

Memo:

From: Wayne Matheson, Assembly Executive Secretary

To: Ministers and Parish Clerks

Date: 21 April 2020

Warm greetings from the Assembly Office. I write to update you on the country moving from Level 4 to Level 3 related to COVID-19 and draw to your attention some related matters.

COVID-19 Government announcement

Yesterday the Government announced the country would move from Level 4 to Level 3 at midnight on 17 April. Full compliance with all government directives issued relating to this level are expected.

For details, please see <https://covid19.govt.nz/alert-system/alert-level-3/>

As was previously announced on 23 March, all physical gathering for public services of worship in the Presbyterian Church remain suspended until further notice.

National Staff remain working from home

National staff will continue to work from home at Level 3 and can be contacted via email or mobile.

Payment of Stipends and salary

Anecdotal evidence is being received of situations where employees, and ministers on stipends, are being encouraged to accept reduced income from their parish. There are also instances of ministers voluntarily offering to forgo part of their stipend and allowances for a time.

I am concerned that employees and ministers may come under undue pressure in relation to this.

Parishes that have applied for the Government Wage Subsidy (where they qualify), should help alleviate concerns in this area. If a parish does not qualify for the wage subsidy, it would suggest that there should be no consideration of reductions in wages or stipends.

I draw your attention to our Book of Order Chapter 16.9(3) and note the requirement of congregations to seek presbytery approval before varying the stipend of allowances paid for ministry support. If a congregation cannot pay the stipend previously approved it must inform the Presbytery along with reasons why it cannot make the payments.

Prioritising expenditure for congregations

I draw your attention to the ordering of priorities of expenditure as set out in our Book of Order Chapter 16.8(4), and highlight the wording, 'exercising due care and prudence to achieve the mission of the church.' I trust this order of priority and guidance will assist you in your conversations and decision making.

“Na, kia rite ki te hunga whiriwhiri a te Atua, ki te hunga tapu e arohaina ana, kakahuria iho hoki te ngakau tohu tangata, te ngawari, te ngakau papaku, te ngakau mahaki, te manawanui;/ Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ” Colossians 3:12