

**Pastoral Letter to the members and friends of the Shepparton Uniting and
Shepparton Rural Congregations regarding the latest restrictions in response
to the COVID-19 pandemic
6th August 2020**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all in this time of pandemic.

I write to you with a degree of sadness knowing that for many the restrictions brings pain and hardship.

In Regional Victoria, the Stage 3 restriction means that we must stay home except for the following reasons: For food and essential supplies, for study or work, for care and healthcare, for exercise or outdoor recreation.

When outside your home, you must wear a face covering and no visitors are allowed at home. You are only allowed to gather with one other person from outside your household in public.¹

As you know, we have done our best to maintain the availability of our Sunday worship services through our Shepparton Uniting Church web page, letter drops and social media. That will continue but the church will be closed even for private prayers starting on Monday 10th August.

Pastoral care of the sick, frail elderly and shut-in should as far as possible be undertaken by the minister(s) and in accordance with the current public health advice. We would endeavour to follow with precautions the recommendations by the health authorities when visiting aged care facilities, hospitals and private homes.

The pandemic has challenged the whole church and her ministers to apply pastoral creativity and prudence so as to ensure that our caring increases rather than decreases in this time of crisis.

Please be assured that I am available for emergencies and my contact number is provided at the end of this letter.

¹ www.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-restrictions-victoria

I urge you my brothers and sisters to keep praying for one another, telephone or text others to see how they are faring and pass on to me any request for help or assistance.

I will continue to entrust you in prayer to our Lord Jesus Christ whom we turn to in this time of distress. May Christ continue to bring comfort to those who mourn, eternal rest to those have passed and heal all who are not well.

Yours truly,

Rev Loni Vaitohi
(Your servant in Christ)

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