

## NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WORKING GROUP ON WORSHIP

### Acknowledging Country and Indigenous Peoples

#### Notes:

-  The following words of Acknowledgement of Country and Indigenous Peoples have been gathered by the Assembly Working Group on Worship, and are currently in use in various places within the Uniting Church. (The first has come from the Assembly Working Group on Doctrine.)
-  The Working Group on Worship encourages congregations through the worship leaders to use some form of Acknowledgement of Country and Indigenous Peoples during all acts of worship. Each of the Acknowledgements below can be used on any occasion, but the Working Group on Worship has suggested some occasions when particular Acknowledgements might be used.
-  When Acknowledging Country and Indigenous Peoples it is important to be sensitive to local community and culture. References only to 'land' may need to be expanded in places where the indigenous community has close association with sea or other water.
-  When the names of local indigenous communities are not known, acknowledgements numbered 2,8,9 and 10 may be used.

#### *This is useful for general occasions ...*

- (1) "This land is God's land and God's Spirit dwells here. We acknowledge the ..... people, traditional custodians of this land under God. We commit ourselves again to working for reconciliation in this land."

#### *This would be useful when the focus is on the creation ...*

- (2) From before recorded time, the First Peoples (Nations) cared for this Land. We praise the Creator for the beauty of this Land and honour those who have offered themselves in tending it.  
We acknowledge the Elders and communities who have told the sacred stories and nurtured faithfulness to the Creator.  
We ask God's blessing on those who continue to work for the healing and restoration of this Land and Her Communities.

#### *This would be useful at Pentecost*

- (3) The Ancient of Days breathed life into this Land and her Peoples. From time beyond our reckoning the ..... people have blessed this place through their care and concern.  
We pay our respects to their Elders and Leaders, past and present, and pray for the future of their communities. May we walk gently and respectfully on this Land.

*This would be useful when the focus is on the creation ...*

- (4) As we look upon the hills and valleys, we see the love poured out upon this Land by those who have cared for this Land since time beyond measure.  
We honour those who have gone before and those who are yet to come.  
May we be mindful of the calling God places on humanity to care for Creation.  
May we take the lead from the ..... people, whose stories are entwined with the stewarding of this place. May we learn from them and walk with them.

*This would be useful on national days ...*

- (5) This is God's Land.  
Many have gone before who have honoured God by caring for the Land, in the ways they have lived and in the stories they have shared.  
We give thanks for the ..... people, who have held as sacred the duty of protecting the Land and living in harmony with it.  
May God honour and bless them – now and to eternity.

*This would be useful for general occasions ...*

- (6) As we gather in this place, we give thanks for the ..... People.  
We acknowledge the commitment their ancestors made, across the generations, to nurturing this Land. Together, may we walk into the future, recognising the sacred footsteps that continue to lead us to the promise of Heaven.

*This would be useful where the church or venue is near to a known site of aboriginal celebration ...*

- (7) *Where the church or venue is near to a known site of aboriginal celebration:*  
We acknowledge that the site of this church is in walking distance of ..... which is the site of ceremony and ritual of the ..... people, the traditional custodians of this region.  
We are awed that they recognised and celebrated the religious significance of place, plant and all living creatures; and that care for the earth was implanted in their law.  
We honour them for this. And we look for and delight in the sacred in our midst.  
We pray that in the power of the Holy Spirit we might work together for reconciliation and justice in this land.

*This would be useful for general occasions ...*

- (8) For this Land - We give thanks!  
For the First Peoples (Nations) - We give thanks!  
We honour the custodians of sacred stories, of dreamings and the connections with the deep earth and oceans.  
May we work together for the restoration of the Land and Sea and Her Peoples.

*This would be useful for general occasions, or in an outdoor setting ...*

(9) From river to ocean, from campfire to hearth,  
may the First People who have cared for this Land be blessed.  
From breath to song, from step to dance,  
may those who follow your Songlines\* [ancient stories] guide us on the journey of  
living honourably in this place.  
From greeting to Amen, from silence to chorus,  
may our worship join with the voices of the First Peoples of this Land.

(\*Songlines – For some communities of Indigenous Australians, a songline, also called dreaming track, is one of the paths across the land (or sometimes the sky) which mark the route followed by localised 'creator-beings' during the Dreaming. The paths of the songlines are recorded in traditional songs, stories, dance, and painting.

A knowledgeable person is able to navigate across the land by repeating the words of the song, which describe the location of landmarks, waterholes, and other natural phenomena. In some cases, the paths of the creator-beings are said to be evident from their marks, or petrosomatoglyphs, on the land, such as large depressions in the land which are said to be their footprints.)

*This would be useful in worship which uses visual symbols ...*

(10)

*A rock is placed before the people.*

Over eons the earth has settled and formed. The colours merge and the stories entwine.

May those who have kept the stories of God's earth be honoured.

*Water is placed before the people.*

The flow of life ripples, finding cracks and crevices. It glistens and sparkles with promise.

May those who quench a spiritual thirst be blessed.

*A candle or fire is lit.*

Darkness is banished with the sharing of warmth.

Relationships enlighten and corruption dissipates.

May the Light of the World be carried in the hearts of the People of God.

*The people stretch out their hands, palms upward.*

We reach out to God and to one another.

May God remake us as a Covenant People,

Bound together by the Spirit of this Land and guided by Her First Peoples.

*This would be useful for general occasions, on national days, in celebrations of ancient peoples ...*

(11)

In the Dreaming, the Spirit of God brought forth the blessing of Ancient Life through Mother Earth.

Ground Beings were given breath and rhythm... the offspring of the heart of God!

This place was tended by the ..... People – people of this Ground and this Land's rhythms. We give thanks for their custodianship and honour their Elders – past, present and future.