

ECHO CHURCH

heaven to earth

WE ARE BACK.

We are so excited to be able to announce that we will be meeting again in person on November 14th! It has been a crazy two years, with lots of challenges to navigate, but also God has done so much, resulting in incredible testimonies and tremendous growth.

We are thankful for technology and that we have been able to meet online over the past 21 months, it has been fun and fruitful, but we are fully aware that this is not God's plan A for the Church. His intention was that people would gather together in person.

The directions issued by the Victorian Government for religious gatherings require that all attendees have received their double vaccination. Echo Church will be following these mandates.

WHY DID WE DECIDE TO OPEN UP KNOWING THAT THESE GOVERNMENT MANDATES ARE IN PLACE, RESULTING IN SOME PEOPLE NOT BEING ABLE TO ATTEND?

This was not an easy decision. Once the Victorian Government Roadmap was announced and we knew the dates that Churches could re-open, our Senior Leaders, Justin and Leigh shared with our Church family the exact process that they would take in order to make a decision on what we would be doing.

Many factors were taken into consideration over many weeks.

They looked at every angle and every side. They spoke to our Core Team, Church Advisors, Small Group Leaders, Leaders from the ACC, as well as Leaders from other denominations.

We are fully aware that our decision of a yes for the majority will be a no to the few. It has been a very long and challenging two years of stop, start Church. Our State has now reached over 91% single dose vaccination, 80% double dose vaccination and it is projected that at the start of December it will hit 90% double dose. Those numbers reflect our local community and those numbers also reflect our Church family. So although we are sad for the few that are unable to be vaccinated or have chosen not to be vaccinated, we feel strongly it is time to open up, knowing that 91% of the Victorian population will be able to attend.

Justin and Leigh took on board all of those thoughts, ideas and opinions and processed it with the Lord and also with Echo's Core Team.

It was a unanimous and unified decision to open up the Church on November 14th.

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WHY DID WE DECIDE TO OPEN UWHY ARE YOU CHOOSING TO FOLLOW THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT MANDATES AND ONLY ALLOWING FULLY VACCINATED PEOPLE TO ATTEND?

Our fight is not against flesh and blood. Therefore, we are not anti-government, or anti specific-people, we are not fighting against the government, and we are not fighting against people. Instead we are choosing to pray for our State, and pray for our Leaders while believing the best in our State and the best in our Leaders. Prayers and declarations for wisdom, protection and blessing, prayers for encounters and experiences with Jesus. Our responsibility is not to run the government, our responsibility is to partner with heaven to see His kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Which looks like doing something, it looks like loving people like Jesus did and does, it looks like meeting felt need everyday, everywhere we go, whether its praying for the sick, encouraging someone, giving food to the homeless, or reaching out to the marginalised and the mistreated. Love looks like something. So we are going to continue to do what Jesus asked us to do.

We care deeply about the vulnerable that will be attending our Church over the coming months. From babies and toddlers to the older generation that will be susceptible to having complications if contracting Covid-19.

We have a duty of care to look after the health and safety of the people coming into our Church.

We have built tremendously close and important relationships with local business owners and local leaders. We care deeply about these relationships. We are not prepared to ruin them by going against the Government mandates.

Our Core Team, Staff, Small Group Leaders, Leaders and Volunteers have all chosen to be vaccinated and also the majority of our Church have also chosen to be vaccinated and are excited and ready to come back to in person gatherings.

Our Core Team were not prepared for Echo Church to receive large fines, as a result of breaking the Government mandates. This would be extremely unwise and irresponsible as we are stewards of the money that comes in to run Echo Church.

We were also informed that if we chose to break the rules, our insurance policies would become void.

WILL YOU BE TURNING PEOPLE AWAY AT THE DOOR?

The Victorian government has made it very clear that we cannot have vaccinated and unvaccinated people meet together. We will be following these mandates. However, we will not be simply turning people away at the front door and telling them to get in their cars and leave.

Our welcome team will be warmly welcoming everybody that comes and will be joined with multiple other teams of people that will be ready to encourage, pray for, minister to and answer any questions that anybody has, as well as inform them about our Online service and other options for them over the coming months.

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We are believing for powerful things to be happening at the front doors over the next few months. Our teams are expecting that everyone who comes will be encouraged and encounter the presence of God in life changing ways, and for healings, signs, wonders and miracles to break out.

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ARE YOU GOING TO BE PROVIDING ANY OPTIONS FOR THOSE THAT HAVE ONLY HAD ONE VACCINATION DOSE, ARE VACCINE HESITANT OR HAVE CHOSEN NOT TO BE VACCINATED?

Absolutely. Yes. Everyone matters to us.

Because we will be following these Government mandates, we will not be having large gatherings where fully vaccinated people and unvaccinated people will be gathering together. This is sad for us and creates quite a challenge for us to navigate. We really want to do our best to provide opportunities and spaces for everyone to gather, connect, and worship in our Church where possible.

Once we know how many people this effects, then we can plan accordingly. The Victorian government is allowing up to 30 people to gather indoors with an unknown vaccination status. We would love for people to fill out their details below so we let you know some options.

All information received will be considered confidential and used only for the purpose for which it is gathered. (ie, to connect people with the appropriate Leader, so they can contact them regarding different options for connection and alternate gathering arrangements).

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IN CLOSING.

These are wild times. It is unprecedented, and it is new for all of us. Different Pastors at different Churches will choose different approaches. We are all responsible for what is in our hands. What is super important, is that we keep our love on, we put the stones down and put the hurtful judgemental words away so we believe the best in each other and pray for each other and cheer each of our Churches on as we chose to honour well.

John 13:34-35 is compelling and so needed for believers at this time. Jesus said, "So I give you now a new commandment: Love each other just as much as I have loved you. For when you demonstrate the same love I have for you by loving one another, everyone will know that you're my true followers."

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