



18 March 2020

Dear friends,

Greetings in the name of Christ.

As you are well aware, our society and our church are being deeply impacted by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The situation is extremely fluid and evolving rapidly in terms of both Government policy and public health advice.

As members of the wider community, and as the body of Christ called to exercise love for our neighbours, we are committed to participating in our society in wise, faithful and responsible manner. We have our part to play both in limiting the spread of the disease itself, and in helping our wider community learn new ways of caring for one another in a time of emotional, physical and financial stress.

I'm equally aware that the consequences of this pandemic may well be felt by our own members, ministry leaders, staff and volunteers. I am praying for you and want to express by commitment to standing in solidarity with you. Please follow all Government and public health advice with respect to your own practices and behaviours.

I am also very conscious of the significant impact of the current situation on health care workers in particular, as well as those in industries experiencing significant disruption. I ask you to be in prayer, as well as offering practical support wherever possible to those in such situations.

In times like this, we often ask the question, "Where is God in all of this?". It's often a statement of exasperation, or fear. Yet we can answer that conclusively; "God is with us!" and we can draw strength and courage from God's presence. We can be generous and confident for others. We can be a safe space, a healing space. We can bear witness to the goodness of God in Jesus Christ, for our lives are hidden in Christ

Advice current Wednesday 18 March 2020

As far as practical measures go, I can advise the following as of today (18 March 2020):

- After consultation with presbytery leaders, face-to-face congregational worship services and meetings should cease effective immediately. This is in accordance with new limits of 100 people in an indoor gathering announced by the Prime Minister this morning, and with further limitations signalled to be applied by the end of the week. You should comply with this advice and work on alternate means of connecting people for worship, prayer and discipleship gatherings.
- Leadership team meetings, church council meetings, small group and home group meetings in face-to-face format may continue at your discretion in the short term with stringent hygiene and social distancing practices, but Government and public health advice should be monitored regularly. We recommend you prepare for the cessation of such gatherings in a face-to-face format and move to different modes of connecting.

- Public children and youth events and activities should cease consistent with our commitment to love our neighbours. The potential for asymptomatic people to unknowingly contribute to the spread of disease is very real.
- Visits to aged care centres, and hospitals can continue, but in accordance with the stringent new measures announced by the Prime Minister this morning. Visits will be short, visitor numbers strictly limited, and as you may imagine, personal hygiene practices will be vital. Please comply with any policy or practices at centres or hospitals you visit. Your own health and safety are important to me, and to our church.
- The Government has advised upgraded international travel advice to "Do Not Travel". Domestic travel is currently ok, with limits on travel into indigenous communities.

I recognise that implementing these measures will have significant impact on the life of our church and community. I want to encourage you to apply your own creative thinking, prayer and planning, to different ways of connecting, encouraging and equipping people to love and care for their neighbours. In addition to your own work, further resources will be available from your Presbyteries, and from the Synod shortly, and on an ongoing basis. I invite you to share any insights, ideas or practices that your community implements in order to help share best practice across the church.

More than anything, look after yourself during this unprecedented time. If you are struggling, reach out to someone you trust, contact Lifeline on 13 11 44 or access the Employee Assistance Provider, ChangeFutures on (07) 3857 0847.

As well as further communication direct to you from the Synod office, I will make a public statement later today expressing the Uniting Church's commitment to stand in solidarity with our community, and with those most vulnerable at this most difficult time.

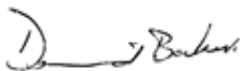
Should you be able to contribute suggestions, or want to seek further advice, please contact the Synod workplace health and safety team at health.safety@ucaql.com.au. Alternatively, information is available from the below sources.

[Australian Government](#)

[Queensland Health](#)

[Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod](#)

My friends let us continue to love God, love one another and love our neighbours.



Rev David Baker

Moderator

Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod