



# SHAHIDIHUB AFRICA

Promoting God's kingdom in Africa through Research, New Perspectives, and Publications.

## **A POLL REPORT ON: THE STATE OF THE CHURCH IN KENYA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**(100-DAYS LATER)**

### **BACKGROUND**

On 13th March 2020, the government of Kenya ordered an immediate closure of all worship places in Kenya as a containment measure against the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The sudden move landed many churches in Kenya into an unfamiliar territory, thus necessitating new ways of doing ministry. Many church leaders were forced to adopt new ways of doing ministry to continue their ministries.

### **OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTATIONS**

This survey, by ShahidiHub Research & Consulting (under ShahidiHub Africa Ltd) sought to find out how churches first adjusted and continued to cope up with this unfolding situation. It also sought to find out how the future might look like for many churches in Kenya. The poll targeted pastors and church leaders, across denominations, in Kenya.

It is expected that the findings will enable pastors and church leaders to lead better amidst the pandemic, understand the current state of the church, and to foster an inter-denominational exchange of information and experience.

In addition, as the nation prepares toward reopening of the economy and places of worship, concerns of church leaders are critical in this process. What is their take on the effects of Covid-19, How are they coping up with this situation, will they be ready for reopening of places of worship, what measures are they ready to take? These and many other matters were covered in this poll.

### **SPONSORSHIP**

Due to the need for well-research data and credible information on the state of the church in Kenya, ShahidiHub Africa Ltd, through its sponsorship, stepped in to sponsor the survey and created a platform that will continue to host conversations on opportunities and challenges affecting the Body of Christ.

**Research Dates:** 22<sup>nd</sup> May- 20<sup>th</sup> June 2020. **Poll Release:** 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

**Who Participated:** Pastors/Church Leaders, in Kenya.

**Denominations Involved:** The Survey was open to all Churches in Kenya.

The following is our collation of the survey feedback (Responses from the open-ended questions were categorized accordingly).

## QUESTION 1: Basic Information

Number of Respondents (Pastors/Church Leaders): 429.

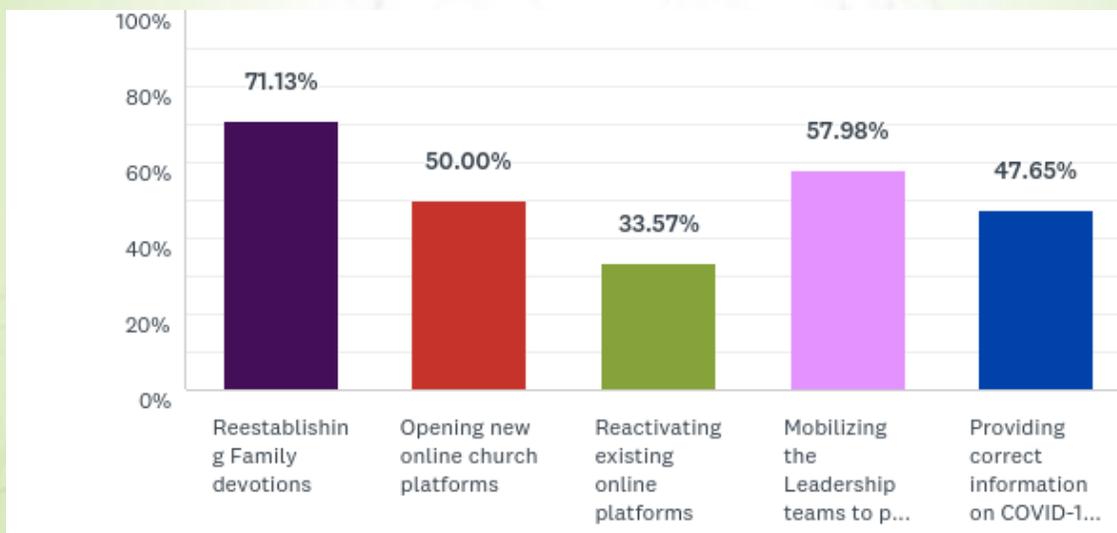
The Counties Represented by the polled pastors/church leaders: Over 33 Counties, in Kenya

The Pastors/Church Leaders Came from: 161 Denominations, in Kenya.

## QUESTION 2

What was your main focus when the government announced the immediate closure of churches due to COVID-19? Select all that apply in order of PRIORITY

- Reestablishing Family devotions
- Opening new online church platforms
- Reactivating existing online platforms
- Mobilizing the Leadership teams to plan and strategize
- Providing correct information on COVID-19 to dispel misinformation



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

When the government ordered closure of all places of worship as a health measure against Covid-19, many pastors and church leaders focused on reestablishing family devotions (71.13%), mobilizing leadership teams to plan and strategize (57.98%), opening new online church platforms (50%), providing correct information on Covid-19 to dispel misinformation (47.65%), and, Reactivating existing online platforms (33.57%).

After the stop of in-person Sunday Services, as the feedback shows, many respondents focused on reestablishing family devotions to continue key worship functions of the church. At the onset of Covid-19, quite a significant fraction of church leaders (83.57%), focused mainly on creating online church platforms and reactivating existing ones for use. Even at this early period when there was limited information on Covid-19, the Church, through pastors, remained a crucial link in creating provision of correct information on COvid-19 pandemic.

**Opportunities:** Parachurch organizations producing devotional materials, Bible study material can consider partnering with churches during this period.

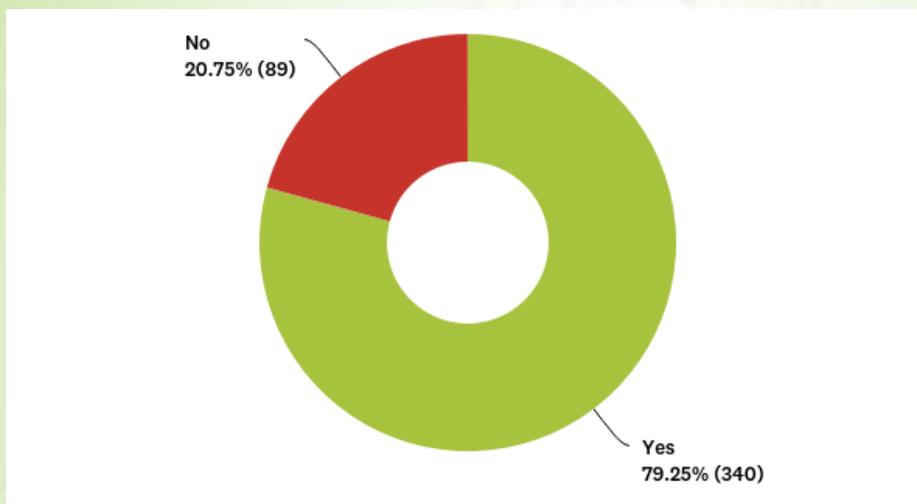
### QUESTION 3

Did your church services transition to any online platform (i.e. live or pre-recorded preaching)?

- Yes
- No

If “No,” briefly explain why \_\_\_\_\_

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS



Majority of churches in Kenya (79.25%) have transitioned to online platform (either live or pre-recorded preaching Services). However, a significant segment (20.75%) have not transitioned to any online platform, whether live or pre-recorded.

### REASONS WHY SOME CHURCH DID NOT MOVE TO ONLINE PLATFORMS

- Lack of financial resources to invest in requisite equipment and to facilitate the personnel involved in live or pre-recorded Church Worship Services. Also, lack of financial resources to invest in buying of data bundles.
- Network connectivity challenges in rural areas.
- (There was no need because) “Many members are not on online platforms; they are computer illiterate and do not own smartphones.”
- “We are used to Sunday church gathering”

### Key Recommendations:

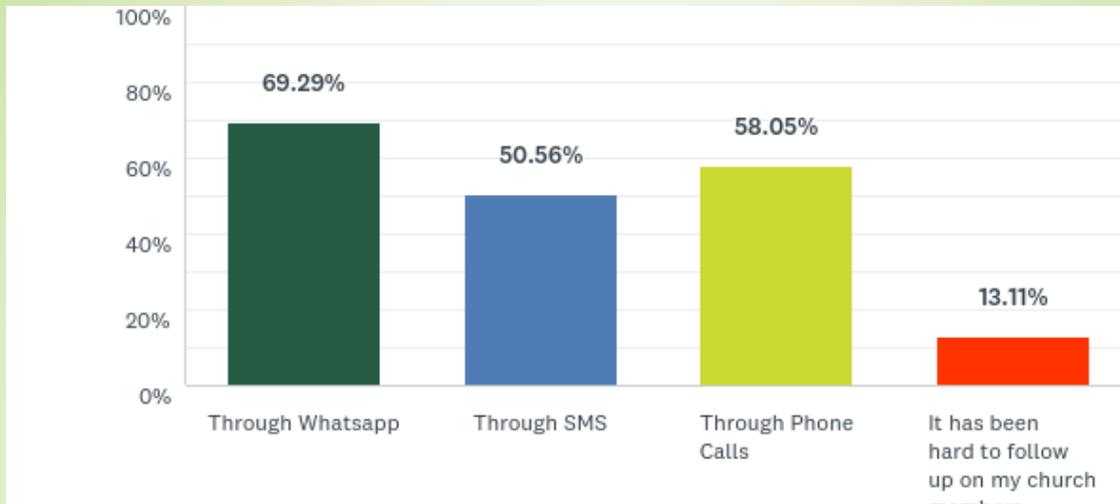
- Internet providers may need to consider offering churches some special tariffs on data bundles.
- Companies that deal with recording or broadcasting may need to provide incentives to churches and build a long-term relationship.
- Moving worship services online is not enough, there is need improve the live or pre-recorded services by developing capacity of people involved in church media departments.

## QUESTION 4

If you did NOT move to any online platform, how have you followed up on your members?  
(omit if you moved to any online platform)

- Through Whatsapp
- Through SMS
- Through Phone Calls
- It has been hard to follow up on my church members

Any other way? (Specify)----



### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

For those pastors/church leaders who did not transition online, most of them made some effects to continue connectedness with their members. The prominent means was: Whatsapp (69.29%), Phone Calls (58.05%), and SMS (50.56%). However, 13.11% expressed that it has been hard to follow up on their church members during this period.

#### **Other Ways Church leaders/Pastors have followed up on their members:**

- Home visits whenever it is necessary, but with proper observance to the Ministry of Health regulations
- Provision of hard copies of Bible study/ family devotional materials to members.
- Follow-up through the leaders of life/Cell-group (home churches).
- Availing to members the preaching/sermon texts with guided questions.

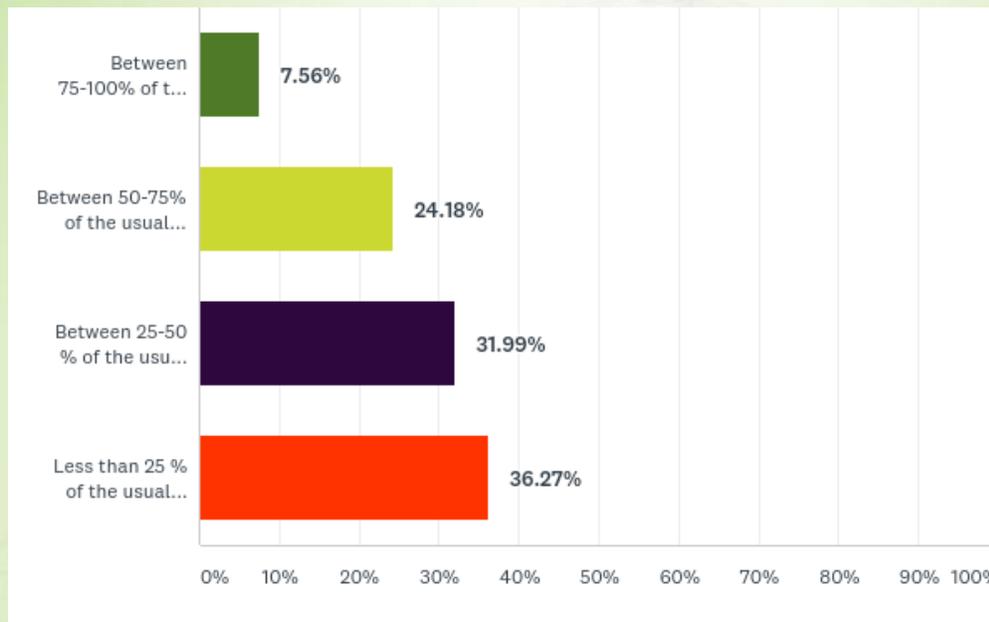
The qualitative data indicate that many pastors have persisted in their ministries despite challenges with technology. Many have come up with new ways of doing ministry; and reaching out to find how their members are doing. In cases where their physical presence and pastoral services are needed, home visitation has been an option, but with strict adherence to the health regulations by the Ministry of Health.

## QUESTION 5

If you moved to online Sunday Services, can you estimate as accurately as possible how many of your members have transitioned to the online platform (*omit if you did not move to any online platform*)

- Between 75-100% of the usual members
- Between 50-75% of the usual members
- Between 25-50 % of the usual members
- Less than 25 % of the usual members

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS



From the findings, only 7.56% of the respondents approximated that between 75-100% of the usual members transitioned to the church online platforms. Further, 24.18% of the

respondents opined that between 50-75% of the usual members transitioned to online platform. Also, from the study, between 25-50 % of the usual members (31.99%), and Less than 25 % of the usual members (36.27%), have transitioned to the church online platform.

Overall, 68.26% believe that, despite running online Church Sunday Services, they are reaching out to less than 50% of their members.

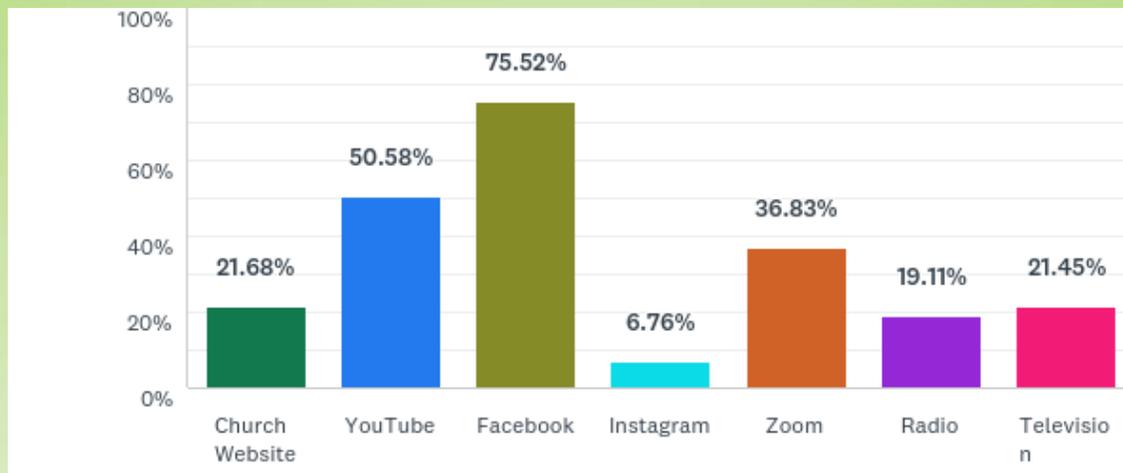
**Key Issue:** It is important for pastors/church leaders to come up with customized strategies to reach out to both the offline and online members.

## QUESTION 6

Since the ban on religious gatherings, what digital platform(s) have you found useful in reconnecting and remaining in contact with your church members? *Please tick all that apply.*

- Church Website
- YouTube
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Zoom
- Radio
- TV

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS



Church leaders have found the following digital platforms useful in reconnecting and remaining in contact with their church members: Facebook (75.52 %), YouTube (50.58%), Zoom (36.83%), Church Website (21.68%), Television (21.45%), Radio (19.11%), and Instagram (6.76%).

Facebook space tops the list, perhaps, because of its popularity/many users, easy-to-use features, and its interactive nature.

This data might be instructive to those pastors/church leaders who are looking forward to transition online or looking for alternative ways that are not just popular among church members, but also effective/dominant ways used by other churches.

## QUESTION 7

In view of your ongoing online or offline programs, which of your church groups do you think has NOT been given adequate and specific attention during this COVID-19 season? (Tick a maximum of two)

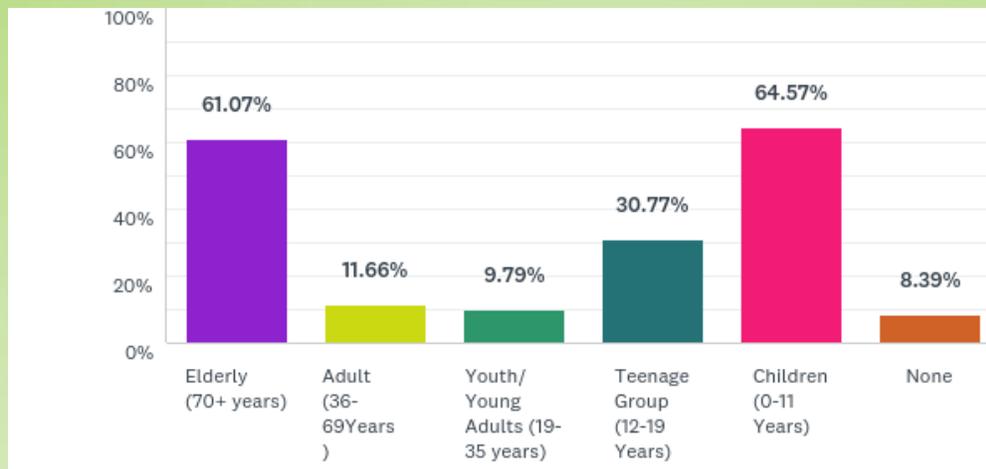
- Elderly (70+ years)
- Adult (36-69Years)
- Youth/ Young Adults (19- 35 years)
- Teenage Group (12-19 Years)
- Children (0-11Years)
- None

If any, what could be the reason? \_\_\_\_\_

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The top three groups that have not been given adequate and specific attention through the ongoing online or offline programs are: Children (0-11Years)- (64.57%); Elderly (70+ years)- (61.07%), and, Teenage Group (12-19 Years)- (30.77%).

### Reasons for this Phenomenon: We sampled few responses:



“Many elderly people and children are neither active online users nor well-versed in using online platforms.”  
“Many children have limited access to digital communication

gadgets.

“Due to high level of vulnerability, children and the elderly have been advised to stay at home to avoid risk of exposure. Visitations to children and elderly happen minimally.”

“It has been hard meeting young people even in their homes.”

“We are yet to develop content that is relevant to the ages of children and teenagers.”

“Much of the ongoing programs and sermon contents are not customized to reach out the young people.”

**Key Issue:** Church leaders might need to critically relook at their ministry strategies they have used over the past 100 days and evaluate their effectiveness and relevance to various groups. But as pastors/church leaders plan on how to best reach different church group, they need to avoid the one-size-fits-all approach. Different groups within the church have different needs that ought to be given attention. This finding shows that church leaders need to increase their efforts in the ministry to children, elderly and teenagers. During this period, each of these groups have fears, concerns, and faith-questions that need to be addressed.

### **QUESTION 8**

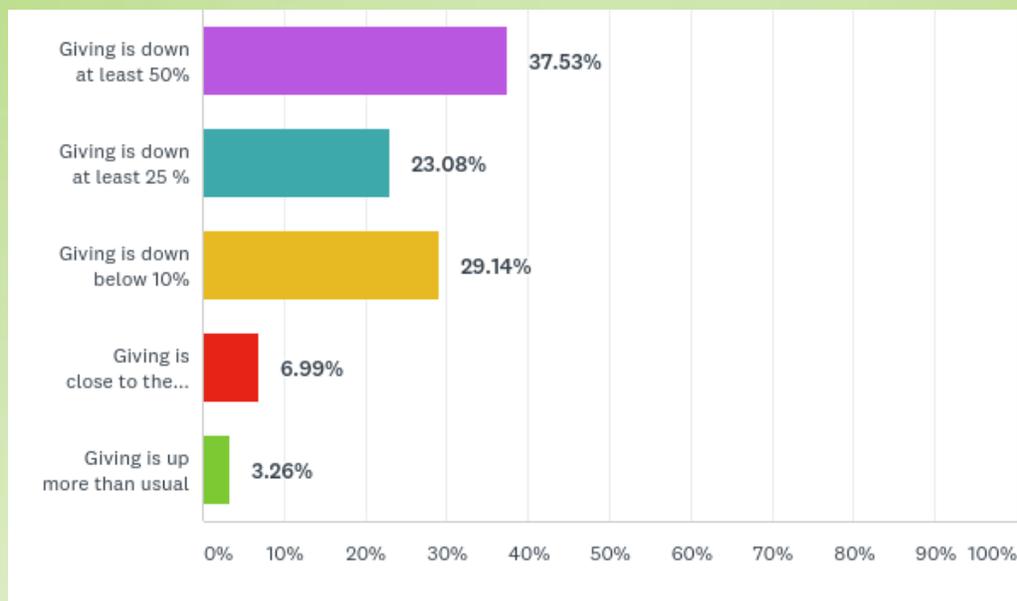
Which of the statements below, best describes the current state of giving in your church since COVID-19 compared to other months before the pandemic?

- Giving is down at least 50%
- Giving is down at least 25 %
- Giving is down below 10%
- Giving is close to the same
- Giving is up more than usual

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

From our respondents, 37.53% said that Giving is down at least 50%; while 23.08% mentioned that Giving is down at least 25 %; 29.14% said that Giving is down below 10%;

while 6.99% think that giving is close to the same. However small the percentage, it is interesting to note that 3.26% said that giving is up more than usual.



Overall, 85% think that giving is below 50%. This significantly impairs the functioning of church activities. Nevertheless, based on the findings, it is worth noting that church members have

continued to give, toward activities of the church, despite the prevailing conditions.

## QUESTION 9

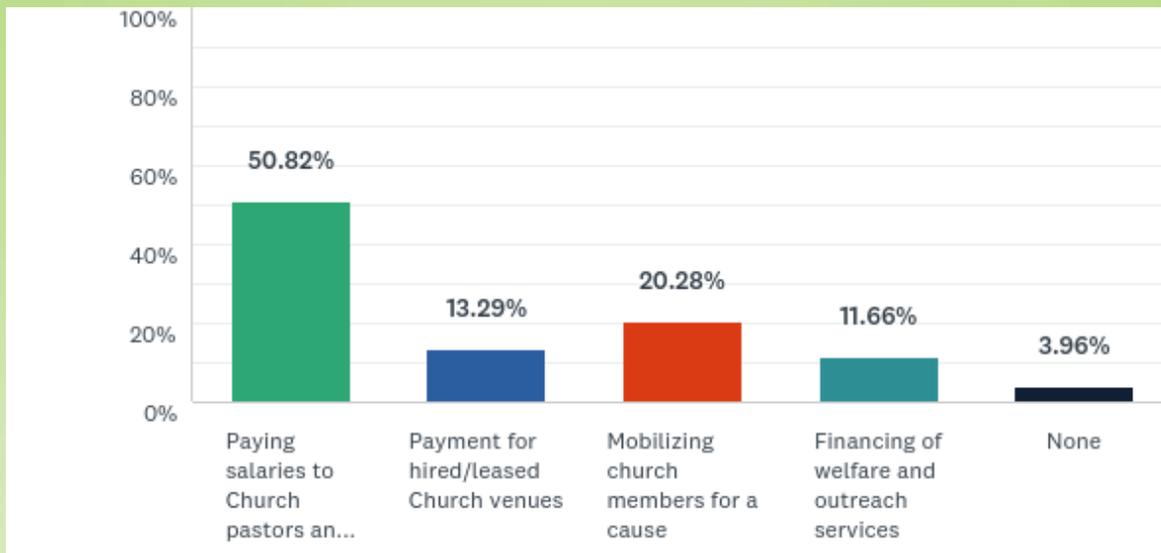
What are some of the administrative challenges your church is currently facing, due to the pandemic?

- Paying salaries to Church pastors and support staff
- Payment for hired/leased Church venues
- Mobilizing church members for a cause
- Financing of welfare and outreach services
- None

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following responses are ordered according to their scores: Paying salaries to Church pastors and support staff (50.82%), Mobilizing church members for a cause (20.28%), Payment for hired/leased Church venues (13.29%), Financing of welfare and outreach services (11.66%), and, None (3.96%).

Due to the dwindling resources and new vote heads in online technology, for most of the churches, pastors and church staff have been hit hard financially, especially in payment of salaries. Administratively, 20.28% of pastors/church leaders think that it has become hard mobilizing their members for any cause during the Covid-19 pandemic period. Also, 13% of Churches on leased/rented property are finding it hard to raise rental money. Approximately, 4% of churches, during this Covid-19 period, are not facing any administrative challenge on the aspects highlighted above.



### QUESTION 10

During this Covid-19 season, what activities are you carrying out that will demonstrate the love of Christ to the community around you? *Please tick only those that apply in order of priority.*

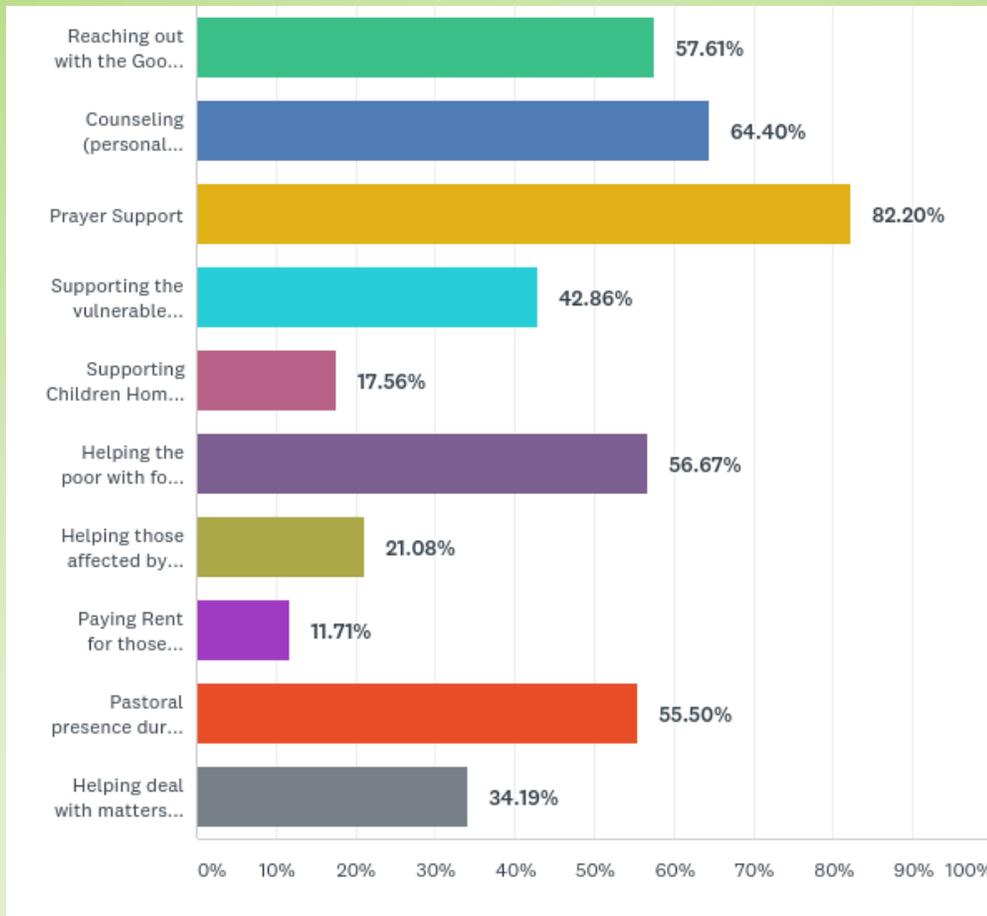
- Reaching out with the Good News
- Counseling (personal problems, conflicts, job losses)
- Prayer Support
- Supporting the vulnerable (Elderly, persons living with disabilities) with basic needs
- Supporting Children Homes with basic needs
- Helping the poor with food stuff
- Helping those affected by natural calamities with basic needs
- Paying Rent for those who've lost jobs
- Pastoral presence during bereavement process and burials
- Helping deal with matters of domestic violence

Other (Please specify)

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The church has continued to shine the love of Jesus Christ even during the darkest moments. The following activities to the society have stood out (ordered): Prayer Support [82.20%]; Counseling (personal problems, conflicts, job losses)- [64.40%]; Reaching out with the Good News [57.61%]; Helping the poor with food stuff [56.67%]; Pastoral presence during bereavement process and burials [55.50%]; Supporting the vulnerable (Elderly, persons living with disabilities) with basic needs [42.86%]; Helping deal with matters of domestic violence [34.19%]; Helping those affected by natural calamities with basic needs [21.08%]; Supporting Children Homes with basic needs [17.56%]; and, Paying Rent for those who've lost jobs [11.71%].

### Other Ministries Include:



Offering training to the surrounding community on economic activities that can sustain individuals and households.

Offering messages of encouragement and hope through (vernacular) radio programs

Developing programs and materials for Covid-19 sensitization

“Developing videos for equipping Church & Community for a Holistic, Gospel-based Response to COVID-19.”

Participating in community initiatives like repairing roads, and bridges destroyed during the recent floods.

### QUESTION 11

Have you created any new partnerships with other churches, and organizations in response to Covid-19?

- Yes
- No

If you answered ‘Yes,’ what nature of a partnership\_\_\_\_\_

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

On this question, about 60% have created new partnerships with other churches and organizations in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Approximately, 40% have not entered into any partnerships.

**Key Issue:** There is need for churches to increase partnerships across denominations and with like-minded organizations in order to effectively respond to the Covid-19 Pandemic.



### **Nature of the Partnerships Created**

- Interdenominational prayer network on digital platforms.
- Creating awareness that Covid-19 is real.
- Mobilizing and Donating foodstuff to the less fortunate in society (working with other

churches, faith-based organizations, supermarkets, CBO's; Sub-county and local administration).

- Pastors fellowship for emotional support.
- Outreaches and Evangelism.
- Fellowships of men across denominations.
- Financial support for streaming online services.
- Trainings on digitizing church services.

### **QUESTION 12**

What has your church done to complement government efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic? Select all that apply

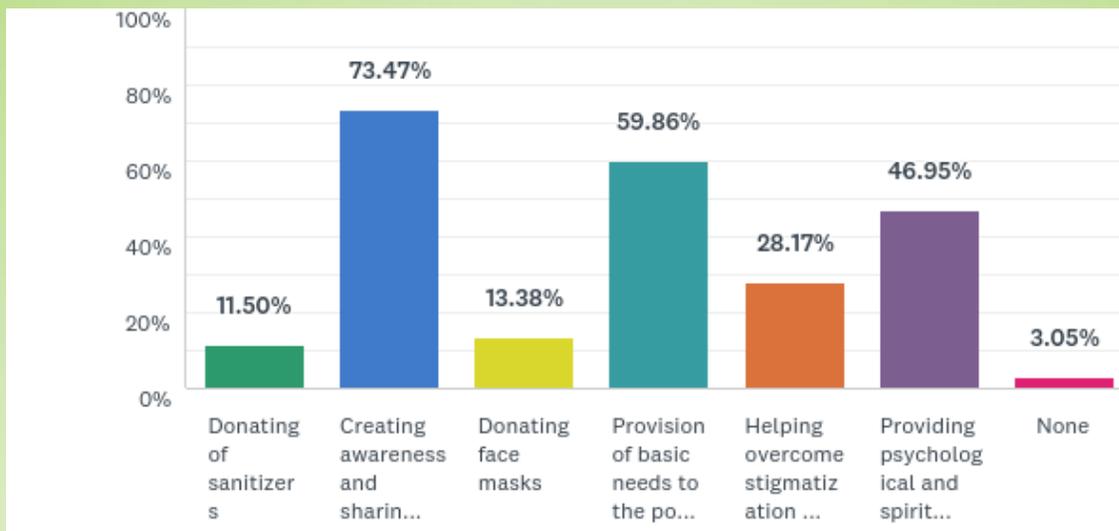
- Donating of sanitizers
- Creating awareness and sharing information on combating the pandemic
- Donating face masks
- Provision of basic needs to the poor and vulnerable members of the society
- Helping overcome stigmatization of the infected and affected in the society
- Providing psychological and spiritual support to families who've lost or have their loved one(s) infected
- None

Other (Please specify\_

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Churches have undertaken a variety of initiatives to complement government efforts in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. They include: Creating awareness and sharing information on combating the pandemic (73.47%); Provision of basic needs to the poor and vulnerable members of the society (59.86%); Providing psychological and spiritual support to families who've lost or have their loved one(s) infected (46.95%); Helping overcome stigmatization of the infected and affected in the society (28.17%); Donating face masks (13.38%); Donating of sanitizers (11.50); and None (3.05%).

Notably, the church remains a strong link in helping the Ministry of Health in creating awareness and sharing information on combating the pandemic, and in helping members of the society to overcome stigmatization of the infected and affected.



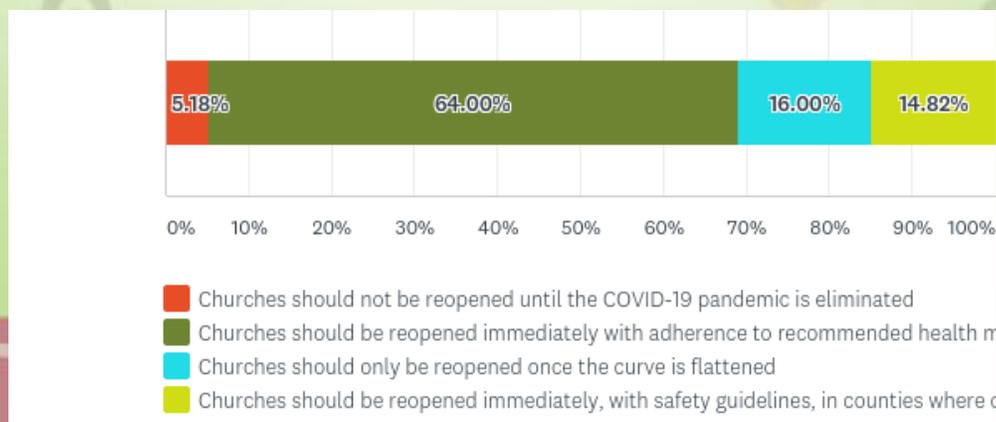
### Other Initiatives by Churches to Complement Government Efforts:

- Praying for the nation and frontline workers.
- Home visits to affected families.
- Providing psychological support (Counseling).
- Distribution of soap for handwashing.

### QUESTION 13

Which of the following best represent your position on reopening of churches?

- Churches should not be reopened until the COVID-19 pandemic is eliminated
- Churches should be reopened immediately with adherence with recommended health measures
- Churches should only be reopened once the curve is flattened
- Churches should be reopened immediately, with safety guidelines, in counties where cases have not been recorded or with previously recorded cases, but the patients recovered



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

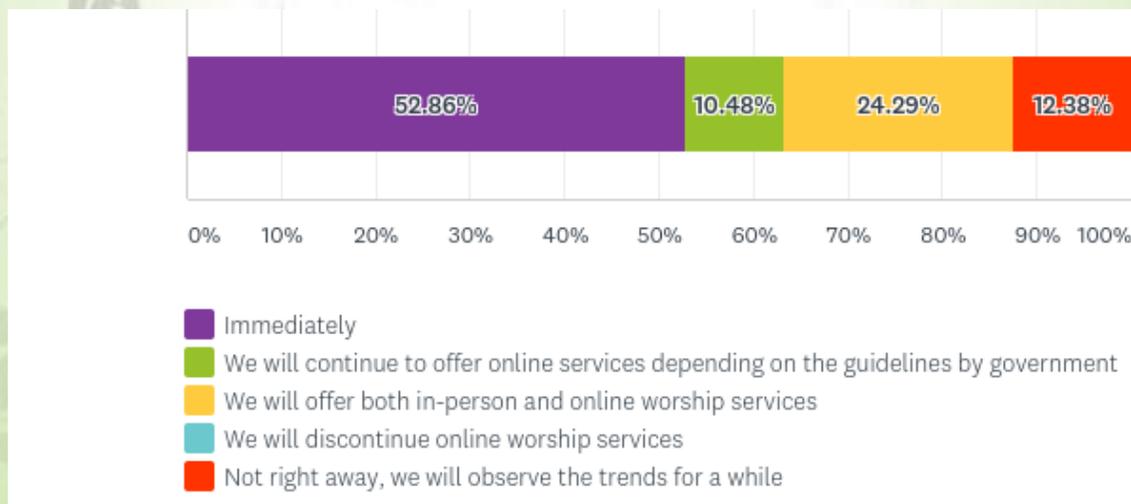
Majority of the pastors (78.82%) want churches to be reopened, with the ministry of Health protocols in place. Here are the specific responses:

Churches should not be reopened until the COVID-19 pandemic is eliminated (5.18%); Churches should be reopened immediately with adherence with recommended health measures (64%); Churches should only be reopened once the curve is flattened (16%); Churches should be reopened immediately, with safety guidelines, in counties where cases have not been recorded or with previously recorded cases, but the patients recovered (14.82%)

## QUESTION 14

When the government reopens churches, how soon will you be ready to put in place necessary measures and start in-person Sunday Service meetings?

- Immediately
- We will continue to offer online services depending on the guidelines by government
- We will offer both in-person and online worship services
- We will discontinue online worship services
- Not right away, we will observe the trends for a while



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings on this question shows that when the government reopens places of worship, not all churches will open at once. It would be a gradual process. Also, all churches that are already doing online Worship Services will NOT discontinue their Worship Services in this platform.

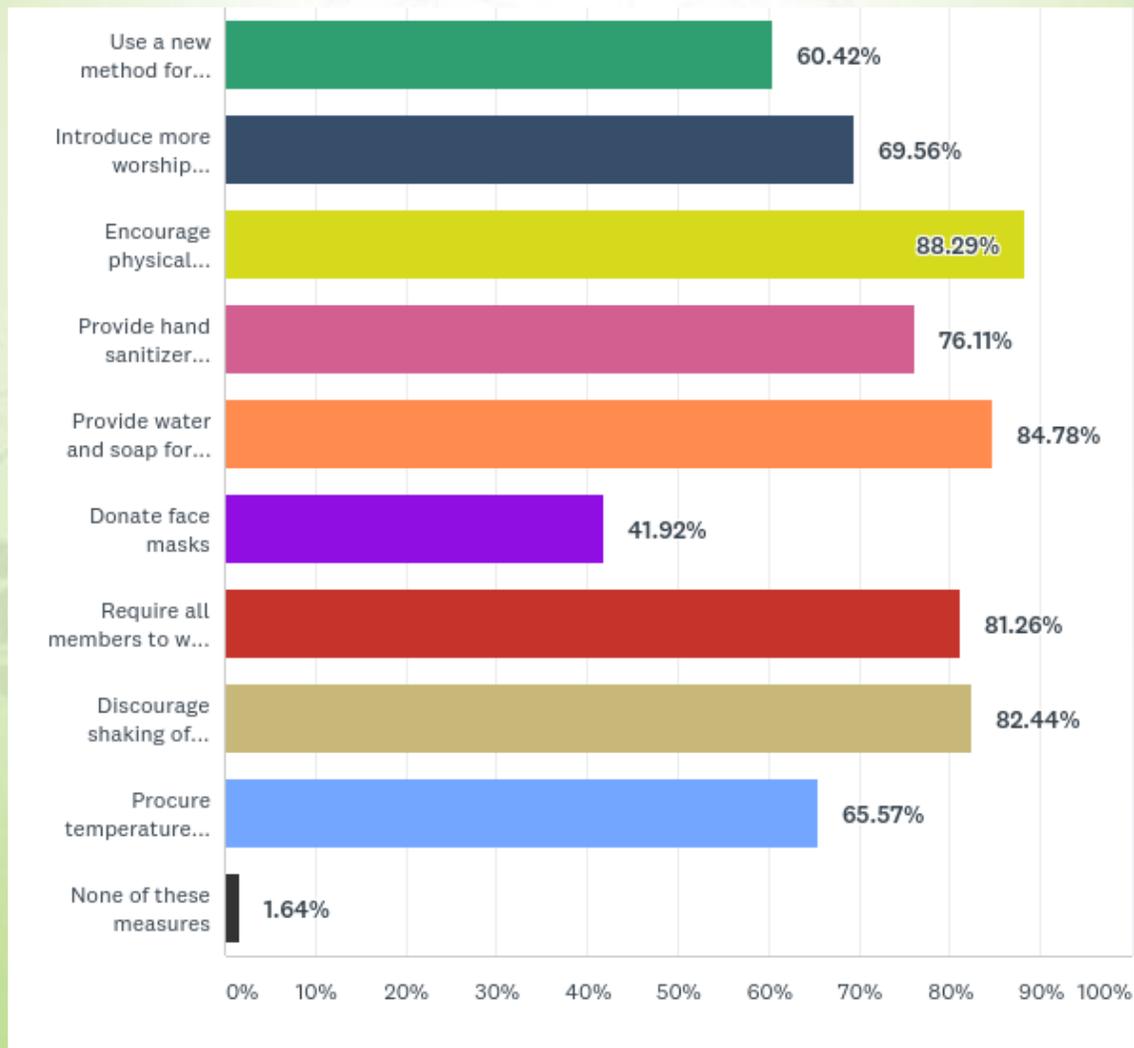
When the government reopens places of worship, approximately 53% of pastors/church leaders think that their churches will put in place necessary measures and start in-person Sunday Service meetings immediately; about 10% of churches will continue to offer online services depending on the guidelines by the governments; about 24% will offer both in-person and online worship services; while 12.38% will take time to observe the trends for a while.

## QUESTION 15

Due to the COVID-19 reality, what new adjustments, if any, do you expect your church to take for Sunday worship gatherings? Select all that apply.

- Use a new method for collecting tithes and offerings
- Introduce more worship services to allow people to be more spread out
- Encourage physical distancing in seating arrangements
- Provide hand sanitizer stations
- Provide water and soap for handwashing at strategic points
- Donate face masks
- Require all members to wear face masks
- Discourage shaking of hands
- Procure temperature checks equipment
- None of these measures

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Generally, Churches are ready to embrace the new norm by making new adjustments as health precautions against the Covid-19 pandemic on their Sunday worship gatherings.

Find below a distribution of responses in order of high-low percentage. Encourage physical distancing in seating arrangements (88.29%); Provide water and soap for handwashing at strategic points (84.78%); Discourage shaking of hands (82.44%); Require all members to wear face masks (81.26%); Provide hand sanitizer stations (76.11%); Introduce more worship services to allow people to be more spread out (69.56%); Procure temperature checks equipment (65.57%); Use a new method for collecting tithes and offerings (60.42%); Donate face masks (41.92%); while 1.64% of church leaders thought that their churches will put in place none of these measures.

### Other Measures that Churches Will Put in Place

- The qualitative data yields the following categorization:
- Use some few minutes of the Worship Service for “Health Talk” to sensitize members on Covid-19 pandemic and other health issues.
- Use bank/mobile Money Transfer services when dealing with Offerings.
- Fumigation of touchable surfaces within the church hall and compound.
- Discourage socialization outside the church after the service.
- “Sanitize microphones or purchase enough pieces to avoid sharing or avoid using them completely.”
- Installing mechanisms of follow-up to pray and encourage affected members.
- Encourage home fellowships and introduce virtual fellowships.
- Avoid prolonged Church service (of over 3 hours).
- Keep social distance when it comes to choirs and praise and worship teams.
- Relook at how baptism and Holy communion are administered (avoid sharing cups and handing over)
- Relook at how visitation of church members can be done.
- Form inclusive Health Teams within in the church.

**QUESTION: If you have any comments or further thoughts, please comment here**

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**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:** *(Here are A FEW representative quotes/statements from the hundreds of comments)*

### Appeals:

- “We request the government to provide thermo-guns to the ‘needy churches,’ PPE’s, fumigation of worship places, and provision of sanitizers.”
- “Government should understand that Churches offer essential services.”
- “In the future, when the government wants to make a decision on church affairs it is crucial that proper consultations should be done.”
- “The local administration should stop harassing churches when they are recording Worship services...”

### “We’re Up to the Task”

- “We are asking the government to open churches. If we go to the market and meet with people, why not the church. As long as we adhere to the health precautions. Please open the house of God where we meet and worship.”
- “Churches can soberly manage the situation than the supermarket, buses, office meeting and eateries.”
- “Government should treat the church as an active partner; and not by suspecting it being unable to adhere to the safety standards. Church leaders have a responsibility in doing that which is necessary to enable churches to reopen with guidelines on curbing COVID-19 spreading. Churches should open with the pastors held accountable for the adherence to protocol.”
- “Churches have a big role in helping community and the nation to combat Covid-19 and other problems by offering hope, combating fear and offering counseling.”

### Lessons:

- “We should unite across denominations.”
- “We should not just depend on Sunday collections to sustain church operations.”
- “We should learn from this pandemic and avoid just rolling back to business as usual.”
- “There is need for the church to diversify in approach to the Gospel and do holistic ministry.”
- “Corporate worship cannot be substituted by any other type of worship.”
- “Church leaders should lead the way in flattening the curve by being following the laid down rules.”
- “The Pastors have lost their financial support due to Covid 19 and their stress levels have increased causing a lot of mental health problems.”
- “I think God wants us to reestablish family altar since a healthy family results to a healthy church.”

## Reopening Places of Worship Protocols

- “The different expressions of worship, even within the Christian community, should be considered when drafting rules for reopening places of worship.”
- “Churches should be reopened with no restrictions.” Leaders of congregations should be mandated to take charge and ensure the guidelines are followed. They will determine other details like the length of services etc.”
- “As the measures are put in place to open places of worship, those concerned should consider financial implications to churches that are in rural areas and have no financial ability to meet expensive recommendations, unless the State will step in to help. Also, time should be given to churches to meet up the requirements.”

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Margin of error:  $\pm 4.72\%$ ; The sample provides Confidence level of: 95%

Snowball Sampling method was employed to get respondents from various churches/denominations in Kenya who then recommended the survey link to church leaders within their networks.

The Online Survey was hosted by the US-based online data service company- *SurveyMonkey Inc.* The data was processed, analyzed and exported from the *SurveyMonkey*.

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**Lead Researcher:** Rev. Dr. Elkanah Cheboi, holds a PhD in Biblical and Theological Studies. He is an educator, consultant, researcher, and ordained minister of the gospel. Currently, he leads a team of researchers at the Shahidihub Research and Consulting. Soon he shall be launching the Round two of the Survey.

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**ShahidiHub Africa Ltd.** is a nondenominational, nonpartisan Christian research, publications and Media company based in Kenya. Through ShahidiHub Research & Consulting, the company seeks to provide credible and researched data on the contemporary context and on emerging trends through opinion polls/surveys on societal matters/themes affecting the church. During this Covid-19 period the organization continues to offer platform where conversations on church and society are hosted. We are grateful for the invaluable feedback from our respondents.

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