of mercy, where a touch of grace heals and restores all that is wounded. The gospel upended the exclusionary logic of purity laws that lead to despair with the foolishly hopeful logic of love that holds in order to heal.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness

so must the Son of Man be lifted up

REFLECTION ON PROTECTION

- **For a year, we have embraced the strange logic, that the cause of our grief, physical distancing, is part of the cure that can protect one another. As the prophet Isaiah recalls, our self-limitation is a holy fast that can lighten the burden of suffering with the knowledge that our restraint protects our neighbour. This strange logic even brings hope in the form of a vaccine where a bit of the cause becomes the cure. Now we seek the wisdom to distribute these vaccines to the most vulnerable, ensure just and equitable access, and sensitize people to the importance of remembering safe preventative practices until we see this journey through.**
- **As we find our way through this wilderness to the day when we can safely gather again, may we look to the one fixed to the cross and remember the holy and healing logic of life that comes through self-giving. *(Source: WCC)***



**World Council
of Churches**

“Religious leaders of all faiths play a critical role in sustaining public trust in health authorities and services, as well as in the approved vaccines themselves.

As a Christian fellowship, it is our duty and moral obligation to publicly challenge rumours and myths and help people access the facts. While moral and ethical concerns also loom over vaccine access and distribution practices, we must take up responsibility and advocate for what is right from a medical, ethical and human rights perspective.”

Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca

WCC Acting General Secretary



Fijian Church Leaders getting vaccinated in April with the Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine



- Amid the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine in some communities, religious leaders are encouraged to build trust, combat misinformation and contribute to decisions accepted in their own contexts.
- Unsubstantiated rumours and conspiracy myths may undermine people's confidence and threaten effective public responses to the pandemic.
- Faith leaders to help their communities and societies to contribute to decisions that are morally substantiated and accepted in their own contexts.



TONGAN CHURCH LEADERS GETTING VACCINATED IN APRIL WITH OXFORD-ASTRAZENECA COVID-19 VACCINE

- Leadership counts. And especially in times of crisis, leadership matters. The past year has exposed various leadership styles from small communities and villages to political leaders with a global profile.
- Whether we gave a thumbs up or down, the response and ensuing actions of every leader had an impact in some way on the lives of others. While the visible impact made some leaders heroes, it also made some villains according to the court of public opinion.
- Caring and humble leadership crucial to help our villages, cities, countries and, indeed, our Pacific to navigate us safely through this pandemic.

WHY IS VACCINATION IMPORTANT?

- Vaccination is the only way of preventing certain incurable diseases, like polio and rabies, and controlling highly contagious diseases, like measles.
- Vaccinations prevent up to three million deaths every year. Thanks to vaccinations, smallpox was eradicated in 1979, and polio will also be eradicated soon. In Papua New Guinea, for example, have recently undergone polio mass immunization campaigns due to the country, whom was formerly polio-eradicated, saw the emergences of new cases.
- In addition to personal immunity, a vaccinated person becomes a “brother’s keeper” by breaking the chain of transmission, thereby protecting others from infection.
- While practice of immunization is not mentioned in the Bible, the Bible DOES mention of ancient means of controlling the spread of diseases, like isolating infected people or prohibiting the eating of sick or dead animals. These methods were inadequate to contain diseases that were fatal or very contagious.

MORE THAN 20 VACCINES ARE APPROVED BY THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION:

- **Childhood vaccinations:** These are the majority of vaccines. They are given to children from birth and should be completed in the child's first 24 months, according to each country's immunization programme. They are also called basic vaccines, and include polio, pertussis, and measles vaccines.
- **Women's reproductive health vaccinations:** Anti-tetanus vaccine is given to women during pregnancy, and HPV vaccine is given to pre-adolescent girls to protect against cancer of the cervix. To enhance protection to women, boys can also receive the HPV vaccine.
- **Outbreak vaccinations:** These are only given during disease outbreaks (e.g., cholera).
- **Occupational vaccination:** These are given only to people who are at risk due to their occupation, for example, anti-rabies vaccines for veterinary workers.
- **Post-exposure vaccinations:** These are given only to people who have been exposed to risk, (e.g., anti-rabies vaccine after a dog bite).
- **Travel vaccinations:** These are only given to people traveling to high-risk areas (e.g., typhoid and yellow fever vaccines).

WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE VACCINATED?

- While trusting in God's providence, we, as humans, take precautionary measures. This does not negate our faith in the sovereign God, but affirms our place as significant actors in God's plan. As Christians, we take vaccines as precautionary measures, which are themselves provisions of God, as a demonstration of our trust in and gratitude to God.
- There are, sadly, also myths and misinformation about harm caused by vaccines. This has led to a resurgence of diseases in communities where they had in the past been well controlled.

(Source – WCC)

ARE VACCINES EVIL?

- Concerns as to whether vaccines may be evil or unethical stem from narratives about how some vaccines were developed, suspicions about the financial interests of vaccine manufacturers, and the need to defend personal freedom of choice in light of public health interventions.
- Admittedly, we continue to benefit from inventions and discoveries made in the past that sometimes used methods that would not meet today's scientific and ethical standards.
- We receive them confident in our Lord's grace that transcends history. Moreover, several key scientists and physicians have made monumental advances in vaccines being inspired by their faith in God. Risks are either rare or small when judged against the severity of the diseases. With every major vaccine, extensive testing is done by public regulators, universities or private laboratories.

WHY THE ROLE OF CHURCH LEADERS FOR VACCINATION IMPORTANT?

- Pacific church leaders, have been providing moral and emotional support to different people in their localities.
- The current pandemic requires leaders who are pragmatic, modest and efficient. Leadership is one of the key ingredients to fighting the pandemic; our leaders need to make their decisions count!
- Church leaders can help people to access accurate information about vaccines, and combat misinformation and myths that may cause people to avoid vaccines to the detriment of their health and the health of their children.

(Source – WCC)

COVID-19 and Vaccine Basics



What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infectious disease that spreads easily from person to person. Currently the world is struggling with a global pandemic of this infectious disease.

How does it spread from person to person?

Like other respiratory diseases, when a person has COVID-19 they generally experience symptoms like the flu. It mainly spreads from

1. Through small particles that are released when a sick person coughs or sneezes.



2. If a person touches surfaces where the virus has landed and then touch their faces. This is because the virus can enter a person's body through their eyes, nose, or mouth.



COVID-19 vaccination is a safer way to build protection

Vaccination is a simple, safe, and effective way of protecting people against harmful diseases before they come into contact with them.

Because of the global threat of COVID-19, scientists around the world have been working together to develop vaccines that provide some protection against COVID-19.



WHY VACCINATE?

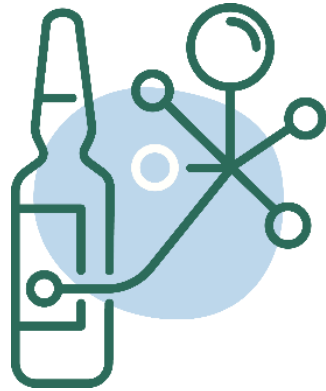
- Vaccination uses your body's natural defenses to build resistance to specific infections and makes your immune system stronger.
- Vaccines **train your immune system** to create antibodies, just as it does when it's exposed to a disease.
- Getting vaccinated is a safe and clever way to produce an immune response in the body, without causing illness.



**Getting
vaccinated can
help prevent
getting sick with
COVID-19**

COVID-19 VACCINATION WILL HELP PROTECT YOU FROM COVID-19

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine...



- Will help create an immune response in your body against the virus



- May help keep you from getting severely ill, even if you do get COVID-19

COVID-19 Vaccine Safety

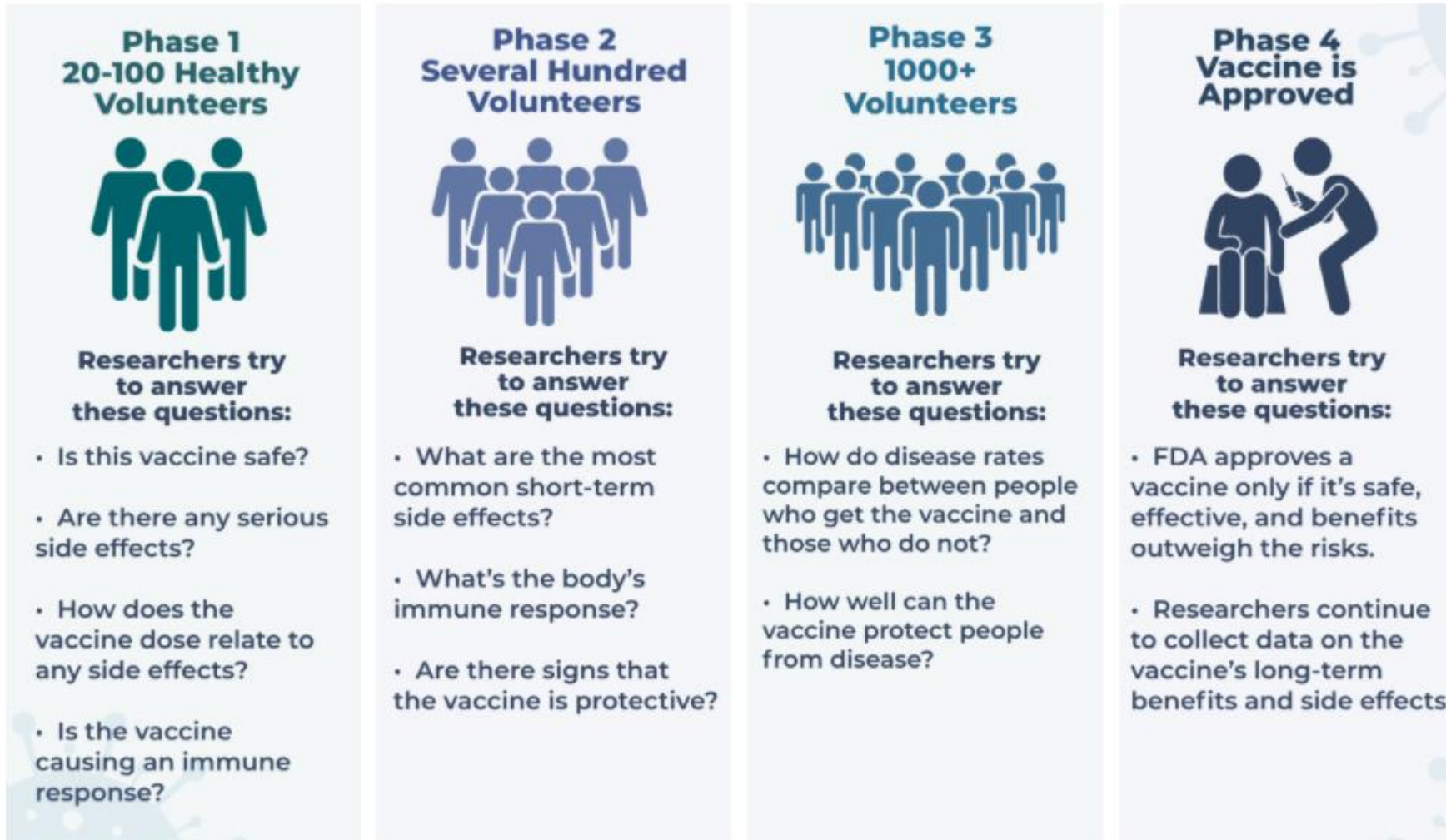


SAFETY OF COVID-19 VACCINES IS A TOP PRIORITY

- There are **different types of COVID-19 vaccines**, however they all work to protect you against COVID-19.
- COVID-19 vaccines are being held to the **same safety standards** as all vaccines.

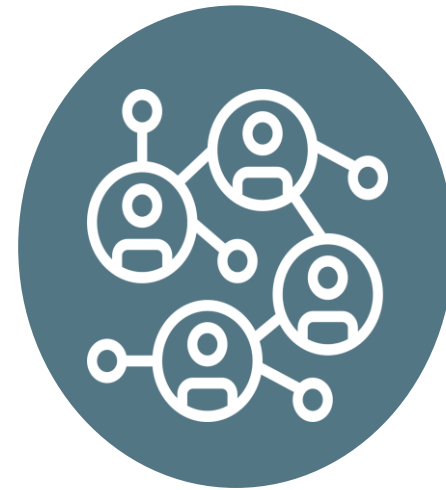


COVID-19 VACCINES DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



When the results of the trials are available, regulatory agencies review the data to make sure the vaccine is safe before giving approval

Whom Will Get the COVID-19 vaccine first?



WHO WILL GET THE COVID-19 VACCINE FIRST?

Due to global limited supply, COVID-19 vaccines are first being provided to those most at risk of getting the disease or suffering serious disease.

These include:

- **health and care workers** who are at a higher risk of being exposed to the virus
- **front line workers like immigration and border control staff**
- **older adults**
- people with **existing medical conditions**, like heart disease and diabetes.



Why is it important these groups get their vaccine first?

Healthcare workers: Most at risk of getting the disease because of their jobs.

Other frontline workers: Such as airport workers, quarantine facility staff, police forces and some other essential workers are prioritised as their jobs bring them into contact with people from different places and so they have a higher risk of exposure to the virus.

Older adults: Older adults are at significantly higher risk of developing severe illness or even death if they get COVID-19.

Individuals with existing health conditions: People with existing health conditions, like hypertension, asthma, heart disease, are at significantly higher risk of developing severe illness or even death if they get COVID-19.



What can I expect when getting my COVID-19 vaccine?

ASTRA ZENECA VACCINE

Age group: ≥ 18 years

Dosage: 2 dose schedule, each dose is 0.5 ml

Dose interval: Between 4-12 weeks,

WHO recommends 8-12 weeks according to country context

Efficacy (efficacy is % reduction in disease incidence in a vaccinated group compared to an un-vaccinated group under optimal conditions)

66.7% preventing Symptomatic Covid-19

100% preventing Severe Covid-19 and Death



WHAT TO EXPECT BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER YOUR VACCINE SESSION

■ Before

- Learn about COVID-19 vaccines.
- See if COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for you.
- If you have any questions or concerns, speak to your health worker

■ During your vaccination session

- Read the fact sheet that tells you about the specific COVID-19 vaccine you receive.
- Tell your health worker about any medical conditions you may have. Be open and honest.
- Receive your vaccine in your arm.
- You will be provided a vaccination record card.

■ After vaccination

- After receiving your vaccine, important to stay at the health center for monitoring.
- With most COVID-19 vaccines, **you will need two jabs.**
- Expect some side effects.
- Continue using all the measures to protect yourself (social distance + handwashing).



Will I experience any side effects after vaccination?

After getting a COVID-19 vaccine, you may have some side effects.

These side effects are normal signs that your body is building protection and generally go away after a few days.

The most common side effects include:

- Pain where you received the injection
- Fever
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Diarrhoea

Please wait 15 – 30 minutes after vaccination

You must stay at least 15 - 30 mins after getting your vaccine so you can be monitored by the health worker for any rare, but severe side effects.

If you experience any symptoms of experiencing a severe allergic reaction, the health team will be ready to treat these reactions immediately.



EVEN AFTER VACCINATION, WE MUST CONTINUE TO PRACTICE THE COVID-19 PREVENTION MEASURES

COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective at preventing severe disease and deaths from COVID-19.

However, it is too early to know how long these vaccines will provide us protection and whether they prevent us spreading the virus to others.

This is why it is important that we all continue to follow the recommended public health safety measures, like covering our cough and sneeze, cleaning our hands regularly, wearing a mask, if recommended, and staying at home if feeling unwell.



MORE CHURCH LEADERS CHAMPIONING COVID-19 VACCINATION

Rev. Gloria Ulloa Alvarado, WCC president for Latin America and the Caribbean

Vaccination is important,

- *Because people who receive the vaccine can approach their loved ones with more confidence, without fear of infecting them or being infected.*
- *Because those who work in healthcare and education can do their work with their patients and students in a less stressful environment.*
- *Because I understand that the COVID-19 vaccine helps protect the human body by creating an antibody-generating response.*
- *Because human history has shown us the effectiveness of vaccination.*
- *Because my mother Noemi, who is 94 years old, has already received two doses of the vaccine and has had no negative effects on her body, she has not had any type of discomfort and this has brought great peace of mind to our whole family."*



MORE CHURCH LEADERS CHAMPIONING COVID-19 VACCINATION

Archbishop emeritus Dr Anders Wejryd, Sweden, WCC president for Europe

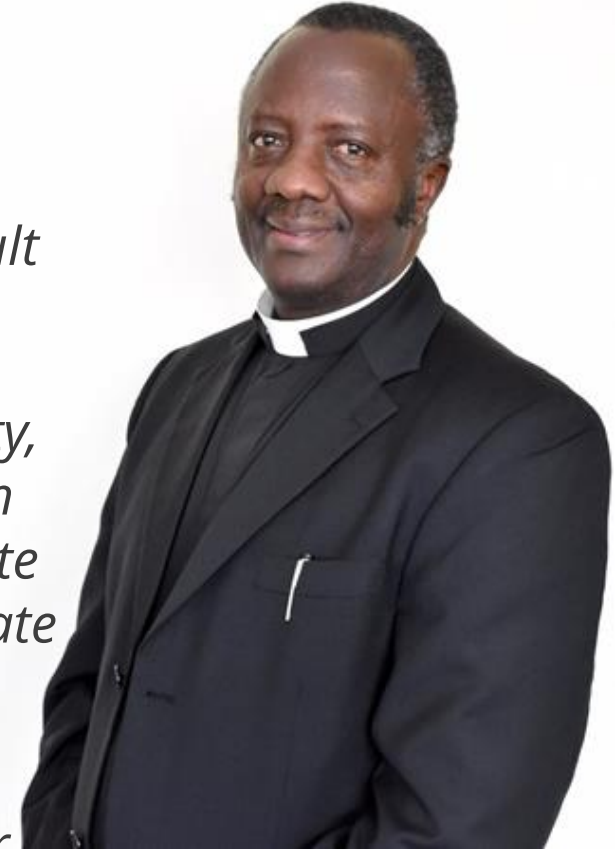


- *“Do to others what you want them to do to you! And don’t do what you don’t want them to do to you! I don’t want to be infected by COVID-19 and I absolutely don’t want to be the one that brought the infection on to someone else. Therefore vaccination is simply about solidarity!”*
- *I am grateful for the first shot, which I got three weeks ago.*
- *God has given us science and reason. Science and reason can be used for different ends. When vaccines have been developed and are shared, the resources God gives have been used for what God wants.”*

MORE CHURCH LEADERS CHAMPIONING COVID-19 VACCINATION

Rev. Dr Fidon Mwombeki, general secretary, All Africa Conference of Churches

- *“COVID-19 is far from over and it continues to cause disruptions in the way communities and congregations conduct their activities and actions. The strict adherence to the guidelines in prevention and management has made life difficult and sometimes impossible to cope with.*
- *As church leaders, as we continue to provide hope by promoting acts of solidarity, care and compassion that help mitigate the humanitarian impact of COVID-19 in our communities, we must use the opportunity and our influence to communicate factually, effectively and consistently using credible sources which provide accurate and life-saving information on COVID-19 prevention, management and control.*
- *We have a long history of vaccinations saving millions of lives, and as such we should reject the conspiracy theories against scientific evidence and advocate for everyone to get vaccinated against the deadly COVID-19 virus, avoiding nationalistic tendencies which may isolate countries without many resources. This should be done through a coordinated approach to reach all who need it, as a matter of justice.”*



MORE CHURCH LEADERS CHAMPIONING COVID-19 VACCINATION

Dr Mathews George Chunakara, general secretary, Christian Conference of Asia



- *"Although vaccines are one of the most successful and cost-effective health interventions and their proven effectiveness has been widely recognized, millions of children in the world lack immunization coverage. One out of three under-immunized children in the world lives in South Asia. The dearth of adequate vaccines and lack of awareness and trust in vaccination are often hindering successful vaccination drives in the region.*
- *As COVID-19 vaccines begin to be rolled out gradually, there exist alarming disparities in access to them across the world. Access to vaccines as well as misinformation and mistrust remain a challenge even in the midst of the horrifying catastrophic impact of the pandemic.*
- *Considering the need for intensifying vaccinations to combat the pandemic, the Asian churches are now engaged in advocacy for an effective vaccination drive and also in urging members across Asia to promote health-seeking behaviour at the grassroots in order to make this world healthier."*

MORE CHURCH LEADERS CHAMPIONING COVID-19 VACCINATION

Jim Winkler, president and general secretary, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (former PCC Intern)

- *“The National Council of Churches USA (NCCUSA) supports this effort to save lives and relieve the burden on healthcare facilities.*
- *“I believe it is our faithful responsibility as followers of Jesus Christ to take the vaccine against COVID-19 so that we can be part of the global effort to overcome the pandemic.*
- *As part of this effort, the NCCUSA has joined Faith4Vaccines, a multi-faith effort led by the NCCUSA, Union for Reform Judaism, National African American Clergy Network, Islamic Medical Association, Sojourners, and Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers.*
- *Our shared goals are to demonstrate religious communities’ trust in the vaccine, support houses of worship and faith communities to innovatively distribute vaccines, create space for multi-faith collaboration, and pave the way for global, equitable vaccine distribution.”*



MORE CHURCH LEADERS CHAMPIONING COVID-19 VACCINATION

Pastor Peter Noteboom, general secretary, Canadian Council of Churches

- *“Of all the commandments, which is the most important? The most important one is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:28-31 NIV)*
- *In this pandemic, what better way to love the Creator God and to love your neighbour than to get vaccinated, advocate for vaccination for all, and contribute time and money to ensure everyone around the world has access to vaccines?*
- *The COVID-19 virus does not discriminate. Our response must also not discriminate. We must make vaccines available for everyone everywhere.”*



MORE CHURCH LEADERS CHAMPIONING COVID-19 VACCINATION

Rev. Dr Martin Junge , Lutheran World Federation General Secretary

- *“As the development and distribution of the vaccines advance, we have observed with deep concern that the access to the vaccines is unequal.*
- *Wealthy countries have secured their doses, sometimes in more quantities that they need, while other countries and their populations have inadequate or no access at all.*
- *The growing lack of solidarity with the most vulnerable and marginalized amongst us is immoral and unacceptable.*
- *The unequal access to vaccines reveals once again the immense inequality in the world, now even exacerbated by COVID-19. A global approach driven by ‘vaccine nationalism’ cannot work because **until all are safe, no one is.***





PCC GS Rev. Bhagwan and CWM Pacific Secretary Rev. Nikotemo Sopepa getting vaccinated in April with Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine



- *“If, as Christians, we are committed to loving God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind and our neighbour as ourselves; if we proclaim life in abundance for all, our response to the COVID-19 pandemic must demonstrate this.*
- *Our care as God's people for God's people means we must take every precaution to protect ourselves and others. We pray for the patients, their families and our frontline workers and for their health and safety. At the same time, we put our trust in the knowledge and skills with which God has gifted our health workers—doctors, nurses and health staff. And we follow their directions.*
- *My wife and I received our first dose of the #astrazeneca vaccine to not only protect ourselves, but as our responsibility towards our family, coworkers and community.*
- *Whatever you think about or who you blame for COVID-19, or the motives and conspiracies etc, vaccination is important.*
- *But willingness to be vaccinated is only part of the equation, it is important that there is vaccine equity and those communities and groups who urgently need vaccines have access to a full vaccination programme.”*

Rev. James Bhagwan, general secretary, PCC

SIMPLE VACCINATION MESSAGE: 'DO TO OTHERS, WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO DO TO YOU'

- **None of us want to be infected by COVID-19.**
- **None of us want to be the one that brings it on to someone else.**
- **Any risks with vaccination are minimal, compared to the risks that follow from the infection from the actual disease, which obviously, is such a strange and difficult one.**
- **Part of our mission as the Church is to promote healing. This is because of the mission of Jesus Christ that included healing.**
- **We must do all we can to protect people from COVID-19 and other potentially fatal diseases. It is our duty to exercise the influence trusted upon us, beyond the pulpits in our local churches.**