



AN OPEN LETTER OF SINCERE GRATITUDE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

From the Chairs of Uniting Vic.Tas, Uniting AgeWell, U Ethical Investors and The Moderator in the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.

Dearest friends,

The past 18 months have been trying for us all, including communities within the Uniting Church in Australia and our organisations. The COVID-19 pandemic and its cycle of lockdowns, re-openings, restrictions and interruptions, has touched almost every aspect of our lives. Many of the things we once regarded as 'normal' may never return.

We have all made sacrifices, big and small. Parents have faced the challenges of home-schooling, often whilst trying to work from home. Families have been unable to visit loved ones to share important celebrations. Hard-working, proud people turned to others for support, many for the first time, as their work has disappeared. Refugees and foreign students have been unable to work or access government supports. Many people with family overseas have been separated from them for long periods of time. Small business owners have had to let staff go or have closed permanently. The list goes on.

At the same time, the pandemic has also brought out the best in many of us.

Where would many of us be if it weren't for caring neighbours? People have held out a helping hand to those in need without concern for the potential risk to themselves. They have put the needs of their community first, demonstrating a true love of neighbour.

And where would we be if it weren't for the essential workers? Our own health and family support workers, aged care and disability support workers, and early years educators who have worked tirelessly to provide care and support to others? Not to mention the people working in supermarkets, transport, teachers, medical staff and everyone else who have enabled most of us to remain in the relative safety of our homes.

Their stories fill us with gratitude and also with hope.

In many ways the COVID-19 pandemic has changed who we are as a nation by providing us with the opportunity to become part of a more compassionate community. It will be many months, or even years, before we find ourselves in a world where our hopes and plans are not driven by Covid case numbers.



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Yet there is no doubt that vaccination is a key part of moving to that new normality.

As the vaccines roll out, everyone has a personal decision to make. For some, getting vaccinated is a simple choice; another way to support their community and in particular those who are most vulnerable. For others, there are factors that make it more complicated.

Many of those working with older people or people with disability see vaccination as part of their commitment to the wellbeing and safety of the people they work alongside every day.

For others, vaccination is our best chance to achieve that elusive COVID normal. It is our best hope to be able to visit families and friends freely, to plan weddings and celebrations, to be able to travel and see loved ones, for businesses to open with confidence and secure local employment.

We all long to be able to make plans without the fear of cancellations and lockdowns.

For love of neighbour, for the wellbeing and safety of our community, we encourage everyone to carefully consider vaccination. If you're unsure, talk to your doctor and make your decision based on what vaccination means for you, your families, and your community.

We've seen over the last year and a half that individual acts of kindness can have a huge impact on the lives of many people around them. Let this same generosity of spirit continue to guide us now.

We all have an important part to play. Together we can make a safer community for everyone.

Yours in gratitude,

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Moderator

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