



Uniting Church in Australia

Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

Presbytery of Port Phillip West

PO Box 1467, Pacific Werribee, Hoppers Crossing, 3029

20 March 2020

To all active Ministry Agents, Church Council Secretaries

Greetings to you in Christ's service! We would like to give you an update from the Presbytery in these strange and uncertain times.

The Ministry Team has had several phone conversations/emails and texts, wanting to know if the Presbytery of Port Phillip West is making any decision regarding worship services this Sunday and beyond. At this stage we are being guided by the instructions we have received from Synod that were sent out to all congregations and ministers yesterday. (If you did not receive that email please let one of us know and we will forward it to you.)

We are aware that some Synods have made blanket decisions to cease worship gatherings, but our Synod has not done so. We are also aware that some Presbyteries within our Synod have strongly encouraged the cessation of worship gatherings. However, the responsibility for worship and worship times remains with local church councils or governing bodies.

We encourage you to make decisions based on the safety of the most vulnerable within your community, allowing for self-selection/decisions of members in relation to attendance at worship, the preference of your ministry agent and for your wider community. Decisions will be based on your local needs.

This can be an opportunity to think creatively about how you worship, i.e. outside with physical distancing, online, etc and how you provide pastoral care not just to your church community but the wider community.

We have collated strategies and plans that are being put into place around our Presbytery for your information. Please know that you are not alone, the Presbytery Ministry team and the leadership of the Presbytery are here for you and available to discuss any concerns that you might have. You are all in our prayers.

Rev Jeanne Beale (Deacon) and Mr Bruce Missen will be the contact people in this crisis and will be formulating crisis plans in accordance with the Government directions. Please forward health and safety issues through them, in particular, the numbers of church members diagnosed with the Covid-19 virus. We must be notified if any ministry agents become unwell with this virus.

As people of faith we can stand strong in the love and strength of our God and the knowledge that we can offer hope and calm to our communities [Isa 41:10, 1 Peter 5:7, 2 Tim 1:7]. Let us channel our anxieties into prayer [Phil 4:6-7]. Taking the lead from Rev Mark Lawrence in his pastoral letter, this is a chance for the church to step up and embody the presence of Christ within this storm. [Mark 4:35-41].

Yours in Christ

Rev Bruce Watson (Chairperson)

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