

## Places of Worship

*These guidelines supplement the Operational Policing Guidelines – Alert Level Two.*

These guidelines have been amended in light of advice regarding the COVID-19 Public Health (Alert Level 2) Order 2020 (the Order) and its impact on places of worship.

Our faith communities have remained away from their places of worship and congregations over the Alert Level Three and Four restrictions. At AL2 there are no longer measures restricting people from leaving their home or place of residence. There is no longer a direction for all premises to close. The community is able to resume various day-to-day activities. Places of worship may now open.

If you attend a place of worship in an operational capacity, you should continue to use your discretion and common sense. We need to remember that faith is a very important aspect of many New Zealanders lives and therefore need to be treated using high levels of empathy and sensitivity. The intent is to ensure the safety of all persons present by adhering to the guiding principles of physical distancing, hand hygiene and contact tracing.

### Alert Level 2 Restrictions

Physical distancing is a key measure to prevent the spread of Covid-19. The Order retains restrictions to ensure physical distancing, both for ‘businesses and services’, and for gatherings outside of a business or service.

“Businesses and services must ensure that all people who enter the workplace or use its services remain 2 metres away from each other” (cl 10(2)(a)). Some businesses and services may allow 1 metre physical distancing, with special rules applying (cl 11 – 13).

Gatherings of more than 10 people (in public and private activities) are restricted, but these restrictions do not apply where people remain 2 metres away from each other to the greatest extent practicable (cl 15).

### Alert Level 2 impact on “Places of Worship”.

Places of worship may open under AL2. There are restrictions regarding the number of people who may “gather” within a place of worship. Unless people are kept 2m apart at any religious service (which would then not be a gathering), services are limited to groups of 10 (except for funerals and tangihanga) and (except for gatherings of friends and whanau) records would need to be kept for the purposes of contact tracing.

Depending on the size of a venue, multiple groups of 10 could be present at a service, provided that each group was 2m apart from each other and that each group complied with any record keeping requirements (depending on whether they were a lower risk gathering or a gathering of friends and whanau). This assumes that people involved do comply at all times with the distancing restrictions, and don’t for example mingle more widely at the end of a service.

Family or whanau who reside together in their household may remain within 2 metres of each other.

### **The graduated response model (GRM)**

We must continue to use the graduated response model in all cases, before considering enforcement.

**Engage** with the parties and communicate with them to identify whether their current behaviour or activities are contrary to the government's response to COVID-19.

**Educate** them on the current requirements (if necessary) to correct their behaviour or activities.  
**Encourage** compliance measures if required.

**Warn** only where evidence of education exists and when offences are repeated or are sufficiently serious.

### **Responding to the place of worship:**

We need to remember that faith is a very important aspect of many New Zealanders lives and therefore need to be treated using high levels of empathy and sensitivity. **Officers should first consult and obtain guidance from either the DCC, Duty Inspector, NCCC or MOC** prior to attending a place of worship in an operational capacity.

If you become aware of any potential breaches ahead of time which you think would benefit from a specific ethnic, cultural or religious response please consider liaising directly with your DCC who will contact the Maori Responsiveness Manager (MRM), Pacific Liaison Officer or Ethnic Liaison Officer for advice and guidance ahead of your attendance.

### **Staff should consider their Health and Safety**

This remains a fluid situation, for the latest information and advice on Health and Safety requirements please check our [Ten One intranet page](#)