



# MOYA CHRONICLES

A PUBLICATION OF MISSIO AFRICANUS



## NAVIGATING THE CURVES OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

**Victor Bamidele Akerele**

*“... of the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their command.”*

*(1 Chronicles 12:32)*

### INTRODUCTION

Pandemic is not new in world history. Just a century ago, an influenza pandemic ravaged the world severely in 1918. It was caused by an H1N1 virus with genes of avian origin. However, the current COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented in the history of most of us alive today. The pandemic has taken many lives and affected individuals and the global economy. Some people have lost their sources of livelihood and some businesses have shut down.

While some parts of the world are experiencing the ease of lockdown, some other parts are experiencing another lockdown due to a second wave caused by new COVID-19 variants. With these new strains, it will take time before things return to the ‘normal’ we were used to. It is therefore important that we face reality and live in the consciousness that things will no longer be as they used to be. That is, we are in a ‘new normal’. Ministers and the church must face this reality quickly and make adjustments to the curves that the pandemic has created. Christians, especially Christian leaders, must understand the times that we are in, know what to do, and move swiftly to do it at the right time.

There is no doubting the fact that this COVID-19 pandemic has thrown curve balls at everyone in the world. These curveballs include unexpected turns in life, family, ministry, business etc. While life frequently throws us a curve every now and then — just as COVID-19 is doing now — these surprising turns can actually be a blessing in disguise if handled well.

### POSSIBLE CURVES CAUSED BY THE PANDEMIC

1. Loss of jobs, loss of businesses, and an increase in unemployed church members.
2. Pressure on churches to assist their members and non-members.
3. Reduced church income.
4. Possible reduction in onsite attendance (*church with walls*) and a possible increase in online members (*church without walls*).
5. Fear of being infected by COVID-19.
6. Challenge of how to make good use of ICT to reach church members and larger audiences.
7. Harnessing the emergence of new leaders during the lockdown.
8. Reduced attention span. People may now prefer short services if they have to be in the four walls of the church auditorium as many are now getting used to short online services.

### NAVIGATING THE CURVES

The curves created by COVID-19 can actually help you to slow down, pause, reflect, evaluate and launch into new heights. It will help you to evaluate where you have been in ministry, where you are now, and where you want to be. **For a pastor to minister effectively during and after the pandemic, he or she must face the reality of the times, understand the season, be willing to change strategy and worship pattern, adapt to the new normal, and be futuristic.** Some of the things that can be done to navigate the curves created by COVID-19 pandemic include the following:

## 1. Realise

Every pastor and, generally speaking, every individual must face the fact that COVID-19 is real. It is with us and has affected several things, if not everything. We are at a time in the world's history that calls for sober reflection, rediscovery and restructuring. Pastors should protect themselves against the infection by taking precautionary measures. They should educate church members on safety precautions and COVID-19 protocols. Pastors should not instil fear in the members but help them to know about Jesus, who is going about doing good and healing all who are oppressed by the devil (Acts 10:38).

## 2. Reunite

It is high time the church started strengthening her bond of unity by strategising and synergising appropriately (Ephesians 4:3-4). The church must make this period a time of social connectedness in order to reduce the possibility of members falling into depression. Closing up communication gaps by using every available platform (including phone calls and text messages) to reach out to members is very crucial now more than ever. The social or welfare ministry of the church should be empowered to function more. Pastors should lead the church to engage safely in social activities. It is a time to lend helping hands to members and non-members who have been seriously affected by the pandemic. The church should be more strategic in its involvement in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

## 3. Readjust

One of the curveballs COVID-19 has thrown at the world is regarding the global economic downturn. While some businesses are experiencing a boom, most businesses are impacted negatively. Some people have lost their jobs. The church may have to adjust her budget and expenditure based on the income being received. Limiting programmes to focus on people-centred events can also be helpful. These adjustments may be temporary until the economy improves. Pastors can also adjust worship patterns by developing content that will address the needs of members. Simply put, let your context inform the content you are giving out. Understand the times like the sons of Issachar and be contextual in your message.

## 4. Reinvent

Reinventing involves re-strategising and creating something new from something already existing. The challenges that came with COVID-19 have shown that some of us need to take some lessons in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Anyone who is not technologically inclined may not be able to operate maximally in this new normal. Pastors need to be creative and innovative. Some will need to invest in the church's ICT and/or media department. If you don't have one, it

may be helpful to create a multimedia ministry platform as an arm of the church. Pray for insight and foresight.

## 5. Reassure

David said in Psalm 27:13, *"I would have lost heart unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living."* David had hope amid hopelessness. This is the kind of spirit that members need to have to be able to navigate the curveballs that COVID-19 is throwing at them. In other words, staying positive and promoting hope is vital at such a time as this. Pastors should lead their church members to sing songs of faith and hope and confess scriptural texts of faith and hope. Pastors should reassure members that all will be well through the love of Christ our saviour. No matter how hard the times may be, pastors and their parishioners should look at the positive side of life and believe that tomorrow shall be better, brighter and more beautiful.

## CONCLUSION

God holds the map of the journey of every individual. Let us, therefore, trust Him to guide us through every challenge we face in life. The storm of COVID-19 shall pass and rain of blessings shall fall. However, while we wait for the pandemic to be over, pastors and parishioners must understand the times, adjust to it, and adapt to the new normal so that they can be more effective during and after the pandemic.



Victor Bamidele Akerele is the President of Lagos Central Baptist Conference of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. He holds a Doctor of Ministry degree and currently undertakes a PhD Program at Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria

## SUBSCRIBING IS EASY

WhatsApp 'SUBSCRIBE'

to +44 7566 826690

and we will add you to our lists. You can also access previous episodes on our website:

<https://decolonisingmission.com/category/moya-chronicles/>