

Joint Letter of the Moderator and Synod Refugee Advocacy Group to all members of UCA SA

Warm greetings to you in the name of the risen Lord.

We have all had challenges in adjusting to restrictions in place in response to COVID-19. Many will have experienced a direct impact on their work and livelihoods. Others will have felt the impact of physical distancing on their well-being. Our congregations have been affected by not being able to gather in our churches for worship and other activities. We continue to pray for you and your church community, and encourage you to keep living with all the hope that is ours in Christ.

Many groups are particularly vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic, including refugees and people seeking asylum. They have been working and paying taxes, but many have lost their jobs in this lockdown period. They have been unable to access key elements of the Australian Government's COVID-19 safety net. We believe it is essential that they are included in any government package designed to support people, the economy and public health. Without access to income support or even to Medicare it may be a challenge for public health and safety requirements to be observed, or to access treatment as required.

As Moderator, I have recently signed on to an open [letter](#) to the Prime Minister titled "Nobody Left Behind: Ensuring people seeking asylum, refugees and other vulnerable groups are included in COVID-19 responses". The Synod Refugee Advocacy group and I would like to encourage you to consider writing a personal letter or email to your Federal Member of Parliament and to the Premier of South Australia to remind them of their responsibility to support the most vulnerable. This includes those seeking asylum and refugees who are facing hardship as a result of losing their livelihoods due to restrictions in place in response to COVID-19. The more of us who take this action, the more impact we can have and the greater our demonstration of the love of God for all people.

The Uniting Church in Australia has articulated its [vision for a just Australia](#) and we have a responsibility during the COVID-19 pandemic to make decisions that are compassionate, inclusive and just. Only in doing so, can we ensure Australia emerges from the COVID-19 crisis with a resilient, healthy and cohesive community. There are tens of thousands of refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia who are part of our communities, and they cannot be left behind at this time of great need.

A letter writing guide [<https://sa.uca.org.au/documents/news/2020/Letter-writing-Guide-for-Venerable-People-COVID-19.pdf>] has been prepared to assist you to write a letter or email. Feel free to personalise it. It does not need to be lengthy, and can simply address the main points.

You are also encouraged to consider some of the following ways you can support those in need:

- [Email your MP](#) to ensure no one is left behind during the COVID-19 health crisis
- Donate food, money, or volunteer for a [UnitingCare Emergency Relief Centres](#) near you
- Support [Circle of Friends](#) who are distributing food, rent, mobile phone payments, car registration, pharmacy bills etc to people in need.

Any small action will be a valuable contribution to ensure nobody is left behind at this time. This is one practical way we can continue to be the church and embody God's love in the suffering world. Please hold refugees and those seeking asylum in your prayers, and undertake action with compassion and love.

Please pass this information on to others in your congregation and community who may also wish to practise neighbourly love.

Grace and peace,

Mr Bronte Wilson, Moderator
Synod Refugee Advocacy Group