

Congregation Connect

As the days grow in warmth and light we notice new life and growth in Spring. Life in abundance! This reflects what Uniting are doing in our community services as reflected in the words of Jesus. *"I have come that they may have life and have it in all its fullness"* (John 10:10b)

Exploring local community services together.

In conjunction with presbyteries and congregations, five Local Engagement Groups (LEG) have begun to build positive relationships across the Church and their community.

A LEG begins with people sharing information and ideas about their local community needs, creating a forum for social justice and advocacy. By working together, they can consider how best to respond, which may include liaising, and encouraging community service through fundraising, collaboration or exploring other opportunities.

If your congregation would like to discuss setting up a LEG in your area, please contact Uniting's Mission and Ethos partners, Rev Lisa Stewart (Tas and West Vic) and Rev Dec Gavin Blakemore (East Vic).



Discussions underway at Macedon Ranges Uniting Church

Hearts – Beating for Others.

Share Sunday - focussed on your mission with your local community.

So far this year, over 70 congregations have downloaded the Share Sunday resources. These can be adapted for use on any Sunday that works for your congregation and are still available at vt.uniting.org/share-sunday-2019

The resources highlight the work of Uniting in local communities and celebrate the wonderful partnerships we enjoy together.

Pictured: Blackburn North Nunawading Uniting Church.



Contacts

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



Christmas cards

Brand new Christmas cards are now available and samples have been provided to your congregation.

Call Uniting Donor Services on **1800 668 426** or order online at **vt.uniting.org/christmascards**



Food For Families

Food For Families is a great way for congregations to connect with local communities and make a tangible difference to the lives of individuals and families experiencing hardship over the Christmas period and throughout the year. Donations of non-perishable food directly support people in crisis, making sure they have a meal on the table at Christmas, and access to food all year round.



The donated food is used locally by Uniting services to stock pantries at our emergency relief centres.

Congregations are invited to register for this year's Food For Families initiative:

- Collecting food items
- Acting as a drop off point for local community donations

To register, please call **1800 060 543** or register online through **foodforfamilies.org.au**

Pancake Day

Pancake day is on the horizon and we are excited to announce that preparations for this significant event in the church's calendar are underway at Uniting.



All funds raised go directly to Uniting programs and services, supporting people when they need it most.

In the spring newsletter, we are pleased to share the success of St Leonard's Brighton and their Coffee Cup Challenge which has significantly increased their Pancake Day fundraising efforts.

To learn more about this great initiative or how we can support your congregation with your own Coffee Cup Challenge leading into Pancake Day 2020, please contact Dale Barker-Harrington in Community Fundraising on **1800 060 543** or by emailing **pancakeday.info@vt.uniting.org**

Raise the Rate

The Newstart allowance is a safety net when people are out of work and trying to get back into work. But it's looking frayed – the rate of Newstart has not been increased for 25 years, while the cost of living, especially housing, has gone through the roof. The payment is miring people in poverty, rather than helping them get back on their feet.

We are part of a coalition of organisations, including the Uniting Church, working together as the Raise the Rate campaign to make the case for an increase.

The Senate is now running an inquiry into Newstart. People that come to our services are being asked what raising the rate would mean for them and their lives, and their experience is at the heart of the message we are sending to our Senators.

If this is an issue you care about, you're encouraged to write to your local representatives to make your views clear. We have made a resource pack available on vt.uniting.org/congregations. It has a template letter to get you started, as well as data about numbers of people on

Newstart and Youth Allowance in each local authority area that you can use to give local impact to your letter.

You could also hold an event during Anti-Poverty Week (antipovertyweek.org.au), which this year is focused on mustering community support for raising the rate of Newstart.

If you would like to find out more about getting involved with either the Raise the Rate campaign or Anti-Poverty Week, please contact our Advocacy team at advocacy@vt.uniting.org