



New Zealand COVID-19 Traffic Lights: Diocese of Dunedin Response

Highlights for All Levels

Level Red

- All churches and faith communities advised to have contingency plans
- Limit of 200 people at any indoor gathering
- Face masks must be worn at all gatherings
- Meetings in private homes do not require face masks (but we recommend groups reach agreement on this)
- Medical grade masks must be worn by all leading and serving in worship services
- Strongly advising communion in one kind (bread) only and that people return to their seats to consume the bread.
- There is no requirement to scan in or for a business to display a QR code poster or have mandatory record keeping, but we are recommending this is kept in place for our settings.

Level Orange

- There is no limit for outdoor gatherings.
- There is no limit for indoor gatherings.
- You do not need to wear a face mask outdoors.
- Other face mask rules remain unchanged (see Government advice for places of worship below).
- There is no requirement to scan in or for a business to display a QR code poster or have mandatory record keeping.

Summary: Government Face Mask Advice for places of Worship

Face masks are required to be worn by workers, including volunteers, at indoor events and gatherings (these must be medical grade masks for events workers in public facing roles). Attendees are not required to wear face masks

Diocese of Dunedin advice: Due to ongoing community transmission and deaths in our regions, we are strongly recommending that all people attending worship continue to wear facemasks. We also recommend that areas are well ventilated, especially if masks are removed for hospitality.

Level Green

- There are no restrictions.
- We encourage you to keep up good health behaviours.
- There is no requirement to scan in or for a business to display a QR code poster or have mandatory record keeping.



A note from Bishop Steve Benford

Tēnā koutou Sisters and Brothers in Christ.

The letter to the Hebrews reminds us about having faith and The Message version of Chapter 11 verses 1 and 2 reads:

The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see. The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd.

Ove the past 2 years we have all been affected by something we can't see, but as the current variation of COVID-19 makes its way around our communities, we continue to hold onto another firm foundation of faith that influences our response to everything taking place.

Of many lessons we have learnt, we now know so much more about how to keep ourselves safe than we did two years ago. There is nothing like a pandemic to sharpen up some of our health and safety practices!

As our country's response changes and New Zealand opens up itself more to each other and the wider world, I want to encourage us all to stay tuned into our own local communities needs and respond as we need to. This means that even though there may be fewer restrictions on what we are required to do, we will continue to keep our most vulnerable members safe by practicing good public health measures. This will ensure that our faith communities don't become "super spreader" sites. In many ways, this is similar to the Alert Level 2 precautions we had in place, where we figured out better and safer ways to worship.

If your faith community is feeling vulnerable and needs to take it easy around "opening up" completely i.e. you want to remain with vaccine pass only services for a while longer, you have my support for this. Alternatively, if you feel the time is right to move to a less restrictive setting (mixed serves where no vaccine passes are required), then you have my support for this as well. **Please advertise clearly what you are doing - and let Andrew or Nicola in the office know so we can update our [on-line worship page](#).** Have your contingency plans in place if you have to change how you do things for a while: the office is happy to assist with Zoom links if you need to go back on-line for any gathering.

For those of you who are continuing to follow our advice around having Eucharist in one kind only (bread) you may like to take the opportunity this Easter to share the wine again, but with clear messaging that this is only for those who want to do so (please see below for



more guidance around this).

Thank you for all that you have been doing to keep each other safe and caring for so many around you. As I write this our season of Lent is drawing to a close, we look forward to the day of resurrection where we recall how Christ has indeed overcome the old order of fear, sin and death. Thanks be to God!

+Steve (5 April 2022)

Our Guidance

This guidance seeks to enable Faith Communities in our Diocese to maximise three key goals in an imperfect situation:

- to be as safe as possible;
- to be as inclusive as possible; (where “inclusive” is about welcome, pastoral care, sacramental ministry, and best-effort community participation); and
- to be as adaptive to local circumstances as possible.

Our response to the New Zealand COVID-19 Protection Framework (“Traffic Lights”) framework put in place by the NZ Government is that:

1. All Faith Communities (parishes, regional deaneries, local churches and Cathedrals) must follow Government regulations.
2. Local arrangements (as permitted within the regulations) for services and other gatherings in each Faith Community are to be made by the Dean/Vicar(s)/Priest(s) in charge **and** Vestry/Church Committee/Greater Chapter.
3. “Gatherings” includes all meetings of groups, children’s ministries, youth ministries, and ministries to the elderly which take place on church premises such as a church, hall or church lounge, or which take place in another venue hired by the church, such as a local community hall or a campsite for the purpose of holding a camp or retreat. They also include church gatherings in private homes (as already covered in our existing Action Plans).
4. **There are no restrictions to attending indoor gatherings of up to 200 people, but some may continue to offer Vaccine Pass Only services.** Faith Communities who wish to offer a service or services or other gatherings, for which each attendee needs to present a vaccination pass, are encouraged to do so. [Download the NZ Pass Verifier](#)



5. **Each Faith Community must advertise its own services clearly** (e.g. on their website, social media, church noticeboards, newspaper advertising, via the [Diocesan Website](#)) so that attendees understand whether the service or gathering they are planning to attend will or will not require a vaccination pass to be presented by each attendee.
6. In any situation where doubt as to the application of these guidelines arises, or difference of viewpoint within a Faith Community cannot be resolved, consultation with the Archdeacon should take place. Where necessary the Archdeacon will consult with the Bishop. **The Bishop's decision on any such matter shall be final.**

Principles for Worship at All Settings

a. At the Red settings, the wearing of face masks is required in all indoor gatherings, including when singing. At Orange, the wearing of a face mask by attendees is strongly encouraged.

b. In services with Singers in a choir or music group, participants may sing without a mask, providing the choir or music group is at least 2m distant from other persons present in the service.

c. All Workers and volunteers (Clergy, people with a lay license) must wear a medical grade facemask (for example a Type IIR/Level 2 mask or above) while working in public facing roles. These include the widely available 'blue' medical grade mask.

d. Face masks may be removed

temporarily by a person leading parts of the service, reading Scripture, leading intercessions, giving notices or preaching; the presider at eucharist/communion and any assistant at communion may be masked through the Great Thanksgiving when not speaking and during distribution of communion to the people.

Good Health Behaviours

See <https://covid19.govt.nz/prepare-and-stay-safe/keep-up-healthy-habits/>

These include:

- [Wear a face mask](#)
- [Do it for each other](#)
- [Stay home if you are sick](#)
- [Wash your hands or use hand sanitiser](#)
- [Cough or sneeze into your elbow](#)
- [Clean or disinfect shared surfaces regularly](#)
- [Improve ventilation](#)
- [Keep your distance from people you do not know](#)
- [Keep track of where you have been](#)
- [Stay up to date with your vaccinations](#)



e. Eucharist/Communion

- **All presiders and servers must practice good hand hygiene.** This means washing or sanitising hands before ablutions (ritual purification) and handling/distributing any sacraments.
- **Eucharist in both kinds (bread and wine) from Easter Sunday 2022.** Make sure that when communion is offered that people are under no compulsion to take it – some may be more comfortable with receiving in one kind only or requesting a blessing.
- **We recommend people receive the Eucharist while standing.** This avoids any contact with altar rails.
- **Any president at Eucharist/Communion can restrict communion to one kind only** if there are any concerns about the presence of COVID-19 in the community.

f. **Good Health Behaviours**: we recommend these are followed at all times (see **above**). Previous guidance from the Diocese concerning non-contact forms of The Peace, hygiene, ministry to children, youth, the elderly, as previously issued for **COVID-19 Alert Level 2** or subsequently updated should be followed.

g. **Meetings in private homes do not require face masks**, but we recommend groups reach agreement on this, recognising that current COVID-19 variants are more transmissible.

h. **Hospitality**: If you are operating a **gathering**¹, you can serve food and drink at Green, Orange or Red. We are not recommending offering of indoor hospitality at Level Red if there is active transmission in the community.

Please note: where Government Guidance talks about 1-metre physical distancing and capacity limits: Capacity limits are based on the maximum number of people who could occupy the space if each person was 1 metre apart. People do not have to keep 1 metre apart at the venue. In some cases a maximum number is also specified. The limits include everyone, including children, in a defined space, except workers.

Government Advice for Places of Worship (as of 4 April 2022, the latest update)

¹ Gathering means a group of people who are intermingling. This does not include people who remain at least 2 metres away from each other so far as is reasonably practical. Services at a place of worship, or a prayer group in an individual's home are an example of a gathering.



Leaders in Ministry (Clergy and Lay)

The Bishop has previously indicated that all lay people involved in public-facing public ministries related to a worship service or other parish/church work must be fully vaccinated at vaccination-only services or gatherings and when performing other work where vaccination is required. Such people include ushers, readers, ministers of the Eucharist, collectors, those leading liturgies of the Word, and undertaking Communion to the sick and home visitation. It also includes people involved in ministry with children and young people under the age of 18 years.

Priests who were not fully vaccinated were, under previous public health orders, significantly constrained in their ministry and were asked to confirm their vaccination status to be able to continue ministry.

These restrictions have now lapsed, but may be reviewed in the future if we receive public health advice advising a particular course of action for people in public-facing ministries. For any queries, please contact Bishop Steve through his EA, Nicola Wong ph. 03 488 0826.

Suggested publicity for pew sheets and posters

We are now operating under the New Zealand COVID-19 Protection Framework (Traffic Lights). The current traffic light setting is (*Green, Orange, Red*).

The following Mixed Service(s) are open to everyone, but precautions are in place: (*replace these words with your details*). Please continue to sanitise/wash your hands. You may want to scan or sign in for local contact tracing purposes. We strongly encourage you to wear a mask at all times and keep 1 meter distance from others. There will be maximum numbers we can have at any service in the Red setting of 200. Communion may be in one kind only at Red – please take the bread back with you to your seat to consume.

The following service(s) are open to anyone with a current Vaccine Pass: (*replace these words with your details*). There are no restrictions, **but you must wear a face mask and give each other plenty of room.** We are asking that you keep your face mask on when singing. Please show us your vaccine pass, and continue to sanitise/wash your hands. You may want to scan or sign in for local contact tracing purposes.

Alternative Worship Services: Visit the Diocese of Dunedin Website for a full list of Anglican worship services that are available: <https://hail.to/diocese-of-dunedin/article/FnD9HK0>



QR Code to website with alternative worship options.



Finally..

A reminder of the beginning words in our original Pandemic Plan that still hold true:
It is important that we change how we serve, worship, and come together during this COVID-19 pandemic infection. This is a time to share te aroha o te Atua (God's love) through our words and our actions to protect our whānau.