

Dear People,

As you already know, a pandemic has been declared by the World Health Organization related to the global outbreak and spread of COVID-19. I have many friends on Facebook and I post an awful lot. Generally, the posts are about politics and politicians, Black people and racism. There is a sense within me now, that this post is probably the most important one ever. I will try to be very brief (which is hard for me to do).

COVID-19 is as dangerous a virus as any we have ever seen. It is hideous in its pernicious ability to attack the vulnerable, finding its way deeply into the lungs of the elderly, those with pre-existing health conditions, and particularly those with upper respiratory health challenges.

Most of our Black churches are filled with people who are aptly described in the above paragraph. Our seniors are at risk in ways that makes the KKK pale in comparison (although the KKK cannot get any paler). Our sick are also at the same level of risk. History shows that Black people and minorities are always the last to be assisted and aided during health crises in our nation. This was true of tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina.

We cannot take a posture of wait and see. We cannot rely on our government to lead the way. We must act now. You are a leader among your people. Strongly encourage them to take the necessary steps to care for themselves; Wash your hands with soap multiple times a day for at least 20 seconds per wash. Get plenty of sleep. Drink plenty of water and eat more fruits and vegetables. Avoid touching your nose, eyes and mouth with unwashed hands. Avoid people who are sick. Stay home when you feel yourself getting sick. Cover your cough or sneeze. Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that you touch.

For Black Churches-

1) Every black church must make a contingency plan immediately. Pastors and church leaders must now tell their seniors over 60 and those with pre-existing conditions and upper respiratory challenges, to consider remaining home rather than attending service. At the same time, stop all community contact in church-handshaking, kissing on the cheek and physical contact. Make sure your trustees are using latex gloves to count money. Do not pass an offering plate to be touched by multiple hands. Do not pass a communion plate for the same reason. Wipe all communal surfaces with disinfectant.

2) When COVID-19 worsens in your area, you must be diligent. Do not allow seniors and the sick to attend worship, if you are still allowed to worship. But create other opportunities for them to be blessed by your church. Livestream your services. If you don't have livestream, have someone record it by phone and put in on Facebook. Make sure your seniors have computers, iPads or phones to tune in. Immediately connect your giving to your Website or use GivePlus, or set up a system for members to text their gifts.

3) Prepare to shut your church doors in the event that your town, city or state gives this mandate. This means you will have to be uniquely creative. Talk to your staff and personnel about this and make plans for them. Preach your sermon via, ZOOM. Use a conference call line. Prepare your Minister of Music and Choir Director for providing music and song, off site. You will have to have bible study, prayer gatherings and other activities through information technology. Get ready for it. Do not allow COVID-19 to prevent God from blessing our people.

Finally, never, ever give up hope or assurance that the God we serve, did not bring us this far, to leave us. At the same time, this is very real. And life has already begun to change. For people of color, we must save our seniors. We must save ourselves too.

Well, it wasn't short after all.