PASTORAL LETTER TO THE NATION BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF KENYA

"10 He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark. 11 When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth. 12 He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him." Genesis 8: 10-12 (NIV Version)

1. PREAMBLE
Dear Kenyans, we send you our goodwill greetings during this period of uncertainty in our Country and the whole world. In this our 5th Pastoral letter we note the sufferings with deep concern and resilience shown by the Kenyan people despite many challenges we are going through. It is our prayer that God continues to protect and give us His grace. Beloved, soon the Pandemic will be swept away, no more lock down and we shall see the dove returning with the freshly plucked olive leaf telling us that life is back to normal.

2. COVID-19
We appreciate the Ministry of Health (MoH) and County Governments, Donors, Corporates and individuals, who have continued to provide leadership in responding to COVID-19. They have continued to offer assistance to those in needy and desperate situations due to loss of livelihoods. We thank all the health workers for their diligence, sacrifice and commitment in providing health services during this challenging time. We are concerned by the reports of increasing numbers of health workers who are getting infected. We send our condolences to the families of health professionals who have died due to COVID-19. We also pray for those who are sick or recovering from the Virus. We continue to appeal to the Government to provide adequate personal protective equipment for all health workers. We must all stand firm against all acts of stigma and discrimination against our people who have been exposed or suffered COVID-19 infection. They need our care, love and support. As Christians we are called upon to embrace the children of God with compassionate care. We pray that these acts of generosity and social responsibility continue. We at the same time call for high integrity, prudence and accountability in the use of these resources as we have many needs that require support.

We note with great appreciation the cooperation and adherence by majority of Kenyans to the guidelines given by the government on COVID-19 prevention. We urge Kenyans to continue to protect themselves since they play a big role in the control of the spread of the virus especially now that the Government has opened up previously locked-up areas.
3. SUSTAINING OUR HEALTH SERVICES
While health services are allowed to continue to operate, restrictions that were issued by MoH on social distancing, reducing visits to health facilities and stopping of elective surgeries has kept many sick people from seeking the health care they need. We have witnessed major reduction of numbers of patients utilizing health facilities. This could lead to complications due to disease progression. While Government Health facilities are able to continue running due to funding from exchequer, Faith Based Health Facilities and those from Private Sector are negatively impacted by loss of revenue. We have been saddened to see media reports of health institutions that are sending health workers on unpaid leave and others shutting down some of their services.

We appeal to the Government to encourage the public to utilize health facilities for treatment of other illnesses and to get important services like immunizations and antenatal care. The Ministry of Health should provide guidelines for safe use of health facilities and undertake supervision to ensure adequate safety measures are being adhered to in the provision of health services. The Government will need to plan for a stimulus package to enable the Faith Based Health Facilities to rebuild the capacity of their health systems as we emerge out of COVID-19 pandemic.

4. CHURCH REOPENING
We commend the Interfaith Council for the recommendations on reopening of churches for public worship. The Anglican Church embraces the guidelines and modalities to enable it reopen. Indeed, our members need to get more vibrant and visible in the COVID-19 pandemic response. The Churches have a key role to play now and in the post-COVID recovery period. People need encouragement, messages of hope, prayer, spiritual and psychosocial support. The Church will proactively be engaged in disseminating messages on COVID-19 prevention, testing, treatment and stigma mitigation and in mobilizing support for the most vulnerable and to be a credible voice in advocacy.

We are committed to: -
  i)  Safeguarding the health and safety of our congregants
  ii) Disseminating correct information to our members
  iii) Engaging our members in constructive dialogue on issues affecting our communities which includes COVID-19
  iv) Care and support for members facing these challenges.

We are keenly aware that we have to adopt to a new norm as our churches re-open during this season. The adoption of use of technology for virtual meetings and worship activities will continue, be improved and mainstreamed.

We appeal to our clergy to be cautious. All congregants, visitors and church workers must wear face masks at all times. Activities involving physical contact such as greeting and laying on of hands have to be suspended. Infrastructure adjustment has to be done to ensure physical distancing is observed. Seating spaces of 1.5m apart should be marked on the benches and we can skip alternate benches. Singing should be minimized and worship services should not exceed one hour. Churches can increase the number of services in a day and congregants can be encouraged to sign in for their preferred service to assist in planning.
Hand washing facilities should be provided at the entrance of the Churches and ushering should involve directing all congregants and visitors to wash hands, sanitize and seat at designated places. Seats and surfaces in churches should be disinfected after each service. Microphones should be regularly disinfected. Information on COVID-19 should be provided at every service. Additionally, re-opening should be gradual and following the stipulated guidelines by the Interfaith Council.

5. SCHOOL REOPENING
Following the directive by the government that schools will open in January 2021 we urge the parents and guardians to be close and monitor their children. We are saddened with reports of high number of girls getting pregnant and boys getting into drugs abuse. As COVID-19 is going to be with us for a while, clear guidelines and protocols should be provided to assure safety in the School environment before reopening can be done. We urge the government, under the economic stimulus package to seriously also consider paying relief allowances to teachers in Private schools and under Board of Management.

6. CONSTITUTION DEBATE
As you will recall in our address to the Nation on 16th December 2019, we urged Kenyans to take time to read the BBI Report immediately it is availed to the public, be positive and have conversation that must focus on what we can do collectively with problems, and how we can implement those recommendations and move the country forward. There are hints of moves to amend the 2010 Constitution of Kenya through yet another Referendum in anticipation of the Elections scheduled for 2022.

Democratic governance demands a stable constitutional order and structure that guarantees national cohesion, respected and honoured by all Kenyans irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, age or status. We therefore request that before we proceed with any amendments, we urge the political class to share the report for public scrutiny.

7. PRAYER
O Lord our God, help us trust you with our decisions and our future. Let us lean on you with all our heart instead of relying on our own imperfect understanding. Give us clear guidance in our life, Lord as we submit ourselves to you, will direct our paths and we can have confidence that your direction is always the best way to go. Hear our prayer, Father, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

God bless you; God bless Kenya.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

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