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Greetings

Christian communities, surprisingly, tend to thrive in times of adversity. There are many signs of new life emerging among our congregations during the eight weeks of lockdown. Some of those stories are included in this May newsletter and more are expected next month.

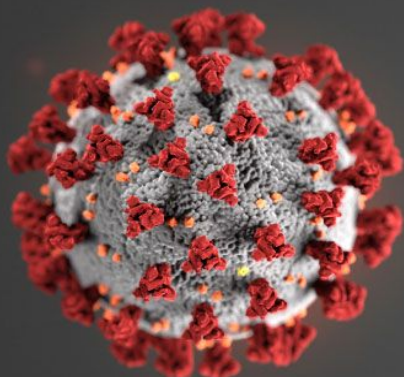
Churches are formed around worship gatherings and so the pandemic lockdown has posed significant challenges. In the face of these our congregations have continued to nurture each other in our faith, provided emailed and online resources, maintained prayer chains and continued to organise, worship, fellowship and pray from the safety of our bubbles.

Congratulations to every church community for the ways you have remained alive, faithful and active, both Christ centred and community facing, through these times of ministry without church services. We will need to do this for a while longer.

This newsletter provides some helpful information as churches prepare for the resumption of our lives together as the people of God.

Grace and peace

Alan Judge
Presbytery Executive Officer



Covid-19 Update

Keeping Ourselves and Our Buildings Healthy

Personal care when we are unwell

Please do all you can to keep healthy yourselves. This means staying home when you feel unwell. It also means when we are sick we should stop working and rest to recover. Church leaders are not great at doing this, we tend to stay home and keep working full days. The PCANZ provides very extensive sick leave provisions for ministers without the requirement for medical certificates etc.; so please encourage your ministers and lay ministry workers to stop working when they are unwell.

The same applies to our unpaid ministry leaders and parish leaders. Take care of yourselves, rest and recover when you are unwell. Ask others to bear the load for you as you focus on your own recovery.

The recurring message through the Pandemic is stay home if you are unwell, be kind, keep physical distancing guidelines and wash hands often.

Healthy Buildings

Sometime soon, most likely next month, will come the time for us to reopen our churches for a range of activities including worship services, church meetings and as a meeting venue for building users. At the moment only groups of ten can meet, but later larger groups [who are able to meet safely] will gather.

This is a time for church leaders and boards of managers to develop their safety plans for building use. Follow this [link](#) to a key document produced to assist in this.

Before you open your church you need to develop a safety plan that covers a wide range of issues including physical distancing (currently 1 metre from those you know, 2 metres from those you don't), provision for hand washing, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, asking ill people not to attend, and keeping records of attendance with capacity for contact tracing.

Some churches when they talk through their safety plan will decide it is too difficult to meet during Alert Level 2. Some churches may continue as they are, by not meeting for even longer. The principle is you do not gather or allow others to gather until it is safe to do so.

Having developed your own church safety plan we ask you to send these to Alan Judge (Presbytery Executive Officer) and to make it available to all in your church. It is also recommended that other building users be asked to make up their own safety plan and provide your church with a copy. This process will raise questions about who cleans before and after groups and how that cleaning is paid for. For example, each group may be asked to thoroughly clean after it has met; or an additional charge is made to enable the church to pay for that cleaning. All groups will need to keep records of attendance with contact details for tracing purposes.

Finance

The Pandemic Lockdown will have affected churches in different ways. Some churches who receive offerings mostly by bank payments may not be affected too much, but others who rely more heavily on Sunday morning offerings are expected to see a major drop in income. One simple response may be to remind members that the church is relying on their regular offerings and ask them to offer the church what can be afforded.

We are all aware that there has been a rise in unemployment, employees have reduced hours and many businesses are deeply challenged financially. So those affected will be unable to fund the church as much as in previous years. Others who have income generated by investments will be noticing that their returns are diminishing in the current economic environment. Some of those most affected will need to trim their offerings to the church.

Each church will need to look very carefully at their capacity to fund the life of their church this year and next. So alongside their safety plan they will need a finance plan.

The Presbyterian Church asks congregations to prioritise the payment of ministers' stipends and employees' salaries and wages.

A few measures have been put in place to assist congregations facing a downturn in income

- The Ministry of Social Development offers a wage subsidy to organisations, including churches, when income has fallen during at least one month by 30%. This subsidy is applied to your employees as well as ministers paid the stipend.
- The Assembly has invited congregations to apply to the Assembly if paying the Assembly Levy is proving difficult. If accepted the levy for May and June will be excused.
- The Presbytery has agreed to a 30% reduction in Presbytery levy for the 2020-21 year. We are the only Presbytery to do this. This was approved by Presbytery last week and invoices will be sent out in September or October. Church Councils will be asked to consider paying the higher amount (without the 30% reduction) if this is possible. Any congregations unable to find the funds (for the levy reduced by 30%) should write to Presbytery about this and explain their circumstances.

A consequence of the reduced Presbytery levy paid by churches will be that Presbytery Council and Workgroups will not be convening physical meetings and travelling to meet church leaders. This will limit the services available for the next 12 months and some Presbytery activities will be postponed until finances recover.

Stipend Reductions.

From time to time churches find they are unable to sustain the agreed stipend level promised to their ministers. If this occurs Church Council's need to advise the Presbytery as soon as possible. They cannot reduce the stipend without Presbytery consent. A few options may be considered

- Discontinuing a ministerial appointment. The Presbytery would need to provide 6 months' notice to the minister and the church is responsible to continue stipend payments until that notice is complete. So it is important churches contact Presbytery at least 9 months in advance.
 - A short term reduction in stipend level is possible. The Presbytery needs to facilitate these discussions and ensure ministers have the opportunity to take advice before agreeing to the change. A change of workload is part of these conversations.
 - A long term reduction in stipend level is another option. This will require a formal change in terms of call. The Presbytery needs to facilitate these discussions and ensure ministers have the opportunity to take advice before agreeing to the change. A change of workload is part of these conversations.
 - Ministers have the option of taking leave without pay for a week or two. Other conditions such as beneficiary fund payments would continue. It is assumed the minister would have already used their annual leave entitlements. The Presbytery office should be informed.
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Be Kind, Pray for One Another

The emphasis on kindness has been a stand out feature of New Zealand's approach to the pandemic. Kindness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit and a mark of Christian community. So we encourage all congregations in all the conversations taking place and decisions being made to keep kindness as a Christian virtue displayed among yourselves.

Alongside this let us be a prayerful people keeping in our prayers those worst affected by the Pandemic and economic recession. Pray for yourselves, pray for other churches of all denominations and styles, pray for your community, pray for our Government, hospitals, community leaders and the Ministry of Health. Pray for countries around the world impacted by the crises of our time. Let us pray for the mission of God, through us and beyond us, in the months ahead.

Wanted - Submissions for a New Spiritual Anthology of Writing



Pleasant Point Writer Karalyn Reid (Joyce) is seeking submissions of spirit-filled poetry and testimonies of hope and purpose for people in this time of COVID-19 and as we move into a new way of living with significant changes socially, economically around here in New Zealand and around the world.

For more info [Click Here](#)



Childrens Ministry

Resources!



Family Faith Moments

The Children and Families team PCANZ are producing a brief weekly family devotion based on the previous Sunday's lectionary reading. Check out the 5 in the series so far.

[Click Here](#)

Faithful Parenting Series

Snapshots of real families, real feelings exercising real faith. Join our very own PCANZ Youth and Children and Families Directors Matt, Gordon, Robin and Julie share their down to earth parenting experience and ideas around routines, dinner times, bedtimes, prayer etc (Each video only 7-10 mins.)

[Click Here](#)



Helping Kids to Process the Lockdown.

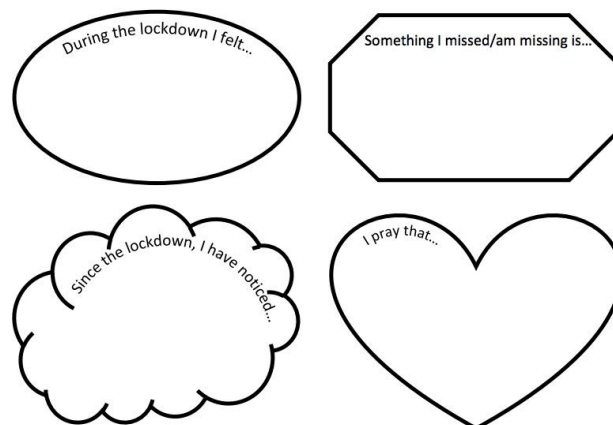
Dr Jennifer Macleod, chaplain at Columba College, has prepared two resources to help her students process the lockdown time as they return to school on Monday 18th May.

She is happy for them to be shared with the Presbyterian network and adapted and used in other contexts too. They could be very useful for an interactive worship response, with children, youth, home group settings etc when we also get the chance to gather again. Below are her notes on the two sheets:

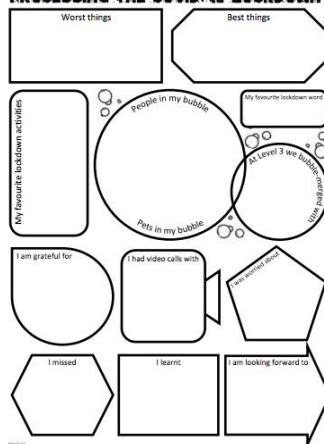
Lockdown Reflections

This is a sheet that I will use to provide a 'drop in' space in the Chapel. I will print it on sheets of different coloured paper, chop them into quarters, and have them available in the Chapel with some blue-tack. The idea is that students can come in, choose as many as they feel like, write their thoughts/feelings, and blue-tack them up on the wall. This is to give them a chance to reflect and express what's going on for them.

[Click Here](#) for a copy of the sheet.



PROCESSING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN



Processing Lockdown

This is a sheet I will use in my RE classes. I will get them to write rather than type as the evidence is that we do process better this way (even those in the 'technology-native' younger generation). My experience with a reflection like this is to be adaptable. Let it be humorous (lockdown words: bubble-buddy, curve-crusher, unprecedented); let parts be private if students want; let it be flexible (if you don't have pets, did you have any teddies in your window?). I will then ask them to share with their neighbours some things from their sheet - remembering to listen well and to respect others' privacy.

[Click Here](#) for a copy of the sheet.

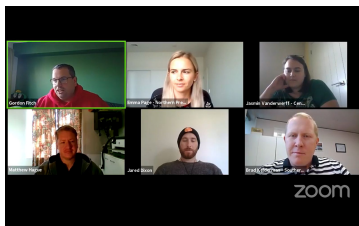
WORD COPY: Jennifer has kindly made a Word file available too if you would like to adapt these resources for your context.

Please email chery@southernpresbyterian.nz if you would like a copy.



Youth Ministry

LockDown Level 2 - “Should I Stay Or Should I Go?”



PYM Team & Matthew Hague (PCANZ Compliance Officer)

Youth Ministry in Level 2... Can we do it? Should we do it? How should we approach it? The PYM Team sit down and chat with Matthew Hague about all things Level 2 and youth ministry. This is a helpful conversation for youth leaders and other ministry leaders as we navigate the ever changing landscaping and what to do with our ministry to young people in this moment.

To view, click [here](#).

Youth Ministry Amidst Level 2

Presbyterian Church

The following is a brief update regarding what and how youth ministry currently looks like during Level 2 of the Covid-19 lockdown. Please let me know if you have any thoughts, ideas or questions around this - as always, I would love to hear from you. Blessings, ##### G

Gathering Updates:

➔ Bible Study (Monday Nights 7pm) and Worship (Friday Nights 7pm)
Until further notice, these will continue via Skype.

➔ Youth Group (Wednesday Nights 6:30pm)

At this stage, it is likely that 'normal' youth group will commence on Wednesday the 3rd of June. This time period is given to allow youth and families two weeks from the beginning of school to settle into somewhat of a routine. Until confirmation of this date, Youth Group will continue via Skype.

Health and Safety Precautions:

When / if we decide to meet during Level 2, our Health and Safety Precautions will be based on the New Zealand school and education systems. Below is a list of what this could involve:

- > Small group gatherings (with the maximum number of people set by the Government)
- > Taking rolls so that contact can be traced
- > Regular hand washing, sanitising, and at a minimum, daily disinfection and cleaning of surfaces. Note that individuals attending these gatherings are to maintain good personal hygiene eg. showering regularly and coughing/sneezing into their elbows
- > Practising a 1 metre social distancing policy, with the avoidance of all unnecessary touching
- > Enforcing that if you, or someone close to you is sick, Phoebe is to be notified immediately and you are to stay at home until further notice is given
- > No sharing of foods or liquids. Personal water bottles are encouraged but must be clearly labelled/named. Where food is needed, the same process is to be followed.
- > Ongoing education around Covid-19 via posters, talking, health pamphlets etc.
- > Continued access to online support/gatherings via text, phone call, WhatsApp, Facebook and/or Skype

Lastly...

Please know that I remain free and available for you and for youth! This could include casual check-ins, prayer requests, trips to the shop, devotions, games, help with schooling and so on. My desire is to bless you on behalf of the Lord, that you might catch a glimpse of his goodness - so please, reach out.

"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace." Numbers 6:24-26

Blessings, #####

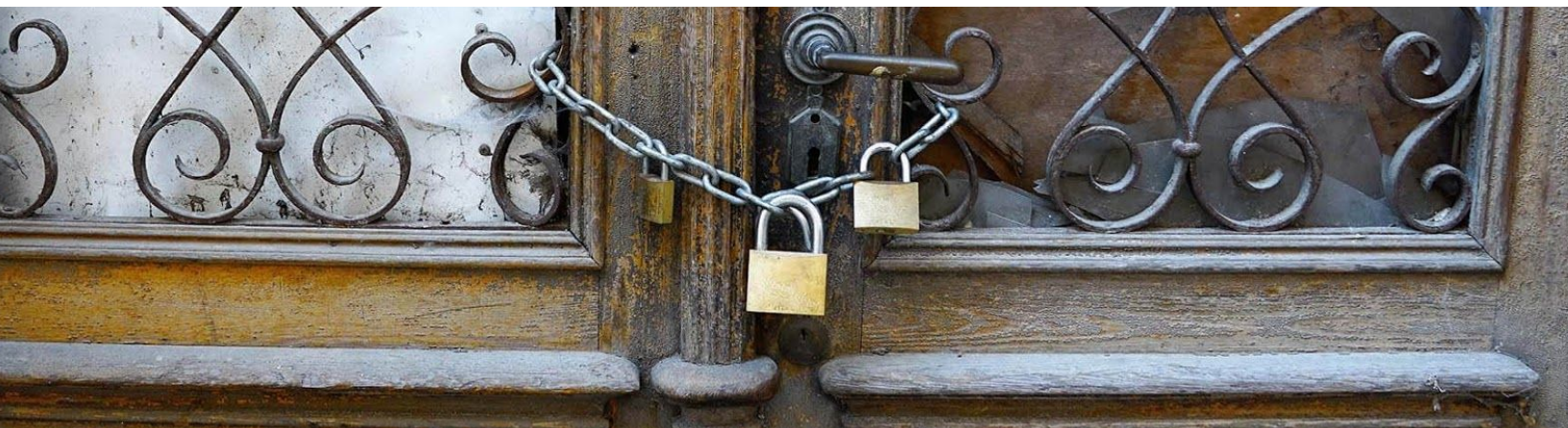
Youth Ministry in Level 2 - One Example

One of our awesome youth pastors in Southern Presbytery shared their youth ministry plans for level 2 and I thought it was too good not to share with others. It will give other groups a starting point on how to approach this next stage well. I love that in this example, the youth pastor is communicating well and early, but is not rushing into things and is taking a cautious approach.

NOTE: Every context is different. You need to apply the guidelines to your context and work out what is best for your community. This is one example, from one particular context.

Contact [Brad](#) if you need more help in this area..

To view, click [here](#).



Church In Lockdown

Some examples of how our churches are meeting during the Covid-19 lockdown. If you would like to share what your church has been doing, we'd all love to hear! Email office@southernpresbyterians.nz

St Davids, Invercargill

For the past 7 weeks in lockdown we have been streaming services through YouTube with links put on our Facebook page, "St Davids on Regent". For the first four weeks our music team had pre-recorded 4 brackets of 2 worship songs to begin the service, but since then, two of the Church musical families have produced the songs by individually recording their parts and instruments. These parts are then mixed and the words subtitled so we can all sing along on Sunday mornings. The other sections of the service; children's talk, welcome, sermon and ending are separately recorded by different people, and then one person puts it all together and uploads it to YouTube. The link is sent out each Sunday morning by Facebook and text message. We are fortunate that the majority of our parish members can access this service on computers, cell-phones or streaming to their TV's. It has felt like we are all in the Sunday Worship together.



In addition, at the beginning of lockdown we split the membership up into groups, with Elders and others phoning or emailing their groups regularly and ensuring there were no needs not being met, but also it is good for just catching up. Our pastor, Paul Buick and his wife Sharon, just new to the parish at

the beginning of February, have also used their daily exercise walks to visit homes and talk to people from the end of their driveways, and this has been great, just having some one on one conversation even if it is at the necessary social distance.

Another initiative of Paul's was to ask people to record a short devotion on their cell-phone or other device which have then been shared via our Facebook page Monday, Wednesday and Fridays. Quite a number of people have taken this up and it has been spiritually uplifting to connect this way with different people, to see their faces, as well as take in the different messages they have brought us.

We praise the Lord that all this technology is available, Apps to exchange large files and order events etc. It would have been a much lonelier lockdown without them. Our challenge will be how to put this to better use for the Kingdom once we can physically meet again, as we know our communications are going much wider than to our own Church group.

It was a bit disappointing that we could not physically meet again in fellowship as we pass into Level 2, but we look forward to that day knowing we have the comfort and guidance of the Holy Spirit with us always.

[St Davids Facebook Page](#)

Weston Community Church

Weston Community Church (Waiareka-Weston Parish) has been making lots of use of Zoom. We have a Sunday morning service utilising Zoom, and also use it for a number of home-groups and other meetings. Our Sunday service has an interesting format, with much of the content being pre-recorded: Varying households record songs, prayers, a children's talk, scripture readings, a welcome, a benediction and the sermon and send those recordings to our tech-savvy youth-pastor.



She then edits those into a single video with subtitles for the songs and text (and often artwork) accompanying the scripture readings. The video service is made available on our Weston Community Church facebook page for people to access at their leisure – we've had people connect in from as far away as South Africa and the UK in this way.

The Sunday morning Zoom service begins with a live welcome before switching over to the pre-recorded content, and concludes with a live benediction. Folk then grab a coffee while we allocate them into smaller 'Zoom Break-out Rooms' of 3-4 households. This enables folk to catch up in greater depth with a smaller group for about 15 minutes. Those who want to can stick around for longer and re-join a larger congregation-wide chat and catch-up.

We email out the sermon, written prayers and the weekly bulletin to those on email. Those without email are paired up with an 'email household' who share content with them over the phone. Each church household has also been encouraged to regularly phone the next household in the church phone directory.

The church facebook page has had a lot of use. Every few days someone posts a video of them sharing a favourite scripture and why that scripture is meaningful to them. Folk have also shared other inspiring videos, artwork and poems, as well as ideas and challenges to entertain the children of the church and community; one of our church household's teddy-bears also makes regular photo appearances of him taking a daily stroll in different locations in his neighbourhood!

[Weston Facebook Page](#)

Limestone Plains Presbyterian Church

I think I can speak for all of our faithful few at Waimatuku and Thornbury in saying that what we have missed most of during our enforced 'holiday' is the fellowship we enjoy together. We always conclude our services with a cuppa and a catch up of each others news.

Most of us have email and I have been able to forward some of the many emails I received so our spiritual needs have been relatively well met. For those without email, I post but NZ post is even slower than usual. The telephone has been well used also.

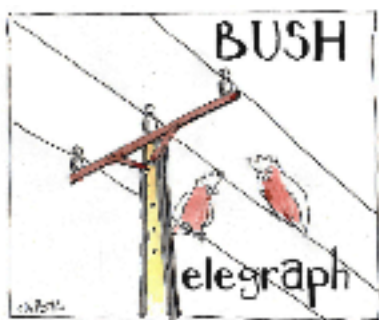


I don't think that the powers that be realise just how many people don't have smart phones and email connections, and don't want them. A lot of important information can pass these people by. So many say follow us on Facebook or go to our website or shop on line and just do your banking online. It can be very isolating for these people.

Anyway, I am looking forward to being released from our bubbles, socialising a little and of course returning to church.

National Church Updates

Click on the following links to see the latest news updates from the various resourcing and ministry departments of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand.



BUSH TELEGRAPH

[May Edition](#)



PRESBYTERIAN YTH MINISTRY

[The Buzz](#)



KIDS FRIENDLY

[Kids Friendly E-News](#)



TREASURERS NEWSLETTER

[April Edition](#)

The Southern Presbyterians Newsletter is released monthly.

Any comments or concerns about the newsletter or the website, or to unsubscribe,
please email office@southernpresbyterians.nz

If you have news and stories of great things happening in your parish, don't be shy, others would love to hear and be inspired! Please feel free to send through any photos, videos and text and we will do our best to share it through our website with the rest of our parishes.

email to: office@southernpresbyterians.nz



We are also on Facebook. Make sure you 'LIKE' us!

To go to our Facebook Page, click [here](#).