

*This document last updated 25 May 2020*

# UPDATED Guidelines for Churches in Alert Level 2 – Information for Churches and Ministers – ALERT LEVEL 2

*These guidelines are designed to help churches and trusts function safely under Alert Level 2. The guidelines will be generally updated as further Government requirements are released.*

## Alert Level 2 Church

The purpose of Alert Level 2 is to *Reduce* the spread of the COVID-19 disease in circumstances where the risk of community transmission remains. It has been described as a time when we “Play it safe.” We will have more freedom of movement at Alert Level 2, but it’s up to each one of us to keep the rest of New Zealand safe. The principle remains to act in the direction of Loving Our Neighbours and to do so safely.

**Church gatherings of up to 100 people will be permitted from midday on 29 May 2020. Until then, the gathering limit remains at a maximum of 10 people.**

All organisations, including churches and trusts, are being encouraged by the Government to use alternative ways of working if possible. This means that churches/trusts that don’t have people or programmes on their premises could continue to have staff work from home at these times.

The move to Alert Level 2 is a transition to a safer way of life. It is not a return to normality - there are still restrictions on what we are able to do. Key amongst these are *physical distancing* and *contact tracing*. A Health & Safety Policy addressing what is required and offering suggestions for how to meet the requirements is available on the [WMCNZ website](#).

## Alert Level 2 Description

Gatherings **up to 100 people** will be permitted provided the following conditions are met ([WMCNZ’s COVID-19 Health & Safety Policy](#)):

- Physical distancing and infection prevention and control requirements must be met;
- All gatherings must record attendees to ensure contact tracing can be conducted if necessary;
- Indoor gatherings should be seated if possible, and no longer than two hours.
- No one is permitted to participate in any gatherings or events if they have COVID-19 symptoms or if they need to be in isolation/quarantine for any reason.

Once the detail of the regulations is available, further clarity will be provided on the Family/Whanau and Close Friends gathering definition. As the regulations currently stand, the definition would allow people who know each other to meet without needing to provide for physical distancing as a legal requirement. This might allow small groups with a consistent membership to meet with more freedom. Its application to larger groups needs clarification.

Funerals, Tangihanga, So mate, Ala, Putu will be permitted for up to 100 people for public funerals while New Zealand is at Alert Level 2. Groups of 100 will be able to rotate through a venue for a funeral or tangihanga.

Playgroups can meet at Alert Level 2, provided the public health measures for early learning services are in place.

A full description of the Alert Level 2 conditions with a comparison to Alert Level 3 can be found [here](#).

### **Mandatory Reporting**

Most people will be outside their bubble with increased risks. These risks are manageable if all required care is taken. As a result, it is now **even more important that all suspected, probable or confirmed cases of Covid-19 are reported to the National Secretary as soon as they are known**. We desire to walk with you as cases emerge in our churches and to reinforce our protocols alongside those required by the Ministry of Health. Please encourage congregation members to notify you if they are tested, require isolation or are otherwise being monitored for COVID-19 so that we are able to keep our churches safe.

### **Facilities/Workplace**

Churches and workplaces that can operate safely, and which have appropriate measures in place, **may reopen**. All organisations, including churches and trusts, are being encouraged by the Government to use alternative ways of working if possible. This means that churches/trusts that don't have people or programmes on their premises could continue to have staff work from home at these times.

WMCNZ's Restart & Reopening Checklist has been tailored for use by churches. You can find additional information on [WorkSafe NZ's website](#). **Churches and Trust activities cannot recommence without the Restart and Reopening Checklist being signed off by Servant Leaders/Trustees and a copy filed with the National Secretary.**

Where staff are working from church premises, they must comply strictly with Ministry of Health requirements for workplace operations including:

- (a) Regularly disinfect surfaces.
- (b) Wash and dry your hands thoroughly and regularly.
- (c) Don't touch your face.
- (d) Stay home if you are sick.
- (e) Get tested for COVID-19 if you have flu like symptoms – call your GP or Healthline
- (f) Continue to seek primary medical care.
- (g) Employees/Volunteers who are sick may not attend church premises.
- (h) Maintain physical distancing.

A register must be maintained for the purposes of contact tracing in line with the WMCNZ Health & Safety requirements. A **Covid-19 Safety Plan** is not now required by WorkSafe NZ as was the case under Level 3.

### **Pastoral Care, Funerals and Weddings**

Face-to-face pastoral ministry is possible under Level 2. Ministers are advised to reflect on the necessity of pastoral visiting on a case-by-case basis. Where an in-person visit is not required online or phone contact is recommended. **A log of people contact must be maintained by the Minister to allow contact tracing if required.**

Pastors can visit a hospital, hospice or private residence under Alert Level 2 to provide pastoral care. In a health facility, they will need to adhere with the relevant visiting policy and infection prevention procedures.

The Ministry of Health funeral and marriage policy has been updated. Funerals and Weddings remain within the 100-person gathering limit:

Pastors may officiate as celebrants at weddings where a marriage certificate has been granted by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Pastors may officiate as celebrants at funerals under the direction of the Funeral Director.

Food and drink consumption are permitted at wedding receptions or after a funeral, So mate, Ala, Putu or Tangihanga **where 100 people or less are gathered**. It should be prepared carefully and served individually, for example, not from a buffet. People should not queue for food or drinks.

All Ministry of Health precautions must be taken in line with the policy [here](#).