COVIDSAFE PLAN FOR CHURCH PREMISES (TEMPLATE)

Throughout the current pandemic we have seen some wonderful examples of how God's church has continued to minister in our community under difficult circumstances. As restrictions at a government level begin to relax, we need to make sure that we continue to behave in a way that honors God and protects our congregations when public meetings recommence.

The purpose of this plan is to ensure that we meet the standards set out by authorities, but also more importantly, be considered and responsible as we begin again to use church premises for the mission which they were intended.

The Federal Government has outlined a Three-Step plan for churches. This plan is outlined as follows:

Step 1:
- *Weddings may have up to 10 guests in addition to the couple and the celebrant*
- *Funerals may have up to 20 mourners indoors and 30 outdoors.*
- *Religious gatherings may have up to 10 attendees.*
- *Every gathering must record contact details*

Step 2
- *Weddings may have up to 20 guests in addition to the couple and the celebrant.*
- *Funerals may have up to 50 mourners. Religious gatherings may have up to 20 attendees.*
- *Every gathering must record contact details*

Step 3
- *Allow gatherings of up to 100 people. Every gathering must record contact details*
- *Review the State government determinations for information on when these steps come into effect*

Importantly, the following 4 requirements must also be applied at each stage:

- Maintain 1.5m distance and good hygiene
- Stay at home if unwell
- Frequently clean and disinfect communal areas
- CovidSafe Plan for all workplaces and premises

Following this plan will enable your church to comply with both the government and diocesan requirements and will enable you to stay flexible to the changing environment.

PREPARE AND PREVENT

1. **When preparing to re-open church buildings, the local leadership needs to meet and agree:**

   1.1 A local **church service plan** specific to your church

   1.2 Nominated **COVIDSafe Responsible Persons/COVIDSafe Warden**

   1.3 A **cleaning plan**

   1.4 An **Outbreak or Incident Plan** including equipment required

   1.5 A Monitoring Plan with regular leadership meetings

2. **Before the church service, ensure:**

   2.1 Pre-service cleaning is complete

   2.2 Your COVIDSafe Posters are displayed prominently at the entrance and in key locations

   2.3 Your COVIDSafe Warden is easily identifiable

   2.4 Your greeting/welcoming volunteers are trained in screening

   2.5 The attendee register is set up where required.

   2.6 Appropriate **hand sanitation** is set up in a prominent location

   2.7 A **seating plan** is established at 1.5 meters apart. Adequate plans are in place to ensure social distancing such as 1 family per pew/row, or 2 spare seats between each family group.

3. **During the service, ensure:**

   3.1 When people arrive, they should be wait in a line at least 1.5 meters apart if there is a queue to get in

   3.2 On entry, all attendees are asked if they have experienced any COVID or flu like symptoms in the past two weeks. If yes, they should be informed that they will be unable to attend unless cleared by doctors. If OK, then invited to complete the attendee register (where required). Please bring your own pen.

   3.3 Limit the use of hymn books and printed materials. Where possible use projection for worship, prayer and order of service.

   3.4 During the service, announcements should include updates on COVIDSafe practices, including as a minimum:

   - People should practice social distancing at a minimum of 1.5 meters at all times

   - No physical greetings or exchanges such us handshakes or hugs, including sharing of the Peace. Learning to Sign "peace be with you" is highly recommended.

   - Wash hands and maintain good hygiene practices

   - Sneezing into your elbow

   - Other relevant COVID Safe practices that apply to the local congregation

   3.5 Your COVID Safe Warden is monitoring attendee numbers to ensure maximums are not exceeded.

   3.6 There is a clear post-service plan to monitor and enforce social distancing practices

Communion

General Synod has provided the following guidelines with respect of Communion:

- Design arrangements for people to receive communion which restrict proximity to each other and the need to touch surfaces

- Ensure ministers of the Eucharist practice wash their hands/ use sanitizer before and after distributing communion

- Temporarily suspend the sharing of the Common cup

- Offer Communion in one kind only to all communicants i.e. the consecrated bread/wafer/host.

- Wafers should not be placed in mouths – then wash/sanitize hands immediately before and after

- Intinction is not recommended

4. After the service, ensure:

    4.1 The attendee register is stored in an easy to locate place

    4.2 Post service cleaning is complete

    4.3 The Monitoring plan is followed

Cleaning Protocols:

- Wear gloves when cleaning and discard after each use
- Thoroughly clean surfaces using detergent and water.
- Only use a disinfectant after cleaning with the detergent and water
- Leave disinfectant on the surface for at least 10 minutes before cleaning off
- If someone infected has been at your venue, follow the national protocols of cleaning

For more information see the Safe Work Australia website:

https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/cleaning-prevent-spread-covid-19

INCIDENT RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

If anyone in your church, whether it is staff, volunteer or congregant suspects that someone may have the virus, or has been exposed to it, it is important that they notify the **COVIDSafe Warden** immediately. They will be responsible for overseeing the **Outbreak/Incident Response Plan**.

On the following page is the Safe Work Australia information sheet. It is important to understand that where you have staff or volunteers at a location in Australia, it is classified under Health & Safety laws as a workplace.

Therefore, the process for a COVID incident notification is:

1. Notify the COVIDSafe Warden on duty immediately
2. Secure the site as outlined on the Safe Work Australia information sheet process
3. Notify the Diocese immediately and complete the normal incident reporting process
4. Work with the Diocese on the appropriate government notification

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions, please contact the **COVIDSafe Warden**:

Emergency Incident Contact:

General Queries Contact:

COVID-19 at the workplace

You are not expected, and should not try, to diagnose people. However, you have a work health and safety duty to minimise the risk of workers and others in the workplace being exposed to COVID-19, so far as reasonably practicable.

If you reasonably suspect someone could have the virus, or has been exposed, this creates a health risk at your workplace, and you will need to follow the steps below.

The person you are concerned about is at the workplace

1. ISOLATE
Prevent the spread. Isolate the person from others and provide a disposable surgical mask, if available, for the person to wear.

2. SEEK ADVICE
Call your state or territory helpline. Follow advice of public health officials.

3. TRANSPORT
Ensure the person has transport to their home or to a medical facility.

4. CLEAN
Clean and disinfect the areas where the person and close contacts have been. Do not use those areas until this process is complete. Use PPE when cleaning.

5. IDENTIFY & INFORM
Consider who the person has had close contact with. If instructed by public health officals, tell close contacts they may have been exposed and follow advice on quarantine requirements.

6. REVIEW
Review risk management controls relating to COVID-19 and review whether work may need to change. Consult workers on WHS issues.

The person you are concerned about was recently at the workplace

1. SEEK ADVICE
Call your state or territory helpline. Follow advice of public health officials.

2. IDENTIFY & INFORM
Identify who at the workplace had close contact with the affected person. If instructed by public health officals, tell close contacts they may have been exposed and follow advice on quarantine requirements.

3. CLEAN
Clean and disinfect the areas where the person and their close contacts have been. Do not use those areas until this process is complete. Use PPE when cleaning.

4. REVIEW
Review risk management controls relating to COVID-19 and review whether work may need to change. Consult workers on WHS issues.

If anything is unclear, see detailed guidance on the Safe Work Australia Website

Remember:

> There is not an automatic WHS requirement to close down an entire workplace, particularly if the person infected, or suspected to be infected, has only visited parts of the workplace.

> Workers assisting a potentially infectious person should have appropriate PPE and follow hand hygiene procedures.

> Consult with workers and allow them to raise concerns.

> Do you need to notify your WHS regulator? See our Incident Notification fact sheet.

> Comply with privacy obligations. See guidance from the OAIC.

> Follow the advice of health officials at all times.

State and territory health department helplines:

New South Wales
1300 066 055

Queensland
13 432 584

Victoria
1800 675 398

South Australia
1300 232 272

Western Australia
(08) 6373 2222

Tasmania
1800 671 738

Australian Capital Territory
(02) 5124 9213

Northern Territory
(08) 8922 8044

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