**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. A local **church service plan** specific to your church
   2. Nominated **COVIDSafe Responsible Persons / COVIDSafe Warden**
   3. A **cleaning plan**
   4. An **Outbreak or Incident Plan** including equipment required
   5. A Monitoring Plan with regular leadership meetings
2. **Before the church service, ensure:**
   1. Pre-service cleaning is complete
   2. Your COVIDSafe Posters are displayed prominently at the entrance and in key locations
   3. Your COVIDSafe Warden is easily identifiable
   4. Your greeting/welcoming volunteers are trained in screening
   5. The attendee register is set up where required.
   6. Appropriate **hand sanitation** is set up in a prominent location
   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:**
   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
   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).
   3. Limit the use of hymn books and printed materials. Where possible use projection for worship, prayer and order of service.
   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
  1. Your COVID Safe Warden is monitoring attendee numbers to ensure maximums are not exceeded.
  2. There is a clear post-service plan to monitor and enforce social distancing practices

1. **After the service, ensure:**
   1. The attendee register is stored in an easy to locate place
   2. Post service cleaning is complete
   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. You also need

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 following at the Diocese office:

Emergency Incident Contact:

General Queries Contact:

