A POLL REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE CHURCH IN KENYA
AFTER THE PHASED REOPENING OF CHURCHES

BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

Following research conducted in May-June 2020 on “The State of the Church in Kenya during Covid-19 Pandemic,” ShahidiHub Research & Consulting (under ShahidiHub Africa Ltd) carried out a follow-up study in January-February 2021. The research, that targeted church leaders across church denominations in Kenya, sought to find out how churches have continued to function after the phased reopening of churches, from July 2020.

The research looked at containment measures instituted by churches against the pandemic, worship adjustments, church attendance, challenges the church is currently facing, ways in which the church continues to shine the love of Christ, and the effectiveness of online worship services. The feedback from these studies has continued to create a body of knowledge and an understanding of the state of the church in Kenya during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We are grateful to the participants who willingly shared their opinions on these polls.
The online poll was open to church leaders (clergy and lay) from all Church denominations, in Kenya.

Below is a collation of the quantitative survey feedback (and responses from the open-ended questions).

**QUESTION 1**

*What containment measures have you put in place since you resumed Sunday in-person gathering? Select all that apply*

- Use of a new method of collecting tithes and offerings
- Introduced more worship services to allow people to be more spread out
- Encouraging physical distancing in seating arrangements
- Installed hand sanitizer stations
- Discouraging shaking of hands
- Providing water and soap for handwashing at strategic points
- Requiring all members to wear face masks
- Donating face masks
- Use of temperature testing equipment
- Formed a health committee
- Employed a new method of distributing Lord’s Supper elements
- Reduced the time of praise and worship and congregational singing
- Reduced the time for sermon delivery

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Since the resumption of in-person Sunday worship services, churches in Kenya have largely complied with the recommended health protocols, by putting in place several containment measures against the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The top new-norm measures instituted by churches include: Encouraging physical distancing in seating arrangements (98.75%), requiring all members to wear face masks (97.50%), providing water and soap for handwashing (96.25%), Use of temperature testing equipment (92.50%), Discouraging shaking of hands (91.88%). Other adjustments include reduced time for congregational singing (71.25%), and reduced time for sermon delivery (58.38%).
There were other measures in our checklist that scored below 50%: introduction of more worship services to allow people to be more spread out (44.38%), employing a new method of distributing Lord’s Supper elements (38.38%), Formation of a health committee (34.38%), and, donation face masks (26.88%).
QUESTION 2

Which ONE of the following statements best describes the current state of worship services in your church?

![Bar chart]

- Purple: 57.59% - We offer both online and in-person worship services
- Green: 37.34% - We discontinued online worship services and embarked on in-person gathering
- Red: 3.16% - We continue to offer only online services
- Blue: 9.53% - We were offline since the start of the pandemic and have been unable to reopen so far

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A majority of churches that had transitioned to online platforms for worship services (in our previous research: 79.25%) have resumed in-person Sunday gathering but have maintained their online ministries; while a significant number of churches have discontinued their online services for in-person gathering.

Slightly over half (57.59%) of churches that had transitioned to online worship services have continued their online ministries even after embarking on the in-person Sunday gathering.

However, a substantial number of congregations (37.34%) discontinued their online worship services and reverted to the Sunday in-person gathering.

The data also indicate that few churches continue to offer pure online services (3.16%), while approximately 2% of church leaders polled indicated that their churches were offline since the start of the pandemic and have been unable to reopen so far.
QUESTION 3

How effective has been your online worship services? (Please omit this if you don’t have online worship services)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A majority of church leaders in Kenya (42.92%) whose churches transitioned to online platforms rated their online worship services as moderately effective.

The scores on this question were: Extremely effective (16.95%); moderately effective (44.92%); slightly effective (31.36%); and, Not at all effective (6.78%).

Cumulatively, approximately 38% of church leaders believe that their online worship services have either been slightly effective (31.36%) or not effective at all (6.78%); this perception might have largely informed the discontinuation of online worship services in some churches.
QUESTION 4

If you have an on-going online worship service, what is your current focus on improving your effectiveness? Please Tick all that apply

▪ Invest in stable internet connectivity
▪ Invest in better sound, the editing process, and broadcasting equipment(s)
▪ Better sermon delivery skills
▪ Increase discussions and feedback
▪ Systematize and regularize production of the online activity/content
▪ Include more Church members in broadcasts
▪ Increasing online presence and social media following

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Churches that have ongoing online services are keen at improving their effectiveness in the online platforms.

The poll results on this question, as ordered below, indicate the priority areas of focus: Increasing online presence and social media following (60%); investing in stable internet connectivity (57.39%); investing in better sound, the editing process, and broadcasting equipment(s) (57.39%). Other priority areas include improving sermon delivery skills (49.57%); systematizing and regularizing production of the online activity/content (45.22%); increasing discussions and feedback (41.74%); and, including more Church members in broadcasts (33.91%).

In our previous poll, we noted that when the government announced the immediate closure of churches due to the first outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, 50% of church leaders polled indicated that their focus was on opening new online church platforms, and some other 35.57% focused on reactivating existing online platforms. Thus, the growing need to improve effectiveness on online ministry platforms remains inevitable.
QUESTION 5
Since you resumed in-person Sunday worship service, can you estimate as accurately as possible how many of your members have come back, compared to the Pre-Covid attendance levels.

- More than 100% have resumed
- Between 75-100% have resumed
- Between 50-75% have resumed
- Between 25-50% have resumed
- Less than 25% have resumed

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In many churches, church membership has recorded a drop compared to pre-Covid levels. Approximately 54% of church leaders in Kenya reveal that church membership, after the phased reopening of churches, is below 75% of the pre-Covid levels.

The data on this question yielded the following results: Between 75-100% have resumed (41.77%); between 50-75% have resumed (43.67%); between 25-50% have resumed (10.13%); less than 25% have resumed (0.63%).

Notably, 3.80% of congregations in Kenya have exceeded the pre-Covid worship attendance levels.
QUESTION 6

What are some of the challenges your church is currently facing, due to the pandemic, Select all that apply

- Paying salaries of pastors and support staff
- Paying of hired/leased Church venues
- Mobilizing Church members for a cause
- Financing of welfare and outreach ministries
- Bringing back Church attendance to Pre-Covid levels
- A stalled Church project
- Putting in place the recommended health protocols
- None of these

![Bar chart showing the percentage of churches facing various challenges due to the pandemic.](chart.png)
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A notable majority of church leaders in Kenya agree that the major task churches are currently facing is, at least, bringing membership levels to the Pre-Covid levels.

The top four challenges churches are facing after the phased reopening of churches in Kenya include: Bringing back Church attendance to Pre-Covid levels (66.67%); financing of welfare and outreach ministries (52.47%); mobilizing Church members for a cause (50%); Paying salaries of pastors and support staff (48.77%).

Also, other challenges include: a stalled church building project(s) (29.63%); putting in place the recommended health protocols (25.93%); Payment of hired/leased Church venues (20.99%);

Still, 4.94% of church leaders indicated that their congregations experience none of these challenges.
QUESTION 7
What activities are you carrying out to demonstrate the love of Christ to the community around you? Please tick only those that apply

- Proclamation of the Gospel
- Providing counseling services
- Offering prayer support
- Supporting the poor and needy
- Paying rent for those who’ve lost jobs
- Pastoral presence during a bereavement process
- Donating face masks
- None of these
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The church in Kenya has continued to shine its light despite the challenges brought about by the Coronavirus pandemic.

Despite the unfolding pandemic situation, churches have continued to engage in pastoral care functions that seek to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ to their members and surrounding communities. The following listed activities are ordered according to their scores: Offering prayer support (86.42%); proclamation of the Gospel (79.63%); pastoral presence during bereavement process (77.78%); supporting the poor and needy (73.46%); providing counseling services (61.11%); donating face masks (18.52%); and, paying rent for those with financial difficulties (6.79%).

It is worth noting that none of those polled indicated that their congregation had suspended its pastoral functions and outreaches. Thus, despite the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, churches have largely remained faithful to their identity and mandate.

QUESTION 8

If you have any comments or further thoughts, please comment here (Please note that ALL responses are anonymous)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A categorization of the qualitative data was done and the following featured as the main items. The participants expressed the need to/for:

- Churches to rethink how church functions are financed without overreliance on Sunday offerings.
- Churches to be quick to learn, be creative, and be ready to adopt new ways of doing ministry.
- Churches to collaborate with other churches, and like-minded organizations.
- Churches to be intentional and strategic in reaching out to children and youth.
- Having both online and in-person worship services.
- Continued sensitization of congregations on the covid-19 pandemic.
- Focus on the people living with disabilities.
- Focus on (online) evangelism, and follow-ups.
- Regularize online services for greater effectiveness.
BASIC INFORMATION

Number of Church Denominations in Kenya Represented: 58

The Counties Represented by the polled Respondents: 24

Number of Respondents: 160


Who Participated: Church leaders in Kenya (Clergy/Lay)

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

The margin of error: ±7.74%; The sample provides a Confidence level of 95%

The 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. Also, the ShahidiHub Church Panel database was used comprising of email contacts of church leaders in different counties and church denominations in Kenya. Besides, Facebook ads were used to widen the reach of church leaders.

The Online Survey was hosted and data processed by the US-based online data service company - SurveyMonkey Inc.

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. The organization has also provided an online platform (www.shahidihub.com) that hosts conversations on current trends and their bearing on the Christian community, and society at large.

Lead Researcher: Dr. Elkanah Cheboi, holds a Ph.D. in Biblical & Theological Studies, from Africa International University. He is a researcher, educator, consultant, and ordained minister of the gospel. Currently, he leads a team of researchers at the ShahidiHub Research & Consulting and oversees publications.
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 emerging trends through opinion polls/surveys on societal matters/themes affecting the church. During this pandemic period, the organization continues to offer a platform where conversations on church and society are hosted. We are grateful for the invaluable feedback from our respondents.

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