

What other Churches within Port Phillip West are doing in the current crisis

What you have said to us.....

Theological Reflection:

We are hearing that this time of fear and confusion is a good opportunity to: Ground ourselves in God and offer hope at this time. We need to be the calm voice in our communities not driven by fear. We can encourage our people to talk about and acknowledge their fears and bring them in prayer to Jesus. We can continue to offer care to the vulnerable. The world is more in need of prayer and hope and we as people of faith can offer that to our community. God is still with us through this crisis. We can find ways to share beauty, kindness and generosity in these troublesome times. We can be creative about how we respond to this situation. We do not have to do what everyone else is doing.

What are others in our Presbytery doing?

Our churches are endeavouring to take into account all the information provided and taking precautions. Many are planning to go ahead with worship this Sunday. They are seeking to keep the 1.5m social distance (one congregation is closing off every second row, local doctors have a "Stop, please do not sit here" sign on every second seat in the waiting room.

Not exceeding the 100 people limit can be overcome by offering more than one time for worship or moving worship outside. The option of outside worship is being considered for Easter Sunday Services by some.

Most churches are cancelling events which involve elderly participants **but are keeping** mainly music and other programs that involve young children going until the Government closes schools and Kindergartens. Others are concerned about elderly volunteers that facilitate these groups so have closed.

Most op-shops are slowing down or closing. Choir groups are not meeting. A significant number of Emergency Relief services are closing, and many Uniting staff are working from home.

One Craft group has split into smaller groups and now meeting in private homes.

Major events have been cancelled:

- Sacred Edge Festival
- Church Camps
- Youth Connect Services postponed until further notice
- A number of Ecumenical Good Friday/Easter events have been cancelled.

However, outside Stations of the Cross Services could be encouraged by the very nature of being outside.

Several are closing sites now before this Sunday to protect their "at risk" members. If your congregation/faith community has a significant number of "at risk" members then continuing to worship in sizeable numbers this Sunday, is **not** the preferred option.

Offering/Financial concerns:

Encouraging online giving as the church still needs money to support the vulnerable and your local ministry.

Not passing the offering bowl around – One person handling it is much better. People coming up the front and placing their offerings in the bowl, or a retiring offering bowl. Alternatively, offering envelopes could be dropped-in at a central point during the week.

Acknowledgment of the financial issues for individuals and churches, especially as offerings decrease and tenants pull out or won't be able to pay the rent and op-shops close.

New opportunities to be church:

Opening the Church for community prayer – having people available to the community and letting the public know this through social media.

Delivery of flyers to the wider community – see example attached

Or posting prayerful or practical support on community social media sites.

Alternative Worship and ideas:

Rev Will Nicholas – the minister at St David's Newtown - is available as a resource for other ministers/congregations with regard to technology, online streaming, social media, etc. (See the article in the on-line Crosslight or our Regenerating the Church FaceBook page).

Streaming the Sunday Morning Worship: Some congregations are offering a worship online facility or offer a video sermon on loop that people could visit during the week in their own time. "How to use technology" tuition is being offered by some churches to help people keep connected. eLM is resourcing in this area so keep an eye on the Synod website.

One congregation is considering a picnic basket for each person for communion.
Also thinking about Labyrinths that people can do on their own time.

Pastoral Care:

Update pastoral lists so that contacts can be made by phone calls, facetime/skype, and snail mail.

One pastoral care team is developing "phone call trees" to ensure all members are contacted.

A weekly paper leaflet mailed out or dropping off sermons and notes to people who do not have access to the internet, helps to maintain a sense of belonging to community.

Keep communicating with other local churches so that you know what is going on.

Understanding the tensions for families if one person is in to hoarding and others are not.

Support Services:

Dept of Health and Human Services – has online training and guidelines for the current crisis as to when to cancel or keep open activities.

As many people lose their jobs, we need to be aware of:

- the extra need for welfare and encouraging people to seek help if they need it.
- checking in on people's mental health – it is really important not to be afraid to ask the questions about suicide i.e. are you feeling suicidal? Do you have a plan? Do you have the means? Encourage people at risk to call Lifeline Australia 13 11 14.
- Contacting the local council to offer services: As other services for seniors and others who are normally socially isolated are closed what can you and your church do for these people? - daily or regular phone calls to check in, driving people to medical appointments and so on.

If you have other ideas that you think would be of help to the rest of the Presbytery, please email them to jeanne.beale@ppw.victas.uca.org.au