



# National Fellowship of Born Again Pentecostal Churches - Uganda

July 8th, 2020

Regional, Provincial, District, Subcounty Overseers, Pastors and Believers,

## RE PASTORAL LETTER JULY 2020

### SALUTATION

Servants of the Most High God, Greetings.

I want to start by thanking you for standing and remaining strong during a very unusually challenging time. Unlike the previous communications, this is a little bit longer and more detailed. I trust everyone has used this time to be in the presence of God as well as spending quality time with their family. I am sure that whatever the devil intended for evil, the Lord turned it out for good.

### OUR PROPHETIC ROLE DURING THE PANDEMIC

When Cabinet decided to institute an immediate lockdown on Monday the night of 16th March, the President insisted that it was not right to do it without informing the religious leaders as key stakeholders in the nation. So he met the Council of Presidents of the Inter-Religious Council the next day on Tuesday 17th and told us that following what was going on all over the world concerning the Covid pandemic, they had unanimously agreed as Cabinet to lockdown everything including airports, businesses, schools, etc. The whole country was to go under a lockdown. He specifically said that he did not want us to just hear it over the news.

1. We felt considering us(Religious leaders) as key stakeholders was a good gesture. Countries all over the world went under lockdown, I did not hear anywhere of any case in any country where the President officially called and informed the religious leaders of his decision.
2. Covid-19 had just been declared a global pandemic and no one had sufficient information of its potential devastation. After much deliberation and reflection, we agreed to co-operate with government.
3. We however, asked him to immediately call for a national prayer, to acknowledge God's Sovereignty over our nation, and ask for his protection and wisdom to survive this plague. To this he agreed and later set a date on Saturday.
4. We agreed to hold those prayers in the State House with the three arms of government represented.

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**Vision:** A Unified, Coordinated, Vibrant and Growing Pentecostal Church Movement in Uganda accomplishing the Great Commission

That they may be one.....John 17:21

That very day, I called all the Regional and some Provincial Overseers to a Retreat Place in Garuga. They came that very night and a few traveled the whole night and arrived the next morning. We spent the next three days together and we discussed the matter at length.

1. In the meantime, our National Fellowship of Born Again Churches(NFBPC) Minister of Health, Dr. Monica Musenero, who is also our NAPECU representative on the IRCU Board for Public Health, was appointed by His Excellency, as The Special Presidential adviser on epidemics.
2. Dr. Musenero took us through an intensive training on Covid and how to handle the epidemic in case it breaks out in the community. Overseers were convinced that we needed to position ourselves and brace for the worst.
3. We spent the three days in prayer to commit the nation in the Lord's hands, prayed, and believed that no one will die of Covid.
4. We also helped translate Ministry of Health materials on Covid in our vernacular languages.

### **OUR PRIESTLY ROLE**

As the Overseers left that Saturday morning, 21st March, they commissioned, sent me, and prayed for all of us who were going to participate in the National Prayers at State House. This service was relayed live on all media outlets. Pastor Kayanja, Dr. Serwadda, Bishop Emiau, and myself from the Pentecostal Fraternity attended this service. We repented on behalf of the nation but also reminded God that we made a covenant with him as a nation on 7th (Serena) and 8th (Nambole) October 2012 during our Jubilee. Like kings Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah in the Old Testament, we invoked the power of the blood covenant to protect our nation. We led the nation to apply the blood of Jesus on our door posts (starting with the State House) like the Hebrews did in Egypt, so that the angel of death would pass over us. We made all the leaders stand and the rest of the nation following by telecast, to make confessions and scriptural declarations of the Blood of Jesus based on Rev 12:11 and Psalms 107:2. We applied the blood on the whole nation starting where we were standing to all the ends of the borders of Uganda. The atmosphere was fully charged. You could sense the presence of God and we could notice that everybody was fully in agreement. You can access this service and copy of the prayer on You Tube. At the end we all felt that the Lord had heard our prayers and left in joy.

I am persuaded that the Lord graciously heard our prayers. Although that very night the first Covid case was reported, we were confident that the arrival came after the nation was already covered with the blood. I totally believe that it is because of our national acknowledgment and trust in God, your continued prayers, our unity, and sense of purpose as the body of Christ, and the tireless efforts of our scientists and medical workers that we will continue to see God's powerful hand of protection. I believe none of your loved ones will die. We also have power to even cover those who do not know our God. Just as the Egyptians who obeyed Moses and applied the blood were also saved.

### **OUR KINGLY ROLE DURING THE PANDEMIC**

Kings protect and provide for their people. God has made us Kings and Priests. The President appointed a 15 member (COVID FUND) team of eminent Ugandans to manage a fundraising towards enhancing our health systems nation-wide to fight Covid. I am grateful that by God's grace, I was also named among them. Our role is primarily fundraising. I want to specially thank all of you who have personally or corporately contributed towards this Fund. In a special way and in addition to one of my communications earlier, I want to thank Apostle Mitala who asked me to present health materials and equipment worth 3.5 billion shillings to the Fund on behalf of NFBPC.

The National Taskforce (NTF) under the Prime Minister was charged with the general response as well as distributing relief to those who are most affected. However, within a few weeks, it was apparent that as religious leaders, we needed to support the NTF in the food distribution exercise. As I communicated to you, this was an uphill task, but after weeks of struggle, we decided as IRCU to meet the President. He agreed and directed that we are allowed to distribute food provided we strictly:

1. Observe the Ministry of Health SOPs,
2. Avoid the politicisation of the exercise,
3. Do it under the IRCU to avoid religious competition and segregation in the target of communities.

We distributed food in response to key needy groups and communities in Kampala, Wakiso, Mukono, Luwero, Kamuli, Iganga, Masindi, and Buliisa. We also responded to pleas from institutions like Uganda Cancer Institute, Mukono University, PWDs, Orphanages, and the like. We also responded to Kasese devastations. I want to officially thank you the Regional, Provincial and District Overseers who engaged in this exercise.

## **PREPARATION FOR RE-OPENING PLACES OF WORSHIP**

In May, I appointed Pastor Michael Kyazze and a team of pastors; Bernard Kirabira (Min for Welfare), Fredrick Semazzi (Former GS), Ivan Wanda DO-Entebbe), Richard Magongo (DO-Kampala Central), Africano Magyezi (Secretary to the Elders Council), and Sarah Seggane (Admin Sec Omega) to make consultations with various groups of pastors and health workers in efforts to develop guidelines, procedures, and SOPs on how to prepare our Churches for re-opening. They and the Uganda Christian Lawyers Fraternity have done a very commendable job. They have produced these guidelines, which include;

1. The Standard Operating Procedures to be followed by congregations,
2. The training manuals for pastors, ushers, security personnel, and health & emergency measures,
3. The work plan on how we will roll out the training on the regional, provincial, district and Subcounty levels,
4. The plan to translate and distribute the Training Manuals. We need your prayers and support to get the necessary funds to print and distribute them across the entire country.

We thought it was better for us to develop our own guidelines based on our capacity to implement them. They were sent to the Ministry of Health, which yesterday approved them with a few amendments to cater for the border districts that are still under a lockdown. The Council of Presidents of the IRCU is due to meet for the final review and approval of these guidelines before we meet the Prime Minister and later the President and make the case for the reopening of places of worship. We will assure government that:

1. Pastors are law-abiding citizens as you have proved through the years,
2. We have the best interest of our people at heart and genuinely seek their welfare and safety,
3. They should trust us to do our best in our means take every possible precaution to protect our congregants.

I trust this will allay all their concerns and fears about us. I trust we will be able to agree and prepare for the re-opening of the places of worship. Your co-operation in this matter will make our work much easier and faster.

## PASTORAL ADMONITION

I therefore, wish to request all Regional, Provincial, District and Subcounty Overseers, pastors and believers alike:

1. To be patient as you give us time to complete the process as mentioned above. I understand your frustration after months of lockdown, but I also trust your patience, perseverance, and endurance grows through such times.
2. To appreciate and co-operate with government in all their efforts to protect citizens, their weaknesses notwithstanding.
3. To therefore avoid any notion that may portray any negative or a rebellious attitude.
4. To desist from outbursts of anger- **insinuating persecution of our churches**, which we all know is not the case. Some pastors are saying there is no Covid. Whatever you believe the source of Covid, the fact is that it is real and more than a million people have died of it. The whole world has been under a lockdown. It is not only Uganda, and certainly not only our Churches that are being affected. We should always do our best, to give every benefit of doubt to the goodwill of government (unless you can surely prove it otherwise) to their human and limited efforts, to make it easy for them to fulfil their God given mandate.
5. To remember that nothing happens without the fore-knowledge, permission and purpose of God, even when the devil intended it for evil. Especially a pandemic of a global proportions like this. This calls for our sensitivity and caution so that we may discern our Lord's purpose in it for the nations. He promised to shake nations, and everything that can be shaken so that only that which can not be shaken will remain (Hebrews 12:26). How else do you think his shaking may come. God's main agent on earth is the Church, and that is why the shaking or (judgment) starts in the house of God (1Peter 4:17). May we keep our hearts humble and ears attentive lest we find ourselves in the rubble. I will write more on this matter in my next communication after I feel it is the right timing of the Lord.
6. To co-operate with Pastor Michael Kyazze and the Team who will soon start to communicate to you on timelines for Trainings and distribution of the Manuals.
7. To please make every effort to talk and explain this to pastors in your areas who may not be members of this Fellowship. Encourage them not to despair but to co-operate wholly in the sensitisation and training exercise. It is for our overall good as the Body of Christ. The training will be open to all pastors and their church leaders.

8. Please pray for Hon. Jane Aceng, Dr. Diana Atwine, the Permanent Secretary and the whole Ministry of Health, Dr. Musenero and Dr. Bakainaga - Fellowship Chief Whip, working with WHO. They are your brothers and Sisters in the Lord and doing their best to serve in the midst of very challenging situations. I request that where you have complaints about local health workers in your area, instead of criticising, kindly consider contacting them for help or information so that they make the necessary response. You can also use our structures to reach them.
9. To be careful, remain loving, and civil to one another and not use this pandemic to settle scores. Some few pastors quarrel and castigate us in IRCU, for having allowed the President to close Churches. Did we allow Cabinet to lock the nation down? Did we need to argue with government just for the sake of it, when we were already aware of what was going on world-wide?

**Churches were closed all over the world along with schools, airlines, businesses, arcades, etc.** As far as I know, other Presidents did not even remember, let alone the courtesy to inform religious leaders. Others insisted that we should have consulted them first, or called days of prayer and fasting of pastors together to ask God how to respond to the President. I regard this as the usual subterfuge to discredit, undermine and demonise Leaders. I wish to kindly ask those brothers to have the courtesy of walking in love as our Lord taught us. If you have an issue with me or whatever I have done, call or visit me, discuss matters with me, before you malign them. (Mat 18:15-20). Until you have done that, you absolutely have no right to speak or write anything against me.

## **OTHER NATIONAL MATTERS**

### **General Elections 2021**

10. To pray for the President, Cabinet, Parliament and other stakeholders to agree on the modalities of the forthcoming 2021 General Elections. Under the auspices of the IRCU, we are seriously engaging-especially political actors, the Electoral Commission and government to dialogue and come to an amicable way forward. This is to ensure that this matter will not create an impasse or plunge the nation into another wave of contention and chaos. Whatever you can do at your regional or local level, prayerfully do it to cool tempers.

11. To mobilise the nation and our believers to engage in Agriculture not only for food security, but also for commercial purposes. It was very shameful to realise that many pastors were almost starving during these few months. I felt like a failure to face the brutal fact that some pastors needed relief as much as their flock. Beloved, we should not accept this situation as normal. You know how much I have laboured on this matter in the past. Life is not going to be the same again. When we are anointed by the Holy Spirit, we become more innovative and entrepreneurial like the Holy Spirit. Please be leaders at every level and in every way.

### **Conclusion**

I want to testify and thank God that this for me has been a great time of personal reflection. I have spent most of it in prayer and fasting with my wife and family. We have had hours of bible study and connected with my family more than I have ever done before on our family altar. We have spent many hours in intercession for the nation and for the body of Christ. We prayed that the Lord may use this time to help us unite and appreciate the need to keep that unity in the bond of peace. It has helped me re-evaluate my leadership role and mandate to empower you in the remaining period of my leadership tenure. I have prayerfully decided to write periodicals and record video and audio messages to equip you. In the next communication I will write what I feel the Lord is saying to us as the body of Christ.

In His Service,



**+Bishop Joshua Lwere**

NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP OF BORN AGAIN PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES  
OF UGANDA