

A photograph of a woman with red braided hair, wearing a blue t-shirt, holding a young child in a yellow and black striped shirt. The woman is looking down at the child with a gentle expression. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a building and some foliage.

Covid-19 SERMON GUIDE

For
Religious
Leaders



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About CMMB

A century-old organization rooted in Catholic traditions and social teaching, CMMB brings transformative hope through life-changing services to the most vulnerable worldwide. Toward our organizational vision of a world in which every human life is valued and health and human dignity are shared by all, inspired by the example of Jesus, we pursue our mission to work in partnership globally to deliver locally sustainable, quality health solutions to women, children, and their communities. We are deeply committed to redressing health inequities for women and children and providing long-term, community-based medical, preventive, and development aid to communities affected by poverty and unequal access to healthcare with our Children and Mothers Partnerships. In targeted parts of Kenya, Peru, South Sudan, Zambia, and Haiti (where we got our start), we make long-term commitments and build local capacity for high-impact, community-driven healthcare. Evidence and best practices ground our work and data guides learning, so that we are continuously improving healthcare delivery.

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Covid-19

SERMON GUIDE

The Problem

Between January 2020 and mid-July 2021, more than 187 million cases of Covid-19 were reported across the globe.¹

The virus has spread quickly from one person to another, and from one country to the next, on all continents. The lives of otherwise healthy adults and children have been its victims along this path of destruction.

The most vulnerable are the elderly and those with such underlying chronic health conditions as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease,² cancer, neurological conditions, HIV, and obesity.³ These individuals are more likely to experience severe illness, resulting in hospitalization, a stay in

intensive care, and death.⁴ In the United States, more than 80 percent of those who have died of Covid-19 have been older than 65, and 95 percent have been older than 45.⁵ Of those who have died from Covid-19, 94 percent had other health conditions and other contributing causes.⁶

Pregnant women and their unborn babies are also vulnerable to Covid-19. Changes to a woman's immune system that occur in pregnancy can make her more susceptible to respiratory viruses such as SARS-CoV-2, which causes Covid-19.⁷ A pregnant woman infected with Covid-19 is more likely to be hospitalized with severe illness and require treatment in intensive care.⁸ The high fevers common in symptomatic cases

¹ Worldometer, Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily" (web page), updated July 12, 2021 GMT, <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>.

² Hannah Ritchie, Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, Diana Beltekian, et al., "Statistics and Research: Mortality Risk of COVID-19," Our World in Data (web page), accessed July 21, 2021, <https://ourworldindata.org/mortality-risk-covid#case-fatality-rate-of-covid-19-by-age>.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Medical Conditions," COVID-19 (web page), updated May 13, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>.

⁴ Hannah Ritchie, et al., "Statistics and Research: Mortality Risk."

⁵ CDC, "Medical Conditions."

⁶ "CDC Report Finds Underlying Conditions in 94 Percent of COVID-19 Deaths," *Journal of Emergency Medical Services*, August 31, 2020, <https://www.jems.com/news/cdc-report-underlying-conditions-94-percent-covid-19-deaths/>.

⁷ "Coronavirus and Pregnancy: What You Should Know," Health: Johns Hopkins Medicine (web page), updated February 4, 2021, <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-covid-19-what-pregnant-women-need-to-know>.

⁸ Miranda J. Delahoy, Michael Whitaker, Alissa O'Halloran, et. Al., "Characteristics and Maternal and Birth Outcomes of Hospitalized Pregnant Women with Laboratory-Confirmed COVID-19—COVID-NET, 13 States, March 1–August 22, 2020," *Morbidity and Mortality*

of Covid-19 can increase the risk of birth defects—particularly during the first trimester.⁹ Between January 2020 and June 2021, 92,763 cases of Covid-19 in pregnant women were recorded in United States.¹⁰ Of these cases, 15,867 were hospitalized; one hundred pregnant women and their unborn babies died.¹¹ Approximately 6 percent of infants born to women with Covid-19 who were tested at birth returned a positive test result, indicating that they too had been infected.¹² It is unknown whether these newborns contracted Covid-19 before, during, or after birth.¹³

The Human Toll of Covid-19

Covid-19 is a killer that preys on God's children. As of June 2021, Covid-19 has claimed more than 3.5 million lives globally.¹⁴

- In South Sudan, 10,688 cases have been recorded; 115 people have died.¹⁵
- In Kenya, 171,084 cases have been recorded; 3,188 people have died.¹⁶
- In Zambia, 96,563 cases have been recorded; 1,284 people have died.¹⁷

Weekly Report 69, no. 38 (September 15, 2020): 1347–1354, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6938e1.htm>.

⁹ “Coronavirus and Pregnancy: What You Should Know.”

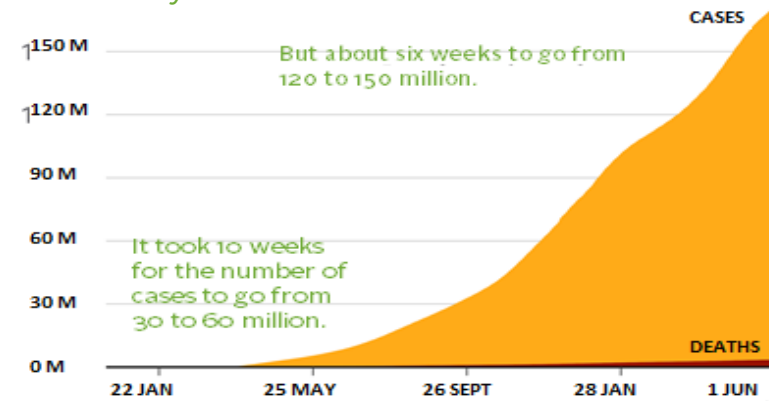
¹⁰ CDC, “Data on COVID-19 during Pregnancy: Severity of Maternal Illness,” COVID Data Tracker, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#pregnant-population>.

¹¹ CDC, “Data on COVID-19 during Pregnancy: Severity of Maternal Illness.”

¹² CDC, “Data on COVID-19 during Pregnancy: Birth and Infant Outcomes,” COVID Data Tracker, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#pregnant-birth-infant>.

- In Haiti, 14,931 cases have been recorded; 321 people have died.¹⁸
- In Peru, 1,961,087 cases have been recorded; 180,000 people have died.¹⁹

Increase in COVID-19 Cases and Deaths 22 January–1 June 2020



¹³ CDC, “Breastfeeding & Caring for Newborns,” COVID-19 (web page), updated July 1, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html>.

¹⁴ Worldometer, Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily (web page), updated July 12, 2021 GMT, <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>.

¹⁵ Worldometer, Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily.

¹⁶ Worldometer, Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily.

¹⁷ Worldometer, Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily.

¹⁸ Worldometer, Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily.

¹⁹ Worldometer, Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily.

The Economic Burden of the Pandemic

Covid-19 has affected almost every individual in the world—those who have fallen ill and died, the health professionals who have worked tirelessly to save lives, and those suffering from jobs lost because of lockdowns, self-isolation, economic downturns, travel restrictions, and other causes.²⁰ The economic toll of Covid-19 has been vast, costing the global economy an estimated US\$28 trillion.²¹

Just imagine what could be accomplished if Covid-19 were to be eradicated and this suffering were to end. Nations could begin to regain their productivity. The dying would cease.

What Can We Do?

Part of why Covid-19 spread so aggressively was that it was new and we did not know enough about it. Covid-19 is dangerous, but we now know how to prevent it. We have the knowledge, and often the resources, to stop the destruction of this new infectious disease.

Scientists have conducted extensive research and testing to develop effective vaccines, and they have been proven to protect people against Covid-19. AstraZeneca is one such vaccine. It is recommended that everyone aged 18 years and

over should be vaccinated.²² Full vaccination requires two doses, the second given 8 to 12 weeks after the first.²³

Side effects may be experienced after each dose: fever,



headache, tiredness, muscle pain, chills, nausea, and discomfort at the injection site (like swelling, redness, and pain).²⁴ These feelings are normal, signaling that the body is building

²⁰ Maria Nicola, Zaid Alsafi, Catrin Sohrabi, et al., “The Socio-Economic Implications of the Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19): A Review,” *International Journal of Surgery* 78 (April 17, 2020): 185–193, doi: 10.1016/j.ijssu.2020.04.018.

²¹ Larry Elliott, “IMF Estimates Global Covid Cost at \$18tn in Lost Output,” *The Guardian*, October 13, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/oct/13/imf-covid-cost-world-economic-outlook>.

²² World Health Organization, “Interim Guidance: Interim Recommendations for Use of the ChAdOx1-S [recombinant] vaccine against COVID-19 (AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine AZD1222, SII Covishield, SK Bioscience),” COVID-19: Vaccines (web page), updated April 21, 2021, https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-vaccines-SAGE_recommendation-AZD1222-2021.1.

²³ World Health Organization, “Interim Guidance.”

²⁴ CDC, “Children & Teens.”



protection. They disappear within a couple of days.²⁵ Even though the side effects can make you feel sick, it is important to note that the vaccine cannot cause you to get Covid-19.

²⁵ CDC, “Key Things to Know,” COVID-19 (web page), updated June 25, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow.html>; CDC, “Children & Teens,” COVID-19 (web page), updated May 27, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/adolescents.html>.

²⁶ CDC, “Key Things to Know”; Mike Stobbe, “COVID Vaccine Found Highly Effective in Real-World US Study,” *AP News*, March 29, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/covid-19-vaccine-us-study-highly-effective-57cde25de803c98503c5ff9937598420>.

It takes about two weeks after receipt of the second dose of AstraZeneca for a person to be fully protected; this is the time it typically takes for the body to build immunity against SARS-CoV-2.²⁶ The vaccine has been shown to be 63 percent effective at reducing the risk for symptomatic Covid-19. Evidence has shown it to be 100 percent effective in preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death.²⁷

There is no evidence to suggest that AstraZeneca affects fertility, either male or female.²⁸ Similarly, there is no evidence that women who become pregnant after receiving an AstraZeneca vaccination are at increased risk for miscarriage. Women who are planning pregnancy are cleared to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine, and need not delay pregnancy after vaccination.²⁹ Women who are breastfeeding may continue to do so safely following AstraZeneca vaccination.³⁰

Because data is lacking, it is recommended that women who are currently pregnant should wait to get fully vaccinated until after delivery, unless they have health conditions that put them at increased risk for severe Covid-19 or unless they are at high

²⁷ World Health Organization, “The Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine: What You Need to Know,” Newsroom (web page), February 11, 2021, <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/the-oxford-astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine-what-you-need-to-know>.

²⁸ Queensland Government, “The COVID-19 Vaccine and Pregnancy,” Queensland Health (web page), updated June 23, 2021, <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/news-events/news/the-covid-19-vaccine-and-pregnancy>.

²⁹ Queensland Government, “The COVID-19 Vaccine and Pregnancy.”

³⁰ Queensland Government, “The COVID-19 Vaccine and Pregnancy.”

risk for exposure to the disease.³¹ These women should consult a medical doctor to determine whether the benefits of vaccination outweigh potential risks.³²

A large proportion of the world must be fully vaccinated if the further spread of Covid-19 is to be halted.³³ This is why all

Progress

As of June 2021, two billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines had been administered around the world.

- Only 9,744 of these doses have been given in South Sudan.³⁴
- Only 969,692 of these doses have been given in Kenya.³⁵
- Only 147,033 of these doses have been given in Zambia.³⁶
- None of these doses have been given in Haiti.³⁷
- Only 3,845,395 of these doses have been given in Peru.³⁸

Successes

Despite the best efforts of people worldwide to practice social distancing and to self-isolate, despite mask mandates and travel

people over 18 should get vaccinated—vaccination protects not only the individual who receives the vaccination, but also that person’s family, community, and all other contacts.

restrictions, the Covid-19 toll has continued to climb around the world since the beginning of 2020.³⁹ Nonetheless, the United States, China, and many other countries have been successful in rolling out Covid-19 vaccines since they were introduced in late 2020. In these regions, the number of daily cases has largely remained stable or fallen with some exceptions.⁴⁰

This success has been attributed to a high proportion of the population receiving the Covid-19 vaccination. Committed efforts to accelerate Covid-19 control via mass vaccination must be prioritized immediately.

³¹ World Health Organization, “Interim Guidance: Interim Recommendations for Use of the ChAdOx1-S [recombinant] vaccine against COVID-19 (AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine AZD1222, SII Covishield, SK Bioscience),” COVID-19: Vaccines (web page), updated April 21, 2021, https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-vaccines-SAGE_recommendation-AZD1222-2021.1.

³² World Health Organization, “Interim Guidance.”

³³ The Visual and Data Journalism Team, “Covid-19: Coronavirus Cases, Deaths, Vaccinations by Country,” *BBC News*, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-51235105>.

³⁴ The Visual and Data Journalism Team, Covid Map, *BBC News*; Hannah Ritchie, et al., “Statistics and Research: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations.”

³⁵ The Visual and Data Journalism Team, Covid Map, *BBC News*; Hannah Ritchie, et al., “Statistics and Research: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations.”

³⁶ The Visual and Data Journalism Team, Covid Map, *BBC News*; Hannah Ritchie, et al., “Statistics and Research: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations.”

³⁷ The Visual and Data Journalism Team, Covid Map, *BBC News*; Hannah Ritchie, et al., “Statistics and Research: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations.”

³⁸ The Visual and Data Journalism Team, Covid Map, *BBC News*; Hannah Ritchie, et al., “Statistics and Research: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations.”

³⁹ The Visual and Data Journalism Team, Covid Map, *BBC News*.

⁴⁰ The Visual and Data Journalism Team, Covid Map, *BBC News*.

Precautions

In addition to getting vaccinated, to help prevent the spread of Covid-19, it is recommended to:

- Wear a cloth or surgical mask that covers your nose and mouth when you are with people not in your household. The mask will protect you and others. Masks are not required for children under the age of two.
- Keep at least six feet away (about two arm lengths) from people who are not part of your household.
- Avoid large crowds, poorly ventilated spaces, and contact with people who are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds or use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 70 percent alcohol.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, dispose of the tissue, then wash your hands.
- Clean frequently touched objects and surfaces daily, particularly if someone who is sick or has tested positive for Covid-19 has occupied the spaces.
- Monitor your own health for signs and symptoms of Covid-19. These include fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, loss of taste or smell, a sore throat, congestion, a runny nose, nausea, or vomiting. Seek prompt care from a medical doctor if you yourself experience any these symptoms or if you notice them in anyone in your household.⁴¹

Opportunity

How Faith Leaders Can Help

As a faith leader, you have great influence among your congregation and in your community. You also have the great privilege and responsibility to protect the most vulnerable of

God's children. In the Parable of the Lost Sheep, Jesus tells us that each life is precious. Like the shepherd who searches high and low for that one lost sheep, God holds each of His children as dear—each life is precious to Him.

⁴¹ CDC, "Symptoms," COVID-19 (web page), updated February 22, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>.

Like the good shepherd, you can play a role in protecting your congregation and community. You can help families protect their health by giving them information to make the right choice about vaccination. Information is a powerful weapon in the fight against Covid-19. Knowing how the AstraZeneca vaccination

can protect against Covid-19 can make the difference between life and death. The two sample sermons in this guide will help you share this knowledge with your congregation and community to help save their lives.



Suggested Sermon 1

PROTECT ONE ANOTHER

Scripture

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” To this question, Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:36-40)

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the Law. (Romans 13:8-10)

“This is my command: Love each other as I have loved you.” (John 15:12)

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well. Keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” (James 2:14-17)

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. (James 1:27)

Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. (Psalm 82:3-4)

Sermon

In the Bible we are commanded to love one another. One time when a lawyer tried to test Jesus by asking him which was the greatest commandment in the Law, Jesus replied: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”* ([Matthew 22:36-40](#)).

In his letter to the Romans, Paul instructed them to *“let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the Law.”* He continued, *“The commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.”* ([Romans 13:8-10](#)) Thus we learn that by loving one another, we are fulfilling the Law, since this commandment sums up all commandments. We also learn that we are to love our neighbors—those living near to us—just as much as we love and care for ourselves.

Jesus is recorded as saying: *“This is my command: Love each other as I have loved you.”* ([John 15:12](#)) So not only must we love one another, we must use Jesus’ love as our model. When we consider how Jesus loved people, it was through actions. He not only told people he loved them—he showed them by healing them, by talking with them, by spending time with them, and by giving them life-giving instructions about how to live vibrant lives, both on earth and in Heaven.

Our love must manifest itself in action, just as faith is best demonstrated through action. James, one of the disciples of Christ, asked a group of believers, *“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm*



and well fed' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” (James 2:14-17)

When it comes to issues of health, our love and our faith must be evident to our neighbors through our actions to protect not only ourselves but one another. God calls us to protect the vulnerable, both in our own families and beyond. In the book of James, we learn that the *“religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” (James 1:27)* As healthy adults, we have the ability to make decisions and to act on them. If we decide we need something for our own protection, we can seek it out. But a young child or a baby developing in its mother’s womb cannot. This is especially true for orphans and for those who have no one to look after them. Therefore, it is up to us as protectors of the vulnerable to provide for them. Protecting the vulnerable in our families and communities from Covid-19 is a responsibility we cannot ignore.

Covid-19 is a killer among us. It has claimed more than 3.5 million lives across the world as of June 2021.⁴² Particularly vulnerable among us are the elderly and those with underlying health conditions. Yet even healthy adults and children have not been spared.

- In South Sudan, 10,688 cases have been recorded; 115 people have died.⁴³



⁴² Worldometer, Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily (web page), updated July 12, 2021 GMT, <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>.

⁴³ Worldometer, Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily.

- In Kenya, 171,084 cases have been recorded; 3,188 people have died.⁴⁴
- In Zambia, 96,563 cases have been recorded; 1,284 people have died.⁴⁵
- In Haiti, 14,931 cases have been recorded; 321 people have died.⁴⁶
- In Peru, 1,961,087 cases have been recorded; 180,000 people have died.⁴⁷

Pregnant women and their unborn babies are highly vulnerable. They are more likely to be hospitalized and require intensive care if infected with Covid-19.⁴⁸ This is because changes to a woman's immune system that occur during pregnancy can make her more susceptible to respiratory viruses such as the one that causes Covid-19.⁴⁹ In the United States, between January 2020 and June 2021, 92,763 cases of Covid-19 were recorded among pregnant women.⁵⁰ Sadly, one hundred of these pregnant women and their unborn babies died.⁵¹

The lives of family members and others have been taken by Covid-19. Jobs have been lost because of Covid-19 restrictions. But it does not have to be this way. Covid-19 is now preventable.



⁴⁴ Worldometer, *Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily*.

⁴⁵ Worldometer, *Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily*.

⁴⁶ Worldometer, *Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily*.

⁴⁷ Worldometer, *Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily*.

⁴⁸ Miranda J. Delahoy, Michael Whitaker, Alissa O'Halloran, et. Al., "Characteristics and Maternal and Birth Outcomes of Hospitalized Pregnant Women with Laboratory-Confirmed COVID-19—COVID-NET, 13 States, March 1–August 22, 2020," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 69, no. 38 (September 15, 2020): 1347–1354, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6938e1.htm>.

⁴⁹ "Coronavirus and Pregnancy: What You Should Know," Health: Johns Hopkins Medicine (web page), updated February 4, 2021, <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-covid-19-what-pregnant-women-need-to-know>.

⁵⁰ CDC, "Data on COVID-19 during Pregnancy: Severity of Maternal Illness," COVID Data Tracker, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#pregnant-population>.

⁵¹ CDC, "Data on COVID-19 during Pregnancy: Severity of Maternal Illness."

We now have a scientifically tested and proven method of protecting against Covid-19: The AstraZeneca vaccine has shown to be 63 percent effective at reducing the risk of symptomatic Covid-19, and 100 percent effective in preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death.⁵²

Our instincts tell us to protect our children from dangers we can see. What would you do if you were walking with your child up a mountain and your child ran to look over the edge of a cliff? Would you let the child lean dangerously over the edge without concern? No, you would stay with the child, closely watching him. You would even pull him back if he leaned too far. Just because you cannot see Covid-19 with your eyes does not mean that the danger is not there. The danger is real. We should not leave our children unprotected any more than we would let them lean dangerously over a cliff.

Jesus does not leave his flock unprotected. He tells us in the Book of John, *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.”* (John 10:11-12) Jesus does not leave the sheep unprotected as the wolf appears. Nor should we leave our families unprotected from Covid-19.

We should also do what we can to protect the young and needy among us, individuals who may lack families and resources for protection. In scripture, the psalmist tells us to defend the poor and very young: *“Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”* (Psalm 82:3-4)

Who can be more vulnerable than a small child? Our communities must work together to make sure that all God’s



⁵² World Health Organization, “The Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine: What You Need to Know,” Newsroom (web page), February 11, 2021, <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/the-oxford-astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine-what-you-need-to-know>.

children are protected from Covid-19 by receiving the AstraZeneca vaccine. At this moment, children themselves—those under 18—cannot receive the vaccine, so we must protect them by getting the vaccine ourselves.



Two doses of AstraZeneca are administered, the second between 8 and 12 weeks after the first dose.⁵³ You will need to wait two weeks after your second dose of AstraZeneca before you are fully immunized. This is the amount of time it typically takes for your body to build protection against the virus—to build immunity.⁵⁴ Covid-19 cannot actually be contracted from the AstraZeneca vaccine.

Until 14 days following the second dose of the vaccine, those vaccinated must continue to avoid close contact with people who are not in their household and to wear a cloth or surgical mask that covers the nose and mouth.⁵⁵ Even after this time, continue to wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, to clean frequently touched objects, and to cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue to prevent transmission of other common viruses.⁵⁶

To stop the spread of Covid-19 and to save lives, all people in a household aged 18 and over, except pregnant women, should get vaccinated. Most pregnant women

⁵³ World Health Organization, “Interim Guidance: Interim Recommendations for Use of the ChAdOx1-S [recombinant] vaccine against COVID-19 (AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine AZD1222, SII Covishield, SK Bioscience),” COVID-19: Vaccines (web page), updated April 21, 2021, https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-vaccines-SAGE_recommendation-AZD1222-2021.1.

⁵⁴ CDC, “Key Things to Know,” COVID-19 (web page), updated June 25, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow.html>; Mike Stobbe, “COVID Vaccine Found Highly Effective in Real-World US Study,” AP News, March 29, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/covid-19-vaccine-us-study-highly-effective-57cde25de803c98503c5ff9937598420>.

⁵⁵ CDC, “Symptoms,” COVID-19 (web page), updated February 22, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>.

⁵⁶ CDC, “Symptoms.”

are advised to wait until after giving birth. A doctor might recommend vaccination to those who have underlying health conditions that increase their risk of severe Covid-19 sickness.⁵⁷ There is no evidence to suggest that AstraZeneca causes infertility or miscarriage during future pregnancies.⁵⁸ Breastfeeding women are able to continue breastfeeding following AstraZeneca vaccination, as they were before.⁵⁹

We are called to be like the shepherd and to protect our own. We are also called to love our neighbors as ourselves and to defend the poor, the fatherless, and the needy. Therefore, we must all do what we can to protect one another from Covid-19 with the proven strategy of getting vaccinated.



⁵⁷ World Health Organization, "Interim Guidance."

⁵⁸ Queensland Government, "The COVID-19 Vaccine and Pregnancy," Queensland Health (web page), updated June 23, 2021, <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/news-events/news/the-covid-19-vaccine-and-pregnancy>.

⁵⁹ Queensland Government, "The COVID-19 Vaccine and Pregnancy."

Suggested Sermon 2

DEFEAT THE ENEMY

Scripture

Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag, and with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine. (1 Samuel 17:40)

But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it, and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it, and killed it." (1 Samuel 17:34-35)

Sermon

When David was preparing to fight Goliath, it did not seem likely to the Israelites or the Philistines that he would win. It may have seemed hopeless to the Israelites that this young shepherd boy could conquer a giant like Goliath. Goliath was very strong and had been fighting for a long time. King Saul tried to discourage David from battling the giant, telling him that he was "just a youth" while Goliath "had been a man of war from his youth."

Yet as we know from Scripture, the young shepherd boy did fight Goliath, and he won, slaying the powerful giant with a stone shot from his sling. David prepared for this battle by gathering five stones and gripping his trusted sling. *"Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag, and with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:40)* David was skilled in using his sling as a weapon. He had used it to fend off lions and bears when he was protecting his father's sheep. It had proven itself to him as a trusted weapon. When faced with a threat as dangerous as the giant Goliath, we too must use what weapons we have and know that it will work to protect ourselves.

Across the world, Covid-19 is like the giant. It is dangerous to everyone and can kill healthy adults and children. It has claimed more than 3.5 million lives around the world as of June 2021.⁶⁰



- In South Sudan, 10,688 cases have been recorded; 115 people have died.⁶¹
- In Kenya, 171,084 cases have been recorded; 3,188 people have died.⁶²
- In Zambia, 96,563 cases have been recorded; 1,284 people have died.⁶³
- In Haiti, 14,931 cases have been recorded; 321 people have died.⁶⁴
- In Peru, 1,961,087 cases have been recorded; 180,000 people have died.⁶⁵

Those particularly vulnerable among us are the elderly, pregnant women, and those with underlying health conditions. They are more likely to be hospitalized and more likely to require intensive care if infected with Covid-19.⁶⁶ In the United States between January 2020 and June 2021, one hundred pregnant women and their unborn babies died because of this disease.⁶⁷

We may feel powerless against the giant that is Covid-19. We may think that it is just part of life now and that there is nothing we can do.

This is not true. We now have a weapon that has been proven in the fight against the disease. Just like David used his trusted sling

⁶⁰ Worldometer, Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily (web page), updated July 12, 2021 GMT, <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>.

⁶¹ Worldometer, Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily."

⁶² Worldometer, Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily."

⁶³ Worldometer, Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily."

⁶⁴ Worldometer, Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily."

⁶⁵ Worldometer, Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic: Main: Cumulative and Daily."

⁶⁶ Hannah Ritchie, Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, Diana Beltekian, et al., "Statistics and Research: Mortality Risk of COVID-19," Our World in Data (web page), accessed July 12, 2021, <https://ourworldindata.org/mortality-risk-covid#case-fatality-rate-of-covid-19-by-age>; Miranda J. Delahoy, Michael Whitaker, Alissa O'Halloran, et. Al., "Characteristics and Maternal and Birth Outcomes of Hospitalized Pregnant Women with Laboratory-Confirmed COVID-19—COVID-NET, 13 States, March 1–August 22, 2020," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 69, no. 38 (September 15, 2020): 1347–1354, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6938e1.htm>.

⁶⁷ CDC, "Data on COVID-19 during Pregnancy: Birth and Infant Outcomes," COVID Data Tracker, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#pregnant-birth-infant>.

and stones, we can use the scientifically tested vaccines. It has been proven to provide protection from the virus that causes Covid-19 and will protect us and our families.

Research has shown that the AstraZeneca vaccine is 63 percent effective at reducing the risk of symptomatic Covid-19 following the first dose, and 100 percent effective in preventing severe illness and death.⁶⁸



So when your closest health facility begins to administer vaccines, it is important to give consent and receive both doses. The second dose is usually given 8 to 12 weeks after the first.⁶⁹ After your second dose, it will be two weeks before you are fully immunized, as it typically takes that long for your body to build protection, or immunity, against the virus that causes Covid-19.⁷⁰ Although the side effects may make you feel sick, Covid-19 cannot actually be contracted from the AstraZeneca vaccine.⁷¹

To stop the spread of Covid-19, everyone except pregnant women should get vaccinated. Pregnant women should wait until the baby is born to get vaccinated unless a doctor recommends otherwise—for example, if she has an underlying health condition that increases her risk for severe Covid-19.⁷² AstraZeneca has not been shown to cause infertility or miscarriage during pregnancy.⁷³ Women who are breastfeeding can continue to do so after the

⁶⁸ World Health Organization, “The Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine: What You Need to Know,” Newsroom (web page), February 11, 2021, <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/the-oxford-astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine-what-you-need-to-know..>

⁶⁹ World Health Organization, “Interim Guidance: Interim Recommendations for Use of the ChAdOx1-S [recombinant] vaccine against COVID-19 (AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine AZD1222, SII Covishield, SK Bioscience),” COVID-19: Vaccines (web page), updated April 21, 2021, https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-vaccines-SAGE_recommendation-AZD1222-2021.1.

⁷⁰ CDC, “Key Things to Know,” COVID-19 (web page), updated June 25, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow.html>; Mike Stobbe, “COVID Vaccine Found Highly Effective in Real-World US Study,” AP News, March 29, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/covid-19-vaccine-us-study-highly-effective-57cde25de803c98503c5ff9937598420>.

⁷¹ CDC, “Key Things to Know”; Mike Stobbe, “COVID Vaccine Found Highly Effective.

⁷² World Health Organization, “Interim Guidance.”

⁷³ Queensland Government, “The COVID-19 Vaccine and Pregnancy,” Queensland Health (web page), updated June 23, 2021, <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/news-events/news/the-covid-19-vaccine-and-pregnancy>.

vaccination, as they did before.⁷⁴

Until 14 days have passed since your second dose of AstraZeneca, you must continue to avoid close contact with people who are not part of your household and to wear a cloth or surgical mask that covers your nose and mouth.⁷⁵ Even after the 14 days, it is important to continue washing your hands frequently, using soap and water. Keep washing for 20 seconds. Also clean frequently touched objects and cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue to prevent transmission of other common viruses.⁷⁶

The sheep David protected may have seemed defenseless against the lions and beasts that tried to attack them, but they were not. The sheep had David and his powerful weapon to protect them. When trying to persuade Saul to let him fight Goliath, David said to Saul, *“Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it, and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it, and killed it.”* (1 Samuel 17:34b-35)

David took his responsibility to protect the sheep very seriously and became skilled at fighting the lions and bears that came to harm them. We are no different. We must take our responsibility to protect ourselves and our families from Covid-19 very seriously, by using the weapon we have against this infectious disease that is harming and killing God’s children. We must receive both doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, reducing our chances of contracting Covid-19 and becoming severely ill. Let us use the weapon we have, the AstraZeneca vaccine, to fight this killer.



⁷⁴ Queensland Government, “The COVID-19 Vaccine and Pregnancy.”

⁷⁵ CDC, “Symptoms,” COVID-19 (web page), updated February 22, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>.

⁷⁶ CDC, “Symptoms.”

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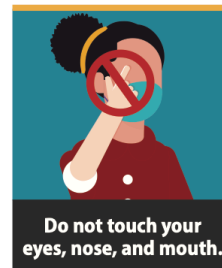
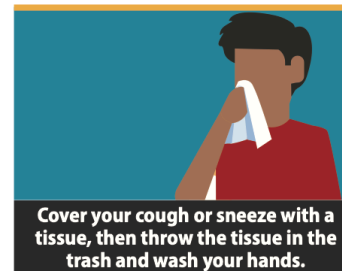
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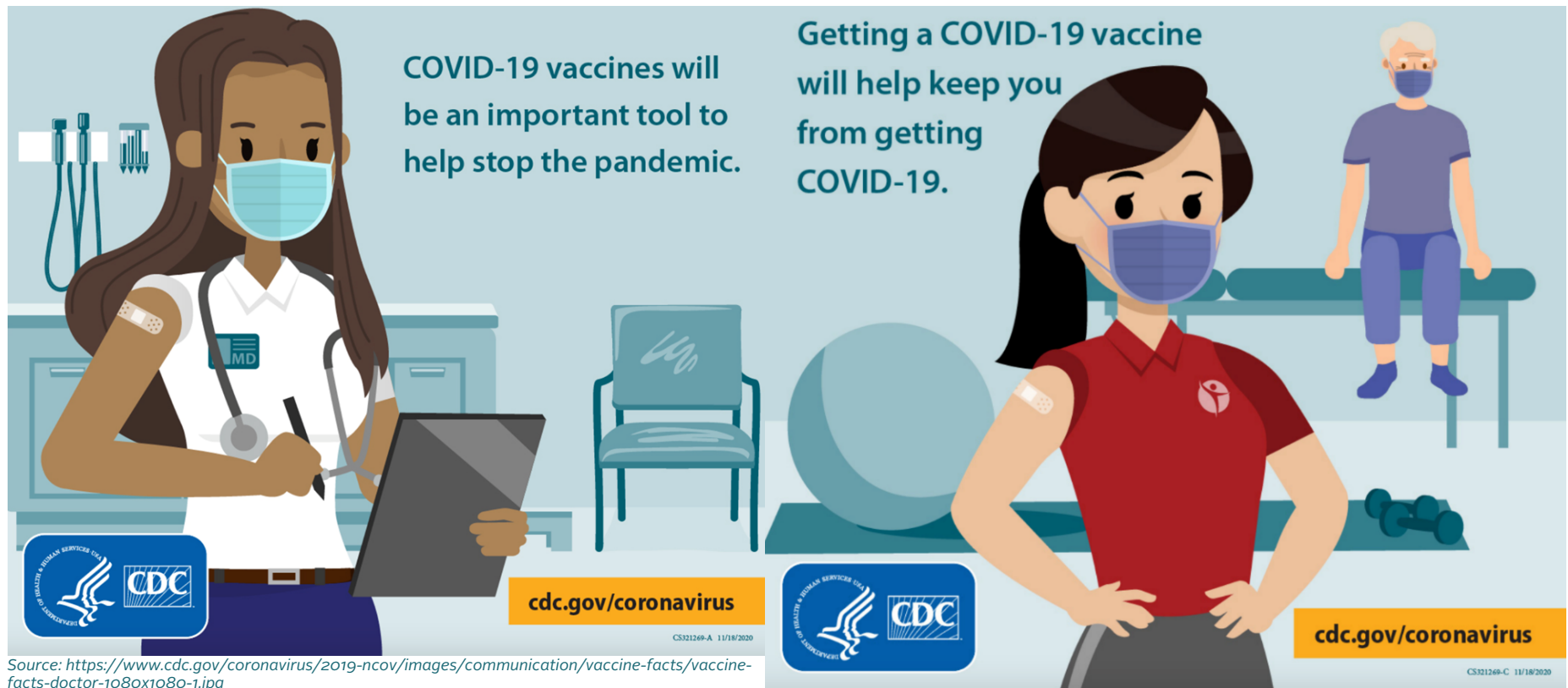
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Infographics

**Help prevent the spread of
respiratory diseases like COVID-19.**



Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/stop-the-spread-of-germs-11x17-en.pdf>



Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/images/communication/vaccine-facts/vaccine-facts-doctor-1080x1080-1.jpg>

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/images/communication/vaccine-facts/vaccine-facts-physical-therapy-1080x1080-1.jpg>



Source: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/proper-mask-wearing-coronavirus-prevention-infographic>



Source: COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy: 12 Things You Need to Know | Johns Hopkins Medicine



Source: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/images/social-media-toolkit/COVID-19-PregnancyGraphics-1080x1080_SM2.jpg

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