



# From the **General Secretary**

**31 March 20**

*Dear Ministers, Chaplains, Pastors,  
Leadership Teams, members of  
congregations and small organisations.*

In my letter to Synod Staff over the weekend, I encouraged them to read the story of Noah (Genesis 7 and 8). We know the story very well, and what detail there is, enables us to imagine what it might have been like for Noah and his family to take in provisions and set up daily routines that would sustain them through a time period of physical distancing and isolation, the length of which was unknown. The story reminds us that Noah and his family were sustained by hopefulness, a sense of purpose in their daily tasks and a belief that God would sustain them and bring them through these somewhat strange events.

I have been very encouraged by the innovative way congregations continue to respond to the growing restrictions. I invite you to join me in thanking and praying for;

- Chaplains who work 'on the front line' with doctors, nurses, aged care, police, defence and our agencies.
- Ministers and Pastors who are preparing worship, leading study groups and prayer meetings.
- Pastoral Care teams who are keeping regular contact with members by telephone, video conferencing and letter box drops.
- Emergency relief teams serving meals, distributing food parcels and advocating for the disadvantaged.
- Members of our congregations who are staff in hospitals, aged care, schools, child care, agencies, supermarkets, chemists and people who provide public transport, collect our garbage and ensure we have internet, water and electricity. The list is extensive.



On Sunday, the government made further announcements around physical distancing and self-quarantining. The new restrictions request that;

- gatherings (other than family) be further reduced, from a maximum of five people down to a maximum of two people,
- three groups of people must stay at home and self-isolate - those people over the age of 70, people with chronic illness over 60 and Indigenous people over the age of 50 and
- anyone with a mobile phone is encouraged to [download WhatsApp and follow the prompts to find current information.](#)

Once again there are some specific matters that pertain to the Church. Let me reaffirm that the primary focus of the Synod and the Presbyteries' response to COVID-19 is to keep people safe and well, and to keep as many people in meaningful employment as possible. We believe worship, pastoral care and emergency relief for the disadvantaged, are essential to the Spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing of all our members, and we fully support the physical distancing and self-isolation practices being enforced by the government.

There are a few matters that warrant special attention at this time.

- All people doing paid work for the Synod, Presbyteries, Congregations and other organisations should have established work practices that enable them to work from home. Special consideration needs to be given to those who are unable to work from home, are home schooling children, and caring for aging or vulnerable family members at home. **Please see below an important message from the Human Resources Team.**
- All non-essential activity at our churches should now have stopped. The police have contacted the Synod office indicating that any congregation seen or reported to be ignoring the restrictions in place will be fined. Two congregations were reported last week and given warnings.
- **These restrictions now also apply to all Op Shops**, both on site at the church or at rented premises. This has been a difficult decision for us, however we believe Op Shops are difficult spaces to practise physical distancing and enforce strict hygiene practices. If your congregation has a commercial lease arrangement and you would like assistance for discussions with the landlord around lease payments or other rental arrangements during this period, please contact [property@sa.uca.org.au](mailto:property@sa.uca.org.au) and our team will be happy to work with you.
- **People in congregations responsible for the preparation of worship** need also to be enforcing physical distancing requirements. We believe that if there is enough space (4sqM per person) in your church to enable people preparing for online worship or livestreaming to be safe, then a maximum of 5 people can gather. However, we strongly recommend that you develop practices that enable you to restrict the number of people in the same room, to 2 people.
- The Mission Resourcing Team, Rev Sue Page and Presbyteries are continuing to develop and make available resources for your congregations to use during this time. In the coming days we will have a particular focus on how our congregations can celebrate Easter.
- **At this time, it is not possible for congregations to be sharing the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion with their congregations.** The Assembly Standing Committee is meeting this week and I hope we will have some recommendations around our practice next week.

I hope that you have developed the practice of sharing my letters and other Synod updates, including **UC eNews** and **links to website resources**, to members of your congregation so that they can be informed about how we are managing the churches response to COVID-19.

**Rev Sue Page will do another Facebook Live on Friday 3rd April** for those who are able to tune in.

The Communications Team in the Synod are keen to hear how you are going. We are keen to hear your stories of how you are managing the challenges and those places where you have noticed God at work. **Please share both your challenges and your joys with us** by contacting Win on [communications@sa.uca.org.au](mailto:communications@sa.uca.org.au)

As you continue to be the Church, may the restorative presence of the resurrected Jesus be with you

each day. As you experience joy in the little things, know that we receive grace in abundance when we focus on the triune God.

Rev Felicity Amery



General Secretary, Synod of South Australia



The Uniting Church in Australia  
Synod of South Australia

## Message from the HR Team

31 March 20

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we recognise there may be implications and challenges in relation to the working arrangements of staff currently employed within congregations. These may be as a result of worship services and other community initiatives affected by the suspended utilization of church buildings. There may also be at the request of staff seeking to change arrangements to care for loved ones.

Prior to changing staff working arrangements, Church Council Chairpersons (or their delegate), are requested to contact the Synod Human Resources team for guidance and assistance. Changes to staff working arrangements will have implications in the provisions of the Fair Work Act 2009 ("Act"), and possibly other jurisdictions, subject to the nature of the changes of employment and work arrangements. Incorrect information provided to staff, or actions taken by congregations in this context, could have long term consequences and could unnecessarily involve your Church Council in complex (industrial and legal) conversations.

The Synod Human Resources team can be contacted in the first instance by emailing [humanresources@sa.uca.org.au](mailto:humanresources@sa.uca.org.au). Please provide a brief summary of the nature of your enquiry, and a human resources team member will respond to your enquiry as soon as possible. During this unprecedented time, we please ask for your patience as enquiries will need to be assessed on an urgency or priority needs basis and will be responded to accordingly.

Human Resources team, Synod of SA

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