



COVID-19

GUIDANCE NOTE

11 January 2022

Happy new year to you all! I hope you are able to enjoy some time of refreshment during the January period.

Thank you to the many congregations who have coped with Covid outbreaks during the Christmas period. You have all responded swiftly and responsibly. I acknowledge contacting NSW Health was very challenging and am thankful for your persistence.

I also invite your prayers for all people who have Covid, in particular our Ministers and Leaders. The next couple of months are likely to be very rocky as multiple ministry expectations compete with personal health. I urge you all to prioritise the health and well-being of yourselves and your families.

Given the lack of clear and consistent advice from the Government, the Synod is advising extreme caution as we navigate the growth of Covid strains and the pressure on all associated support systems. I urge you to be wise as you contemplate what will best work in your context. Just because the Government has not mandated a restriction does not mean it should not be voluntarily practiced.

For this reason, Synod staff will continue to work from home and Synod meetings will continue to be via Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

NSW Covid-19 Restrictions

This summary of current Covid-19 restrictions applies to all ministry areas, including Youth and Children's Ministry.

With the recent increases in Covid-19 case numbers, many congregations have reverted to online worship. We encourage each congregation to consider the risks and prioritise the health and well-being of members and visitors. The Synod recommends online worship wherever feasible.

Masks are required to be worn by everyone over the age of 12 whilst indoors unless an exemption is held. This now includes offices and shared public workspaces.

Singing is currently banned for certain businesses like hospitality venues and night clubs. Given the similarity of people in confined spaces, the Synod recommends there be no singing at Places of Worship (even whilst wearing masks). As this is not a mandated restriction, it is up to each Church Council/Congregation to make their own decision. This includes singing groups, choirs and performers.

Density rules do not apply to Places of Worship, however, 1 person per 2sqm does apply to hospitality venues and night clubs. Due to the similarity of risk, Synod recommends the use of density rules.

PRESBYTERIES

CANBERRA REGION

FAR NORTH COAST

GEORGES RIVER

ILLAWARRA

KOREAN

MACQUARIE DARLING

MID NORTH COAST

NEW ENGLAND NORTH WEST

PARRAMATTA NEPEAN

RIVERINA

SYDNEY CENTRAL COAST

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COVID-19 Safe Check-in by QR code is required by the Government for Places of Worship, Funerals and retail premises (this includes Op Shops). Check-in is not required for weddings but is recommended. Third party hirers are only required to have check-in facilities in place if they operate a business listed on the NSW Government website: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/business/nsw-rules>

Covid-19 Safety Plans are no longer mandatory but remain highly recommended. Being able to demonstrate due diligence for ensuring the health and wellbeing of attendees is highly desirable for every congregation. There are helpful links and information in the plan to help guide your church for best practices in being Covid safe. <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/business/safety-plans>

Communion and Baptisms may be conducted paying particular attention to Covid safe practices.

Morning teas may be held with people sitting and with no self-service facilities. This is based on the Government's recommendation for Restaurants and Hospitality Venues.

Please continue to:

- Maintain 1.5m physical distancing, where possible
- Maintain hand hygiene
- Practice respiratory hygiene (masks)
- Stay home when sick
- Maintain strict Covid safe cleaning regime
- Get tested if unwell
- Minimise contact with common items e.g., collection plate, hymn books, etc.

For your convenience, should you have a Covid outbreak, please have your CovidSafe Response Plan completed to enable your quick response:

<https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/10966/covid-19-response-plan.pdf>

This information has been sourced from:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/stay-safe/rules/people-in-nsw>

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/business/nsw-rules>

Separate advice will be issued for the ACT.

For further information and clarification, please contact:

Covid19@nswact.uca.org.au

kingsleym@nswact.uca.org.au

Regards,

Bronwyn Murphy

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