

31 March 2020

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Kia Ora, Talofa lava, Kia Orana, Fakaalofa lahi atu, Anyoung haseyo, Malo e lelei, Taloha ni.

Warm greetings in Christ's name.

As our Prime Minister has reminded us since the first case of COVID-19, these are unprecedented times.

Who would have thought only a few weeks ago, that as a country we would have closed our border; we would be in lockdown; and many of us would be joining together from our own homes via the internet for our worships services? The pace of change has been swift and very necessary. We fully support these and urge you to do likewise.

We all know these measures may go on for some time and that we will not be returning to normal – whatever that might look like – anytime soon. We read that any measures that will successfully “flatten the curve” in the coming weeks or months will also extend the curve further out. No-one knows for how long, and many of our parishes and people face uncertain times.

The competence of our Government, Ministry of Health and Civil Defence officials, doctors, nurses and health workers, plus the sheer resourcefulness and resilience of people all around us, is humbling and encouraging. Please continue to pray for these people and their families.

Our local arrangements team for Assembly have highlighted some of the travel and other issues we face as a result of COVID-19 if we continue to plan a General Assembly in Hawke's Bay for this October. While still six months away, the administrative responsibilities for our Assembly require us to fulfil various tasks now. Some important local arrangements need to be confirmed – and costs incurred. Presbytery clerks/executive officers tell us they are struggling to name who should be commissioners, especially elder commissioners, and to make accommodation and travel arrangements is almost impossible. At this time of lockdown and uncertainty, there are many more urgent tasks that folk are facing.

We have listened to our public health and epidemiological experts who remind us that the measures we need to have in place will be required for some months. Even then, no one should imagine that the COVID-19 season will have ended, certainly not on a national scale.

We have asked, what is the Spirit saying to the Church?

We have spent time in prayer.

In the light of this, we, as the Moderator and the Assembly Clerk, using the provisions of the Book of Order Section 14.29(2) have made the decision to postpone General Assembly until September/October 2021, to be held within the bounds of Presbytery Central.

We recognise this is a bold step.

We want to give surety and relieve pressure off our parishes and presbyteries in making this decision, so that time and energy can be devoted to the pressing issues presented by COVID-19.

We recognise the implications of this decision and will be working on those in the days and weeks ahead. We will keep you informed as we proceed.

We invite you to join us in praying for our country; our people; our Church. And let us... "Stay home, wash our hands, and be kind".

Na, ma te Atua, nana te tumanako, e whakaki koutou ki te hari, ki te rangimarie, i runga i te tumanako ki a ia, kia hua ai to koutou tumanako, i runga i te kaha o te Wairua Tapu./ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

Ngā mihi nui



Rt Rev Fakaofu Kaio  
Moderator



Rev Wayne Matheson  
Assembly Executive Secretary