

40 Days of Prayer and Prayerful Action

Tuesday 29 May – Saturday 7 July

Uniting Church in Australia President-elect Dr Deidre Palmer invites all UCA members into 40 days of prayer and action in the lead up to the 15th Triennial Assembly meeting.

“We offer these prayers to you recognising that there will be many words flooding over us all as we prepare for this journey together,” said Dr Palmer.

“Each prayer equips us with space, silence and action we need to contemplate the 15th Triennium’s theme Abundant Grace, Liberating Hope.”

The 40 days of prayer begins on Tuesday 29 May and concludes on Saturday 7 July, the day before the Assembly meeting begins.

We will pray together for renewal for ourselves, our communities, our world and our Church.

The prayers were written by Rev. Alex Sangster from Fairfield Uniting Church in Victoria.

Join us in 40 Days of Prayer and Prayerful Action.

- Pray and take action throughout the 40 days.
- Set aside time in your congregation to pray: each Sunday, for a day, for a time each day.
- Join with other congregations to pray together.

Prayer One

We journey together towards our Assembly.

We give thanks for God's abundant grace and we are set free with the liberating hope of Jesus.

Today, take a moment to think about your journey in the UCA.

When did it begin? Where has it taken you? What keeps you present?

Prayer Two

**Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 1
Corinthians 12:27**

Stand as you are, in your body. Breathe.

Know that you are part of a great body of hope journeying together towards Assembly.

Know that you are connected. Breathe.

Prayer Three

Commit today to taking a carbon fast as you journey towards Assembly - whatever is possible in your life - driving less, eating less or no meat and walking more.

Prayer Four

You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. Deuteronomy 10:19

The Dalai Lama says:

“This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy.”

“Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness.”

Speak with kindness to a stranger today.

Prayer Five

Christ's body is planetary as well as congregational – so pick up 7 pieces of rubbish today.

Prayer Six

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8

Think about God today, walk with God today, talk to one person about God today.

Prayer Seven

The earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Genesis 1:2

Today. For just a moment. Be still.

Can you feel the movement of the Holy Spirit breathing across the waters of the earth and in the water of your own body?

How does becoming aware of this truth change you?

Prayer Eight

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him. Matthew 4:11

Who are your angels?

Give thanks today for the seen and unseen angels in your life and in the life of our Church.

Prayer Nine

Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth. Psalm 46:10

Today. In all the business leading up to Assembly, in all the whirlwind of daily life, in the moments ticking by – sit down and have a rest – you are already here.

We all are. The Kingdom of God is within you.

Prayer Ten

“Only Christ could have brought us all together, in this place, doing such absurd but necessary things.” — Kathleen Norris, poet.

Today, do something necessary, with Christ.

Prayer Eleven

Our story tells us that Jesus was in the desert, without water.

Drink a glass of water. Slowly. Really slowly.

Give thanks for water. Prepare yourself to join with the Assembly in exploring how our church will grapple with the reality and ongoing threat of climate change.

Prayer Twelve

...truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left;
2 Corinthians 6:7

Jesus spoke truth to power. This led to the cross.

Where does our Assembly and our church need to speak truth today?

Prayer Thirteen

At its Greek root, "to believe" simply means "to give one's heart to." If we can determine what it is we give our heart to, then we will know what it is we believe.

Today, can you give your heart to God?

Prayer Fourteen

Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Exodus 33:11

Go for a walk. Doesn't have to be a long one. Even around the block.

Where is God on this walk? Pay attention. Can you speak to god as to a friend?

Prayer Fifteen

"I not only live each endless day in grief, but live each day thinking about living each day in grief." — C.S. Lewis.

Today, allow yourself to grieve, really grieve.

Grieve for those you have loved and lost, grieve for our planet, grieve, lament and rest.

Prayer Sixteen

"The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people but the silence over that by the good people" — Martin Luther King Jr.

Today: be the good, stand up (there are opportunities all around you)

Prayer Seventeen

He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. He said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on." Luke 21:1-4

Today, buy extra groceries and put in food bank at your local supermarket or at Church.

Prayer Eighteen

"We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Meditate on how our whole Church can be a spoke in the wheel.

Prayer Nineteen

Today, pray without ceasing.

Every breath, every step, every action.

Prayer Twenty

Today we pray for those who explore Christian Unity, Doctrine and Worship.

We give thanks that they provide theological leadership in the Uniting Church in the three related areas of ecumenical activity, theological reflection and worship resourcing.

Help us to be open to their teaching and reflection.

Prayer Twenty-One

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. John 1:5

Sometimes we are called to go, with each other and with our God, into the valley of the shadow. We are called to be the light in the dark that the darkness may not overcome it.

At this Assembly we will be brave.

We will not be afraid. And if we are afraid, we will look to each other and to our god and we will find our way forward, together.

Prayer Twenty-Two

Today we give thanks for our sisters and brothers in the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress from all over Australia.

We commit ourselves to walking alongside this nation's First Peoples, to speaking the truth about our past and to dreaming together into a just future.

Prayer Twenty-Three

Sit in a chair, feet resting on floor, legs uncrossed, arms uncrossed. Close your eyes.

Repeat Jesu Christe, over and over in your mind. Do this for 5 minutes. Be Still.

Prayer Twenty-Four

He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Isaiah 2:4

The National Committee for Defence Force Chaplaincy (NCDFC) provides members of the Australian Defence Force and their families, as well as patients and staff of repatriation general hospitals, with Christian ministry, in order to meet their spiritual needs.

We give thanks for their ministry and for the work of those in the armed forces and their families. We pray together for a time when nation will no longer rise up against nation.

Prayer Twenty-Five

“Lighthouses don’t go running all over an island looking for boats to save; they just stand there shining.” – Anne Lamott, novelist.

Today: can you stand and shine?

Prayer Twenty-Six

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12

We pray today for and with our Multicultural and Cross Cultural Ministry communities.

We rejoice with the Holy Spirit for our unity in diversity and for the great gifts that together we can all share with our world.

Prayer Twenty-Seven

“You do not have to be good. You do not have to walk on your knees for a hundred miles through the desert repenting” – Mary Oliver, poet.

Today, can you remember, in your very bones, that you are loved?

Can you share this love with those you meet?

Prayer Twenty-Eight

“People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child -- our own two eyes. All is a miracle.” – Thích Nhất Hạnh, Vietnamese monk.

Today: See the miracle, tell someone about it.

Prayer Twenty-Nine

Today we give thanks and pray with and for UnitingCare Australia. Sing it out loud!

TiS 650 Servant Song 87.87

Prayer Thirty

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Romans 14:7-9

As we move towards Assembly, we open our selves to hear each other's theological and heart perspectives on what it means to live and die as people of faith within the Jesus story.

Prayer Thirty-One

Buy a banana and give it to the person begging.

Tell them your name.

Ask them how their day is going.

Prayer Thirty-Two

For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Isaiah 55:12

Hug a tree. Yes, a tree. Hold it and offer a prayer of confession.

Just do it...and feel forgiven.

Prayer Thirty-Three

“My soul cries out with a joyful shout
that the God of my heart is great,
And my spirit sings of the wondrous things
that you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight,
and my weakness you did not spurn,
So from east to west shall my name be blest.’
Could the world be about to turn?”

(Canticle of the turning by Rory Cooney)

What is your soul longing for? For yourself? For our Church? Write it down.

Prayer Thirty-Four

Go outside tonight, or look out the window.

Even if it's cloudy and there are no stars, see the stars – say hello to God.

Prayer Thirty-Five

“The Christian leader of the future is called to be completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self. God loves us, not because of what we do or accomplish, but because God has created and redeemed us in love.”

– Henri Nouwen, theologian.

Today – can you be yourself?

Prayer Thirty-Six

We come to Assembly from our vast and wild land.

Today we pray, for our Bush Chaplains, who journey across 86% of our country; visiting people on isolated properties, Aboriginal communities, mine sites and small communities.

Prayer Thirty-Seven

Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Colossians 3:13

Who do you feel distant from?

Can you reach out to them today? Call them, text them, send them love.

Prayer Thirty-Eight

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” Matthew 26:36

Go and sit in a garden. Remember Jesus in the garden.

Be bought back to yourself and God again.

Prayer Thirty-Nine

We acknowledge that there is a diversity of opinion in our Uniting Church community on the issue of same-gender marriage.

We have always tried to maintain a respectful conversation on this subject between the councils of our Church and to work constructively across our membership.

In our current conversations on marriage the Uniting Church we are seeking to hold a 'Space for Grace' - engaging in respectful conversations with one another, guided by the Spirit, sharing our stories and understanding of marriage and same-gender relationships in culturally appropriate ways.

Help us all to the Space for Grace for each other as we discern together, our way into God's future.

Prayer Forty

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

Today, what have you wrapped in grave cloth, what can be let go of?

What is weighing you down?

And what can we as a church let go of and what must we hold dear?