

ST MICHAEL'S  
UNITING CHURCH



# Exploring Belonging



*Wherever you are on your spiritual journey,  
you are welcome...*

## Contact details

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Minister	Rev Dr Margaret Mayman <a href="mailto:minister@stmichaels.org.au">minister@stmichaels.org.au</a>
Chairperson Church Council	Laura Beckett <a href="mailto:office@stmichaels.org.au">office@stmichaels.org.au</a>

# Mission and Vision

## Our Mission

St Michael's seeks to be a vibrant, inclusive, hospitable and community focused city church, sharing a contemporary and progressive Christian theology embracing spirituality, the arts, wellbeing, justice and compassion.

## Our Vision

St Michael's vision is to be a nurturing and dynamic Christian spiritual community contributing to a world where each person and all creation can flourish and enjoy abundant life within the city of Melbourne and beyond.

## You are welcome here!

St Michael's Uniting Church is a place where everyone is welcome, where the diversity of the human community is celebrated – race, sex, creed, age, nationality, cultural background, ability and disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status.

Wherever you are on your spiritual journey, wherever you have come from, wherever you are going to, whatever you believe, whatever you do not believe, you are welcome here.

## Uniting Church in Australia



St Michael's is a Congregation of the Uniting Church in Australia. The Uniting Church was formed in 1977 when the Methodist Church of Australasia, most congregations of the Congregational Union of Australia, and approximately two thirds of Presbyterian Church of Australia congregations, came together under the Basis of Union. The Uniting Church is the third largest denomination in Australia.

# Progressive Christianity

Progressive Christianity... is a spiritually open, enquiring path of engagement with the Christian tradition and the life and teachings of Jesus.

By calling ourselves progressive Christians, we mean we are Christians who...

1. Believe that following the path and teachings of Jesus can lead to an awareness and experience of the Sacred and the Oneness and Unity of all life;
2. Affirm that the teachings of Jesus provide but one of many ways to experience the Sacredness and Oneness of life, and that we can draw from diverse sources of wisdom in our spiritual journey;
3. Seek community that is inclusive of all people, including but not limited to:
  - conventional Christians and questioning sceptics,
  - believers and agnostics,
  - women, men, non-binary and trans-people
  - people of all sexual orientations and gender identities,
  - people of all classes and abilities
4. Know that the way we behave towards one another is the fullest expression of what we believe;
5. Find grace in the search for understanding and believe there is more value in questioning than in absolutes;
6. Strive for peace and justice among all people;
7. Strive to protect and restore the integrity of our Earth;
8. Commit to a path of life-long learning, compassion, and selfless love.

# Spirit, Community, Justice, Wellbeing

## Spirit

At St Michael's you will find an energised and inclusive community of people. St Michael's is a safe place to connect your spirit without disconnecting your mind. It is a place for experiencing God, Divine Presence, in a diverse congregation that celebrates and values the gifts brought by each person. We invite you to take part in gatherings that are rich and innovative, linking theology, spirituality, and concern for social and ecological justice.

## Sunday Gatherings

Our services are warm, vibrant, inspiring and progressive. In spoken word and hymns, Christian faith is expressed in contemporary language and ideas. For the most part, we follow the ecumenical cycle of the church year. We celebrate special occasions such as Refugee Sunday, Reconciliation Sunday and the Season of Creation. Our gatherings include biblical and contemporary readings, a reflection by the minister, singing, prayer and silence. People of all ages are welcomed and included.

Music is an integral part of St Michael's life. Our Sunday gatherings include instrumental "Music for Contemplation" performed by Australian and international musicians at the invitation of Rhys Boak, Music Manager and Organist. Music is part of the church's life because we understand creativity is an integral aspect of being human and that music and other art forms nourish the human spirit expressing joy, hope and beauty.

Sunday Gatherings are recorded each week and made available online via our website and our YouTube channel. These are enjoyed by people who are not able to attend church in person for a variety of reasons. We are joined online each week by hundreds of people from Greater Melbourne, regional Victoria, across Australia and other places around the world.

Sunday Gatherings are supported by the essential work of the Church Services Committee which works with the minister and others who have roles in leading worship.

## **Social and ecological justice**

St Michael's acknowledges the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their elders, past and present. We acknowledge the First People's care of land and waters for millennia. Our church stands on land that was never ceded by the traditional owners. In response, we stand with them in their quest for Treaty, an established Voice in the government of our state and nation, and Truth-telling about our history.

As a progressive faith community, we share a concern for social justice, human rights, the environment and equal participation for all. We seek to bring the Sacred vision of a renewed and reconciled world into the present; reflect the love of the Divine everyone, without regard for human barriers such as race, sex, creed, age, cultural background, sexuality, gender identity or intersex status; work in coalition with like-minded churches and citizens for justice and peace; respect all living beings, and the fragile earth which is our home; and act with integrity, ensuring that our words and our deeds are aligned.

We seek to follow the example and teachings of Jesus. In the Gospels we read that Jesus taught what it means to love your neighbour and your enemy; called on his disciples to heal the sick and give to the poor; challenged the systems and structures of oppression in his society; and demonstrated a radical acceptance of all people.

The St Michael's Community does not see itself as taking God where God is not. Rather, we see the love, grace and compassion of the Sacred already at work in the world. Our purpose is not to convert individuals to the Christian faith, but to respect each person and their path in life.

## Wellbeing

St Michael's has a long history of support for mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Our commitment to wellbeing is lived out in our worship services, in the provision of Mingary, the Quiet Place, and in our support for Mingary Cairnmillar Counselling & Wellbeing which provides free counselling, wellbeing programs and low-cost vocational assessments, in person and by telehealth. Mingary-Cairnmillar is located in St Michael's administration building.

On some Sundays, mindfulness meditation is offered after church in the Wellbeing Studio.

We believe that wellbeing concerns both self and society. Human wellbeing depends on the development of social and relationship skills, physical health, social connectedness, housing, education and employment.

## Music

In addition to music in worship gatherings, St Michael's offers Thursday lunchtime organ recitals without charge. The recitals showcase our splendid organ and our gifted organist and manager of music, Rhys Boak. Through the recitals we share with the city our understanding of the place of music in nourishing the human spirit. We hope to extend the music program with an outward-facing focus on supporting young and emerging artists by providing performance opportunities and participation in Music for Contemplation in Sunday Gatherings.

# St Michael's Community

## Care and Compassion

The vision of pastoral care at St Michael's is the creation of a community of compassion and care. Pastoral care is an art practised by clergy and lay people to offer ministries of care to one another and to those outside of our congregation. It comes from a commitment to connection, mutuality and interdependence as we seek for the survival and flourishing of human community in a tumultuous world.

The Contact & Care Committee liaises with the minister and a network of Pastoral Carers. The Committee invites people with gifts in this area to become Pastoral Carers with responsibility for caring for a small group of people. The Contact & Care Committee is also responsible for offering a warm welcome for all at Sunday Gatherings and after-church hospitality and for ensuring that newcomers are welcomed and included in the community.

If they wish, Members and Companions are connected with a Pastoral Carer. Pastoral Carers keep in touch with you with Members and Companions and help newcomers make connections with others in the St Michael's community.

## Community Life

For information about participating in any of these activities, contact the church office for the coordinator's details.

Sunday Hospitality: every Sunday after the worship service, we have tea/coffee and a time for conversation. It's a great way to meet people.

The Church Services Committee contributes to the smooth running of Sunday gatherings and works with the minister in planning special services.



The Property Committee is tasked with day-to-day property maintenance, conservation management, and capital works programs. Current work includes commission of a Conservation Management Plan prepared by Purcell, an international heritage architecture firm, and consideration of revitalising the interior of the church to make it a safe, welcoming, accessible, and inclusive space for all.

For information about the role of the Contact & Care Committee, see the section above on Care and Compassion.

The Mission Coordinating Committee is tasked with oversight of St Michael's mission and vision and the implementation of the Council's Mission Goals.

Programs are arranged by a sub-committee of Mission Coordinating. The Programs sub-committee arranges guest speakers and participatory groups after Sunday services. Public forums and events are hosted on social issues, progressive theology and social aspects of wellbeing.

Events and Programs are advertised on the slideshow notices at church, in the weekly eNews and on the website [www.stmichaels.org.au](http://www.stmichaels.org.au)

# Connecting and Belonging

There are different ways of connecting with and belonging to St Michael's. The Uniting Church recognises three ways that a person may belong: as a Member, a Member in Association or Companion.

## Members of St Michael's and the Uniting Church in Australia

People become members by applying to the Church Council, and

- being baptised, confirmed or transferring membership from another UCA congregation,
- seeking to live a Christian life,
- joining regularly in the worship, community life and mission of the congregation,
- as far as they are able, contributing financially to support the community life, worship, and mission of the congregation,
- accepting the governance of the St Michael's Church Council, and
- accepting the governance of the UCA.

Note: The requirement of baptism is set by the Uniting Church. It was agreed at a time when many children in Australia were routinely baptised. We recognise that understandings about baptism and membership have changed over time.

A person may be baptised at any age, and the Minister welcomes conversations exploring how baptism may be understood and expressed in a progressive theological context.

## **Members in Association of St Michael's and the Uniting Church**

People become Members in Association by applying to the Church Council, and

- fulfilling the criteria for membership; and
- retaining active membership of another denomination or another congregation of the UCA.

Members and Members in Association have the right to attend, participate in, and vote or deliberate at any meeting of the congregation on any matter brought before that meeting.

## **St Michael's Companions**

People become Companions at St Michael's by requesting such recognition from the Church Council, and

- sharing contact details so they can receive communications and be contacted by minister, staff or lay leaders (subject to our privacy policy),
- joining regularly in the worship, community life and mission of the congregation in ways that express their own gifts and the needs of the community,
- as far as they are able, contributing financially to supporting the life, worship, and mission of the congregation,
- accepting the governance of the St Michael's Church Council.

Companions are welcome at congregational meetings, where they can speak but not vote or participate in consensus decisions. They are not eligible for election to Church Council but may be invited to serve on Committees or Task Groups.

The official Uniting Church name for a Companion is Adherent.

## **Finding out more about belonging**

How you choose to connect/belong is your decision.

‘Exploring Belonging’ conversations for newcomers are held twice a year so that people can find out more about being involved at St Michael’s and learn about the Uniting Church. People who have recently filled in a ‘Connecting with St Michael’s’ card will be invited to an ‘Exploring Belonging’ session, but anyone can come along at any time.

After the Exploring Belonging session, people who choose to will have an opportunity to make public commitments and be welcomed as Members, Members in Association, or Companions at a Sunday Gathering.

Please contact the Secretary of Church Council or the Chair of Contact & Care, or the Minister, if you would like to know more about membership or another form of belonging at St Michael’s.

# Governance

## Church Council

The Church Council is responsible for oversight of the governance, community and strategic direction of the Congregation. Members are elected by the Congregation.

According to the 1977 Constitution of the Uniting Church, the purpose of Church Council is “building up the congregation in faith and love, sustaining members in hope, and leading the Congregation to a fuller participation in Christ’s mission in the world.”

It is one of the Councils of the Uniting Church and relates to other Councils: the Presbytery of Yarra Yarra; the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania; and the Assembly (the national body of the UCA).

The Council meets monthly. Tasks include development of mission plans, strategies, and policies; drawing up the budget and financial reports; ensuring community safety and OHS; relating to the wider church; and maintaining the membership roll.

The strategic direction of the Council is implemented by five Committees which report to Council – Church Services, Contact & Care, Programs, Property and the Mingary Committee. They are comprised of Council members and others from the congregation (members or companions).

## 2024 Church Council

Laura Beckett (Chairperson), Brian Smith (Secretary), Ian Cox (Treasurer), Peter Anderson (Property Chair), Lorraine Woolley (Church Services Chair), Lyndell O’Brien (Contact & Care Chair), Ann Kinnear (Mission Coordinating Chair), Val Gill (Culture of Safety), Anthony Bendall, John Coppock, Jess Hand, Catherine Jones, and Chris Phillips.

## **Safe Church**

As Christians we believe that the Sacred encounters us in love and grace, and that our relationships with each other should express love and respect; and be free from abuse or violence; and that our churches should be safe places where all people, especially children and vulnerable adults, are free to know God, express their spirituality, and grow in faith. We affirm that all people have the right to be physically, emotionally, spiritually and sexually safe, respected and have their views and opinions valued at all times. We recognise that we live in a country that legislates for people's safety and the Church has responsibilities under that legislation.

St Michael's has a Safe Church policy and established procedures for protecting children and vulnerable adults, and for dealing with concerns about safety. Everyone who volunteers at St Michael's, and is therefore in a position of trust in the congregation, has a State of Victoria Working with Children Check. Val Gill is the St Michael's Safe Church Contact Person.

## **Wider Church Connections**

St Michael's is an engaged participant in the Presbytery of Yarra, the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, the Inner-Melbourne UCA Justice Coalition, and Melbourne City Churches in Action.

## **Finances**

The mission and ministry of St Michael's depends on the generous giving of its members, companions, and friends. Offerings can be given either by Sunday offerings at church (collection boxes or Pay Point), electronic direct debit or online banking transfer.

Our heritage-listed building is ‘high maintenance’ in the truest sense. We do not receive any Government assistance or regular grants but rely on donations and weekly offerings which cover in part the cost of regular operations.

The Treasurer is a member of Church Council and works closely with the Finance and Operations Manager.

## Communication

### Church Office

St Michael’s office is staffed by a friendly and effective team comprising of the Manager of Finance and Operations, the Office Manager, and a part-time Office Administrator. The office is staffed Monday to Thursday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and Friday 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

Email: [office@stmichaels.org.au](mailto:office@stmichaels.org.au) Phone: 03 9654 5120

### Website

[www.stmichaels.org.au](http://www.stmichaels.org.au)

### eNews

The weekly eNews is our primary way of communicating with our real-life and online communities. You can subscribe via the website or by contacting the St Michael’s office.

### Social Media

 [www.facebook.com/stmichaelsmelbourne/](https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelsmelbourne/)

 [www.youtube.com/user/StMichaelsChurch](https://www.youtube.com/user/StMichaelsChurch)

 [instagram.com/stmichaelsmelb](https://instagram.com/stmichaelsmelb)

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