

The core ethical values and standards for good practice continues from Issue 4 as follows:

4. Autonomy: Affiliates should honour the right of persons to make their own informed choices. This principle does, however, not deny the right and duty of the practitioner to proclaim the message of faith and wisdom as contained in the Bible and the relevant faith tradition, as understood and subscribed to by the affiliate. It does also not preclude the right of institutions to set and apply rules of membership of faith institutions in terms of confession and ethical conduct – to the extent that such rules are not in conflict with the core ethical values as contained herein.

5. Integrity: Affiliates should at all times act with integrity in their practice of these core ethical values and standards as a foundation for their character and practice as responsible professionals.

6. Truthfulness: Affiliates should regard honesty, accountability and transparency as a basis for their professional relationships with the persons they minister to.

(To be continued...)

The guiding light Newsletter



Issue 5 - April 2021



Message for Today From the daily Scripture reflections of Bible Media

This message was written by Barend Vos, a well-known Christian writer and minister.

Admirers

Read John 12:20-26.

"If any man will serve me, he shall follow me..." (v 26).

The Jewish Passover attracts a lot of people as always, including Greeks who wanted to meet Jesus. This is how John tells us. Surely they've heard about everything he's doing and saying, and now they want to come and see what the fuss is about. If they're lucky, they can go home and tell you: Do you know what we've heard and seen?

But for these curious and admirers and casual runners, Jesus has a hard message: The way after me is no comfortable, broad highway. It is in many respects an alternative route, a narrow, challenging winding road. There are often dark depths. And it's life-threatening. Jesus uses words like "die" and "lose life" (v. 24-25) when he talks about this with them. Discipleship is expensive.

Admiration, on the other hand, costs nothing. It's easy, often exciting and sometimes holds great reward. It is also death-safe, because it obviously occurs at a distance. And an admirer always has friends, those whom you can point out the object of your admiration and say: Just look there! And: Isn't that admirable!

Fortunately for admirers, they don't have to do much more than that. Fortunately, admirers are not asked anything and not exactly expected anything. If their admiration is over time, then it's just like that... Sadly, Jesus says, love asks far more than admiration. If love is missing, he says, you forfeit the Father's honour. And you lose all the sense and meaning your life could have.

I can't do without you, Lord. Show me often the way behind you, your tracks, and make me willing and excited to follow it.

Message for Today is published by Bible Media on a daily basis and reaches more than 5,800 readers daily. Bible Media is hereby recognised as the main donor who made the early phases of the ACRP development path possible.

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CHRISTIANITY'S AFRICAN ROOTS - PART 5

As we continue to explore the Christianity roots in Africa, we begin with the story of one of the first converts.

The first African convert

Philip, a man of good reputation, who was chosen to serve the early church, was directed by an angel to a desert road where he encountered “the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority”. Philip told him the Good News about Jesus. The treasurer believed, was baptised, and “went on his way rejoicing”. It is likely the treasurer was from Meroe, a city on the Nile in modern Sudan. Jews had settled there—as well as in other areas of Africa—when Solomon expanded Israel’s influence and trade. Meroe was the capital of the rich and powerful Kingdom of Kush, known for its iron smelting, gold mining, and trading. Kush was several thousand years old. At one point, the kingdom had conquered Egypt (the 25th Dynasty of Egypt was Kushite). About fifty years before the treasurer’s conversion, the country had battled Rome in a five-year war. Christianity’s first African convert, the Ethiopian treasurer, came from an amazing kingdom in the heart of north-east Africa.

An African as the “Greatest of the Early Church Fathers”

Augustine’s writings greatly influenced Western Christianity and Western philosophy. Many, such as his *Confessions which contains his conversion story*, are still read today. Augustine was born, served as bishop, and died in modern Algeria and considered himself African. His early life was one of parties and worldly living. But, through the prayers of his mother, the witness of St. Ambrose, and the words of Paul to “put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him”, Augustine became a Christian.

The Christian church thrived in northern Africa for the first six hundred years. It helped formulate Europe’s understanding of Christian theology, provided three popes to the Roman church, and contributed to the determination of the Scripture canon. It developed a rich heritage of biblical scholarship, teaching on Christian living, and evangelistic zeal. And monasticism, an African institution, was a powerful force for the spread of the gospel throughout Europe.

After Mohammed’s death in AD 632, Islam quickly spread across northern Africa and into Spain through military conquests and forced conversions. The African church did not fare well and lost its position as an important centre of Christian thought and evangelism. But Egypt remained mostly Christian for many centuries after this conquest. And Ethiopia, where Christianity survived the spread of Islam, was home to the only Christian church in sub-Saharan Africa before colonial times. However, both Islam and geography isolated it from the rest of the Christian world.

Even though the influence of the church across North Africa weakened with the onslaught of Islam, the works of church fathers like Augustine are still key contributions to the global church today. In the next newsletter, we will learn about an African considered to be the Father of Orthodoxy.



Religious gatherings: We need to act responsibly – letter from Pres Ramaphosa to religious leaders as published by news24 (29/03/2021)

Faced with the reality of a third wave, faith communities are encouraged to innovate when holding congregational worship over Easter, Passover and Ramadan as they did last year, writes Cyril Ramaphosa.

Dear Fellow South African,

Over the course of the next few days and weeks, many South Africans of faith will join others across the world in important religious observances. Members of the Jewish faith are celebrating Pesach, Christians will observe Easter and Muslims will soon start the holy month of Ramadan.

For the second year, they will mark these occasions in the midst of a devastating global pandemic that has cost the lives of more than 2.5 million people across the world.

At this moment, it is worth recalling the writings of the eminent reformer and clergyman Martin Luther nearly 500 years ago, when the bubonic plague was cutting a devastating swathe across much of Europe.

In a letter dated 1527, Luther writes about the responsibilities of members of the clergy and of all people of faith during a deadly plague.

Much of the letter is about religious duty towards the sick and the dying. But he also offers practical advice similar to the public health advice we have today on social distancing, sanitising and quarantining.

"All of us have the responsibility of warding off this poison to the best of our ability," Luther writes.

Use medicines, take potions which can help you; fumigate house, yard and street; shun persons and places wherever your neighbour does not need your presence or has recovered; and act like one who wants to help put out the burning city.

While upholding the view that people of faith should not neglect their duty to care for the sick, he cautions against endangering the lives of others.

In many ways, the views expressed by Martin Luther five centuries ago echo the position of religious leaders in South Africa in the midst of the current epidemic.

Faith-based organisations have been vital to our national response to the disease, not only providing spiritual comfort and guidance, but also by caring for those most vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic, including through the provision of food, shelter and other social services.

Keen for a return to a semblance of normality

Religion plays an important role in the lives of millions of South Africans, and congregational worship forms a vital part of their religious practice.

Being able to gather for religious services is also a welcome respite from a period of great hardship for individuals, families and communities.

It is understandable that after more than a year of labouring under restrictions on religious gatherings the faith community is keen for a return to a semblance of normality.

In recognition of the importance of congregational worship to the lives of our people, government has been engaging with the faith community.

I recently had an extremely constructive virtual meeting with leaders of the faith community. These leaders understand and appreciate the very real danger of a new wave of Covid-19 infections. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, religious organisations have taken proactive and positive measures to limit the spread of the disease among worshippers.

READ | Coronavirus command council advised to move SA to level-2 as it mulls over hiking church gatherings

In light of these precautionary measures, a number of religious organisations have asked that some of the existing restrictions on the size of congregations be eased, especially as we prepare for Easter and Ramadan observances. Government is currently deliberating on these and other issues, and will make an announcement in the coming days.

Another important factor is that during the various alert levels, religious organisations have incurred substantial financial losses that threaten their sustainability. As government we remain committed to working with the faith community to find workable solutions.

At the same time, public health and safety must be our paramount consideration.

The religious community has shown innovation and initiative in the holding of worship at a time when there was a great deal of uncertainty over the trajectory of the pandemic.

Online services

Congregational services were held online and worshippers were encouraged to pray in their homes instead of attending services. This greatly aided the national effort to contain the spread of the disease.

Religious leaders played a pivotal role in encouraging public adherence to health measures around important customary and cultural rituals like burials.

By equal measure, our people have demonstrated their commitment to adhering to public health protocols and to social distancing. And they correctly appreciate that they must continue to avoid large gatherings.

We are now at a time when precaution is needed above all. The coronavirus pandemic has not been eliminated, either in our own country or around the world. The threat of a third wave is real and ever-present.

International experience has taught us that we should not tempt fate. Many countries have eased restrictions, only for there to be resurgences, necessitating the imposition of even harsher restrictions.

Faced with this reality, faith communities are encouraged to innovate in the holding of congregational worship over the upcoming Easter, Passover and Ramadan as they did last year.

Potential to spread the virus

Large gatherings, whether religious or otherwise, have the potential to spread the virus, despite the application of measures around social distancing and sanitising.

Over this coming weekend, millions of South Africans will be observing an important tenet of their faith. In a country that enshrines the right to religious freedom, all effort must be made to support our people in the exercise of this right. And in exercising this right, we need to make sure that we do not place the rights or the lives of others at risk.

READ | Covid-19: Third wave might hit earlier than expected

This is a principle that the religious leaders I met with fully support and appreciate. Like Martin Luther, they understand the responsibility of all people of faith – indeed of all South Africans – to observe the practical measures put in place to protect people's health and save lives.

For more than a year, we have worked together as a society to contain this pandemic. Now as we work to overcome it, we need to reaffirm our shared determination to act responsibly and cautiously.

In doing so, we will be giving practical effect to the universal messages of hope, salvation, freedom and solidarity that will be spoken of in the churches, synagogues, mosques and homes of our land in the days and weeks ahead.

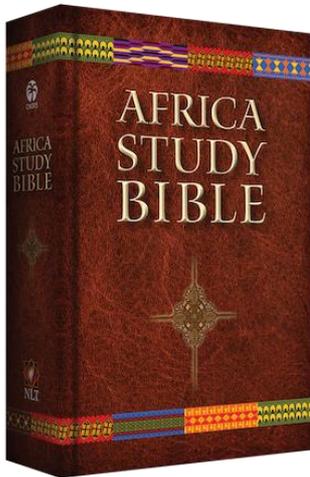
With best regards.

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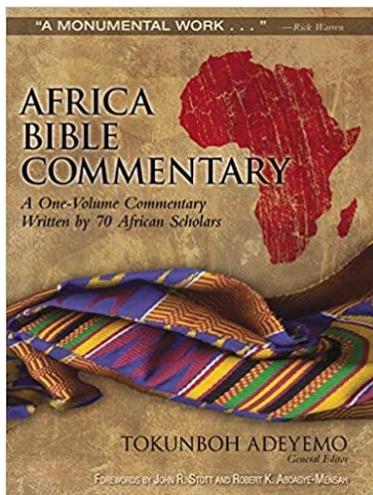
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