



uniting
church
in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

COVID-19

INFORMATION UPDATE

12 May 2020

Notice on Gathering

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

Presbytery Chairpersons, Ministers and Synod leaders met on the 11 May 2020 to review the situation regarding worship and groups meeting in Uniting Church facilities following the easing of restrictions in some **states and territories**.

With the safety and well-being of our community in mind, all leadership across the Synod agreed that the following guidance is provided to all entities across the Synod.

The consensus decision was that we should not be meeting in person for services of worship or face to face meeting in our churches.

It is anticipated that the effects of COVID-19 will continue to impact our lives for the foreseeable future. In the coming months we will be asked to make difficult choices between conflicting needs and imperatives. We must avoid framing our situation in terms of a false choice between reviving the economy — or our churches — and saving lives. Our commitment to supporting the safety and well-being of people must remain our priority. If we don't continue our efforts to contain the virus, a new wave of infections and deaths will cause further pain. All that we have gained in this time of isolation could be quickly lost. Reopening our buildings and resuming gatherings prematurely, even with the practice of social distancing, could unfairly force the choice between personal health and the desire to re-join the beloved congregation.

In this spirit we therefore:

1. Request Uniting Church congregations to continue to suspend face to face worship.
2. Encourage and affirm the continued delivery of worship via alternate means.

PRESBYTERIES

CANBERRA REGION

FAR NORTH COAST

GEORGES RIVER

ILLAWARRA

KOREAN

MACQUARIE DARLING

MID NORTH COAST

NEW ENGLAND NORTH WEST

PARRAMATTA NEPEAN

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SYDNEY CENTRAL COAST

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3. Reaffirm the provision of essential services and activities that support vulnerable people in our communities, practicing strict social distancing and hygiene. (These activities are likely to have been clarified with Synod Office already, but should you have questions, please make contact).
4. Encourage Ministers and leadership teams in their continued efforts to:
 - a. foster social contact amongst their people in safe ways,
 - b. encourage people to maintain fellowship and pastoral care by other means: Australia Post, telephone, internet, Facebook, online resources (Saltbush, Insights, Facebook, etc), and
 - c. utilise the various options available on the Synod COVID-19 Hub for online activities as a church.
5. Continue to 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.

Synod affirms that:

1. A funeral or wedding may still be held, adhering to the numbers set by the **state or territory government as appropriate**.
2. Pastoral Visits are permissible as long as no one is considered to be at risk. Should the Minister or Pastoral Visitor be in a vulnerable category, please make other arrangements. Prior to visiting, please make contact to ensure all parties are well and able to safely receive the visit.

Presbytery and Synod leaders will continue to meet each week and will continue to monitor future developments.

Rev. Jane Fry
General Secretary

Rev. Simon Hansford
Moderator

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