

TRUTH BURNS

At a recent press conference Professor Marcia Langton said, 'the truth burns'.

In that simple statement I heard a description of the work of the Holy Spirit who burns the truth into our lives, both our lives as a nation and as a Church.

The Holy Spirit has burnt the truth into my heart and mind and life as I have read and listened to the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

I try to make time most days to either read or listen to the Statement. I listen to it in English and I listen to it in First Nations languages.

As I read and listen, the Holy Spirit burns the truth into my heart, into my mind and into my gut.

It burns the truth that sovereignty has never been ceded and can't be wiped out by colonisation.

It witnesses to the truth that their children are removed in too great a number and their people are disproportionately incarcerated. Not because they don't love their children or are innately criminal, but because the system is unjust and cruel.

A First Nations Voice enshrined in our Constitution offers the chance to put a spoke in the wheel of this system and help us all build a more just and compassionate way of being with each other in ways led by First Peoples.

As I knelt before Rev Mark Kickett, Interim Chair of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress at the reconvened Assembly, I led the confession of sin on behalf of the Assembly.

We acknowledged our actions have not matched our commitment in the Covenant or the vision of the Preamble.

The truth of this is burnt into my life. I know that, just as Australia must learn to listen to its First Peoples, the Church must also learn to listen to Congress as they struggle for self-determination to lead and guide ministry with First Peoples.

So I will go to the ballot box when the day for the Referendum comes and I will vote Yes.

I will vote Yes to a First Nations Voice



with the pain, the hope, the joy and the grace of the Uluru Statement ringing in my ears, the long struggle of First Peoples for self-determination lodged in my heart and a longing in my gut for a better, more truthful way to be in these lands.

And I will leave the ballot box resolved to continue to be part of the work of justice-seeking, for even as we work for a Yes vote, after we have cast our vote, there remains hard, good, holy work of truth-telling and treaty-making to do.

There is also hard, good, holy work to do in the Church to bring about the

vision of Congress to be self-determining in all ministry and advocacy for First Peoples in the Church.

I will vote for a Voice and I will remain committed to this work so that I might join in the reconciling work of Christ, which calls us to truth-telling and justice-making and which has the power to make all things new.

Rev Sharon Hollis, Uniting Church in Australia Assembly President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharon Hollis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.