



# DAY OF MOURNING 2024

A worship service for faith communities to reflect on the effects of invasion and colonisation of Australia's First Peoples.



**Uniting Church in Australia**  
ASSEMBLY



**UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER**  
CHRISTIAN CONGRESS



**COVER ARTWORK:** Interwoven story-telling

“No matter what the history, this will always be Aboriginal land, our imprint will never be invisible and we will always survive and thrive. Our stories and family lines entwine across seas, lands and skies, forever a united front.”

**Grace Williams**

Community and Cultural Resource Officer,  
Leprena - UAICC Tasmania

# DAY OF MOURNING Introduction

## 21 January 2024

As we move into 2024, we are acutely aware that there remains in our nation an unhealed wound that began with the white settlement of Australia and continues to impact the lives of First Nations People today.

Since 2019 the Uniting Church has marked a Day of Mourning to reflect on the dispossession of Australia's First Peoples and the ongoing injustices faced by First Nations people in this land. For those of us who are Second Peoples from many lands, we lament that we were and remain complicit.

This declaration of a Day of Mourning arises from a request from the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) which was endorsed by the 15th Assembly in 2018. It is an expression of the Uniting Church's commitment to justice and truth-telling, a commitment grounded in and required of us by the [Covenant](#) we have made and reaffirmed with UAICC.

Again in 2024, we invite you on or around Sunday 21 January to hold worship services that mark the Day of Mourning.

As Christians, we hear the promise of Jesus that the truth will set us free. The Day of Mourning invites us to listen to the truth of the effects of colonisation and racism on First Peoples and to hope that in confronting this truth we will discover ways to create communities of justice and healing.

In marking the Day of Mourning, we affirm the sovereignty of First Nations people. We confess and seek forgiveness for the dispossession and violence against First Nations people. We lament our part and we recommit to justice and truth-telling.

of Mourning service as it tells



We pray that in the year ahead we will have the courage to face our history with honesty. We pray that we learn to listen to First Nations People and empower them to implement policies and practices they know will address the most pressing problems facing their communities. On this Day of Mourning and throughout the year, may we celebrate their strengths and successes.

We encourage you to use this opportunity to make a connection with UAICC or First Peoples in your local community. You might also like to take this opportunity to begin a conversation about how you will continue to live out the covenant as a faith community and explore the Assembly's [Living The Covenant Locally](#) resource as a way to begin or continue this journey.

We would love to see and hear stories about how you participate. [Email the Assembly](#) or use the official hashtag on social media: #UCADayofMourning.

As the President of the Uniting Church and National Chair of UAICC, we pray that our Church and our nation will continue on this journey of confession, truth-telling and of seeking justice and healing.

Grace and peace,



**Rev Sharon Hollis** / President  
Uniting Church in Australia



**Rev Mark Kickett** / National Chair  
Uniting Aboriginal and  
Islander Christian Congress



# DAY OF MOURNING

## Worship Resource

### 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.

### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES:

*Suggested actions for the inclusion of children in the service.*

- » *Jump and throw your arms up high*
- » *put your hand to your ear then loosen your fingers and wave your arms around*
- » *cup your ear with your hand as if listening hard*
- » *stand still and breath deeply*
- » *tap rhythm sticks (or two small gum tree limbs), hit gum nuts with a small branch, whistle using a gum leaf or blade of grass.*
- » *tap two stones together*
- » *pretend to syphon dirt from one hand to the other*
- » *make a heart shape with your hands and move it away from and then towards your body*
- » *make a triangle with your hands*
- » *give yourself a hug*
- » *extend your arm as if putting it around a mate, then extend your arms as if placing your hands on someones shoulders*
- » *wiggle your arm across your body*
- » *hold your hands up high in the air*

*Other suggestions for a service that includes Children and Families can be found at the end of this document*

## 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.**

OR

We acknowledge the \_\_\_\_\_ Clan/Nation  
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.

*If there is a member of  
the recognised traditional  
owner Clan/Nation able to  
be present, then a Welcome  
to Country may be said first  
followed by the short form  
of the Acknowledgement in  
response.*

## HYMN/SONG

## GREETING

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.**

## BLESSING FOR A SACRED PLACE

**Leader:** Arrawatanha Ngapala Nguthana

**Response:** Most High  
Our Maker

**All:** The land you have given us, your children.  
Look on this place ...  
this special place where you live;  
this special place where your glory rests.  
Look upon this sacred place  
where your name is honoured.  
Help us keep it as our Ancestors did.

**Leader:** Althaninda

**Response:** Happy are you.

*In the Adnyamathanha language of the Flinders Ranges, SA, Arrawatanha means God/Most High and Ngapala Nguthana means Our Maker. The meaning of Althaninda is Happy are you*

## PRAYERS

### INVOCATION

Abba, Father,  
Bäpa 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 liberator,  
friend of the poor,  
dwell with us  
as healer of creation,  
and restorer of hope.

Creator Spirit,  
bringer of hope,  
source of courage,  
help us to listen,  
and open our hearts  
to the stories of these lands.  
Amen.

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



## TRUTH-TELLING AND AN INVITATION

We are called to the day  
We are called to this space

We are called to justice in the mourning  
Not just for today but all that weeps from today

All that sits in the layers of mourning,  
embedded in the trail of injustice

Of removal  
Of dispossession  
Of stolen land  
Of stolen children  
Of stolen identity

Imposed policies on a sovereign people

Ancestral land,  
The mourning as a mother weeps for her child's hand

In the everyday dawning  
First Peoples sit in intergenerational mourning

We sit in silence and pray not just in the pain of this day  
but of all that this day  
weaves into -  
all the mourning, past, present and future

Creator let us arise  
Arise in justice and truth telling  
Arise in the mourning of the weeping hills

Let us mourn but in the mourning,  
let us look to the love that calls us to seek out  
and speak out against injustice

To be present in footprints past  
To be the advocates for change

## LAMENT AND CONFESSION

Merciful God,  
we, the Second Peoples of this land, lament the injustice and abuse that has  
so often marked the treatment of the First Peoples of this land.

*The gathered body shares  
this lament, saying it  
together.*

**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.**

## RESPONSE BY FIRST PEOPLES

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

## DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

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.**

## HYMN/SONG

## THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

## BIBLE READINGS

*Passages which could be used include:*

*Psalm 85: 7-13;*

*Micah 6: 6-8;*

*John 14: 15-24;*

*Acts 2: 1-21;*

*Romans 8: 19-27;*

*James 2: 14-26;*

*1 John 4: 7-21*

*Particular concepts may also be used, as follows:*

**Redistributive Justice** - reparation, who is given the power (2 Samuel 21); Nature of land (1 Kings 21)

**Reparation** - Luke 19:1-10

**Jubilee** - "the year of the Lord's favour", a prophetic declaration for First Peoples (Isaiah 61:7-9; Luke 4:16-21; Lev 25)

**Self-emptying God** (kenosis) – in the "other", Christ is revealed (Matthew 25:31-46)

**A Destiny Together** – Basis of Union: "the reconciliation and renewal of the whole creation"; Psalm 78:1-8; 2 Corinthians 5:16-19; The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)

*Further references: Mark 10:17-31, Luke 1:46-55; John 1; Psalms 19:1,2; Isaiah 40:22-31; Romans 8:19-21, Acts 17:22-28.*

### Preaching of the Word

Other resources for preaching:

**16th Assembly Bible Studies led by Nungalinga College**

Online Assembly:

<https://uniting.church/bible-reflections-from-nungalinga-college/>

Reconvened Assembly:

<https://uniting.church/worshipday2/>

<https://vimeo.com/801833713>

**Walking Together – Exploring the covenant between First and Second Peoples**

<https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/493>

**Building Partnerships – A guide to covenant renewal in the UCA**

<https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/288>

## TIME OF SILENCE

*The gathered community may be invited into a time of silent reflection*

## OFFERING

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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.

## SENDING FORTH OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

## HYMN/SONG

## WORD OF MISSION

People of God,  
be strong and of good courage,  
live as people of the Covenant,  
seek justice and resist evil,  
honour First Nations People and confront racism,  
love and care for creation and turn from exploitation of the earth,  
proclaim truth and challenge lies  
until we are reconciled through God's love.

*There could be a  
special offering for  
the work of the UAICC  
in your Synod or First  
Peoples community  
organisation you have  
connected with.*



## BLESSING

May the blessing of God,  
ancient of days,  
Jesus, embodiment of God's justice  
and the Spirit, animator of Creation  
Be on us and remain with us. Amen.

## DISMISSAL

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.

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## SUGGESTED SONGS

**Why Lord, O Why?** by David McGregor:

Youtube: <https://youtu.be/LvhCTvt8wM0>

**How Shall we Sing?** by Craig Mitchell and David McGregor

<https://vimeo.com/663295833>

**How Long, How Long (Psalm 6)** by David McGregor

<https://vimeo.com/650139229>

**Lament** by Garry Jennings

Sheet music: <http://garrycondoseres.com/index.php/snippets/407-lament>



## CHILDREN AND FAMILIES:

For an intergenerational service that helps children and families to fully participate, you might like to consider these ideas.

## SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR PRAYERS AND REFLECTIONS

See the above Call to Worship for suggested actions.

## CRAFT ACTIVITY:

- Ask your children to draw an Australian landscape as described in the Call to Worship, gum trees, desert sand, mountains etc.
- Or bring with you pieces of native trees, sand, stones to look at or to use to make a picture.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FIRST PEOPLES

- During the Acknowledgment of First Peoples you might like to read Welcome To Country By Auntie Joy Murphy and Lisa Kennedy by Walker Book.

Make sure to emphasise that God was always in this Land.

## TRUTH-TELLING AND AN INVITATION

Ask these Wonder Questions:

I wonder:

- How do these words make you feel?
- Do your feelings change as the poem is read?
- Can you draw how they make you feel?
- Describe those feelings

Suggested resource: You may like to use a set of emotional cards where children can point to the cards to show how they feel. For example:

- Bears Bundle  
<https://innovativeresources.org/resources/value-packs/the-bears-bundle/>

Or use the emojis on your phone.

## LAMENT AND CONFESSION

Children might pray as they continue working on their picture or focus on the leaves and rocks while they pray.

A shorter children's prayer might be:

Great God,

Thank you for the (stone, rock, plants, mountains etc, name each in turn after the statement Thank you for)

Help me to share this land

And to learn from those who you first gave this land too.

Help me to not forget past wrongs to the First People

And not to repeat them

Amen (one clap, use clapsticks if possible)

## **BIBLE READINGS:**

Suggested activities or resources for the bible passages suggested above:

### **Psalms 85: 7 – 13:**

Make a heart card with a beautiful picture of something from Australia on it

### **John 14: 15 – 24:**

Read/Watch Tina the Tree from the Lost Sheep website:

<https://www.lostsheep.com.au/stories/tina-the-tree/>

Use the free downloads or buy the activity pack

- how many acts of love did the tree do?
- how many acts of love were done to the tree?

### **Romans 8: 19 – 27:**

Watch Aboriginal creation stories on You Tube. For example:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDI5QwAR8DI>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0y3Ta5xcKV4>

### **James 2: 14 – 26:**

Read/Watch All These Things by Susie Poole:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wm5EUrLP9zY>

Encourage role-play with toys where being kind can be played out.

To explore the themes suggested:

### **Redistributive Justice:**

- Read The Day the Crayons Quit by Drew Daywelt  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZttMDho5HMw>
- Play with toys that encourage practicing interaction with others.
- Or draw a colourful picture using all the colours

### **Self-emptying God:**

Tell stories of how someone has changed their life or how you changed life for someone.

- Watch this Behind the News episode on Eddie Koiki Mabo:  
<https://www.abc.net.au/btn/classroom/mabo-day/10530494>



### **A Destiny Together:**

- An alternative reading of the Beatitudes can be found in The Beginners Bible Jesus Teaches on a Mountain pp.318- 321
- Play with toys in a “garden” made from the twigs, leaves etc that you bought with you into worship.

## **BOOKS FOR CHILDREN**

***Sorry Sorry*** By Anne Kerr

<https://www.booktopia.com.au/sorry-sorry-anne-kerr/book/9781925877359.html>

***Walking the Corroboree*** by Rhanee Tsetsakos and Anne Kerr

<https://boolarongpress.com.au/product/walking-to-corroboree/>

***Stolen Girl*** by Trina Saffioti, illustrated by Norma MacDonald

<https://www.magabala.com/products/stolen-girl>

***Stories for Simon*** by: Lisa Miranda Sarzin, illustrated by Lauren Briggs [https://](https://www.penguin.com.au/books/stories-for-simon-9780143784258)

[www.penguin.com.au/books/stories-for-simon-9780143784258](https://www.penguin.com.au/books/stories-for-simon-9780143784258)

***Sea country*** by Aunty Patsy Cameron and Lisa Kennedy

<https://www.magabala.com/products/sea-country>

***Day break: January 26. The day we remember by Amy McQuire and Matt Chun Day***

[https://www.booktopia.com.au/day-break-amy-mcquire/  
book/9781760508159.html](https://www.booktopia.com.au/day-break-amy-mcquire/book/9781760508159.html)

***Hero, Rebels and Innovators: Inspiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People from History*** by Karen Wyld and Jaelyn Biumaiwai

<https://www.hachette.com.au/karen-wyld-jaelyn-biumaiwai/heroes-rebels-and-innovators-inspiring-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people-from-history>

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## **TOY BOX ADDITION:**

If your toy collection does not have First Nations dolls in it you might like to add to your collection. You can do that here:

<https://www.yarnstrongsista.com/product-category/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-resources/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-dolls-clothes/>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### *Truth-telling and Invitation:*

*Alison Overeem, Manager, Leprena - UAICC Tasmania*

*Blessings for a Sacred Place: Rev Dr Aunty Denise Champion as part of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress contribution to Penelope Monger (ed.) Living Water Thirsty Land (Sydney: The Uniting Church in Australia Assembly, 2008), 90-91.*

### *Prayers of the People:*

*Prepared by the Wontulp Bi-Buya Indigenous Theology Working Group  
Amended September 2018, Assembly Resourcing Unit*

*Children and Families additions: Wendy Lewis, The Cross in my Backyard:*

<https://thecrossinmybackyard.wordpress.com/>



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