

Anglican Diocese of Christchurch: Policy Statement for Traffic Lights Framework

Date: Thursday 2 December 2021

Since the Diocesan Policy Statement on Traffic Lights Framework was issued on 19 November 2021 by Bishop Peter and Standing Committee, in order the clergy and churchwardens may be guided in their planning for services and gatherings after the Traffic Lights Framework takes effect, some developments have taken place, including a Pastoral Statement from the Tikanga Pakeha Bishops, issued on 26 November.

There is no revision to the policy statement issued on 19 November 2021 (save for inserting the correct date for the Traffic Lights Framework to begin) but that policy statement now has a Foreword added to it and an Appendix.

Further, all the material here should be read in the light of the Government's Guidelines and Regulations, which are captured in a single document (previously circulated, Tuesday 30 November 2021) and which is circulated with this document.

The Foreword to the Christchurch Policy Statement is a Pastoral Statement of the Tikanga Pakeha Bishops with a brief explanatory comment by Bishop Peter.

The Appendix to the Christchurch Policy Statement includes some (slightly revised) guidance relating to the Government's Guidelines for Traffic Lights (sent out Tuesday 30 November 2021), some words which may assist ministry units in their communication about services and events, especially in the Orange Traffic Light, as well as some responses to questions the 19 November and 26 November statements have raised.

Foreword

What the Tikanga Pakeha Bishops have said in a Pastoral Statement (26 November 2021)

Pastoral message from the Anglican Bishops, Tikanga Pākehā

From the time of our nation's first lockdown response to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequently throughout these extraordinary times, we as Bishops have met weekly together to pray, to support one another and to reflect on our leadership through the rapid changes in our nation's continuing response to Covid-19. The foundational unit of the Anglican Church is the Diocese; that group of individuals, communities and organisations who gather around the bishop. We honour and respect the independence and integrity of each Diocese, whilst seeking in these circumstances, to offer as much consistency and commonality as we possibly can.

Out of a deep love for the church and the people we serve, we have sought to approach the next stage of our nation's response to this world-wide health emergency in a way that reflects two key agreements in common:

1. The normative position for worship, events and gatherings, is that they will be fully-vaccinated. In other words, vaccine certificates will be required to attend services of worship, events and gatherings. This fully vaccinated approach, as the norm, reflects the best and most current health advice available to us, as we seek to do all that we can to minimise the risk of anyone becoming infected with Covid-19.
2. We have a pastoral responsibility for the care of all people. This responsibility is to both vaccinated and non-vaccinated, but particularly to the most vulnerable. This care includes those who may not be able to worship with us because they have chosen not to be vaccinated. It also includes those who are in quarantine after exposure to infected people and are awaiting test results. Such pastoral responsibility also includes those who are ill, or those who are choosing to limit their potential exposure to infection because of their level of vulnerability or the level of vulnerability to members of their households. We are committed to supporting local Churches in finding ways to minister to all.

As bishops, we are committed to constantly reviewing these principles, and the protocols and policies that are being established in each Diocese regularly, to ensure that we continue to reflect the greatest level of care possible.

As we continue to navigate this season together, we would also like to take this opportunity to thank and honour all those who lead and serve within our church in Christ's name and who work for the coming of Christ's Kingdom. We continue to faithfully hold each other before God in prayer.

"Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Ross Bay

Bishop Steven Benford

Bishop Peter Carrell

Bishop Justin Duckworth

Bishop Andrew Hedge

Bishop Steve Maina
Bishop Philip Richardson
Bishop Eleanor Sanderson

Further comment from Bishop Peter

In the statement above the normative position of our Tikanga is proposed as that which “reflects the best and most current health advice available to us, as we seek to do all that we can to minimise the risk of anyone becoming infected with Covid-19.”

That is, we do not see another position as one which would reflect the best and most current health advice available to us.

Nevertheless, in the Diocese of Christchurch decisions have been made and will be made by ministry units according to the policy issued below which permits choice in order that each ministry unit determines its pattern of worship services under the Traffic Lights Framework.

It is fine to continue this decision-making process but **I now ask you as your Bishop to make your decisions in the light of the Bishops’ statement above, in particular, that your decision-making aspires to achieve minimisation of the risk of anyone becoming infected with Covid-19.**

Finally, I repeat here what I have written this week to the Diocese re masking: it is my expectation that we will mask when we worship together. This too is part of minimisation of the risk of anyone becoming infected with Covid-19.

Introduction to the Diocese of Christchurch Policy Statement

Recently the NZ Government introduced the “**Traffic Lights Framework**” (<https://covid19.govt.nz/alert-levels-and-updates/covid-19-protection/>) as part of its management of the Covid-19 Delta outbreak. The new Framework takes effect from midnight Thursday 2 December 2021. For a summary chart, see <https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/COVID-19-Protection-Framework/COVID-19-Protection-Framework-22-October-2021.pdf> .

This policy document is **the response of the Anglican Diocese of Christchurch to the Traffic Lights Framework**.

In our response to the potential of the virus to damage our health, the underlying principle the Diocese of Christchurch is working from is:

“Keeping ourselves and others safe from the COVID-19 virus.”

In this way we are biblically faithful:

“the one who loves another has fulfilled the law ... Love your neighbour as yourself”
(Romans 13:8, 9).

Our policy here focuses on the situations in which the Government authorities determine that we are in “Traffic Light Green” or “Traffic Light Orange.” We will issue separate Guidance later for when we are in Traffic Light Red.

In the Traffic Lights Framework, the Government invites churches to choose between two options when they hold services (ordinary worship, weddings, funerals) and other gatherings:

Option 1: with a limited number of attendees (100, Green; 50, Orange) without requiring attendees to have a vaccination pass or

Option 2: with an unlimited number of attendees, providing every attendee presents a vaccine pass.

For clarity: all references to requirements for or expectations about people being vaccinated, are references to people aged 12 and over. Children aged under 12 are unable to be vaccinated at the present time.

Principles and concerns shaping our Diocesan Policy

With Option 1, those who are vaccinated and those who are unvaccinated are almost certain to mingle together, and it is very likely that some vaccinated persons will choose to stay away from such services and gatherings.

With Option 2, those who are unvaccinated must stay away from such services and gatherings.

Either option potentially excludes people from worship and fellowship, and exclusion is the opposite of the inclusion churches generally seek to foster.

With either option, our Anglican understanding of our duty of care for our people is that we will pastorally care for all. Such care includes access to the sacrament of Holy Communion for the

baptised and making available pastoral sacramental actions to those in need of anointing or reconciliation.

There is no option by which all worshippers in all ministry units in the Diocese of Christchurch will be happy with all arrangements made by our churches in compliance with the framework.

Our concept of “safety” must include concern for children’s health because children who cannot be vaccinated are part of our worshipping communities.

Similarly, some vaccinated adults are immune compromised or suffer in some other way which increases their vulnerability to the virus, even when fully vaccinated. The concept of “safety” includes concern for the health of our adults.

The policy set out here seeks to guide ministry units in our Diocese to maximise three key goals in an imperfect situation:

- to be as safe as possible;
- to be as inclusive as possible; (where “inclusive” is about welcome, pastoral care, sacramental ministry, and best-effort community participation); and
- to be as adaptive to local circumstances as possible.

Our response to the Traffic Lights framework proposed by the NZ Government is that:

1. All ministry units must follow Government regulations.
2. Policy determination (as permitted within the regulations) for services and other gatherings in each ministry unit is to be made by the vicar/priest in charge **and** vestry/church council.
3. “Gatherings” includes all meetings of groups, children’s ministries, youth ministries, and ministries to the elderly which take place on church premises such as a church, hall or church lounge, or which take place in another venue hired by the church, such as a local community hall or a campsite for the purpose of holding a camp or retreat. They do not include church gatherings held in private homes, which shall follow Government regulations for private gatherings.
4. Ministry units who wish to offer a service or services or other gatherings, for which each attendee needs to present a vaccination pass, are encouraged to do so.

Our recognition is that in some ministry units this decision will enable people to feel safe, and/or this decision will enable services/gatherings to be held at which more than 100 attendees are expected.

Each ministry unit making such decision has the support of the Anglican Bishop of Christchurch.

5. Ministry units who wish to offer services, to which both those who are vaccinated and those who are not vaccinated are welcome, are encouraged to do so, and these services will be limited to 100 persons or fewer in Green or to 50 persons or fewer in Orange.

Each ministry unit making such decision has the support of the Anglican Bishop of Christchurch.

6. In some cases ministry units will be able to offer within their programme, services and gatherings which require vaccination passes and services/gatherings which do not require vaccination passes;

7. In those ministry units where (6) is not possible, collegial consultation should take place within the local archdeaconry or with (a) neighbouring ministry unit(s), in order to fulfil (8) and (9)
8. Each ministry unit must advertise its own services clearly (e.g. on their website, social media, church noticeboards, newspaper advertising) so that attendees understand whether the service or gathering they are planning to attend will or will not require a vaccination pass to be presented by each attendee; will or will not involve vaccinated and unvaccinated persons being present together in the same event; and will or will not require the wearing of masks by every attendee.
9. Each ministry unit offering only one kind of service must advertise clearly where the nearest service can be attended which is the alternative kind of service, (or, if no alternative is available within reasonable distance, how an online Anglican service from within our Diocese can be accessed).
10. Where people aged over 12 have a Ministry of Health exemption from being fully vaccinated, each ministry unit will need to make a determination as to its local approach to participants in worship who have such exemptions.
11. In some situations (for example when a church is in a co-operating relationship with another church/denomination, or when a church and a school collaborate to offer a school service), the requirements above may be overridden by policy considerations stemming from a relationship with another denomination or institution, providing at all times:
 - a. all actions comply with Government regulations;
 - b. the stricter of the two sets of requirements are followed.
12. In all cases,
 - Mask wearing is strongly recommended; and Vestries are encouraged to decide that mask wearing will be mandatory for some or all services/gatherings within their respective ministry units.
 - When a service is held with both vaccinated and unvaccinated persons present, masks should be worn by all attendees.
 - Singing shall only happen when people are wearing masks. Singers in a choir or music group may sing without a mask, providing the choir or music group is at least 2m distant from other persons present in the service.
 - Masks may be removed temporarily by a person 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 through the Great Thanksgiving and distribution of communion to the people.
 - Communion is to be in one kind (bread) only when the traffic lights are Orange. It is recommended that when people are masked, they receive the bread and return to their seats to consume the bread.
 - Communion may be in two kinds (bread and wine) when the traffic lights are Green.
 - It is permissible for any president at Communion, with any concerns about the presence of Covid in the community when the traffic lights are Green, to restrict communion to one kind only.

- Other guidance from the Diocese concerning The Peace, serving of food, hygiene, ministry to children, youth, the elderly, as previously issued for Covid Alert Level 2 or subsequently updated [<https://anglicanlife.org.nz/download/level-2-guidelines-8/>] should be followed.
13. In any situation where doubt as to the application of the policy arises, or difference of viewpoint within a ministry unit cannot be resolved, consultation with the Archdeacon should take place. Where necessary the Archdeacon will consult with the Bishop.
The Bishop's ruling on any such matter shall be final.

Appendix

(1) Bishop Peter's Response to Government Guidance – slightly revised from 30 November 2021

On Friday 3 December we move into the Orange Traffic Light mode – thankfully consistently across the whole Diocese – and it looks like the minimum period we will be in this mode is until Monday 17 January 2022.

Distributed with this document is an official Government document which gathers together various statements on the Government Covid webpages into one set of guidance for places of worship in the Traffic Lights Framework.

Notable:

- Specification of **1m social distancing** in places of worship so that the 50 maximum in Orange may be less than 50 in some of our smaller churches (where services are held which do not require My Vaccine Passes).
- Specification of social distancing even when My Vaccine Passes means numbers are not limited. P. 7 of the Guidance.
- Clarification of the distinction between a service and an event.
- Workers (paid/unpaid) do not need to be vaccinated when the service or event does not require My Vaccine Passes.
- Workers (paid/unpaid) who need to be vaccinated when the service or event does require My Vaccine Passes must be vaccinated before such services begin in a ministry unit (e.g. must be vaccinated by 5 December if starting such services on Sunday 5 December).
- Clarification that all workers (paid/unpaid) for services or events requiring My Vaccine Passes must have the record of their vaccinations kept on file by the ministry unit.
Churchwardens, please ensure this record keeping takes place.
- Clarification that, providing strict guidelines re hygiene and non-mingling are followed, different kinds of services or events can be held in the same church complex.

My guidance

- Workers (paid/unpaid) for services or events are the people leading or assisting with making the service or event happen:
 - o People at the front of the church: priests, deacons, lay worship leaders
 - o People at the door of the church: welcomers, sidespersons, checkers of My Vaccine Passes
- Members of music groups, choirs, and providers of music such as organists and pianists are not counted as “workers”.
- The Government Guidelines document does not specify requirements for those working with children (e.g. Sunday School) or for events which are child-focused during week days (e.g. Mainly Music), but it is consistent with the Government's direction re education generally that those who work with children are fully vaccinated. **Therefore it is recommended that all young adults and adults (i.e. aged 12 and over) working with children are vaccinated.**
- Where (say) a Sunday School involves children beginning in church and then moving out to Sunday School and that service is a My Vaccine Pass service, then all those working with children must be vaccinated, in keeping with all other workers at such a service.
- It is possible to (say) only hold services for which My Vaccine Passes are required while also letting out our premises to groups holding gatherings of a mixed kind. (But see below). Such

decisions should be made locally in each ministry unit. The following may assist in the decision making (with thanks to the Diocese of Auckland):

(2) Use of Our Buildings by Other Churches or Users

- Buildings hired to others are our privately owned buildings
- We can therefore determine the conditions under which they are used by others, i.e. in this case whether we decide our sites as a whole require vaccine passes to come onto them for all activities, or whether some activities can occur without passes.
- That decision is delegated to local governing bodies (Vestry/Church council) who have stewardship of their buildings
- That governing body is responsible for assuring themselves that all activities being conducted in accordance with the current health orders relevant to that activity
- So they would need to know how they are being used, what the health and safety plan is, and possibly make spot checks to check they are doing as required
- If there are non-vax events they would need to ensure that ventilation and cleaning occurs before the next activity
- And of course the Diocese and whoever the building owner is (eg CPT) need to feel confident this is being managed appropriately at local level.
- At all times all users of our premises must conform to Government guidelines and regulations.

(3) Masking

- Although the Government document says wearing masks is encouraged, I am very concerned that in some of our parishes, this has become, 2 or 3 in the congregation wear masks and no one else does.
- **In view of the travelling of Aucklanders from 15 December throughout NZ, the new omicron version of the virus, and generally the importance of mask wearing for minimising chances of the virus spreading, I now say: it is my expectation that all worshippers are masked when participating in worship in the Diocese of Christchurch.**
- Masks may be removed for the purpose of leading a service (but must be worn during presidency at the communion table), reading a lesson, leading intercessions or singing as part of a choir or music group.
- **I ask all reading this whether we are respecting the virus and its potential devastating impact on our brother and sister in Christ if we are choosing to not mask at worship.**

(4) Aspects of administering My Vaccine Pass Services and Events

The following words (with acknowledgement to the Diocese of Waiapu) may assist ministry units in the Diocese of Christchurch in communicating to parishioners about aspects of vaccine pass gatherings and events:

(what we could say in our ministry units about) Our rules about Vaccine Passes

We require people to show their My Vaccine Pass in order to attend services of worship, events, and gatherings in our buildings.

When people arrive, they must show or scan in their “My Vaccine Pass”. If someone has an exemption, that will show up as OK on the scanner. If someone is under the age of 12 years and 3 months they do not need to show a vaccine pass.

We are doing this because we are committed to caring for everyone, and especially for those who are most vulnerable. We want to keep everyone safe. We need to be sure that only vaccinated or exempt people are gathering here. This minimises the risk of anyone getting infected with Covid.

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. Requiring vaccine passes is a practical way of loving our neighbours.

People can join this gathering by showing or scanning their My Vaccine Pass. If someone cannot do that, there are some other ways to worship. Details of these are given on the other side of this notice.

(what we could say in our ministry units about) Other ways to worship

These are examples only. Please insert your local details.

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

[optional:

Contact details if you want to discuss this further with someone.]

(5) An example of a ministry unit advertising different kinds of services

In this example the Parish of Motueka parish [<https://motuekaanglican.org.nz/>] clearly signals the form and nature of its services in the Orange Traffic Light

As we navigate our way through this Covid-19 TLS, St. Thomas Motueka will be offering two different gathering worship times and styles.

Riwaka & Ngatimoti are as noted below

Sunday: 9am Main Church

- Vaccine Certificate Required
- Mask still required
- No gathering limit



This gathering is in the main Church building with access through the front door of the church or front door of the administration foyer. Morning tea will be held in the foyer and the toilet facility is adjacent to the foyer.

Sunday: 10am Auditorium

- No Vaccine Certificate Required
- Mask still required
- Gathering limit 50
- Respect for the personal space of others



This gathering is in the auditorium with access from the prayer garden on the northern side of the building. Morning tea and toilet facilities are available in the adjacent Parish Centre.

St. James, Ngatimoti – 3rd Sunday @ 10:30am

- Vaccine Cert not required - Mask required - Max occupancy 50

St. Barnabas, Riwaka - 2nd & 4th Sunday @ 9am

- Vaccine Cert not required - Mask required - Max occupancy 50

(6) Guidance (sourced from the Parish of Fendalton) re assisting people to obtain their My Vaccine Pass

- If you need help to access your Vaccination Pass please ring the Parish Office on 351 7064 and one of our staff will contact you to help you through the process.
- If you don't have a smartphone or access to a computer, you can call 0800 222 478 to request a pass. You will need your NHI number and will may be asked some questions to confirm your identity. There are several ways to find your NHI number including a prescription or prescription receipt, a prescription medicine bottle label, a hospital letter, an x-ray or test result.
- If you would like to speak with one of our staff about any questions or concerns you may have, please don't hesitate to ring staff/phone numbers.
- Please note that the purple appointment cards that you were given when you received your injections are not proof of vaccination. You will need the official Vaccination Pass.
- We will need to appoint volunteers whose job will be to verify the Vaccination Passes of parishioners as they enter group meetings or worship. This will take place outside the venue. Parishioners and group participants are asked to have their Vaccination Passes ready and allow time for this.
- You will need to continue being masked and continue to scan the QR code as you enter.
- Those who are unvaccinated will be able to access most of our major services through our livestreaming facility. To access this, click on the link on the Home Page of the parish website.

Although this is yet another layer of organisation, Vestry and Staff believe that the sooner we embrace this new way of organising our church life, the better. The Traffic Light Framework will be with us for some time to come.

It will mean that those who are vaccinated will have greater confidence in attending worship and events on our site. This especially applies to parents with children and those who are immune compromised. It will also mean a more manageable workload for our parish staff.