

Tuesday 1 September 2020

Re: COVID-19 update

Dear friends in Christ,

Key messages

The Moderator will compose a musing for later in the week reflecting upon our role as stewards during Season of Creation.

- Face-to-face gatherings are still permitted, however, congregations in restricted areas should monitor current health advice when planning to gather physically.
- There are specific risks and guidelines related to outdoor gatherings.
- The Synod office building will be closed until 14 September 2020.
- Thank you for your work towards the ministry of the Uniting Church in Queensland during this time.

Season of creation

Let us remember that churches across the world are celebrating September liturgically as the [Season of Creation](#). The Moderator will compose a musing for later in the week reflecting upon our role as stewards.

COVID-19 in Queensland

Active cases of COVID-19 within Queensland are continuing to slowly increase and while we may not be experiencing the numbers that have been seen in Victoria and New South Wales, it is clear that COVID-19 is active within our state and the risk of community transmission is still high.

At this stage, face-to-face services may continue in the restricted areas providing congregations are operating in accordance with a COVID-19 plan that is consistent with the Public Health Direction or the [COVID Safe Industry Plan for Places of Worship](#). Our utmost priority is the safety of our members. As such, congregations in [restricted areas](#) should exercise extra caution when gathering. The list of restricted areas is extensive and includes most of south-east Queensland. Some areas for consideration when gathering physically include:

- First and foremost, whether to meet this weekend is in the best interests of the safety of our members, their loved ones, and the wider community.
- Increased vigilance with cleaning, personal hygiene, and physical distancing.
- In the case of any signs of illness, no matter how mild, the person concerned should be provided with a face mask and requested to leave and seek COVID-19 testing.
- Limit the time on-site—if meetings are planned or scheduled for after the service ensure all attendees move outside for at least 15 minutes before the second meeting begins.
- Consider limiting or ceasing congregational singing.
- Limit mingling pre and post-service (no morning tea).
- Emphasise the need for vulnerable persons to consider their own personal safety in attending.

We ask that if you become aware of any member of your congregation who is ill, that you urge them to get a COVID-19 test immediately, irrespective of how mild their [symptoms](#) may be. This continues to be an evolving situation and any updated advice will be provided via an extra-ordinary COVID-19 update. Members of the church are also encouraged to review the current [contact tracing list](#).

Face masks

We encourage members of the church to carry face masks with them at all times. Not only is it now mandatory to wear face masks in hospitals across the Greater Brisbane Area, but it is also recommended to wear face masks in instances where it may not be possible to physically distance, for example, in shopping centres, public transport, or when undertaking a volunteer or work activity.

Further information on the use of face masks can be found on the Synod's training resources website.

Outdoor gatherings

Many congregations are holding gatherings and events outdoors in public places. The Industry Plan for Places of Worship and the Public Health Direction on business restrictions does not extend to gatherings in public places. The [Movement and Gathering Public Health Direction](#) provides guidelines, especially around what is permissible in a restricted area as opposed to a non-restricted area. If you are seeking to have your gathering deemed an event, and your event is to be attended by up to 500 people, then you need to complete the [COVID Safe Event Checklist](#). To hold an event in a public place requires approval of the local council, and this will need to be provided in writing before the COVID Safe Event checklist can be completed.

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Synod office

Due to the increasing number of cases of COVID-19 within south-east Queensland, the Synod office building will be closed with staff working remotely until 14 September 2020. This should not impact the services and support that you should expect from our staff.

Unless there is a need for an extra-ordinary update, the next COVID-19 update will be sent on Tuesday 8 September 2020. Remember that the email for all COVID-19 enquiries is COVID19@ucaqld.com.au.



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Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod



Rev Heather den Houting
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