

# A Destiny Together

## Justice for First Peoples

# Resources for Congregational Worship

### **About these resources**

As an expression of the Uniting Church in Australia's commitment to the Covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC), the 13th Assembly resolved to call all members and congregations to a week of prayer and fasting for justice for First Peoples. The Assembly is encouraging all congregations to dedicate Sunday worship on 23 March 2014 to the theme 'A Destiny Together'.

Some congregations might also wish to highlight the week in some way during worship on 16 March. This would be a helpful way of 'setting the scene' for those who will be following the order of daily prayer for the week and participating in the fast, and also for supporting those who will be attending the public vigil in Canberra on 18 March. While the public vigil is a most significant occasion in the life of the Church in terms of our public witness to justice, it is our congregational worship on 23 March that will be the culmination of the week and the most powerful expression of our mission in this country to witness to the "reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation".<sup>1</sup>

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Bold type represents the sections which may be said together by the congregation.

### **Introduction to Worship**

Today we gather to worship because here in this land, as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, we have A Destiny Together. In the Revised Preamble to the Constitution of the Uniting Church in Australia, we recognise that "through this land God had nurtured and sustained the First Peoples of this country, the Aboriginal and Islander peoples, who continue to understand themselves to be the traditional owners and custodians... of these lands and waters since time immemorial".<sup>2</sup>

We remember that "After much struggle and debate, in 1994 the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia discovered God's call, accepted this invitation and entered into an ever deepening covenantal relationship with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. This was so that all may see a destiny together, praying and working together for a fuller expression of our reconciliation in Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Uniting Church in Australia (2009). *Revised Preamble, Constitution of the Uniting Church in Australia*, paragraph 10, Available: <http://assembly.uca.org.au/resources/preamble>

<sup>2</sup> paragraph 3, *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> paragraph 10, *ibid.*



## Acknowledgement of First Peoples<sup>4</sup>

We acknowledge the .....people,  
the first inhabitants of this place.

We honour them for their custodianship of the land,  
part of God's good creation on which we gather today  
and pay our respects to their elders, past and present.

You granted humanity

the sacred gift of relationship with your creation, God.

You call us to respond to this gift with respect

caring for the wellbeing of all you have made.

We give thanks for those who have heeded your call.

OR

We acknowledge the traditional caretakers of the land in which we live.

We acknowledge their deep spiritual connections to this land,

pay our respects to their elders past and present

and thank them for the care they have shown the earth

over thousands of years.

## Hymns and Songs

(Please remember to observe any copyright acknowledgements that may be required)

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)

<sup>4</sup> Local Aboriginal Land Councils or municipal councils can provide information on the traditional owners of your area.

## Welcome or Acknowledgment?

A 'Welcome to Country' is delivered by an Aboriginal person who is a member of the clan or tribe who have lived on the land where the gathering is held. It serves as a generous invitation to feel welcome on the land. It is a reminder of the people, their elders past and present, who have cared for the land.

'Acknowledgement' can be offered by anyone who is not of the land where the gathering or meeting is being held. It is an offering of respect and thanks to the local people who have lived and cared for the land for generations.



## Gathering Prayer

God of love,  
you are the creator of this land  
and of all good things.  
Our hope is in you  
because you gave your son Jesus  
to reconcile the world to you.  
We pray for your strength and grace  
to forgive, accept and love one another  
as you love us and forgive and accept us  
in the sacrifice of your Son.

Prepared by Wontulp Bi-Buya Indigenous Theology Working Group  
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## Prayer of Confession 1

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 failed to care 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.**



## Prayer of Confession 2

Merciful God,  
We have clenched our hands in anger  
to threaten and to hurt.  
We have clutched with our hands  
to keep and to hold selfishly.  
We have pointed with our finger  
to accuse and belittle.  
We have held our hands idly  
when there is work to be done.

We have lifted our hands to hide our eyes  
and shut out sorrow, suffering and need.  
We have closed our ears  
to cries of help with our hands.  
We have hidden our hands when we could have  
reached out to our brothers and sisters in love.

We repent and are sorry for all our sins.  
God, forgive us.  
Strengthen us to love and live through Jesus Christ.  
Let us extend our free hands to  
our neighbour in love.

Rev Sally Apokis © TEAR Australia. Used with permission.

## Affirmation of Faith 1 (to be said together)

We *declare* our faith in God as Creator of the universe:  
the world in which we live,  
and all living things on the face of the earth.  
We *believe* that creation bears witness  
to the power and the presence of the Triune God  
and calls us as God's people to praise, thanksgiving  
and respect for the earth.  
We *celebrate* the richness and diversity  
of culture and language in our world,  
knowing that in God  
we are united in our common humanity,  
made in the image and likeness of God.  
We *declare* our faith in God as Spirit, breath of life,  
always at work to bring people alive to God.

(cont.)



We *believe* that this same Spirit  
has been present and active in every race and culture,  
preparing hearts and minds  
to hear and receive the good news of God's love and grace  
revealed uniquely in Jesus Christ.

We *celebrate* that from the beginning  
the Spirit was present and active  
in revealing God through the law, custom  
and ceremony of the First People's of this ancient land.

We *declare* our faith in Jesus, Saviour and Lord,  
who brought the church into being and prayed for its unity.

We *believe* that in Christ we are brothers and sisters  
together in the one great family of God,  
called to live in faith, hope and love.

We *celebrate* the opportunity  
to learn, grow and serve together  
as a pilgrim people on the way to God's promised end in Jesus Christ.

## **Affirmation of Faith 2 (to be said together)**

We *say* God created the universe,  
and the world we live in,  
and every living thing on this earth.

We *believe* the Creation shows us the power and presence of God,  
and makes us want to praise and give thanks to God,  
and take good care of the earth God has made.

We *are full of joy* that across the world  
different peoples have their own culture and language,  
and that in God we are all united together as one.

We *say* God is Spirit, breath of life,  
who is always working to bring people to life in God.

We *believe* the Spirit has been alive and active in every race and culture,  
preparing hearts and minds for the good news:  
the good news of God's love and grace that Jesus Christ revealed.

We *are full of joy* that from the beginning the Spirit was alive and active,  
revealing God through the law, custom and ceremony  
of the First Peoples of this ancient land.

We *say* Jesus is Saviour and Lord,  
and that he began the church  
and prayed that the church might be together as one.

We *believe* that in the risen Jesus  
we are all brothers and sisters in the one great family of God,  
and that God calls us to live in faith, hope and love.

We *are full of joy* that we can learn, grow and serve together  
as a pilgrim people on the way to God's promised end,  
the reconciliation of all creation in Jesus Christ.



## A prayer for Indigenous Australians

God of our ancient peoples,  
Lover of all tribes,  
show those of us who are  
more recent arrivals  
in this Great South Land  
how best we can allow Indigenous Australians  
to recover their dignity,  
and to make their rich contribution  
to our growing nation.

Thank you for those in government,  
and in the church community  
who are really listening  
and responding with true wisdom  
to their needs and cries.

Thank you for the land rights that have been recognised,  
for progress among tribal groups,  
for Indigenous leaders, poets, priests, campaigners and visionaries.

We pray with anguished souls  
for the descendants of tribes  
disinherited long ago,  
for those broken spirits  
who gather without aim or hope  
in parks and lanes of cities and towns.

God, guide us,  
for we don't know what to do –  
except perhaps to admit to them  
that we are burdened to belong  
to the race that dispossessed them.

Lord, hear our cry;  
we long to undo  
the many wrongs,  
as far as that is possible.  
But how do we start, God?  
Where do we start?  
Merciful God, hear our cry!

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## Prayer for the Journey of Healing

Almighty and loving God,  
you who created all people in your image,  
lead us to seek your compassion  
as we listen to the stories of our past.

You gave your only Son, Jesus,  
who died and rose again so that sins will be forgiven.  
We place before you the pain and anguish of  
dispossession of land, language, lore, culture  
and family kinship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander people have experienced.

We live in faith that all people will rise from  
the depths of despair and hopelessness.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families  
have endured the pain and loss of loved ones  
through the separation of children from their families.

We are sorry and ask your forgiveness.

Touch the hearts of the broken, homeless  
and afflicted and heal their spirits.

In your mercy and compassion walk with us as  
we continue our journey of healing to create a  
future that is just and equitable.  
Lord, you are our hope. Amen.

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## Reconciliation Prayer

God of love,  
you are the creator of this land and all good things.

We acknowledge the pain and shame of our history  
and the suffering of our peoples  
and we ask your forgiveness.  
We thank you for the survival of indigenous cultures.

Our hope is in you because  
you gave your son Jesus  
to reconcile the world to you.  
We pray for your strength and grace to forgive,  
accept and love one another  
as you love us and forgive and accept us  
in the sacrifice of your Son.

*(cont.)*



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 groups in our communities,  
especially the disadvantaged.  
Help our young people to find true dignity  
and self-esteem by your Spirit.

May your power and love be the foundations  
on which we build our families,  
our communities and our nation.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prepared by the Wontulp Bi-Buya Indigenous Theology Working Group, March 1997.  
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## Word of Mission

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  
until God's promised reconciliation of all creation is complete.

