

Wednesday, 1 December, 2021

Kia Ora Knox Community,

The Knox Church Council has been discussing Knox's position around attendance at worship as we anticipate moving to the 'traffic light' Covid-19 Protection Framework recently indicated by the Government. A copy of the way the system works is attached to this email.

We believe there is a need to balance three important things as we navigate this situation in our church family:

- The right for people to make their own decision about vaccination
- The need to keep our people safe, especially those who are most vulnerable at this time
- Our desire to remain a church that has a welcoming attitude to all

It is not possible to meet all these needs completely, but we want to do the best we can! Here is what we are thinking.

Firstly: all of our Sunday staff, Matthew, Daniel and Gabriel are fully vaccinated. Jan, our pastoral visitor, is vaccinated. Current members of council also are vaccinated and happy to be identified as such. We're confident as well that our office staffing complies with all current requirements. Also, hirers of our buildings are being informed of the need to work within new government requirements.

Secondly, regarding worship: the time when COVID is prevalent in our community is fast approaching. Research shows that people who are unvaccinated are many times more likely to spread COVID - <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/300441329/your-unvaccinated-friend-is-roughly-20-times-more-likely-to-give-you-covid>

The new traffic light system is designed to allow those holding gatherings to provide a level of safety. Once the system is introduced, it is our intention that attendance at worship in the main church building will be for those vaccinated (and those who are not able to be vaccinated, e.g. children under 12).

In order to aid this, we will invite you to register your vaccination status with us. You can do that at church on a Sunday morning - we will have people on the doors with scanners, and they'll be able to help with advice about downloading your vaccination certificates. Or, if you prefer, you can ring Lynda at the office (Wednesday to Friday, 10:00am to noon), and she'll organize for someone to help you.

If you have decided not to be vaccinated we would love you to make contact with us (either Matthew, our minister, or Jean, our Health and Safety officer) to talk about how we can help you to remain closely connected with the church and how we can care for you at this time. And we will be offering alternative ways for you to worship with us - with an audio feed of the service piped through into the Knox Centre Hall where suitably distanced seating will be set up for unvaccinated people. We are offering this option, since the only legal alternative is to turn people away, and this does not sit well next to our commitment to inclusiveness.

We are happy to announce that with the reduced risk offered by the traffic light system, we now feel comfortable with singing again in church. We also feel it appropriate to begin celebrating communion (in a careful way) from January next year. We are not comfortable, however, about serving morning tea after the service just now, so we will not do that for the moment.

We are very open to feedback and conversation about all of this.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to talk.

For the Knox Church Council,

Janet Wilson, Council Clerk

Matthew Jack, Minister

Jean Brouwer, Health and Safety Officer

SO, FOR THIS COMING SUNDAY, 5 DECEMBER

Augmenting our welcoming teams on the church doors this Sunday, we will have some willing volunteers (who deserve our thanks) who will help clarify your vaccination status as you come to church. To do that clarification, they have a number of options. They can

- scan any electronic proof of vaccination you might have in your phone
- scan any printed proof of vaccination you might have in your purse or pocket
- for the moment, sight any card issued at your second vaccination

The Traffic Light people will also have printed forms, which once you've shown your vaccination status, you can fill in to allow us to enter you onto a confidential register that will enable us not to have to check you each subsequent week - although we note that current certificates have a six-month expiry. We will learn and adapt as we go!

Since our first week of checking, scanning and explaining will probably be a bit time-consuming, we suggest you leave plenty of time this Sunday to get through the door. And we thank you for being patient as we get used to this new way of gathering.

Also, since proof of vaccination becomes more important at this time, please let us know if you are having any difficulty working out how to get that proof. Many pharmacies are offering help with this, and a quick call to our office will result in a phone call back with some helpful advice.