

# Uniting Presbytery of Tasmania



<https://ucatas.org.au/>

Issue No. 183

May 2020

## Tassie UCA congregations - being church during the pandemic

In her Easter message, Moderator Rev Denise Liersch reminded us to look to Jesus for a way forward during this time of seismic upheaval. The congregations and faith communities in the Presbytery of Tasmania have many ways of being Church during this 'non-contact' time – and show us that there are new ways to worship, share, remain connected, and care for each other.

Congregations and faith community members are discovering new skills (Zoom, videoing, photography, YouTube) to learn or share, are finding creative ways to worship in their communities, and new ways of caring for all members of their congregation and their local communities. During this time of 'non-contact Church' some are:

- Ω recording their Sunday worship and sharing with the congregation
- Ω connecting on Sunday mornings by holding Zoom Worship
- Ω using 'faith at home' resources from the Presbytery website
- Ω increasing the frequency and size of their regular newsletter
- Ω sharing resource material by email and letter box dropping
- Ω updating contact lists to staying in touch by phone, email, letter, Zoom
- Ω making a phone call to have a shared devotional/prayer time with another member of the congregation, or a cuppa and chat
- Ω check out TV and radio stations for Christian programs

(see more on pp 6 – 7)

“We ARE part of the Community of Christ and while we may not be able to gather in one location as Community we are still gathered in spirit and in His love through His Holy Spirit which He has left with us for all eternity. We should not be disheartened by current events and difficulties because we do have the HOPE and the ASSURANCE of God’s presence with us, in us and through us to others.”

*Derwent Cluster newsletter*

**What do you need, and how can we help? Missing connection with your local church? Zoom doesn't need a computer: you can just use your home phone or mobile phone. Or join the weekly 'open conversation' for local leaders, every Thursday 7:00-8:00pm on Zoom: contact the Tas office for more info on 6331 9784.**

# Opportunities



arrangements  
to be confirmed

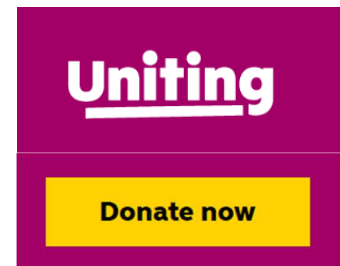
**Next Presbytery Gathering**  
9.45am Saturday 13 June 2020  
by Zoom

## Synod Updated Covid-19 Information

In a bid to assist congregations keep abreast of what is and isn't permitted, the Synod Coronavirus Crisis Team has gathered Frequently Asked Questions and attempted to provide easy answers. This FAQ sheet will be updated WEEKLY and re-sent in every Coronavirus edition of *eNews*.

Coronavirus editions of Synod *eNews Update* is sent to all presbyteries, all ministers and all church councils weekly.

**Uniting VicTas** is the community services arm of the Uniting Church across Tasmania and Victoria. Uniting VicTas already provides emergency relief to people now also affected by Covid-19, on top of existing poverty, homelessness, domestic violence, mental health issues, and more. Covid-19 makes these situation even more dire. You can donate now: phone 1800 668 426 or visit <https://www.unitingvictas.org.au/donate/>



## Worship Resources

Both the Presbytery of Tasmania and the Synod have resources pages that are updated frequently. Here you can find worship ideas, faith at home, online churches and services, printable resources and Zoom meeting information among other resources.

Presbytery link: <https://ucatas.org.au/resources-for-non-contact-times/>

Synod link <https://victas.uca.org.au/resources/covid-19-worship-resources/>

Please contact the UCA Tasmanian Office if we can assist with printing or mailing of any resources you or your congregation require.

# Reflection What Does Trusting Yourself To God Look Like Right Now?

There are three realities of life we cannot avoid: life is uncertain, it doesn't always go to plan, and it isn't always fair.

Let's begin with the first reality – we don't know what will happen in the future. We can predict the weather, even economic fluctuations, but not our day-to-day lives. As we are currently being reminded, a perfectly healthy person can suddenly fall seriously ill.



Four or five months ago we would never have imagined the world would be in this condition. When Wuhan was hit with COVID-19, there was no global panic because most people simply thought it would be contained to China. As it turned out, the virus has spread to every corner of the globe. Many have lost their loved ones, many have lost their jobs, many have had to self-isolate and remove themselves from their communities and many more continue to live in a state of anxiety.

And that highlights how life isn't always fair. Health workers, for example, are dying as they try to treat infected patients. These realities can make us feel anxious and lose hope, but we should remember what Jesus's disciples experienced. For three years they followed Him in the hope He would restore Israel, drive out Roman invaders, and elevate their ranks from simple fishermen to people in the eyes of society.

But what was their reality? Jesus brought them to the cross and said: "Do not let your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me." He said this not just to comfort and strengthen the faith of His disciples, but to affirm that although the cross looks bleak they should not be discouraged because it is all in God's control.

This message is worth remembering now. Our current situation could trigger other crises – economic, political and social – and we don't know how any of them will play out. But it's important that we remember that, whatever happens, we should not get anxious and instead place our trust in God.

But what does trusting yourself to God look like in practice? It is not about being passive and doing nothing. We need to give our best. No matter how great a problem we face, as long as we keep trying, it will always be possible for us to find a way out. If we give up, then the way will be closed for us.

Entrusting yourself to God does not mean neglecting your mind as if the most important thing is only to believe. Faith is important, but so is reason and common sense. In our current situation this means maintaining our health, strengthening our body's immunity and adhering to social distancing guidelines.

So what then is the function of faith? Faith allows us to do all that we must do without panic. God does not promise a smooth and comfortable life, but He does promise guidance and providence; even in the midst of storms.

God does not promise we will always be healthy and prosperous but He assures us that whoever entrusts his life to Him will not be disappointed.

God did not promise life without mourning, but He did promise to replace rain with a rainbow.

***Rev Ajub Jahja is minister at St Andrew's Gardiner Uniting Church, Presbytery of Port Philip East (the south eastern suburbs of Melbourne)***

*This article first appeared in Crosslight, used with permission: <https://crosslight.org.au/>*



## **Expressions of Interest in Membership of the Synod Meeting**

**13 – 18 November 2020  
Box Hill Town Hall, Melbourne**

The 2020 meeting of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania is scheduled for November this year but with the uncertainties of the current COVID-19 situation, we are unsure whether the meeting will be able to proceed as planned, adapted to an alternate format, or may need to be postponed.

To cover all bases the Presbytery is seeking to undertake our usual process of electing Tasmanian Members of the upcoming Synod, so that things will be able to proceed smoothly if the meeting is held in November as planned.

Presbytery Members, Ministry Workers, Church Council Secretaries and Lay Preachers have recently been sent further information and Expressions of Interest paperwork and these are also available at the UC Tasmanian Office .. [tas.office@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:tas.office@victas.uca.org.au) or 6331 9784

# Church giving in ‘non-contact’ times

Continued collection of giving is important – *despite Coronavirus*

Regular planned giving to our local congregations & faith communities, and to the wider Uniting Church through **Mission & Service Giving**, is an important aspect of our Christian faith and discipleship. *God gives us many good gifts; we are called to share those gifts with the world.*

While gatherings for worship, fellowship and pastoral care are not possible at present, there are many ways to ensure financial contributions keep the mission and ministry of the Church going.

If you are responsible for local finances in your place of worship, ask your members about their giving at this time:

- Ω remind everyone of the various financial commitments the congregation or faith community has, and that there are a range of ways to give, both now and in due course;
- Ω recognise that some people's financial situations have changed significantly, and ask how much they see themselves giving at this point in time: some may have to reduce for a time, others who are still employed may see this as a moment to be more generous, still others may decide now is the time to give some ‘rainy day’ money to those in desperate need;
- Ω provide a list of ways to give, ask which they choose at this time, and notify your Treasurer.

## A list of ways to give – which will work for you?

- Ω Direct regular offering
- Ω Direct EFT
- Ω Post a cheque
- Ω Planned giving envelopes
- Ω Home offering
- Ω Banking envelopes

Your local UCA leaders have been sent more information about this. Please ask them about local arrangements if required to continue supporting the worship, witness and service of the Uniting Church during these ‘lean’ times.

## May Prayer Guide

A monthly prayer guide is available with daily suggestions to ‘uphold one another in prayer’ (Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 1:9-12)



## Tassie UCA congregations being church during the pandemic



### Longford

At Longford UCA we have gone from a fortnightly newsletter to a weekly newsletter. The newsletter includes the usual stuff, extracts from communications of Presbytery and a contribution from the worship leader for the Sunday. The newsletter is emailed to those with email and letterboxed for those without. The worship contributions vary in content depending on the leader. Some might include a printed sermon; they usually include prayers and suggestion of a hymn to read, sing or follow on Youtube. For example Graham Booth was responsible for Good Friday and Easter Day services. The Good Friday service began by asking participants to make a cross from found objects in their home and on Easter Day to add something to this that spoke of life. People were encouraged to take photos and share or keep to share later. This enabled members of the congregation to “preach” to others. The emailed ones were also shared in the next newsletter. (Some examples are above) We went this way of the newsletter because many are not confident users of Internet technologies.

In addition to this, before all face to face meetings were stopped a group of us met and divided up those on our list of members in order to maintain phone and or email contact in order to maintain a further sense of community (body) in isolation.

*Graham Booth, Lay Preacher*

### Kingston

When we aren't able to meet face to face, how do we be the body of Christ? At Kingston Uniting we have been managing this in a number of ways.

We are all staying in touch by phone, email, letter and Zoom, with the Pastoral Care team making a number of calls each week, and everyone spending time making contact with others within our community and beyond.

Michael, our minister, has discovered previously unknown wizardry within his mobile phone and talents within himself, managing to bring a worship service to us each week via YouTube. This has involved camera work, sound recording, editing and artistic direction. I guess he has become a Producer and Director of worship in a new way. This has been a wonderful gift, and with the help of our rostered worship leaders, we have been invited to a beautiful service, that includes time for the children, and which we can view in our own homes each week. A number churches are offering their own style of “gathering” in this way.

We have had Zoom meetings and are planning a prayer and reflection group which will begin soon. We are also encouraging those who can, to give to Uniting or other aid organisations, to help those who need support at this time.

Those who do not have access to a computer are cared for by a weekly delivery of the newsletter and words for worship.

KUC is trying to live out Kindness, Understanding and Connection in these isolating times.

*Bronwyn Morton, Retired Minister*

## **Hobart Scots Memorial**



The Scots-Memorial congregation had its last in-church service on the 15 March 2020. Since that time we have arranged an "Our Church at Home" written Order of Service that we provide on a weekly basis. We have done this because about a third of our congregation don't have internet access and the order of service is posted out to them.

We have suggested to the congregation that they set up their own worship space at home (see photo attached) and go through the service either by themselves, with a friend or in a group. Six members of those without the internet have been conducting their service for the last 3 Sundays at 10 am by telephone conference. The group service has been very successful in connecting our people to a Sunday service.

The Order of Service includes our regular "Sharing Time" where individuals share news from the last week. Its another link joining us together at this time. Those who have internet access can use the Order of Service or one of the many options available on the internet.

*Steven Kaczmariski, Chair Scots-Memorial Church Council*



## Leadership Formation



*Launceston Pilgrim Church service  
Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April by Zoom*

The single voices were a little unsure at the start, and our singing was a little raw. The sound might drop in and out, and some of us have connected by the phone. Some of us pull up a space on our couches, and tune into a YouTube channel. Some of us connect into multiple worship times and spaces from all around the country. Some of us join a live Facebook feed of worship.

We are arranging meetings with the use of technology. Making sure that those who aren't connected with technology aren't missed out. With all the precautions needed, we look out for those who are vulnerable in our community.

We are rising to the challenge of our times and embracing ways of being God's called people with adaptive and creative measures. Our sacred spaces have shifted from the communion table and baptismal font in a building locked for the majority of time, to our coffee tables, kitchen tables, or desks. We break bread in our own homes as we gather differently, but no less connected. We celebrate the richness of God's good story in our lives and history in different ways.

We are listening to different voices bring their sense and experience of who they know God to be. Stories of God at work over a long time in people's lives. Stories of young people exploring who God is for them as they question and ponder meaning in the light of our current day's experiences.

What are we discovering in these times? What is coming to light as we journey differently together? What is the sense of who God is that is emerging? Whose stories are helping us make sense of where we are now? Whose voices will help guide us into the way we might need to be next? What opportunities are being presented to us in this time? How is God using us, using me, in this? What I am learning about who God is? What are we learning together?

I joined in the worship time over zoom with the Derwent Cluster. If their experience of worship is like others, sometimes fumbling, sometimes with chaos of sound and vision, sometimes with cautious effort of single voices leading singing and no musical instruments to hide behind, sometimes with earnest prayers from the heart, then I am so proud of who we are in this present



day. We know who God is for us, we know our experience of God in our lives. It is rich, deep, raw, and real. This is the sense of God that the world needs right now. I have had so many conversations with shop staff while out getting essentials, that involved talking about God. The world is open to the possibility. Test the curiosity for God when you next go out. As Alison Overeem from Leprena reminds us - we are experts in our own story. The story you hold of God, is always important, real, worthwhile and just what someone else may need to hear about as they live out their own story.

God works and is working beyond the constraints of our buildings. And we are living it, growing in it and being surprised by it. This is the kingdom of God! Let's keep going!

*Denise Savage, Presbytery Minister for Leadership Formation*

*If you would like Denise to listen and share around leadership formation, contact Denise 0 427 647 395 or [denise.savage@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:denise.savage@victas.uca.org.au).*

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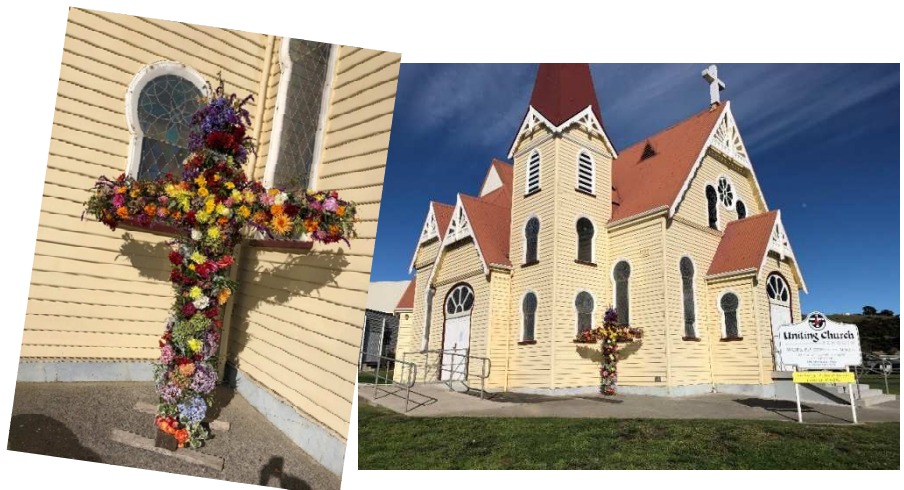
## To garden is to believe in the future

Early Easter Sunday morning saw Penguin Uniting Church member Lynn Templar put up a floral cross in front of the one of the most picturesque Uniting Churches in the country, just over the road from the ocean.

Lynn's comments below indicate something of the appreciation of locals as they got their morning exercise along the shore-front, directly over the road from the church.....

“It was an amazing sunrise this morning and I had so many rich conversations with the people out doing their exercise in the community – people would ride/walk past and say simply ‘thank you’ or Happy Easter – I was the one truly blessed this morning. I found myself saying that flowers are a sign of the future – they truly are. To garden is to believe in the future. Happy blessed Easter to you all.”

Lynn has recently completed a period of quarantine, so we're certain she was delighted to be out and about again (maintaining physical distancing of course) and contributing to the community in this way.



*This article first appeared in Crosslight, used with permission: <https://crosslight.org.au/>*

## Bottling my anxiety

I spent a recent Saturday morning foraging for fruit, and bottling my anxiety against the coming winter: raiding lonely but laden apple trees on roadside reserves; carefully collecting windfalls from our ancient pear tree before greedy grubs burrow in, to spoil and multiply; gathering hazelnuts, and wondering about the acorns.



*How big will the coming storm be,  
and how long will its winter last?*

I wonder what else can be planted now, how to feed a family, fearful of hunger, of lack, of loss ... and yet how deeply privileged am I? I lack nothing: biblically, my barns are full and I conspire to build more. So many around me have so much less already, and the sharp curves of covid19, of employment and economy will soon escalate even further the less and the loss.

*Bottling my anxiety against the storm and the winter, I pause.*

Perhaps this disruption, unbidden, is a curving gift of epic proportions? A gift of creeping calamity, already hitting hard overseas, with a slow trickle of local cases, an occasional death. A gift, how? In time, death comes to us all, and that tax will be paid, soon or later. Fear of death is innate to life, yet palliation comforts not by denial, but by the gift of care: care-full contact, even in these non-contact times.

*Can I un-bottle my anxiety, and share the bounty of life instead?*

Care in the face of death provides reassurance that we are held, are seen, are known rather than alone, that death is only the end of what we know, of what we can see from this standing place. Yet the cosmos calls to us, beyond all we can see, calling us home, an epic and eternal calling that moves us both forward and back, to be undone. We each construct a life, but in time all is undone.

*Undo the lid, remove the protective seals, share the fruit of life now.*

‘Sawubona’ is the Zulu greeting I see you, but looking beyond sight, sees the import and value of the other – a value not just to me, but to others I don’t even know, and to the cosmos. I see you, not for what you give to me, or for what I fear you may ask, or take; but for who you are, for who you may yet become, and for when you too are finally undone. I see you.

*One day all will be undone, but for now, this day, more can be done:  
more to connect, to see each other, to care. Sawubona. Shalom.*

Rohan Pryor, April 2020

# Praying for the Everyone

- We pray for those who are living in the North-West of our State, who are fighting the Covid-19 outbreak
  - We pray for the people throughout Australia and the world who are suffering with the virus, and those who are grieving due to the loss of a loved one from Corona virus
  - We pray for our leaders, who are doing the best they can at this unprecedented time
  - We pray for those among us who are suffering from anxiety and loneliness at this time
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## Congregational Checklist for May

- Annual reports, including reports from ministers, chairpersons, various church activities, financial statements to be sent to UCA Tasmanian Office (if you have had the opportunity to hold your AGM yet?)
- Review of Safe Church Policies (following AGM)
- Notify UCA Tasmanian Office of any changes to Presbytery Directory – office bearers, worship times etc. (following AGM)
- Expect to receive your insurance premiums from Synod
- Online Church surveys to come from the Synod– Heartbeat of the Church and Treasurer’s questionnaire



## what's On

### May

Tues 5	10.00am	Pastoral Relations Committee
Thur 14	10.00am	Presbytery Standing Committee
Mon 25	10.30am	Resource & Development Committee

### June

Tues 2	10.00am	Pastoral Relations Committee
Sat 13	9.45am	Presbytery Gathering by Zoom
Mon 25	10.30am	Resource & Development
Tue 26		National Sorry Day
Wed 27		National Reconciliation Week (until 3 June)

### An idea for what you can do at home during this time...

Create a space where you can place something that reminds you of the community of faith to which you belong – a bible, a cross or another symbol. If you don't have a cross, you might like to draw one for your space.

Each day write out a favourite verse from the Bible and leave it present as you go throughout life in your daily living.

If you or your congregation would like to share your stories of being church differently at this time with others, please let us know at the UCA Tasmanian Office [tas.office@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:tas.office@victas.uca.org.au) or at PO Box 1076 Launceston 7250. We would love to hear your ideas and stories.



*Part of the  
Kingston Uniting  
Church service for  
19 April 2020*

Published and distributed in the week before the last Sunday of each month.

Contributions received seven days prior to publication.

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Presbytery of Tasmania website: <https://ucatas.org.au>

The map of Tasmania including King and Flinders Islands has been adapted from a Creative Commons file  
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