

Additional Resources



Intercultural Neighbouring Sunday 2026



Additional Resources for Preaching, Music, Prayers, Intergenerational Activities, and Anti-Racist Worship 2026

A Companion Resource to the INS 2026 Celebration Guide

Belonging: One Body, Many Members

*Living faith and life cross-culturally, with every member valued and gifted;
confessing racism, healing Country, flourishing as a multicultural and intercultural church*

Sunday 19 July 2026

How to Use This Resource

This companion resource contains theological background, sermon notes, worship principles, additional prayers, all-age/children/youth activities, and music suggestions. For the ready-to-use Order of Worship, see the *Celebration Guide*.

Acknowledgement of Contributions and AI Assistance

Individual contributions and material drawn from the Uniting Church in Australia and other ecumenical resources are acknowledged throughout this resource. Material not individually attributed was developed by the Being a Multicultural Church Circle's Advocate and Panel. Generative AI was used to assist with drafting, proofreading, and editing. All AI-assisted material was carefully reviewed and revised prior to publication to ensure consistency with the theology and ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia.



Introduction

Intercultural Neighbouring Sunday (INS) continues the Uniting Church's commitment to becoming a multicultural, cross-cultural, and intercultural Church. Building upon earlier INS themes of "Our Pentecost Vision: Being a Multicultural Church" (2023), "Weaving Christ' love across cultures and boundaries" (2024) and "Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of We Are a Multicultural Church" (2025), 2026 takes up the Assembly's 2012 statement *One Body, Many Members — Living Faith and Life Cross-Culturally*, calling congregations and faith communities into deeper truth-telling, justice, and belonging as members of the one body of Christ.

In 1985, the Assembly declared the "Uniting Church is a multicultural Church," and in 2006 affirmed it as "a Church for all God's people." The 2012 statement *One Body, Many Members* gave these declarations sixteen practical marks — from worship and leadership to stewardship and accountability — for what it looks like to live faith and life cross-culturally. Much of this remains unfinished work. INS 2026 invites every congregation to take hold of that unfinished work afresh.

At its November 2025 meeting, the Assembly Standing Committee received the discussion paper "Uniting Decade of Intercultural Transformation (2026–2035)" as a theological and strategic vision for the life of the Church. The paper proposed the development of a National Anti-Racism Action Plan, recognising that, to live as one body with many members, the Church must also name and dismantle racism in all its forms.

INS 2026 seeks to support congregations and communities in:

- receiving cultural and linguistic diversity as gifts of the Creator God, not threats to be feared or managed;
- speaking truthfully about racism, confessing where the Church itself has caused harm;
- deepening Covenant relationship, truth-telling and justice with First Peoples;
- ordering ministry, leadership and resources inclusively, justly and equitably across cultures;
- engaging in prophetic advocacy for racial, social and ecological justice; and
- living as one body with many members, where every gift is needed and every person belongs.

This resource pack also draws on the wisdom of Rev Radhika Sukumar-White's reflections on intentionally anti-racist worship, encouraging churches to move beyond passive inclusion towards practices that actively dismantle racism, decolonise worship, amplify marginalised voices, and embody the reconciling work of Christ.

2026 Theme *Belonging: One Body, Many Members*

In a world marked by division, hatred, exclusion, and fear, we, as Uniting Church, are called to live as the body of Christ — one body, with many members, none dispensable and none alone. Paul's image of the body, taken up by the Assembly in its 2012 statement *One Body, Many Members*, reminds us that our racial, cultural and linguistic diversity is not a problem to be managed but a gift of the Creator God, given so that the whole body may be built up in love.

INS 2026 invites congregations to move beyond symbolic celebration of diversity towards the costly, practical work of belonging — honouring every member's gifts, and confessing and dismantling whatever in our common life still excludes.



Lectionary Readings for 19 July 2026 (with Suggested Alternate Reading)

Reading	Passage	Suggested Reader / Language Note
First Reading	Genesis 28:10–19a	Consider a First Peoples or migrant community member as reader, acknowledging God's presence in unexpected, unsettled places.
Psalm	Psalm 139:1–12, 23–24	Read responsively in two languages (e.g. English alternating with Mandarin, Arabic, Vietnamese, a Pacific or First Peoples language, or another language present in the congregation), or sung in a multilingual setting if available.
Second Reading	Romans 8:12–25	Read by someone connected to a migrant or refugee community, naming the groaning of creation in their own mother tongue for at least one verse.
Gospel	Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43	Standard Gospel reading; consider a brief congregational acclamation in a second language before and after.
Alternate / Additional Reading	1 Corinthians 12:12–27	Particularly apt given the theme title. Consider reading verse-by-verse with different voices/languages for each “part of the body” named, to embody the text's own image of many members, one body.

Multilingual Practice Notes

- Where possible, print the Psalm or a key verse from each reading in parallel columns (English + one or more community languages) in the order of service.
- Invite a member of a migrant or First Peoples community to read at least one passage in their own language, with an English translation following or projected.



- A multilingual sung response (e.g. a Kyrie, Taizé-style refrain, or a simple sung “Amen”/“Alleluia” in another language) can frame the readings and reinforce the theme of one body gathered from many tongues.
- To avoid this becoming a one-off gesture, teach the whole congregation a phrase or response in another language beforehand, and invite everyone — not only those who already speak it — to say or sing it together. It is also worth naming, honestly, the loss of language carried by many in the body: First Peoples whose languages were suppressed through colonisation, and second- and third-generation members of migrant families who no longer speak the language of their grandparents. Multilingual worship can hold grief as well as celebration.

Sermon Notes: “One Body, Many Members: Belonging in Christ”

Theme: Belonging in the body of Christ is God’s gift, not a status earned, defended, or withheld by human structures, culture, or prejudice. The Church is called to recognise who God has already welcomed, to see every member fully, to share in the body’s suffering, and to live faithfully with difference until God’s harvest comes.

1. God Incorporates the Outsider — and Meets Jacob — Genesis 28

Jacob is a fugitive with no standing of his own, displaced, and outside any expected sacred space. Jacob is at a boundary, and it is here that he encounters God. God comes down to Jacob and speaks with him directly, giving a promise that reaches beyond Jacob’s own household: “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 28:14). When Jacob wakes, he does not simply feel welcomed — he renames the place. A stone pillow in open country becomes Beth-el, “house of God,” because something happened there that turned bare ground into a dwelling.

- Belonging in God’s family does not erase cultural tension or human failure — it persists through them. Jacob receives God’s promise while fleeing his brother’s murderous anger, deceived and deceiving in turn, sent away so he will not marry a Canaanite “other.” The blessing breaks in before the family’s rivalries and exclusions are resolved, given before it is earned.
- God is already present among First Peoples communities, migrant and refugee communities, Jewish and Islamic communities facing hatred, and those marginalised by society or by the Church — already counting them as God’s family. In fact, people on the margins and at boundaries often encounter God there.
- The story pushes further than welcome: Jacob is addressed, blessed, and sent outward with a vocation — to become a blessing to others, not only a recipient of one. Belonging opens onto purpose.
- The ladder is not simply a ramp into membership; it is traffic between heaven and earth at one particular place, made holy by encounter rather than by anything special about the ground itself. This invites reflection on our own places of meeting and story — the *tapa mat* laid out for talk, the *madang* where a village or household gathers, the circle around a



campfire, the shade of a tree where elders and travellers stop to speak. These too can become *Beth-el*: ordinary ground turned into a house, because of who meets there and what is shared.

- The Church's task is not only to recognise who God has already welcomed, but to build and honour places where real encounter can happen — where story, testimony, and attentive presence do the work of changing us, as they changed Jacob.

2. Every Member Fully Known — Psalm 139

The psalmist is searched and known by God completely — every part of who they are, hidden and visible, seen and unseen.

- No member of the body is invisible, interchangeable, or dispensable to God.
- This confronts racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, the erasure of First Peoples, and the exclusion of people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds — all of which treat some members of the body as less fully known or valued than others. Every person, with all of their physical and cultural characteristics, is formed and known by God.
- Racism, antisemitism, and Islamophobia hidden within systems, habits, jokes, silence, and assumptions remain seen by God, who treats no member as less than another.
- God sees both hidden suffering and hidden prejudice. The Church is called into truth-telling, humility, repentance, and healing — not as accusation, but as the path to genuine belonging.
- The Psalmist still reacts with hatred toward the “wicked” (vv. 19-22) but in the end recognises that the same evil may dwell within (vv. 23-24).

3. The Whole Body Groans Together — Romans 8

Suffering and hope are held together: not only individuals but creation itself groans toward redemption. Ultimately, nothing can overcome the love of God.

- The work of the Spirit and the scope of God's adopting love know no bounds. God knows all hearts and the Spirit can interpret any heart language.
- Racism is systemic and structural, not only personal. Creation groans under injustice — colonisation, violence, exclusion, displacement, ecological destruction — and so does the body of Christ whenever any of its members suffer.
- When one member suffers, the whole body groans; none can treat another member's pain as someone else's concern.
- The Church joins God not by denying pain but by participating in restoration, healing, and justice for every member. Christian worship is not escape from the world, but neither is it self-sufficiency dressed up as service. It is the whole body laying down its idols — consumerism, nationalism, individualism, the quiet lie that it is all up to us — to stand in



adoration before the One True God, and from that posture of openness, to participate in God's reconciling work within the world.

- If God is for all of us, then we have no place to be against anyone. God gave the Son, in love, for all. We cannot condemn, and we cannot separate anyone from God's love.

4. Living with Difference Within One Body — Matthew 13

A note for preachers: *Take care not to flatten this parable into “all difference is equally good” or “nothing in the field is genuinely harmful.” Jesus is plain that there is a real distinction between wheat and weeds, between fruit that gives life and fruit that does not, and a day when this is reckoned. The force of the parable lies not in denying that distinction but in who is given authority to act on it, and when. The servants are told to wait, because human hands uprooting too soon risk tearing out wheat along with weeds. The call is to patient discernment that leaves final judgment to God — not to relativism.*

Wheat and weeds, good and evil, coexist within the one field. Judgment belongs ultimately to God, not to us.

- Racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and exclusion are weeds — not simply “differences” to be celebrated alongside everything else. Naming what is harmful is not opposed to belonging; it is part of tending the field honestly.
- We name injustice clearly, resist hatred, and refuse dehumanisation, while avoiding simplistic “us versus them” thinking.
- The instruction to let them grow together is not indifference to harm, nor a call to passivity. It guards against the damage done whenever the Church has tried to do God's harvesting itself — judging and excluding those it deemed unworthy. Waiting for God's final judgment does not mean waiting to act against injustice now; it means refusing to claim for ourselves the authority to make final, eternal judgments on others.
- Even as we name these systemic evils clearly, we hold open the possibility of transformation — that structures and patterns of harm can, by the Spirit's work and through real repentance and change, give way to justice. This sits in tension with the parable's stark image of a fixed distinction — but it is the tension we are called to hold: naming harm clearly while working, actively, for its uprooting.
- Transformation is God's ultimate harvest, but it is not ours to defer. We participate now — urgently and actively — in truth-telling resisting injustice, and tending the field so that good fruit can flourish.

Discussion questions — “Weeds and Wheat Today” (suitable for sermon application or small-group use)

- Where do we see systemic evils — (racism, exclusion) — growing alongside examples of justice and inclusion in our own community today?
- Why do both exist together, in the same field, the same body?



- How do we resist hatred without becoming hateful ourselves?
- Have you seen a community move from patterns of harm toward greater justice? What made that change possible?

5. One Body, Many Members, Named — 1 Corinthians 12 (Alternate / Additional Reading)

Paul names the image that gives this whole service its title directly: “the body does not consist of one member but of many” (1 Cor 12:14). A key verse in this passage is vv. 12–13, where Paul declares that all peoples — Jew and Greek, slave and free — share alike in God's gift of the Spirit, baptised into one body by one Spirit. The foot cannot say it does not belong because it is not a hand; the body needs its weaker and less honourable parts as much as its visible ones — God has arranged the body so that there is no division, and so that each member cares for the others.

- This passage states the theme outright, rather than imaging it indirectly as Genesis, Psalm 139, Romans 8, and Matthew 13 do. It can anchor the sermon or serve as a climactic reading after the others, naming explicitly what has been built implicitly.
- “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together” (1 Cor 12:26) draws directly on the same logic as Romans 8: the body's wellbeing is shared, not individual. Racism, exclusion, and erasure of any one member are wounds to the whole body, not isolated harms.
- Paul's insistence that God gives greater honour to the parts that lack it (1 Cor 12:23–24) confronts hierarchies of worth — cultural, racial, or social — within the Church. No member, however marginalised, is “less” of the body; many are owed more honour precisely because they have been given less.
- Diversity of gifts and parts is not a problem to be managed but God's own design for unity (1 Cor 12:4–7, 18). The same Spirit that incorporates the outsider (Genesis 28) and knows every member fully (Psalm 139) is the Spirit that apportions different gifts to different members for the common good.
- This reading invites the congregation to ask practically: which members of this body have we treated as dispensable, dishonoured, or invisible — and how do we now act so that “there may be no dissension, but that the members may have the same care for one another” (1 Cor 12:25)?

Closing Image

Picture the body of Christ: many parts, one life. No member stands alone, and no member is dispensable. God invites us to take our place, and to make room for every other member, so that the whole body may be built up in love — many tongues, many peoples, one body, gathered at the *tapa mat*, the *madang*, the campfire, the shade of the tree — wherever ordinary ground becomes a house of God because we meet, listen, and are changed there together.



Music Suggestions

Together in Song

The following selections reflect the intercultural and multicultural character of INS 2026:

- 50 – Bonum est confidere / It is good to trust (Taizé)
- 73 – Laudate Dominum / Sing praise and bless the Lord (Taizé)
- 701 – Alleluia
- 702 – Alleluia (Taizé)
- 704 – Asithi, Amen / Sing Amen (Swahili)
- 706 – Bless the Lord, my soul (Taizé)
- 709 – Chuyo chuyo turo chusoso / Lord hear us! (Korean)
- 711 – Wa wa wa Emimimo / Come, O Holy Spirit, come (Yoruba, Nigeria)
- 713 – Dona nobis pacem, Domine (Taizé)
- 714 – Eat this Bread (Taizé)
- 720 – Halle, halle, hallelujah! (Caribbean)
- 723 – Santo, santo, santo / Holy, holy, holy (Spanish, Argentina)
- 725 – In our darkness (Taizé)
- 728 – Jesucristo reina, reina, ya! / Jesus Christ reigns! (Spanish, Argentina)
- 730 – Jesus, remember me (Taizé)
- 731 – Jubilate Deo / Rejoice in God (Taizé)
- 734 – Kyrie eleison / Lord have mercy (Ghana)
- 735 – Kyrie, Kyrie, eleison / Lord have mercy (Taizé)
- 736 – Kyrie eleison / Lord have mercy (Ukrainian Orthodox)
- 739 – Nada te turbe / Nothing can trouble (Taizé)
- 740 – O, qué bueno es Jesús / O, how good is Christ the Lord (Spanish, Puerto Rico)
- 741 – O Lord hear my prayer (Taizé)
- 747 – The Lord is My Light (Taizé)
- 749 – Thuma Mina / Send me, Lord (Zulu, South Africa)
- 750 – Veni Creator / Come Creator (Taizé)
- 752 – Veni, Sancte Spiritus / Come Holy Spirit (Taizé)
- 773, 775 – Gloria, gloria (Taizé and Spanish, Argentina)

**The Taizé community is an ecumenical monastic community in France. Worship is in many languages and songs are often translated into multiple languages for communal singing. See the Taizé website for translations.*

Additional Song Resources

- Come All You People: Shorter Songs for Worship from Iona / Wild Goose Publishing
- We Walk His Way: Shorter Songs for Worship from Iona / Wild Goose Publishing
- For Everyone Born: Global Songs for an Emerging Church

Compiled by Rev Jennifer Hughes, Intercultural Neighbouring Sunday (2024) Celebration Guide, UCA Assembly



Additional Prayers

“Creator and Creating God”

Creator and Creating God, we gather as a community of faith to offer You our thanks and praise. We gather as one body representing many cultures. We gather as siblings in Christ responding to Your call to work for justice and peace. Accept our thanks for the gifts each of us brings in response to your call. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Srishtikarta, Srishti ke nirman karne vale Parmeshwar, Aapko dhanyvad aur stuti arpit karne ke liye. Ham sare vishvasee ek samuday ke roop mein ekatrit hue hain. Hum anek sanskritiyon ka pratinidhitva karte hain parntu ham Ek shareer, Ek kutumb ke roop mein ekatrit hue hain. Ham Masihi bhai-bahnon, aapki pukar ke uttar mein nyay aur shanti ke liye kaam karte hain. Aapke dwara diye gaye upharon ke liye hamara dhanyvad sweekar karen. Yesu ke naam mein hum prarthana karte han. Aamin.

Written by Rev Valentina Satvedi Leyden (English & Hindi), Uniting in Prayer 2026, UCA Assembly

“Litany of Invocation”

Come to us, God of peace. Come with your healing and your reconciling power. Come, that fear may be cast out by love; that weapons may be replaced by trust; that violence may give way to gentleness: Come to us, God of peace.

Come to us, God of justice. Come with your righteous judgments and your mercy. Come, that we may hear the cries of the oppressed in every land; that we may see the suffering of the poor in our own land; that we may return to the way of righteousness and compassion: Come to us, God of justice.

Come to us, God of love. Come with your extravagant kindness and your goodness. Come, that we may see you in the people of every race and culture; that we may embrace you in the lonely, the bereaved and the rejected; that we may be an accepting and a caring church: Come to us, God of love.

Come to us, God of unity. Come with your forgiveness and your healing grace. Come, that we may witness to reconciliation for a divided world; that we may gather around Christ's table as one people; that we may affirm one church, one faith, one Lord: Come to us, God of unity.

Come to us, God of hope. Come to us with your promises, come in your mysterious presence. Come, that we may marvel at your faithfulness in past generations; that we may celebrate the new things you are doing among us today; that we may be your pilgrim people on our journey to your kingdom: Come to us, God of hope.

A Prayer of Invocation drawn from the 4th Assembly, Uniting in Prayer 2026, UCA Assembly

“God of the pilgrim people”

God of the pilgrim people, you call us from our individual lives and our separate communities into the Community of Christ to be one people, your people. As we gather, your people in your holy presence, affirm in each of us the good that you have created; remove from each of us the evil that works against you; reform in each of us the life that we have through Jesus. May your Spirit enliven our worship, and enlighten our understanding of your will. Encircle us in your love and so enable us, in return, to love you and one another.

A prayer from the 8th Assembly, Uniting in Prayer 2026, UCA Assembly

“Lord, have mercy” — a multilingual Kyrie

At Uniting in Prayer 2026, the congregation prayed the Kyrie together in the many languages of the Uniting Church family, including English, Spanish, Arabic, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Tongan, Portuguese, Mandarin, Dinka, Indonesian, Armenian, Korean, Fijian and others. Leaders are encouraged to invite members of the congregation to lead these, or other languages spoken in the community, line by line:



- Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. (English)
- Señor, ten piedad. Cristo, ten piedad. Señor, ten piedad. (Spanish)
- يا رب ارحم، يا مسيح ارحم، يا رب ارحم (Arabic)
- Panginoon, maawa ka. Kristo, maawa ka. Panginoon, maawa ka. (Tagalog)
- Xin Chúa thương xót. Xin Chúa Kitô thương xót. Xin Chúa thương xót. (Vietnamese)
- 'E 'Eiki, 'alo'ofa mai 'akimautolu. Kalaisi, 'alo'ofa mai 'akimautolu. 'E 'Eiki, 'alo'ofa mai 'akimautolu. (Tongan)
- God, you are merciful. Christ, you are merciful. God, you are merciful.
- Senhor, tenha piedade. Cristo, tenha piedade. Senhor, tenha piedade. (Portuguese)
- 求主，怜悯我们。基督，怜悯我们。求主，怜悯我们。 (Mandarin)
- Kristo, dhuk de tiit. Yecu Kristo, luɛi kua. Kristo, dhuk de tiit. (Dinka)
- Tuhan, kasihanilah kami. Kristus, kasihanilah kami. Tuhan, kasihanilah kami. (Indonesian)
- Տէր ողորմեա. Քրիստոս ողորմեա. Տէր ողորմեա. (Armenian)
- 주님, 자비를 베푸소서. 그리스도, 자비를 베푸소서. 주님, 자비를 베푸소서. (Korean)
- Turaga, ni lomani keimami. Karisito, ni lomani keimami. Turaga, ni lomani keimami. (Fijian)

Drawn from Uniting in Prayer 2026, UCA Assembly

Symbolic Action

Use this within Response of Faith, after the sermon and before the Litany of Commitment.

“One Body, Many Members — Building the Body Together”

Setup

Display a large, blank outline of a human body (on butcher's paper, fabric, or a whiteboard) at the front of the worship space. Prepare simple cut-out shapes — hands, feet, eyes, ears — and coloured pens, enough for everyone present.

Action

Invite each person to take a shape, write or draw on it their name, culture, language or a gift they bring, and bring it forward to attach to the body outline. As the body fills with colour and difference, name aloud that every member is needed, and that none can say to another, “I have no need of you.” Close by naming together what still excludes some members from full belonging, and committing to keep building this body together.

With the All Age Resource

Mr. Potato Head.

1. All I have is the body...everything else is missing.
2. Can you help me put Mr. Potato together? As you put the parts on Mr. Potato talk about the importance of each part.



3. So in today's reading, we hear that you and I and everyone around here is called as the body of Christ. One Body with many parts. And like each special part, we are like that also. Each person in the church is like a part of the body. Each one of us is important and we need to work together.

4. As we listen to the Bible reading, maybe you can think about what gift you bring for our life together? Do you bring laughter? Are you good at remembering everyone's names? Are you good at dancing???

-For creative response: See the image below

You can use larger baby blocks or LEGO and ask people to build a community together, where all the blocks/gifts are needed.

People are invited to write their names on the block. Blocks are all different in colour, shape, and size, like us. And for the blocks to do anything, they need one another, belong to one another...like we need one another to be God's church. Wonderfully diverse and fearfully beautiful.



Contributed by Rev Heewon Chang

Children's Resources

"We Are One Body"

Bible Story

"Paul told the church that we are all part of one body, like hands, feet, eyes and ears. Every part is different, and every part is needed. No part can say to another, 'I don't need you.'"

This means God made everyone different on purpose, and everyone is needed in God's family.

Activities

"Every Part Matters!"

Trace around a child's hand or foot and talk about what that part does and why it matters. Ask: "Could the body work without it?" Answer together: "No part is too small, and no part is left out."

Build the Body of Belonging

Give each child a paper hand, foot, eye or ear shape to decorate with their name and a gift they have. Children add their shape to a large body outline together, as a symbol that everyone belongs and everyone is needed.

Youth Resources

“Every Member Matters”

Discussion Questions

- Who in our society is treated like they don’t belong, or like a “lesser” member of the body?
- Who is not listened to, or whose gifts go unrecognised?
- What does it mean that God fully knows and values them, even when others don’t?

“Weeds and Wheat Today”

Discuss examples of harm (racism, exclusion) alongside examples of justice and inclusion.

- Why do both exist together?
- How do we resist hatred without becoming hateful ourselves?

Reflection: “The Groaning World”

- Where is the world groaning today?
- What is our role as followers of Christ?

Action Commitment

Invite youth to complete: “This week I will...” Examples: listen, learn, speak up, stand with others.

Visual and Symbolic Elements

- a collective “body of Christ” mural or mosaic, built from contributions of every member;
 - weaving activity representing intercultural belonging;
 - stones placed at the altar for lament and commitment.
-

Post-Service Engagement

- Conversation circles on racism and reconciliation;
- shared multicultural meals;
- links to anti-racism resources and commitments;

A compiled list of resources for UCA congregations is available at the link below.

[Anti-racism Resources for Congregations March 2026.docx](#)

- encouragement for ongoing intercultural neighbouring partnerships throughout the year;
- an invitation to read and discuss our Assembly's two recent national submissions on racism and antisemitism, and to consider local responses to their recommendations.

You can read both submissions at the link below:

[Submission on racism hatred and violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People](#)



Worship Principles for Intentionally Anti-Racist Worship

Drawing on the wisdom of Rev Radhika Sukumar-White's reflections on intentionally anti-racist worship, INS 2026 encourages congregations to reflect carefully on how worship practices either reinforce or dismantle exclusion. You can read the full paper at the link below:

[Towards Intentionally Anti Racist Worship | UCA Assembly](#)

A note on language: the principles below use three different words deliberately. "Should" marks a clear expectation for every congregation. "Encouraged" marks a strong recommendation to be applied thoughtfully within each context. "Invited" marks an open invitation rather than a requirement, recognising that congregations are at different points in this journey.

Begin with Acknowledgement of Country

Every gathering — worship, meetings, Bible studies, youth gatherings — should begin with a thoughtful and meaningful Acknowledgement of Country. This is not simply ritual language, but a theological act of truth-telling, humility, and reconciliation.

Congregations are encouraged to:

- learn the history of the local Country;
- build relationships with First Peoples communities where possible;
- use acknowledgements that express respect, lament, and commitment to justice.

Examine Worship Space and Participation

Congregations are encouraged to reflect on who is visible in worship leadership, whose voices are amplified, how physical space shapes participation, and whether worship practices unconsciously privilege dominant cultures.

For example: Are readers, musicians, and prayer leaders drawn only from one cultural group? Does fixed seating face a single focal point in a way that suits one tradition of worship but not another? Are name badges, notices, or PowerPoint slides only ever in English? Are visiting or newer members invited into visible roles (reading, welcoming, serving), or only into the congregation?

INS 2026 encourages churches to intentionally include people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds as preachers, liturgists, musicians, storytellers, and prayer leaders.

There is a balance to be struck here: our worship should reflect the people actually gathered in a particular place, while also witnessing to the catholicity of the Church — its universal character across cultures and generations. Both matter: worship that only ever reflects the congregation as it currently can settle for the familiar, while diversity introduced without any connection to who is actually present can feel performative. Congregations might intentionally include voices and traditions from the wider, global Church even where the local congregation is not yet diverse, while continuing to grow real relationships locally.

Embrace Multilingual Worship

The Church is invited to move beyond the assumption that everyone experiences worship in the same language or cultural form. Suggestions include:

- multilingual Scripture readings;
- prayers in different languages;
- translated liturgical responses;



- songs from diverse cultures;
- explanations of worship elements for newcomers or EAL (English as an Additional Language) participants;
- the thoughtful use of AI-assisted live translation tools, where appropriate, to support fuller participation, hospitality, and inclusion across linguistic communities.
- an ongoing practice — not a one-off gesture — of teaching the whole congregation a phrase, song, or prayer in a different language each season, so that multilingual worship becomes a shared discipline the majority also learns, rather than a display performed by a few.

Using the AI Worship Translation App

As a congregation with members born across the globe, Burnside City Uniting Church found that some members would appreciate having live translation from English into their own native language. They experimented with a number of different paid platforms and eventually developed their own AI-based system that translates spoken English in real time during the worship service into any chosen language, which the congregation can listen to with headphones or read on their phones. For the recent Pentecost service, members were encouraged to use the platform to let their phones audibly translate the Bible reading into any chosen language. A wonderful cacophony of many languages praising God was heard.

If your congregation is interested in using the app, contact admin@bcuc.au.

Contributed by Rev Dr Benji Callen

Multilingual worship can become tokenistic if it is limited to a single reading or greeting performed once a year. Congregations are also encouraged to acknowledge, honestly and without sentimentality, the loss of language that many in this body carry — First Peoples whose languages were suppressed through colonisation, and second- and third-generation members of migrant families who no longer speak the language of their grandparents. Multilingual worship is not only celebration; it can also hold grief for what has been lost.

Be Attentive to Worship Language and Music

Congregations are encouraged to review worship language and music carefully. Questions to consider include:

- Does this language unintentionally exclude or alienate?
- Does it reinforce harmful associations around race, purity, or superiority?
- Does our worship reflect the global and intercultural Church?

For example: hymns and choruses that equate “light” and “white” with goodness and “darkness” and “black” with sin reinforce racial associations even when unintended. Mission-era hymns sometimes romanticise colonial history (“bringing light to darkest lands”) and may need a verse omitted, a note of context offered, or a different hymn chosen. Conversely, simply adding a “world music” song without care for pronunciation, context, or permission can turn another culture’s worship into decoration rather than genuine participation.

Learn from Diverse Theological Voices

Preachers and worship leaders are encouraged to engage with Indigenous theologies and theologies from the Global South, including African, Asian, Pasifika, Middle Eastern, and postcolonial theological perspectives. No theology is culturally neutral. The Church grows through listening beyond dominant voices and traditions.





Intercultural
Neighbouring
Sunday 2026

