



INTER-FAITH COUNCIL ON THE NATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

GUIDELINES FOR SAFE REOPENING OF IN-PERSON CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP



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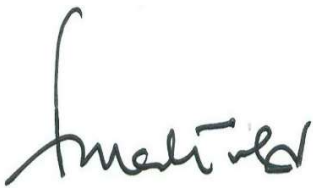
FOREWORD

Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government

I wish to acknowledge the enormous role of the religious leaders in nurturing the spiritual, psychological and physical health of our people. A spiritually healthy person is a peaceful and secure being. Our constitution aside from acknowledging the supremacy of the Almighty God does guarantee unfettered freedom of worship for all without exception. The corona virus pandemic however has inevitably led to the limitation of this inalienable right in the interest of protecting and safeguarding lives of the people we love and care for the most.

The government's desire to ensure that Kenyans from all creed and walks of life freely exercise their right to worship informed the appointment of the Interfaith Council with the solemn duty of developing protocols and guidelines for phased resumption of safe congregational worship. The Council is further obligated to sensitize and capacity build the religious leaders on the protocols and guidelines as well as oversee their strict implementation.

Cognizant of the World Health organization advisories and evidence resulting from consistent monitoring of the current trends of the disease in the country by the Ministry of Health, it has become certain that the novel corona virus could become endemic in human population. It is expected that the Council will reflect on its enormous responsibility of seeing to it that the cascading of the guidelines is successful and use soft power through persuasive clarion call for responsibility, self-regulation and voluntary compliance by all faith community leaders all over the Republic.



Fred Matiang'i, PhD, EGH

Cabinet Secretary

Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government

Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health recognizes the role played by the religious organizations in enhancing health to the population and residents of our country. The current pandemic mitigation activities this far have received contributions from the religious organizations.

In regard to COVID-19 pandemic, the decision to gazette an Inter-Faith Council to engage on the best ways to mitigate resumption of service was timely. We recognize that the Inter-Faith Council brings on board diverse faith communities and key Government Ministries to create a working platform.

The Inter-Faith Council has been mandated with the development of protocols and guidelines in a consultative model of stakeholder's engagement to support the Government's preparedness, response, and containment of COVID-19 pandemic.

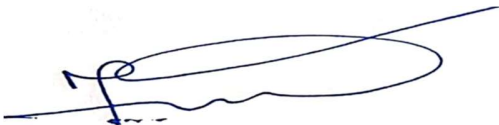
The guidelines and protocols developed and adopted by the Council forms a significant progress for the Ministry of Health in addressing the effects of COVID-19 and containing the risk of community spread.

The Ministry of Health has demonstrated its commitment to the fight of COVID-19 pandemic through the provision of technical support to the Inter-Faith Council to accelerate resumption of worship in a safe and sustainable manner.

The technical support corroborates the Government's commitment towards upholding the freedom of worship in Kenya in a manner that safeguards the rights of citizens to the highest attainable standards of health as outlined in the Kenyan constitution.

The guidelines and protocols for phased re-opening of places of worship therefore outline the minimum requirements for the gradual and safe resumption of congregational worship and the conduct of religious rites and ceremonies.

The guidelines will form the reference point upon which all religious organizations will conduct religious activities and ceremonies to reduce the risk of new infections and safeguard lives of all Kenyans. The Ministry of Health's policy objectives is to provide Kenyans the best health services available and in deed we reaffirm our commitment on the same.



Sen. Mutahi Kagwe, EGH
Cabinet Secretary
Ministry of Health

PREFACE

In December 2019, the COVID19 infection broke out in Wuhan City, China before spreading globally causing mortalities the world over. The first case was reported in Kenya in March 2020 and when the country reported the first death associated with the disease, there was need for adopting appropriate measures for containing the virus. Part of these measures included closing of places of worship.

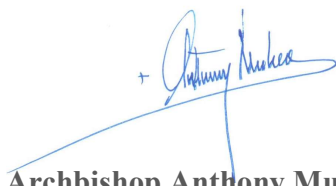
On 12th June 2020, on direction of His Excellency the President Uhuru Kenyatta, the Cabinet Secretary of Interior and Coordination of National Government and the Cabinet Secretary Health jointly appointed the 16-member Inter-Faith Council for National Response to Coronavirus Pandemic vide Gazette Notice 3976 to develop guidelines towards the phased, gradual and progressive resumption of in-person congregational worship, weddings, funerals and other religious rites. The diverse membership of all the faith groups in the country was to ensure the widest level of consultations among our religious communities. The Interfaith Council held consultative meetings, hearings and submissions from various religious groups, Council of Governors, other bodies, individuals and organisations in the process of compiling these guidelines. The Interfaith Council also consulted the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Interior on expert advice during the production of these guidelines.

These guidelines provide direction to religious institutions in creating safe environments in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. Following these measures, the spread of infection will be contained, and enable successful phased reopening of congregational worship. It is our hope and prayer that these guidelines will ensure that our worship gatherings do not become an opportunity for increase of infection rates nor a cause for loss of lives among the faithful.

We thank the Cabinet Secretary of Interior and coordination of national Government and the Cabinet secretary of Health for facilitation of the Council. We also appreciate all the religious groups and individuals for their submissions and active engagement with the Council. On behalf of the entire Council we thank all those who have supported our work. We recommend these Guidelines to all Kenyans and in particular, to our religious leaders for application in their places of worship to ensure we reopen our places of worship in a safe and orderly fashion in order to safeguard the health and wellbeing of all our congregants.

We pray to the Almighty God for His mercies and graces to end the Covid19 pandemic and relieve the pain and suffering of our people from the infection with this disease in Kenya and the whole world. We beseech our faithful to be unceasing in their prayers for an end of this disease and to strengthen our frontline workers and health providers.

Thank you and God bless us all.



Archbishop Anthony Muheria
Chairman, Inter-faith Council

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Inter-faith Council on the National Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic

- | | |
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PREAMBLE

We the Inter-Faith Council for National Response to Coronavirus Pandemic having been constituted by Gazette Notice No.3976 on 12th June 2020, wish to recognize the honour accorded to us as religious leaders to consult and develop guidelines towards the gradual and progressive resumption of in-person congregational worship that adheres to physical and social distancing in the light of the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic.

We as a nation recognize God the Almighty as our creator, as recognized in our Constitution and that we are all in His hands. We appreciate the deep faith in God of our Kenyan people, which leads them to seek and yearn for communication with God in the places of worship and in prayer.

We join our sisters and brothers in praying to God for an end to the pandemic, recovery for those sick with COVID-19, consolation for families who have lost their loved ones and a cure for the disease. We also recognize the freedom of religion and worship, which is enshrined in our Constitution, which gives the citizens the right to free worship.

We realize that with the outbreak of COVID-19, and the real serious danger the disease presents for the citizens' life; it was necessary to institute some emergency measures to contain the disease spread, which included the banning of gatherings of any type including gathering in places of worship. We indeed have seen devastating statistics of deaths caused by COVID-19 in other countries. We praise and appreciate the patience of Kenyans of all faith traditions, who with great patience have endured this long period of waiting for the reopening of places of worship

Cognizant that the COVID-19 cases are still on the rise and that we may for a long period have to reckon with the presence of this disease, we the Inter-Faith Council wish to present these guidelines in line with our mandate, trusting in God through prayer and believing in the responsibility of our congregants and all religious leaders in our country.

Our major concern as Interfaith Council, that is shared by the many religious leaders, is that our places of worship be safe environments in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, where following the established measures, the spread of infection is contained, and our worship gatherings do not become an occasion of an increase in infection rates nor a cause for loss of lives.

Building a Moral Foundation

The onset of the COVID-19 and the consequent national lockdown seems to have exposed the decay in our social and moral fabric. The reported increase in cases of domestic violence and the surge in teenage pregnancies, is a sure evidence of weak family bonds. In a nation that prides itself in its strong religious foundation, this is extremely sobering and calls for deep reflection by us as religious leaders. Therefore, as we ready ourselves to open our places of worship, we must not prepare to merely go back to business as usual. Instead, we must seriously consider concrete steps that we must take towards building strong healthy families, founded on solid religious principles. For as George Washington rightly pointed out, national morality cannot prevail without religious principles. It is our singular responsibility to ensure that these are intentionally weaved within the family.

1. BACKGROUND

Since declaration of the first case of COVID-19 in March, 2020. Kenya has seen an upward trend in cases of the disease which has necessitated taking a number of measures to curb the spread of the virus, including implementing a curfew, restricting movement out and into four counties, including Nairobi Metropolitan, and closing most of the urban and rural markets to enforce social distancing and closedown of places of worship across the country since March, 2020.

Currently, community transmission of COVID-19 accounts for majority of cases of the confirmed cases. With the consideration of in person phased reopening of places of worship, evidences and with a target of flattening the curve, it is imperative that a community based approach be adopted. In this the role of the religious community as a strategy cannot be overemphasized and should focus on taking services closer to individuals, families and communities and increasing their participation in curbing the disease.

2. THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the great connectedness of peoples across faiths, cultures and Nations, in the need to fight the common enemy. The Pandemic does not only have devastating medical and public health consequences, but also emotional and psychological impact to affected families, and the spiritual strength of the people.

The appointment of the Interfaith Council by the Government is recognition of the close collaboration needed between the faith groups and the Government in confronting the threat of COVID-19. As men and women of faith, we recognize the pivotal role that the Religious Leaders have in the fight against COVID-19. From time immemorial, faith based initiatives have always come to the rescue in the times of Human Crisis and Calamity by offering essential congregational worship, advocating for the needs of vulnerable populations and help in reducing fear and stigma among others.

World over, the contribution of religious leaders in nation building cannot be overemphasized. For this reason, the Interfaith Council has sought to reach out and encourage the religious leaders to carry out their very important role to supplement the Government efforts to fight COVID-19. Closing down of places of worship due to COVID-19 greatly disoriented who have struggled hard to get accustomed to the Digital and virtual participation in Worship and religious Congregational worship.

Although research on the spread of COVID-19 is rapidly changing, the constant element remains that coronavirus is spread by contact from person to person. Thus congregating in groups is deemed risky for the time when community transmission is on the rise. This means that congregations would have to consider alternatives to singing in the initial phases of public worship. Worship may still be joyful, but it will likely be quieter.

As the Interfaith Council, we appeal to all religious leaders to lead in the fight against COVID-19 using all available spaces we have in our places of worship and in the virtual spaces. The opening of public worship will also assist the civic education of our people in order to achieve greater compliance levels. We have a great appeal to the people's heart, and enjoy great Trust, which we must use to help them

understand the realities the pandemic presents. Religious leaders have a major role of giving Hope to the people, and in educating them through sensitization of the Public or civic education. We are able to use spiritual persuasion to convince the people of the need to take the right measure in order to combat the spread of the COVID-19. We would have to use our channels and avenues within our networks, as it is also our duty to ensure the life of our congregants is not endangered unreasonably.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 has become endemic and this means it will be with us for some time until an appropriate public health tool (e.g. vaccine) is available. In the meantime, each country and institution is required to determining the trajectory that this outbreak will take. As the faith community, we must confront this common health threat as a body if we are to keep corona virus at bay.

The Interfaith Council therefore appeals to all the Religious leaders to take up some of the roles in helping their congregants in:

A. Adapting to the new normal of handling and conducting in-person congregational worship through guidance on congregational worship and other religious ceremonies, practices and rites observing public health guidelines in COVID-19 period.

B. Supporting congregants and ensuring compliance with the following:

- i. Listening, to children and families, through organized spaces for dialogue on-line, through media
- ii. Intergenerational dialogue to give voice to girls, boys together with parents and communities to find solutions to issues surrounding the epidemic.
- iii. Voices of faith and wider community engagement to inform local responses as well as national policymaking and programmes.
- iv. Care and attention for the most vulnerable people, especially children, women, persons with disabilities, orphans, and persons at risk of violence and neglect.
- v. Encourage solidarity, cooperation and social solidarity to support poor people and families, especially those who have lost their jobs and livelihoods due to the state of emergency.
- vi. Promote positive parenting, family dialogue, protection from violence

C. Countering: all forms of stigma and discrimination associated with transmission of COVID-19 with active promotion of attitudes and behaviours to uphold the dignity and rights of their congregants.

D. In keeping with open communication and feedback; provide congregants with the following:

- Promote active engagement of networks of religious communities including women, and youth, in collaboration with municipalities, to provide organized voluntary congregational worship.

- Spiritual and emotional care and support for parents, children, the elderly and those experiencing disruption and distress in order to provide a source of support, peace, comfort and hope.
- Positive age-specific and gender-responsive parenting guidance and support to families in relation to the health, development, protection and social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people, particularly those in low-income families and those most vulnerable and hardest to reach.
- Youth-friendly communication and engagement including their support with more systematic use of technology and social media as a connective communication platform for communities during periods of physical distancing and beyond

In summary, religious leaders have a responsibility to contribute towards containment of COVID-19 through:

- 1) Safeguarding the health and safety of their congregants during worship
- 2) Dissemination of public health messages to their members.
- 3) Advocating for improved health congregational worship s for their people especially mental health
- 4) Sensitizing their members on matters of hygiene and sanitation
- 5) Engaging congregations through organized spaces for dialogue on COVID-19 pandemic.
- 6) Creating clear mechanisms for feedback on experiences on COVID-19.
- 7) Care support, and attention for those affected and infected with COVID-19
- 8) Specific assistance to those vulnerable groups

These guidelines were developed through a consultative process involving religious leaders, community leaders, the Council of Governors, health and health security experts. The process took cognizant of the special role of religious leaders in COVID-19 through; education, preparedness, and response.

As Faith communities in Kenya, we have a responsibility to put in place necessary measures to ensure that our places of worship are safe and free from COVID – 19 diseases. In this regard, through these guidelines, we propose the following public health and social measures in the prevention of the spread of corona virus through our places of worship, to guide a safe, secure and sustainable re-opening of the places of worship in Kenya.

Figure 1: Preventive measures

INTER-FAITH COUNCIL (KENYA)
PHASED PARTICIPATION IN RELIGIOUS RITES
GENERAL NORMS FOR PLACES OF WORSHIP

ALWAYS WEAR
YOUR MASK



WASH HANDS
BEFORE & AFTER
SERVICE



KEEP 1.5 METER
SOCIAL DISTANCE



AVOID PHYSICAL
CONTACT



USE SOAP, WATER
& SANITIZER



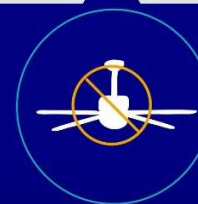
FOLLOW SET
MOVEMENT PATHS



DISINFECT PLACES
OF WORSHIP
REGULARLY



DON'T USE FANS
ENSURE NATURAL
VENTILATION



CHAPTER THREE

3. PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

The greatest danger we are currently facing is the possible exponential spread of COVID-19 infection among the population. Health experts have identified healthy hygiene practices as the basic weapons against COVID-19. It is therefore clear that as a first step for the fight against any eventual spread of the virus within our Places of worship and our communities, we must embrace these practices and make them part of our life.

A. Healthy Hygiene Practices

We, the religious leaders, do acknowledge that hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene are critical measures to prevent COVID-19 based on the mode of transmission.

We therefore recommend that all places of worship should adopt the following healthy hygiene practices;

- i. Ensure hand washing facilities are provided in designated places in places of worship
- ii. Encourage hand washing for at least 20 seconds with soap and clean running water
- iii. Where possible, Places of worship to provide 70% alcohol based hand sanitizers in designated places:
- iv. Sensitize congregants on the importance of covering mouth with flexed elbow or disposable paper towel when coughing

B. Social distancing

Because COVID-19 is transmitted through contact, social distancing has been highlighted as one of the main measures of reducing the possible infection is the distance from one another. As religious leaders we appreciate that keeping our distance while conversing is the best way to reduce the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The recommended distance by the Health experts is 1.5m (5Ft). This is because COVID-19 is transmitted through droplet/aerosolized particles. Social distancing, also called “social distancing,” means keeping space between yourself and other people.

During this COVID-19 period, and in keeping with the phases given, the Inter-Faith Council recommends that, religious institution and places of worship emphasis:

- i. Observe distancing of 1.5m (5ft) between congregants.
- ii. Regulate the number of congregants per session by size of the place of worship according to the social distancing
- iii. Organize open air congregational worship where possible with social distancing
- iv. Post signs with sitting arrangement at the entrance of the worship space
- v. Have clearly labelled spaces or ushers to assist people to settle in their places.
- vi. Discourage physical contact methods like handshaking or embracing but instead use of non-contact methods
- vii. Where any physical contact action is involved, follow strict rules
- viii. Reduce physical singing and instead use recorded music where possible.
- ix. Observe social distancing when more than two speakers are conducting one sermon

- x. Consider staggering congregational worship sessions based on the congregants' capacity
- xi. Not have unnecessary movements and dancing according to the phases
- xii. Discourage any gatherings/socializing outside places of worship before and after worship
- xiii. Limit congregational worship time to a maximum of 90 minutes up to maximum of 2 hours in keeping with phasing
- xiv. No refreshments or food should be provided
- xv. Clean and disinfect washrooms and ablution often; and used while observing social distance.

C. Use of face masks

COVID-19 is transmissible by droplet particles. This can happen when people talk, sneeze, sing or cough. The Health experts explain that the use of masks helps to stop such particles from leaving one's body and reaching the air/surface from which they can be easily transmitted from one person to the other. If we observe strictly the use of mask, we will no doubt manage to contain the COVID-19.

The Inter-Faith Council therefore recommends that religious leaders in places of worship should:

- i. Ensure mandatory use of masks at all times by fully covering the mouth and nose by all adults and children above the age of five years
- ii. All congregants and presiding religious leaders to wear masks all the time properly
- iii. Use appropriate masks by all

D. Protection of the vulnerable population

Statistics and research has shown that senior citizens age 60+years, people with co-morbidities, pregnant and lactating mothers as well as children below the age of five years are the most vulnerable as they have compromised immune system. This therefore means that they are highly likely to be at risk for COVID-19. It is therefore important to protect this category of individuals even as in-person congregational worship resumes.

In view of this, we the Inter-Faith Council recommend that;

- i. Any individual experiencing shortness of breath, coughs, high fever etc. should stay at home to minimize risk of spread of COVID-19 to others especially the vulnerable, for the initial stages of resumption of public worship
- ii. Encourage those individual experiencing shortness of breath, coughs, high fever to seek medical attention
- iii. Children below 5 years to stay at home. It is difficult for young children to abide by social distancing rules
- iv. Adherence to guidelines provided to protect children attending adult worship congregational worships
- v. Gathering of children and lessons should be discouraged in the initial reopening phases
- vi. Some special congregational worship sessions for the vulnerable and children may be organized in the course of phasing while observing very strict measures

- vii. The vulnerable group should be encouraged to stay at home and follow online congregational worships
- viii. The Clergy can visit the elderly staying at home and adhere to provided guidelines and protocols
- ix. A special congregational worship session to be organized for at risk/vulnerable population only while following guidelines and protocols

E. Cleaning and disinfection of places of worship

Cleaning and disinfection are important processes that help in the removal of virus, dirt and germs. Since different people from different places congregate at our places of worship, they could harbour germs and virus that are harmful to our health. It is important for religious leaders to ensure proper cleaning to remove dirt and subsequent disinfection to remove pathogens such as COVID-19. The Inter-Faith Council therefore recommends to the faith communities to:

- i. Develop a routine cleaning schedule for the places of worship
- ii. Ensure routine cleaning and disinfection of places of worship. This can be done with water, soap and disinfectant.
- iii. Regularly Clean and disinfect toilets, door knobs, handrails and other surfaces
- iv. Provide bins for safe waste disposal (masks, serviettes and tissue)

F. Ventilation of places of worship

Ventilation has proven to help in air circulation from the advice given by the Health experts. It is therefore highly recommended to keep the places of congregation very well ventilated. Further the ventilating fans are not advisable as they promote the droplets to float around.

The Interfaith Council therefore recommends for our places of worship to:

- i. Keep all windows and doors open and propped during the congregational worship
- ii. Totally discourage in-door use of overhead fans
- iii. Encourage open air congregational worship s within the place of worship adhering to guidelines

G. Members attendance register for ease of contact tracing

We do appreciate that contact tracing involves individuals being able to remember whom they were with and where they were with from 48 hours before the onset of symptoms to the point of self-isolation or quarantine, and diagnosis of COVID-19. We therefore realize the important of having a register that lists all the contacts that have been at a single place so that in the event a case of COVID is reported from a particular area, then it becomes easier to get the contacts or person the case came into contact with.

To achieve this in places of worship, the Inter-Faith Council recommends that places of worship should:

- i. Every faith body devise a way of supporting their member congregations in developing an agreeable method of tracking participants in a congregational worship
- ii. Every place of worship to develop and implement a method to track worship attendance
- iii. Keep a record from the method adopted for at least 14 days.

H. Sharing of materials and items among members

Science has proven that corona virus can remain on items, materials and surfaces for between 3 hours to 9 days. This poses a risk to people who come into contact with contaminated surfaces and items. It is therefore important to minimize or forego sharing of any material or equipment at the places of worship.

The Inter-Faith Council therefore recommends that:

- i. As much as possible prohibit sharing of items (such as prayer mats, offertory baskets etc.) in places of worship
- ii. Sanitize microphones between users where Public Address systems are used
- iii. Washable microphone covers be provided to each user where microphones are shared
- iv. Any material (prayer mats, bibles, hymnals, and printed bulletins) should not be shared among members. Where possible, use or ask congregants to carry their own from home.
- v. Adopt cashless transactions or use of stationery boxes for collections and not movable tray baskets.
- vi. Processions and passing of items from person to person be discouraged.
- vii. Sale and or distribution of food within premises of worship be prohibited.

I. Temperature monitoring and referral

We, the religious leaders, acknowledge that COVID-19 presents with a number of symptoms key among them fever, coughs, flu, high body temperatures etc. even though these symptoms are shared by other illnesses, temperature monitoring using non-contact infrared thermo-guns is an important step in identify people who may be at risk of COVID-19 disease. Such persons should be referred to health facilities where they can be attended appropriately.

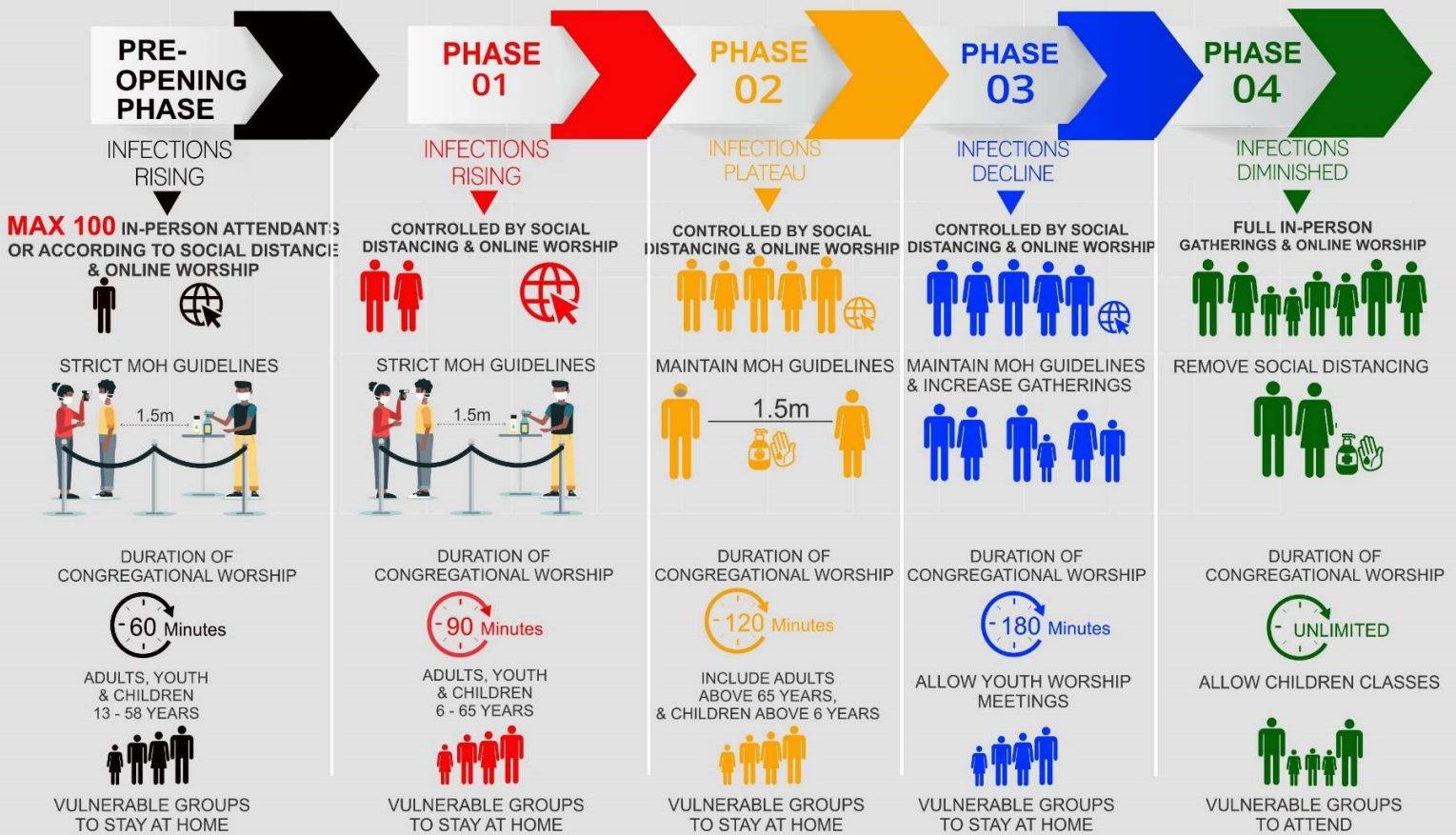
Since this is an expensive exercise, we recommend that wherever possible;

- i. That National and County governments subsidize purchase of thermo-guns to places of worship
- ii. Have thermo-guns to be used for temperature readings at the entrances
- iii. Identify a designated place within places of worship where persons with temperatures above 37.5⁰ Celsius /or presenting with signs and symptoms are isolated for further attendance by health team
- iv. Identify a nearby health facility for referral of congregants presenting with temperatures above 37.5⁰ Celsius and /or presenting with signs and symptoms
- v. Put friendly and dignified measures when dealing with worshippers exhibiting COVID-19 like symptoms to avert stigma associated with the disease
- vi. Be willing to refer any persons with temperatures above 37.5⁰ Celsius /or presenting with COVID-19 like symptoms to the nearby designated health facility.

Figure 2: Places of Worship

INTER-FAITH COUNCIL (KENYA) PHASED REOPENING OF PLACES OF WORSHIP GUIDING PRINCIPLES

I. Minimize Infection Spread II. Minimize Exposure to Virus III. Protect the Vulnerable



CHAPTER FOUR

4. PHASED RE-OPENING OF PLACES OF WORSHIP

Strategy for phased re-opening of places of worship

In order to resume in-person congregational worship, there is need for a gradual and progressive resumption of congregational worship that adheres to physical and social distancing in a phased manner.

There are several strategies that have proposed for adoption towards this end. These includes;

- i. Allowing less risky population to participate in congregational worship in earlier phases
- ii. Limiting the amount of time per congregational worship
- iii. Reducing the number of religious ceremonies to be celebrated during different phases
- iv. Limiting the number of participants per each congregational worship and or ceremony
- v. Minimizing the number of ceremonies that can be celebrated during certain times
- vi. Delaying participation of vulnerable populations in congregational worship up to a time when the disease will reduce
- vii. Organizing for special worship sessions for risky populations
- viii. Adopt innovative forms of worship such as virtual and use of sound system in place of people singing.

This process has been considered in guiding reopening of congregational worship in a way that is responsive to COVID-19 pandemic. Upon permitting of the re-opening of places of worship by the Government, the Inter-Faith Council will adopt the following guidelines for managing the safe, secure and sustainable reopening of places of worship.

Pre-opening Phase for Phased Safe Reopening of Congregational Worship

The Interfaith Council recommends a preparatory phase in the phased reopening of places of congregational worship. During this phase the Council anticipates all umbrella bodies for the different faith communities to undertake the role of adopting the measures for containment of COVID-19 pandemic and cascade them to all religious congregations for adoption and adherence before the next phase first phase of reopening of places of worship.

The activities to be implemented by congregations include:

- i. Installation of sanitary facilities at strategic points at the places of worship
- ii. Acquisitions of relevant disinfectants, thermal guns and waste disposal bins for infectious waste.
- iii. Labelling/marketing and adjusting of sitting arrangements to meet the social distancing guideline of 1.5 metres in places of worship
- iv. Establishing/reactivating congregational committees for implementation and monitoring of compliance to the guidelines.
- v. Devising mechanisms for ensuring no crowding before and after worship sessions including strategy to address capping of congregants' numbers and protection of vulnerable members.
- vi. Planning for resumption of worship according to provisions recommended in Phase 1 in regard to congregational worship; religious ceremonies and rites, funerals and weddings.

Table 1: Phased reopening of in person congregational worship

S/No.	Key Considerations and Parameters	Phase 1 Infection Numbers on the Rise	Phase 2 Infection Numbers Plateau	Phase 3 Infection Numbers Declining	Phase 4: New Normal No COVID-19 disease cases
	To minimize the spread of infection				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regulate numbers at congregational worship ○ Require persons with symptoms to stay at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use combined in-person and online worship ○ Ensure strict social distancing of 1.5 m(5ft) ○ Strictly ensure adherence to guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintain social distancing of 1.5m (5ft) ○ Ensure adherence to guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allow full in-person gatherings ○ Maintain social distancing of 1.5m (5ft) ○ Ensure adherence to guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allow full in-person gatherings ○ Maintain social distancing of 1.5m (5ft) ○ Ensure adherence to guidelines
	Minimize exposure to virus				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reduce duration of congregational worship ○ Regulate number of gatherings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hold a maximum of 90 minutes' gatherings ○ Hold a maximum of two gatherings ○ Hold combined family worship (Adult, youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hold a maximum of 120 minutes' gatherings ○ Allow multiple gatherings per week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hold a maximum of 120 minutes' gatherings ○ Allow all other gatherings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Resume full length worship gatherings ○ Allow all other gatherings ○ Allow children classes

		<p>and children above 5 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No youth gatherings ○ No children classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hold combined adult and children worship ○ Allow youth worship meetings ○ No children classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allow children classes 	
Protection of vulnerable groups					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Protection of vulnerable groups ○ Regulate attendance by vulnerable groups(Age>65 years, Children<5 years; underlying conditions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encourage persons aged above 65 years and children below 5 years to stay at home ○ Encourage special congregational worship for vulnerable groups under strict guidelines ○ Require children below 5 years to stay at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allow persons above 65 years (with no underlying conditions) and children below 5 years to attend worship ○ Encourage special congregational worship for vulnerable groups under strict guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allow all persons to attend congregational worship – under controlled conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allow all persons to attend congregational worship

Figure 3: Funerals Guidelines

INTER-FAITH COUNCIL (KENYA) PHASED PARTICIPATION IN RELIGIOUS RITES FUNERALS

(Does not apply to COVID-19 Related funerals)



WEAR MASK
AT ALL TIMES

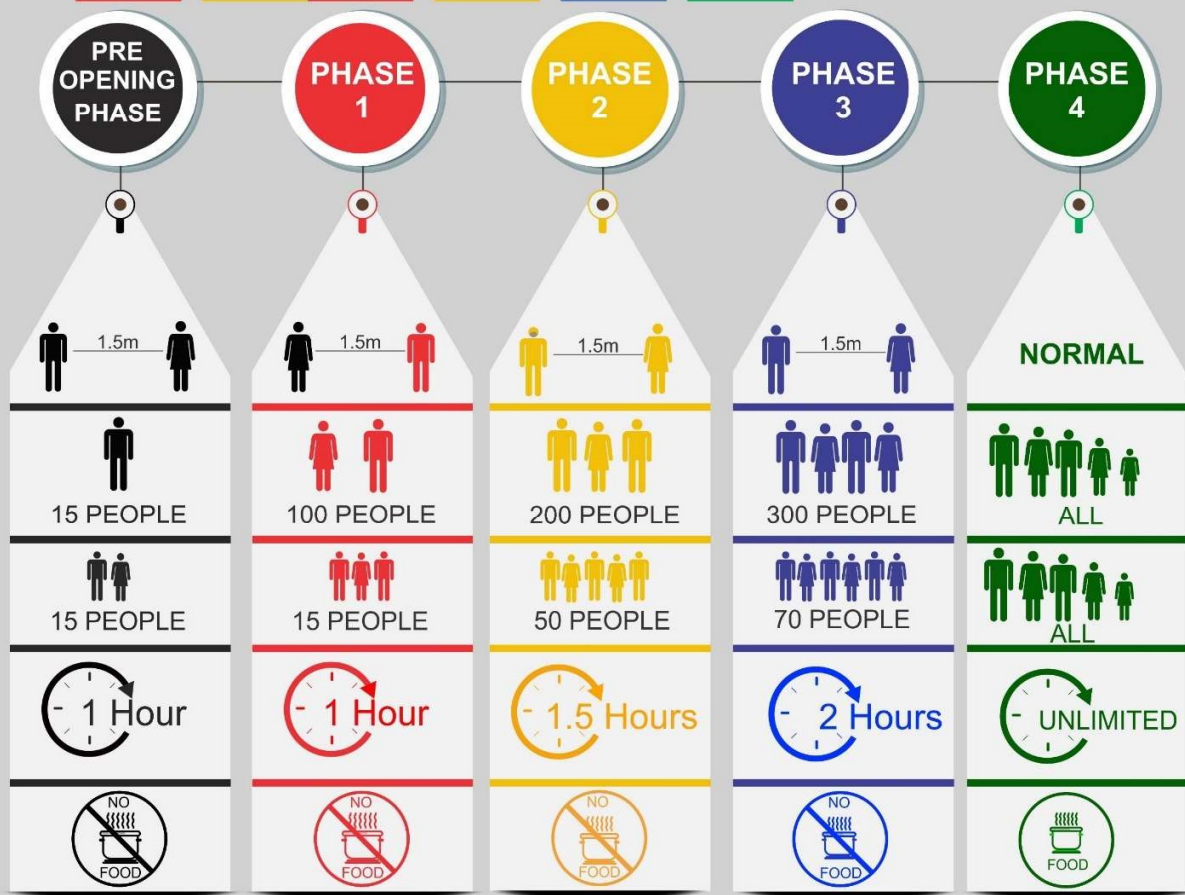
◆ SOCIAL
DISTANCING
WITH MASK

◆ PARTICIPATION

◆ GRAVESITE

◆ DURATION

◆ FOOD



CHAPTER FIVE

5. RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES AND RITES

Interfaith Council acknowledges existence of diverse faiths including but not limited to Hindu, Islam, Christians (Protestants and Catholics). Similarly, we acknowledge that most religious ceremonies, rites and functions have been greatly affected by the emergence of COVID-19. These ceremonies, rites and functions involve different age groups ranging from new born children to adults. The Most affected are, naming, baptism, weddings, funerals and gravesides /crematoria last rites and send-off and other life event rites of both children and adults.

Religious leaders acknowledge that funerals have presented one of the most urgent, difficult and often cruellest tensions that exist, between the realities of human need, and the demands that must be met, if the current COVID-19 outbreak is to be brought under control. When a loved one dies, the natural human desire of the bereaved is to be surrounded by others in order to experience their comfort and support through presence, touch, prayer and a common acknowledgement of grief and loss. We realize that these gatherings present a high risk in the transmission of the virus. Similarly, celebratory rites of passage including weddings which normally includes celebration by the community have not been spared. During the COVID-19 period, there has been a limitation to the number of attendees.

The Interfaith council consulted widely to get views on these rites, and Funerals seemed to raise the most discomfort, both for the ordinary funerals but most passionately the COVID funerals. Many concerns were raised on the lack of dignity for the departed in the manner of burial, and the complete denial of grieving.

After conducting a nation-wide stakeholder engagement of different Faith Traditions, and bearing in mind the diversity of practices within congregations, the Inter-Faith Council tried to find some common recommendations, to be concretized by each Faith Tradition.

General Considerations in the context of COVID-19

The following measures must be adhered to by religious groups and congregations in order to help protect the health and wellbeing of individuals while at the same time ensuring that congregants get spiritual nourishment.

- Ritual and processional singing, chanting and shouting must be minimized
- Ritual and processional dancing must be minimized due to the high level of contact
- Sharing of personal materials and items such as masks, gloves, water, clothes etc. is totally discouraged
- Use single user gloves where personal contact cannot be avoided such as during anointing, baptism etc.
- Where there are no gloves for use during contact on such occasions as above, sanitize before and after every contact.

Funerals for COVID-19 deaths should be reviewed to allow for the following under COVID-19 scenario;

- Decent and dignified burial should be accorded to the deceased
- Family should be given ample time for Mourning of the dead
- Blessing of the graves can be done before and after burial
- Allow access to burial site for ministers with due protection
- Allow family members to participate in

The general recommendation is that religious ceremonies and rites (including religious rites and related rites, weddings, funerals and burials) should have a phased approach gradually incorporating them into the Worship. Each phase would then indicate the measures that need to be in place by congregations and individuals during the celebration of these ceremonies and or rites as follows:

a. PHASE ONE

i. Funerals and Burials

- The funeral congregational worship should be held in open space
- The deceased body should be transported from mortuary to the congregational worship
- Attendance to funerals should be limited to a maximum of one hundred (100) people.
- Any form of contact with COVID-19 dead body should be avoided unless by a trained personnel observing the necessary precautions
- The grave side congregational worship should be limited to a maximum of fifteen (15) people.
- The COVID-19 funeral congregational worship should be conducted within one (1) hour
- The COVID-19 victim burial should be observed under the general MoH Interim Guidance on Handling of Human Remains Infected with COVID-19.
- Only religious and family tributes should be allowed
- Discourage any food during funeral ceremonies
- For COVID-19 Victim Religious requirements on the dead should be done by trained personnel taking all public health precautions.

ii. Wedding Ceremonies

- Allow ceremonies while maintaining 1.5m physical distance and a maximum of fifty (50) people in attendance
- Observe all guidelines regarding normal worship
- Food should not be allowed during this ceremony
- Ritual dancing should be discouraged in order to minimize contact among attendees

iii. Other religious rites:

- Major celebration or ceremonies within our faith traditions (Pasha, Idd-ul-adha, Easter celebrations, Christmas etc.) should be scaled down within the COVID-19 context. **NB:** The sacrifice and distribution of meat and other food staff should be done according to guidelines.
- All other religious rites of passage should be attended by the nuclear family and sharing of meals should be limited to fifteen (15) nuclear family members only.

b. PHASE TWO

i. Funerals and Burials

- The funeral Congregational worship to be held in open space

- The deceased body should be transported from the mortuary straight to the congregational worship
- Attendance at burials should be increased to two hundred (200) people
- The grave side congregational worship should be limited to fifty (50) people
- The COVID-19 funeral congregational worship should be conducted within one 1hr. 30 minutes
- The COVID-19 victim burial should be observed under the general MoH Interim-Guidance-on-Handling-of-Human-Remains-Infected-with-COVID-19.
- Only religious and family tribute are allowed
- Food should not be allowed except for family members

ii. Wedding Ceremonies

- Allow ceremonies while maintaining 1.5m physical distance and a maximum of thirty (100) people to participate
- Observe all guidelines regarding normal worship
- Food is discouraged during this ceremony
- Ritual dancing is discouraged during the ceremony to minimize contact

iii. Other religious rites:

- Major celebration within our faith traditions (Pasha, Idd ul-Fitr, Easter celebrations etc.) should be practices within COVID-19 guidelines governing worship
- All other religious rites of passage should be attended by the nuclear family and sharing of meals should be limited to thirty (30) nuclear family members only.

c. PHASE THREE

i. Funerals and Burials

- Funeral Congregational worship should be held in open space
- The deceased body should be transported from mortuary directly to congregational worship
- Attendance to funerals should be increased to three hundred (300) people.
- The grave side congregational worship should be limited to a maximum of seventy (70) people
- The COVID-19 funeral congregational worship should be conducted within one 2hrs.
- The COVID-19 victim burial should be observed under the general MoH Guidance on Handling of Human Remains Infected with COVID-19
- Only religious and family tributes should be allowed
- Only the nuclear family should be allowed to eat

ii. Wedding Ceremonies

- Allow ceremonies while maintaining 1.5m physical distance and a maximum of one hundred (150) people in attendance

- Observe all public health guidelines regarding normal worship
- Food is allowed during this ceremony up to a maximum of one hundred (100) family members only
- Ritual dancing should be limited while observing guidelines for worship

iii. **Other religious rites:**

- Major celebration within our faith traditions such as; (Pasha, Iddul-Fitr, Easter celebrations etc.) should be scaled down within the COVID-19 guidelines governing worship.
- All other religious rites of passage should be attended by the nuclear, extended family as well as friends and sharing of meals should be limited to one hundred (100) people.
- Sharing of food should be limited to one hundred (100) people including family members and friends.

d. **PHASE FOUR**

i. **Funerals and Burials**

- Funeral congregational worship s should be open to all
- The congregational worship should be done normally
- Only religious and family tributes are should be allowed

ii. **Wedding Ceremonies**

- All wedding ceremonies should be allowed to continue

iii. **Other religious rites:**

- Major celebration within our faith traditions (Pasha, Idd ul-Fitr, Easter celebrations, Christmas etc.) should be open to all under MoH guidelines
- All other religious rites of passage should be open to all.

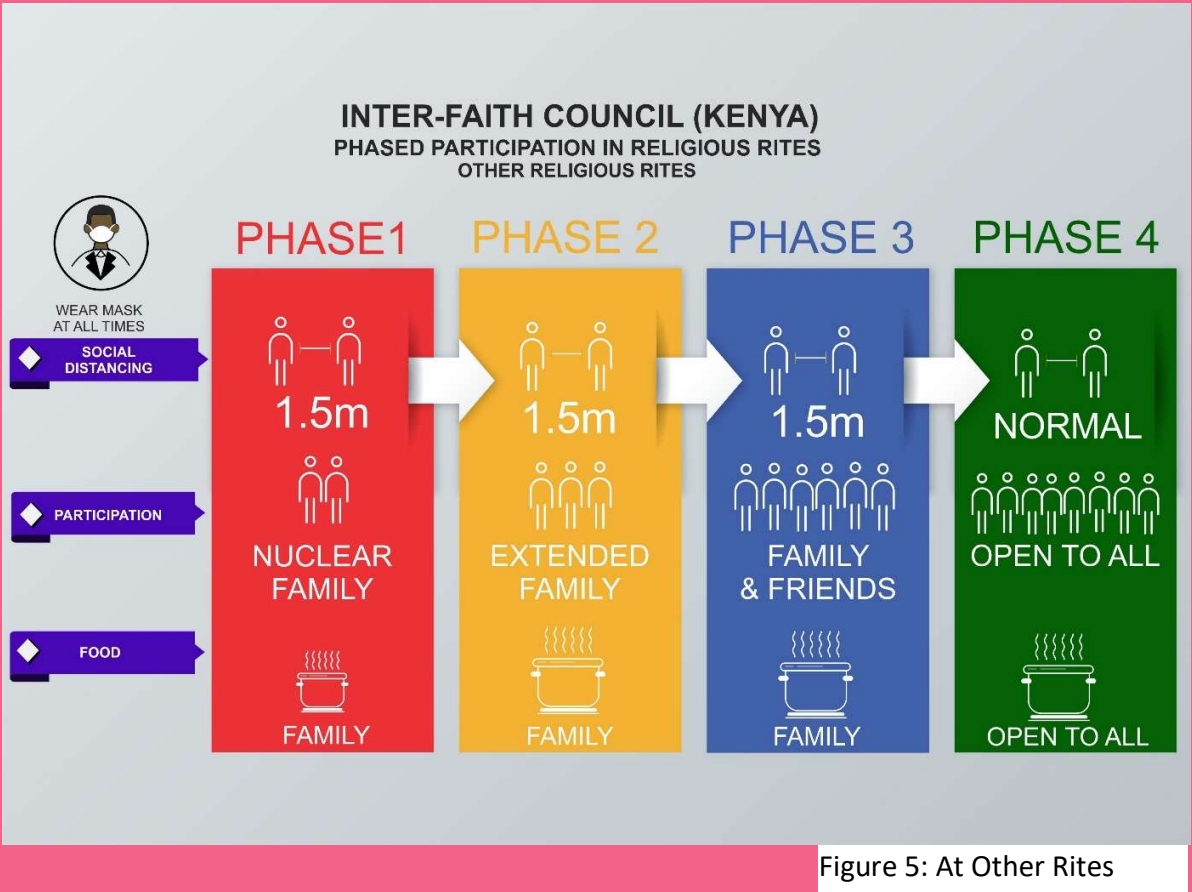
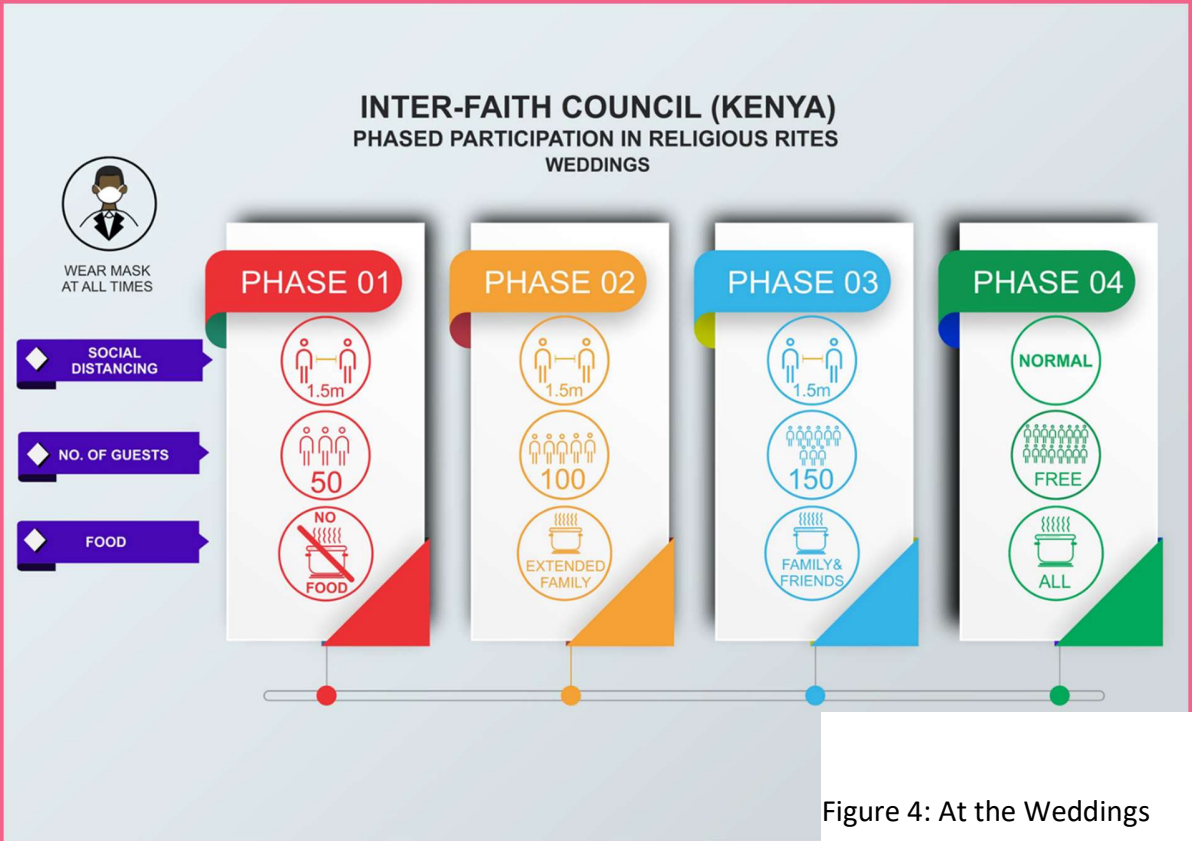


Table 2: Religious Ceremonies and Rites

S/No.		PHASE ONE Recommendations	PHASE TWO Recommendations	PHASE THREE Recommendations	PHASE FOUR Recommendations
Religious ceremonies and rites					
1.	Funerals and Burials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The funeral congregational worship should be held in open space ▶ Social distancing of 1.5m ▶ The deceased body from COVID-19 should be transported from mortuary straight to the congregational worship ▶ Attendance to funerals should be limited to a maximum of one hundred (100) people. ▶ Any form of contact with the COVID-19 dead body should be avoided unless by a trained personnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The funeral Congregational worship to be held in open space ▶ The deceased body should be transported from the mortuary straight to the congregational worship ▶ Attendance at burials should be increased to two hundred (200) people ▶ The grave side congregational worship should be limited to fifty (50) people ▶ The funeral congregational 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Funeral Congregational worship should be held in open space ▶ The deceased body should be transported from mortuary directly to congregational worship ▶ -Attendance to funerals should be increased to three hundred (300) people. ▶ The grave side congregational worship should be limited to a maximum of seventy (70) people ▶ The funeral congregational 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Funeral congregational worship should be open to all ▶ The congregational worship should be done normally ▶ Only religious and family tributes are should be allowed

		<p>observing the necessary precautions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The grave side congregational worship should be limited to a maximum of fifteen (15) people. ▶ The funeral congregational worship should be conducted within one (1) hour ▶ The COVID-19 victim burial should be observed under the MoH Interim Guidance on Handling of Human Remains Infected with COVID-19. ▶ Only religious and family tributes should be allowed ▶ Discourage any food during funeral ceremonies ▶ For COVID-19 victim religious requirements on the 	<p>worship should be conducted within 1hr. 30 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ -The COVID-19 Victim Funeral congregational worship should be observed under MoH Interim Guidance on Handling of Human Remains Infected with COVID-19. ▶ Only religious and family tribute are allowed ▶ Food should not be allowed except for family members 	<p>worship should take a maximum of two (2) hours.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The COVID-19 victim funeral congregational worship should adhere to MOH Interim-Guidance-on-Handling-of-Human-Remains-Infected-with-COVID-19. ▶ -Only religious and family tributes should be allowed ▶ Only the nuclear family should be allowed to eat 	
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		dead should be done by trained personnel taking all public health precautions			
2	Wedding ceremonies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Allow ceremonies while maintaining 1.5m physical distance and a maximum of fifty (50) people in attendance ▶ Observe all guidelines regarding normal worship ▶ Discourage food during this ceremony ▶ Discourage ritual dancing in order to minimize contact among attendees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Allow ceremonies while maintaining 1.5m physical distance and a maximum of thirty (100) people to participate ▶ Observe all guidelines regarding normal worship ▶ Discourage food during this ceremony ▶ Discourage ritual dancing during the ceremony to minimize contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Allow ceremonies while maintaining 1.5m physical distance and a maximum of one hundred (150) people in attendance ▶ Observe all public health guidelines regarding normal worship ▶ Food is allowed during this ceremony up to a maximum of one hundred (100) family members only ▶ Ritual dancing should be limited while observing guidelines for worship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All wedding ceremonies should be allowed to continue

3.	Other religious rites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Major celebration or ceremonies within our faith traditions (Pasha, Idul-Fitr, Easter celebrations, Christmas etc.) should be scaled down within the COVID-19 context. ▶ All other religious rites of passage should be attended by the nuclear family and sharing of meals should be limited to fifteen (15) nuclear family members only. 	<p>Major celebration within our faith traditions (Pasha, Idul-Fitr, Easter celebrations etc.) should be practiced within COVID-19 guidelines governing worship</p> <p>All other religious rites of passage should be attended by the nuclear family and sharing of food should be limited to thirty (30) family members only.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Major celebration within our faith traditions (Pasha, Idul-Fitr, Easter celebrations etc.) should be scaled down within the COVID-19 guidelines governing worship. ▶ All other religious rites of passage should be attended by the nuclear and extended family as well as friends. ▶ Sharing of food should be limited to one hundred (100) people including family members and friends. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Major celebration within our faith traditions (Pasha, Idul-Fitr, Easter celebrations etc.) should be open to all under general MoH guidelines ▶ All other religious rites of passage should be open to all.
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6. PUBLIC SENSITIZATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Sensitization and capacity building and monitoring are key tenets for the success of the council in achieving on its mandate and ensuring compliance. The council seeks to empower and equip the Religious leaders with the relevant information for further dissemination to their congregation.

The council therefore endeavours to empowered clergy and congregants as front-line army in guaranteeing compliance to the guidelines. This will be done through a robust communication plan that will target to reach all the stakeholders with the right message to elicit behaviour change.

a. Sensitization committees

Various inter/intra-faith sensitization committees drawn from congregational; Sub-County; County and National sensitization committees will be formed to create awareness on the guidelines. The messaging will be highly dependent on the subcommittee findings on best approaches for different categories of people

b. Sensitization messaging, Channels and target groups

In disseminating these messages, different channels will be used: these includes; IEC materials, Radio (national and vernacular), Television (national and vernacular), Digital media (social media platforms), and Public participation fora. Target groups will range from Religious Leaders; Faith Communities; General Public; MOH; Community Health workers; National Administration.

The messaging will include:

- 1) Mandate of the Council (roles and responsibility)
- 2) IFC directives and guidelines
- 3) Building trust, partnerships and Collaboration between Religious Leaders and the government
- 4) Care giving and support
- 5) Stigma of people and families affected and recovered
- 6) Myths and misconceptions regarding COVID19

Table 3: Sensitization of the Faith Community Plans

S/no.	Key identified areas	Messaging	Timeline
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandate of the Council (roles and responsibility) – God and Freedom of worship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Messages on faith, compassion, love and care of people God, freedom and rights of worship. Share what the Council is doing through spiritual guidance 	July – Dec 2020
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IFC directives and guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate people on the support available after infection How to manage to emergencies Empower people to adopt safety in worship places and homes. Capacity building of religious leaders on home based care guidelines 	July – Dec 2020
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building trust, partnerships and collaboration between Religious Leaders and the government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Messages on how religious leaders are collaborating with the government. Show how Religious leaders and government officials are collaborating and partnering. 	July – Dec 2020

4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care-giving and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building of religious leaders to be able to offer care and support for their congregants. Messages on how to care and support for each other. 	July – Dec 2020
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stigma of people and families affected and recovered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Messages that address stigma; highlight on love, compassion and unity. 	July – Dec 2020
6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Myths and misconceptions regarding COVID19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Messages that address these myths and misconceptions. 	July – Dec 2020

7. MONITORING FOR COMPLIANCE

We the Interfaith council acknowledges that COVID-19 was recently declared an endemic disease by WHO and hence it will be with us for the foreseeable future, transmission of this virus could occur during the resumption of in-person church activities. Therefore, for the safety of the whole congregation as well as their families, friends and neighbors, places of of worship should be prepared to assist public health departments to identify and find the contacts of people who discover they are infected as well as ensuring compliance with set guidelines and protocols to avert the disease.

A. Compliance and Monitoring:

The Council proposes the need for several intra and inter-faith committees to ensure there is monitoring of compliance of congregational worship as follows:

i. Congregational faith Committees

Each place of worship will form a COVID-19 congregational committee. The committee will be guided by a commitment form; this is a document with the guidelines as developed by the council and compliance directives and working with MOH. The committee will monitor and report what happens within their congregations in relation to COVID-19.

ii. Sub-county Intra-Faith Committees

Every faith community/denomination will be forming some sub-county level committees. This committee will be key in cascading information to the congregational level and reporting the same to the County levels to ensure compliance among the religious institutions.

iii. County Inter-faith committees

This committee shall be formed by religious bodies forming the interfaith council. The committees will pick the information from the sub-county levels to the national level to ensure compliance among the religious institutions.

iv. National Inter-Faith Committees: These will include the NCCK, KCCB, SDA, OAIC, SUPKEM, NAMLEF, EAK & SHIA Communities.

These committees will consist of Intra-Faith representatives at different levels with representation at the national level. This is the committee will handle the issues raised by the national committees of different congregations. The committee will provide information and the Inter-Faith Council together with the public health officers will enforce the opening of places that have complied and closure of places that have not complied.

Table 4: Monitoring for Compliance

S/No.	Activity	Input	Output	Outcome	Timeline
1.	Establishment of Intra-faith and Interfaith COVID-19 monitoring and compliance committees at different levels Congregational; sub county; county; national	Financial, Logistical and human resource	Numbers of committees	Monitoring & Compliance committees	July 2020
2.	Development of terms of reference	Financial, Logistical and human resource	Number of specific terms per committee developed	Adoption of terms of reference	July 2020
3.	Development of monitoring & compliance checklist	Financial, Logistical and human resource	Number of monitoring & compliance items developed	Comprehensive monitoring & compliance checklist	July 2020
4.	Implementation of checklist	Financial, Logistical and human resource	Implementation sessions	Implementation reports	August 2020

5.	Review of the tool	Financial, Logistical and human resource	Review Meetings	Updated monitoring & compliance tool	November 2020
6.	Compliance mechanism (Public Health premise /facility inspection)	Compliance monitoring tool Financial, Logistical and human resource	Number of compliance inspection visits	Compliance reports	July 2020

8. REVIEW OF GUIDELINES

The Council acknowledges that development of the in-person congregational resumption of this is work in progress whose implementation is phased and hence review of protocols and guidelines will be important at every stage as it will give a clear picture on the progress that is being made in terms of resumption of in-person/congregational worship in the places of worship all over the country and inform decisions on next course of action.

Since the patterns of COVID-19 disease keep changing in different geographical settings and scientifically, it would be important to look at the guidelines put in place vis' a vis' new or emerging information as pertains to the spread, prevention and control of COVID-19 as shall be received from the Ministry of Health, WHO and CDC. The review will also be important in addressing other issues that will be raised by stakeholders who may not have fully participated in the initial development of the protocols and who feel that their input would help ensure resumption of in-person worship in a safe and sustainable manner. It would also help to look at international best practices and borrow from proven and tested practices

The review of protocols and guidelines for the safe re-opening of in-person congregational worship shall be guided by the phased re-opening of the places of worship as outlined in the guideline or as may be necessary considering that these guidelines have been developed to help offer physical religious congregational worship s to worshippers and at the same time ensure the health and well-being of the worshippers. The review will be done according to the phased performance and the guidelines.

The review team shall comprise of the following:

- The Inter-Faith Council of Kenya
- Inter-Faith Implementation Committees
- The Religious leaders
- The Ministry of Health

The outcome of the review process at every phase will inform the decisions on the way forward for in-person congregational worship in Kenya in the face of COVID-19, which as WHO says will be with us for quite some time.

The guidelines shall be reviewed after successful implementation of the same or on a needs basis.

Table 5: Review process for the Guidelines

S/No.	Review Activities	Specific Review Teams/Level	Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Formation of review committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Inter-Faith Council of Kenya • Inter-Faith Implementation Committees • The Clergy/Religious leaders • The Ministry of Health 	Inter-Faith Council	July,2020
2.	Creation of Review plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial plan • Midterm plan • End-term plan 	Inter-Faith Council	July,2020
3.	Phased Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1 • Phase 2 • Phase 3 • Phase 4 	Inter-Faith Council	Phase1 (within 1Month) from the launch of the guidelines Phase 2,3&4 after successful implementation of each phase

4.	Data collection, collation and analysis Collect suggestions through interfaith committees		Inter-faith sub county review committee	Within 3months interval
5.	Incorporation of new emerging trends about COVID-19 into the guidelines		Inter-faith sub county review committee M&C teams	Within 3months interval
6.	Validation and launch of updated guidelines		Inter-faith sub county review committee M&C teams	
7.	Dissemination of updated guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media • Clergy 	Inter-Faith Council	Annually

9. CONCLUSION

It is important and actually necessary to recognize the role faith and religious principles play in our life as human beings. Spiritual connection with God the Almighty is essential in the wellbeing of every person since it is what connects us with great values that are central in guiding us on how we behave and relate to realities in our life. No doubt, places of worship enhance the connection with God due to their unique environment and serene atmosphere, hence the need to keep these places accessible, though with consideration of certain guidelines that are necessitated by the current conditions of Coronavirus pandemic.

We therefore rejoice and thank God for the return to our places of worship. This must however have a deeper meaning for all Kenyans, be a reason to praise God even more and give Him more space in our lives and in our society.

FAITH COMMUNITIES

Acknowledging the Supremacy
of the Almighty God of All
Creation

