

Winter 2023 Congregation Connect

Giving children the best start

Kindergartens help build strong communities. For it is here children develop confidence, celebrate diversity and grow the skills they need to successfully transition to school.

The three denominations that became the Uniting Church in 1977 brought with them a rich history of concern and action in mission with families and children.

Many of their congregations began schools and kindergartens in areas of great poverty as part of their faithful response to the gospel.

Uniting's kindergartens continue in this heritage as they serve some of the most disadvantaged communities and families in Australia. Today, nearly half of Uniting's 55 Early Learning centres reside on Uniting Church land.

Early Learning manager in the North East, Peggy, expressed her gratitude to congregations.

"Congregations are very generous allowing us to use their spaces to run our programs," she said.

"Many Early Learning services would not be able to operate without their support."



Congregations putting faith into action

During National Volunteer Week in May, Uniting celebrated the outstanding contribution and compassion of our volunteer workforce. But we cannot celebrate our volunteers without thanking our congregations.

Many of Uniting's services were established by congregations and congregational members continue to help run these programs.

Earlier this year Breezeway's community meals centre in Ballarat celebrated 25 years. Uniting's CEO, Bronwyn Pike, acknowledged the Central Ballarat Uniting Church's contribution to Breezeway.

"It's important to pay tribute to Reverend Dr Graeme Sutton and Barb Cole, and the Ballarat Central Uniting Church for their work in establishing Breezeway and the incredible legacy they have left, a legacy which for 25 years has warmed the hearts of many thousands of people right here in Ballarat," Ms Pike said.

NoBucks in Tasmania has a similar story.

Established by members of the former Wesley Uniting Church congregation in Hobart, NoBucks has served community meals for those in need for 15 years.

These services could not continue without the compassion and generosity of Uniting congregations and their members who volunteer.

If you're interested in volunteering please visit, unitingvictas.org.au/volunteer

Above: Meet Ian, he has been volunteering at Uniting for 25 years.



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

Uniting

Coffee Cup Challenge

Thanks to your congregations' support we have raised \$28,000 bringing the total amount raised since 2017 to over \$107,000.

Your generosity is changing lives.



Spread the Warmth this winter

For many of us, the cooler weather signals the need to find our winter doonas, turn up the heating or buy a new jacket to stay warm and dry. Sadly, for many people, these simple comforts are out of reach due to the rising cost of living.

Your congregation can help us bring some warmth to people in need by providing new or good quality used blankets, doonas, swags, jackets and other winter woollies to distribute to those who need them most.

To find out where you can drop off winter items or make a donation, visit unitingvictas.org.au/local-winter

Children do not belong in prison

For many years, Uniting Vic.Tas and the Synod Justice team have been working as part of a broader coalition to raise the age of criminal responsibility.

When children get caught up in the criminal justice system, they are subjected to further trauma, stigma and harm. Children deserve to be supported by our community, not shut out of it.

In April, Uniting welcomed the leadership displayed by the Victorian Government in its commitment to raising the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12 years. We are troubled by the four-year delay in raising the age to 14 and have called upon the Victorian Government to work closely with children and young people, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, community service organisations, legal services and peak bodies to meet international standards by raising the age to 14 with immediate priority.

Last year, the Tasmanian Government raised the minimum age of detention to 14 years however, the age of criminal responsibility still remains at 10 years. We are still calling on the Victorian and Tasmanian governments to publicly commit to 14 years as the age of criminal responsibility.

Visit raisetheage.org.au to take action.



Share Sunday

This year, the focus of Share Sunday on 20 August is around the theme of "God's call to Unity".

The lectionary readings for this Sunday hold out the theme of 'Unity' – an ever-widening unity – unity within the family, unity within the nation, unity between ethnicities, unity between all. A unity called for and enabled by God.

A set of worship resources has been created to support congregations who choose to hold a Share Sunday Service.

Please download them at unitingvictas.org.au/share-Sunday and feel free to adapt material to suit your congregation.

Your congregation will soon receive a Share Sunday pack which you can use to help promote our Share Sunday Appeal.



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