

This document last updated 30 August 2020

UPDATED Guidelines for Churches in Alert Level 2 – Information for Churches and Ministers – ALERT LEVEL 2

These guidelines are designed to help churches and trusts function safely under Alert Level 2. The guidelines will be generally updated as further Government requirements are released.

Alert Level 2 Church

The purpose of Alert Level 2 is to *Reduce* the spread of the COVID-19 disease in circumstances where the risk of community transmission remains. It has been described as a time when we “Play it safe.” We will have more freedom of movement at Alert Level 2, but it’s up to each one of us to keep the rest of New Zealand safe. The principle remains to act in the direction of Loving Our Neighbours and to do so safely.

Church gatherings of up to 100 people (plus [workers](#)) are permitted under Alert Level 2.

The move to Alert Level 2 is a transition to a safer way of life. It is not a return to normality - there are still restrictions on what we are able to do. Key amongst these are *contact tracing* and *hygiene protocols*.

A Health & Safety Policy addressing what is required and offering suggestions for how to meet the requirements is available on the [WMCNZ website](#).

Requirements for Gatherings

Gatherings **up to 100 people**, plus workers (e.g. Ministers, worship teams, tech teams etc - whether paid or unpaid), are permitted provided the following conditions are met ([WMCNZ’s COVID-19 Health & Safety Policy](#)):

- Infection prevention and control requirements must be met;
- All gatherings must record attendees to ensure [contact tracing](#) can be conducted if necessary;
- NZ COVID Tracer App QR codes must be prominently displayed in publicly accessible buildings (but not in homes);
- No one is permitted to participate in any gatherings or events if they have COVID-19 symptoms or if they need to be in isolation/quarantine for any reason.

Church Gatherings have been redefined under the new regulations as “social gatherings”. This means that:

- Churches do not need to follow rules for businesses and hospitality;
- Physical distancing is no longer a strict requirement but should be approached pastorally;
- Workers (e.g. Ministers, worship teams, tech teams etc - whether paid or unpaid) are not included in the 100-person limit; .

Requirements for Community Ministries

Where a church or trust operates a community ministry that comes under another category of service, it must comply with the requirements for that activity

EXAMPLE 1 A soup kitchen must follow the hospitality requirements for businesses and services in relation to that soup kitchen.

EXAMPLE 2 A playgroup must follow the requirements of the Ministry of Education in relation to the activities of the playgroup

A full description of the Alert Level 2 conditions with a comparison to Alert Level 3 can be found [here](#).

Contact Tracing & Safety Plan

A register must be maintained for the purposes of contact tracing in line with [WMCNZ's COVID-19 Health & Safety Policy](#) requirements.

- All gatherings must record attendees to ensure contact tracing can be conducted if necessary;
- NZ COVID Tracer App QR codes must be prominently displayed in publicly accessible buildings (but not in homes);

A Covid-19 Safety Plan is not now required by WorkSafe NZ as was the case under Level 3.

Masks / Face Coverings

The wearing of masks on public transport is **mandatory for those 12 years of age and over**.

In other situations, the government advice at Alert Level 2.5 and above is that people should wear a mask whenever they leave their homes and especially when they cannot maintain physical distance from people they don't know. A face covering helps stop droplets spreading when someone speaks, sings, laughs, coughs or sneezes. Face coverings are particularly useful when physical distancing is not possible.

At this stage we are not recommending mandatory use of face coverings in the worship setting but encourage churches to normalise the practice for anyone who chooses to do so. Churches could consider making them available.

Mandatory Reporting

Most people will be outside their bubble with increased risks. These risks are manageable if all required care is taken. As a result, it is now **even more important that all suspected, probable or confirmed cases of Covid-19 are reported to the National Secretary as soon as they are known**. We desire to walk with you if cases emerge in our churches and to reinforce our protocols alongside those required by the Ministry of Health. Please encourage congregation members to notify you if they are tested, require isolation or are otherwise being monitored for COVID-19 so that we are able to keep our churches safe.

Pastoral Care, Funerals and Weddings

Face-to-face pastoral ministry is possible under Level 2. Ministers are advised to reflect on the necessity of pastoral visiting on a case-by-case basis. Where an in-person visit is not required online or phone contact is recommended. **A log of people contact must be maintained by the Minister to allow contact tracing if required.**

Pastors can visit a hospital, hospice or private residence under Alert Level 2 to provide pastoral care. In a health facility, they will need to adhere with the relevant visiting policy and infection prevention procedures.

The Ministry of Health funeral and marriage policy has been updated. Funerals and Weddings remain within the 100-person gathering limit:

Pastors may officiate as celebrants at weddings where a marriage certificate has been granted by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Pastors may officiate as celebrants at funerals under the direction of the Funeral Director.

Food and drink consumption are permitted at wedding receptions or after a funeral, So mate, Ala, Putu or Tangihanga **where 100 people or less are gathered**. It should be prepared carefully and served with increased awareness of hygiene requirements.

Facilities/Workplace

Churches and workplaces that can operate safely, and which have appropriate measures in place, **may reopen**. All organisations, including churches and trusts, are being encouraged by the Government to use alternative ways of working if possible. This means that churches/trusts that don't have people or programmes on their premises could continue to have staff work from home at these times.

WMCNZ's Restart & Reopening Checklist has been tailored for use by churches. You can find additional information on [WorkSafe NZ's website](#). **Churches and Trust activities cannot recommence without the Restart and Reopening Checklist being signed off by Servant Leaders/Trustees and a copy filed with the National Secretary.**

Where staff are working from church premises, they must comply strictly with Ministry of Health requirements for workplace operations including:

- (a) Regularly disinfect surfaces.
- (b) Wash and dry your hands thoroughly and regularly.
- (c) Don't touch your face.
- (d) Stay home if you are sick.
- (e) Get tested for COVID-19 if you have flu like symptoms – call your GP or Healthline
- (f) Continue to seek primary medical care.
- (g) Employees/Volunteers who are sick may not attend church premises.
- (h) Maintain physical distancing.
- (i) Display a NZ COVID Tracer QR code poster (effective 11:59am on Wednesday 19 August). You can obtain these [here](#).