



## Te Raranga Churches Network On Viruses & Wellbeing - October 2021

Te Raranga is a regional church network that connects a majority of denominations and church movements within the city of Christchurch and region of Canterbury. Initiated after the 2010-2011 earthquakes, it has since then been active in building collaboration across the wider church, and seeking peace and well-being throughout the region.

We appreciate the importance of safety measures implemented by government and the health sector, acknowledging and honouring the incredible efforts by so many on the frontline across the nation. Many church leaders here in Christchurch benefited from a recent Zoom call facilitated by local MP and senior cabinet Minister, Hon. Poto Williams. Several health experts were included to answer (so patiently!) many of the questions that leaders have either carried themselves or heard amongst their communities regarding the Pfizer vaccine.

As Church leaders involved in the Te Raranga network, and by far the majority of churches in our region, in keeping with the overwhelming advice of our medical and scientific community, we support the current CDHB initiative of vaccination as the best possible strategy against the wide-spread impact of Covid-19 in our communities.

The wider church across our region carries a huge diversity of expression, culture and views, but is united around the common values of faith, hope and love. The overall heartbeat of the gospel - Te Rongopai, enables us to work together for the peace, protection and well-being of all, especially the most vulnerable. We are called to love and honour one another, even when we disagree.

We recognise that there are differing views regarding Covid-19 and vaccination, and for various reasons some individuals have chosen not to be vaccinated at this time. Te Raranga network encourages vaccination for the sake of our community's health, but we also note that any potential restriction for faith based gatherings based on vaccination status would be problematic for the wider church. We have always desired for our churches to be open to everyone, to come as we are, with no discrimination. While we encourage vaccination so our families and faith communities, businesses and schools alike, can be safe, inclusive places, we also want to uphold open dialogue around how we can all live and work together in a spirit of peace and unity, rather than segregation or dissension.

That is the heart and desire of Te Raranga: peace, unity, and well-being for all. We encourage all New Zealanders to uphold these values in the way we relate to one another in these days ahead.

**Mā te Atua e manaaki tātou. May the Lord bless us all.**