

**COVID19 – COVID PROTECTION FRAMEWORK**  
**GUIDELINES / RESOURCES / FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

24 November 2021

Tēnā koutou

This paper and the resources it references is offered to church councils to provide assistance, and guidance as we seek to maintain the unity of Spirit under the COVID-19 Protection Framework. It acknowledges there are differences of opinion about how this should be implemented.

This is one of the more difficult conversations we have to have. We need to hold to, and focus on, what defines us as brothers and sisters in Christ, vaccinated or unvaccinated. In many ways it should invite us to greater and deeper prayer, to listening to each other and the Spirit - with abounding grace.

While much attention is being focused on how we will operate – the more important and foundational issue is the ‘why’ question. Why are we thinking and doing the things we are? What does the amazing Good News of the Gospel say to us and invite us to live and share in Aotearoa New Zealand in times such as these? This of course relates to our Theology. The Doctrine Core Group has provided a paper to ground our thinking, reflection and conversations. This can be [found here](#).

### **Official position**

The Assembly Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand does not have an ‘official position’ about the vaccination programme nor the government’s overall strategy. However the Assembly does have a policy about health and safety set out in the Conditions of Service Manual. Our Moderator, Rt Rev Hamish Galloway has written:

“Firstly, there is the central tenet of love for neighbour. In this case, our thinking needs to be very focused on what will help keep our neighbours safe.

Secondly, there is the biblical call to respect those who govern us. In this case political parties from a variety of sides of the political spectrum are united around the need for as many as possible to get vaccinated. And they are strongly supported by the vast majority of people working in the medical and scientific sectors.

I urge you to consider these two elements of biblical faith very carefully in your decision making.”

Under our polity – decisions will be made by each church council to discern and act on what they believe the Spirit is saying to the church. It is also a reminder that we are all accountable ultimately to Christ – the head of the Church.

## COVID-19 Protection Framework

The Government announced the new COVID-19 Protection Framework (aka the new traffic light system) in October 2021, and that it would replace the alert level framework. This will come into force at 11.59pm on 2 December 2021.

Details and the most up to date information can be found on the Government's COVID 19 website. Please [see here](#).

## Church Services

It is recognised that a simple diagram could assist and help us see how the COVID19 Protection Plan impacts indoor church services – please see these below:

### RED

#### WITH VACCINE CERTIFICATES

100 people allowed, with social distancing of 1 m

#### WITHOUT VACCINE CERTIFICATES

10 people allowed

### ORANGE

#### WITH VACCINE CERTIFICATES

Unlimited numbers of people

#### WITHOUT VACCINE CERTIFICATES

50 people allowed, with social distancing of 1 m

### GREEN

#### WITH VACCINE CERTIFICATES

Unlimited numbers of people

#### WITHOUT VACCINE CERTIFICATES

100 people allowed, with social distancing of 1 m

## **Book of Order Advisory Committee - Legal Positions – including Health and Safety Matters**

Our Book of Order Advisory Committee has produced a paper setting out the Legal Framework affecting the Church response. This can be [found here](#). This is a comprehensive paper, and we commend it to you. Note, the requirements under the Health and Safety at Work Act. Each church council must update its Health and Safety plan to include the risk of Covid 19 infection and outline the steps it intends to take to eliminate or minimise that risk as far as is reasonably practicable. In most cases the PCBU will be the church council. Officers of the PCBU will in most cases be the convenor of the church council and the minister. They have a particular duty to ensure the PCBU carries out its responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work legislation

### **Employment Advice**

We note legislation is being introduced this week – COVID-19 Response (Vaccinations) Legislation Bill. We note information which can be accessed from [Worksafe NZ](#) and that this will be updated following new legislation.

A church council considering matters in relation to employment should seek legal advice before making any decision that could result in the end of someone's employment. Legal advice can be sought from Frontline Law, 0800252748 or [contact@frontlinelaw.co.nz](mailto:contact@frontlinelaw.co.nz).

The Assembly will cover the costs for parishes who use this avenue.

We also offer [this advice](#) for a church council to consider if they wish to create a vaccine policy for their parish, see a [sample template](#).

We are aware of questions concerning who will be ultimately responsible for checking vaccination certificates. Information is not yet available about technology requirements for checking QR codes and the verification required of individuals.

It will be the church council that will be responsible to ensure that those entering a gathering/event, or using the premises, have signed in and are identified. Decisions will need to be made on who in the church will confirm this is carried out.

The Church Property Trustees have also provided a [short helpful comment](#) for us.

### **Further Questions**

We are aware of a wide range of questions individuals and church councils have as they seek to navigate decisions in this space. Please see [29 questions and answers here](#) where we have captured these. The answers we have provided are from a lawyer to assist you in your decision making.

As we discern and respond in our settings – let us seek to honour Christ the head of the Church. Let us be people of prayer – asking for wisdom – for we will need it in these days. We know the importance of safety and care for vulnerable people. We know also that there are tensions in this space. This has the potential to create division within families, faith communities, friendships and

places of work. The Gospel calls us to show love, care and grace. We have seen, and continue to see, creative and innovative ways to respond to the ongoing call to be light and salt in our communities. In these times we need more than ever to be reminded of these words; “Whakatata atu ki te Atua, a ka whakatata mai ia ki a koutou” .... “Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you.” (James 4.8)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Matheson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'W' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'n'.

Rev Wayne Matheson  
Assembly Executive Secretary