

30th September 2020

Dear El Shaddai Family

CORPORATE WORSHIP GATHERINGS AT ESCC

You may have read the letter we sent you a few days ago, dated 23rd September, when I indicated that your Elders were meeting on Wednesday night to discuss President Ramaphosa's announcement that SA has moved to Lockdown Level 1ⁱ. We did meet on Wednesday and continued to meet over the weekend and again today to discuss the implications of this decision on El Shaddai Christian Church.

For El Shaddai Christian Church, the decision is not as simple as others face. As this ministry includes a significant Christian School, we must also take into consideration regulations impacting schools.

The Western Cape Education Department issued the following regulation

“These directions do not allow for non-education activities. Schools or school halls may not be used for church services, funerals or any other public gatherings.” WCED Reference: COVID-19/20200917/01)

The outcome of our eldership meetings is, for the reasons outlined below, we do not feel it wise to open our facility for corporate worship services for the foreseeable future.

Firstly, we do believe that, unless a law explicitly disobeys God or His Word, we are required to submit to the authority of the land – whether we agree or not.

Secondly, El Shaddai Christian School is entering into examination time. As we are a registered international examination centre, apart from our internal candidates, we will also host 297 external candidates who will sit for their examinations at this facility. We are of the opinion that the risk is too high, on behalf of these students. From the best advice we have, it is wisdom to minimize exposure by limiting people using the facility. We are a family

and part of our family is the school. Our students have faced many challenges this year and common sense advises us to hang on and see them through until the end of their exams.

Thirdly, we consider the reputational damage to the school and the church to be unacceptable should we act irresponsibly and put the futures of our students at risk. It is time to make the sacrifice of our Sunday gatherings for the benefit of the whole.

This does not mean El Shaddai Christian Church is closed! The past few months have seen that, through our cell groups, our church has been impervious to this storm. We have seen many cell groups flourish, build meaningful community and support each other. Equally, our pastors have used this time to strengthen our input into our cells – something we plan to continue to do.

We believe this shift towards our homes being our church has been overwhelmingly positive for ESCC and we would like this to be our new normal. Delaying opening our facility, helps us entrench cell group life as our focus! In this season, we encourage you to keep meeting, in person, if you can, in your homes as the regulations allow. Let us grow the bonds of cell life which will make our celebration life all the sweeter.

In addition to your cell group meetings,

- We encourage you to continue to make use of our live streamed services.
- We will seek to develop a plan for limited physical gatherings in the weeks ahead with clusters of cells groups in open areas like public spaces etc. Your pastor will let you know soon what we are suggesting.
- Where possible, volunteer in our Covid-19 relief efforts that are ongoing.

While this may be disappointing news, we believe this represents our best way forward. Of course, we will constantly evaluate and adjust to the situation in the best interest of all. But, for now, let us rather postpone our corporate gatherings for this period ahead.

We are absolutely confident that the church and, especially our local church, will not only survive this but will ultimately thrive as a result of this season.

With love

Bruce and Judy
For ESCC Eldership and Staff

ⁱ <https://www.gov.za/covid-19/about/coronavirus-covid-19-alert-level-1>