

UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (UCCSA) STATEMENT ON THE ISSUE OF VACCINES

The UCCSA Executive Committee (met on 21-23 September 2021), is deeply aware of the unprecedented circumstances created by the coronavirus pandemic throughout the Southern African Region. The Church profoundly regrets the untimely deaths of hitherto very healthy people as a result of COVID-19 virus infections. As the Church, we hold firmly onto our faith in Jesus Christ as the great physician and healer from all the health challenges that this life throws at us. The UCCSA, over and above that, unequivocally affirms its belief that:

- Vaccines are highly effective in the preventing hospitalization, viral intensity and death, including against the newly emergent variants,
- Fully vaccinated people who become infected with new variants appear to be infectious for a shorter period and recover much faster,
- Church members and members of the general public are encouraged to get vaccinated, keep social distance, wear masks indoors and in public places, and regularly sanitize or wash their hands with soap in order to reduce the spread of the virus,

The UCCSA implores all its members everywhere to do everything in their power to help their national populations to reach herd immunity in their fight against the coronavirus pandemic by getting vaccinated. This is the only means for our countries and our economies to return to situations of normalcy where we are able to congregate, travel and hold meetings and conferences, as was the case in the pre-COVID-19 times.

The Executive Committee notes with appreciation and gratitude the spirit of generosity that led to huge vaccine donations by many industrialized countries which help many people in the developing world to have access to these lifesaving interventions, without which the situation would have been far worse.

Along the same lines the Executive Committee commends the governments of the SADC region for setting aside their own national resources to purchase additional vaccines to ensure that their populations can be vaccinated. Also noteworthy is the fact that the inoculation programmes prioritize the most vulnerable members of the

national populations like the elderly, those living with pre-existing comorbidities and front-line healthcare workers who attend to patients under strenuous conditions.

Given the foregone, the Executive Committee commends all Congregationalists and the general public who have set the example to receive the vaccines and in doing so, save their own lives and those of others with whom they interact. The Executive Committee urges and encourages all the members of the UCCSA in particular, and the people of the Southern African region in general, to become vaccinated as and when these become available in their localities.

While the Executive Committee regrettably notes the plethora of conspiracy theories and misinformation about the origins of the virus, as well as the various interventions that have been developed to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, the Church would like to put on record its respect for the human rights of people who, for very genuine reasons, are hesitant to receive the vaccines, owing largely to the fears peddled by the conspiracy theorists. We urge and encourage all Congregationalists and members of the general public who are in situations where vaccines are available to them, but who are hesitant to take such vaccines, to prayerful reconsider their position with view of taking the vaccines.

We further urge all Congregationalists and all Christians from all other Christian Communities, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, to desist from peddling conspiracy theories with no basis in science or fact, about the COVID-19 pandemic and related vaccines, given that such theories have dire consequences on the lives of ordinary people and the health and welfare of communities.

The lockdown of our respective economies and the borders of our countries because of COVID-19, have caused unbearable hardship to vulnerable families and households. Many have lost their jobs, their incomes and are destitute. The Church has a moral and spiritual obligation to encourage congregants and Christians in general, to make to right decisions in these unprecedented times, to ensure that we reverse these hardships and for our societies to return to normalcy as soon as possible.



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