

Friday 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." Philipians 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