



DAY OF MOURNING 2025

A worship service for faith communities to stand in solidarity with Australia's First Peoples as we remember, reflect and on the effects of invasion, forced dispossession, oppression and suffering.



UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER
CHRISTIAN CONGRESS



Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY

We acknowledge that God has been present in these lands for thousands of generations, and we can claim the promises of Jesus to write a new story of a walking together in faith, hope, justice and love.



COVER ARTWORK:

The above artworks depict the story of Christ's presence being amongst First Peoples of these lands of his creation for generations. His teachings have long been displayed within the stories, songs, dances and ceremony First Peoples have used them to connect with God as great Creator and teacher for our communities.

We, as First Peoples mourn the heartbreaking inequities our past and present generations have and continue to suffer, and we seek to create new ways into a light filled future, by fully claiming the promises Jesus has made to us. We hold deep sorrow for what has been lost forever, and pray that the souls of those who have come before us, know the peace of our Lord, amongst their heavenly home. As a young Aboriginal woman, I show my honour for the sacrifices and heartbreak of my Elders, by seeking to grasp with both hands, all of the opportunities that have been hard fought for my benefit. I seek to know, and be comforted by the light of Jesus, and to let that light shine into the darkness of our daily struggles and suffering.

Artworks for front and back cover by Zoe Belle, Guwa Koa and Kuku Yalanji woman

Reflection Scripture John 1:1-9 NIV

The Word Became Flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome[a] it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

DAY OF MOURNING Introduction

19 January 2025

In 2024 the Uniting Church in Australia and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) joyfully celebrated 30 years of a covenant relationship under God. Made in honesty about our history and sustained by hope for the future, the Covenant has been a guiding light in our journey towards a more just Church and nation.

Woven together by threads of love, faith and a vision for God's justice and healing, we have chosen to walk together as First and Second Peoples, sharing in joy and sorrow on the journey to reconciliation.

In this spirit of commitment, we invite you to observe the Uniting Church Day of Mourning on Sunday 19 January.

Now in its fifth year, the Day of Mourning was established by the Assembly in 2018 at the request of the UAICC, building on Congress' legacy of prophetic leadership including the creation of Congress itself and the Covenant. This day expresses our deep desire that truth, justice, healing and hope will shape our life as First and Second Peoples all across this vast southland.

For countless generations before colonisation, First Peoples lived in this ancient place, custodians of its lands, skies, and waterways. They cared for creation with profound wisdom and harmony, sustained by the Spirit of God who was always present with them.

The brutal settlement of these lands now called Australia devastated the oldest living culture on earth. Since that time First Peoples have known forced intervention, genocide, dispossession, incarceration, the loss of language, culture, family and story. The great wounds at the heart of our nation will remain unhealed until we can reckon with the full truth of our history.

As Second Peoples from many lands, we must understand how we continue to benefit from grave injustices of the past and present.

The Day of Mourning asks us to listen deeply and learn humbly, and bear one another's burdens. It is a moment to receive the outstretched hand of friendship offered in grace and hope, and to trust in Jesus, whose reconciling love continues to mend the brokenness within and among us.

The same ancient Spirit of God which has always been present in these lands has given us 'a destiny together' as the body of Christ in this time and place. This is also a day to celebrate survival and the immense gift we have in each other, giving thanks for the transformative and boundless love of Christ which holds us.

As the President of the Uniting Church in Australia and National Chairperson of the UAICC, we pray that the roots of our covenant will grow deep into the soil of truth and friendship and grow new shoots of justice and healing for our Church and nation.

May the blessing of God - the Ancient of Days, Jesus, the embodiment of justice, and the Spirit, the eternal animator of Creation - be on us and remain with us.

Grace and peace,



Rev Charissa Suli /
President
Uniting Church in Australia



Rev Mark Kickett /
National Chairperson
Uniting Aboriginal and
Islander Christian Congress

DAY OF MOURNING

Worship Resource

CALL TO WORSHIP

PRAYERFUL ACTION:

(The words in red within the prayer are body actions that the gathered congregation can participate in as the call to worship is spoken. This can be led by the worship leader or others as appropriate)

Our Lord is alive amongst all things of creation.

(Lift your hand to your ears)

The sounds of the rivers in motion, the waves of the seas.

(Make a motion of the waves with your hands)

The scents of the gum trees and native flowers on the winds.

(Stand still with your legs firmly planted, take some deep breathes, stretch up both arms and sway like a tree in the breezes.)

You made the earth to give us life and daily sustenance and it is on Country that we find a place to retreat and walk alongside you in whispering conversation.

(Rub hands together to make the sound of a whispering conversation)

Today we come together, and we bring our full voices, to lift them in praise of our triune God.

(Lift arms wide to praise God together)

We ask for forgiveness for not always being the givers of love and hospitality.

(Bring hands together in prayerful pose)

And, we look to have our hearts made clean.

(Use your right hand to catch the love of Christ and rub it onto your chest over your heart)

(Together)

***Lord our father of unconditional love,
we come in repentance and hope***

***Jesus, son of guiding and teaching love,
we come to listen, learn and act with courage.***

Additional Ideas for Children and Families

Suggested actions for the inclusion of children in the service.

- Use Gum leaves and native flowers to make a small posy
- Use clap sticks to keep a beat
- Make a dry riverbed with river stones
- Write words of what love looks like on small pieces of paper or dried gum leaves. Place them in a wooden bowl or Coolamon

*Holy Spirit of multiplying love,
we come with humble awe and wonder of what you might move within our
hearts and the hearts of those with whom we share life.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FIRST PEOPLES

Today, as we gather to worship, we acknowledge the _____
peoples, as the first-born peoples of these lands, and we acknowledge that
through their continuing care of God's creation, God and his Holy Spirit has been
a source of spiritual sustenance and strength for First Peoples of this Country.

We pay our respects to the knowledge holders and sharers of story, for through
their custom and ceremony God's reconciling love and purpose is revealed.

We acknowledge First Peoples Elders present today and in doing so,
acknowledge their suffering. We commit ourselves to an ongoing Covenantal
journey.

HYMN/SONG

GREETING

Friends, today we are remembering in strength that comes from fellowship, the
hurtful and saddening history of our nation and the violence acts that resulted in
dispossession and disconnection which were perpetrated on First Peoples of this
place.

We come together today under God, to mourn and lament the darkness and
suffering of our history, and to prayerfully welcome into our lives, the healing
light of the hope we have in Jesus.

A light that runs through all of us, to shine a pathway for us to journey together.
As we hold these stones in our hands,
Stones that cry out to the God of truth, justice and love,
May God's unending peace be with you,
And also with you.

BLESSINGS FOR A SACRED PLACE

Caller: Baiaame, giver of life

Responder: Our Creator God, our guide, our protector and giver of
wisdom.

All: You have come before us, and made it possible for us to be together in this special place at this time.

You created us in your image to be in a reconciling relationship with each other through you.

Our pain is known to you and you have shared with us the way through darkness and into light.

Help us not to stumble like children, but to stand proudly as followers of your teachings and lessons of healing.

Caller: Jesus, the name of salvation.

All: And our home of assurance.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (SPOKEN IN UNISON)

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

We acknowledge with sorrow the way in which their land was taken from them and their language, culture and spirituality despised and suppressed.

We acknowledge with sorrow the way in which the Christian church was so often not only complicit in this process but actively involved in it.

We acknowledge with sorrow that in our own time the injustice and abuse has continued.

We have been indifferent when we should have been outraged,
we have been apathetic when we should have been active,
we have been silent when we should have spoken out.

Gracious God, forgive us for our failures, past and present.
By your Spirit transform our minds and hearts so that we may boldly speak your truth and courageously do your will.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

HYMN/SONG OF CONFESSION

PRAYER FOR THE JOURNEY OF HEALING

(preferably spoken by a First Nations person)

Oh God, your love is wider than our differences,
larger than our loneliness,
and stronger than our sorrows.

At times we may doubt that we are able to overcome hostilities we feel towards others, or have felt towards us,

Yet you invite us to experience
that through surrender and obedience to your great and reconciling love,
we are able to see more clearly the beautiful picture
of your gift of a wondrous creation.

We are reminded of the words of Paul to the church in Rome calling us to peace and hope through faith, grace and perseverance:

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

Oh God, we know the work of reconciliation is not simple.

It requires peoples who may feel suffering through dispute,
to look at each other as we would look to reconciling with you God;
to see the joy in working to live amongst each other in peace,
in a creation made for us.

Peace given from you God, with you God, and in you God.

Help us to reckon with the challenge that reconciliation between First and Second Peoples must begin with reconciling ourselves in truth and humility with you, our God.

Then we can do the work of being peacemakers and justice seekers,
in understanding what we may need to know better,
to be able to act responsibly and respectfully.

Oh God our hope for the coming season of faith in our Uniting Church,
is that we look towards each other as peoples of God,
who wish to be supported to live freely,
in enjoying the giving of spiritual care for each other,
through wonder and worship.

We bring our truth-telling, our lament and our confessions to you God,
In the name of Jesus Christ,
Who bore our sins,
And is the great reconciler.
Amen

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Water for First Peoples is always a sign of God's peace and fulfillment in everything that is good. The promise of food, of harmony with ourselves, and the creation around us.

At the very beginning Creator God blessed the waters, God's great gift to us and renewed in this water here today.

God who hovered over the waters, invites us to 'come to the water' to drop our heavy burdens of lament and confession.

Hear then the words of Christ's forgiveness to us all:
Your sins are forgiven, and you are cleansed and made new again.
Go now and live as my reconciled people.
In the name of Christ, Amen.

So then, let us bring the heavy stones that we are carrying and drop them into the water of healing and life.

SONG and PRAYERFUL ACTION

(While music is playing, invite people to bring their stones forward to place in a bowl of water, symbolising the waters of baptism and cleansing of forgiveness and life.)

RESPONSE FROM FIRST PEOPLES

(An opportunity to hear stories from First Peoples about how they make their way in the world with God, culture and faith.)

'Either invite a First Nations person to share, or alternatively play Play one or two of these video stories from Voices from the Covenant, of First Peoples reflecting on faith: (<https://www.youtube.com/@VoicesofourCovenant>)

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

2 Chronicles 7 NIV

if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Isaiah 61:1-3 NIV

The Year of the Lord's Favor

61 The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,[a]

2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,

3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,
the oil of joy
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.

They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the Lord
for the display of his splendor.

John 1: 1-9

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.
6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.
8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.
9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Isaiah 9 : 1-7

9 Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—
2 The people walking in darkness
 have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
 a light has dawned.
3 You have enlarged the nation
 and increased their joy;
 they rejoice before you
 as people rejoice at the harvest,
 as warriors rejoice
 when dividing the plunder.
4 For as in the day of Midian's defeat,
 you have shattered
 the yoke that burdens them,
 the bar across their shoulders,
 the rod of their oppressor.
5 Every warrior's boot used in battle
 and every garment rolled in blood
 will be destined for burning,
 will be fuel for the fire.
6 For to us a child is born,
 to us a son is given,
 and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
 Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 Of the greatness of his government and peace
 there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this

Matthew 5

5 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, **2** and he began to teach them.

Salt and Light

14 "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

SERMON

TIME OF SILENT REFLECTION

HYMN/SONG

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

Leader: Loving God, on this day of celebration we acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout Australia. We turn to you in prayer as we commit ourselves to journeying together in the spirit of Faith. Father, you are good.

All: Lord fill our hearts with Love and Compassion.

Leader: We pray for all Leaders in this Great Southern Land, that they may respect and accept the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, and provide truth, justice, peace, unity and equity for all. Father you are good.

All: Lord fill our hearts with Love and Compassion

Leader: We ask for your guidance for the youth on their life's journey, that

they
come to seek and know you and trust in your love and compassion.
Father you are good.

All: Lord fill our hearts with Love and Compassion

Leader: We pray for all Elders, those who are sick, the dying, the imprisoned,
those who are lost and suffering – we ask for your protection, healing and
mercy for all.
Father you are good.

All: Lord fill our hearts with Love and Compassion

Leader: Lord thankyou for your Mercy which covers all our Sins and for the
love which you wash over us. Please help us to be strong in Faith and to love
everyone as you taught us.
Father you are good.

All: Lord fill our hearts with Love and Compassion

Leader: Let us all take a moment's silence as we pray for our personal
intentions *to our God*.
Father you are good.

All: Lord fill our hearts with Love and Compassion

Leader: God, our loving Father, you reveal your care and compassion to us
through the life, words and deeds of your son Jesus. Grant us the gift of
your compassion so that all peoples may enjoy your promise of peace. With
humble hearts we make our prayer through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

WORD OF SENDING FROM GOD:

People of God,
go from here to live out the covenant into which we,
the First and Second Peoples of this land, have entered
with one another.

Confront and challenge injustice wherever you see it.
Act justly yourselves and insist that others do the same.
Rejoice in the richness of our diverse cultures and learn from them.
Celebrate and demonstrate the unity we share in Jesus our Lord.
Commit to worship, witness and serve as one people under God.

BLESSING

May our God of all creation

Bless us with a desire to seek to know better those who we are yet to call friend.

May the troubles we experience in our own lives, be lessened by the giving and receiving of hospitality and respect towards each other.

May our great Creator comfort the pain of those who experience ongoing suffering through the actions of those who are yet to understand a better way.

May the songs of the birds amongst the trees and the bush scents carried on the breeze, be a comfort to those who mourn what has been lost.

May the rivers, streams and waterholes that have cut pathways across Country, be a creation signpost for knowing the healing waters from which to drink.

And, may the nourishing light of Christ's Holy and perfect love be a daily reminder of our responsibility to be the hands and feet of Jesus in speaking up for justice, and working to create an abundant life, for all of God's peoples across these lands.

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- Prayer for the journey of healing written by Rev Aunty Roberta Stanley and Kym Korbe
- Final blessing prayer written by Brooke Prentis, from the Wakka Wakka peoples https://www.commongrace.org.au/an_aboriginal_prayer_for_truth_and_hope
- Resource and in-person worship service curated by members of the Muth Arrak Regional Council of UAICC, Qld

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Hymns/Songs

Suggestions from Muth Arrak (Regional Council of UAICC, Queensland Synod)

- [Holy Ground](#)
- [Here I am](#) (Together in Song 658)
- [Weep With Me](#)
- [O Come to the Altar](#)
- [Light of the World](#)
- [Living Hope](#)
- Come as You Are (Together in Song 693)
- [In Christ Alone](#)
- [King of Kings](#)

From previous resources

- For you, deep stillness (Julie Perrin - All Together Whatever, 494)
- Great South Land (Geoff Bullock)
- How long? (Robin Mann - All Together for Good 563)
- Like a Candle (Craig Mitchell - All Together for Good 582)
- Sorrowing Song (Robin Mann - All Together Everybody 286)
- How long? (David MacGregor, Uniting in Worship 2, p. 200 & CD Rom)
- Prayer for peace (David Haas - As One Voice)
- Christ be our light (Bernadette Farrell - All Together OK 313)
- Do justice (David MacGregor - All Together for Good 578)
- Bambelela/Never give up (Trad. South African - Seasons of the Spirit Songbooks)
- All are welcome (Marty Haugen - Church Hymnary 4)
- Companions on the journey (Carey Landry - Seasons of the Spirit Songbooks)

- God of freedom, God of justice (Together in Song 657)
- Great God, your Spirit, like the wind (Together in Song 416)
- Christ is the world 's in which we move (Together in Song 677)
- Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair (Together in Song 690)
- Come to be our hope, Lord Jesus (Together in Song 688)
- Kneels at the feet of his friends (Together in Song 640)
- When I needed a neighbour were you there? (Together in Song 629)

Video resources

Voices of the Covenant exhibition series (UCAQLD):

- https://ucaqlld.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Voices-of-our-Covenant-Catalogue_Digital.pdf
- <https://www.youtube.com/@voicesofourcovenant>

Prayers

- [Assembly Resource Centre - First Peoples Worship Hub](#)

Picture Books

- All ages book recommendations
https://www.commongrace.org.au/book_recommendations
- Children's resources
https://www.commongrace.org.au/childrens_resources
- "Our Mob, God's Story",
<https://www.biblesociety.org.au/our-mob/>





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