



# DAY OF MOURNING 2026

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



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 generation. His teachings have been 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 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

**17th December 2025**

**Rev. Charissa Suli, President, UCA**

Each year, on the Sunday before 26 January, our Church gathers in truth-telling, lament, and hope as we mark the Day of Mourning. This is not simply an observance—it is a spiritual discipline and a covenant commitment. In 2015, the Assembly accepted the request of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAIICC) that our whole Church pause to remember the ongoing impacts of invasion, dispossession, and injustice on First Peoples. Through this request, Congress invited the Church to walk more faithfully in the promises we made in 1994 when we entered into Covenant.

That Covenant named the pain caused when the Church failed to hear the wisdom, spirituality, and leadership of First Peoples. It confessed the harm that came when the gospel of Jesus Christ was confused with colonising ways. And it committed us to a different path—one shaped by humility, truth, justice, and life-giving relationships. This Day of Mourning invites us again to live into that promise, not for one Sunday alone, but as part of an ongoing journey of covenant faithfulness for our whole Church.

We recognise that congregations come to this day carrying different histories, emotions, and understandings. Some approach it with deep sorrow; some with uncertainty; others with a longing to do better. Wherever we are on that journey, we are held by the same God whose love calls us into deeper relationship.

The Scriptures appointed for this Sunday speak powerfully into our shared story. Isaiah promises that the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light—a light that does not deny the darkness but transforms it from within.

The artwork accompanying this resource reflects this truth with beauty and courage: the pathways of sorrow, the strength of ancestors, the movement of Christ's healing light through story, community, and Country.

In the gospel, Jesus calls ordinary people to leave old patterns behind and follow him into a new way of life grounded in justice, compassion, and shared purpose. Paul urges the early church to be "knit together" despite their differences—an image that resonates deeply for us as First and Second Peoples seeking a common life marked by respect, equity, and reconciliation.

This resource has been shaped through the leadership, spirituality, and wisdom of UAICC, and we receive it with deep gratitude. It calls the whole Church into worship that is honest, courageous, and filled with the hope of Christ. It invites us to listen deeply, to acknowledge the truth of our shared history, and to participate in God's work of restoration and right relationship across this land.

So, as we gather on Sunday 25 January 2026, we encourage every congregation and community of faith to enter this day with open hearts.

**Grieve with your First Peoples communities.**

**Stand in solidarity.**

**Pray for healing for our nation.**

**Commit yourselves anew to the long journey of justice, peace, and covenant relationship.**

May the Holy Spirit guide us as we weave threads of love across this land, trusting that God is restoring, renewing, and reconciling all creation.

Grace and peace to you,



**Rev Charissa Suli** / President  
Uniting Church in Australia



## Rev. Ken Sumner, Interim National Co-Chair, UAICC

The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) observes an annual Day of Mourning for First Peoples on the Sunday before January 26th.

This significant observance, requested by the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC), is an expression of the UCA's Covenant relationship and commitment to truth-telling and justice. It calls on congregations to:

1. **Lament** the devastating effects of invasion and colonisation, including dispossession, violence, and ongoing injustices against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
2. **Acknowledge** the Church's own complicity in this history.
3. **Affirm** the sovereignty and resilience of First Peoples and honour their continued cultural and spiritual life to Country.
4. **Commit** anew to the journey of reconciliation, healing, and standing in solidarity with First Peoples in their struggle for justice.

There is a continued call for Justice, not Charity – a demand for true self-determination, equality and equity in an honoured shared future together with integrity.

The Day of Mourning provides a crucial moment for deep reflection, confession, listening, and prayer, shaping a shared future for First and Second Peoples in Australia.



**Rev Ken Sumner** / Interim Co-Chair  
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.**

**Holy Spirit of multiplying love,**

### 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



***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 and 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 thank you 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 the God of all wonder who set the stars in the sky,  
bless you with relentless unsettledness that drives you to seek truth.

May the God of all justice who gave motion to the rivers,  
bless you with righteous anger that drives you to seek freedom for all.

May the God of all love who placed laughter in the kookaburra,  
bless you with the friendship that looks like the love where one lays down  
their life for another.

May the God of all comfort who determined the height of the mountains,  
bless you with tears from shared pain and mourning that shows you hope.

Now with wonder, righteous anger, sacrifice, and lament  
Go in truth, justice, love, and hope to Change The Heart of Australia.”

## **Acknowledgements:**

- Artworks by Zoe Belle, Guwa Koa and Kuku Yalanji woman
- Prayerful action, opening blessing, greeting written by Kym Korbe, Executive Officer Covenanting, UCAQLD
- 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 [“An Aboriginal Prayer For Truth and Hope”](#)
- Resource 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](#)
- [Oh Come to the Alter](#)
- [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://ucaqlld.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Voices-of-our-Covenant-Catalogue_Digital.pdf)
- <https://www.youtube.com/@voicesofourcovenant>

## Prayers:

- [Assembly uHub - First Peoples Worship](#)

## Picture Books:

- All ages book recommendations  
[https://www.commongrace.org.au/book\\_recommendations](https://www.commongrace.org.au/book_recommendations)
- Children's resources  
[https://www.commongrace.org.au/childrens\\_resources](https://www.commongrace.org.au/childrens_resources)
- "Our Mob, God's Story"  
<https://www.biblesociety.org.au/our-mob/>

