

# Congregation Connect

## COVID-19 update.

**We continue to practice strict hygiene and physical distancing measures to keep services operating and help keep our staff, volunteers and consumers safe.**

Many of our emergency relief services have experienced a significant increase in demand during the COVID-19 pandemic. Demand for other services like alcohol and other drugs and mental health have also increased during this time.

We are continuing to provide care and support for vulnerable people during the crisis in new and innovative ways. Some of the practical solutions we have adopted include pre-packaged food parcels that are dropped off to people in need, teleconferencing consumer sessions and regular phone contact to support the needs of vulnerable families, children and young people.

We have also sourced personal protective equipment to protect our frontline staff and volunteers and provided a range of health and wellbeing resources to help our people cope during this stressful time.

## Share Sunday Resources 2020 'A place to call home'.

**During the COVID-19 lockdowns of recent months, 'home' has become the sole domain from which we have conducted almost every facet of our lives. This rather intense experience of the centrality of home has come with its challenges and frustrations alongside many blessings. Like many, you may well be feeling the pull to escape far too familiar surroundings.**



One pressing issue that the very intensity, and necessity, of the COVID-19 isolation requirement has brought into sharp focus is how profoundly challenging it must be for those in our communities without safe and secure housing or without a place to call home.

The UCA and your community services organisation Uniting Vic.Tas share a continuing commitment to Making Housing A Priority. Never has this seemed more timely or more urgent. This year our worship resources for Share Sunday focus in particular on Youth Homelessness with the theme 'A place to call home'. The sad reality is that two in every five people who experience homelessness are under the age of 25.

The promise of a home, or homeland, belongs to the foundational stories of our faith. This year we will reflect on how that promise calls, claims and challenges us to hope for and respond to those young people so desperately in need of a place to call home like Bronte (pictured above), who reached out to Uniting Vic.Tas services when she experienced youth homelessness three years ago.

In the coming weeks, a selection of resources will be available for your congregation to lead a Share Sunday service. The chosen date for the service is 30 August 2020, but you can use the resources at any time.

The links to the 2020 Share Sunday Worship Resources will be distributed through the Synod eNews for download. You can also contact the Mission Team Admin - [deborah.loh@vt.uniting.org](mailto:deborah.loh@vt.uniting.org) or visit our website [www.unitingvictas.org.au/congregations](http://www.unitingvictas.org.au/congregations)

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# Uniting

Uniting is the community services organisation of the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania.



## Bushfire recovery support appeal.

**Support from congregations for communities across Victoria affected by the bushfires at the beginning of this year has been overwhelming.**

Many congregations provided support in the immediate aftermath of the fires and contributed to Uniting's long-term recovery campaign.

So far, Uniting's bushfire appeal has raised over \$400,000 with donations still being received.

We are extremely grateful that \$165,000 of those funds have been donated by over 130 Uniting congregations and affiliated groups, as well as Presbyteries. On behalf of the many people affected by the bushfires, we thank you for your support.

Funds are being used in a variety of ways to support those impacted by the bushfires. One example of this is providing activity packs for babies, children and young people in all locations impacted by the bushfires. Another example is co-funding a second patrol Ministry in partnership with Gippsland Presbytery and Frontier Services to provide bushfire recovery support in East Gippsland. A further update about other ways funds are being used will be provided in the Uniting Spring Supporter Newsletter.

## Support with compassion.



**The theme of this year's Winter Share Appeal is 'Support with compassion' which we know is at the heart of Uniting Church congregations.**

Given current circumstances, it's impossible to have conversations or discuss emergency relief without mentioning the impact of COVID-19. Even in 'normal' circumstances, there is an increased need for Uniting's emergency relief services during the winter months. This year's appeal will focus on those services that have continued to support people during this difficult period.

This winter, we are also promoting the need for blankets and other bedding, pyjamas, winter woollies and swags through our Spread the Warmth this Winter appeal. The challenge is even greater this year during the pandemic to keep those who are most vulnerable in our community warm and sheltered during the colder months. Donations of new items can be dropped off at any of Uniting's offices or emergency relief services.

**With your support, we continue to do the very things that nourish, sustain and strengthen people and communities during this period of uncertainty and beyond. Find out how you can help at [unitingvictas.org.au/winterappeal](http://unitingvictas.org.au/winterappeal)**

## Pancake Day 2020.

We would like to sincerely thank everyone who participated in this year's Pancake Day, whether by holding an event, participating in a Coffee Cup Challenge or donating individually or through a retiring offering.

Thanks to your amazing efforts, we have raised almost \$58,000 from Pancake Day this year from 130 participating congregations, schools and groups. For anyone who has not submitted their funds yet, it would be appreciated if you could please do this as soon as possible so they can be used to support those in need.

**We would like to give a special shout out to our top 10 Pancake Day Fundraisers:**

- St Leonard's Uniting Church
- Airport West Uniting Church
- Penguin Uniting Church
- Scottsdale Uniting Church
- St Arnaud Uniting Church Adult Fellowship
- Leopold Primary School
- UCAF Portland Uniting Church
- Echuca Moama Uniting Church
- Haileybury Parents and Friends Edrington
- Drysdale Uniting Church

## Celebrating our volunteers.

Our 2,300 plus volunteers are vital to the many services we deliver across Victoria and Tasmania. This year the theme of National Volunteer Week (18 - 24 May) was 'Changing Communities, Changing Lives.' Never was a theme more appropriate for the times.

The celebrations were slightly different this year but we still acknowledged the incredible efforts of those volunteers who support Uniting Vic.Tas.

Together we help people maintain their independence, ensure families have access to food parcels, provide foster care for children and support people with disabilities to access meaningful work. And these are just a few of the ways we support those living on the margins.

We hope our volunteers who were unable to help during the COVID-19 restrictions will stay in touch and once again share their skills and compassion in the not too distant future.



Tasmanian volunteer, Anne Bevan is one of the volunteers who shared her story for this year's National Volunteer Week celebrations.