



**Q 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 5/4/2020*

**LIVE-STREAMING WORSHIP**

**Q 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 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.

If you are in Tasmania, reassure your congregation you are undertaking the live stream in compliance with the requirements of the Public Health Act Direction relating to mass gatherings. If you have any further questions, contact Paul Hunt, State Manager Environmental Health Services on **6166 0698**.

*As of 6/4/2020*

**PRE-RECORDING WORSHIP**

**Q 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**

**Q 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](http://www.victas.uca.org.au/safe-digital-ministry)

*As of 7/4/2020*



COVID-19

# FAQs

AS AT APRIL 23, 2020

## GATHERINGS

### Q 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](mailto:uca.legal@victas.uca.org.au)

As of 7/4/2020

### Q 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 7/4/2020

## HOLY COMMUNION

### Q 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 16/4/2020

## Coronavirus Funerals

### Q 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

## Ministers in high risk groups

### Q 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



## 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/](http://www.victas.uca.org.au/resources/property/forms-and-resources/)

*As of 16/4/2020*

## 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*

## GOVERNMENT FUNDING

### What federal government funding can the UCA access and will congregations have access to it?

The Synod, in conjunction with the Assembly and other synods, is actively pursuing all government support programs, including the Job Keeper Payment and the Cash Flow Boost that are designed to help organisations and staff directly affected by measures announced by government to control the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

At this stage the application process is synod wide, across synod ministries and operations and congregations, as the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) wishes to deal with just one entity. The on-line registration via the ATO website opened on 20 April 2020 and the Synod will register as an employer for the JobKeeper package.

Further verification of the financial and employment impact will be required to determine eligibility. At this stage ministers are not defined as eligible under the JobKeeper program, being offered by the government. Advocacy work is currently being undertaken by Assembly to review the government’s position on this. More information will be provided when this becomes available.

**IMPORTANT:** In the coming days eligible employees, as defined under the JobKeeper program, will receive a JobKeeper employee notification from Synod payroll or via congregation treasurers requesting employee agreement to participate in the Jobkeeper program. Congregations and presbyteries should not take individual action and will be informed as soon as more information is available.

*As of 22/04/2020*



COVID-19

# FAQs

AS AT APRIL 23, 2020

## KINDERGARTEN

### Q 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. This is likely to change, so please monitor future government directives. Social Distancing regulations should be encouraged wherever possible.

As of 5/4/2020

## MULTI-LINGUAL RESOURCES

### Q 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/](http://www.ethnolink.com.au/covid-19-coronavirus-translated-resources/)

As of 6/4/2020

## WORSHIP RESOURCES

### Q 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

### Q 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

### Q 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

## Zoom virtual meeting Licences

### Q 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](mailto: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

### Q 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](http://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](http://www.crosslight.org.au)

As of 5/4/2020





### **UPDATED INFORMATION**

**Q 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**

**Q 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*

