

Summer 2023/24

Community in Mission



Welcome to our refreshed newsletter

Community in Mission highlights the magic that happens when we partner together to enliven communities around us.

Farewell

Rev John Clarke will retire in 2024. We also farewell Uniting's Mission and Ethos Partner, Rev Lisa Stewart.



Our Director of Mission, Rev John Clarke will retire on 31 January 2024. John is the longest serving member of our Executive Team, joining before our merger in 2017. He has been a strong advocate for our missional work within the Uniting Church during that time as well as ensuring our decisions reflect the mission and ethos of the Church. John has created a culture, within his own Mission and Equity team and more broadly across the organisation, that embodies the values of the Uniting Church. We will miss his compassionate and wise counsel and wish him all the best for his retirement.

We also farewell Rev Lisa Stewart as she begins a new role as Minister of the Southern Mornington Peninsula Congregation. Lisa has been with Uniting for six years and developed strong relationships within Uniting and congregations. She has made an outstanding contribution to the organisation and we wish her all the best.

We will reshape the future Mission and Ethos team to continue to grow our partnerships across the Church.



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

Uniting

60 years of hope

Celebrating Lifeline.

*Pictured: Opening of the Lifeline
Centre in Darlinghurst 1963*



Lifeline was established just over 60 years ago by one of the founding agencies of the Uniting Church.

Concerned by the increasing phone calls from people in distress, Wesley Mission's then Superintendent, Rev Sir Alan Walker, founded a 24/7 telephone crisis support service, and called it Lifeline.

“From a desperate call, the tragedy of suicide and a helplessness that was felt by many... the amazing work of Lifeline was born,” said Rev Sir Alan Walker.



Lifeline moves to Wesley Centre in 1979.

Now with 41 centres across Australia, Lifeline has saved countless lives and steadfastly maintained its commitment to supporting people in crisis. Uniting's Lifeline Melbourne and Ballarat centres answer more than 44,900 calls a year.

Since opening in 1963, (pictured) compassionate volunteers, many of which come from our Uniting congregations, have been the foundation of the service and been there for people in their darkest moments.



“Connecting with someone and helping them realise they do matter, can be an incredibly empowering and enriching experience for the soul.” - Lifeline volunteer, Anthony

Pilot program born from partnership

The Catalyst Program supports those living with alcohol and other drug dependency.



Catalyst is a five-week rehabilitation program for people looking for support to stop or take a break from substance use following withdrawal support.

Since its commencement in Victoria, over twelve years ago, the program has supported over 1000 people to develop motivation and resilience to cut down their use of alcohol and other drugs and improve their health and wellbeing.

The program consists of a range of activities that build skills and strategies for coping with challenging situations, developing routines and maintaining motivation using Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).

For the first time, Uniting is piloting this program in Tasmania. Thanks to the generous support of the North Hobart congregation, Uniting is able to run the program out of its property. This partnership allows us to expand Uniting's services in Tasmania so we can reach more people in our communities.

Bronwyn Pike, CEO of Uniting Vic.Tas and Adrian Webber, General Manager of Alcohol & other Drugs, met with Catalyst program staff at North Hobart Uniting Church to tour facilities before the program commenced in November.

Pictured: Jeff Savage, Minister Hobart North Uniting Church; Adrian Webber, General Manager Alcohol & other Drugs; Bronwyn Pike, CEO Uniting Vic.Tas; Janae Roberts, AOD Counsellor; Emma Hooper, Manager Catalyst Programs; Jeremy Pettet, Executive Officer Uniting Vic.Tas.

Mission and Ethos Partner

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Synod

Once again, we enjoyed participating in the Synod meeting held from 18 to 21 November. The four days involved many deep connections and inspiring conversations that will drive our work together next year.



Coffee Cup Challenge

This year's challenge ends on Pancake Day, so make sure you celebrate your efforts over some delicious pancakes and a coffee together!

However, it's not too late to join the team of compassionate people supporting those experiencing crisis and run a challenge over Lent.

Register today at unitingvictas.org.au/coffee



Giving children a future

Meet Christie*, an extraordinary foster carer who, along with her loving husband and two children, has dedicated over 10 years to providing a safe home for children in need. Uniting reflects the church's commitment to caring for our community's most vulnerable through providing safe living environments for children in foster care. Scan QR code for more.

**The photo used is for illustrative purposes only and not the person featured in this story.*

