



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

Coronavirus update

18 March 2020

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Pastoral letter

18 March 2020

Dear friends,

Greetings in the name of Christ.

As you are well aware, our society and our church are being deeply impacted by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The situation is extremely fluid and evolving rapidly in terms of both Government policy and public health advice.

As members of the wider community, and as the body of Christ called to exercise love for our neighbours, we are committed to participating in our society in wise, faithful and responsible manner. We have our part to play both in limiting the spread of the disease itself, and in helping our wider community learn new ways of caring for one another in a time of emotional, physical and financial stress.

I'm equally aware that the consequences of this pandemic may well be felt by our own members, ministry leaders, staff and volunteers. I am praying for you and want to express my commitment to standing in solidarity with you. Please follow all Government and public health advice with respect to your own practices and behaviours.

I am also very conscious of the significant impact of the current situation on health care workers in particular, as well as those in industries experiencing significant disruption. I ask you to be in prayer, as well as offering practical support wherever possible to those in such situations.

In times like this, we often ask the question, "Where is God in all of this?". It's often a statement of exasperation, or fear. Yet we can answer that conclusively; "God is with us!" and we can draw strength and courage from God's presence. We can be generous and confident for others. We can be a safe space, a healing space. We can bear witness to the goodness of God in Jesus Christ, for our lives are hidden in Christ.

Advice current Wednesday 18 March 2020

As far as practical measures go, I can advise the following as of today (18 March 2020):

- After consultation with presbytery leaders, face-to-face congregational worship services and meetings should cease effective immediately. This is in accordance with new limits of 100 people in an indoor gathering announced by the Prime Minister this morning, and with further limitations signaled to be applied by the end of the week. You should comply with this advice and work on alternate means of connecting people for worship, prayer and discipleship gatherings.
- Leadership team meetings, church council meetings, small group and home group meetings in face-to-face format may continue at your discretion in the short term with stringent hygiene and social distancing practices, but Government and public health advice should be monitored regularly. We recommend you prepare for the cessation of such gatherings in a face-to-face format and move to different modes of connecting.
- Public children and youth events and activities should cease consistent with our commitment to love our neighbours. The potential for asymptomatic people to unknowingly contribute to the spread of disease is very real.
- Visits to aged care centres, and hospitals can continue, but in accordance with the stringent new measures announced by the Prime Minister this morning. Visits will be short, visitor numbers strictly limited, and as you may imagine, personal hygiene practices will be vital. Please comply with any policy or practices at centres or hospitals you visit. Your own health and safety are important to me, and to our church.
- The Government has advised upgraded international travel advice to "Do Not Travel". Domestic travel is currently ok, with limits on travel into indigenous communities.

I recognise that implementing these measures will have significant impact on the life of our church and community. I want to encourage you to apply your own creative thinking, prayer and planning, to different ways of connecting, encouraging and equipping people to love and care for their neighbours. In addition to your

own work, further resources will be available from your Presbyteries, and from the Synod shortly, and on an ongoing basis. I invite you to share any insights, ideas or practices that your community implements in order to help share best practice across the church.

More than anything, look after yourself during this unprecedented time. If you are struggling, reach out to someone you can trust, contact Lifeline on 13 11 44 or access the Employee Assistance Provider, ChangeFutures on (07) 3857 0847.

As well as further communication direct to you from the Synod office, I will make a public statement later today expressing the Uniting Church's commitment to stand in solidarity with our community, and with those most vulnerable at this most difficult time.

Should you be able to contribute suggestions, or want to seek further advice, please contact the Synod workplace health and safety team at health.safety@ucaqld.com.au. Alternatively, information is available from the below sources.

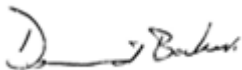
[Australian Government](#)

[Queensland Health](#)

[Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod](#)

My friends let us continue to love God, love one another and love our neighbours.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Baker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Baker

Moderator

Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod

Public statement

18 March 2020

For immediate release,

Like many in our community, the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod has been actively monitoring developments in the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Our church expresses its commitment to stand in solidarity with our community, consistent with our understanding that to love our neighbour is a calling of the highest order.

We commit ourselves to supporting Government and public health policy and advice in order to assist in limiting the spread of the pandemic.

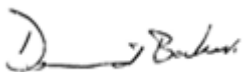
After consultation with leaders across the life of the church, Uniting Church congregations across Queensland will cease public worship gatherings effective immediately. We'll work where possible to implement other means to encourage and enable Queenslanders to continue to support one another practically, and to give expression to their spiritual life. Local Uniting Church congregations will make further announcements as to their own particular arrangements.

In our agencies, schools and community services, we will continue to implement all Government and public health advice. This naturally includes aged care facilities, in-home aged care, hospitals and the community and disability services of UnitingCare Queensland, and Wesley Mission Queensland and in Uniting Church schools and residential colleges. We acknowledge the significant load that will be shouldered by our health care workers, the very real risks to vulnerable Queenslanders, and the impact of this pandemic on those working in particular industries. We recognise too the very real mental health consequences of the situation on many in our community.

We pray for you and with you. We are committed to working alongside you to limit impacts and make our contribution to Queenslanders and Queensland communities.

Blessings in the name of

Christ,



Rev David Baker

Moderator

Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod

Supporting worship, witness and service in the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) context

Background

As you are aware, our society and our church are being deeply impacted by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The situation is extremely fluid and evolving rapidly in terms of both government policy and public health advice.

As members of the wider community, and as the body of Christ called to exercise love for our neighbours, we are committed to participating in our society in a wise, prudent and responsible manner. We have our part to play both in limiting the spread of the disease itself, and in helping our wider community learn new ways of caring for one another in a time of emotional, physical and financial stress.

This document offers suggestions, comments and questions to assist your congregation in finding the most helpful ways of reshaping its life in the weeks and months ahead. This is a living document, and your contributions are most welcome. Contact [Scott Guyatt](#) with suggestions and ideas for inclusion.

Other such information is available from many presbyteries, and will likely be updated regularly. We recommend that you remain in close contact with your presbytery.

General comments

As you find new ways to worship, witness and serve in your congregation and ministry, it's critical to take the attitude that you are doing so out of love for your neighbour. We are taking a responsible and safety-first approach to caring for our community, and particularly the most vulnerable, in an unprecedented time of uncertainty.

We are not closing or shutting down. Consider framing any changes to your congregation or ministry activities as changes, transitions and new approaches. Every decision we make will be in the best interests of our people. We are continuing with our core purpose of worship, witness and service even if we're finding new ways to do those timeless things in a challenging and evolving context.

Care for the people of your congregation and the people of your community. Think about physical needs, about the capacity of the vulnerable (whether due to age, health status, financial implications) and your congregation's capacity to help with real needs, in real time.

Think about your own leaders, volunteers and ministry workers. They are under the same stress as everybody else while also trying to support the broader community. Prayer, practical support, and encouragement will be vital.

We could be in this "new normal" for quite a while. As meeting face-to-face becomes impossible or ill-advised, it may be a number of months until normalcy returns. Whatever approach you take, consider this as a longer term "normal" and not a stop-gap approach designed for just a couple of weeks. Redeploy the time and effort that normally goes into preparing for gathered events to supporting new approaches.

Be prepared to change your approach as we go along:

- You might learn new skills, open up new possibilities.
- Practices that are acceptable now may become inappropriate as the situation evolves. For example, at the time of writing (18 March), small group meetings would be ok, but that may change by tomorrow.

Share your success stories and lessons learned with other congregations. Drop comments, suggestions and experiences on the Uniting Church Queensland Synod Facebook page or send to [Project Plenty](#) and we'll compile and publish stories about all the great ideas we're hearing. Let us be active in supporting, encouraging and equipping one another. We're all in this together.

Social media presence is important:

- Work hard to “ramp up” your social media presence, and in a way that contributes to building a stronger community. Remember best practice in terms of privacy, respect and safe relationships.
- Post and share material that is helpful, encouraging and inviting, and that lets your community know you're being pro-active in caring for them and with them. Tread the line between advocating appropriately cautious behaviours and stoking the fires of panic.
- Encourage your members/readers to adopt best practice as advised by health professionals and government.
- Proclaim the gospel of love and good news.
- Share content such as [Spotify playlists](#) that your community can enjoy, reflect on and respond to. Give opportunities for discussion, reflection, and sharing stories.

Pastoral care

Caring for your congregation and your neighbours is vital in a high stress time such as this.

Invite your pastoral care team or leader to think about ways in which this can happen if/when face-to-face meeting is no longer feasible.

Establish or revive the prayer chain approach. Remember privacy and be sure to respect it.

Check with your local community centre, school chaplain, local council member, or even community group to see if there are other local caring initiatives your congregation can support.

Talk particularly with the vulnerable in your congregation and beyond about their practical needs and how you can assist:

- Shopping or food resources
- Financial support for those experiencing loss of income
- Regular conversation for those who are forced or choose to self-isolate

Stay abreast of the best medical advice for the health and safety of your community, your family, and yourself.

Monitor mental health indicators within your community.

Identify medical professionals within your community and see how you can support them. They'll likely be under high levels of stress for the foreseeable future.

Remember that some people will be open to video calls, text message groups and so on, but others will respond better to good old-fashioned phone calls.

Physical pastoral visiting continues to be appropriate in the short term, provided stringent hygiene and social distancing measures are undertaken. Particular policy and practice have been applied to visits to aged care centres by the Australian Government on 18 March, and similar practices may apply in hospital settings. Liaise with aged care providers or hospitals at the time of visit to understand and implement any practices they have applied. That said, your own health and safety is of paramount importance and where possible you should limit face-to-face contact.

Worship and public events and gatherings

At the time of writing, the Australian Government has banned gatherings of more than 100 people and signalled that further limitations to this policy are likely.

The Uniting Church in consultation with presbytery leaders has determined that face-to-face public gatherings and events (including regular worship) should cease as of 18 March, even if the numbers present are below the current government-mandated limit.

We encourage you to communicate this decision, the reasons behind it (love for our neighbour, responsible and prudent action) and the implications for your congregation and community through social media, and direct communications with your members wherever possible. Let people know what options you are working on for worship, community and communication. Consider signage at the church property directing people to your website or social media channels for updates.

In a highly connected society, our capacity to rapidly mobilise interaction using technical tools and the internet is both real and inviting. This won't be the solution for everybody, but it's a good option to consider.

The matter of weddings and funerals is obviously highly emotive. Liaise with families to ensure your ability to apply any government or public health mandated limits (for example, at the time of writing, a limit of 100 people at indoor gatherings), or to postpone. For funeral services, work with funeral providers for appropriate arrangements regarding size of gathered groups, indoor/outdoor venues or any capacity to live stream. Keep in mind social distancing requirements. Blanket policies are difficult, and your wisdom and discretion will be necessary—but with public safety a priority.

Should we move to live-streamed worship?

Live streaming worship enables your congregation to stay connected and to continue to participate in worship. Live-streamed worship in this sense involves a small team leading worship from a central location, streamed via internet to participants in their own homes

Introductory comments:

- First work out if this is the right approach for you and your community. It may not be best, or even possible. Not everybody will be able to live stream, from either a technical or community perspective.
 - Live streaming worship is not something that every church will be able to achieve overnight. Even a basic solution requires some technical knowledge, equipment, internet connection and time to test and establish.
 - Live-streamed worship is not something that everyone in your congregation will be able to participate in. Not everyone has sufficient internet speed, or access, and in some instances hearing or vision challenges may make live viewing via small screens difficult. Knowing your community will help with the right decision.
- A high-quality outcome requires the right equipment, good technical knowledge and a well thought through plan. If you want to pursue the live-streaming option, get started as soon as possible allowing for the fact that it will take some time to plan and implement.
- For all but the simplest approaches you may require new equipment. Some of this may be hard to find in the current environment with demand running high as many organisations look to move online. Even if you can find it, there will be costs involved.
- You'll need decent bandwidth and stable internet connection.
- Streaming content may involve new copyright licencing. In particular if you plan on streaming music and singing, you'll need appropriate copyright licences at additional cost. Take a look at [CCLI streaming licence](#) as one example (your current copyright licence provider may be able to assist).
- Best outcomes are possible when you think about the possibilities that streaming worship enables, rather than simply filming your existing worship service/format and broadcasting it. How will you make your streaming services interactive, for example? What options are there for having the congregation interact with each other, or with the pastoral team either before, during or after the service?

- Look beyond your existing leadership team for those who might have skills for a time such as this. Be invitational—people will be looking for ways to serve and to help.

Three potential approaches:

- Low end: webcam or mobile device on platforms such as [Facebook live](#) or [YouTube](#)
 - Low equipment and moderate technical skills required
 - Low to medium quality outcome
 - Best suited to sharing short messages, reflections, Bible readings and prayers
 - Not ideally suited to longer broadcasts or music, or to whole services
 - Interactive via comments section of streaming platform
 - Example: [BELLS Caloundra](#), [Kawana Waters Uniting](#)
- Middle of the road live-streamed worship
 - Purpose-built, dedicated equipment
 - Software and systems integrating audio and video for streaming via the platform of your choice
 - Reasonable degree of technical proficiency required
 - Can produce high-quality video/audio outcomes with the right system
 - Can use platforms such as Facebook live or YouTube, or purpose designed [worship streaming platforms](#) (note: there are costs involved, and demand may be high with many churches looking to establish online/streamed worship)
 - Examples: [Bribie Island Uniting Church](#), [Mackay Northside](#)
- High end:
 - High potential for excellent outcomes
 - High quality video and audio production
 - High levels of interactivity with real-time interaction with viewers
 - High demand for technical skills to establish and run
 - Can demand significant resources in terms of equipment, software and platform
 - May take some time to setup
 - Example: [Newlife Church](#)
- Further information:
 - An [excellent resource](#) from church leaders globally on digital best practice for churches—constantly evolving content, links to products, platforms and best practice (highly recommended)
 - Newlife Church will release a video containing advice and information on streaming worship 18 March on their [Facebook page](#)
 - Suggestions from NSW/ACT Synod of the Uniting Church at [Insights Magazine](#)
 - [Coronavirus and the Church](#) website

Alternatives to running your own live-streamed worship:

- Encourage your congregation to join one of the other live-streamed worship gatherings from Queensland Uniting Church congregations. A list of live-streaming congregations will be kept and updated regularly at the Queensland Synod website from Friday 20 March. You could host a discussion afterwards via your congregation's Facebook page (in the comments section) or via [Zoom](#) or [Skype](#).
- Partner with other local churches to establish a shared live streaming of worship. You can be sure that every other church in your neighbourhood will be grappling with the same questions, challenges and opportunities. For example, Rev Wayne McHugh at Mackay Northside/Seaforth congregation is working on a streaming solution allowing multiple worship leaders from multiple locations to share in leading worship. Once tested, this solution may be available to others.
- Consider utilising pre-recorded sermons, news, messages shared weekly, with the invitation to your congregation to view, share and respond.
- Record and publish video updates from your congregation's YouTube or Facebook accounts. This can be achieved simply using a smart phone.
- Record and publish audio updates or podcasts via an audio host account such as Soundcloud.

Small group, church council, leadership team meeting processes

Use video conferencing platforms to support small group gatherings, prayer group meetings or even church business meetings.

- Utilise video conferencing platforms such as [Zoom](#) or [Skype](#) to host small group meetings and/or prayer meetings.
- Consider establishing or using your existing small group content but encouraging groups to meet "digitally".
- This can be a low or no-cost option. Zoom, for example, can host multiple parties in a video-enabled link with free accounts able to access up to 45-minute sessions with multiple parties, and no time limit for two party connections. Check with your platform provider for up-to-date conditions of use and account options.
- Most platforms will enable users to connect to a meeting via smart phone, phone call (audio only) or a PC with webcam, speakers, microphone.

Discipleship resources and suggestions

Encourage and equip family/household groups to support one another. Provide simple weekly reflections, questions and prayer suggestions. Examples:

- Lent Event resources through until Easter
- Develop/write your own content (perhaps aligned with a weekly streamed or pre-recorded sermon/message)
- Utilise third party resources such as [Feed my Family](#) or the [Hold that Thought](#) 90-second sermon series from the NSW/ACT Synod of the Uniting Church.

Encourage multiple households or small groups to meet together to participate in streamed worship services (review this advice regularly as the situation changes).

Provide resources for household prayer, including neighbourhood prayer walks, prayer for healthcare workers, school staff, the vulnerable. Again, review this advice as the situation changes.

Recommended viewing with reflection/discussion questions (for example a link to a YouTube clip, or TV shows such as [Bluey](#), [Messiah](#) or [The Good Place](#)). Be careful to choose age-appropriate shows and suggestions with appropriate reflection material.

Recommended reading with reflection/discussion questions (articles, books, pieces written specifically for the time).

Reflecting on spirituality of the everyday through Simon Carey Holt's book [Heaven all Around Us](#).

Share your ideas and resources with other local or other Uniting Church congregations.

Consider developing and sharing music lists from Spotify or other streaming services. [Here's an example](#).

Frequently asked questions

Advice regarding novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as at 18 March 2020

Advice is relevant to the following individuals:

- Permanent (full-time and part-time) employees
- Fixed term employees
- Casual Employees
- Volunteers
- Agency or Temp staff
- Ministry agents who receive a monthly stipend payment.

Information in this advice related to employees will also apply to ministry agents who are employed in a ministry location (ministry of pastor).

What is coronavirus and how is it spread?

Coronaviruses can make humans and animals sick. Some coronaviruses can cause illness similar to the common cold and others can cause more serious diseases. The coronavirus is most likely to spread from person-to-person through:

- Direct close contact with a person while they are infectious
- Close contact with a person with a confirmed infection who coughs or sneezes, or
- Touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touching your mouth or face.

Symptoms

A number of clinical symptoms have been reported in identified cases of novel coronavirus. These symptoms include:

- fever
- a cough
- sore throat
- fatigue
- shortness of breath.

Government advice regarding coronavirus

Individuals must follow the advice issued by the [Australian Government](#) and [Queensland Health](#) regarding coronavirus isolation requirements, which is updated frequently. The Australian Government has also released an [information sheet](#) regarding the use of surgical masks in relation to coronavirus. For individuals who may be travelling overseas, you should check the Australian Government's [Smart Travelled website](#) for travel information restrictions about the destination country or transit country.

As of 6.30am on 18 March 2020, there are 454 confirmed cases of coronavirus in Australia, 78 of them in Queensland. There have been five tragic deaths.

Self-quarantine requirements

The isolation requirements in relation to coronavirus is changing rapidly and the latest information can be viewed through the [Fact sheet-novel coronavirus](#). In addition, there are additional healthcare and residential aged care worker self-quarantine requirements published by the government [Fact Sheet-novel coronavirus](#). To help limit the spread of coronavirus, you must isolate yourself in the following circumstances:

- If you are travelling or returning to Australia you will be required to self-quarantine for 14 days. This applies to all travellers including Australian citizens.
- You must follow the directions of the Government officers who will be conducting spot checks on people who should be in self quarantine and failure to adhere to the directions will be considered an offence under new laws being passed by the Federal Government.
- If you begin to feel unwell and develop a fever or shortness of breath, a cough or a respiratory illness during your period of self-quarantine you should seek immediate medical attention. Call ahead to your GP or emergency department and mention your travel history before you arrive.
- If you experience any other symptom during your period of self-quarantine you should also seek immediate medical attention. Call ahead to your GP or emergency department and mention your travel history before you arrive.

If an individual presents in the workplace or contacts their manager and meets the self-quarantine criteria, the individual will be directed to leave the workplace (or not return to the workplace) and undertake the self-quarantine in accordance with the government directions for [self-quarantine](#).

What happens to my ability to work if I have to self-quarantine?

Some individuals who are in self-quarantine, may be directed by their manager to work from home. The ability to work from home will be dependent on the individual's duties and whether these are able to be undertaken with appropriate access Synod office systems in a remote capacity during the period of self-quarantine.

Employees (permanent, fixed term and casual) and ministry agents who are directed to work remotely will be paid their normal pay in accordance with their normal employment conditions, for the self-quarantine period.

It should be noted that your manager may direct you to undertake other duties within your capabilities and these duties may not be the same as the individual's usual responsibilities. Work is currently occurring within the Synod office regarding increasing the ability for staff, as approved, to work remotely.

For ministry agents in self-quarantine and who reside in a manse, additional measures will be required to prevent contact with members of the community or your placement who may arrive announced at the manse. This may include signage to indicate your unavailability to meet face to face and to call a nominated phone or mobile number.

Volunteers, agency and temp staff will not be directed to undertake duties during the self-quarantine period and therefore, no payment will be made.

Can I take leave during a period of self-quarantine?

Normal leave conditions as per the [Synod office leave process](#) apply during a period of self-quarantine and any request for leave should be made to the manager.

For employees other than casuals, leave includes:

1. Personal Carers Leave eg to care for an immediate family member;
2. Annual leave; and
3. Long service leave (if eligible).

For ministry agents, leave includes:

1. Annual leave; and
2. Long service leave (if eligible).

Casual employees are entitled to two days of unpaid personal carers leave. Services Australia may provide a payment if a person is eligible. See their [website](#) for more information.

What if I contract coronavirus?

You must follow the directions of your health care practitioner and are not permitted to attend the workplace.

Individuals who contract coronavirus have a virus and are deemed unwell for the purpose of their employment, ministry or volunteer role. We have great concern for staff safety and wellbeing, and it is important for any individual who contracts the virus to take the necessary time to focus on their treatment and recovery from the virus. An individual will also be deemed unwell during a period of testing for coronavirus.

Normal leave conditions as per the [Synod office leave process](#) and [ministry agent leave policy](#) apply during a period when an employee or ministry agent is unwell and cannot not undertake their duties.

For employees other than casuals, leave includes:

1. Personal Carers Leave; until exhausted (the requirement for a medical certificate after more than two days absence will not apply);
2. Annual leave if an application is made; until exhausted, and
3. Long service leave (if eligible) and if an application is made until exhausted.

For a ministry agent, leave includes:

1. Continued payment of stipend, but the appointing body can make an application to the

Sickness Accident and Assistance Plan if the ministry agent remains unwell for more than 14 days.

2. Annual leave if an application is made; until exhausted, and
3. Long service leave (if eligible) and if an application is made until exhausted

A manager may consider payment of discretionary leave on a case-by-case basis and is only approved by the General Secretary.

Casual, temporary and agency staff are not entitled to leave provisions and are only remunerated when working. Services Australia may provide a payment if a person is eligible. See their [website](#) for more information.

Medical clearance certificate

If you have self-quarantined as above, or have contracted the coronavirus, you will be required to provide your manager with a written confirmation from a medical practitioner that you are not infected with the coronavirus before returning to the workplace. A person not showing symptoms does not have to be tested, based on Queensland Health advice.

Can I make a workers' compensation claim?

Workers' compensation generally covers illnesses or diseases that employees and ministry agents develop over time as a result of on-the-job exposure. It may be relatively easy to prove that work conditions caused traditional occupational diseases, where the medical link is well established and exposure away from work is rare. Proving the work connection can be more difficult when the illness is considered an "ordinary disease of life"—a condition that many people develop throughout their lives from various causes. That doesn't mean it's always impossible to get workers' compensation benefits if you contract coronavirus, but you will need strong medical evidence that workplace exposure caused or contributed to the illness. The Queensland Synod will consider each case on its merit when responding to a workers' compensation application.

What happens if my workplace is shut down?

Some of or all of the Synod office workplaces may be shut down if this is required for staff safety and wellbeing, or on the advice/instruction from health authorities. For example, a shut down may be required while an individual is tested for coronavirus. If a shut-down is directed, individuals should self-quarantine and the above information regarding self-quarantine will apply. Should you be unable to complete your work from home, you will still be paid.

Staff will be notified of a shut down via a text message.

What if a health authority requests private information about me from the Queensland Synod?

The [Privacy Act](#) provides for disclosure of private information in certain circumstances. If individuals of the Synod office or a Synod office workplace is impacted by coronavirus, we will comply with any request from health authorities for private information such as contact details. It is critical that where there is a risk of exposure to coronavirus, individuals must be informed as quickly as possible.

I am concerned about coronavirus and refuse to attend work

If you do not meet the self-quarantine requirements, or have not contracted coronavirus, you are expected to undertake your duties and attend the workplace. Subject to any direction from the Queensland Synod, an employee who refuses to attend work is withdrawing their services and will not be paid until you resume work.

Where a ministry agent refuses to attend the workplace, the Associate General Secretary will contact the ministry agent.

Given the nature of casual employment, a casual employee can make themselves unavailable for work and normal notifications requirements to the manager should be followed.

Similarly, volunteers and agency/temp staff can decide not to attend the workplace, but the latter should raise their concern with the agency/temp employer.

Individuals are strongly encouraged to refer to government advice (as outlined above) and anyone with concerns can call 13 HEALTH.

Also, all employees and ministry agents can contact our Employee Assistance Provider (ChangeFutures) on (07) 3857 0847 or info@changeutures.com.au.

Protecting yourself and others from the novel coronavirus

Novel coronavirus is transmitted from person to person, usually when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Transmission may occur from contaminated surfaces, so it is important to frequently wash your hands using the correct [hand washing technique](#).

To protect yourself and others from infection practice good hand and respiratory hygiene including:

- cleaning hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rubs
- covering your nose and mouth with a tissue or flexed elbow when coughing or sneezing
- avoiding contact with anyone who has symptoms such as fever, a cough, sore throat, fatigue, and shortness of breath
- staying home if you are unwell.

Should meetings be cancelled?

Based on current advice, meetings that are non-essential critical have been cancelled.

When meetings are held, the number of attendees should be kept to as small as possible. Ideally, no more than 10 people in the same room or space at one time. Social distancing must be a consideration when conducting any meetings that are required. Do not hold meetings where a 1.5m space cannot be maintained between attendees and avoid close personal contact, such as hand shaking.

Is the Synod office prepared?

The pace in which this situation is changing has been challenging to many. However, a business preparedness team has been formed, headed by Val King to ensure that the Synod office is able to respond to changes in a swift and confident manner, while minimising any impact upon business operations.

Should I cancel any Easter travel plans?

If you are looking to travel internationally over Easter, please advise your manager immediately. You will need to follow any advice from the Government in relation to self-quarantine on return. For those with domestic travel plans, there is no need to advise your manager, but please consistently read this document and the coronavirus Intranet page for additional updates.

Further information

Queensland Health: <http://conditions.health.qld.gov.au/HealthCondition/condition/14/217/838/novel-coronavirus>

Australian Government: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

Coronavirus Internet page: <https://ucaqld.com.au/important/coronavirus-update/>

[Pastoral letter from the President of the Uniting Church in Australia, Dr Deidree Palmer](#)

The checklists available below may help.

[Community and Faith-based Organisations Checklist](#)

[Home Office Self-Assessment Checklist](#)

[Individual and Family Checklist](#)

[Organisation Preventative Measures Review Checklist](#)

Key contacts

Synod critical incidents: [\(07\) 3377 9706](tel:0733779706)

Synod office communications: [0437 368744](tel:0437368744)

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