COVID-19
VICTORIA FAQs

AS AT AUGUST 6, 2020

Stage 3 (Regional Vic, including Mitchell Shire) and Stage 4 (Metro Melbourne) restrictions:

The stay-at-home restrictions which have applied to Metropolitan Melbourne and the Mitchell Shire since early June will now apply to all of Victoria until 13 September.

You may only leave home for the following four reasons:

- **Going to work if this cannot be done from home**
- **Care or care giving**
- **Exercise**
- **Buying food and other essentials (including medical)**

Visitors in the home are not permitted, other than for the purposes of giving/receiving care. No in-person worship services – only livestreamed/ recorded services, with a maximum of 5 people. Funerals will be limited to 10 people plus those essential to conducting service.

Police will be enforcing the order through community patrols and asking people why they are out. If it is for anything other than the four permitted reasons fines will be issued. Vehicles will be randomly stopped with passengers asked to identify themselves, their address and reason for their travel.

It is also mandatory for people to wear face masks whenever they leave their homes, including at all times in the workplace. Fines for non-compliance: $200 for individuals and up to $9,913 for employers.

The Premier has declared a State of Disaster as of 6pm Sunday 2 August, in addition to the existing State of Emergency. This gives law enforcement agencies additional powers to enforce all COVID restrictions.

Additional restrictions for Metropolitan Melbourne came into place from Sunday 02 August, including:

- Shopping – only one person per household is able to shop at a time, and only once per day
- Shopping and exercise must be undertaken within a maximum distance of 5km of a person's residence
- Exercise – a maximum of one hour per day and in groups of no more than two people (with exemptions for children who are in the company of parents/guardians whilst exercising)
- A curfew exists within Metropolitan Melbourne from 8pm to 5am nightly. The are very limited exceptions including: to give/receive care; to go to/be at work; for medical treatment; or for personal safety reasons (eg fire, to escape domestic violence or other harm, etc).
- Permitted Worker Permits must be carried at all times when attending any workplace other than the home. (see p4)

Fines for non-complance with the above directives by individuals range from $1,652 to $19,826.40.

Further information is available from the Vic Govt website at: **https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/ coronavirus**

As of 06/08/2020

Stay-at-home order

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

1/8

How will we know about further updates?

We have established a Synod Crisis Management Team which monitors changes on a daily basis. Compliance and Pastoral advice will continue to be issued via emailed letters from the General Secretary and/or Moderator. All other relevant advice will continue to be sent via the special Coronavirus editions of Synod eNews, which will appear in your inbox from "Communications". eNews and emailed letters are sent to all Presbyteries, all ministers, all church councils.

As of 05/4/2020

MULTI-LINGUAL RESOURCES

Where can I find the current government guidelines in other languages?

Ethnolink have information available in 51 languages at: **www.ethnolink.com.au/covid-19-coronavirus-translated-resources/**
The Department of Home Affairs has extensive multi-lingual resources available at: **https://covid19inlanguage.homeaffairs.gov.au/**
The Victorian Multicultural Commission have release multi-lingual resources including:

Audio messages
■ **https://cloud.think-hq.com.au/s/m9SX3ntGGqr7Sai**
Posters (JPG and PDF)
■ **https://cloud.think-hq.com.au/s/m9SX3ntGGqr7Sai**
Social Media banners
■ **https://cloud.think-hq.com.au/s/m9SX3ntGGqr7Sai**

As of 06/08/2020

LIVE-STREAMING WORSHIP

How many people can be involved in live-streaming worship services?

Recording and live-streaming of worship services is permitted providing all of the following guidelines are met.

The streaming of worship services is permitted only where the number of people at the premises is limited to five (which includes those participating in the ceremony and those providing technical support) and the following social distancing requirements can be met:

■ Each person must maintain a distance of at least 1.5m and must wear a facemask
■ At least 4sqm of floor area per person is required in the place where the ceremony/performance takes place. This means the immediate area/room around the participants where the ceremony is performed.

In addition, you must take measures to mitigate any risk of disease transmission by ensuring the following measures are in place:

■ Exclude persons who are unwell from participating in the production of the live streaming
■ Exclude persons in identified vulnerable groups from participating in the ceremony and the production of the live streaming, including:
  • Those who are immuno-compromised, etc.
  • over 70
  • over 65 with significant medical conditions
  • Aboriginal Tasmanians over 50 with significant medical conditions
■ Ensure all people present practice good respiratory and hand hygiene and provide appropriate hand washing facilities and hand sanitisers
■ If live streaming worship from a church or church building,
  • a COVID Recovery Action Plan Checklist (Sections A, B & C) must be completed and maintained and
  • **In Metro Melbourne, a permitted worker form must be completed and signed off (see Permitted Worker Permits - p4).**
  • If live streaming worship from a private residence, with only the residents present, a COVID Recovery Action Plan Checklist and Permitted Worker Permit are not required.

As of 06/08/202

Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

PRE-RECORDING WORSHIP

Are there any differences in the requirements for pre-recording worship vs live-streaming?

As the basic process is the same for both, the same practices should be applied.

As of 6/4/2020

SAFE (DIGITAL) MINISTRY

What safety measures should be adopted for ministry within the digital space?

The Culture of Safety Unit has prepared some guidelines for leaders and communities, offering commentary and interpretation of how our existing Child Safety resources and policies, and the Uniting Church Code of Ethics, continue to shape our digital ministry practices. To view the guidelines visit: **www.victas.uca.org.au/safe-digital-ministry**

As of 7/4/2020

GATHERINGS

What face-to-face gatherings are permitted at church?

Places of worship are not to be opened or used for worship services with any congregations, except for weddings and funerals – as indicated below.

Weddings may be held in places of worship, with the maximum number of five people present, using appropriate social distancing and hygiene practices.

Funerals may be held in places of worship, with the maximum number of 10 people present, using appropriate social distancing and hygiene practices.

The guidelines for Weddings and Funerals are the same whether conducted indoors or outdoors.

Community halls or similar are not to be used by any groups, Church-related or other. If halls or other facilities are intended to be used for Essential Public Services such as food banks, homeless services, or education they can remain open for the delivery of these services only (applying all other health and safety measures). If you are in doubt about whether the service is an Essential Public Service, seek advice either via your presbytery or contact:
uca.legal@victas.uca.org.au

As of 06/08/2020

What face-to-face gatherings are permitted away from church?

No face-to-face congregation-related gatherings, such as prayer groups, study groups or social groups, are to take place in people's homes, buildings or outdoors. Church Council and congregation committee meetings may only be held via teleconference and/or videoconference.

As of 06/08/2020

HOLY COMMUNION

What changes to worship services are permissable?

Assembly Standing Committee has approved temporary pastoral measure guidelines for congregations and faith communities to enable the celebration of Holy Communion as part of online worship. These guidelines can be found at:
https://www.assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/3163-temporary-arrangements-for-holy-communion

As of 16/4/2020

Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

CORONAVIRUS FUNERALS

Are there any special requirements for holding the funeral of someone who has died of Coronavirus?

The Victorian and Tasmanian governments each have guidelines for cases of suspected or confirmed COVID-19. These mean that some cultural and ministry funeral practices need to change, especially how families interact with the body of a person who has (or may have) died with COVID-19. Ministers need to consider how their ministry practice may need to alter and should discuss with Church Councils ahead of time how families can be supported in this situation.

As of 17/04/2020

PERMITTED WORKER PERMITS

Under Stage 4 lockdown, anyone living and/or working in Metropolitan Melbourne must carry a Permitted Worker Permit to attend any workplace, other than their home. Although there is provision , for example, for up to 5 people to be involved in live streaming, that doesn't mean there should be an assumption that a service should be recorded from a church building, or that the full 5 people possible should be used. However, a Church is regarded as a workplace, so anyone attending to facilitate the livestreaming, funerals, weddings, etc must carry a Permitted Worker Permit.

Failure to comply carries fines of up to $19,826.40 (individuals) and $99,132 (bodies corporate).

This is the initial process.

1. The Permitted Worker scheme template available from **https://victas.uca.org.au/all-you-need-to-know-answers-to-your-frequently-asked-questions/** has some of the information filled in.

The individual, with the approval of the Church Council Chairperson or other appropriate person, needs to complete the employee details and work location sections, sign the employee space, and on page 2, under the employer statement, add the nature of the Permitted work (from the Sector Summary document also available at the same web page)

2. Then return the form to the presbytery AND to **CrisisManagement@victas.uca.org.au**. Sending both at the same time at this stage means there are no undue delays for urgent requests.

3. As well as returning the form, please attach a statement by the Church Council Chairperson or person supporting the application saying

    - all reasonable steps have been, and will continue to be taken, to maintain a safe working environment for the employee, and a COVIDSafe plan is in place;
    - that the information provided on this permit is a true representation relating to a current employee and their employment details;
    - the attendance of the Employee at the Work Premises is required for the provision of a Permitted Service (the wording inserted on page 2) and that they support the application.

4. Please ensure that there is an email address for the person so the form can be returned promptly to the individual

As of 06/08/2020

MINISTERS IN HIGH RISK GROUPS

What if a minister is part of a Coronavirus high risk group?

All people who are
- aged over 70,
- over 65 with chronic health conditions,
- immune-compromised, or
- Indigenous people over 50 with chronic health conditions

are urged to stay at home. This includes ministry agents in these at-risk groups, whether retired or in active placement, who might have otherwise led funerals.

Ministry agents in these risk groups are encouraged to talk with their Church Council and have clear arrangements in place in advance as to who may be called on for funerals, especially where a person has died with confirmed or suspected COVID-19.

As of 17/04/2020

Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

RENT RELIEF REQUESTS

What do we do if we are approached by tenants for Covid-19 rent relief?

Rent relief is not automatic. Our Property Services and Legal departments have compiled guidelines for handling rent relief requests, both commercial and residential. If you wish to support a rent relief application, there is a form which needs to be completed before any rent relief can be offered. Details available on the first info sheet at: **www.victas.uca.org.au/resources/property/forms-and-resources/**

As of 16/4/2020

OP SHOPS

Can we keep our Op Shop open?

In Metropolitan Melbourne only prescribed essential retail is now permitted to open. All Op Shops must remain closed for the duration of Stage 4 restrictions.

In Regional Victoria we have as yet been unable to find any government directives which would permit Op Shops to remain open under the current Stage 3 restrictions. Unless advised otherwise in future editions of these FAQs, all Op Shops in Regional Victoria must also remain closed.

As of 06/08/2020

KINDERGARTEN

We have a kindergarten operating from a church-owned building. Do we need to close it?

The current advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer advises that Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services remain safe places for staff and children.

That means ECEC services, including sessional kindergarten, in regional and rural Victoria under Stage 3 restrictions, can continue to operate, with appropriate risk-mitigation measures in place (unless instructed by the Department of Health and Human Services to close).

From Thursday 6 August, ECEC services in metropolitan Melbourne should only remain open to provide education and care for those children whose parents or carers are permitted workers and for vulnerable children.

As of 06/08/2020

WORSHIP RESOURCES

Where can I access worship resources to help me keep connected?

Our worship resources page, which caters for all people across our Synod, is updated each week. Available at: **https://victas.uca.org.au/resources/covid-19-worship-resources/**

As of 6/4/2020

SYNOD

What if we need to contact someone from Synod Ministries and Operations?

Whilst they may be working remotely, all Synod staff are still working. Please contact any staff member as normal, but please be aware that they may not have all of the answers at their fingertips quite as readily as usual.

As of 5/4/2020

CONGREGATION WEBSITE TRAINING

Will training sessions for new congregation websites still go ahead?

These have been postponed indefinitely. Congregations and presbyteries that have booked training days will be contacted with alternative dates when this becomes possible.

As of 27/3/2020

Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

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ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING LICENCES

What does it cost for a Zoom meeting licence?

If you plan on using Zoom frequently and/or require full functionality, Synod Ministries and Operations along with other Synods have negotiated with Zoom to purchase a bulk deal. As such we are able to provide Zoom licences for a cost of just $7.93 per month.

If your presbytery or congregation is interested, please contact:
Shweta.Paliwal@victas.uca.org.au.

You will need to provide: Number of licences required and the details of the contact person (including their email address)

As of 20/04/2020

CROSSLIGHT

Will *Crosslight* continue to be published?

Our Communications team will continue to produce Crosslight, however while the current lockdowns are in place, it will only be available online, as either a **"flip book"** (which can be read on screen) or as a printable PDF. The June "Flip book"edition is available at: **https://issuu.com/ucavictas/docs/2020cross_06june**

We had hoped to resume publishing the printed version of Crosslight for the next edition in August. However, the reintroduction of Stage 3 Lockdown in Metro Melbourne means that unfortunately the August edition will again only be produced as a "flip-book" version, which can also be downloaded as a PDF.
News and feature stories are posted to Crosslight's website on a regular basis available at: **www.crosslight.org.au**

As of 09/07/2020

UPDATED INFORMATION

How will we know if the information on this page is still current?

This FAQ sheet will be updated WEEKLY and re-sent in every Coronavirus edition of eNews.

Please check this page each week for anything which is of particular interest. If in doubt, check with Synod Ministries and Operations or with your presbytery.

As of 6/4/2020

OTHER QUESTIONS

What if we have questions that aren't on this FAQ sheet?

Ask the relevant person/department at Synod or your presbytery. This FAQ document will contain additional topics as they become known.

As of 6/4/2020

COVID SAFE APP

Should we encourage downloading the Federal Government's Covid-Safe tracing app?

Synod Ministries and Operations would strongly recommend that all people in ministry download the Covid-Safe tracing app and also encourage all Uniting Church members to do so. As worship services recommence, this is a simple measure to help maintain the safety of our members as they start to gather again.

As of 14/05/2020

FIRST AID PRECAUTIONS

In the event of someone needing first aid treatment, are there any additional precautions required?

Anyone administering first aid should use general droplet and contact precautions, namely a face mask for the person they are treating which they should encourage the person to apply themselves, a face mask and gloves for the first aider, and goggles for the first aider (if available).

In the event that a first aider has a reason to suspect a person is infected with COVID-19, they should try to limit their contact with that person as much as they can, meaning they should avoid physical contact (e.g. checking pulses and performing physical assessments) unless absolutely necessary, such as performing CPR or putting people in a recovery position if they are unconscious and/or struggling to breathe.

As of 11/06/2020

Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

NSW/VIC BORDER CLOSURES

Who needs a cross-border permit, and where are these available?

The Border closure is being managed by the NSW government. Information, including Border Declaration Permit applications are available on the Services NSW website at **https://www.service. nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-covid-19-nsw-border-declaration-permit**

As of 09/07/2020

JOBKEEPER PAYMENTS

What is happening with the Jobkeeper payments?

The first reimbursement of the JobKeeper Payments for the month of April has now been reimbursed to congregations. These reimbursements have been credited to the same account from which stipends/wages are charged.

JobKeeper payments apply from April to September 2020. Each month the Australian Taxation Office will pay the Synod and the Synod will then forward amounts to congregations in the 4th week of each month.

Congregations should record the JobKeeper payments in their accounts as a receipt – "Grants received Government". **The amount should not be paid to ministers/staff as they have already been paid through the normal payroll processes.**

The Synod will manage all reporting to the ATO, including monthly declarations of revenue. This is based on the Synod operations and not on individual congregation results. There is no need to submit monthly revenue results.

Unfortunately efforts to qualify for the Cash Boost Payment have been unsuccessful at this stage.

Congregations are reminded that the JobKeeper Payment has been implemented by the Government to help employers keep staff and restart when the crisis is over.

Some questions:

Do casuals need to submit timesheets?
Where a casual is normally paid by submitting timesheets, these need to continue to be submitted, even if it's for a small shift.

Do staff need to continue to work?
Yes. The JobKeeper payment processes allow an employer to reasonably alter an employee's duties, location and days of work. We would advise congregations to find all staff (including casuals) some work tasks to do even if it's from home. You might need to be creative and/or ask the staff what they may be able to contribute. Some ideas shared in the zoom meeting – for Playgroup workers contacting parents, providing activity packs, zoom catch up with children, sing alongs etc. Admin staff may also be used to keep in contract with members, email/deliver newsletters, filing etc. The work may not be what they normally do.

For Part-time/Casuals who receive a top up payment does LSL levies (portable LSL) apply on $1500?
Portable LSL Authority - levy for "Community Service Workers": For those employees who are receiving a top-up payment, the top-up portion is not included in the calculation of the LSL levy.

The situation is the same as what has been calculated in the past (the actual total hours worked and the totals ordinary pay received by the worker, not including the JobKeeper top-up payment).

For example, if a worker's regular fortnightly wage is $1,000 before tax, and this is topped up with as additional $500 under the JobKeeper scheme, you must include only the $1,000 regular wage.

As of 09/07/2020

Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

COVID-19
VICTORIA FAQs

AS AT AUGUST 6, 2020

During this time of second wave lockdowns, it is important that we all take care of ourselves and of each other. Sometimes we may need help to do this. Below are just some of the places you can turn to if you, or someone you know, may need some assistance coping with Stage 3 or 4 COVID restrictions:

WELLBEING

Lifeline   ph **13 11 14**

Beyond Blue   ph **1300 22 4636**

Kids Helpline   ph **1800 55 1800**

1800RESPECT   ph **1800 737 732**
(Domestic & Sexual Violence)

SafeSteps   ph **1800 015 188**
(support & planning to escape domestic violence)

LGBTQIA   ph **1800 184 527**
(peer driven support)

Alcohol or Drug related issues
                                            ph **1800 888 236**

A great workbook to help build resilience during isolation: **https://thewellnesssociety.org/free-coronavirus-anxiety-workbook/**

YMCA – Virtual Y – online platform with loads of fitness, nutrition, wellbeing, family and youth content. **https://virtualy.ymca.org.au**

Vic Govt Food and personal care packages for people in mandatory self-isolation, delivered to your door.
                                            ph **1800 675 398**

FINANCIAL

Centrelink
Online financial resources for existing customers:
www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/help-emergency

Centrelink Crisis Payments   ph **132 850**

Uniting Vic Tas
https://www.unitingvictas.org.au/contact-us/

Aust Govt (early release of Superanuation):
www.australia.gov.au

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