



Abundant
Grace
Liberating
Hope

Uniting Church in Australia
Assembly

President: Dr Deidre Palmer

General Secretary: Ms Colleen Geyer

Pastoral Letter – Racism and Police Brutality

To all congregations and faith communities

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I join with Christian leaders from around the world to express my outrage and deep sorrow over the murder of George Floyd, and the evil of racism, which gives birth to such acts of inhumanity.

I offer prayers for the Floyd family and for all those in the U.S. who live in fear and ongoing discrimination because of the colour of their skin. We join in solidarity with all those who are working for justice, equity and healing in the U.S. and particularly with our partner churches, who are deeply committed to this struggle for justice.

In the Bible, our sacred text, we hear God's cry for justice for those who are living in poverty, those who are oppressed by unjust systems, those who are excluded and discriminated against. For the President of the United States to brandish the Bible as an assertion of power over people seeking justice, is an affront to the prophetic and radical call of Jesus. The Jesus we know from the Gospel stories, calls leaders to use their power in service to others, to call forth in others compassion, justice and kindness, unity and community. These are the leaders, we are called to be and that we need in the world today.

While we condemn what is taking place in the U.S., a country which was my home for nine years, we need to also turn our gaze to our own home in Australia. We need to focus on the racism which blights our land, the racism, which leads to Aboriginal deaths in custody, which has First Peoples experiencing discrimination, poverty, ill health and disadvantage.

We began this National Reconciliation week by saying we need to strengthen our actions for justice, healing and reconciliation. This is not an abstract call – it is seen expressed daily in our relationships with one another in this country.

It is seen when we:

- call out racism;
- tell the truth about the history of colonisation, dispossession and the undermining of First People's culture, language and spirituality;
- advocate for First People's voice to be heard in determining their future;
- respect and appreciate the culture and stories of First Peoples, and work together to deepen our relationships based on reconciliation that arises from justice, and leads to healing; and.
- live in harmony with the sacred land that we share.

To stand by and remain silent is to be complicit in contributing to a system and world that is against God's intention for us all. What God desires is for us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God. (Micah 6:8)

Yours in Christ,

Deidre Palmer



**Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY**

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Prayer

Risen, Crucified God,

We cry out for justice for the family of George Floyd and for comfort for all those who mourn his death.

Forgive us for the sin of racism, and the ways we fail to acknowledge that all people are equal, created in your image, deeply loved and of infinite worth.

Forgive us for our silence, and the ways we are complicit in racist attitudes and actions.

Stir in us vision, courage and determination to work for justice in Australia.

May your Holy Spirit fill us with your compassion and reconciling love, that we might walk together as First and Second Peoples in mutuality, respect and delight in our shared life and destiny together.

Through Christ, our liberator we pray.

Amen.