

Spring 2021 Congregation Connect



A place to call home

In the last edition of Congregation Connect, we told you about our involvement in From Homelessness to a Home. The program secures permanent housing for people who were placed in hotels and motels throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and provides ongoing support.

This program is proving a big success, housing people like Rachael.

Rachael, 23, has been homeless since her mother forced her to leave the family home at 18.

She has couch-surfed, stayed in temporary accommodation, crisis accommodation and moved from house to house, living in at least 26 different places in the past few years.

"I have lived with people in the past, which didn't work out. I would move in with partners and most of those relationships turned into domestic abuse," says Rachael.

"Just knowing I am going to have a place that is mine, a place to call home, a place that is safe, honestly means the world to me.

"Before, I had basically given up. I thought life wasn't going to get any better. It never had for me.

"I was so convinced nothing would get better. Now I have my mental health in check, I am not using drugs or alcohol, I am looking after myself, life has just gotten so much better.

"Stability will definitely make it easier. The fact I have my Ps (probationary driver's licence) will also make it easier and it will get a lot easier when I get a car.

"This program has changed my life for the better."

Your Mission Team at Uniting Vic.Tas

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Thank you for keeping people warm in winter

Thank you to all congregations who supported our Winter Blanket Appeals, bringing much needed comfort and warmth to people in crisis during the colder months.

Your generosity helped provide more than 1671 people with bedding and clothing this winter.

Jeremy Pettet is Uniting's Executive Officer in Tasmania. He points out that poverty, unaffordable property rents and family violence are among leading contributors to homelessness.

"The last couple of years have been particularly difficult and we know there are many people across Victoria and Tasmania who are really struggling," says Jeremy.

"Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we've seen a surge in demand for emergency relief, including from people experiencing homelessness.

"We see many people who are lucky enough to have housing but are forced to choose between purchasing food or paying for electricity. It's the most disadvantaged people in our community who are always hardest hit in the colder months.

"Thank you to everyone who donated."

Pictured: Jacinta Boss from the Commonwealth Bank and Jeremy Pettet from Uniting Vic.Tas. Commonwealth Bank branches around Tasmania were drop off points for blankets.



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

Uniting



Share Sunday resources

We've experienced a sharp rise in demand for our mental health and crisis support services over the past 12 months because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we join in God's Mission together, the Uniting Church of Australia and your community services organisation, Uniting Vic.Tas continue to provide safe, inclusive spaces to support people struggling with their health and mental wellbeing.

The reality is that 1 in 3 people in Australia will suffer from some form of mental health issue in their lifetime.

This year, the focus of our Share Sunday resources is mental health, around the theme of 'All are welcome.'

Share Sunday is an opportunity for the whole of the Uniting Church to acknowledge the community services being undertaken by our agencies, parish missions, presbyteries and congregations.

It is also an invitation to continue to explore how we can partner together as we respond to Christ's calling to serve humanity seeking to create an inclusive, connected and just world.

Resources are available to download at www.unitingvictas.org.au/share-sunday

These resources include:

- A complete sample service, with all prayers and responses
- Sermon/reflection
- Intergenerational activity resources
- Suggested hymns

You are invited to adapt the material to suit your context and congregation(s).

Your congregation should also have received a Share Sunday pack, featuring Paul's story about how Uniting supported him through a challenging time in his life.

You can use these resources to help promote our Share Sunday Appeal, which supports people struggling with their mental wellbeing.

Contact Uniting

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Marrageil Baggarrook opening

In May we opened new crisis accommodation units for older women at risk of homelessness in Melbourne's east.

Named Marrageil Baggarrook, the 8 independent living units have been a long time in the making, with great dedication, faith, and advocacy from the Mountview Uniting Church congregation.

We have collaborated with the congregation to source funding and partner with other organisations to see this come to fruition.

The congregation, who donated the land, also played a significant role in the planning of the units, with members generously donating their time to help prepare the submission for funding to the Victorian Government.

The units will provide a safe space for women to live while they receive assistance to secure long-term housing and help with finances, mental health, and any other support services they may need.

A special thank you to Mountview Uniting Church, especially John Williams, who has been the chief advocate in finding an opportunity to develop this land into a new resource for serving the community.

Pictured (left to right) Uniting Vic.Tas CEO Bronwyn Pike, Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Gabrielle Williams, Associate Gen Secretary Uniting Church Victoria & Tasmania, Isabel Thomas-Dobson and local Member for Ringwood, Dustin Halse.