



Uniting Church in Australia  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

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This letter has been sent to: All presbytery office bearers, people in placements and retired ministers and Church Council Secretaries

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

This letter provides guidance on how to best provide pastoral care and worship services as the spread of Coronavirus escalates.

The [Victorian government website](#) and [Tasmanian government website](#) remain your best sources of up-to-date information. We urge you to keep checking them for important updates as the advice will keep changing. Follow all advice and instructions concerning public gatherings and apply them to church services and activities.

The Victorian government's [media hub page](#) provides daily updates on locally confirmed cases which will help you monitor the spread of infection in your area.

Consider the way worship and other activities are undertaken to reduce the possibility of virus transmission.

We encourage you to remain compliant with health and safety procedures, avoid unnecessary exposure and act responsibly to reduce the risk of spreading. Therefore, if you are sick we ask that you do not attend Church.

It is important you minimise physical contact with others and with surfaces that come into contact with multiple people.

Attached to this letter is a self-assessment guide and poster listing 10 ways to reduce your risk. Please place copies of them in prominent locations.

### **Worship services and gathered activities**

- Seek to limit risk for those who may be vulnerable. Weigh up what would best serve the congregation and wider community.
- Remind people to stay informed and take all reasonable steps to keep themselves and others safe by following good personal hygiene and health practices.
- Avoid shaking hands, hugging or kissing when greeting people, including at the beginning and end of services.
- Ensure hand washing facilities have plenty of soap and paper towels (not cloth towels) available. Please ensure hand sanitisers are clearly available at multiple sites.
- Encourage members to stay home if they are sick.
- Should food be shared, extra vigilance should be given to all food preparation and handling.

- Regularly wipe surfaces at church with a cleaning solution that kills viruses.
- Stand at least one metre apart from anyone with cold or flu symptoms, and advise anyone sick to go home.

### **Passing the Peace**

- Think of ways in which this can be done without physical contact. For example, hands pressed together and a slight bow of the head; hand on heart; eye contact and smile.

### **Holy Communion**

- Use individual glasses. Avoid sharing the common cup or intincture. Ensure those preparing and serving use hygienic food-handling procedures and sanitise their hands before distributing the elements to communicants.
- Use a small number of servers rather than passing the elements from person to person.
- Place hand sanitisers nearby so people can clean their hands before they receive the elements.

### **Offering**

- Consider how the offering can be received without everyone handling the bowl.

### **Pastoral Care**

- Please check you have contact details, including phone numbers, for all attendees and that people are linked into Pastoral Care teams.
- Telephone vulnerable members of your community to ensure they have adequate support.
- If someone within your congregation gets the virus, we advise the minister or Pastoral Care team not to visit face to face, but instead phone or skype to maintain a sense of community.
- Consider telephoning a person before visiting them to confirm they are well and a visit would be welcome.
- Be particularly careful if visiting the elderly, babies, people in hospital or those with chronic illness.

In all of this we are acting out of a sense of Christian care and responsibility for all people, especially the vulnerable. Prayer remains a really important gift and we once again point you to the President's recent [statement and prayer](#).

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have further questions.

Grace and peace in this challenging time,

Isabel



**Isabel Thomas Dobson**  
Acting General Secretary