



24 Elder Lane,
Bethlehem
Private Bag 12003
Tauranga 3143
P 07 576 6769
F 07 579 1751
www.beth.school.nz

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Dear families of students living in towns beyond Tauranga, Mount Maunganui and Papamoa,

As I am sure you are aware by now, we are taking the COVID-19 pandemic extremely seriously. Whilst situations like this should never be a cause for fear, we know from the life of Jesus that care for our neighbours should be a key priority as we seek to follow in his example. We face this pandemic by making practical preparations that protect ourselves and think particularly of those around us, trusting in Him to provide for our needs as do so. Indeed, it is a command for us to do this as Christ-followers.

"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." - Mark 12:30-31

Holding this in focus, I write to you, together with the Board of Trustees and Senior Management Team, in light of the Prime Minister's announcement this morning and the most recent advice of the Ministry of Education.

In announcing an Alert - Level 2, the Prime Minister has urged the public to avoid undertaking non-essential domestic travel, in order to reduce the potential impacts of a community transmission.

From Monday, if it is possible for you to supervise your children at home, and therefore to avoid bus travel, I would ask that you seriously consider this option. I recognise that this might not be practically possible for some families and so your children are of course welcome and expected to attend school. This request aims to reduce the risk to your families of children being in close proximity whilst travelling to school, whilst also reducing any risk to your communities of the virus being transferred between regions.

I must reiterate that in these unprecedented times, our primary concern is for the welfare and wellbeing of you as our BC families.

With respect to our assisting families in maintaining programmes of learning whilst offsite, I am in the process of establishing appropriate protocols with my staffing team that enable us to do the best we can by your children, whilst acknowledging that our teachers are being stretched both personally and professionally by this crisis as well. Can I thank you in advance for your graciousness and patience as we as a school community act to adjust, care for one another generously and continue to trust that God is sovereign in the midst of all of what we are experiencing.

Ngā mihi nui,

LARNE EDMEADES
BETHLEHEM COLLEGE PRINCIPAL

