



187 Hinemoa Street,
Birkenhead,
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8th April 2022

Grace and peace to you from God.

A few weeks ago the government announced several changes to the COVID-19 Protection Framework. Evidence shows we are coming off the Omicron peak with cases in Auckland having already declined significantly, with a decline expected nationally by mid-April. As such, changes form part of a 'post-peak plan' for a safe return to greater normality. I write to outline what this means for us as a Parish covering the many aspects of Church life.

Firstly the whole of New Zealand remains at the RED setting of the COVID-19 Protection Framework.

Distancing

The changes that have already come into effect are the **raising of indoor gathering limits to 200 people**. As a parish we will still take care to ensure that gatherings are limited to a capacity that allows for people to be comfortably distanced. And we ask that all people who attend worship keep at least 1 metre from each other if possible. This means utilising the whole space and been conscious of those next to you. If you feel sick PLEASE do not attend services.

Contact Tracing

There is also now no longer any requirement for **contact tracing**. However we have left up the manual and QR scanning if you still want to keep a record of your own movements.

Masks

Guidelines around mask wearing remain unchanged for indoor gatherings. Masks continue to be one of the key tools in the fight against COVID-19. Masks must be worn indoors in the Church and Hall for all gatherings. We have moved back to singing Hymns however we are not currently singing the Liturgy for the time being.

Vaccine Passes

One of the major changes of course is there is now **no requirement to use vaccine passes** for any events or gathering. We understand that this change is difficult for many. The advice from the Diocese is in line with the Government's own in dropping these requirements for services.

One of the greatest challenges for us now is adapting to the new strategy of 'living with Covid-19'. I know that many of you have been staying away due to your own personal health concerns and will continue to do so. We completely understand this and I will continue to provide an **online service** until you feel comfortable to return.

Worship

We will continue to not hold hands for the Community Blessing and to have **Communion in one kind only (bread)**. Over the next few months we will consider any changes to this by seeing how things develop.

We have only been having one service on a **Sunday at 9am**. We are changing this temporarily for **Easter Sunday and having 8am & 9.30am services** in order to accommodate more people. We will however let you know after Easter whether or not we will move back to two services or remain with just the one. I know the one service has not worked for many but it has been the easiest way to manage at this time.

Morning Tea & Events

We have decided to continue **not having morning tea** for the time being. Like many things we will review this on a regular basis based on how things develop.

The same goes for any parish events such as the Mid-Winter dinner or Quiz Night. It is too early to know how things will look in a few months so we are holding off on these sorts of events for the time being. However the Women's and possibly the Men's Breakfast are going to resume in April. Usual restrictions will apply to these however you may temporarily remove your mask while seated and eating.

I know that for some of you the above decisions may be disappointing. As a Vestry we have grappled with many of the decisions that have been made and at times it has not been easy. We do however all recognise the importance of being a church that is welcoming to all, as that is at the core of what we do in being a *caring community of faith*.

And so on that note as we look to the future I wish to express my gratitude to you all for your continued support of All Saint's. It has been an incredibly difficult two years. And though we are not 'out of the woods' yet there is at least some positive signs around us. And as we look to celebrate Easter next week wherever you may be I hope that you are reminded that Easter is all about the seeing the positive signs around us. For us as a Church that is not seen any more clearly than in the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Keep safe and well.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. P. Greatbatch', written in a cursive style.

The Reverend Jordan Greatbatch