

# **Port Phillip East Presbytery**

## **Preparing for the transition period**

### **Zoom Meeting 15 May**



51 people in attendance

Hosts: Duncan Macleod and Anneke Oppewal

*See also pdf of slides from today, and Moderator's Letter, Synod FAQ and Checklist distributed on Thursday 14 May.*

**The core message this week is that church councils are responsible for careful planning and implementation of safe practices, well before opening up our buildings, running church gatherings in homes, or restarting pastoral visitation.**

**The Presbytery, and the Synod, are encouraging congregations to keep their members safe rather than rushing into opening up our buildings.**

The Presbytery encourages church councils to use the Synod's check list (looking out for updates as they come out) as they consider whether they are ready to begin any face to face gatherings or pastoral visitations. This includes who will be responsible and planned actions. We encourage church councils to send their checklists to the Presbytery to be used to help other congregations.

### **Values and principles**

*(courtesy of John Squires, Canberra Region Presbytery)*

- Gathering for worship is important, but safety of people is more Important. Safety of people is more important than income.
- Weakest or most vulnerable are the test for any decision we make
- Relationships with others are our first priority. Loving our neighbour takes priority over programs and activities
- We have a commitment to the common good—the good of all people in society
- We need to ensure the safety of vulnerable people in leadership (ministry leaders, both ordained and lay)

## **Discussion Notes**

Ministers and other ministry agents should not be pressured into activity (pastoral visitation or holding gatherings) that compromises the safety of themselves or members.

If holding a meeting or gathering in the church building, in a home or any other indoor venue, we still need to factor in four square metres per person whatever you do. This applies to worship, running an op shop, visiting.

Record names of everyone attending anything at all times.

### **Hygiene**

Hand sanitiser can be hard to get at the moment and can be very expensive. But it is a requirement if we are going to be opening our buildings. Toilets should be flushed with the lids down, and disinfected often. Cost of cleaning needs to be considered. A professional standard of cleaning needed, preferably after each use. Many of our members would not be able to clean the Church to standard. We could factor in the cost of professional cleaning into revised rental agreements.

If we're moving out of isolation it would make sense for regular testing of ministers and other ministry agents.

### **Renting and Op Shops**

Synod will distribute advice next week on how we engage with renters. In the meantime we note that the church council should be communicating with renting organisations about the standards of hygiene and safety we are requiring, including keeping a contact register of participants and visitors to the site. One congregation, in preparing for the reinstatement of a rental agreement, has made it clear that renters of facilities are to bring their own food and drink, or have no food at all.

We can open op shops if we are able to ensure that the environment is safe for customers and volunteer staff. People over 70 and those with health vulnerabilities should not be serving in the op shop. It would be sensible to learn from clothing stores and department stores about measures they are taking to protect their customers and staff, such as not providing fitting rooms.

## **Thinking ahead to a time when we are ready to meet again**

Could we have BYO communion? We currently have BYO communion elements allowed for in homes, and many congregations are providing for that. Individual packages can be purchased online. See the following link for an example of 100 prefilled cups of blackcurrant juice each with a wafer.

<https://whole-in-one.com.au/product/prefilled-communion-cups-100-packs>

We can encourage members to feel comfortable about wearing face masks in Church. It's part of the new etiquette.

Are we up to visiting people in their homes? Living rooms are small spaces, and a more hazardous environment for spread of COVID-19, flu and colds. If we are visiting the elderly that may make it difficult for elderly members to receive visits from care staff. Cleaning is an issue. Another approach is to visit people, sitting or standing outside, in the driveway, going for a walk.

We could use the "crying room" in church for vulnerable people.

Singing is a big issue, because of the spread of droplets throughout the church building. Even spacing people around the building does not protect members from the impact of congregational or choir singing. We can use recorded music as an alternative.

We need to pay attention to routes in the church building, with one way foot traffic, paying attention to how people walk in narrow aisles and sit in pews. We need to encourage people to avoid touching surfaces.

We are habit-craving beings and we are programmed to go back to 'normal'. It will take lots of thought and regular communication to help us adjust to a new environment.

**Remember: Connection and relationships are more important than gathering in buildings.**