



# ORDER OF SERVICE

*for the*

*16th Assembly*

**Reconvened Meeting**

*Worship & Renewal of the Covenant*

Friday 6 May 2022

Live & livestreamed from the lands of the  
Gubbi Gubbi/Kabi Kabi People



# Welcome to Country

## Song

### Where The Spirit Is, There's Freedom

**Refrain:** Where the spirit is there's freedom.

Where the Spirit is , there is life!

1. Not by the world can our freedom be nourished,

Not by our things, only by Spirit.

Practise, my children, to live by the Spirit,

Drop all your masks, take freedom's clothing!

**Refrain...**

2. Heaven on earth, here we live, free to

love and to share, carried by joy

Practise my children, to love by the Spirit,

daring today to taste God's future.

**Refrain...**

3. Wounds will be healed, eyes will be opened,

imaging God, reflecting Jesus.

Practise my children, to live by the Spirit,

heaven is here, time made eternal.

**Refrain...**

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## Welcome

## Call to Worship

Creator God we claim this time now to rest in your love.

We come.

We come with our tiredness and sadness.

We come with our energy and joy.

We come with our apathy and scepticism.

We come with our intentions & openness.

**Creator God, may we rest in Your love, together.**

Sustainer God, we claim this time now to grow in Your love.

We are here.

We are here to share our stories.

We are here to listen to others.

We are here to be challenged by you.

We are here to grow more like you.

**Sustainer God, may we grow in Your love, together.**

Life-giving God, we claim this time now to create in Your love.

We are Your people.

Journeying together, pilgrims on the way.

Created to create.

Created to grow.

Created to rest in You.

**Life-giving God, may we create in Your love, together.**

We have come – **it is good.**

We are here – **it is good.**

We are your people – **it is good.**

**We commit to dwell in Your love.**

The peace of Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

Please turn to the people near to you, and in a covid-safe manner,  
greet them with a sign of peace.

*Let us praise God in song:*

## Song of Praise

### How Wonderful the Three-in-One

1. How wonderful the Three-in-One,  
Whose energies of dancing light  
Are undivided pure and good,  
Communing love in shared delight.

2. Before the flow of dawn and dark,

Creation's Lover dreamed of earth,  
And with a caring deep and wise,  
All things conceived and brought to birth,

3. The Lover's own Belov'd in time,  
Between a cradle and a cross,  
At home in flesh gave love and life  
To heal our brokenness and loss.

4. Their Equal Friend all life sustains  
With greening power and loving care,  
And calls us born again by grace,  
In Love's communing life to share.

5. How wonderful the Living God:  
Divine Beloved, Empow'ring Friend,  
Eternal Lover, Three-in-One,  
Our hope's beginning, way and end.

*Words by Brian Wren*

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## Bible Reading

### Ezekiel 36:22-28

Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when through you I display my holiness before their eyes. I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and

you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

In this we hear the Word of God

**Thanks be to God.**

## Prayer of Confession

*kneeling as able*

Almost 30 years ago, in 1994, The Uniting Church in Australia entered into a Covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. Dr Jill Tabart, President of the Assembly, and Pastor Bill Hollingsworth, Chairperson of the UAICC, spoke words of truth, confession, covenant and grace with one another. Tonight, we will seek to renew this Covenant, but in so doing, we must be honest with ourselves, with one another, and with God, about the ways we have not lived up to or honoured this statement of covenant.

And so, members of the 16th Assembly and those joining via live-stream, in humility and faith, let us bring our confessions before God. If you are able, you are invited to kneel, so our bodies are in postures of deep humility. Let us pray:

*This is Your nation, This is Your land,  
A land of dreaming, a forgotten past:  
A kindred people, willing to share,  
This sacred land, This is our home.*

God of all creation, we give thanks that You have loved and sustained all creation since time immemorial. We give thanks for ancient history, for stories and bloodlines, for sacred sites and sacred relationships.

Before You, and before our Congress siblings, we confess anew that we have been and continue to be complicit in the oppression of First Peoples. We took and continue to take land from its rightful

custodians. We chose and continue to choose violence, subjugation, prejudice and patronising charity. We have turned a blind eye to the continued desecration of sacred places across our lands. Australia's justice system continues to discriminate against First Peoples, and the ever increasing numbers of Indigenous deaths in custody show us that justice is yet to roll down like waters.

And so, before You, our God, and before our First Nations siblings, we humbly seek forgiveness.

**When we have ignored this Covenant and its implications for our worship, witness and service, forgive us.**

**When we choose power over rather than power with, forgive us.**

**When we make assumptions without deep listening, forgive us.**

**When we do not lift up the voices of First Nations People, particularly when it means that we need to be silent and step aside, forgive us.**

**When we choose not to seek reparative justice through property and finances, forgive us.**

**When we feel that Congress work is reserved for wider Councils of the church, and ignore the First Nations people within our communities, forgive us.**

**Forgive us, God of love. And we seek Your forgiveness too, First Nations siblings.**

**We pray that our commitment to this covenant will be renewed and enlivened. Kindle in us a flame for justice and equity in these lands known as Australia, and remind us to work in solidarity, shoulder to shoulder, with our First Nations siblings. May we defiantly choose love and justice over racism and fear, every day, in every decision, in every action.**

*This is the Great Southland of the Holy Spirit.*

*A land of red dust plains and summer rains,*

*And in this sunburnt land we have seen God's love,*

*And to this Great South-land God's Spirit's come.*

*Amen.*

## Declaration of Forgiveness

## Reflection – Denise Champion

## Renewing of the covenant

*Second Peoples are invited to join in the bold type as an act of renewing the Covenant*

We meet in the presence of God who through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ has reconciled us to God and to one another in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our unity “transcends cultural, economic, national and racial boundaries”. When we share bread and wine we recall God’s gracious covenant with us and the whole creation, and anticipate the joyful celebration of the fulfilment of God’s rule of love and justice among us. In the meantime, as people who share in this covenant, we are called to carry out faithfully Christ’s command to love one another and to order our life in the church in truth and justice. We who are non-aboriginal members of the Sixteenth Assembly, representing all members of the Church, renew the covenanting statement made at the Seventh Assembly.

Long before my people came to this land your people were here. You were nurtured by your traditions, by the land, and by the Mystery that surrounds us all and binds all creation together.

My people did not hear you when you shared your understanding and your Dreaming. In our zeal to share with you the Good News of Jesus Christ, we were closed to your spirituality and your wisdom.

**In recent years we non-Aboriginal members of the Uniting Church in Australia have had the privilege of journeying with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and with other Aboriginal people. We have become more aware of the sad impact that in earlier times the church and our culture had on your people.**

**So on the one hand, we give thanks with you for those of our people who have lived among your people bearing faithful witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ which brings hope and liberation to all. We give thanks to God who has empowered and encouraged your people to stand firm and exercise moral leadership throughout these two centuries.**

**But on the other hand, we who are non-Aboriginal members of our church grieve with you, our Aboriginal and Islander brothers and sisters. We grieve that the way in which our people often brought the Gospel to your people belittled and harmed much of your culture, and confused the Gospel with western ways. As a result you and we are the poorer and the image of God in us all is twisted and blurred, and we are not what God meant us to be.**

**We lament that our people took your land from you as if it were land belonging to nobody, and often responded with great violence to the resistance of your people; our people took from you your means of livelihood, and desecrated many sacred places. Our justice system discriminated against you, and the high incarceration rate of your people and the number of Black deaths in custody show that the denial of justice continues today.**

**Your people were prevented from caring for this land as you believe God required of you, and our failure to care for the land appropriately has brought many problems for all of us.**

**We regret that our churches cooperated with governments in implementing racist and paternalistic policies. By providing foster-homes for Aboriginal children, our churches in reality lent their support to the government practice of taking children from their mothers and families, causing great suffering and loss of cultural identity. Our churches cooperated with governments in moving people away from their land and resettling them in other places without their agreement.**

I apologise on behalf of the Assembly for all those wrongs done knowingly or unknowingly to your people by the Church, and seek your forgiveness. I ask you to help us discover ways to make amends.

In 1988, the Heads of Churches called for a secure land base for dispossessed Aboriginal people, an assured place in the political process for Indigenous people and an openness to get to know one another and learn from each other's culture and values. We commit ourselves to those objectives.

**We rejoice in the promotion of understanding and commitment to change engendered by the Reconciliation Process and the High Court's native title decision and subsequent Commonwealth legislation. In the words of the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples, these changes presage: 'A New Partnership'.**

**We recognise, as was declared in the Assembly's 1988 Statement to the Nation, that the Australian people and this church continue to benefit from the injustices done to your people over the past two centuries. We believe it is right for the Uniting Church to make reparations to you for land taken from your people and used by the churches which became part of this church.**

In 1988 you invited us non-Aboriginal members of this church to enter a covenant with the members of the Congress. We seek to journey together in the true spirit of Christ as we discover what it means to be bound to one another in a covenant. Christ has bound us each to himself, giving himself for us, and he has bound us to each other with his commandment 'Love one another as I have loved you'.

**It is our desire to work in solidarity with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress for the advancement of God's kingdom of justice and righteousness in this land, and we reaffirm the commitment made at the 1985 Assembly to do so. We want to bring discrimination to an end, so that your people are no longer gaoled in disproportionate numbers, and so that equal housing, health, education and employment opportunities are available for your people as for ours. To that end we commit ourselves to work with you towards national and state policy changes. We commit ourselves to build understanding between your people and ours in every locality, and to build relationships which respect the right of your people to self determination in the church and in the wider society.**

**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.**

I pray that this covenant will unite us in a multi-racial bond of fellowship which will be a witness to God's love for us all and a constant challenge to the continuing racism which oppresses you and separates us in this land. I pray that it will thus help us all to move towards a united Australia which respects this land in which we live, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and provides justice and equity for all.

## UAICC Response to Renewing the Covenant

*Congress members are invited to join in the bold type.*

When God created the heavens and the earth He gave humankind his habitation and placed him within his bounds. When He did this He gave humankind stewardship over the bounds of his habitation. We are also told in the Bible that when God had finished creating it was good.

For many thousands of years aboriginal people moved in harmony with creation and subdued it as necessary by hunting, fishing and gathering thus respecting God's command and allowing the earth to sustain us. Our laws were developed by our relationship with the land our intricate system of inter-tribal government. Trade was established which has never been acknowledged or understood appropriately by European researchers.

In 1788 this relation with creation was violently disrupted by the invasion of the European which robbed us of our stewardship of the land which God gave to us.

Your ancestors came to us in different ways and we saw little of our caring God in them. They did not come to us as God's will would dictate, but to dispossess us, take our children, rape our women,

kill our men and boys and destroy our culture, reject our values and beliefs and ultimately claim our lands as their own.

As a direct result of this violent dispossession, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have lived as strangers and outcasts in their own land.

Whilst the church attempted to stem the decimation of our people and culture by providing missions and sanctuaries, in very many instances it did not attempt to understand our ways, our laws or social and economic structures.

**We agree with you that the church, which had a responsibility to be the conscience of the invaders, in many instances relinquished this responsibility and joined with the invaders in a great many atrocities by smoothing the pillow for what was believed to be a dying race. Many of our people look upon the church in our country as condoning what was happening and watched the church stand by as our future was slowly being shortened by westernisation, assimilation and policies of prejudice.**

**Along with the past governments of Australia, the church is held accountable in our society for the injustices and atrocities inflicted on our people.**

**Contrary to the belief of the invaders that they had a divine right to take possession of this land as their own, the God of righteousness, truth and justice has sustained us with the belief that one day we would be recognised as the true stewards of this land. This has come to pass through the High Court decision which was handed down in the Mabo case.**

It is good and right that the church should repent of any of its actions in support of a policy that violently discriminated against and oppressed God's stewards of this land.

The UAICC believes it is just for the Uniting Church, as a result of its enlightened understanding of the Gospel implications of creating new community, to offer a practical response to the past history

of dispossession and resulting disenfranchisement of Aboriginal and Islander people from their social, economic and spiritual development of Australia, by taking action to empower the UAICC ministry by offering to share the assets of the Uniting Church. It is difficult for us again, to recall the atrocities of the past and agree to walk towards you and offer forgiveness because many of our people feel your position of influence in our present society reminds us of who committed these great offences.

**As a result of the violent dispossession and resulting isolation from economic empowerment in Australia, within a great number of our people there has developed a deep anger and resentment of European people.**

**Therefore it would be wrong to just say "I forgive", without reaching a commitment to work together to lay a new foundation upon which we may build a more just future together by ensuring that the Uniting Church plays an active role in providing adequate resources to address the present disadvantages caused by the past injustices and dispossession by the invasion of this country. 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.**

**Because it is pleasing to God to love one another, and it is our commitment to do so, we invite you on behalf of Congress members to develop a new relationship by entering into the struggle of those issues that presently are the cause of continuing injustice resulting in broken relationships.**

You seek our forgiveness because your understanding has been enlightened by the Spirit of the living God to recognise the failures and mistakes of the past and you desire to establish a new relationship based upon real recognition, justice and equality.

**We come to this covenanting table with our gifts of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander spirituality, our culture, our Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander ways of loving and caring, our instinctive concern and a willingness to share and teach our history and every good aspect about being Aboriginal and Islander.**

**Our commitment to walk together with you as equals will be measured by our willingness to share with you our friendship and our love for God's creation. Our people have survived on the fruits of this country and have harvested from gardens as diverse as nature can offer. We give to you our foods, drinks, the flesh of our animals, the fish of our waters and birds of the air that have sustained our people for generations gone by.**

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.

*A period of silent reflection*

## Song

### I Can Do All Things

I can do all things, (echo)  
I can do all things, (echo)  
through Christ who gives me strength.  
I can do all things, (echo)  
I can do all things, (echo)  
through Christ who gives me strength.  
Giver of whatever I need.  
He is the Source of my strength

Djambarrpuyru:

Narrany djäma dhu bukmak, (echo)  
Narrany djäma dhu bukmak, (echo)  
Garraywalañuwurr  
Nayiny ganydjarmirr ñarraku.  
Narrany djäma dhu bukmak, (echo)  
Narrany djäma dhu bukmak, (echo) ?  
Garraywalañuwurr  
Nayiny ganydjarmirr ñarraku.  
Djesu Garray goñ-djulji.  
Djesu Garray marrkapmirr.

Kriol:

Ai gin dum enijing, (echo)

Ai gin dum enijing, (echo)

Thru Krai im na meigim me strongbala.

Ai gin dum enijing, (echo)

Ai gin dum enijing, (echo)

Thru Krai im na meigim me strongbala.

Im gibit mi wanim ai wandim.

Im na ebrijing weya meigim mi strong.

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## Bible Reading

### Genesis 1:1 – 2:3

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 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. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the days and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let's make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

In this we hear the Word of God

**Thanks be to God.**

## Song

### Love Makes A Way

1. Love makes a way to open the door,  
love spreads the welcome mat down on the floor,  
love feeds the hungry and sits with the poor,  
the greatest of these is love.

2. Love clothes the cold and tends to the frail,  
visits the sick and the pris'ner in jail,  
love sees a need and answers the call  
the greatest of all is love.

*Bridge:* Love isn't jealous, impatient or proud.  
Love keeps no record of wrongs that are done.  
True love rejoices when goodness prevails,  
love never fails.

3. Love see a stranger and acts as a friend,  
love breaks down walls, finds bridges to mend,  
love chooses life and sticks to the end,  
the greatest of all is love.  
The greatest of all is love.

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## Prayers for others and ourselves

Leader: Merciful God, hear us.

Response (sung): **Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison.**

Let us come together in 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.**

## Song

### Song – Faith, Hope & Love

1. Faith, hope, and love -  
this is what we long for.  
Faith, hope and love –  
this is what we need.  
Faith, hope, and love -  
this is what we cry for.  
Oh Christ, teach us how to live.

2. Trust in the Truth -  
this is what we long for.  
Trust in the Truth -  
this is what we need.  
Trust in the Truth -  
this is what we cry for.  
Oh Christ, teach us how to live.

3. Patience within -  
this is what we long for.  
Patience within –  
this is what we need.  
Patience within -  
this is what we cry for.  
Oh Christ, teach us how to live.

4. Freedom for all -  
this is what we long for.  
Freedom for all –  
this is what we need.  
Freedom for all -  
this is what we cry for.  
Oh Christ, teach us how to live.

5. Faith, hope, and love -  
this is what we long for.  
Faith, hope and love –  
this is what we need.  
Faith, hope, and love -  
this is what we cry for.  
Oh Christ, teach us how to live.

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## Blessing

## Song

### Peace and Goodwill

Peace and goodwill be with us ev'ry morning.  
Peace and goodwill be with us in the afternoon.  
Peace and goodwill be with us through the evening.  
And at night God's peace be with us through and through.

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## Acknowledgements

Thank you to Megan Laurie-Thomson who is the liturgist for Assembly worship and to everyone who helped contribute to the development of the worship or participated in the leadership of worship.



muyilathina takila-ti  
Le:wun tunk-ungai tuldangk tunk-ungai  
Ola ma tumau i le alofa'  
사랑 안에서 살기  
Tinggal di dalam Kasih  
Nofoma'u i he Ofa  
愛中合居



**Uniting Church in Australia  
ASSEMBLY**