

Considerations for Safe Return to worship (updated 23 June 2020)

The District Bishop/Office has prepared this document understanding that all congregations are different and in particular member numbers will be a consideration in planning return to worship. We urge Church Councils to use this checklist to formulate the Congregational Safety Plan and add to it as needed for individual scenarios. Please continue to abide by the Victorian and Tasmanian Government guidelines on public gatherings and worship.

Announcements by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services on the easing of restrictions can be sourced [HERE](#)

Announcements by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services on the easing of restrictions specifically for religion and ceremony can be sourced [HERE](#)

Announcements by the Tasmanian Government on the easing of restriction can be sourced [HERE](#)

From the Victorian DHHS website on enforcement of compliance

Directions will continue to be enforced through spot checks by Victoria Police and use of emergency powers by DHHS and Local Government Authorised Officers to ensure compliance with the directions of the Chief Health Officer.

As restrictions are eased, industry bodies, Victoria Police, Worksafe, DHHS and Local Government Authorised Officers will work together under both under the Directions and existing legislative and regulatory frameworks to boost education and remediation, in addition to driving enforcement and compliance with the Directions.

District Bishop Lester has communicated most recently on the 15th May concluding with the words

'So, in your haste to return to worship, please be patient and responsible. Make sure that what you do provides optimum safety for everyone concerned and reflects the purpose of restrictions, as difficult as they are.' (Read the full message [HERE](#))

The LCA NZ COVID – 19 response [webpage](#) contains resources and communications from our National Bishop, John Henderson and other departments of the LCA. Please continue to read communications from Bishop John and make use these resources as you are able.

In Bishop John Henderson's message of 14 May he reminded us the following three items are not yet permitted (Read the full message [HERE](#))

1. Large, unrestricted public gatherings or worship services.
2. Provision of food or catering, including refreshments or beverages at gatherings.
3. Individuals who are feeling even mildly unwell are not to enter church buildings or attend face-to-face gatherings.

Please communicate clearly and explicitly to members about return to worship so they are aware of the dates and times, particularly if changes to worship times or practises are planned (for example multiple services on a day). Church Councils please be considerate of your pastor and his family's health and wellbeing where multiple services are mooted. It is important that ability to sustain the return to worship program is a consideration for both the pastors and also volunteers who may be required to serve in various areas. Likewise the health risk is heightened for members over 70 years of age.

Preparation and planning for Return to Worship and use of Church building

	ACTION	WHO	By WHEN	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware of, and abide by, State Government restrictions on attendee numbers and persons per square metre in a worship place or prayer meeting t home Announcements by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services on the easing of restrictions specifically for worship can be sourced HERE (Currently up to twenty attendees at Sunday worship and the one person per 4 square metre rule plus 1.5 metre distancing in Victoria, except for Funerals). There are different regulations for prayer meetings at a church or public place (ten people) and at an individual home (five visitors plus the householders) 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint an individual or team of individuals in the congregation who undertake to be responsible for reading and sharing District and LCA communications both in this time of COVID - 19 but also ongoing. This is may be a role for synodical delegates and a Church Council member. Sign up to Vic Tas District eNews here Sign up to LCA eNews here. 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider which volunteer roles are necessary as reduced numbers may be worshipping, affecting volunteer pool. Communicate changes and new procedures to volunteers 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate to the congregation regarding the plans for return to worship and use of building, and particularly any changes to worship times and practises 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With staff and ministry leaders consider how and when ministry areas might resume. What health and safety concerns will need to be addressed? Who will undertake the communications? 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unless appropriate deep cleaning is being organised there should be no meetings at the church or church buildings. If there will be appropriate cleaning the social distancing rules still must be observed. Guidelines on how to disinfect your workplace can be found HERE Cleaning and disinfecting for business and constructions sites Consider what surfaces may be overlooked and make notes to deal with these (for example communion vessel wipers and covers) 			

<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider signage at entries and exits regarding hand washing, social distancing and other changes to activities. Some example of signage can be found HERE			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider any 'traffic flow' both in and out the building and rooms. You might wish to establish directional travel – e.g. everyone travels clockwise			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clarity on social distancing in the building using tape, chalk or other visible indicator 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase hand sanitiser and disposable gloves in sufficient quantities that it is available for all using the space, and particularly for those distributing Holy Communion or collecting or counting money 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance records are to be kept for use in case of possible outbreak. (Ensure multiple pens and hand sanitiser are available at sign in. Please sanitise pens). These should be dated and retained in case of outbreak in order to assist the department of health or relevant authority. Download Sign In Sheet 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regard the passing of the peace as verbal only and announce this clearly 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise handling of all objects before, during and after worship. Consider removing any items in the pews and consider treating the offering collection as a retiring offering thereby minimising handling . 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebration of Holy Communion may be a high infection risk activity. Please consider the decision to hold Communion services carefully. The person or persons preparing, consecrating and distributing Holy Communion must <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wash hands with soap and hot water prior to handling communion elements and vessels and have hand sanitiser readily available for use for each service. It may be advisable for the person to wear a mask while preparing the communion elements Observe the Good hygiene for COVID – 19 guide for handwashing and more 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please be aware of infection risk during Consecration and Distribution Utilise Individual cups and minimise handling of the wafer/s 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Money handling is a high infection risk activity. Those counting the offering need to be informed of the need to take protective measures Ensure supply of gloves and/or hand sanitiser Continue to encourage REGonline giving through the LLL 			

<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider likely behaviour after the service has finished. While people may be able to observe restrictions within the confines of the building, as they leave they may relax into the usual social habits. Remind people of the need to support the church and wider community by behaving in accordance with government restrictions, and not to linger after the service 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate that there is no hospitality events at the church until a further easing of restrictions allows for this. 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between services (where multiple service are taking place) thorough cleaning of the church space must take place including communion vessels and any altar cloths to be cleaned or replaced 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider what use may be made of the church that is not worship related. Who will be responsible for <ol style="list-style-type: none"> for cleaning the surfaces including pews for attendance register (see below) for ensuring sanitiser is available and used for deep clean after room use for ensuring people don't linger after the meeting Guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting the building can be found HERE Cleaning and disinfecting for business and constructions sites 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where the church is used by outside users on a hire basis consider management of communicating general principles and expectations to these groups under COVID – 19 conditions 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check First Aid kits to ensure an ample supply of disposable gloves and masks. Consider the purchase of CPR pocket masks in case CPR is required. You might consider a non-contact thermometer depending on the type of users of the building 			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor, review and revise your safety plan regularly 			
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				