

23 March 2020

Dear Colleagues and Friends

Kia ora

The impact of COVID-19 sees us in unprecedented times, making hard decisions for the wellbeing of our churches and communities.

With the full support of the Council of Assembly, I am informing you that from today, 23 March 2020, all physical gathering for public services of worship in the Presbyterian Church need to be suspended until further notice. This suspension should take effect immediately.

This decision has been made thoughtfully and prayerfully and is aligned with the current restrictions on gatherings issued by the Government last week, and with the Level 2 alert issued on 21 March.

In taking this action, we are acting in solidarity with other national churches. Like us, they recognise that at this time of significant risk to national safety, that the care of all people is paramount.

We know that the Church is far more than the buildings we worship in - now is a time for us to demonstrate this truth. While many things have been cancelled, compassion and care never will be.

The Church is made up of people who love God; love one another; read the Scriptures; pray for themselves and others; care for others and love their neighbours as Christ taught them.

Pray for your families, your neighbours, our country, and those ill with the virus. Pray for our health professionals and all those on the frontline who are working tirelessly to care for our community. Pray for the lonely and the frightened. Pray for strength for parents comforting fearful children. Pray for the courage and grace to be a comfort to all.

Our Moderator – Right Rev Fakaofu Kaio – will be leading the way in showing us how to pull close while being apart. He will be producing a weekly video including prayer, and reading the Scriptures and reflections to encourage us all. This will be available from this week onward and more details will be emailed shortly.

We have information and advice for our churches on Covid-19 on our Church [website](#), that we are regularly updating, and on this [Facebook group page](#) where people can find ideas for resourcing ministry.

Please continue to follow the best advice provided by the [Ministry of Health](#) and on the special [COVID-19 information website](#).

‘Ko te Atua to tatou te piringa, te kaha, te awhina i nga wa katoa. Na reira, kaore tatou e matakū ...’ /
God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear...” Psalm
46: 1-2

Wayne Matheson

Wayne Matheson
Assembly Executive Secretary