

**UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
PASTORAL SUPPORT DOCUMENT FOR THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE VIGIL SERVICE
INVITATION TO FAITHFUL REMEMBRANCE**

Dear Beloved Community of God in Christ,

As President of the Uniting Church in Australia, I offer this pastoral document to support your congregations in marking the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. This document provides an invitation to participate, historical and theological reflections, pastoral prayers, suggested hymns, practical guidance, and resources to assist in commemorating this significant event.

I warmly invite you to join me in commemorating the solemn anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. On Sunday 13 April 2025 3:00 pm, we will gather at St Stephen's Uniting Church, 197 Macquarie Street, Sydney. This year marks 110 years since the Armenian Genocide began, resulting in the tragic loss of approximately 1.5 million lives between 1915 and 1923. It also marks a decade since the Uniting Church formally recognised this tragedy as genocide during our 14th Assembly in July 2015.

[Please register your attendance here.](#) If you're unable to attend in person, I encourage you to mark this important anniversary in your local worship services.

Historical and Theological Reflection

As the Uniting Church in Australia, our recognition of the Armenian Genocide expresses our unwavering commitment to truth, justice, and reconciliation. The prophet Micah reminds us: "*He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*" (Micah 6:8 NIV).

Armenian theologian Dr. Vigen Guroian emphasises the importance of communal memory and moral witness to our Christian identity¹. Pacific theologian Dr. Upolu Vaai similarly calls for genuine reconciliation, involving the transformation of oppressive structures². The Rev. Dr. Krikor Youmshajekian, Minister of St Andrew's Uniting Church in Sydney, beautifully reflects: "*Remembering the Armenian Genocide is essential to our spiritual journey. It calls us to bear witness to the truth, acknowledge the pain endured, and strive tirelessly for a more just and peaceful world.*" He further shares his personal story, stating: "*Growing up in an Armenian community, I witnessed firsthand the lasting impacts of genocide on families and communities. This memory compels us to speak the truth, to actively engage in reconciliation, and to ensure such atrocities are never repeated.*" Historically, our commitments to justice and reconciliation have been firmly established in foundational documents such as the Basis of Union (1977) and the Covenanting Statement with First Peoples (1994). These continue to shape our shared journey. As conflicts and crises continue around the globe, our act of remembrance becomes even more significant. It challenges us as a church to be courageous in advocacy, dialogue, and compassionate action.

A prayer written by Rev Gaby Kobrossi

A Middle Eastern minister serving at Bankstown District Uniting Church in the Georges River Presbytery, NSW/ACT Synod.

God of infinite mercy and boundless love,
we come before you with heavy hearts, remembering our Armenian sisters and brothers
who have endured the unspeakable pain of violence and genocide.

¹ Guroian, V. (2002). *Tending the Heart of Virtue: How Classic Stories Awaken a Child's Moral Imagination*. Oxford University Press.

² Vaai, U. (2017). *Relational Hermeneutics: Decolonizing the Mindset and the Pacific Itulagi*. Pacific Theological College.

Lord comfort those who mourn with your gentle embrace.
Heal the wounds of trauma that linger in hearts and minds.
Grant wisdom and courage to those who strive for justice and truth,
and renew the hope of all who long for a future of peace.

Unite us as instruments of your love,
that we may boldly stand against oppression and lift up the persecuted.
Strengthen our resolve to be peacemakers in a fractured world,
reflecting your grace and compassion in all we do.

We also lift up every community facing persecution and suffering,
asking that your healing presence surround them,
bringing restoration, hope, and the promise of your peace.
In the name of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, we pray. Amen.

Suggested Hymns for Community Worship

- "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace" (TiS 607)
- "Lord of All Hopefulness" (TiS 613)
- "Beauty for Brokenness" (TiS 690)
- "God of Freedom, God of Justice" (TiS 657)
- "Great is Your Faithfulness" (TiS 154)

Music sheets are available in the "Together in Song" hymnbook or online at [Together in Song](#).

Practical Guidance for Congregations

Consider:

- Reaching out to local Armenian communities and any of our Armenian and Middle Eastern Ministers within the Uniting Church to build relationships and better understand their stories.
- Hosting educational forums about Armenian history and culture.
- The groundbreaking documentary the Golden Chain of Mercy.

In the shadow of World War I, The Golden Chain of Mercy unveils a poignant story of survival and compassion that transcends borders. The Ottoman Empire commits a genocide to erase the country's ethnic minorities – Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, from history. Amidst this darkness, a glimmer of hope emerges through the sacrifice of ANZAC unit fighters, alongside the benevolent citizens of Australia and New Zealand who came to their aid.

This documentary tells the story of survivors and is a tribute to the unsung heroes and missionaries who stretched *'the Golden Chain of Mercy'* ring after ring across the globe, a testament to humanity's unwavering resolve to uphold justice and kindness in the face of unimaginable adversity. The film pays tribute to the kindness and generosity of the missionaries of the evangelical churches, known today as the Uniting Church of Australia.

A special documentary screening will be held at Wesley Mission in Sydney CBD on 24 May 2025. More details to come later. Please save the date. You can make donations here: [Golden Chain of Mercy](#)

Additional Information

- [Uniting Church National Assembly Resolution \(2015\)](#)
- <https://www.facebook.com/AMAAust/>
- www.amaaaust.org.au
- [Armenian National Committee of Australia](#)
- [More information and prayers about the genocide to be displayed at the Camden Theological Library](#)

Beloved members of the Uniting Church, may our remembrance unite us profoundly in witness to God's justice, peace, and reconciliation. Together, let us courageously embody hope and healing in our world.

Kelesi mo Melino (Grace and Peace),

Rev Charissa Suli
President, Uniting Church in Australia