



# The Presbyterian Church **Property Trustees**

## NEWSLETTER

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### **PIF On Call interest rate to increase**

*The On Call Fund interest rate will lift to 1.5% from 1 January 2022 (the Long Term Fund remains at 3.0% plus inflation)*

The interest paid on balances in the Presbyterian Investment Fund On Call account will increase to 1.5% p.a. (from 1.0% p.a.) from 1 January 2022.

Following surprisingly good economic growth and employment results, and a sharp increase in prices (inflation), the Reserve Bank lifted the Official Cash Rate by 0.25% in both October and November. The Official Cash Rate now sits at 0.75% p.a. This means the investment assets in the On Call Fund are able to earn better returns, enabling the Trustees to pass these on to account-holders – at least for the time-being.

However, as we have just witnessed with the arrival of the Omicron strain, the only thing that is certain, is that uncertainty abounds. Whereas we appeared to be on a path towards higher interest rates, we now need to wait to see how the new strain affects the global economy.

The Long Term Fund continues to pay interest income of 3.0% p.a. plus inflation. Inflation for the quarter to 30 September 2021 was 2.2%, so Long Term Fund account-holders received a further 2.2% income into their account over this period. No reserve interest was paid on Long Term Fund balances for the quarter to 30 September 2021.

The Annual PIF newsletter and financial statements are available on the PCANZ website. For more information, please email: [trustees@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:trustees@presbyterian.org.nz)

# COVID-19 and your Buildings

## *What are some of the things Church Councils should be thinking about?*

We know that Church Councils have a lot to think about when it comes to Covid and parish life. This includes what to do about employees and worship. Church Councils also need to consider what they are going to do as building owners/managers. Most parishes have buildings that are not only used for parish activities, but are also extensively used by community groups. In many cases, the income from facility-hire makes a valuable contribution to the financial health of the parish.

Where the Trustees hold the title to Church buildings, Church Councils are responsible for the management of those buildings. Accordingly, the Trustees offer the following to assist each Church Council to make informed decisions about the use of their buildings, particularly in respect of use by other groups. The Assembly Executive Secretary has already provided advice concerning parish life, such as worship. Our comments are also based on what we understand about the COVID-19 Protection Framework. Parishes should confirm their own compliance and take advice as appropriate.

### **Operating with My Vaccine Pass**

A Church Council can determine that all users of its facilities must present a My Vaccine Pass. We note that the Methodist Church has adopted this approach, which applies to buildings held in Methodist title in co-operating/uniting parishes.

Where a vaccine pass is required, **a venue must display posters or signage** indicating to attendees that a My Vaccine Pass is required. These can be downloaded here [COVID-19 protection Framework – posters](#). Under this approach, **all staff who are in the same area at the same time as the vaccine pass activity must be vaccinated** (and you must keep records as required). It is important to consult with affected employees before a decision is made, especially when the decision might affect the employee's ability to continue with their employment. You can seek advice on this point from the PCANZ lawyer by calling 0800 252 748 or emailing [contact@frontlinelaw.co.nz](mailto:contact@frontlinelaw.co.nz).

***Under this approach, Events and Gatherings can proceed without limits under Orange, with a limit of 100 people for both Events and Gatherings (based on 1m distancing) under Red.***

Church Councils might want to take this approach to promote the care and safety of staff and congregation members, to avoid cleaning requirements, to ensure Events (like mainly music) can continue in their facilities, and to make managing the facilities more straightforward.

Nonetheless, we appreciate that this might have an adverse impact on facility-hire revenue – but there might also be an adverse impact if you select not to require a My Vaccine Pass.

On balance, we think adopting a with My Vaccine Pass approach has merit.

### **Who is responsible to sight Passes?**

If you operate with My Vaccine Pass, the organiser of the Gathering or Event must either sight Passes or can use a verifier app to scan the QR code that is embedded into the My Vaccine Pass. Children under the age of 12 years and 3 months do not need to provide a My Vaccine Pass to enter places with a vaccination requirement.

That means that if you operate with My Vaccine Passes for worship or another church gathering, the Church Council is responsible for ensuring Passes are sighted or scanned. This could be done through delegating this task to someone. If you hire a room to another group, the organiser of that group is responsible to sight or scan Passes.

## Operating without My Vaccine Pass

A venue that chooses to operate without My Vaccine Passes must comply with capacity constraints set out in the COVID-19 Protection Framework: **Events cannot operate at Red or Orange. Gatherings are limited to 25 under Red and 50 under Orange (based on 1m distancing)**. This will likely affect church facility users.

## Gatherings and Events

If you operate without My Vaccine Pass, or a mixed model (with and without My Vaccine Pass), you need to understand the difference between a Gathering and Event.

A **Gathering** is a group of people who are intermingling. Worship is a gathering.

An **Event** is an activity organised by a business or service that:

- Takes place at a commercial or private indoor or outdoor premises or a publicly owned premises hired for that purpose, and
- Has controlled access of customers or clients via ticketing, fee paying on premises, registration or other practicable means of controllable entry
- Unless that activity is an outdoor community event or gathering

A ticketed concert held at a place of worship is an example of an Event. It might be that a number of church facility users are Events, e.g., mainly music.

## Operating with and without My Vaccine Pass

A venue can switch between activities operating with My Vaccine Passes and operating without My Vaccine Passes as long as;

- There is no intermingling of groups – consider entrance and toilet/kitchen spaces
- Spaces being used are ventilated
- High touch surfaces are cleaned between groups
- Capacity limits are complied with (without My Vaccine Passes)
- It is made clear to all involved (attendees/staff/volunteers) which activities are using My Vaccine Pass and which are not.

Advice on cleaning can be found here [Ministry of Health – cleaning and disinfection advice](#).

## Operating multiple activities in the same venue

If you have multiple defined spaces in a venue, you can operate multiple activities at once. This includes operating activities in different defined spaces with and without My Vaccine Pass at the same time.

A defined space is:

- An indoor area that is separated by walls and has no direct airflow to another indoor area that is being used; or
- An outdoor area that is separated from other outdoor areas by 2 metres.

Separate spaces must be managed so that groups do not mix entering, leaving, or using the premises, for example, in entrances, exits, kitchens and toilets.

## Capacity limits

Depending on what level of rules your area is under, and whether vaccine passes are being used, there might be a limit on how many people can attend an activity. Capacity limits do not include workers

or volunteers (paid and unpaid), but do include all other people (adults and children) within the 'defined space'.

Capacity limits are based on the following:

- The maximum number of people that could occupy the space and comply with the 1 metre physical distancing rule,
- Up to the maximum number of people set by the applicable rule.

This means the maximum number of people who could occupy the space if each person was 1 metre apart. People do not need to stand 1 metre apart.

Please note that other capacity limits may apply, for instance, arising from fire regulations.

## Hire Agreements

We strongly recommend you use some form of written agreement with those groups that use your facilities, whether or not they pay anything. You should update your agreements to reflect your position, ensure users are aware of their obligations under the COVID-19 Protection Framework (to sight or scan Passes and display posters or signage as appropriate), allow you to charge extra for cleaning if required, and allow you the flexibility to change your position should you so decide.

## Commercial Tenancies

If you have commercial tenants, your arrangement will be covered by the lease agreement. Your tenants will have obligations as employers and may have their own specific obligations, e.g., child-care centres. You should understand where these tenants sit with respect to the COVID-19 Protection Framework and negotiate any changes to the lease as required.

## Ron Mills takes over

*The Rev Dr Ron Mills replaces Rev Chris Elliot as Chair of Trustees*

Ron Mills has just been appointed the Chair of The Presbyterian Church Property Trustees, after joining the Trustees in 2015. Ron spent several years in parish ministry, before taking up the role of Convenor of Kaimai Presbytery – a role he is in the process of relinquishing (which is useful, because he'll be kept busy as Chair).



Ron replaces Chris Elliot, who joined the Trustees in 2009, with the last three years as Chair. We give thanks for Chris's service over this time and her thoughtful leadership as Chair.

## Introducing Robyn Taylor

*Robyn has just started in the Trustees' office as our new Accountant*

Robyn Taylor has just joined Russell, John, and Tracy in the office as our new part-time Accountant. Robyn, a chartered accountant and member of the Chartered Accountants of NZ and Australia, joins the team after an extensive career in both commercial and not-for-profit sectors.



Robyn will be in the office from Monday to Wednesday. On the other days you are likely to find her working with her husband in their Horowhenua pear orchard.

Robyn is taking over from Marion Blair, who has been our Administrator since 2013. Marion is moving south to sunny Blenheim, and we thank her for her wonderful service and wish her all the best for the next stage of her journey.

# St Andrew's Otahuhu – Renovations

## *A creative mix of the old and the new*

Like many parishes, St Andrew's Otahuhu, was faced with the challenge of strengthening their church building in order to meet the seismic standard required by the Church. The challenge was further complicated by the building's heritage status. While many in the congregation wanted a new building, a compromise was reached with Auckland Council that saw the rear 30% replaced, with the front 70% strengthened.



It wasn't easy (or cheap). It took four years' of fundraising from members (past and present), plus grants from the Lotteries Commission, Foundation North and Northern Presbytery. The congregation also had to take out a mortgage, which it is now paying off.

However, the end-result is a wonderful mix of the

old and new, visible to, and well-used by, the community. The space is now free-flowing, so people can move from the worship auditorium to gathering spaces for fellowship. Hospitality was an important part of the plan. The new component includes a café for outreach ministry to the community. This includes a Soup Kitchen every Monday and Bake Thursdays. There's also an Op Shop on-site.

The new building has reignited people's love for church. It has given a sense of freshness and a feeling of belonging. The theology of the building is that, when you enter, you are moving from the old to the new. The congregation is proud of their accomplishments. The building affects the way they worship and how they connect, internally and externally. It also affects the way they give: weekly donations are improving. The parish has even seen an increase in members since the re-opening twenty months ago.

