

Summer 2022/23 Congregation Connect

A prelude to Christmas

Although we often traditionally dress up the nativity scene of Christ's birth with angels and riches, the reality was more humble. It's not about the power to push through but grace to come beside. Not about a celebrity with visions, but a servant with compassion and wisdom. That same current is able to flow through us.

So, this Christmas time, we remember the forgotten and overlooked ones, reaching out to clothe them with respect, welcome and resources to restore dignity and hope. This is best done in a community of warm relationships that offer clothing and food, opportunities and a willingness for each to be mutually transformed. So as part of the Uniting Church, we seek to embody grace and generosity as we companion each other on the journey.

Feeding families at Christmas

As we fill our homes with Christmas cheer, struggling families are far from joyful.



The rising costs of housing, groceries and living in general, are forcing many to make impossible choices every day just to survive.

Maidie Graham, Ringwood's Uniting Crisis and Homelessness services manager, stresses the urgency of those in need.

"People who come to us just don't have enough money to live on," she says.

"The cost of living is going up and up. And often people can't even buy food.

"They become very reliant on services like ours."

Maidie says congregations have always been huge contributors to Uniting's Food For Families Appeal, one of Uniting's programs dedicated to supporting families and individuals in crisis by providing them with non-perishable foods and essential household items.

"The Food For Families Appeal is a great program to get behind, particularly around the Christmas time of giving.

"We have congregations who donate to us regularly during the year. Often, they will kindly ask what we are short of or what they can help with.

"It's great for our consumers to know that there is support in the community."

Help families put food on the table this Christmas.

Register your congregation today.

T 1800 668 426

foodforfamilies.org.au/register



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

Uniting



Can't afford to live

“My children continue missing out on things, simply because I have to buy food.”

New research conducted by Uniting Vic.Tas and Swinburne University's Centre for Social Impact, has uncovered the devastating impact of the rising cost of living.

112 people on low-incomes including those on income support, as well as people working full-time, parents, carers and retirees were surveyed. It found:

- 92% were cutting back on food and groceries
- 85% of parents with children under 18 were experiencing poor mental health
- Women were more likely than men to be bearing the brunt of cost-of-living pressures
- More than 1 in 10 reported an increased risk of family violence due to financial strain.

“People can only live a safe and dignified life if they can afford life's essentials and can live free from constant worry about how they will keep a roof over their heads and food on their table,” said Bronwyn Pike, Uniting Vic.Tas CEO.

Uniting's Emergency Relief services are a crucial source of support for those experiencing crisis.

Many congregations already provide their own emergency relief services to those experiencing crisis. To volunteer at one of Uniting's services please visit unitingvictas.org.au/volunteer

Read full report at unitingvictas.org.au/publications



Coffee Cup Challenge

Missing your morning coffee?

We're almost halfway through our Coffee Cup Challenge with many saving money to donate by sacrificing the cost of a coffee each week to help people in crisis.

Their regular sacrifices really do add up.

It's not too late for you to sign up too and join a team of compassionate people. The challenge ends on Pancake Day, so let's get together and celebrate your efforts over some delicious pancakes and a latte! Register today unitingvictas.org.au/coffee



Mission and Ethos Partners

Rev Lisa Stewart (West and Tasmania)

E lisa.stewart@unitingvictas.org.au

Rev Garry Derkenne (East)

E garry.derkenne@unitingvictas.org.au

Contact Uniting

T 1800 668 426

@ community@unitingvictas.org.au

unitingvictas.org.au