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Hello Everyone,

As you may have seen, the Victorian government has announced a further easing of COVID restrictions. From midnight, Sunday December 6, Victoria will move to “COVIDSafe Summer Restrictions”.

There will be no overall limit on the number of people who can attend religious gatherings and ceremonies (including weddings and funerals). The number of people will depend on the size of the church.

We will still need to keep a record of the first name and contact phone number of each person who attends.

If we keep the record manually (using pen and paper), the density quotient will remain at 1 person per 4 square metres. If we keep the record electronically, using a QR (Quick Response) code, the density quotient can be 1 person per 2 square metres.

Using a QR code requires people to scan the code using their smart phone camera. The QR code takes the person to a website where they enter their details. You can find information about the Victorian Government QR Code Service at www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/qrcode

I expect that most of our communities will continue recording first name and phone number using pen and paper. For those communities, the density quotient will remain at 1 person per 4 square metres. In this case, to calculate the number of people who can gather in a particular area, you measure the floor space and divide by 4. For example, if a church is 30 metres long x 10 metres wide, the area is 300 square metres. So you could have 75 people gather in that church.

From midnight tonight, wearing a mask will no longer be mandatory in places of worship. However, wearing a mask is recommended when you cannot keep 1.5 metres distance from other people.

Thank you all for your patience through these months of restrictions. Special thanks to those who have been serving our communities in extra ways, such as in keeping records and doing the extra cleaning of our churches.

May the easing of restrictions mean that we can worship together more freely while still keeping safe.

God bless you all.

Bishop Paul Bird.