

Community in Mission

Iuk – Waring | Lent – Easter



One of my theological mentors taught me that marking time is important, in that it helps us make sense of our unfolding histories.

You'll notice the above masthead references the Iuk 'eels' and Waring 'wombats' seasons. These seasons are observed by the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin nation, the traditional owners of the Yarra River Valley which covers much of the present location of Melbourne in which we produce this publication.

We are also about to journey through the seasons of Lent and Easter.

The marking of seasons attunes us to the rhythms of nature, and the pattern of suffering, solidarity and hope which plays out in our lives. This reminds us that each person's life is an important part of the unfolding world, and the larger story of the beloved human community.

This issue of *Community in Mission* contains an update on Uniting's work to support young people with disabilities in a time of transitioning into employment. We also share details of an important event where Uniting gave an apology to Forgotten Australians, people who found themselves in out-of-home care run by our founding agencies in the past century.

Alongside these stories we hear from Sue McKenzie from the Croydon North Uniting Church. Sue shares the Church's 90-year history of worship, witness and service which continues through community care.

I hope these stories serve as a reminder of what the liturgist Robert Hovda calls the "simple requirement of ... the reign of justice and peace".

Matt Julius, Church Engagement Worker

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I recently visited the Bendigo Uniting Op Shop. This op shop, and the emergency relief program up the road, were both established by local congregations and continue as part of Uniting in relationship with the wider church.



Uniting is the community services organisation of the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania.

Uniting

Around Uniting



Uniting says sorry to Forgotten Australians

Late last year Uniting said sorry to Forgotten Australians, people who found themselves in institutional or other out-of-home care in the past century. Our apology, given jointly by CEO Bronwyn Pike and Acting Senior Manager, Care and Placement Prevention Grace Scaglione, was given on behalf of the founding agencies which had provided care in the past.

This small event, which was attended by Forgotten Australians, Uniting Board members and staff, involved Forgotten Australians reading a statement about 'What sorry needs to say', the formal apology, and a statement about Uniting's current practices and policies to safeguard children today.



Head to our website to learn more and watch this event.



Young people score ace jobs at the Australian Open

It was great to see seven teenagers from our School Leaver Employment Support program score hospitality jobs at this year's Australian Open!

The program gives young people living with disabilities help and support on their pathway to employment by working with them to create action plans to learn work and life skills so they feel confident and positive about their future in the workforce.

With support from Tennis Australia and Dylan Alcott's the Field, which connects people with disabilities with organisations looking to hire, the teens gained real-life customer service experience at one of Australia's most exciting sporting events.

Some of the young people involved in the program also gain hospitality skills through work experience at the Sycamore Tree Coffee Shop, a social enterprise operated by the Heidelberg Uniting Church.

From the Croydon North Uniting Church

By Sue McKenzie, Croydon North
Community Meals Coordinator



The Croydon Congregational Church (later known as the Gifford Memorial Church, and now known as the Croydon North Uniting Church) commenced worship services in the Croydon North area in 1934 as an outreach mission. Two years later a church building was erected on the Maroondah Highway site.

Our association with Uniting started in about 2000 and eventually led to the redevelopment of the whole property. This was the birth of Gifford Village, an affordable housing community managed by Uniting.

In June 2014, we were blessed with a new, modern community centre and worship space and the opportunity to continue to serve the Croydon North community.

Uniting employed a community liaison person to investigate and implement ways to utilise the community space. This was the beginning of the Croydon North Community Meals program. Although initially a Uniting initiative, in 2019 the Croydon North Uniting Church was asked to take over running the program.

Despite many hardships, including COVID-19, the program has thrived. We now serve around 35-40 lunches every Tuesday. We welcome anyone from the community, but particularly those most vulnerable and in need of a meal, friendship and companionship.

Worship continued on this site until November 2024 when we had to make the heartbreaking decision to dissolve the congregation. But, thanks to Uniting's generosity, we're able to continue this important community outreach program at the Croydon North site into 2025 and beyond.

Pictured: The final worship service at Croydon North, celebrating Isabelle Merry, the first woman ordained in Victoria to the Croydon Congregational Church (1937).

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Food For Families. Faith in action.

“And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” – Hebrews 13:16

There are many verses in the Bible where God calls people to care for those in their time of need. This is just one of the teachings that comes to mind when St Andrew’s Gardiner Uniting Church reflects on their commitment to Uniting’s Food For Families program.

For the Church, donating to the program is a practical way to provide support to those experiencing crisis. Each year since 2018 the congregation has collected 10-15 boxes of food and non-perishable items to help people put a meal on the table.

“Participating in this program aligns with the core principles of compassion, empathy, and service that are central to my faith,” said congregation member Albert.

“This work resonates with me because it addresses a fundamental human need: access to food. Food insecurity affects individuals and families from all walks of life, and by supporting this cause, I can directly impact the wellbeing of my neighbours and community members,” shared Albert.

“It really is a beautiful, heart-warming program. It brings people closer together. We hope our contribution supports people in crisis when they need it most,” said congregation member Alfian.



Read full
story.



Register your
congregation.

Pancake Day 2025. Flip for a good cause.

Thank you to the more than 65 congregations who have taken part in this year’s Pancake Day to raise funds to support Uniting’s programs. Your time and effort is greatly appreciated!

It’s not too late! There’s still time to get involved by holding an event anytime up until the end of April. Register via this QR code or call us on **1800 668 426**.

