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UCJC – Covid-19 Support

Testimonies (Translated from community languages – Swahili, French, Lingala and Tigrigna)

Ndombele Ngindu, 67

Ndobebe is 67 and comes from DR Congo. He lives with his wife on their own (they have no children). He spoke shyly at first, growing bolder as he explained his feeling to volunteer support workers at the Universal Church of Jesus Christ.

Covid-19 pandemic crisis period was and still is a difficult and frightening time for older people like me. Because we are elderly, we can't do anything, trapped in our houses, afraid of spreading the virus. We hear that it is a dangerous disease, and it can't be treated. If someone feels ill, he deteriorates rapidly. And he may die. Thank God I am in good hand through the church (UCJC). However, we try to take all possible precautions, especially after the volunteer support workers from UCJC visited us and alerted us to the necessity of that, and gave us information in French about this disease, how it spreads, and how to save ourselves from it. God willing, we can protect ourselves from the virus, but we face many challenges. We get water and food by delivery. We can't go to the shop. I can't meet many people we used to meet before although we wear face masks. We are grateful to the Universal Church of Jesus Christ's volunteers who go out to get what we need early before the crowds.

The Universal Church of Jesus Christ has been able to support older people in the community by staying in touch throughout the pandemic to provide information and advice, refer and follow up cases, and provide us with materials about the virus. We are grateful to them as they are still communicating with us. They reassure us, answer our various questions, and confirm our continued protecting measures.

Florence Tesgai, 60

Mrs Tesgai is 60 years old and was born in the eastern countryside of Eritrea. She currently lives with her son in Sandwell. She shared her experiences with us.

We face difficult living conditions here because of the lack of job opportunities and the scarcity of resources. One of the reasons is the emergence of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) epidemic, which has become the talk of people everywhere. Initially, we got some information from the news and through our phones, and later through the mobile awareness team that works with the Universal Church of Jesus Christ (UCJC). We know that the virus is fast spreading, and no one has yet been able to produce a cure for it, but that it can be prevented with cleanliness, and avoiding gatherings and crowds.

I'm worried about the disease spreading. We try to take precautions not to mix with crowd of people and others who have had to leave their homes. Because of the virus, my movement was restricted, and I had to stay at home for a long time and not visit my neighbours and relatives.

I've been afraid since the beginning because as an older person I may be more susceptible to illness than others. In the beginning, we did not adhere to the instructions and went out and met with neighbours and relatives, but after recommendations and warnings by our support workers from the UCJC, we ceased visits and gatherings. This caused a lot of boredom and increased tension.

We, the elderly, live in a state of fear because we hear about the large numbers of infected and dead people due to the virus, despite the countries applying strict measures to prevent the spread of the virus. We know that the virus does not discriminate, but we are old and have chronic diseases, so we know that we are more susceptible to disease. We also know that there are a few centres in this area which can receive patients with the virus.

I worried that medicine supplies might be disrupted due to the closure of many outlets. But I rely on the support I receive through the UCJC to get my medicines delivered to my doors. I am diabetic and I need to take medicine regularly or my condition will get worse, but thank God the medicine is still available and free at the health centre.

As well as reducing visits and gatherings as much as possible, I know that if I begin to suffer from one of the symptoms, I should isolate myself even from those I live with, try to strengthen my immunity and, if the symptoms worsen, go to the hospital.

I'd like to thank the Universal Church of Jesus Christ team who visited us several times to check on our health and give us information about the virus and the proper and correct methods of prevention. I'd also like to thank the team who visited us to understand as part of a review to understand what we needed to deal with the virus and to provide materials and awareness sessions for everyone. They have been keeping us updated before and during the lockdown.

I hope that this virus will end as soon as possible, that people will return to normal life.

Anzuluni Milemo, 69

Anzuluni is leader of our older people's steering committee. Here he shares his experience of the pandemic and the support he received from the church.

I stay at home. I haven't been to any social activities such as wedding ceremonies, housewarming gatherings or any other social gathering. I've stopped going out completely. Staying at home can be quite boring. We [older people] usually meet and do collective activities but we can't organise any meetings now.

I am not scared of acquiring the virus as I believe I'm taking good care of myself but when I receive a lot of information and listen to too many news reports, I start to get worried.

We should be conscious but not panic. You need to educate yourself about the disease – listening to the news, seeking information on COVID-19 and following the suggestions from the Ministry of Public Health. This is the type of supportive messages we continuously received from our support workers from the Universal Church of Jesus Christ. You must practice good hygiene, don't share spoons, regularly wash your hands and wear masks when you go out.

Since the virus outbreak, I listen to radio and watch television to follow the situation in the country. It's stressful. There're a lot of information and I can't be sure which news are factual or fake. Information I have received has made me worried. Yes, I'm scared, but not much about myself. I'm worried about my friends' health and safety too. However, the team at the UCJC is always on our side with trustworthy news.

I'm learning how to use video calls so that I can talk with my friends when we cannot meet in person. It's better than nothing. It helps me not to think and worry too much about them.

Since the outbreak, I have less work and less income. As the outbreak continues, people are staying at home and spending less.

Face masks are one of the necessities of this pandemic, but they are expensive but the UCJC has provided us with sufficient reserves.