



Impact of COVID-19 on the Church of God in Nigeria

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Abstract. This paper explores the effects of Covid-19 in the Church with a bid to identifying the positives and negative influence on the Church, which is expected to be the community of faith. Covid-19 is a disease and death virus that has infected the world since early 2020. Governments around the world are finding it more difficult to deal with it, because it rising has different goals. However, the battle against this virus in Nigeria is becoming more daunting due to persistent difficulties such as pervasive socio-economic inequality, less importance of life being provided to those on the margins, and the government's apathic response. Otherwise, corona virus is both stubborn and untouchable. It's not afraid of strong regimes, riches of wealthy, advanced technology, war arsenals, nuclear weapons, strict rules, or violent police forces. So, who's going to win, the people or the virus? Ultimately, research can discover a cure, but in the meantime, the deadly virus is endangering democracies, undermining religion, economies, employment and businesses, destroying health, mental and social well-being, and killing thousands more on the planet due to fear or hunger, as well as to the dearth of medical facilities.

1. Introduction

The history of outbreaks of pandemics and contagious diseases is as old as the existence of mankind. The novel Corona Virus, otherwise referred to as COVID-19, was first identified in 2019 in the Chinese city of Wuhan after which the pandemic spread like wildfire through continents, generating global health problems with consequent effects on governments, economies, education and lifestyles worldwide. The pandemic 's devastating

consequences in terms of the constant statistical rise in the number of reported diseases and deaths forced the World Health Organization (2020) and worldwide political leaders to take stringent steps. Other efforts at mitigating the spread of the virus globally have been in the areas of collating data daily, developing effective vaccines and preventive measures to contain the spread or surge in infected cases. The strict procedures introduced to protect lives and curb the spread of the novel Corona virus portend a major shift in peoples' lifestyles globally in terms of social relations, economy, politics and education to mention but a few. In Nigeria, the threats of the pandemic were not taken serious early enough and so, the response was weak. While other countries were seriously battling the pandemic, Nigerians were still going about their normal daily sociopolitical and economic routines. The first case of the pandemic was recorded in Nigeria was recorded on February 14, 2020 (BBC News, 2020). Maclean (2020), laments that most of the index cases of Covid-19 in Nigeria were imported from Europe and America rather than China, where the virus originated.

The possibility of Nigeria becoming the epicenter of the pandemic has become a major concern to professionals and experts across the globe due to the fragile health systems characterized by inadequate funding, ineffective data management system, inadequate training of healthcare workers and unavailability of modern medical equipment. Almost all the states (35 states) out of 36 states have recorded confirmed cases as at the time of writing this article. In line with the practices in containing the pandemic, the government instituted measures such as interstate travel bans or restrictions, closure of land and sea ports, grounding of all non-essential flights or

movements, contact tracing, massive sensitization of citizens on the nature of the virus, isolation or social distancing, disinfecting public places, shutting down of schools, religious and other public places. However, as a result of the lockdown and restriction of people's movement in most states, most businesses have gone cashless with a 70% rise in Point of Sales (POS) transactions in Nigeria in March, 2020 according to a report by the Nigerian Inter-Bank Settlement Scheme (NIBSS) (Adesanya, 2020). Also, the educational system has paralyzed and only just few evolving from conventional classroom instruction to eLearning channels such as Google or virtual classroom, radio and television teaching sessions by some schools and churches which are closed down have now resulted to online churches in form of Instagram Live, Facebook Live, Zoom and Church radios. The impacts COVID-19 is causing and inflicting across the layers of society in different sectors have changed and going to change further in many ways. Many did undermine the consequential impact and have now started to accept its deadly power to inflict death and the ability to contaminate millions of people. COVID-19 pandemic has pushed many human activities to opt for changes. One such drastic change coronavirus introduced concerns faith of the believers who congregate for worship services and other important functions that fall in the Christian calendar that the church observes. COVID-19 has changed the regular services and other important events that falls within the Christian calendar in the last two months. Due to the changing scenario, physical connectivity within the ecclesia has totally been snapped off and now it is only on-line proximity. Congregation members are strictly forbidden to assemble in the churches and so the global church went on-line.

1.1 History of The Virus

In 1918, the Influenza virus was already in existence but it was the Type A influenza viruses that caused the most severe disease and are deadliest to humans. They are composed of combinations of 16 different hemagglutinin subtypes and nine different neuraminidase subtypes, which are the proteins found on the influenza virus's surface that allow it to bind to the host cell (this is what enables the virus to live and reproduce in the human body) (Kupperberg, 2008). The origin of the Influenza Type A virus otherwise called H1N1 virus is yet unknown, however, there are certain reviews which suggests that the most likely site of origin was Haskell County, Kansas, U.S., an isolated and sparsely populated county in the southwest corner of the state, in January 1918 (Barry, 2004). British scientist J.S.

has provided yet another theory. According to him, Oxford emerged in a post of the British Army in France, where a British disease doctor named "purulent bronchitis" exploded in 1916 (Oxford, 2001). In 1927 the American Medical Association published a comprehensive international pandemic study by Dr. Edwin Jordan, editor of *The Journal of Infectious Disease*, Barry (2004), after years of work and analysis of evidence from all over the world. He claimed that after years of research, France, China and India had to be removed as a possible source and concluded that the United States was the most probable source, from army to base, then towns and villages. "The facts was even clearer. Influenza could be found hopping from soldier to base, then to cities, and going with soldiers to Europe. His inference was that the United States was the place of origin (Jordan 1927).

Type A influenza virus emerged at a time when the world was more concerned about the outcome of the First World War than about any virus or illness, what they failed to realize was that diseases killed more people in times of war than the armies on either side, for example, "disease claimed 10 British lives for every battlefield death in the Boer War (1899–1902); it took 2 lives for every 1 in the American Civil War (1861–1865), and the ratio was 6 to 1 in the Spanish-American War (1898)" (Kupperberg, 2008). The neglect of the outbreak and inaction by most countries (especially the United States) led to the ease of access of contamination, as the spread in most scenarios occurred in concentrated, overcrowded, military camps then spread to municipal areas. Second, the widespread of the virus was also because a lot of influential people made a conscious effort to limit people from knowing about the virus so as not to affect the morale of the soldiers and the people in general, at that time it had become the regular practice of men in power to make use of propaganda to aid the war, In December 1917 David Lloyd George (former United Kingdom prime minister from 1916 to 1922) admitted to C.P. Scott, the Manchester Guardian editor, said that if people only knew the facts about the war it would end tomorrow (Scott, 1970). It was also due to this fact that the virus got its alias, the *Spanish Flu*, Spain at that time played a neutral role in the war and was free from the bureaucracy and red-tapes that accompanies it, therefore Spanish newspapers were free to report the emergence of a new influenza virus as there existed no wartime censorship limiting the nature of news published, thus giving the international community the false notion of the virus originating in Spain. Flowing from these, the next question to be answered seeks to ascertain how many people got infected

(infection rate) and how many died as a result of this pandemic (mortality rate). There are some reports that the outbreak resulted in the deaths of more than 20 million people globally (Kilbourne, 1987, Simonsen, et al, 1998 & Jeffrey, et al , 2001), an additional 25 – 30 million people died from the pandemic in 1991 (Patterson, 1991). A more recent report places the death toll at as much as 100 million (Johnson, 2002 & Knobler, 2005), with an outbreak rate of one million. The figures are yet unknown due to several reasons, one of them being the fact that certain countries at that time were accused of underreporting the cases of death.

1.2 How did Covid-19 started?

Some early cases of Covid-19, however, appear to have inflicted people with no link to the Wuhan market at all, suggesting that the initial route of human infection may pre-date the market cases. The Wuhan market was shut down for inspection and cleaning on January 1, but by then it appears that Covid-19 was already starting to spread beyond the market itself. On January 21, the WHO Western Pacific office said the disease was also being transmitted between humans – evidence of which is apparent after medical staff became infected with the virus.

1.3 What exactly is Covid-19?

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that are known to infect both humans and animals, and in humans cause respiratory illness that range from common colds to much more serious infections. The most well-known case of a coronavirus epidemic was **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (Sars)**, which, after first being detected in southern China in 2002, went on to affect 26 countries and resulted in more than 8,000 cases and 774 deaths. While the cause of the current outbreak was initially unknown, on January 7 Chinese health authorities identified that it was caused by a strain of coronavirus that hadn't been encountered in humans before. Five days later the Chinese government shared the genetic sequence of the virus so that other countries could develop their own diagnostic kits. That virus is now called Sars-CoV-2. Although symptoms of coronaviruses are often mild – the most common symptoms are a fever and dry cough – in some cases they lead to more serious respiratory tract illness including pneumonia and bronchitis. These can be particularly dangerous in older patients, or people who have existing health conditions, and this appears to be the case with Covid-19.

1.4 The Genesis of Covid-19 In Nigeria

On 28 January 2020, the Federal government of Nigeria assured citizens of First outbreak Milan, Italy Index case . On 31 January 2020, following the developments of COVID-19 pandemic in mainland China and other countries worldwide, the federal government of Nigeria set up a Corona virus Preparedness Group to mitigate the impact of the virus if it eventually spreads to the country. The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control also announced same day that they had already set up corona virus group and was ready to activate its incident system if any case emerged in Nigeria. On 26 February 2020, a Chinese citizen presented himself to the Lagos State government on suspicion of being infected with corona virus. He was admitted at Reddington Hospital and was released the following day after testing negative. The first confirmed case of the pandemic of corona virus disease 2019 in Nigeria was announced on 27 February 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus, he works in Nigeria when he had returned on 25 February from Milan, Italy through the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, fell ill on 26 February and was transferred COVID-19 cases in The Greater Lagos Metropolitan Area excluding areas falling within Ogun state territory, On 9 March 2020, a second case of the virus was reported in Ewekoro, Ogun State, a Nigerian citizen who had contact with the Italian citizen. (2 months and 1 week ago). Background to the country of its readiness to strengthen surveillance at five international airports in the country to prevent the spread of corona virus. The government announced the airports as Enugu, Lagos, Rivers, Kano and the FCT. On the same day, the World Health Organization listed Nigeria among other 13 African countries identified as high-risk for the spread of the virus.

Early March, the minister of health in Nigeria, Osagie Ehanire, announced that 60 persons who had contact with the index Italian patient were under isolation, 40 persons in Ogun State and 20 in Lagos State. On 1 March, four Chinese citizens were quarantined in Plateau State, they all tested negative the following day. On 3 March, the governor of Lagos State, Babajide Sanwo-Olu disclosed that two Reaction on foreign Nationals from an unnamed Asian country has tested negative to the virus. On 6 March, the Anambra State government announced that five Chinese citizens tested negative for the virus. The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control reported that a total of 219 primary and secondary contacts of the index case had been identified and were being actively monitored. On 9 March, the

President Muhammadu Buhari established a Presidential Task Force for the control of the virus in the country. On 10 March, Turkish Airlines cancelled all their flights to Nigeria due to the virus outbreak. On 15 March, a woman in Enugu State displayed the symptoms of corona virus, she tested negative the following day. On 17 March 2020, Nigeria postponed the 20th national sports festival that was supposed to hold in Benin City, Edo State from 22 March to 1 April. On 18 March, the management of the National Youth Service Corps suspended the 2020 Batch A stream one 21 days orientation exercise indefinitely. The orientation exercise commenced on 10 March and was expected to end on 30 March, before it was suspended after just 8 days. Later the same day, Nigeria placed a travel ban on 13 countries with high cases of the virus, the countries are; United States, United Kingdom, South Korea, Switzerland, Germany, France, Italy, China, Spain, Netherlands, Norway, Japan and Iran.

In Katsina State, a Nigerian citizen that returned from Malaysia displayed the symptoms of the virus, he tested negative the following day. Kano State government confirmed that three persons tested negative for the virus in the state. Lagos State government banned religious gatherings of over 50 worshippers for 30 days, Ogun State also banned any gathering of more than 50 people for 30 days. The New Afrika Shrine suspended all their programmes indefinitely. Kwara State and Lagos State announced the indefinite closure of their public and private schools, while Zamfara State, Sokoto State, Katsina State, Niger State, Kano State, Jigawa State, Kebbi State and Kaduna State also closed down their schools for 30 days from 23 March. The Nigeria Football Federation suspended all football activities for four weeks. On 19 March, Anambra State government announced the closure of their schools and suspension of public gatherings indefinitely, tertiary institutions was closed from 20 March, while primary and secondary schools was closed from 27 March. Ogun State government extended an earlier ban to schools and religious centres in the state indefinitely. Federal government announced the closure of tertiary institutions, secondary and primary schools. Enugu State government also ordered the closure of all primary and secondary schools in the state from 27 March. On 20 March, Nigeria extended their travel ban to two more countries, Sweden and Austria. Ekiti State government banned social, political, religious and family gatherings of more than 20 persons. The state also ordered the closure of all their schools from 23 March. Nigeria announced the closure of their international airports, Enugu, Port Harcourt and Kano airports from 21 March. Rivers

State government also announced the closure of all their schools and directed the restriction of all religious activities.

Osun State government banned any public gatherings of more than 50 persons in the state with immediate effect, including schools, churches and mosques. Delta State government announced the closure of all their schools from 26 March. On 21 March, Nasarawa State government confirmed that five persons tested negative for the virus in the state. Kebbi State government announced the indefinite closure of all their primary and secondary schools. The Nigerian Railway Corporation also announced the suspension of all passenger services from 23 March. Lagos State government reduced the number of people allowed in any religious or social gathering from 50 to 20. Nigeria announced the closure of the remaining two international airports, Abuja and Lagos, from 23 March. Osun State reviewed their previous ban on public gatherings of more than 50 persons and changed it to a complete ban, enforcing it on all public gatherings in the state under any banner or organisation. Oyo State government ordered the closure of schools in the state. Bayelsa State government also ordered the closure of all schools in the state from 26 March and restriction of all public gatherings above 50 persons. Imo State government also announced the indefinite closure of all schools in their state with immediate effect. On 22 March, Edo State government announced the closure of all their schools from 23 March. On 23 March, Ebonyi State government banned all public gatherings in the state, including weddings, seminars, conferences, burials and any other large gatherings. Niger State government announced a shut down in the state, restricting movement from 8am to 8pm everyday, from 25 March. Kano State government suspended all gatherings in the state indefinitely. Rivers State government announced a partial lockdown in their state, closing cinemas, nights clubs, public parks, weddings, burials and religious worship centres from 24 March. Edo State announced an indefinite ban of any gathering of more than 50 people. The Chief Justice of Nigeria, Tanko Muhammad ordered all courts in Nigeria to shut down from 24 March. Nigeria ordered the closure of all land borders for four weeks and the suspension of Federal Executive Council, (FEC) meetings indefinitely. Anambra State government banned all public gatherings in the state with more than 30 persons, including weddings, festivals, funerals and clubs. The Independent National Electoral Commission announced suspension of all their activities for fourteen days. Ondo State government banned all political, religious and social gatherings in

the state for fourteen days. Oyo State government also banned all social gatherings in the state with more than 30 persons, including religious services, parties, burials and weddings. On 24 March, Yobe State government announced the closure of all their schools from 26 March. Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board suspended all their activities for two weeks. The Nigerian Senate adjourned plenary to 7 April, while the Nigerian House of Representatives adjourned indefinitely. Edo State government reduced the number of people allowed in any public gathering from 50 to 20, closing markets in the state and allowing only sellers of food items, medicines and other vital commodities to operate.

Kaduna State government confirmed that three suspected persons tested negative for the virus in the state. Nasarawa State government ordered the indefinite closure of all their schools with immediate effect. Osun state government banned weekly markets indefinitely in the state. Lagos State government ordered the closure of stores and markets in the state from 26 March, allowing only sellers of food items, medicines, water and other essential commodities to operate. The National Examination Council announced an indefinite postponement of the 2020 common entrance examination into 104 Unity schools in Nigeria, which was supposed to hold on 28 March. Enugu State government banned all social and political gatherings in the state. Actors Guild of Nigeria banned movie sets across Nigeria. Delta State government banned all social gatherings of up to 20 persons, including burials, crusades and ordered the closure of clubs and cinemas with immediate effect. Ondo State government ordered the immediate closure of all markets, shops and malls in the state for seven days. The government also banned clubs, beer parlours and joints, except places where food, water and medicals are sold. Federal Capital Territory Administration ordered the immediate closure of shops in the markets and neighborhood centres, except those selling food items, medicines and other essential commodities in the FCT. They also ordered the immediate closure of churches and mosques. On 25 March, Rivers State government announced an indefinite closure of their sea, air and land borders into and out of the state with effect from 26 March 2020. Kogi State government also announced an indefinite closure of their sea and land borders, suspending the activities of commercial motorcycle in the state with effect from 26 March. They also reduced the number of persons in any public gathering to 5. Ekiti State government banned the operations of markets in the state with the exception of those selling essential commodities like food items, water, medicine and medical equipments.

Kwara State government ordered the ban of commercial transportation, closure of all mosques and churches and markets with exception of markets selling drugs, food items and other essential commodities. Kano State also announced an indefinite closure of their air and land borders into and out of the state with effect from 27 March 2020. Bauchi State government also announced the closure of markets in the state from 26 March with the exception of those selling essential commodities like food items and medicine. Abia State government banned burial and wedding ceremonies of more than 30 guests. The state also banned religious activities of more than 50 persons for 30 days. Imo State government ordered the indefinite closure of major markets in the state with effect from 28 March. The government also closed its land borders, allowing entry upon screening. Delta State government announced the closure of their borders into and out of their state for two weeks in the first instance. The government announced the closure of Asaba airport with effect from 27th March; land borders with effect from 29 March; malls, supermarkets, markets and shops with effect from 1st April, ordering food sellers to conduct their businesses within the precinct of their homes. The government also directed all residents to stay at home with effect from 1st April. The government announced that the restrictions doesn't apply to providers of essential services like; security healthcare, directing pharmacies to remain open, water services, fire services, power services, essential departments of media houses and telecommunications companies. On 26th March, Ebonyi State government announced the closure of their state borders from 28th March, allowing only vehicles carrying food items, construction materials, medical supplies and patients going for treatment. Federal government ordered the immediate closure of international airports and land borders in the country for a period of four weeks. Rivers State government announced an indefinite closure of all markets in the state from 28th March. Jigawa State government ordered the indefinite closure of their state borders from 27th March. Akwa Ibom State government ordered the closure of their state borders, except for the transportation of food items. The state government also directed their workers to stay at home for a week starting from 30th March. The government also announced that their state-owned airline, Ibom Air, would suspend all its flight operations from 29th March. Kaduna State government placed a dusk to dawn curfew on the state, ordering residents to stay in their homes with immediate effect, except workers in essential services like; health workers, the fire service and security personnel.

The government also ordered the closure of all businesses, offices and places of worship, banning wedding events and all social gatherings. Sokoto State government announced the closure of their state borders for two weeks from 27th March, with the exception of vehicles transporting food and essential medical commodities. Federal Capital Territory Administration restricted business and commercial activities in the territory to 15 hours daily, starting from 9pm and ending 6am. On 27th March, Oyo State government placed dusk to dawn curfew on the state, banning inter-state travel from and into the state, except vehicles carrying food items, medical, pharmaceutical and petroleum products from 29th March, while also reducing the number of people allowed in a social gathering from 30 to 10. The state also announced that all markets will be closed except those selling perishable food items from 29th March. Osun State government announced the closure of their state borders from 28th March. The state government all announced the closure of their major markets as well as shopping malls, with the exception of pharmaceutical, foods and medical needs outlets. Katsina State government announced the closure of their state borders from 28th March, allowing only fuel takers and vehicles conveying food items and other essential commodities, but with subject to screening and testing at the point of entry. Enugu State government announced an indefinite closure of their state borders and inter-state transportation in the state from 31st March, allowing only those on medical emergency services. Nasarawa State government banned all social and religious gatherings of more than 50 persons, including weddings, churches services and mosque prayers with immediate effect. The state government also announced the restriction of all movement into the state. Niger State government banned the intra and inter-state movement of people and vehicles, exempting only vehicles carrying food items, fuel, medical supplies and other essential services. Zamfara State government announced the closure of their state borders with effect from 28th March 2020. Bayelsa State government announced an immediate closure of their sea and land borders into and out of the state. On 28th March, Anambra State government announced the closure of their 63 major markets from 31st March, for a period of two weeks, allowing only food items and medicine markets. Abia State government announced a four weeks closure of their state borders and markets from 1st April, directing residents to stay at home and allowing only food sellers to operate. Imo State government announced an indefinite ban on all weddings, burial ceremonies and religious activities with immediate effect. The state government also directed all civil and public

servants to stop work immediately, except those on approved essential services. Ogun State government announced the closure of their state borders for two weeks in the first instance from 29th March, allowing only vehicles conveying personnel involved in essential services such as security agencies, health workers, food, medical items and petroleum products. Cross River State government banned all religious gatherings of more than five persons in the state. Kebbi State government announced the restriction of all entries into and out of the state with immediate effect. Taraba State government announced the closure of their state borders with effect from 29th March, restricting movement in and out of their state.

On 29th March, Ekiti State government placed a dusk to dawn curfew on the state, closing the state borders and banning inter-state travel from and into the state for fourteen days, except vehicles carrying food items, medical, petroleum products and other essential goods from 30th March, while also ordering residents to stay at home, except those on essential services. The government also ordered the closure of all businesses, offices and places of worship. Anambra State government announced the closure of River Niger Bridge with immediate effect, allowing only vehicles transporting food items and medicines. Federal government announced the locking down of Lagos State, Ogun State and the FCT, for a period of two weeks from 11pm on 30th March, ordering the citizens of the affected areas to stay in their homes, banning travel to or from other states and announcing the shutdown of businesses and offices, exempting hospitals, food processing, petroleum distribution, banks, power generation and private security companies. The government also exempted workers in telecommunication companies, broadcasters, print and electronic media staff who couldn't work from home. The federal government also suspended the movements of all passenger aircraft all over the country, including commercial and private jets. Osun State government announced the total lockdown of their state from 31th March, banning movement of individuals and inter-state movements, allowing only those on essential duties to operate, such as health personnel, fire service, security personnel, environmental officials, power and water supply agencies, media and telecommunication officers. The state also permitted pharmaceutical and medical outfits to open. On 30th March, Adamawa State government announced the closure of their state borders for fourteen days with effect from 31th March 2020, ordering a total lockdown in the state. The state government also announced that the ban affects tricycle, taxis and bus operators throughout the state. The state government also banned social activities

and ordered the closure of all markets, except food markets, medicine markets and filling stations, directing banks to provide skeletal services. The lockdown of Ogun State that was supposed to start from 30th March, was shifted to commence from April, after the state government made a request to the federal government to allow them provide food for their residents. On 31st March, Bauchi State government announced the closure of their state borders for fourteen days with effect from 2nd April, ordering a total lockdown in the state and exempting essential services.

Kwara State government announced an indefinite closure of their state borders with immediate effect, exempting only vehicles carrying agricultural produce, medical equipments, and officials on essential duties. Delta State government reviewed the earlier closure of their state borders and restriction of movement for their residents and announced the exemption of those involved in the transportation of essential supplies such as; food, water, petroleum products, pharmaceutical products and other essential services, noting that banks were to remain open only for skeletal services. Bayelsa State government also reviewed the earlier closure of their state borders with the exemption of vehicles transporting food, drugs and the vehicles conveying personnel on essential duty. On 1st April, Taraba State government announced the banning of all public gatherings of more than 20 persons in the state. The state government also ordered the closure of all markets with immediate effect, except those providing essential services such as; pharmacies, food stores and petrol service stations. Ondo State government announced the closure of their state borders with effect from 2nd April, prohibiting inter-state travels into the state. On 2nd April, Bauchi State government reversed the total lockdown in the state. Akwa Ibom State government announced an indefinite lockdown of their state, directing residents to stay at home, closing all business premises, markets, shops, motor parks and offices, allowing only grocery shops, pharmacies and those on essential services to operate. On 5th April, Niger State government relaxed their restriction order with immediate effect, restricting movement from 2 pm to 10pm and allowing movement from 8am to 2pm every day. On 9th April, Kwara State government announced the total lockdown of their state for 14 days from 10th April, exempting vehicles carrying goods and services. The state government allowed markets selling foods and medications to open on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, between 10am and 2pm. On 11th April, Anambra State government announced an immediate lockdown of their state for 14 days, directing

residents to stay at home and allowing only those on essential services to move around. Niger State government announced the lockdown of their state from 13th April, exempting those on essential services. On 13th April, federal government extended the lockdown of Lagos State, Ogun State and the FCT, for another two weeks from 11pm on 13th April. Ekiti State extended their state lockdown for another fourteen days. On 14th April, Delta and Osun States extended their state lockdown for another fourteen days. Kano State announced the total lockdown of their state for seven days from 16th April, ordering residents to stay at home, closing all markets, places of worship and public gatherings in state. On 17th April, at least 18 people in Nigeria have been killed by security forces during the enforcement of measures to curb the spread of the virus.

On 20th April, Nigeria extended the closure of airports to another 2 weeks. Borno State government announced a fourteen days lockdown of their state from 22nd April, restricting movement of individuals, banning public gatherings, and allowing providers of essential services. On 21st April, Taraba State government announced a total lockdown of their state from 22nd April, restricting movement of individuals and vehicles and allowing workers on essential duties, such as health workers, pharmaceutical shops, fuel stations and media houses. On 23rd April, Kwara State government extended their lockdown for another two weeks. On 25th April, Anambra State government lifted their lockdown. On 26th April, Kaduna State government extended their state lockdown for 30 days. On 27th April, federal government announced the locking down of Kano State, for a period of two weeks with immediate effect. The government also extended the locking down of Lagos State, Ogun State and the FCT, for a period of one week, announcing an indefinite nationwide curfew from 8pm to 6am starting on 4th May, while also placing an indefinite ban on non-essential inter-state passenger travel, allowing partial and controlled interstate movement of goods and services, announcing the mandatory use of face masks or coverings in public places, and extending the ban on social and religious gatherings. Anambra State government announced the reopening of the 63 major markets in the state. On 28th April, Delta State government announced the relaxing of their lockdown from 30th April.

2. Effects of COVID 19 On Churches

The current pandemic COVID-19 has altered activities and affected a lot of businesses, schools' calendar and this has great effect on the Church

because it has not allowed the members of each assembly to worship together. Many of the church members have no enough spiritual stability to stand on their own. What the Church can just do in this era of this pandemic is to maintain personal hygiene, always take care of health, follow the instruction of the ministry of health and keep a distance from people. God is using this experience as a warning to turn to Him. This world is coming to an end. People should rely on God as He is the only solution and the only healer. He is the only one who can help us at this time. A disease that has no cure can only be stopped by God. God is giving us His revelation already by the happenings around. Those who are yet to accept Jesus should do that because the coming of Christ is near. The Book of Revelation talks about the opening of a seal and disease comes into the third part of the world to kill people, but we should be very careful with our health and follow God, because He is the only one that can take away this virus. So, let us all keep faith and expect God's intervention. What precaution is the Church taking against the spread of coronavirus? Is it true that this will affect the growth of the Church as some churches have gone online? We have not had much case in Nigeria, but at present the Church will also need to reduce some of its activities and at the same time pray more than before. The Church also needs to encourage people. It is true that the development will definitely affect the growth of the Church because people will be afraid to come to church and our network system is still not very good in Nigeria. For now, there is no need to panic, but to take precautions and all will go well. A lot of people, even the aged, are not computer-literate and also cannot afford to go online. All these challenges will affect the growth of the Church. This will also affect the finances of the Church as well as the one-on-one ministry. But people should be mindful of the fact that the Church is in the heart, so, let everybody stay connected to the Church. It is only for a season, this time too will pass.

3. COVID-19: How can churches respond?

Churches are, of course, integral parts of their communities and are often on the front line of responding to disasters, both practically and pastorally. Experience from previous epidemics has shown that churches are particularly well-placed to build trust and hope, to counter fear, and to build community resilience as well as individual mental and spiritual resilience.

2.1 Spiritual and Theological Resources

Prayers in a time of Coronavirus- churches at this time of coronavirus disease should build a prayer link

that will help the members to maintain their spiritual stability in God, though there may not be any avenue to gather together but can handle it online.

Bible studies- scripture must be exposed to members that will encourage them and build their trust in God it must be an interacting which will allow them to participate, this will encourage them to be active and involve.

Maintaining worshipping life when we can't gather in person- Across the Anglican Communion, people are responding creatively to the suspension of traditional gatherings for worship. Where possible, churches are using social media, recording and live streaming of services and sermons to maintain a pattern of 'collective' worship. The Anglican Communion News Service (<http://www.anglicannews.org/>) is also preparing a service for each Sunday, using fresh self-recorded videos and archived material from across the Communion, providing the opportunity to worship with our global Anglican family. However, it is recognised that some church members, especially the elderly or those without digital access, may find it difficult to engage with this, either technologically or emotionally, so alternatives are also being sought. Ideas being tried in different places include using radio channels, people sharing in a service individually at a set time with a common prayer sheet delivered, ringing the church bell to call people to pray at home at the same time, and gathering in their own household to share in a service, a Bible study or to watch a live stream or recording together.

3.2 Practical Action

Supporting community preparedness for COVID-19 to help your community prepare for, and respond to, COVID-19, and the Church needs to get organised and plan what she can do. You will probably already be taking steps to minimise the spread of the disease through physical distancing and hygiene measures and encouraging people to self-isolate and seek testing when they have symptoms (where available). But it is equally important to discern how Church can be the hands of Jesus, reaching out to the most vulnerable at this time.

4. Prevention of COVID-19

The best way to prevent and slow down transmission is be well informed about the COVID-19 virus, the disease it causes and how it spreads. Protect yourself and others from infection by washing your hands or using an alcohol based rub frequently and not touching your face. The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from

the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes, so it's important that you also practice respiratory etiquette (for example, by coughing into a flexed elbow). At this time, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19. However, there are many ongoing clinical trials evaluating potential treatments. WHO will continue to provide updated information as soon as clinical findings become available?

5. Will People Come Back to Church after COVID-19?

There are some saying the new habit of watching church services at home will continue after the current stay-in-place orders are lifted. Others believe that Christians will miss the fellowship with other believers and will crave being with them in person. The widespread use of internet-based technology, via platforms such as Facebook Live and Zoom, has allowed many churches to broadcast their sermons, and sometimes musical ministry, to a wider audience than would usually meet in their buildings on Sundays. The relative ease of live streaming and video recording has given churches of all sizes the opportunity to reach out.

In addition, the wide usage of social media outlets, has given many people of all ages the chance to stay home on Sunday mornings, to sleep in, and still "attend" church services. Some even say that many Christians are watching more than one church service online each Sunday morning. One result of the current pandemic situation may be larger church audiences, but less active participation. People are watching church services on the internet but are much less involved in key metrics than they were before. For example, although some churches are providing children's and youth ministries online, there is less need for adult, not many people have access to good network, data and android that will help them to live service unless the recorded ones.

According to Mel Walker, he said, "Many were not gathering in person, Clergy members are to be commended for their ingenuity and willingness to, in some cases, learn new technology in an attempt to reach the largest number of people each weekend". The facts are in: Churches have launched new ways of connecting with people, and church members are enjoying their newly found Sunday schedules. The convenience of worshipping at home in front of a computer, tablet, or television has become what many are calling the "new normal" of church life. That fact is causing many church leaders to think about the possible answers to a specific question, "Will people

come back to active, in-person church attendance following the COVID-19 crisis?"

5.1 What would become of the Church after opening of the worship places?

A specific answer to that question is probably quite uncertain now as pastors' minister through the current realities of this pandemic. The Churches should start to start plan now for life after the coronavirus, when worshippers will be coming together, how can we manage the members that have started enjoying the worship at their own space and within the limited time?

According to Mel Walker, he stated the following reasons people may not *return to their routine of regular church attendance*:

- **People enjoy worshipping at home.** The relaxed atmosphere of being at home with their families may have a long-term appeal for many customary church attendees. It is not an exaggeration to say that the current stay-at home philosophy may have allowed some to watch worship services in their pyjamas. Some believe that a significant number of regular church members may want to continue this casual practice even after the COVID-19 pandemic is over.
- **People don't feel safe in public places anymore.** The media has done a great job of convincing people to be afraid of public places with crowds of people. Residents have been told to wear face masks in public, to have at least six feet of distance between people, to use hand sanitizer or disinfectant wipes regularly, and to wash their hands often. Younger generations are already struggling with anxiety and the current health crisis may make people quite leery about going to any public meetings in the near future.
- **People like the freedom to watch services on their own schedule.** Another already common practice in the overseas countries, even before this pandemic, was the practice of many to participate in other activities and functions on the weekends instead of making the commitment to regularly attend church services.

Although other activities are limited now as well, people seem to appreciate having more time available on weekends for other leisure pursuits. Having church services posted on websites and social media apps allows people to watch church services

whenever it works in their personal and family schedules.

6. Post Covid-19 Effects

- (i) People will miss connections with other believers. The current isolation from other people is likely to cause some to crave interpersonal connections with others. The extended time of social distancing can permit loneliness to develop in some, so perhaps followers will desire to be present in church buildings once again to renew times of fellowship and interaction with other believers. This may be especially true with younger generations for whom strong connections with peers are very important.
- (ii) People will respond positively to connections made during coronavirus situation. Many pastors and other church leaders have worked hard during the COVID-19 scare to communicate the gospel and the love of Christ to the largest number of people possible. Churches of all sizes have effectively utilized technology, especially social media platforms, to minister to church members and to reach out to unchurched people in their own communities.

Some churches also developed creative ways (such as food distribution to the needy and to demonstrate their willingness to serve in their own neighborhoods. These methods, especially during a difficult time will undoubtedly yield some evangelistic results for the church. Recipients may indeed choose to visit those churches once the current shelter-in-place directives are relaxed.

- (iii) People will have a greater sense of commitment due to living through a crisis. Some church leaders believe that the coronavirus epidemic may, in fact, be good for the church. Churches have had ways to fulfill their mission without the opportunity to gather in large assemblies. The emphasis upon a growing level of true community in small groups, in lieu of big gatherings, may continue to be a significant priority in the church’s future. Plus, the current widespread use of technology to communicate God’s Word will likely go on when the pandemic ends. Perhaps a renewed spirit of dedication has also emerged which will carry over to a new reality for the church. God’s people have had to be innovative and resourceful during the pandemic, and conceivably that level of commitment may continue once churches are back in their buildings.

Data Overview of Cases Around The World

Table 1: Covid-19 statistics (as at 18th May 2020)

Countries	Confirmed cases (Total)	Confirmed deaths (Total)	Recovery cases (Total)
Global	4,825,902	317,101	1,868,415
Africa	85,072	2,766	32,647
Europe	1,956,713	167,291	
Asia	1,100,232	27,645	532,441
South America	440,233	23,123	153,260
Nigeria	5,959	182	1,594
US	1,528,179	90,988	346,389
Spain	277,719	27,650	195,945
Italy	225,435	31,908	125,176
Russia	290,678	2,722	70,209
France	179,569	28,108	61,213
United Kingdom	243,695	34,636	
Germany	176,651	8,049	154,600
Turkey	149,435	4,140	109,962
Canada	78,318	5,902	38,550
Australia	7,060	99	6,392
China	82,954	4,634	78,238
Belgium	55,559	9,080	14,657
Saudi Arabia	54,752	312	25,722
Mexico	49,219	5,177	33,329
Chile	43,781	450	19,213
Portugal	29,209	1,231	6,430
Sweden	30,377	3,698	4,971
South Africa	15,515	264	7,006
Philippines	12,718	831	2,729
Egypt	12,229	630	3,172
Ghana	5,735	29	1,754

Source: Wikipedia, 2020

7. Cure of Covid-19

There's currently no treatment specifically approved for COVID-19, and no cure for an infection, although treatments and vaccines are currently under study. Other coronaviruses like SARS and MERS are also treated by managing symptoms. In some cases, experimental treatments are tested to see how effective they are. Examples of therapies used for these illnesses include: antiviral or retroviral medications, breathing support, such as mechanical ventilation, steroids to reduce lung swelling and blood plasma transfusions

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world we live in drastically. Attempts to contain the spread of the virus and flatten the curves in the number of deaths and infected cases have seen governments globally and in Nigerian states place strict restrictions such as travel bans, social distancing, lockdown of public institutions like schools, shopping malls, religious worship centers and so on. These measures have had dire consequences on education, socio-economic and political activities, and the people's lifestyle. The pandemic has exposed the terrible state of health care facilities and the height of poverty in the Country.

Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

- People should follow the directions of the relevant authorities as to the mode of prevention of Covid-19, the instruction of social distancing and washing of hands should be strictly followed to flatten the curve and to curb its spread.
- The government recently lifted the ban on closed down in Lagos state to savage the economic consequences on the nation. While this might seem like good news, the government have to be careful so as not to decide their sad fate with their own hands.
- The pandemic has taught us that good public health systems can be a determining factor in the economy of a country, a healthy country is a wealthy one. The government have to set up new strategies and make new policies for the advancement of public health systems.

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