

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

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 Will churches be using Vaccine Passport services under the new system?

A *Following government guidelines for gatherings, parish leadership is free to decide what type of services to hold, depending on the parish's own particular circumstances and after conducting a full risk assessment, with appropriate measures put in place to keep people safe. We encourage parishes to also consider the needs of those who are unable to attend a service or gathering requiring a vaccine pass. All services must follow government requirements.*

Q3 Will churches be able to offer services that are open to unvaccinated people?

A *Yes, parish leadership can decide to hold open services where My Vaccine Pass is not required, taking into account the parish's own particular circumstances and after conducting a full risk assessment, with appropriate measures put in place to keep people safe. We encourage parishes to also consider the needs of those who are unable to attend an open service or gathering where no vaccine pass is required. All services must follow government requirements.*

Q4 How do people get their My Vaccine Pass?

A *To get your vaccine pass, you'll have to create a My Health Account via the My Covid Record website. <https://mycovidrecord.health.nz/>*

To do this, you will need an email address, a password, and proof of identity (a driver's licence, passport or birth certificate). You don't need to know your NHI number to set up your account, it will automatically find your number in the system.

Once you have an account, your vaccination record will be available for you to view. It will show the dates of both your jabs.

The next step is to request a vaccine pass. It asks for you to tick a few boxes before completing the request form. The pass is then emailed to you.

If you don't have a smartphone or access to a computer, you can call Ph 0800 222 478 to request a pass. If you're doing it this way, you'll need your NHI number on hand, and you might be asked some questions to confirm your identity. People can call on the behalf of someone else, but they must have their permission to do so.

Assistance with obtaining a Vaccine Pass is now also available at pharmacies.

Q5 Who needs a vaccine pass?

A *Everyone attending a “vaccine passport” service or activity must have a valid ‘My Vaccine Pass’ if they wish to attend. (People who cannot be vaccinated on medical grounds are eligible for a ‘my vaccine pass’ and should present it to attend.)*

Q6 Do these rules apply to Small Groups?

A *The government guidelines for places of worship include prayer groups and similar groups meeting in an individual’s home within the definition of ‘gatherings’ to which these rules apply (see the Nelson Diocese COVID Protection Framework Chart). If a small group being held in someone’s home wishes to operate without the requirement for a vaccine pass, it must follow government requirements and put in place any safety measures that may be needed in the particular circumstances to keep people safe.*

Those inviting people into their homes have the right to protect their family and loved ones and have a duty of care toward their guests. Similarly, those attending a small group in someone’s home need to be able to assess their own level of safety in doing so. We encourage small groups held in someone’s home to discuss whether they wish to declare themselves as VP group or not, and to follow the gathering-type restrictions according to their decision.

Small groups held on church premises are also subject to the traffic light safety requirements.

Whatever the nature of the small group, it must be clearly advertised in church bulletins, parish websites, etc, whether or not it requires a My Vaccine Pass.

Q7 Can elder-care ministries and home visits continue?

A *Yes - However given the vulnerability of those over the age of 70, parishes must undertake a risk assessment to decide if in-person Elder-Care ministry should only be undertaken by those who are fully vaccinated. If parish leadership is considering running this ministry with unvaccinated workers, this risk assessment must be carried out in consultation with the Diocesan Health and Safety Coordinator, Russell Nimmo. Whether vaccinated or not, eldercare workers must comply with all other relevant safety measures (such as masking and appropriate hygiene measures). Please see the advice on carrying out risk assessments in Part A.*

If visiting homes, be sure to check beforehand that the visit is welcome, that the person has no COVID symptoms and hasn’t been in proximity with anyone with COVID in past 14 days.

Masks may be removed temporarily to allow the person to see your lips if they are hard of hearing. Maintain physical distancing as far as possible. Pay attention to ventilation and consider meeting outdoors if that suits both parties.

Q8 How should children’s ministry work under the new system?

A *As children (under the age of 12) are unable to be vaccinated at this stage (December 2021), they are more vulnerable to COVID 19. Their unvaccinated state also increases the vulnerability of children’s workers. Parishes must undertake a risk assessment to decide if children’s ministry or activities should be carried out only by those who are fully vaccinated. If parish leadership is*

considering running this ministry with unvaccinated workers, the Diocesan Health and Safety Coordinator, Russell Nimmo, must be consulted in conducting this risk assessment. Please continue to ensure that all those working with children are appropriately qualified to do so under SafeHere. Please see the advice on carrying out risk assessments in Part A.

Children could be in small bubbles (up to 10) and particular attention should be paid to hygiene. Distancing is challenging for small children, so pay attention to keeping bubbles as small as possible. Mask requirements are set out in our gathering rules. When masks are required, this applies to those aged 8 and over. Try to avoid activities that involve close contact.

Q9 How does this apply to Food Banks?

A *Please note that Food Banks **must not ask for a vaccine pass**. Therefore they cannot operate under the Vaccine Passport system.*

Q10 What about our Op Shop?

A *Retail can open at all levels of the framework– with capacity limits based on 1 metre distancing. Careful risk management is required. See the government Covid site <https://www.business.govt.nz/covid-19/covid-19-protection-framework> for up-to-date information. A risk assessment, taking into account the particular circumstances, must be undertaken and appropriate measures put in place to keep people safe.*

Q11 What about close-proximity ministries – like Nail/Foot Care?

A *We count nail/foot care to be a close-proximity service in the same category as barbers. Government requires use of Vaccine Passports when delivering close-proximity services at **Orange** and **Red** settings. If you wish to offer this ministry to unvaccinated participants at **Green**, please ensure that government requirements are followed and that a risk assessment, taking into account the particular circumstances, has been undertaken and appropriate measures put in place to keep people safe.*

Q12 How does this apply to venue hire?

A *Vestry should determine whether to hire out facilities at various traffic light settings. Detailed guidance on the rules for venue hire can be found here <https://www.business.govt.nz/covid-19/covid-19-protection-framework> We recommend that:*

- *People hiring facilities should set their own VP/non-VP settings and be responsible for managing their own events/gatherings in relation to those settings.*
- *Hirers should be inducted in to minimum cleaning settings that the church requires and sign off on agreeing to them as part of the hire agreement.*

Q13 Can I still be involved in the life of the church if I am not vaccinated?

A *Yes, but possibly differently for a time. This depends on the types of activity you are involved in. Each activity needs to be assessed for the risks involved – see Part A.*

There may still be other opportunities for involvement in services/activities that are open to all, or in ministries that don't require in-person contact with others. (Prayer ministries, admin work, Zoom/phone assisted pastoral care etc.) Talk with your vicar about any new opportunities that you identify, that you might like to be engaged in.)

Q14 Will masks need to be worn at services?

A *The government rules require masks to be worn at Orange and Red Levels for those in rostered face to face roles. The government recommends mask wearing for 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. (See below for circumstances when masks can be removed). Vaccinated persons with valid mask exemption may attend a VP Service but should try to maintain some physical distancing.*

Q15 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.

Q16 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.*

Q17 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.

Q18 What are the sanitising/cleaning requirements under the new system?

A Under the Traffic Light system there is a requirement to clean facilities when switching between non-Vaccine Pass activities and Vaccine Pass activities. Fact Sheet 3 describes cleaning requirements and the sanitation process following a COVID exposure.

Q19 This sounds like a big workload. How can we manage?

A We accept that extra workload issues may arise from the burden of attempting to meet everyone's needs under the Traffic Light System. Vicars and Vestries should work together to ensure that the workload for Vicars is not increased significantly, as this is harmful to the wellbeing of the Vicar and ultimately to the parish.

Q20 How long will all of this go on for?

A Nobody knows the answer to that question, but we should be prepared for the long haul. Note: Prof. Sean Hendy, COVID Modeller has suggested that we are likely to spend about 75% of 2022 at Red level unless children are vaccinated – which might reduce it to around 50% of 2022 at the “Red light” level. Let's hope that this is a pessimistic prediction, but we are learning from experience that we must expect the unexpected. New variants may also pop up from time to time... so we must learn to go with the flow and to be creative in the ways that we minister to people in our current environment.

Q21 What are the advertising & signage requirements?

A Posters must be displayed at entrances to Vaccine Passport events and can be downloaded from this site: <https://covid19.govt.nz/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-vaccination-certificates/my-vaccine-pass/> Download one or more of these posters to be displayed at all Vaccine Passport gatherings.

Additionally, all advertising of services and events must clearly indicate whether a Vaccine Passport is required (e.g. church bulletins, websites, Facebook, newspaper, radio etc).

Q21 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.*

Q22 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.

Q23 Can we run VP and non-VP gatherings simultaneously?

A *If you have multiple defined spaces in a venue, you can operate multiple activities at once.*

A defined space is:

- *an indoor area that has no direct airflow to another indoor area that is being used;*
- *or an outdoor area that is separated from other outdoor areas by 2 metres.*

*Separate spaces **must be managed so that groups do not mix entering, leaving, or using the premises, for example, in entrances, exits and toilets.***

This includes operating activities in different defined spaces with and without My Vaccine Pass at the same time.

For example, at Orange, a place of worship can run a service operating with My Vaccine Pass without capacity limits at the same time as a separate service operating without My Vaccine Pass with up to 50 in a separate defined space. No intermingling is allowed by groups (including in entrances, exits and toilets).

Q24 What do capacity limits mean?

A *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 recommended by the Ministry of Health. However, there is a requirement to assess the total number of people allowed in a defined space in both VP and non-VP gatherings, based on the size of the space. For example, if a space is 80 m², then VP services at Red can only accommodate 80 people (excluding staff). For spaces of 100m² or more,

*the maximum number who can attend VP services at Red is 100 (excluding staff). Similar calculations apply at non-VP services at all traffic light levels. Please see **Part B Protection Framework Chart** for maximum allowed attendance at non-VP services/gatherings. These calculations do not apply to church gatherings in peoples' homes. Rather, the requirements refer only to the total number of people allowed in a home at the different traffic light settings.*

Q25 How can we prepare welcomers for checking passes?

A We recommend that those checking VP passes at VP services and activities have wording to use if people do not wish to comply.

Please talk with staff and welcomers about how they will handle these situations. This includes making it clear to everyone when not to continue to request the pass, how to turn someone away (if separate non VP spaces are not available) and when to seek help from others or call the Police.

Attendees are responsible for presenting their own My Vaccine Pass. Welcomers should sight the pass but are not required to check ID.

Children under the age of 12 years can be admitted without a My Vaccine Pass, even if the church is operating under My Vaccine Pass rules.

Welcomers are expected to exercise judgement in identifying those under 12 years who are not required to have a Vaccine Pass. This might include asking the child their age, year at school, or student ID if they have it, for example.

You may find the guidance on the following page helpful:

What to do (and say) at the door:

As someone approaches

It's good to see you today. Please scan in with the Covid Tracer app (or sign in).

(If signing in manually, remember to note your full name, phone number/email, date and time in and out. We need these in case we have to get in touch for contact tracing purposes.)

Please show or scan in your "My Vaccine Pass". Thanks!

If someone is concerned about their details being stored

It's OK. The verifier app doesn't store personal details or show any information other than your name and date of birth.

If someone tries to show a vaccine exemption

Please show or scan in your "My Vaccine Pass". If you have an exemption, that will show up as OK on the scanner.

If someone tries to show a purple vaccination card or vaccine confirmation letter

We need you to show your My Vaccine Pass – that's the way we can be sure that only vaccinated or exempt people are gathering here. If you go along to a pharmacy and tell them your NHI number, they will print your pass out for you.

[Insert details of local pharmacy that does this.]

If someone is young

If you're under 12 years and 3 months, you can come in without a My Vaccine Pass.

If necessary:

How old are you? / what year are you in at school?

If someone doesn't want to / refuses to show or scan in their "My Vaccine Pass"

We need this so we can be sure that only vaccinated or exempt people are gathering here. That's so that we can keep people safe and minimise the risk of anyone getting infected with Covid.

We are committed to caring for everyone, and especially for those who are most vulnerable. Requiring vaccine passes is so that we can keep people safe. This isn't just this parish: it applies to all our churches and follows the best health advice. Other churches are also taking this approach.

If someone is clear they are not vaccinated and not exempt and insists it's their right to worship

We want everyone to be able to worship safely. You can join this gathering by showing or scanning your My Vaccine Pass. If you can't do that, there are some other ways to worship.

- You can join our online worship. Here are the details.
- We are running another, smaller, service which people can enter without showing a Vaccine Pass. Here are the details.
- There is another, smaller, service in _____ [adjoining parish or separate worship centre] which people can enter without showing a Vaccine Pass. Here are the details.

Have these details on a hand-out you can give them. This is probably best used at the end of the conversation, rather than as a substitute for it.

If someone gets angry

I can see you're angry/upset. Please understand we are doing this because we care about people being able to worship safely, especially those who are most vulnerable. This applies to all our churches.

And it's because we care that we are providing other ways for you to worship. Here are ways to do that. [repeat details]

If someone continues to be angry – don't take up time continuing the conversation

If you would like to talk to someone about this, I'd happy to get them [vicar / warden] to do this later. Would you like to leave me your details to pass on? *[Clear this with your vicar first.]*

If someone is still angry

I can see you are still angry / upset. I can't change our rules, and you aren't able to come to this service without showing your My Vaccine Pass. Here are details of our other ways to worship. Please take them home now and decide which one of those you will use instead.

I need to ask you to leave now.

When to seek help from other workers/volunteers

Do this if you feel out of your depth. Work as a team and support one another. Sometimes another team member repeating the same message can help.

When to call police

If you feel in danger / at risk of imminent physical attack. Ideally, seek help from a colleague before things escalate to that stage.