UNITINGWORLD

UPDATE
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WE WERE MADE FOR TIMES LIKE THESE

COVID-19 AND THE POWER OF PEOPLE *uniting*

UnitingWorld
connecting communities for life

UnitingWorld is the international aid and partnerships agency of the Uniting Church in Australia. Together we work for a world where lives are whole and hopeful, free from poverty and injustice. Because every person matters.

Pictured: Ketut from a village in rural Bali feels more confident to keep his family safe after receiving vital health and sanitation training from our partners.

COVID-19 EMERGENCY UPDATE



While many project activities have been put on hold due to lockdowns, we are redirecting people and money to meet immediate COVID-19 related needs.

Our partners are continuing to serve their communities in innovative ways and working hard to retain the development gains you've helped make happen.

Thank you so much to all our regular givers and all of you who've helped resource our partners to respond to this crisis. Your donations are being put to use protecting lives, preventing hunger and building the long-term resilience of communities in the Pacific, Asia and Africa.

Thank you for supporting this critical work.

Blessed to be a blessing

WHY WE WERE MADE FOR TIMES LIKE THESE

It's 260AD and across the Roman Empire, as many as one in four people are dying from plague. Bodies are left to rot in the streets and civic life grinds to a halt as people abandon the sick and flee from the cities.

One group is remarkably, consistently different.

In an Easter pastoral letter to his flock at the height of the carnage, Dionysius the Bishop of Alexandria notes: *"Most of our brother Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves and thinking only of one another. Heedless of danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ…"*

Over the next sixteen centuries, through plagues that wiped out 60% of Europe's population, historians credit the caring actions of Christians with not only saving countless lives, but with prompting the exponential growth of their faith.

Today, our leaders have called us to dig deep into the roots of this practical, other-centered faith. **We were made for times like these.**

"The whole premise of the Judeo-Christian faith is that we're blessed to be a blessing to others, to be a gift, to make a contribution, to grow and co-create. At times like this the siren call to just hunker down and look after ourselves is seductive, but it fundamentally contradicts everything we understand about ourselves as people of God." –Rev David Baker, Moderator of the Queensland Synod.

"During these testing COVID-19 days we keep hearing "we are all in this together". We tend to interpret that as we must look after our family, neighbours and friends. As people who follow the way of Christ our orientation needs to be much broader." –Rev Steve Francis, Moderator of the Western Australia Synod.

"Please join me, in supporting the work of our partner churches through UnitingWorld's COVID-19 Appeal. Now, more than ever, we all need to support one another, so that we can come through this crisis into a world where the basics of life: clean air, water, food, shelter, healthcare, love and community are part of all our lives. Let's join with our global partners in embodying God's vision for the flourishing of all people and the whole creation." –Dr Deidre Palmer, President of the Uniting Church in Australia.



Lockdowns in India have reduced COVID-19 transmission, but food insecurity and hunger have skyrocketed.

THANK YOU for joining the power of people uniting to respond to COVID-19.

As a valued partner of the Australian Government, we can access funding each year to implement our poverty alleviation programs. Every donation you make to our tax-time appeal will be will be combined with funding from the Australian Government to reach more people. We have committed to contribute at least $1 for every $5 we can access in government funding, which means right now your gift can go up to six times as far!

Donate now at **www.unitingworld.org.au/actnow** or call **1800 998 122**

Australian Aid

UnitingWorld is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

CHOOSING PEACE FOR AMBON AND THE WORLD



A reflection by Brooklyn Distephano, 17-year-old Ambonese student and UnitingWorld Peace Workshop participant.

In 1999 Ambon suddenly became a war zone. A conflict between religions caused over five thousand people to lose their lives and half a million to lose their homes. Many children and teenagers became child soldiers and risked their lives for something that destroyed them. The conflict ended in 2002 after the signing of the *Malino Agreement.*

Right now, Ambon is more peaceful, and tolerance between religions is becoming so good here. There are a few lessons about peace from Ambon for the world.

The first is the past conflict. It made the people of Ambon know that conflict will only bring chaos, death, and that nobody can win. They wanted to change for the future.

The second is the people in Ambon. The people who suffered because of conflict of course didn't want the next generation to have the same suffering as them, so they teach their kids about peace and love. In fact the conflict ended not only because of the signing of *Malino Agreement* but also because the people who were tired of living with conflict and fear made a movement to end the conflict.

The third is this movement joining with world organizations like UnitingWorld to make workshops about peace for kids, teenagers and all people. The workshops are really important for the people of Ambon because they can end the trauma that some people still have and give learning for the new generation.

I take part in the workshops and I am very thankful. It's not just important for the people in Ambon, but to all the people in the world who can see how Ambon turned from being a warzone to a city of music. Even from the dark past and conflict, Ambon is finding its way back to the light and hopefully to the brighter future. When we all learn from this, the world can have peace.

Now it is just up to us – each living human being. Are we going to turn this world to a warzone or to a better place? This is every person's choice. So what's your decision?

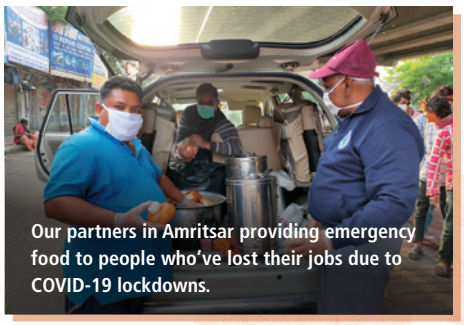


High school peace workshops you're helping support in Ambon through Lent Event this year.

lentevent

A huge thank you to everyone who has been supporting Brooklyn, other young leaders, women's groups and small business start-ups through gifts to this year's Lent Event. There's still time to learn more about the projects, watch our video series and donate at **www.lentevent.com**

HOW YOUR *gifts* ARE SAVING LIVES THIS MONTH



Our partners in Amritsar providing emergency food to people who've lost their jobs due to COVID-19 lockdowns.

BALI

Protestant Church of Bali

- **2,338 people** provided with food assistance
- **320 families** supplied with health packages containing masks, soap and vitamins
- **708 families** given health education brochures
- **1,000 fruit and vegetable plants** prepared to help improve long-term food security and nutrition
- Technical assistance to **14 village leaders** realigning village budgets to support families impacted by COVID-19.

INDIA

Church of North India: Diocese of Durgapur, Diocese of Amritsar

- **2,000 households** provided with food and hygiene packs including masks and soap
- **4,000 masks** made and provided to the community and service sectors in Amritsar
- **562 vulnerable families** provided with emergency food and hygiene packs.

WEST PAPUA

Evangelical Christian Church in Papua

- Providing health information
- Supplying masks, soap and other protective items
- Training community members in sewing fabric masks
- Helping people connect with the Ministry of Health's rapid testing facilities in the Highlands
- Providing seeds and helping people who have lost jobs grow their own soy and red beans.

SRI LANKA

Methodist Church of Sri Lanka

- Supporting people with disabilities who have lost their jobs find other means of income
- Providing food and hygiene packs to **130 vulnerable households**
- Creating plans with the Department of Agriculture to support the creation of organic home gardens to meet the expected vegetable and fruit shortage.

ZIMBABWE

Methodist Church of Zimbabwe

- **5,000 education packs** produced about COVID-19 for use in rural areas
- Supporting local health centres to acquire personal protective equipment
- Helping provide food, clean water and soap to households most in need.

Thank you for making this happen!
For more project updates on COVID-19 visit **www.unitingworld.org.au/projects**

STOP VIOLENCE

OUT OF SIGHT, BUT NEVER OUT OF MIND

Under the watchful eye of local authorities, 38-year-old Casi, her husband and four children are locked down together in their two-room home.

Much of their lives, however, goes unseen. Thanks to COVID-19, Casi's husband hasn't worked in his labouring job for five weeks, there is no money and the family are eating just one meal a day. Casi's husband broods. The children are constantly under his feet and the shame of being unable to provide for his family eats at him relentlessly. His anger mounts. Part of him knows his violence is wrong. But here inside the home, there's no accountability and no escape: in the hearts of his wife and children, fear grows.

Casi could live anywhere in the Pacific, including Australia, across Asia or in Africa. Reports of domestic violence across all sections of society have increased during the pandemic.



The Presbyterian Women's Mission Union in Vanuatu are increasing their efforts to address violence against women, especially in areas impacted by the 'double disaster' of Cyclone Harold and COVID-19. Read more at www.unitingworld.org.au/news

In countries where a majority of the population identify as Christian, our partners are advocating a zero-tolerance approach that calls men to account through a powerful lens – faith. In Vanuatu, our partner ran a television ad UnitingWorld helped to create that calls out male violence as sin, pure and simple. In Fiji on Mother's Day, the national newspaper ran a story with the headline, *"Stop violence because our faith says so"*. Advocates against gender-based violence, trained by UnitingWorld partners, are more active than ever, distributing information about faith, human dignity and protection in the home during COVID-19 lockdowns.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.

Your gifts to our COVID-19 appeal will help support women and children who are temporarily out of sight, but never out of mind.

NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Disaster and crisis are a part of life for us here at UnitingWorld. Each year, at least one of our partners is swamped by the impact of a cyclone, storm, war or famine. We mobilise, we strategise, we fundraise, we act. We're good at it.

COVID-19 is different. It has plunged every single one of our partners, in every part of the globe, into crisis all at once. We're traveling at speed through territory we've never traversed before, and there's little light to guide. We don't know exactly how the pandemic will play out for each of our partner communities – how many lives lost, what cost to the economy. As unemployment soars and productivity declines here in Australia, we don't know what resources you, our supporters here in Australia, will muster to continue to support our brothers and sisters internationally. We don't know how the Australian Government will allocate precious funding under the pressure of a massive deficit and to what extent the foreign aid budget will bear the brunt of the scramble to claw back dollars.

Our partners tell us they're living by faith. I am too. It's not the kind of blind belief that asserts everything will be fine—despite all evidence to the contrary—and claims immunity from fallout. It's about faithfulness, staying true to our call. And it's about trust, in God's character and promise. This faith is about relationship, as is so much of our shared life with God, our partners and with each of you as our co-workers. We are bound to each other in covenant, the promise that through the darkest nights and the deepest valleys, Christ is beside us and through us and alive in this world. I can't tell you how reassuring that knowledge is to me in the midst of the chaos of budgeting, planning, responding in the blackness of 'not knowing'. Please continue to stand with us in giving, praying and hoping. We were made for times like these, and we are not alone in God's world.



In hope and determination,



Dr Sureka Goringe,
National Director, UnitingWorld

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