



**uniting
church**
in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

COVID-19

INFORMATION UPDATE

People in leadership in the Uniting Church in the Synod of NSW.ACT

Leaders from all Presbyteries and the Synod have met today, to give consideration to the situation regarding worship and groups meeting on Uniting Church facilities. We have agreed to provide the following guidance to Presbyteries, Congregations and Faith Communities across the Synod.

We note the clear advice that has been provided by government health authorities, about the importance of acting early for the benefit of the whole society. Early action will minimise the likelihood of becoming infected, slow the rate at which the virus spreads, flatten the curve of the incidence of serious cases, and assist the medical and hospital systems in responding to seriously increased demands.

The very strong recommendation is that **we should not be meeting in person in any gathering.**

As Paul long ago advised, “whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith” (Gal 6:10). Our commitment to the common good mandates that we proceed in this direction.

We have a responsibility towards one another in our community of faith. By keeping distant from one another, not touching physically, not gathering in groups, we lessen the possibility that we pass on the virus to one another.

We also have a responsibility to other people in our society. We know that the virus will keep on spreading. By not gathering, we reduce the spread of the virus in society, which flattens the curve, spreading out the number of serious cases, making it more feasible for the hospital and medical systems to cope with the inevitable rise of cases to be dealt with.

We acknowledge that conversations about modes of operating have been undertaken already in many presbyteries, congregations and faith communities. We anticipate that a government directive is imminent, which will restrict meeting in groups and require us to cease all gatherings.

We therefore propose the following strategies, on the understanding that they will contribute to lessening the risk, slowing the rate of spread of the virus in our communities.

1. Support Church Councils of Uniting Church congregations who have already decided to suspend worship in their congregation;
2. Strongly urge that Church Councils of Uniting Church congregations immediately decide to suspend all worship services as from today;

PRESBYTERIES

CANBERRA REGION

FAR NORTH COAST

GEORGES RIVER

ILLAWARRA

KOREAN

MACQUARIE DARLING

MID NORTH COAST

NEW ENGLAND NORTH WEST

PARRAMATTA NEPEAN

RIVERINA

SYDNEY CENTRAL COAST

SYDNEY

THE HUNTER

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3. Strongly urge that Church Councils of all Uniting church congregations
 - (a) decide to suspend immediately all other church activities in their premises and
 - (b) decide to suspend immediately the use of their church facilities for all community users;
4. Note that many church facilities are the base for community activities which are relied upon by the most vulnerable people in our communities (emergency relief, food banks, and the like), and strongly urge that Church Councils in this situation adopt clear infection control protocols which will be available from Albert Olley in Uniting Resources on alberto@nswact.uca.org.au or 0404 801 191;
5. Strongly recommend that Ministers and Pastors, Elders and Church Councils
 - (a) give active consideration to ways that they can foster social contact amongst their people in safe ways,
 - (b) encourage people within the congregation to maintain fellowship and mutual support by other means: Australia Post, telephone, internet, Facebook, online resources (Saltbush, Insights, Facebook, etc), and
 - (c) note that Adrian Drayton, (Synod Communications adriand@nswact.uca.org.au) is collating the various options available for online activities as a church;
6. Encourage people to use this time as an opportunity for personal retreat and reflection, for enriching and renewing their life of faith, for discovering new ways of reaching out in friendship and support to others in faith, even in the midst of the challenges being experienced.

Rev. Jane Fry
General Secretary

Rev. Simon Hansford
Moderator

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