

Autumn 2023 Congregation Connect

Over 30 years fighting food scarcity

Thanks to your generosity, our Food For Families program has put food on the table of those facing crisis for over 30 years. The program is needed now more than ever as the impacts of the pandemic and the rising cost of living has left many struggling to afford basic food items.

Last year, our program collected 67 tonnes of food and essential items for those in need. This year we hope to exceed that amount so we can meet the growing demand of individuals and families seeking food relief.

Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre (ASWC) Team Leader, Aimee Dare, expressed just how crucial these food donations are for people seeking asylum. "Times have been tough for clients at the Centre," she said. "We've been sending food out to families as quickly as it's been coming in."

Please register now and help us provide practical assistance for people when they need it most. Call us on 1800 668 426 or visit [foodforfamilies.org.au/register](https://www.foodforfamilies.org.au/register)

Celebrating 20 years

Late last year the Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre (ASWC) celebrated its 20 year anniversary.



Over 150 people, including clients, staff and volunteers, past and present, and key congregation partners came together and celebrated with food, music, dancing.

ASWC volunteer and Australian singer-song writer, Liz Stringer, enthralled the audience with her performance as she expressed the centre's greatest strengths: its strong relationships, big heart and passion for real change.

Since opening in 2002, the Centre has offered welcome and care to people in need of a safer life in Australia.

ASWC Team Leader, Aimee Dare, specifically expressed her gratitude to congregations for their long-standing support of the program.

"Congregations have always been behind the work we do. Their commitment to advocating for justice and supporting those seeking asylum is truly inspiring", she said.

While the anniversary revealed the heart-warming stories and impacts of the ASWC, it was also a bitter reminder of the unrelenting barriers and inequalities people seeking asylum face in Australia.

ASWC Community Development Worker, Anna Vost said, "I hope we won't need the Welcome Centre forever. I hope everyone just gets given permanent visas and they can go on with their lives."

If this article has inspired you to be involved, please reach out to your Mission and Ethos Partner.



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

Uniting



New Mission and Ethos Partner

A warm welcome to Cheryl Lawrie who joined Uniting's Mission team in January.

Cheryl has worked in several roles that focus on connecting the Church with the broader community.

She was the Acting Executive Director with the Commission for Mission at a time when UnitingCare agencies were transitioning to form Uniting Vic.Tas, and when the Synod was undergoing its major restructure.

She then became Executive Officer at CAN Community Support, which with the Carlton (Church of all Nations) congregation makes up the Carlton Parish Mission.

Cheryl has seen first-hand the resilience of the Church as it has coped with change and admires how the Church works with the community, each enriching the other.

She is passionate about continuing to strengthen Uniting's partnerships with other parts of the Church, as well as ensuring the organisation continues to be guided by its core foundations, ethos and values.

Cheryl will work alongside Rev Lisa Stewart and Rev John Clarke as part of Uniting's Mission Team.

Pancake Day 2023

Thank you for making it a huge success. Your efforts are supporting those in crisis.



Tasmania to ban conversion practices

Last year, the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute released a report and recommendations on reforms to address the risks and harms caused by sexual orientation and gender identity conversion practices (SOGICE).

During this time, a proposal - Preventing Harm from Sexual Change Efforts was accepted at the 16th Assembly meeting. The Assembly resolved to recognise that SOGICE are harmful to people's mental health and wellbeing and to learn how they can help prevent harm from this ideology and practice in the future.

As a provider of mental health services in rural Tasmania and as part of the Uniting Church, we have a particular duty to speak in support of the LGBTIQ+ people we serve and urge the Tasmanian Government to support this bill.



Mission and Ethos Partners

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