

2021

Reconciliation Sunday

Worship Resource



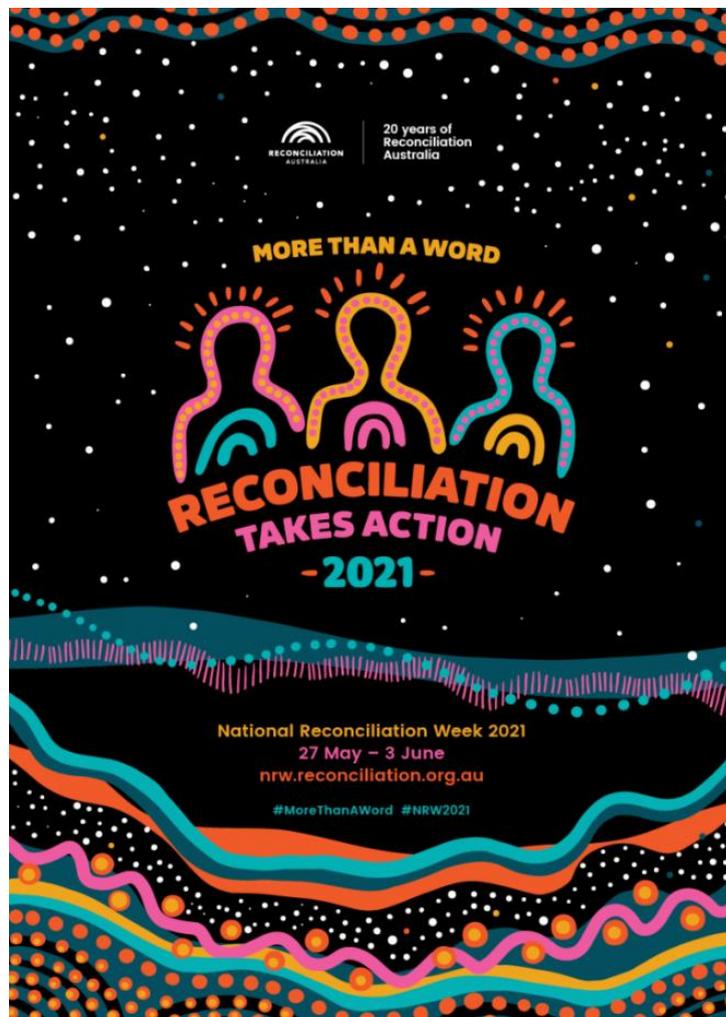
Prepared by
Mission Resourcing
Uniting Church Synod of South Australia

What is National Reconciliation Week?

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is a time of coming together to recognise shared experiences in Australia. To acknowledge the shared history of Australia there must be an aspect of truth telling. This involves acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the First Peoples of this country. NRW presents opportunities to recognise and learn about the longstanding cultures of First Peoples. NRW encourages First and Second Peoples to come together to learn from one another and celebrate their interconnectedness.

The theme from NRW 2021 is **'More than a Word. Reconciliation takes action'**. The theme encourages us to avoid tokenistic responses to reconciliation. Encouraging the Australian public to commit to bolder and braver movements to achieve reconciliation. Jessica Johnson of Nungala Creative designed this year's NRW poster. In the art Jessica emphasises an active approach to reconciliation is needed to achieve action. The art depicts that every person is asked to stand up for reconciliation and use their mind and soul to enact change.

To read more about NRW visit the [Reconciliation Australia Website](https://www.reconciliation.org.au).



Reconciliation Sunday 2021 Order of Service

Acknowledgement of First Peoples

Today, as we gather to worship, we acknowledge the..... Peoples, the first inhabitants of this place from time beyond remembering.

We acknowledge that through this land, God nurtured and sustained the First Peoples of this country, the Aboriginal and Islander peoples.

We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather today. We acknowledge that the First Peoples had already encountered the Creator God before the arrival of the colonisers; the Spirit was already in the land, revealing God to the people through law, custom and ceremony.

We acknowledge that the same love and grace that was finally and fully revealed in Jesus Christ sustained the First Peoples and gave them particular insights into God's ways; and so we rejoice in the reconciling purposes of God found in the good news about Jesus Christ.

Resource:

An Acknowledgement of Country/Acknowledgement of First Peoples is an important way to pay respect to the Traditional Custodians of the land. It also honours the continuing connection First People have to their Country. You can find the nation group for the land you are on by viewing the [AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia](#). Once you have located the nation group add it in the blank space above when you say the Acknowledgement of First Peoples. The above Acknowledgement is from the Assembly's Acknowledgement of First Peoples in the Uniting Church in Australia resource. The resource is available from the [UCA Assembly's website](#).



Intergenerational Worship Idea:

You are invited to stand outside on dirt or grass, preferably with bare feet as you read the acknowledgement.

While outside gather up a handful of leaves (you will need at least one per person), if possible find some gum leaves too and bring them inside to use later in the service.



Gathering of God's People

Today we celebrate Reconciliation Sunday, the first Sunday of National Reconciliation Week (27 May – 3 June each year). For the past fourteen years, the Synod of South Australia has encouraged this celebration as one way of continuing to recognise the Covenant between the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) and the Uniting Church in Australia. Reconciliation Sunday encourages us to participate in one of the major themes of our Christian faith. God was in Christ reconciling the world. We too can contribute to this reconciling by developing mutually respectful relationships between First and Second Peoples within congregations and the wider church.

Intergeneration Worship Idea:

After reading the above paragraph, look at the UCA and UAICC. Think about or talk together about:

What are some similarities between the logos?

What are some differences between the logos?

What do you think the different parts of the logos represent?

What do you think reconciliation means?



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.

By Rev Dr Jenny Tymms

Hymn

TIS 241: So God loved

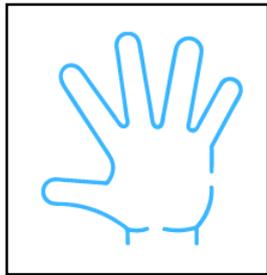
Prayers of the People: A prayer for Reconciliation Sunday

As we gather, God,
seeking to hear you as Word.
After being made right with you through confession and prayer.
As we enter in truthful confession.
We face the past of our nation with pride and shame.
We acknowledge the good,
those who sought to do what is right,
often against policy and practice of government and institution.
And that those who have built capacity and made things better,
striving for a better Australia for all people.
We acknowledge the bad,
those who dehumanised others,
or participated in suffering, oppression and the creation of trauma,
whether it be through blind service to the times,
the failings of misguided good intentions.
A suspension of compassion in prejudice and hard hearted-ness,
or the intentional practise of cruelty in the relishing of hatred and discrimination.
In this time,
we remember First Peoples.
We bring to mind the inequity that they struggle against.
We attend to the trauma and suffering that still haunts so many.
We listen for the pain of the past which diminishes the present.
We seek to see the prejudice and discrimination that still lurks in pockets,
as a dark shadow haunting this nation from the success of past policy and enculturated attitudes.
These things that take away from the beauty of culture,
and taint the celebration of a great people,
and lessen us as a nation.
May we work for reconciliation.
May we join together for the common good.
May we unite with you in your work of love.
May we walk together as your Church and follow you as Christ,
that all may come to know grace and peace.
United, we pray. **Amen.**

By Rev Jon Humphris

Intergenerational Worship Idea:

Trace your hand on a blank piece of paper or over the prayer. Use coloured pens or pencils to underline, circle or colour words that stand out for you or write key words inside your hand shape. You might also like to write the names of people or groups of people who come to mind as you pray this prayer.

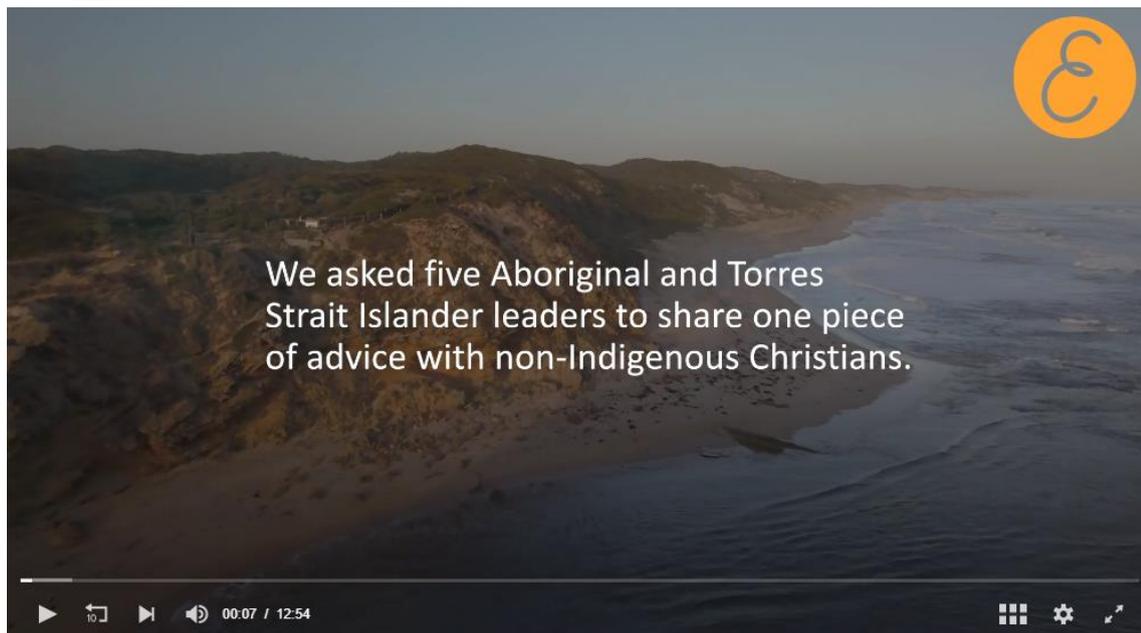


Reflection

“What’s one thing you want non-Indigenous Christians to know?”

That’s the question that Eternity video journalist Bella Ann Sanchez asked five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christians – Ray Minniecon, Elle Davidson, Bishop Chris McLeod, Alison Overeem and Jatham Staudinger.

Click [here](#) to hear their answers.



Video link supplied with permission of [Eternity News](#)

Questions for discussion/reflection from the Eternity News video:

- What does it mean to be authentically Christian?
- What are your idols i.e. wealth, power or control?

- How do we release idols of wealth, power and control?
- How are you educating yourself about the history of Australia?
- How can the Holy Spirit bring healing if we take active approaches for reconciliation?
- Have you ever kept quiet when someone said something racist?
- How can you respond helpfully if someone makes racist comments?
- Do you know the ancient stories of the land on which your church stands? If so, how do these stories connect with your faith?
- How do we create a untied future between First and Second Peoples Christians?

Hymn

TIS 415: Praise the Spirit in creation

Prayer of Lament and Confession

Gracious God,

We acknowledge there is not one type of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person but many. We lament the commonality that all First Peoples on this land share. That sovereignty has never been ceded. Since time immemorial, long before the arrival of Second Peoples, First Peoples cared for and lived-in harmony with this land.

First Peoples knew the land on their Country deeply. You guided First Peoples spiritually on their land. They became the custodians of cultures, creation stories and songlines. You guided the gifts of cultural customs, languages and lore. You selected the proceeding generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons to carry on their ancient ancestral bloodlines. Instilling continued pride in cultures despite the degradation of the past.

We lament the many hardships caused by colonisation and the intergenerational trauma that continues today. O God, we mourn the ancient and sacred sites destroyed for financial profit and greed. We pray for those who have protested and advocated in matters of social justice for First Peoples.

Merciful God, we grieve the over representation of First Peoples in the prison systems. They are not statistics. They are mum and dads, brothers and sisters, cousins, uncles and aunties, nephews and nieces, sons and daughters. They are part of ancient kinship systems. Yet so many exist, languishing due to ongoing systemic failures. We pray for politicians and policy makers. May they truly hear the many voices of First Peoples and avoid tokenistic gestures. Please help them to implement policies for self-determination.

Lord hear our prayers for continued strength for First Peoples. For hope and improved opportunities, for not just for equality but equity as well. To close gaps of disadvantage, in culturally appropriate ways. Lord, we pray that truth telling continues in our communities, in our schools, our workplaces and in our churches.

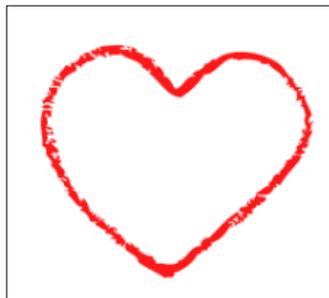
We pray Lord, for our allies those who stand in solidarity with First Peoples. We pray for those whose hearts are still to be opened to the truth-telling of this land. We pray for guidance from your Son Jesus, to be truly reconciled in Him. We pray in the power of the Holy Spirit that as First and Second Peoples we can work together towards true reconciliation on this land. **Amen.**

By Tarlee Leondaris

Intergenerational Worship Idea:

Draw a heart shape (either on blank paper or over the printed prayer, you could do this individually or as a group).

Write inside the heart words from the prayer that stand out for you or write the words: Sorry, Forgive, Reconcile.



Readings from Scripture

Trinity Sunday

Is 6:1–8

Ps 29

Rom 8:12–17

Jn 3:1–17

Sermon

Rev Dr John Squires and Rev Elizabeth Raine first wrote this sermon in Wauchope around 2014. They had an active youth group there that was 90% Indigenous young peoples. They had developed a very good relationship with Biripi elders there. They repeated the sermon in

Queanbeyan in 2019. The connected themes between Trinity Sunday and Reconciliation Sunday greatly spoke to Covenanting and International Mission Officer Tarlee Leondaris. She adapted the sermon to fit the 2021 lectionary ready as well as the theme for National Reconciliation Week in doing so reflecting on current covenanting relationships.

Today, we also celebrate both Trinity Sunday and Reconciliation Sunday. Trinity Sunday is a celebration of who God is for us: Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Reconciliation is an important issue in the Australian context. The Uniting Church in Australia remains on a journey of reconciliation with First Peoples. And because the Trinity evokes the theme of community and relationships and restoring human relationships as a part of God's reconciling mission in our world, the two do belong together. And through forgiveness, God's grace works to provide all with hope and a new way of living.

One God, yet a community of persons. The Trinitarian doctrine insists that the nature of God is closer to a loving community than to a lofty individual. The trinity expresses the notion that the highest form of existence is communal. God is communal, so therefore we should find the true meaning of being as a person in fellowship with other people. Because of this, the church community should reflect God far better than a lone person, no matter how gifted that person may happen to be. By insisting on being individuals over being community, we limit and diminish ourselves. Growth in faith really only takes place when we give to others and receive from others; when we know we need them and they need us.

What kind of wonderful creatures might we become if, in the fellowship of the church, we begin to model ourselves not on individualism but on God's community, as symbolised by the Trinity?

David Unaipon, a Ngarrindjeri man and preacher and the man on our \$50 note, recognised this many years prior to Union. He said:

"We, as Aboriginal people, need you and you, as non-Aboriginal people, need us. You, as non-Aboriginal people who have come to Australia, have played a large part in making this society what it is, so you can't just leave us Aboriginal people and expect us to fend for ourselves. You can't leave us now because it's like us taking you out in the bush and leaving you there. Most of you wouldn't survive in the wilderness on your own. For many Aboriginal people, white society is like a wilderness. We need to be shown the way through what is, for many of us, very much uncharted waters; an unknown territory. However, it is inappropriate for you to insist that we become like you in order to succeed in society. This is what has happened so often in the past and Aboriginal people have been disempowered by this approach. Our society can encompass people who are quite different, and so can the Church. We can work together to fulfil God's purpose for us all. Your relationship with God as expressed through the Trinity is the key to building loving relationships with those who are different. The love we are able share comes from God's love for us and we have Christ's example to follow, but we need the Spirit to guide us on our way. Loving one another means

forgiving, trusting and sacrificing. It means opening our hearts to others; it means transforming your attitudes toward others.”

David Unaipon raised important points here about culture, community and the work of Holy Spirit in our lives. In today’s Gospel reading (John 3:1-17) Nicodemus came to Jesus personally. He wanted to examine Jesus for himself and separate fact from rumour. The passage reads that Nicodemus came at night or after dark. Possibly this was because he was worried about what his peers, the Pharisees would say about his visit to Jesus. Nicodemus himself was a Pharisee and a member of the ruling high council or Sanhedrin. During Jesus’s time, the Pharisees were a group of religious leaders. Jesus and John the Baptist often criticised the Pharisees for being hypocrites. Many Pharisees were resentful of Jesus because he undermined their authority and challenged their perspectives. Contrarily, Nicodemus was inquisitive and he believed Jesus had some answers. An educator himself, Nicodemus came on this occasion to learn from Jesus. It is a reminder to each of us no matter how well educated we are, we must come to Jesus with an open mind and heart to be lifelong learners.

Jesus revealed to Nicodemus that the kingdom would come to the whole world, not just to the Jews, and that to be part of the kingdom we must be born again. This was a radical concept: Jesus’ kingdom is personal not pertaining to a particular race, and entrance requirements are repentance and spiritual rebirth. David Unaipon spoke to this point well by stating, “The love we are able share comes from God’s love for us and we have Christ’s example to follow, but we need the Spirit to guide us on our way.” It is this same understanding of God’s love and presence of the Holy Spirit that bonds the Uniting Church in Australia into a covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. On Sunday 10 July 1994 the then president of the Uniting Church in Australia Doctor Jill Tabart read the Covenanting Statement. In doing so lamenting historical wrongs and systemic failings. Whilst at the same time committing the Uniting Church in Australia and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress to journey together in the true spirit of Christ. Further Doctor Tabart stated:

“We acknowledge that no matter how great our intentions however, we will not succeed in our efforts for reconciliation without Christ's redeeming grace and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit at work in both your people and ours.”

Jesus’ teaching to Nicodemus informs the Covenanting Statement. That spiritual renewal transcends race and that no one is beyond the touch of God’s Spirit. Towards the end of today’s Scripture reading in John 3:16 the entire gospel comes into focus. God’s love is not stationary or self-centred. It reaches out and draws others in. Here God sets out the pattern of true love, the basis of reconciliation for all relationships. Our challenge as Christians is to adhere to the words of the Covenanting Statement. By journeying together in the spirit of Christ and discover what it means to be bound as First and Second Peoples in a covenant.

On that same day in 1994, the Chairperson of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress Pastor Bill Hollingsworth responded to the Covenanting Statement. He set out a roadmap to practical reconciliation. Pastor Hollingsworth stated:

“Your commitment to be practical in seeking to be united in this relationship will be assessed by your decisions to resource the Congress ministry and to be actively involved in ministry alongside and with Aboriginal and Islander people to change the present disadvantage... We pray that God will guide you together with us in developing a covenant to walk together practically so that the words of your statement may become a tangible expression of His justice and love for all creation. We ask you to remember this covenant by remembering that our land is now also sustaining your people by God's grace.”

Nearly 27 years have passed since the formalisation of the Covenant. During this time, there have been many wonderful achievements in covenanting and reconciliation. Yet this year's National Reconciliation Week theme 'More than a word. Reconciliation takes action', urges the reconciliation movement towards braver and more impactful action. Although 27 years later, this year's theme is reminiscent of Pastor Hollingsworth's response. That commitment to covenanting must be practical. It is in this moment that we should truly take a moment to assess our practical commitments towards covenanting. To reflect upon our own individual commitment but more importantly our collective commitment as a community of called by Christ. In this moment, it is right to ask ourselves as a Christian community, is this where we want to be on our covenanting journey? Are we satisfied with reconciliation between First and Second Peoples within the life of our congregation?

This Reconciliation Sunday can we as Christians take the risk like Nicodemus and bring our questions to the Lord. By asking where, might the Trinity Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer be calling us into commitment to covenanting? How can our Christian community continue or start to make our contributions to covenanting be more than words and into action?

Offering for the UAICC Youth Ministry

UAICC Youth Ministry encourages young people to follow Jesus. Congress ministry in SA has helped develop a number of remarkable young leaders.

Congress employs a Training & Formation Coordinator to help youth and young adults grow in their faith and discipleship. Likewise, to provide mentoring and pastoral guidance so that participants can explore their sense of call and gain skills and knowledge.

Your support will assist Congress youth and young adults to come together and learn in culturally appropriate ways about leadership and discipleship.

Please use the banking details below and enter the transaction reference as 'Rec Sunday'.

Account name: UAICC Youth Ministry

BSB: 704095

Account number: 213824

Offertory Prayer

Gracious God,
Bless these offerings to provide opportunities for the UAICC Youth Ministry.
Please send your Spirit on these young people in all the work they do. Bless these young leaders through discipleship and formation.
May these leaders continue to encounter Your Spirit on Country as their ancestors did for thousands of years before them.
In the name of our Lord Jesus. **Amen.**

Prayer of Adoration

God of Holy Dreaming, Great Creator Spirit,
from the dawn of creation you have given your children
the good things of Mother Earth.
You spoke and the gum tree grew.

In the vast desert and dense forest,
and in cities at the water's edge,
Creation sings your praise.
Your presence endures
as the rock at the heart of our Land.

When Jesus hung on the tree
you heard the cries of all your people
and became one with your wounded ones:
the convicts, the hunted, the dispossessed.

The sunrise of your Son coloured the earth anew,
and bathed it in glorious hope.
In Jesus we have been reconciled to you,
to each other and to your whole creation.

Lead us on, Great Spirit,
as we gather from the four corners of the earth;
enable us to walk together in trust from the hurt and shame of the past
into the full day which has dawned in Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

By Auntie Rev'd Lenore Parker - used with permission

Intergenerational Worship Idea:

If there's two or more people, take it in turns to read a paragraph each from the prayer.

During or after reading the prayer, each person is invited to take a leaf that was collected earlier and hold it, trace it with your finger, and be amazed at our Creator God.



Hymn

TIS 699: A new commandment I give unto you

Dismissal

Go out into the world in the power of the Spirit;
in all things, at all times,
remember that Christ is with you;
make your life your worship
to the praise and glory of God.

Amen.

Intergenerational Worship Idea:

Hold the leaves that you collected earlier in your hand. If you want to, crush up the gum leaves (or other scented leaves) and smell their aroma as you say the benediction.

After the dismissal is read, extinguish the candle and watch the light change from a flame to smoke, like God's Spirit that we carry with us now.



20 Actions for Reconciliation in 2021

Reconciliation Australia states, “The goal of the reconciliation movement is for a just, equitable and reconciled country. This will only be achieved when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the First Peoples of this land, are able to equally contribute to daily life of the nation. Until this happens, Australia will not reach its full potential.

We need more people speaking up, asking the hard questions and taking action during and beyond National Reconciliation Week. To help you, we have compiled 20 actions for reconciliation.

If you are hesitant to challenge some of the long-held but incorrect ideas in your community, be assured that across this country many people just like you are joining First Nations peoples in this effort.

This National Reconciliation Week, make reconciliation more than a word. Move from safe to brave on issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.”

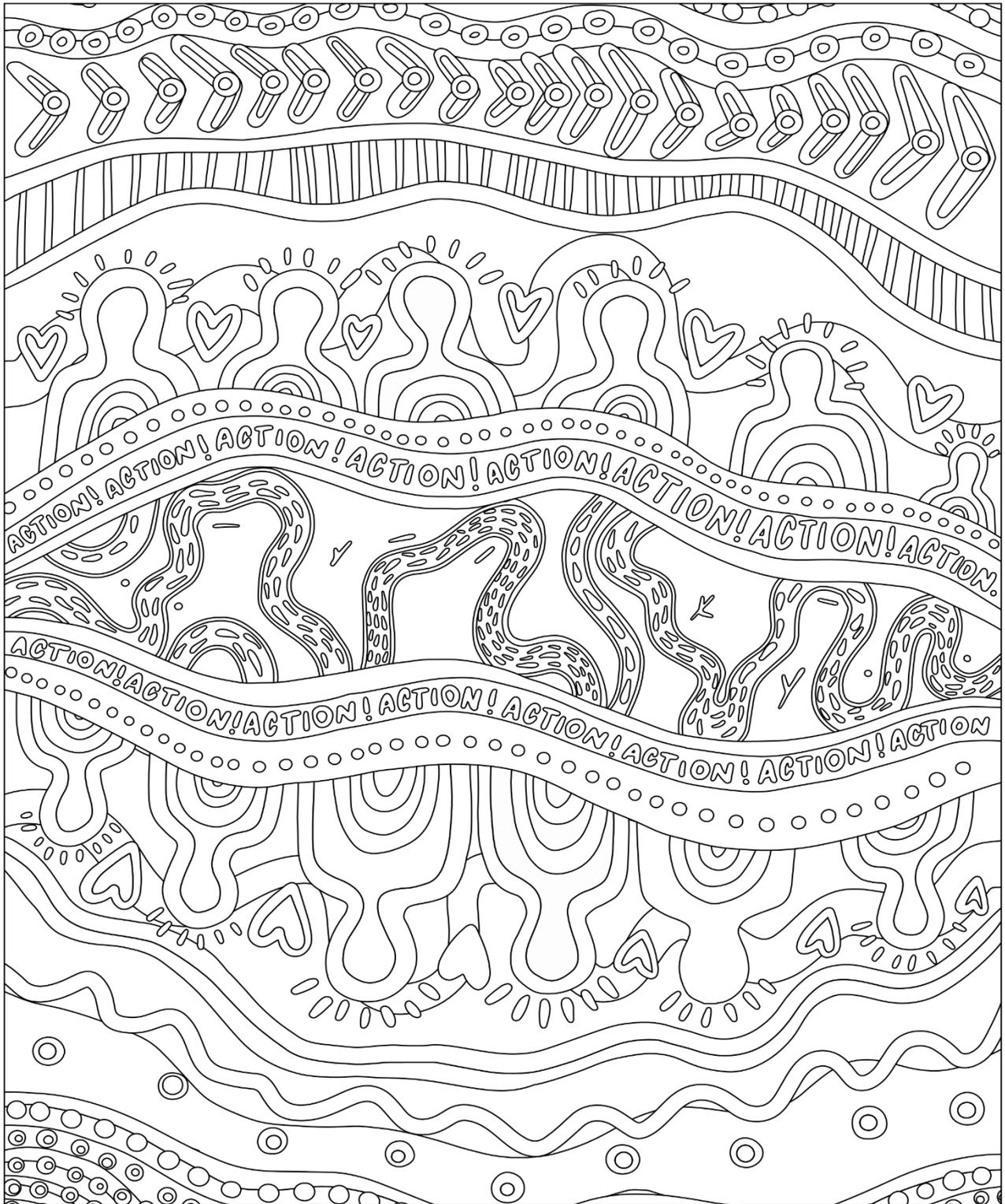
From a Uniting Church in Australia perspective, we aim to achieve the objectives of reconciliation through Covenanting. Congregations are encouraged to develop mutually respectful relationships with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress as well as other First Peoples in your local communities.

Reconciliation Australia has released a guide to [20 Actions for Reconciliation in 2021](#). We are all encouraged to review these actions and look to ways to apply them in our congregations beyond Reconciliation Sunday this year.

Contact

For more details about Covenanting, please contact the Synod’s Covenanting & International Mission Officer covenanting@sa.uca.org.au or **(08) 8236 4264**.

Colour for Reconciliation
Action by Jessica Johnson



Action is the story of the land and community sharing the united call for action on reconciliation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples have been listening to the heart beat of the land and sea for generations. With their rainbow shaped souls the spirits ask for us to join and make reconciliation more than a word, take action. We all have a role to play.

More resources available from Reconciliation Australia [here](#).