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Epidemics, Pandemics, and Plagues: How the Church has Responded throughout History, and Implications for Churches in Battling the Covid-19 Pandemic

Abstract: The recent outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a massive disruption of the 'normal' in every area of life. Apart from creating fear, confusion, and uncertainty, the pandemic has led to a new way of life in both the society and the church. In such times, how do Christians live out their biblical mandate of ministering to both the church and the world? Over the last 2000 years, there has been a repeated emergence of plagues of devastating nature. In these different eras, Christians (and corporately, the church) have responded to plagues in diverse ways. While employing a case study method, the paper examines how the church responded to epidemics and plagues throughout history. The exploration will look at the following plagues: the Plague of Cyprian (250-270 CE); the Black Death (from 1348 and 1500s), Smallpox (1758), Cholera (1854), the Flu Epidemic (1918-1919), and Ebola (2015). The study will highlight practical considerations for contemporary churches in Kenya as they battle with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Key Words: Pandemics, Plagues, Covid-19, History, Christian Response.

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