1.   Executive Summary

87% of Northern Presbytery churches completed a survey about the impact of Covid-19, which included conveying learnings and what might be useful support moving ahead. As a summary to the theme analysis that follows, there was a high use of online platforms for Sunday services and most of the churches without ministers organised alternate arrangements.   Many prepared daily devotionals, weekly reflections, hosted prayer meetings, bible studies and offered alternative ways to connect and deepen faith. 11% did little other than a phone call in addition to Sunday worship service arrangements. The determination to stay connected and creatively offering many and varied ways to worship and connect spiritually was inspiring.

The vast majority of churches were agile to overcome isolation with increased communication between leadership and membership. On the whole pastoral care was very well attended to and a huge effort was made especially by the minister and the elders. Phone contact was well utilised and deepening of relationships was common and identified as a benefit. However, there was a lack of proactive leadership in 14% of churches.

The greatest challenges for leaders included the inability to interact face-to-face, the workload and stress entailed in adapting, dealing with the challenges associated with online ministry, and ensuring communications with congregation members were working well, particularly for those who were vulnerable / isolated.

In terms of mission, just over half were negatively affected, but some increased activities in responding to those in the local community being affected. Two missional possibilities emerged. One was uncovering new ways to stay connected, such as creating online worship and use of multiple forms of social media. The other was increased connecting with the wider community, including extending support to those in need. A large majority organised this through the elders and minister who were in regular contact with people, usually by phone. Nearly all prioritised those that were elderly and vulnerable and those without access to computers.

Some churches lacked enhanced technology, especially Northland rural churches and there were some areas with access to internet issues (Northland and South Region). Overall, churches with websites, Facebook pages and the ability to use You Tube and online streaming, either already in place or with the people to organise this quickly, did the best. Looking ahead, the majority conveyed that the combination of in-house worship and recording/live streaming of services should be the new norm. There also is a strong leaning toward conducting more business and planning meetings online. There were useful suggestions as to what could be achieved by utilising available technology and what support churches might require.

Financially, just over 10% of churches have incurred none or little impact, just over 40% experienced a small impact, and about 40% have incurred sizeable or very significant negative impact. Given the vast majority of churches have, or will soon resume worship and other activities, it is estimated that 3 churches may not manage financially without assistance and 7 are questionable. These will be followed up by presbytery.

There are a range of concerns about the future in regards to the impact of Covid 19, in particular those related to: finance; whether or not people will return to 'face to face' church; risk of the most vulnerable; uncertainties as to whether things can go back to how they were; retaining staff; hardship of some congregation members; and sustainability of the church compromised. Conversely, there are a number of identified opportunities, such as: increased online presence; deepening connections between people; possibility of new initiatives; increased engagement with community; extending types of worship; extending ministry beyond those who attend church.

2.   Worship

2.1   What arrangements have you made for the continuation of the Sunday Service during lockdown levels 4 & 3?

Across all regions there was a high uptake of online platforms. You Tube, Facebook, websites, and zoom were used to great effect. This was also followed up by email with PDF's of the service and this was sometimes posted and delivered where necessary. Most churches have gone to extraordinary lengths to make sure people were contacted and able to participate in some form of Sunday service.

9% were phoning around but recommending that members simply watched other services or Shine TV. No real plans were made to continue their own Sunday services. Of this group nearly half came from the Northland region.

91% across the regions did a superb job and went above and beyond. Ministers have done really well and obviously progressed as the lockdown continued. It was a steep learning curve for some but the efforts have paid off, some reporting that the online viewing numbers have increased.

2.2   What arrangements have been made for any mid-week services/studies/prayer meetings/spiritual discipleship?

Once again, the take up here was really good. Many people even prepared daily devotionals, weekly reflections, hosting prayer meetings, bible studies and offering alternative ways to connect and deepen faith. This also included youth and kids.

Understandably, this was not as much a priority as the Sunday service. 11% did little other than a phone call. By and large people were creative and very deliberate about offering other ways to connect apart from the Sunday service, making the most of Zoom and Facebook in particular.

2.3   What particular arrangements have been made for Youth and Children?

This was a little disappointing, maybe because many churches have few children/youth anyway. However, despite this, not a lot of extra effort was put into this, unless the particular church had a youth worker/kids' worker. A few went the extra mile, providing weekly or daily challenges, or sending worship kits to families and the children/youth. Most contacted kids and youth via zoom meetings. Some 13% did nothing at all.

In general, churches and ministers did an exceptional job stepping up under pressure. Churches without a minister at the time struggled, but still made an effort. It seems that a sense of a worshipping community

was maintained and in many cases was even enhanced. The noticeable exception was with youth and children and this was mainly left to youth/children's workers via Zoom if at all. The use of technology particularly Zoom was noted. On the whole, most congregations did whatever they could with the resources they had and were determined to stay connected to their people. People were creative in offering many and varied ways to worship and connect spiritually. The effort made was inspiring. It is clear that those with websites, Facebook pages, and the ability to use You Tube and online streaming either already in place or at least with the people to organise this quickly did the best. It seems that there is a real opportunity for us as the church to reach further than our four walls, the ability to connect for worship at other times of the week was clearly taken advantage of.

3.   Leadership

3.1   How have the leaders in the church stepped up during this time?

The overwhelming response has been communication with membership. The Church was agile in all five regions to overcome isolation with increased communication between leadership and membership.

Although 63% of the responses to the question report increased communication, 14% admit leadership did not step up at all. The percentage also includes churches where the minister was sole provider of pastoral care/communication; the tone of the response given was "business as usual"; or the question wasn't answered.

Breaking down the information further, only two Regions reported leadership not stepping up: East Central (29%) and Northland (25%). The following statement summarises the overall response:

> *"Some leaders have shrunk away - gone quiet, others have offered help, new and old 'leaders' have emerged."*

Almost 13% of the churches highlighted leaders contributing to the creation and distribution of worship services. Ranging from leading the online service to contributing a reading, there was increased participation of leaders who assisted the minister with worship-related material.

11% of the churches noted leaders attending extraordinary meetings. These were held electronically and conducted at higher frequency as measured against pre-Lockdown values.

Nearly 10% of the churches reported leaders running errands for and assisting with vulnerable congregation members during the crisis. The percentage was highest in the South and West Regions.

3.2   What have been the identified strengths and weaknesses?

The single-most identifiable feature was the deepening of relationships (34%). Words such as community, caring, connectivity and community were utilised to express what one church summed up:

> *"Our church experienced solidarity, more than usual."*

Limited access and/or understanding of technology were identified by 27% of churches as the key weakness. Added to this were related comments that potentially raise the weakness to 40% of congregations, such as multiple media platforms required to reach differing ages and culture, suspicious

and unsure of security, lack of use for finances and preference for written word. Online services were specifically identified as a strength in 15% of the participants and an additional 7% cited high IT and media literacy within their parishes.

The third major identifiable feature dealt with people stepping up to help (19%) in contrast to 12% of churches stating the opposite. Some noted that people and leaders were doing less than pre Covid-19. One noted an increasing apathy appearing after the initial crisis passed.

The following table summarises the Strengths and Weaknesses that was evenly distributed across the five Regions. The only exception was West Region being responsible for one-third of the reported "stepping up".

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Technology	Online Services 15% High IT and media literacy 7%	Limited access/understanding 27% Multiple media platforms required to reach differing ages & cultures 5% Preference for written word 2% Suspicions 3% Finances 3%
Community	Deeping of Relationships 34% Preplanning 2%	Isolation of membership 3% Database 3%
Participation	People stepping up 19%	People not stepping up 12%
Unspecified		15%

3.3   What has been the greatest challenge for you as a leader at this time?

Ministers were open, honest and transparent when expressing the challenges faced by Covid-19. The number one challenge was the inability to interact face-to-face (31%). It appears to be especially challenging to leaders in the West and South Regions. Common themes included inability to minister during crisis situations and adapting to a new reality from change itself.

Not surprisingly, the second challenge shared by leaders was managing the workload required to adapt to the change (29%). This included time management, personal stress and maintaining momentum and motivation. There were personal reflections that struggled "to be seen as doing something positive" and "managing different hats at the same time." The general consensus is that the amount of work required was far higher during the crisis than previously. The heart of the ministers is best articulated as:

> *"To find the will of God in the midst of unprecedented pandemic situation and how effectively to share His message with people."*

Closely related to the workload was dealing with the challenges associated with online ministry (27%). The challenge was especially felt in East Central Region. One minister calculated that it took 2.5 – 3 times longer to prepare for the weekly service than pre Covid-19. Common themes expressed a heightened stress levels associated with providing online ministry.

The fourth challenge of significance was maintaining lines of communication within the churches (19%). Several expressed a fear of missing someone pastorally, identify the struggling and their ability to assess the needs without being intrusive. The most common theme associated with this challenge was maintaining a sense of community within the church.

There are two other challenges of smaller rank yet worthy of note. The first is that 10% of the leaders expressed their challenge of navigating through an unknown future with so few details. They struggled with the lack of information required for future planning and maintaining momentum in ministry.

The final challenge of note is that 7% expressed a struggle to "spur" people into a greater sense of ministry. Their most common theme was feeling little or no support from the congregation to participate in a church without walls.

4. Mission

4.1 How has your outreach into the community been impacted by Covid-19?

Many examples of outreach were given demonstrating the effects of Covid-19. Funding was a significant factor for several and most were unable to perform their usual outreach activities. However, 40% of the churches were able to sustain their ministry with many being impacted positively. The following graph illustrates the overall nature of the responses.
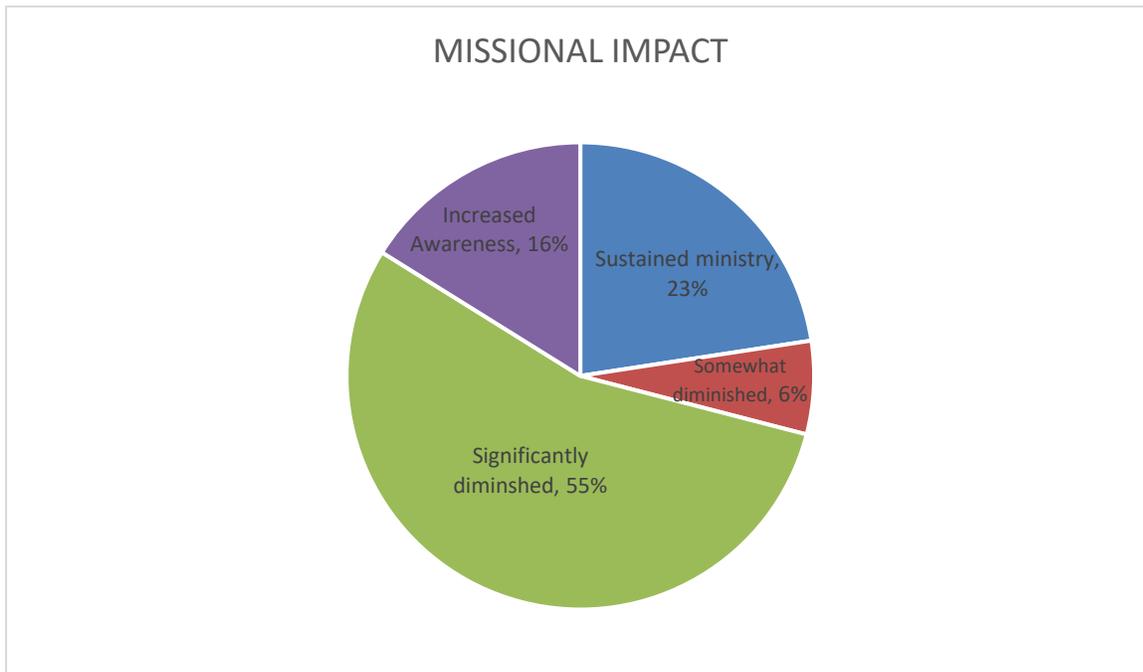
The table below shows the range of impact from minimal to positive. 23% of churches were able to adapt their outreach, usually through online means. The negative impact was keenly felt in 61% of the churches. Most of the activities listed were related to meeting social and relational needs that can only be offered face-to-face. The amazing positive impact was shared by 16% of the churches. The greatest example was

in East Central where a church organised the care network for its entire suburb. They were able to coordinate the needs and manage a team of volunteers for each street within their suburb.

> *"It was a huge amount of work but now I have random community members sending me kind messages of thanks."*

Table of Responses

Minimal Impact	Sustained ministry within community	14
Negative Impact	Somewhat diminished ministry to community	4
	Significantly diminished ministry to community	34
Positive Impact	Increased awareness of ministry in wider community	10

4.2   What measures have you taken to continue missional activity under lockdown?

Lockdown was a time where 10% of the churches enhanced their internal communication tree. It appears the enhancement enabled communication to include members of the wider community. Unfortunately, 35% of the churches seemed to be paralysed in their missional activities and no new measures were taken to adapt to the crisis.

The number of paralysed missional activities was matched by 35% of the churches moving their activities online. Not all missional work was transferable electronically, but their effort stands in stark contrast with those who took no new measures.

Besides transferring work online, some of the same churches joined with others who continued to provide for the vulnerable. This meant 27% of the churches were active to raise money, provide food, deliver to the vulnerable and engage in social activities under essential services.

4.3   What new possibilities have emerged for mission with Covid-19?

There were two specific missional possibilities emerging from Covid-19. The first was uncovering new ways to stay connected. The agility to adapt under pandemic situation was demonstrated by 32% of the churches, chiefly through creating online worship. Several churches began to expand beyond Facebook and YouTube and experimented with multiple forms of social media. Some learned the value of using specific media to target differing ages and cultures. Many recognised the weakness of their database and sought to strengthen their integrity.   In the process, they rediscovered the value of telephonic communication with the added ability to send text messages.

The second missional possibility emerging from Covid-19 is connecting with the wider community. 24% of the churches discovered how to reach beyond their walls and interact with their neighbours outside those walls. This included collecting and delivering supplies for the vulnerable, organising funding for PSN, and working more closely with government departments MSD, DIA, Civil Defence Team and a local Fire Brigade.

The added benefit of the above two discoveries was reconnecting with past adherents to the ministry. 11% of the churches stated this as a learning outcome. Many developed online services and reached

farther than they imagined. Past adherents and neighbours on the fringe of ministries both joined in online worship. Whereas two-thirds of the churches discovered new ways to stay connected, one-fourth did not.

5.   Pastoral Care

   i)   *What arrangements have been made in terms of pastoral care during this time?*
   ii)   *How have you and the congregation members stayed in contact and maintained connection?*
   iii)   *What arrangements have been made for those without technological capability or accessibility?*

100% of churches handled pastoral care very well. A large majority organised this through the elders and minister who were in regular contact with people usually by phone. Nearly all prioritised those that were elderly and vulnerable and those without access to computers, checking in on them 1x a week at least. For those without technological ability or access were consistently phoned and most churches also dropped off service outlines or posted them. A great deal of the pastoral care load was taken on by the minister and elders and a lot of effort was made. This was clearly a priority especially during level 4. Many also had a double layer of contact and care through home group leaders, prayer trees/chains, pastoral care teams and many members of the general congregation who were encouraged to keep in contact with one another. A lot of incidental pastoral care was also done through bible studies, prayer meetings via zoom.

A few churches were also involved in practical levels of care, such as food parcels, deliveries of wood, blankets, cooked meals and financial help, as well as help getting to doctor. 4% of churches mentioned this. There was no doubt more than this going on.

The phone was by far the preferred method of contact, as well as messenger, whats app and Zoom. Many reported a deeper level of communication and care because of the regular contact and the need for people to "offload".

On the whole pastoral care was very well attended to, and a huge effort was made especially by the minister and the elders. Phone contact was definitely well utilised.

6.   Technology

6.1   What Technology have you used during lockdown to communicate and connect?

Traditional technology was used, such as: NZ Post/Letterbox drop (reported by 8%); telephone including texting and voice messages (reported by 56%); Websites (reported by 15%); Emails (reported 58%). Some churches lacked enhanced technology, especially Northland rural churches. Quality access to internet was an issue in part of Northland and in the South Region. Others with access difficulties viewed online services from other churches and/or Shine TV.

The low reporting of websites seems to indicate churches, if they have one, use them mostly as a "billboard". The churches reporting websites as a tool were active to keep information up-to-date and used by some for interactive work, including access to databases used for telephonic and mail outs. Two other churches mentioned additional software for database work: Infoodle and Elvanto.

Some churches purchased equipment to better leverage technological ministry (11%). Purchases included computers, smart phones and microphones. Others (8%) utilised video editing software, iSing and OBS (Open Broadcast Software). The conference tool of choice was Zoom (83%). One church reported using freeconferencecall.com and another GoogleMeet.

The two social media tools used by most churches were Facebook, including Messenger (56%) and YouTube (33%). Less than 10% of the churches reported use of WhatsApp and Instagram. Other tools used by less than 5% of the churches were: Google Hangouts, Skype, Twitter, KakaoTalk, WeChat. LINE. Wix Blog.

General learning is summarised by the following submission:

> *"Different platforms work better for different groups. Our PI families tend to use Facebook; our Boomers tend to respond to email; our youth use Instagram and Zoom; our leaders meet on Zoom and most people access our worship services on our YouTube page through our website."*

6.2   What has worked well and why? What has not worked well and why?

The multi-pronged question produced a set of learnings and challenges.

a)   Learnings:
- Having someone else host electronic meetings so leader can concentrate on delivery
- Emailing devotionals and/or regular newsletters received high results
- Communication trees valuable to maintain community
- Pre-recording of worship services reaching wider audience than expected
- YouTube page accessed through website
- Identifying the preferred platforms for differing ages and cultures
- Live worship services that helped people stay connected
- Combination of broadcasted worship service followed by Zoom meeting
- Increase in online banking donations
- The combination of multiple tools to combat isolation, i.e. email, Web, Zoom, telephone.

b)   Challenges:
- Laptop audio was not of best quality
- Elderly members in rest homes
- Lack of worship music in recorded services
- The limitation of pre-recordings for two-way participation
- People grew tired of multiple Zoom meetings as used also by work and school
- The additional workload required for online/pre-recorded services
- Very slow broadband in rural areas
- YouTube audience difficult to accurately calculate
- Sense of relationship cues are missed through electronic meetings
- Sense of distancing and isolation still an issue even with electronic connections
- Senior members found it difficult to adapt to modern technology

- The private sharing and prayers between individuals that often follow an in-person worship service

6.3   How might technology help the church in the future?

The question uncovered suspicion and felt the Church was looking to see if technology could replace in-house worship and breaking bread with virtual services. The tone of most answers was Covid-19 centric. The question's invitation to imagine beyond Covid-19 was generally missed. The answers indicate it was read as *What technology might…* instead of *How might technology…* The list of technological needs fall into two categories: equipment and training.

a)   Equipping organisations:
- Better camera and microphone for recording services
- High quality video access for both worship and community work
- Upgrade internet feed to enable quality live feed
- External assessment of equipment to ensure quality broadcasts
- Updated websites

b)   Equipping people:
- Training in how to set up and record services
- Training in how to set up and conduct online meetings
- Upskill how to LOVE through technology more
- Equipping church leaders on how to use technology to reach more people
- Need to familiarise people with technology for wider acceptance

The core of the question was understood by some.

> *"Covid19 has pushed us to think outside traditional practices of gathering in Church, into using technology more, and to think creatively f ways to do online ministries."*

This will not be something we can simply step back from and leadership is starting to give key time to conversations on how the future might look. Answers that relate to the how aspect of the question were few:
- Extends mission field beyond church and connects foreign missionaries to local church where both can help each other mutually such as language classes to facility better communication of Gospel
- Recorded services give opportunity for non-church goers to gain insight
- Utilising Facebook for forums that wider community can contribute
- Social media can be used more for promotions
- Urgent meetings can be held virtually
- Joint in-house and online services giving accessibility for those unable to be present and improve people's participation in church meetings, services and activities.

The overwhelming agreement from the diverse answers was that the combination of in-house worship and recording/live streaming of services should be the new norm. There also is strong leaning toward conducting more business and planning meetings online as a new norm.

6.4   What support would be useful for your church to fully utilise technology in the future?

The practical question produced excellent ideas while validating concerns around lack of access in Pacifica and rural communities. The resources suggested are separated below by suggested level of responsibility or need.

a)   Presbytery for all Regions:
   - Recommend an ideal package of equipment, setup and operation for availability to all churches
   - A Best Practice guide for delivering online ministry including copyright advice
   - Tech Advisor or dedicated group of technically proficient people able to assist Parishes
   - Online subscriptions to allow all to have access to meeting, video and music resources
   - Mutual communication channel shared by all and connecting with PCANZ worldwide partners

b)   From Presbytery for each church:
   - Church website creation
   - Training in social media uploading, posting and marketing
   - Training in online broadcasting or access to those with production skills
   - Contribution to investment in equipment and personnel required for quality online services (audio-video equipment, lighting equipment, video editing software)
   - Basic infrastructure of high-speed internet and high-quality Wi-Fi

c)   Membership Needs:
   - Computers, tablets for members in need
   - Internet connection costs for members in need
   - Tutorials for congregants to become familiar with using technology

7.   Finances
As at June 2019 the combined funds in Operating accounts and reserves for Northern Presbytery's 89 churches, 3 camps and presbytery is $43 million. These comprise: 4( ) not known; 3 (3%) $1-$10k; 12 (13%) $10 – $50K; 12 (23%) $50k - $100k; 37 (40%) $100k – $500k; 17 (18%) $500k - $1m; 8 (9%) over $1m.

In terms of financial impact: 14% rated negligible or very small; 44% small; 23% sizeable; 19% very significant. This included 4 who are embarking on major property development, which will be impacted. Those most negatively include medium and large congregations.

Indications of financial impact from examining survey responses and funds held in operating accounts and reserves are:

   i) If can't operate until June: 3 may not manage without assistance; 7 are questionable; remainder will be OK.
   ii) If can't operate until September: Twelve may not manage without assistance; 11 are questionable; remainder will be OK.

Note: Presbytery will be following up with those churches where there is an indication that they may not be able to manage without assistance.

8.   Future Status

8.1   Main concerns looking to the future

- Impact Covid-19 will have on people in the church.
- Health and safety for those of us at risk.
- The financial implications for the church and for members of congregation.
- Not going back to the way things of have always been done but rather taking what has been good about this time into our future.
- How to recover to get back to where we were prior to Covert-19.
- Building up new initiatives that came to a sudden halt; now having to start these again from scratch.
- Keeping our staff in their jobs
- Pastoral care of some of the more vulnerable members of our church family
- Support the elderly with technology and being isolated
- Needing to find different ways to our regular events (e.g. shared meal)
- Lots of uncertainty and need to process post stress impact on people.
- Loss of natural closeness and connection, social anxiety around closeness.
- Some members have lost or reduced their jobs so giving is likely to be lower and also more stresses on families to provide for their families. Some may need to relocate.
- Looking after those in our congregation who will not be returning to church in the medium term.
- The mental health of the community – particularly those who lose jobs, income, hopes and dreams etc.
- Sustainability of our church due to the age of the congregation

8.2   What are the main opportunities as you look towards the future?

- An increased online presence (e.g. webpage, Facebook, YouTube, online services).
- Continuing to deepen connections between people.
- Developing children and youth ministry
- Developing a deeper understanding of Eldership roles and responsibilities.
- A stronger connection to and missional opportunities with the communities we serve.
- Increase communications between us, such as continuing with our 'contact groups'
- Connect in a greater way with our neighbours who might not want to visit a church.
- Growing youth and family ministry in creative ways that encourage families to join in more actively.
- Creating collaborative relationships with local service providers and businesses owners.
- Providing more space for rental opportunities in the community, creating a more substantial income.
- Creating small support home groups in our immediate neighbourhood amongst our parishioners, with the potential of extending this to our non-churched neighbours as an outreach endeavour.
- Recognise need to realign with better values – slower life – can the church offer anything to nurture that desire?
- Keep more connected with people as has happened during lockdown.

- Programmes to support people including outreach to people who realise what is important in living.
- Having a wider group of people who have previously not been active, but have been visiting the online services.
- Dark times provide an opportunity for the light of the gospel to be more clearly seen – so preach the gospel!