



Sunday Jan 23rd , 2022 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Gathering & Lighting the Candle

Today friends, we are remembering the tragic history of our nation and the violent dispossession of her First Peoples.

Today is a Day of Mourning. Today we mark in lament the truth of our shared history and we lift up to God our prayers for First Peoples and our nation.

We say sorry and we pray for forgiveness, healing and hope. We also come together and give thanks to God for the grace which enables us to face ourselves and the wrongs in our country and seek healing and be given the courage to repent and seek to mend our wrongs. The God of all justice, the God of all peace, be with you all. **And also with you.**

The Christ candle is lit.

Call to worship

Our land is alive with the glory of God;
desert sands hum and gum trees dance.
Brown grasses sing
and mountains breathe their stillness.
All created things add their rhythms of delight
and even stones rap out their praise.
Let our voices mingle with those of the earth;
may our hearts join the beat of her joy,
for our triune God is with us:
the Source of all being surrounds and upholds us.
Christ Jesus walks beside and before us.
The Spirit moves within and between us.
Blessed be God, our wonder and delight.

Acknowledging



We acknowledge the *[please use the local name]*,
the sovereign First Peoples of this place.

We honour their elders past, present and emerging together with all descendants of this Nation, for their care for these lands and waters since creation.

Singing - Where wide sky (TiS 188)

Where wide sky rolls down and touches red sand,
where sun turns to gold the grass of the land,
let spinifex, mulga and waterhole tell
their joy in the One who made everything well.

Where rain-forest calm meets reef,
tide and storm,
where green things grow lush and
oceans are warm,
let every sea-creature and tropical bird
exult in the light of the life-giving Word.

Where red gum and creek cross hillside and plain,
where cool tree-ferns rise to welcome the rain,
let bushland, farm, mountain-top, all of their days
delight in the Spirit who formed them for praise.

Now, people of faith, come gather around
with songs to be shared, for blessings abound!
Australians, whatever your culture or race,
come, lift up your hearts to the Giver of grace.

W: Elizabeth J. Smith; M: attrib. to William Croft
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Prayer

Abba, Father, Bāpa* God, source of all life,
answer our call, as a mother responds
to the cry of a child in the night.
Jesus Christ, teacher and friend, Liberator,
stand beside us as bearer of our humanity,
and sharer of God's grace.
Creator Spirit, giver of new life, purposeful guest,
prod us to praise, calling us to be a people
of hope and faith in Christ Jesus.

Merciful God, we, the Second Peoples of this
land, lament the injustice and abuse that has so

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often marked the treatment of the First Peoples of this land.

We lament the way in which their land was taken from them and their language, culture, law and spirituality despised and suppressed. We acknowledge and lament the way in which the Christian church was so often not only complicit in this process but actively involved in it.

We lament that in our own time the injustice and abuse has continued. We have been indifferent.

Gracious God, hear our confession — We have not loved you with our whole heart, nor have we loved First Peoples and other neighbours as ourselves. God of mercy, forgive us for our failures, past and present and give us the grace today to make a fresh start.

By your Spirit transform our minds and hearts so that we may love as you have loved us, that we may boldly speak your truth and courageously do your will. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

At this point in the service if First Peoples are participating they could be invited to offer a response to the lament and confession.

This is the best of all: When we are empty, God fills us; when we are disheartened, God is compassionate; when we are wounded, God brings healing; when we confess our sin, God forgives. In Christ, through Christ and because of Christ, our sins are forgiven. **Thanks be to God. You refill the cup of life, O God. In Christ, we find refuge, strength and hope. Amen.**

**Bäpa means Father in the Yolŋu languages of North Eastern Arnhemland*

Listening

Read: Micah 6: 6–8 &
John 14: 15–24

For these words of faith and for Jesus the Word:
Thanks be to God.

Reflecting - Rev. Arnie Wierenga

I remember my excitement of learning that Australia would celebrate her 200th birthday on January 26th, 1988. 200 was a number that seemed barely possible to a young child - imagine the birthday cake, the fireworks, and millions of people invited to the party!

But by the time Australia marked a bicentenary, I was no longer excited about a big party. School stories of nation building were challenged by reality, because history is far richer than what is written in books. It is also very personal.

The story of God's people is like that as well, where the written word came long after people experienced the creator God among them. A consistent theme in the lived experience of God's people, and a theme arising from Micah is that God is always reaching out to us, for us to respond to love and live in it.

The prophet Micah reminds us:

*what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).*

As part of this call the Uniting Church recognises today as a *Day of Mourning*, or a reminder that not all is right when it comes to our relationships between First and Second peoples of this land. January 26th is not a blessing for all people, and if justice is called for, we as the people of God need to find a deeper and more truthful telling of both history and faith.

That will likely take on different forms for each of us. It calls me to reflect on being a member of the Second Peoples. My family arrived in Australia as migrants from Holland. Within a decade of my parents becoming citizens they were asked to vote in the 1967 referendum. How ridiculous that new arrivals were asked to decide if those who

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have been here 60,000 years or more could have the same citizenship rights.

I was drawn to the Uniting Church because she was a church embedded in this land. The Uniting Church not only had First Nations people who belonged to her, she was and continues to be a church deeply committed to ensuring our Christian journey is faithful to the gospel in this place.

Micah's call towards justice is saying that God desires us to do the right thing. What does the right thing look like on this *Day of Mourning*? I believe that Jesus Christ calls me to be aware of a richer and living history of this land.

Part of that comes through truth-telling. Angus McMillan was considered a heroic pioneer in Gippsland. He 'discovered' and named the rivers Avon, Mitchell and Nicholson and claimed a pastoral lease along the Avon.

He was honoured in many ways, but notably a Federal Parliamentary seat was given his name.

But McMillan also organised an armed massacre at Warrigal Creek where 60-150 Gunai Kurnai were killed. Through telling this difficult story, change becomes possible. While we cannot reverse an event of history, its impact reverberates down the generations. Telling the truth has power, and the seat name has now changed.

In my teenage years I was into sport and through that made many friends. A number of them were Indigenous Tasmanians, but I didn't know it at the time. It wasn't safe for them to identify as Aboriginal. But as folk began to protest that a supposed dying race was well and truly alive, that all changed and the positive impact was immense. History has power - to keep people in their place or to liberate them. The gospel calls us towards liberation - to do justice, to love kindness, to walk humbly with God.

In part that means travelling a difficult journey of history, truth-telling in order to enrich our present and bring hope for our future. It also calls us into relationship, First and Second peoples. For this I give thanks to the Uniting Church for many opportunities to find faith, grace and wisdom from our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

*what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).*

Responding:

Prayers for World & Community

Give us the courage to accept the realities of our history so that we may build a better future for our nation. Teach us to respect all cultures. Teach us to care for our land and waters. Help us to share justly the resources of this land. Help us to bring about spiritual and social change to improve the quality of life for all peoples in our communities, especially the disadvantaged. Help all young people to find true dignity and self-esteem by your Spirit. May your power and love be the foundations on which we: walk together as First and Second Peoples; and build our families, our communities and our nation. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Passing the peace

May the Peace of God dwell with you:
and also with you.

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Offering

O Lord Jesus Marrkapmirr, as we offer these things in your name we offer our adoration and love and desire to walk fully in your ways. Bless these offerings and we, your people, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Notices

Synod COVID updates can be found at:

<https://victas.uca.org.au/all-you-need-to-know-answers-to-your-frequently-asked-questions/>

Singing - What a friend (TiS 590)

What a friend we have in Jesus
all our sins and griefs to bear,
what a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer:
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations,
is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged:
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness:
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Jesus is our only refuge:
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
in his arms he'll take and shield you,
you will find a solace there.

W: Joseph Medlicott Scriven; M: William Penfro Rowlands
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Blessing

People of God, go from here to live out the covenant into which we, the First and Second Peoples of this land, have entered with one another. Confront and challenge injustice wherever you see it. Act justly yourselves and insist that others do the same. Rejoice in the richness of our diverse cultures and learn from them. Celebrate and demonstrate the unity we share in Jesus our Lord. Commit to worship, witness and serve as one people under God, Until God's promised reconciliation of all creation is complete. There could be a special offering for the work of the UAICC in your Synod or First Peoples community organisation you have connected with.

Bless us therefore, as we depart this place: give us a generous spirit, a kind heart, and the grace to walk alongside our First Peoples, as brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen.

Go in the power of God's good Spirit: with the gentle fire of God's zeal, with the breath of life, ready to work for justice and peace. We go in Christ's name. Amen.

Singing - O Lord Jesus (TiS 253)

O Lord Jesus Marrkapmirr,
all the power belongs to you.
Hold me by this power, O Lord,
you alone are king.

Now we praise you for your Word,
living, true and full of light.
Yours the hands that rest on me:
hold me for all time.

W: People of Arnhemland & D'Arcy Wood;
M: Australian Aboriginal melody
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Liturgy: Uniting Church, Day of Mourning 2022
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