

COVID-19 pandemic: Pilgrim Uniting Church update, Friday 20 March 2020

We offer a further update to information we circulated to you yesterday.

Taking heed of ongoing advice from Government and medical authorities, and in light of information received from the Crisis Management Team (CMT) in the SA UCA Synod, we have decided to cancel Pilgrim worship services for the next few weeks until advised it is safe to resume. This is a sensible action, especially given the number of vulnerable people in our congregation and in the wider community. Even so, this has been a difficult decision for us to make and we thank you for your understanding.

The Chinese congregation is also cancelling their Sunday services.

We are in uncharted territory with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the unfolding health crisis. Our priority is to minimise risk and to ensure people are safe, and supported.

Please stay informed, and follow advice from medical experts that may affect you. COVID-19 is a medical crisis, but a world living in fear is also a spiritual crisis.

People around the world, and in Australia, are mourning the loss of loved ones due to COVID-19, and many struggle with the challenges of physical distancing. We are mindful of the negative impacts of 'social isolation'. Ministers, Cluster Groups, Pastoral Partners and informal networks in the Pilgrim congregation will all have a significant contribution to provide ongoing practical, emotional and spiritual support. We are in this together, and will be strengthened by continuing connections.

Do take the time to care for those whose spirit will be lifted by a phone call, a text message, a card, or an email. Check on neighbours, friends and family. As well, please reach out to others if you need some support yourself.

Next week, our highest priority will be mapping out the next steps, including the way ongoing pastoral and practical support will be provided, and how we provide spiritual nurture and resources when we cannot meet for worship. We are very mindful that we are nearing the end of the season of Lent, with Palm Sunday a week away, and the celebration of Easter two weeks away. We plan to offer printed and online resources and will inform you about how to access these when the plans are consolidated.

We leave you with this thought: "With churches closing, it is time for us to show that the church has never been about the building. **We are the church**, where we are. May we treat each other with kindness, compassion and respect, especially in this challenging time."

May our gracious God - Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, keep you strong in your faith.

Grace and peace

Rev Sandy Boyce
Rev Dr Greg Elsdon