

St Alban's and COVID-19

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear." (Psalm 46 v1)

Yesterday the Prime Minister announced that gatherings of over 100 people are banned. This clearly affects our 10.15am service which this year has had attendances from 140 to 200. We want to honour the law of course and we want to try and maintain as much normality and fellowship as we can. It is a difficult balancing act for us all.

Both Services will happen this Sunday 22nd as a trial - with the following changes.

1. We ask that some people attend the 8.30am service who usually attend the 10.15 service. The average attendance at 8.30am is 44 so we could have about 50 more attenders.
2. We ask that people keep a vacant seat between themselves and the next person, unless they are family!
3. We will have the aircon and extractor fans going so that the air is circulating out of the auditorium.
4. We will not celebrate Communion (The Lord's Supper) this Sunday, to reduce risk.
5. We will not serve tea and coffee after the services.
6. Sonbeams, STAKs and Pr1me will continue.
7. **And here's the big challenge - if we have over 100 attend either service, we will ask for volunteers to leave the service in order to reduce the numbers present.** Before you come on Sunday, would you please consider whether you would be willing to leave if required.

We encourage any of you who feel unwell or are vulnerable to stay home and we affirm your decision to do so.

We are setting up to live stream our services using YouTube so that people will be able to view our services in their own homes or wherever, on a phone, tablet or computer. We are developing a pastoral care system to keep in touch.

The Men's Breakfast WILL PROCEED tomorrow Saturday 21 at 7.30am with Pastor John Faiz.

We believe it is appropriate to do so and have checked with Pastor John that he is willing to attend. Those who feel unwell or are concerned about their health risks will not attend so it is a self-selecting audience.

The BUZZ Children's Holiday Programme is CANCELLED

We have cancelled the April Buzz due to the unavailability of key leaders with health concerns.

The Passover Celebration is CANCELLED

This is a shared meal with people facing one another around tables and usually involves our older members. We will make available Passover service sheets and encourage people to celebrate in their homes, as was the intended practice.

The Presbyterian Easter Youth Camp is CANCELLED

And so is our Quiz Fundraising Night on Friday April 3rd. Those who have paid their camp fees already or have contributed funds towards the camp will have them returned.

The elders are meeting next Tuesday evening at our usual monthly meeting to discuss other possibilities for maintaining our sense of community and pastoral care while remaining safe and mindful of our personal and community responsibilities. And to pray.... Please continue to watch and pray every day.

Next Wednesday 25th will be a National Day of Prayer in NZ called by Christian Leaders.

They encourage us to pray at 12noon wherever we are, or at any other times during the day that suit us, for an end to the spread of Covid-19, for those who are grieving loss of loved ones, healing for those with the virus, for those economically affected in business or employment, for medical staff and the Government departments responding to this challenge in Aotearoa. More details in this weekend's newsletter or from this Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/205032114058998/>

Until then, please stay safe, stay thoughtful of others, stay in touch, stay prayerful, and stay home if you are sick!

We will keep you updated with any new information about St Alban's.
Please contact me or an elder if you have any questions or comments.

Shalom, Steve
Senior Minister
March 20, 2020