

COVID-19 VICTORIA FAQs

AS AT MAY 21, 2020

To help identify items which are new, or have been updated since the last FAQ, simply look for:



This week's updates:

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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.

Separate editions of these FAQs are now being produced for Victoria and Tasmania reflecting the different approaches of each state government in easing Covid-19 restrictions. Please ensure that you are reading the version relevant to your state.
As of 14/05/2020



As of 21/05/2020

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/>

As of 21/05/2020



As of 21/05/2020

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 ten (including those providing technical support) plus those participating in the ceremony and providing the following social distancing requirements can be met:

- Each person must maintain a distance of at least 1.5m from another person
- 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
- Maintain environmental cleaning standards in line with those published by the Australian Government Department of Health.

As of 21/05/2020





As of 21/05/2020

GATHERINGS

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

The recommencement of small gatherings for worship, prayer, or Bible study, or even home visits to some church members, presents a challenging task of how to decide who may take part without the risk of some feeling excluded. This includes finding ways of meeting the safety requirements that don't involve or obligate those most at risk of severe illness, e.g. those over 70 or with health conditions, including Ministers or other congregation leaders, to do the tasks to achieve these requirements. This will require careful consideration by each Church Council based on local needs and requirements.

Religious gatherings and ceremonies are permitted with up to 10 people (plus those involved in staging the worship) to be held indoors or outdoors, providing physical distancing (1.5metres and 4 sq.m per person) can be maintained. Attendee names and contact details must be recorded in case contact tracing is required. These records should be kept for 21 days.

Should you choose to hold worship services, there are a number of factors which will need to be considered, including:

- *How to limit attendance numbers to the maximum 10 people and whether to allow non-members to attend*
- *Whether attendance by people (including Ministers) in any of the vulnerable groups should be discouraged*
- *How to ensure that persons who are unwell do not attend*
- *How to ensure social distancing is maintained, including on entering and exiting the building*
- *What changes to worship will be required to ensure the safety of all attendees, including eliminating/minimising the touching of shared items (eg microphones, books, pulpits, collection plates)*

- *How to ensure personal hygiene and building cleanliness meet minimum standards. See Safework Australia guide attached to checklist at: <https://victas.uca.org.au/download/668/faq/8608/checklist-for-congregations-2>*
- *Ensuring that bathrooms are properly provisioned with soap, disposable handtowels and sanitiser*
- *Noting that morning/afternoon tea or any other social gathering before/after worship should not occur*
- *What signage may be required to ensure the observance of all measures by attendees at all times*
- *How to maintain a record of all people who attend, including contact details, and*
- *How you will respond to unwell people attending, and attendees with suspected/confirmed Covid-19*

To assist in preparation for Worship Services and gatherings, see checklist at:

<https://victas.uca.org.au/download/668/faq/8608/checklist-for-congregations-2>

At funerals, **20 people** are allowed **at an indoor ceremony** and **30 people at an outside ceremony**. This is in addition to the minimum people required to conduct the funeral.

Weddings may be held with the **maximum number of 10 people** present plus the couple and the celebrant. Appropriate social distancing and hygiene practices must continue to be observed. There has been no additional allowance advice issued for outdoor ceremonies.

Community halls or similar can only be used for some limited purposes. 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 (applying all other health and safety measures). If hosting a support group, a maximum number of 10 people can be present plus the facilitator(s).

Continued P3





Before using any church owned buildings, or allowing any other group to use church-owned buildings, please complete the checklist at: <https://victas.uca.org.au/download/668/faq/8608/checklist-for-congregations-2>

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 21/05/2020

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

Gatherings of up to 5 people may be held in a private residence, plus the residents of the household.

Prior to visiting, you should always check the residents' willingness to receive visitors and their ability to observe social distancing requirements.

Church Council and congregation committee meetings should continue to only be held via teleconference and/or videoconference unless face-to-face meetings are absolutely necessary.

As of 21/05/2020



As of 21/05/2020

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 local 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 21/05/2020

HOLY COMMUNION

What changes to worship services are permissible?

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 16/04/2020

CORONAVIRUS FUNERALS

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

The Victorian government has 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

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, worship services or engaged in visiting church members.

Continued P4





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 to conduct such work, especially funerals where a person has died with confirmed or suspected COVID-19.

As of 14/05/2020

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 16/04/2020

OP SHOPS

Can we keep our Op Shop open?

Op-shops can continue to operate in Victoria unless directed otherwise by local authorities, and provided that social distancing measures are put in place for staff, volunteers and visitors. It should also be noted that some Op Shops may need to close for a short time while addressing the current requirements.

Op Shops run by Uniting VicTas should consult Uniting for additional guidelines to the following:

- Staff and volunteers aged 70+ should be asked to stay at home
- Op Shops are considered an essential service and are also considered a workplace, therefore are excluded from the current “two-person limit” on gatherings.

You may of course choose to adjust how you operate your shop, such as operating only on a case-by-case basis by request to support local needs and/or in partnership with local community services.

In line with social distancing requirements, the number of persons in an Op Shop at any one time should be limited, using a rule of one person per 4sqm, including staff and volunteers, and people should remain a distance of 1.5m apart wherever possible. It may be helpful to mark this distance on the floor near service counters as a reminder to visitors.

As of 5/4/2020



As of 21/05/2020

KINDERGARTEN

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

Early Learning Centres, including kindergartens, are considered to be “education” and, as such, are not currently covered in the list of services to be closed. Social Distancing regulations should be encouraged wherever possible.

As of 21/05/2020

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

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





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

JOBKEEPER PAYMENTS

What is happening with the Jobkeeper payments?

The CSPA has now lodged the JobKeeper application on behalf of all congregations. Where an employee is entitled to a top up payment to the \$1500 per fortnight, the Synod has made this payment and provided the funding.

We expect the ATO will pay the JobKeeper payment to the Synod in the last week of May. We will then reconcile the amount received and pay the \$1500 per fortnight less the Top Up Payment funded by the Synod back to each congregation. This will be credited to the same account that CSPA currently direct debits the payroll costs. We hope the direct debit will be processed by May 29. We want to acknowledge the fantastic effort by all volunteer treasurers/secretaries acting on the various emails so promptly. It been a challenging time with the Government and the ATO changing the rules as we've tried to action the latest developments.

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 contact 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 do Superannuation and Long Service Leave levies (portable LSL) apply on \$1500?

Superannuation Guarantee is only paid on the normal hours. For those submitting timesheets this will be based on the hours work by their normal pay rate. As such it does not include super on the top up payment. The situation with the LSL levies is unclear. We have been in contact with the the Portable Long Service Authority and they have indicated "We are currently seeking further advice on our position relating to the Job Keeper payment. Once the Authority has finalised its position we will make external communications to employers." For further information, please contact payroll@victas.uca.org.au

As at 14/05/2020





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 at 14/05/2020

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 April "Flip book" edition is available at: www.issuu.com/ucavictas/docs/2020cross_04aprilweb and the next edition will be published in June.

News and feature stories are posted to *Crosslight*'s website on a regular basis available at: www.crosslight.org.au

As of 5/4/2020

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

