

# Churches services get under way in Hawke's Bay but under a new normal

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Rev Jill McDonald of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Hastings speaks to her congregation in person for the first time in many weeks as churches reopened over the weekend. Photo / Ian Cooper

Hawkes Bay Today

By: Blair Voorend

Church congregations were back over the weekend in Hawke's Bay for the first time in months but remain very different from normal.

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Hastings was one of many churches across the region to reopen its doors.

Church finance committee member and parishioner Derek Burns said it was great to see a few familiar faces again even if there were fewer than they expected.

"We originally catered for 40 people with social distancing rules in force but managed to open the churches lounge area and foyer to stretch it to 60, which is quite a bit different from the 150 we normally have."

Burns said it seemed some people are still a bit hesitant to go out.

"Some people are still a bit on edge ... but over the next couple of weeks we expect the numbers to grow and when we go to level 1, see things go back to normal."

The church's trust has applied to the government's "Shovel Ready" investment fund to help develop some big projects for the community.

The trust has honed-in on five projects to support in the region that aim to stimulate employment and improve the environment and peoples' lives.

Two of the projects are around building solar energy farms.