

Congregation Connect

COVID-19 update

Like lots of other organisations, Uniting Vic.Tas has been focused for many weeks now on managing the impact of COVID-19 for our services, consumers and workforce.

We are implementing the guidance from state and federal governments and have cancelled all non-essential events that bring together people from different locations.

It will likely be some months before we return fully to business as usual, but we are working tirelessly to minimise disruption to our services. Our frontline staff and volunteers are doing a wonderful job in finding new ways to deliver the essential services that people rely on such as Emergency Relief, counselling, homelessness and housing services and support for children and families during this difficult time.

Uniting's purpose speaks to the importance of connection. In this period of physical distancing this is more important than ever.

Local Engagement Groups

One of the ways Uniting is building connections with the wider church is through its Local Engagement Groups (LEGs).

LEGs are formed when local Uniting Church congregations get together with local Uniting Leaders to meet regularly, share information and knowledge, and collaborate on local events, issues or causes. Working together, in partnership with the presbytery concerned, they can have a greater impact and presence in their local community.

Barwon LEG showed how successful these collaborations can be when they came together with Uniting Barwon to Flip for Good Cause, right in the centre of Geelong.

Hosting a Pancake Day Stall in the heart of a Westfield Shopping Centre was a great opportunity, not only to raise funds for Uniting's housing and homelessness services, but to showcase the Uniting Church presence across the City of Greater Geelong.

New connections were made between the many volunteers across the congregations. It was a fun-filled day - flipping for a cause together - where plans were made to do the same again next year.

Please get in touch with your Uniting Mission contact person to discuss any ideas on how congregations in your area could come together to be a force for good in your local communities.



Members of local congregations coming together to host a Pancake Day Stall in the heart of a Westfield Shopping Centre.

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Uniting

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



Food For Families

Thank you to all congregations who generously supported Uniting Emergency Relief services by donating food and other essential items to our recent Food For Families appeal.

Many people in our community facing crisis can now access the basics they need to get through difficult times.

The 73 tonnes of food and other essential items pledged through Food For Families provided some much-needed Christmas cheer for people in crisis and restocking our shelves for the challenging months ahead. This equates to over \$243,000 worth of food and essentials.

The ongoing support of congregations continues to positively impact people when they need it most. The continuous rise in the cost of living is leaving a growing number of families struggling to make ends meet, especially at this time.

As winter approaches and our Emergency Relief pantries start to run low, please consider donating non-perishable food and toiletries all year round by dropping off goods to your local Uniting service to support those in need.

To register for Food For Families in 2020 or to find your nearest drop off point, please visit foodforfamilies.org.au or call **1800 060 543**.

Pancake Day

As you would be aware, Shrove Tuesday, also known as Pancake Day fell on Tuesday 25 February and the team at Uniting (pictured below) launched this on the rooftop terrace at Synod.

This was a great opportunity for Synod and Uniting to share a morning tea while raising money to support Uniting programs and services.

Over 100 congregations registered to hold events this year. Thank you!

All money raised goes directly to programs and services supporting people in your community experiencing crisis, vulnerability and disadvantage.



Emergency Relief services - Now more than ever.

As a congregation, you may already be responding to calls for support for those that have been impacted by the recent bushfires and unprecedented rainfall. These calls for support have increased even more so in the wake of COVID-19 virus in our communities.

These challenges have and will continue to have a significant impact on our Emergency Relief services. Our Emergency Relief centres provide the basics for a home cooked meal and essential household items. It's often the first port of call for people in crisis –

a chance to start building trust, while establishing a connection they can count on.

Our Emergency Relief services are an entry point to a range of vital services that address the immediate needs of people in crisis. People accessing Emergency Relief typically have a low or no income, making them vulnerable to financial shock such as high utility bills. Others need support as a result of an unforeseen or life changing event such as illness or family violence.

At Uniting we're getting ready for more people than ever before coming to us asking for emergency support, crisis accommodation and access to fresh food and we are working hard to ensure these needs

can be met. Every measure is being taken to protect the health and wellbeing of those we support and will be reviewed daily.

Emergency Relief is central to Uniting's holistic approach to assisting families and individuals in crisis and supporting them to build stability and wellbeing. With your support, Uniting will be there to help the most vulnerable in our community.

Uniting's Emergency Relief services are facing increased need in these challenging times. If your congregation would like to consider supporting our services, please contact us on 1800 668 426.

Contact Uniting

 1800 688 426

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