

FAQs regarding Nelson Diocese's COVID Protection Framework (TLS System)

As we enter the Winter season, those who are vulnerable to Covid are also vulnerable to influenza. So, our 'policy' is to promote safe practice for all airborne & hand contact pathogens:

- stay at home if feeling unwell
- hand washing
- use of ventilation and masks in indoor spaces
- Compliance with government and on-site requirements at healthcare, rest home and educational establishments.

Q1 What is the diocese's position on vaccination to protect against COVID-19

A We recommend vaccination as the best available tool to reduce the harm caused from the spread of the COVID-19 virus

Q2 Can churches still use Vaccine Passport services if they wish?

A No. It is Bishop Steve's expectation that the use of Vaccine Passes be dropped, and that all gatherings are open, with COVID safety being addressed through adoption of appropriate public health measures.

Q3 How do we manage ministries to the vulnerable? (eg Eldercare, pre-schoolers etc)

A Together with Bishop Steve's expectation that Vaccine Passes be dropped, we desire to drop all distinctions in regard to vaccination, except where required by external organisations the worker must engage with, or by their professional body. Therefore, parishes are asked to undertake risk assessments and ensure that sufficient health protection measures are in place to reduce transmission risks to an acceptable level.

Close-proximity services: Follow the link for guidance: <https://covid19.govt.nz/traffic-lights/life-at-red/shopping-and-services-at-red/shops-and-close-proximity-businesses-at-red/>

Q6 What about venue hire?

A Vestry should determine whether to hire out facilities at various traffic light settings.

We recommend that:

- People hiring facilities are responsible for managing the H&S of their own events/gatherings.
- Hirers should be inducted into the minimum cleaning settings that the church requires and sign off on agreeing to them as part of the hire agreement.

Q7 Will masks need to be worn at indoor services?

A *The government rules require masks to be worn at Orange and Red Levels for those in rostered face to face roles.*

*Masks are recommended to all people attending services at all levels of the traffic light system. Given the age profile of people in our gatherings, we also **strongly encourage** mask wearing for all.*

Masks are mandatory for church gatherings if the gathering doesn't have exclusive use of its space.

(There is no requirement for masks outdoors.)

Q8 What do we do if someone says they can't wear a face covering?

A *It's not always obvious why a face covering is unsuitable for someone, so it's important to be kind, respect people's privacy, and don't jump to any conclusions.*

When face coverings are required in church this applies to people 8 years of age and older.

There are some people for whom wearing a face covering is unsuitable due to a disability or health condition. These people may have an exemption card with them to show that a face covering is unsuitable for them. However, exemption cards are not mandatory, so some people will not have one with them.

People for whom a face covering is unsuitable need to be able to access church activities just like everyone else. Please do not discriminate against people with disabilities that prevent them from wearing a face covering.

Q9 Can masks be removed when singing? And should choirs/worship leaders wear masks when singing?

A *Singing can be an important part of our worship, but it poses a higher risk of spreading COVID. We strongly encourage the congregation to wear masks during singing. Choirs and Worship Leaders should only sing without masks if there is a minimum distance of 2m between them and the congregation.*

Q10 Can masks be removed at microphones?

A *Masks may be removed temporarily by a person more than 2m from the congregation and leading parts of the service, reading Scripture, leading intercessions, giving notices or preaching; but the presider at communion and any assistant at communion must be masked throughout the Great Thanksgiving and distribution of communion to the people.*

Q11 What is meant by an 'event'?

A *Under the government framework an event is defined as an activity organised by the church:*

- *that takes place at a commercial or private indoor or outdoor premises or a publicly owned premises hired for that purpose*
- *that has controlled access of entrants via ticketing, fee paying on premises, registration, or other practicable means of controllable entry*
- *unless that activity is an outdoor community event or a gathering.*

Q12 What is meant by a gathering?

A *Under the framework a gathering is defined as:*

- *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 examples of a gatherings.

Q13 What has happened to capacity limits?

A *The indoor capacity limit has increased to 200 (size permitting) at RED.*

There are no limits at other traffic light settings.

Capacity limits do not include workers or volunteers (paid and unpaid) but do include all other people (adults and children) within the 'defined space' where a service/gathering is held.

There is no longer a requirement to be a certain distance from others in church services/gatherings, although this is still advisable at red.

Churches must assess the total number of people allowed in a space based on the size of that space. For example, if a space is 80 m², then services at Red can only accommodate 80 people (excluding staff). For spaces of 200m² or more, the maximum number who can attend at Red is 200 (excluding staff).