

Summer 2024/25 Community in Mission



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Welcome Matt

Please join us in welcoming Uniting's new Church Engagement Worker, Matt Julius.

Hi, I'm Matt. This is a new role for me, with the hope to proactively engage congregations so that we can embody the shared work of mission.

As a candidate for ordained ministry in the Uniting Church in Australia, I come into this role with a deep love of the Uniting Church. I also bring a background in the social- enterprise sector.



Matt Julius at the Sycamore Tree Coffee Shop run by the Uniting Church in Heidelberg.



As we move towards Advent and Christmas we anticipate and then celebrate God making a home among us. And yet, Jesus' life was marked by the experience of homelessness and displacement. Jesus' family fled their home seeking safety and refuge. Jesus' ministry was marked by restlessness:

"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:20)

This edition of Community in Mission shares two stories of Congregations and Uniting Vic.Tas confronting the realities of homelessness. These stories invite us into restlessness towards injustice, as we sit in waiting for the Prince of Peace to come in fullness.

May you have a joyous and peace filled season of Advent and Christmas.

Matt Julius, Church Engagement Worker

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

Uniting

Care packs for people in crisis

Pictured: Burwood Height's Uniting Church.



After noticing rough sleepers residing on their property, Burwood Height's Uniting Church and Uniting's Burwood services decided something needed to be done.

"With the extreme weather it was important for us to respond in a compassionate way while also promoting the safety of the church and Uniting staff," said Uniting's Crisis Support Supervisor in Burwood, Sarah.

"We wanted to ensure that the congregation would feel equipped, safe and confident in providing resources and support to the rough sleepers after office hours. That's where the idea for the packs came from."

Together, both the congregation and Uniting Burwood carefully constructed support packs and a safe approach for congregation volunteers to distribute to those found residing on the property.

"It was important for us to include items that required minimal preparation and cooking facilities but were also as nutritious as possible," said Sarah.

The packs are stocked with nourishing, easy to prepare meals, toiletries and an information card including key contacts and local support services.

Creating these care packs is a practical way that any congregation can collaborate with Uniting in our shared mission.

Building bridges through story

Pictured: Uniting's Senior Manager for Homelessness, Maidie Graham, presenting at the half-day event.



On October 12th, Manningham Uniting Church held their latest 'Building Bridges through Story' event. The focus of the event was homelessness and was run in partnership with Uniting, CareNet, and Manningham City Council. The Building Bridges committee has shared this story from the event.

Over 60 people were challenged at the half-day event which encouraged enlightenment, participation and action through hearing the lived experiences of those whose voices are seldom heard.

Four people with personal experience of homelessness, with different causes, bravely shared their stories, and the impacts of this experience on them and their families. All were raw and deeply moving.

During the presentations and a subsequent open forum, practical advice on options for assistance were shared and discussed. Highlighted also was the absolute importance of maintaining the individual's dignity.

An outcome intended by those organising and supporting the event is identification of specific means of providing greater support for local homelessness initiatives.

While initiated and managed by MUC, the event was run with the support and partnership of other organisations. It was generously supported financially by Manningham City Council, and both Uniting Homelessness Services and CareNet, a charity focussed on provision of food relief and other support to those in need in the Manningham area, actively participated and contributed to its success.



1 in 200

Every night, roughly 1 in 200 Australians find themselves without a safe, secure or affordable place to sleep.

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Crafting change

If you happen to visit the Wesley Uniting Church in Melbourne CBD on a Wednesday, you may be lucky enough to meet the ‘crafters’. A group of women bound by their shared creativity and their passion for supporting refugees.

“The group began in 2005,” says Fay. “We started it for refugees to have some sort of community.”

“We also offered English classes,” added Susan. “It was a great way for people to learn English in a less confronting space.”

Today, the refugee group have moved on but the crafters continue to congregate, selling their wares to support Uniting’s Food For Families program.

“With the current climate, families are really in need of support,” says Fay.

Uniting and Wesley Church have a covenant relationship which guides our mutual affirmation and amplification of each other’s mission and ministry. The connections and collaborations continue to take many forms: from crafting to choirs, jam sales to Pancake Day, Share Sunday and Covenant Sunday services. But the unique relationship between the oldest founding agency of Uniting and the congregation where it began remains.

“It’s great to realise our vision and with this beautiful collaboration between Uniting and the church,” says Fay.

“It’s a relationship that’s over 130 years old,” added Wesley Church Rev Rachel. “Uniting inherited Wesley Mission which was started by this congregation in 1893. It’s a joy to build on this historical connection.”



Left to right: Rosemary, Laurene, Susan, Minister Rev Rachel and Fay.

Pancake Day 2025

Flip for a good cause.

For over 20 years, communities across Victoria and Tasmania have flipped thousands of pancakes raising over \$2.4 million dollars for local communities in need.

Register your next event by visiting our website, unitingvictas.org.au/pancake

