



COVID-19 virus: update

This is an update following on from previous communication by both the Council of Assembly and the Assembly Executive Secretary (View previous documents [here](#))

Date of issue: 25 May 2020

Life at Alert Level 2

Yesterday, the Government updated information on life at Level 2. In relation to gatherings, the upper limit has been increased to 100 from Friday, 29 May. Cabinet will again review the settings of Alert Level 2 on 8 June and have agreed that no later than 22 June, four weeks from today, they will consider a move to Alert Level 1. In light of today's announcement the suspension of public worship services will be lifted effective from Friday, 29 May.

This is a very positive development, and as we prepare for the various changes that this implies, we wish to remind you of the following: The first step in considering the requirements and obligations for the local congregation is the development of a COVID-19 Safety Plan that meets government guidelines as well as meeting our health and safety obligations towards employees, facilities users, and visitors. This needs to cover all areas of the life of the local church – not just physically gathering for worship – so must include your plan related to ministry with children; youth; pastoral care; home groups etc.

This should be completed by your Health and Safety Officer and lodged with your presbytery and acknowledged by them **before** you operate under Level 2.

Gathered in person Worship

Safe Practices in addition to Overarching Principles for Level 2:

Enabling worship to take place safely in our church buildings is a way of 'loving our neighbours as ourselves' – caring for everyone, especially vulnerable people.

Parish councils may consider continuing worship through online services (or other means) at Level 2. If you plan to meet physically, parish councils need to consider:

- Each gathering space, church, hall, morning tea area, must be assessed for seating capacity within the limitations of physical distancing requirements under Level 2, i.e. at least 1 metre distance between people when sitting or standing.
- Communicate with all about expectations of new practices.
- Communicate the week prior to the service about new practices that will be in place in line with the requirements of COVID-19 Level 2.
- A normal clean of all facilities to be completed before worship recommences as churches and halls have been unused for up to 10 weeks.
- All surfaces to be cleaned and disinfected regularly.
- All high-touch surfaces to be cleaned and disinfected between services if multiple services are being provided on the same day, and also before any other group uses this space on a different day.

And finally, consideration for increased connection with those not able to participate in gathered worship should also be part of the conversation.

Government Tracing App

To obtain a QR code that can be used with the government NZ COVID Tracer app, a location must be registered using a NZ Business Number (NZBN). Most churches do not have a NZBN and so cannot obtain a government app compatible QR code. It is recommended that the service at www.tracing.co.nz is used to obtain a QR code. Although a QR code from this service is not compatible with the NZ Government app, it is a website-based service which can be used by anyone without downloading any app, and it meets the contact tracing registry requirements.

Please see our Church [website](#) for more information. If you have further questions, please contact our Compliance Director, [Matthew Hague](#).

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