



Bishop Mark Calder

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MEDIA RELEASE

Church services resuming

The bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Bathurst (which covers central and western NSW), Mark Calder, has welcomed the announcement from the Premier's office today that services of worship may resume again, so long as there are no more than 50 people present and that appropriate hygiene requirements, health checks and social distancing is observed.

"We have been in preparation for this announcement for a couple of weeks and have been readying our church leaders for the possibility that church services may soon resume in a modified form," Bishop Calder commented.

"However, because some of our buildings are quite small and many of our people fall within the most vulnerable age group, we are taking a cautious approach to resuming services.

"While the cleaning, checking, contact recording requirements are all perfectly understandable, they are quite onerous.

"So we are leaving the decision about whether or not to resume services at this time, to each local church's leadership. People should contact their local church, to see what is planned."

Should churches wish to resume, they must apply to the Registrar of the Diocese and sign off that they have met all the demands of the multi-faceted checklists which have been provided.

"Everyone in their local context has to be comfortable with this decision. Clergy ought not to press lay people to meet the requirements of meeting again, nor should lay people press clergy to resume," Bishop Calder said.

"Our relationship with God is not dependent on following certain rituals and ceremonies but is nurtured as we hear the Bible read and explained and respond with prayer and transformed lives."

Bishop Calder has been producing online services each week since lockdown, (available here <https://www.bathurstanglican.org.au>), and many parishioners are content with this form of church for the time being.

"The safety of our people and the community is of primary concern, and churches who do resume services, will be absolutely committed to keeping everyone safe."

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