

WALKING TOGETHER

Exploring the Covenant between First and Second Peoples

Study Guide

UNITING CHURCH
IN AUSTRALIA



Walking Together

Exploring the Covenant between First and Second Peoples

Produced by Formation, Education and Discipleship
with Christian Unity, Doctrine and Worship
Uniting Church in Australia Assembly

Group Discussion Sessions by Craig Mitchell

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The videos can be seen and downloaded through assembly.uca.org.au
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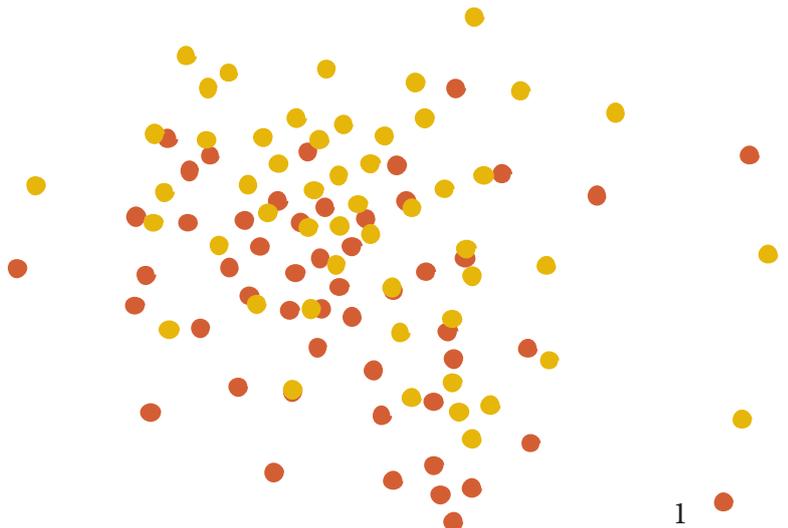
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Preamble to the UCA Constitution

The Uniting Church in Australia (the Church) was formed on 22 June, 1977 by the union of the Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia and the Presbyterian Church of Australia after the approval of "The Basis of Union" by the councils and courts of those three churches, guided by the belief that they had been called by God into this union.

The Church in accordance with the Basis of Union accepts that the responsibility for government in the Church belongs to the people of God by virtue of the gifts and tasks which God has laid upon them and so organizes its life that locally, regionally and nationally, government is entrusted to representatives, men and women, bearing gifts and graces, with which God has endowed them for the building up of God's Church and that therefore the Church shall be governed by a series of inter-related councils, each of which has its tasks and responsibilities in relation to the Church and the world.

The Church in accordance with the Basis of Union acknowledges that the demand of the Gospel, the response of the Church to the Gospel and the discipline which it requires are partly expressed in the formulation by the Church of its law, the aim of which is to confess God's will for the life of Christ's Church.

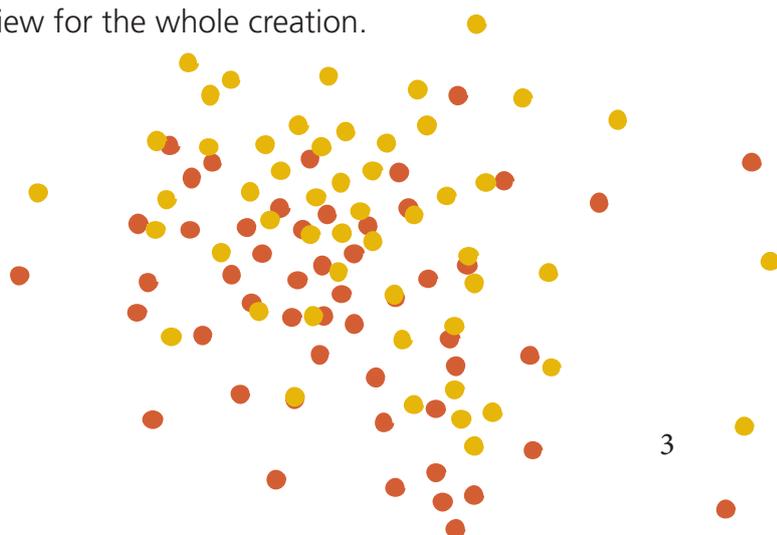
As the Church believes God guided it into union, so it believes that God is calling it to continually seek a renewal of its life as a community of First Peoples and of Second Peoples from many lands, and as part of that to:

RECOGNISE THAT

1. When the churches that formed the Church arrived in Australia as part of the process of colonisation they entered a land that had been created and sustained by the Triune God they knew in Jesus Christ.
2. Through this land God had nurtured and sustained the First Peoples, the Aboriginal and Islander peoples, who continue to understand themselves to be the traditional owners and custodians (meaning 'sovereign' in the languages of the First Peoples) of these lands and waters since time immemorial.
3. The First Peoples had already encountered the Creator God before the arrival of the colonisers. The Spirit was already in the land revealing God to the people through law, custom and ceremony. The same love and grace that was finally and fully revealed in Jesus Christ sustained the First Peoples and gave them particular insights into God's ways.

4. Some members of the uniting churches approached the First Peoples with good intentions, standing with them in the name of justice; considering their well being, culture and language as the churches proclaimed the reconciling purpose of the Triune God found in the good news about Jesus Christ.
5. Many in the uniting churches, however, shared the values and relationships of the emerging colonial society including paternalism and racism towards the First Peoples. They were complicit in the injustice that resulted in many of the First Peoples being dispossessed from their land, their language, their culture and spirituality, becoming strangers in their own land.
6. The uniting churches were largely silent as the dominant culture of Australia constructed and propagated a distorted version of history that denied this land was occupied, utilised, cultivated and harvested by these First Peoples who also had complex systems of trade and inter-relationships. As a result of this denial, relationships were broken and the very integrity of the Gospel proclaimed by the churches was diminished.
7. From the beginning of colonisation the First Peoples challenged their dispossession and the denial of their proper place in this land. In time this was taken up in the community, in the courts, in the parliaments, in the way history was recorded and told, and in the Church.
8. In 1985 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the Church formed the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.
9. In 1988 the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress invited the other members of the Church to join in a solemn act of covenanting before God.
10. After much struggle and debate, in 1994 the Assembly 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.

AND THUS the Church celebrates this Covenantal relationship as a foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation.



Introduction to this Study Guide

As church we are being asked to move to an uncertain place. We are being asked to build new conversation with First Peoples about land, relationships and identity from a less certain place than we thought we occupied.

Rev Dr Chris Budden

We've had two hundred years of colonisation and Christendom that has come from other parts of the world. I've got to thinking, 'What was God doing with us as Aboriginal people before the white man came to Australia? What was happening? If God is God of creation, how did our Aboriginal people understand how their world came into being?'

Rev Denise Champion, *Yarta Wandatha*, page 8.

God in Christ has given to all people in the Church the Holy Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation.

Basis of Union, paragraph 3

There are few issues as important for Australia today as how we recognise and respect the first Australians and promote their well-being. How do we as Christians seek to live as people of reconciliation? How can we as Australians walk and live together as people of compassion, justice, peace and hope?

These resources are designed to help you explore where we have come from as a nation and as a church, and how as First and Second Peoples we might walk together in the future. There are two group sessions, each with two accompanying video clips. Each session is designed last for approximately 60 minutes.

Worship resources related to the the recognition of First Peoples have been prepared by the Worship Working Group. They are available in the Walking Together DVD and CD pack, or may be downloaded from assembly.uca.org.au/walkingtogether.

Session One – “Our Land, Our Story”

This session explores the experience of Indigenous peoples in Australia, including their experience of God, and the mixed legacy of colonisation. It includes two video segments.

Session Two – “A Destiny Together”

This session explores what it means to be First and Second Peoples together, and how we might live out our shared covenant in the future. It includes two video segments.

Video Interview with Rev Denise Champion

There is an additional video featuring an extended interview with Rev Denise Champion, minister with UAICC. Duration 13 mins

Session One: Our Land, Our Story

Purposes of Session

- To explore the experience of Indigenous peoples prior to colonisation
- To reflect on the mixed legacy of colonisation
- To become familiar with the Uniting Church's key commitments to First Peoples

Introduction

In these two discussion sessions, we will explore briefly the experience of First Peoples, in particular their experience of God in this land, and their experience of colonisation.

The Uniting Church has two key statements that relate to Indigenous Peoples - a Covenanting Statement from 1994 and a revised Preamble to the church's Constitution from 2009. It is likely that many church members have never seen these important documents. They express key understandings about our history as different peoples in this land and our commitments about our shared future.

Some of the statements may come as a surprise, and certainly as a challenge. However for us to live as the people of God is much more than words on paper. You will have the opportunity to hear from a number of Uniting Church leaders about the origins and implications of the Preamble. Also, you will have the opportunity to hear from and explore with each other how this narrative is significant for our church, and indeed our nation.

We pray that your conversation and prayer will lead to a deep acknowledgement of the importance of these issues for us as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Bible Reading

Isaiah 40:21-26

Prayer

*Creator of all things,
Both seen and unseen.
Speak to us in your great wisdom.
Make us strong as we seek
Your help and guidance.
Teach us to love all people
Regardless of race or colour or belief.
May we listen with great care
To the heartbeat of this land
And to its people
Who cared for it so well
And for so long.*

*May the peace these people and their land
Have always enjoyed
Continue to be strengthened and preserved
By all who wish to come and be part of
This country and its 'Ancient Dreaming'.*

Used with permission of Elizabeth Pike, 1998.
Assembly Working Group on Worship,
*Resources suitable for worship and prayer
with, or in support of, the First Peoples
of this land*

Bible Reading

Isaiah 40:27-31

Group gathering exercise

Listening is very important. If you didn't listen to the stories it was a matter of life and death. You wouldn't know where to find food. You wouldn't know where to find water. So you had to listen very carefully. And part of listening was observing. Dad would have had to observe his Elders to know where to dig. These are all very important ways of how we learn too. To be watching and listening and observing our Elders. I always say we either learn by listening or we make mistakes. This is true for all people.

Rev Denise Champion, *Yarta Wandatha*, page 9.

A key part of our time together is listening to one another, listening to voices of leaders from across the church, and listening to the formal words of our church through its councils.

Let us begin by listening to one another. I invite you to share your responses to these questions, one person at a time, without comment from other people. Let us listen carefully to one another.

Discuss

Where did you grow up? Who did you grow up with?

Who passed on to you the wisdom of your family and the ways of your people?

Now go around the group a second time, responding to these questions one at a time.

How much do you know already about the revised Preamble?

How are you feeling about these discussion sessions?

What will we need to do in order to listen well to one another?

What is the Preamble?

The Preamble to the Uniting Church's Constitution gives us a succinct statement of our histories in this country both as Australians and as the people of God. It is a good place to start as it challenges us to be honest about the past.

The revisions to the Preamble came to the Uniting Church's national Assembly meeting in 2009. The document was then referred to synods and presbyteries for concurrence as is required with constitutional amendments. The required number of approvals from synods and presbyteries were subsequently received and this was noted at the 2012 Assembly.

Take some time to familiarise yourselves with the statement. Since we will be referring to it over two sessions, you don't need to either understand or discuss all of it right now.

Decide together whether you wish to read the Preamble aloud, letting each person read a paragraph in turn, or allow people to read individually. (Another option is to print sections in large print on separate pieces of paper and place them around the room.)

It is a good idea to provide pens for people to highlight, underline or make notes as they read.

For example

- underline key phrases that stand out to you
- place a ? in the margin for parts that raise questions for you
- place a * in the margin for parts that you affirm

As a group, make a note of some of the key phrases and some of the parts that have questions about. You may wish to list these on a large sheet of paper or whiteboard. You will be discussing these after the video.

Watch Video #1 - "Speaking of Our Past"

Duration 6 mins 50 secs.

How did we get the revised Preamble?

Rev Dr Chris Budden, Interim National Co-ordinator, Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress explains:

Like many fine moments in the life of the church, the Preamble arose out of tension and struggle. There was a sense in the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress that its voice was not always respected in the various councils of the church, and disagreement about what authority Congress should be able to exercise in the life of the church. They felt that some areas of the Church's life were not open to hear their voice.

The answer was to put the commitments in the law of the church – something public and more stable than occasional decision of councils of the church. Congress suggested that a starting point could be a new Preamble to the Constitution, and offered a proposal for what could be in such a document.

The Assembly Standing Committee appointed a task group to work with Congress on a new Preamble. They worked together on this task for about two years (mid 2007 to mid 2009), consulting widely and making sure that at every step Congress had a clear voice.

As the name implies, Preambles come before Constitutions. They are ways of introducing the Constitution. They say: "we are this sort of people, shaped by this sort of history, and valuing these kind of things, so this is how we want to shape our life together". The Preamble seeks to name in the 'law' of the Church who we are as First and Second Peoples, and what this means for the way we shape our life together.

Discuss

*What questions do you have about how the revised Preamble came into being?
What are some of the statements in the Preamble that you want to affirm?*

Clauses 4 to 7 acknowledge that while some people approached First Peoples respectfully, the history of the church has often reflected the same paternalism, racism, ignorance and denial as the rest of colonial society.

*How do you react to these statements?
What evidence of this do you see in our history or from our experience today?
Why might some people find such statements difficult or contentious?
How do our beliefs and attitudes as Christians shape our responses to past wrongs?
What Scripture verses come to mind as you consider this?*

Watch Video #2 - "The Spirit in the Land"

Duration 6 mins 10 secs.

...we have stories that stretch back across time and so it is about making sense of what has been revealed to us. If we say that God, that Christ, was here from the very beginning of our world, then how was God here in Australia right from the beginning of Creation?

Rev Denise Champion, *Yarta Wandatha*, page 8.

If the Gospel is to be expressed fully in the wider Australian context, it needs to take into account the voice of God now being discerned in our Aboriginal culture by Aboriginal people. Aboriginal culture, Aboriginal spirituality and the Aboriginal experience of the Gospel are not to be viewed as curios of mission history, but as integral to the work of God in Australia.

Rainbow Spirit Elders, *Rainbow Spirit Theology*, page 27.

Read over Clauses 1 to 3 of the Preamble again.

These clauses raise theological questions that may seem new to us as a church. However they also reflect the experiences and questions of missionaries, both in the past and today. These men and women saw themselves taking the Gospel to other countries and cultures, and often discovered in one way or another that the people and cultures were not as godless as they had presumed.

Time and again, missionaries discovered that the faith that they brought was entwined with their own western culture. Their gospel was in some way a colonial gospel, often accompanied by power, privilege and a denial of the culture, language and beliefs of the indigenous people. A further step has taken place throughout the last century, namely, allowing indigenous people to voice their experience of God in their own culture and to express how they see this connected with the Triune God revealed in the Scriptures.

Discuss

These Clauses raise challenging questions for us.

If God is Creator of all, how and where do we experience God through Creation?

John chapter 1 says that the Word was at the beginning of Creation and we see this Word revealed in Jesus Christ. *In what ways can the Word be known by people in their own time, community and culture? If so, how?*

How does our own culture shape our faith? Does this also limit our ability to see faith in other cultures?

Can we learn from people from other cultures about God and God's ways?

Spend some time discussing these and the questions you have listed about Clauses 1 to 3.

Reflection

Spend some time individually reflecting on the session and writing some notes.

What new insights have you gained from the session – about our history, about the church, about God, about yourself?

What has challenged you in this session – your understandings, your attitudes, your faith?

What questions do you have at this time?

Prayer

*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.*

Assembly Working Group on Worship

Resources

Rev Denise Champion, *Yarta Wandatha*, c/- UAICC: Salisbury, 2014.
<http://sa.uca.org.au/covenanting/aunty-denises-book-yarta-wandatha>
Rainbow Spirit Elders, *Rainbow Spirit Theology*, HarperCollins: Melbourne, 1997.
Doctrine of Discovery movie and other resources - dofdmenno.org/movie/
(Produced by a group of US Mennonites.)
Assembly Working Group on Worship, *Resources suitable for worship and prayer with, or in support of, the First Peoples of this land*, available at
<https://assembly.uca.org.au/cudw/worship-resources-and-publications/item/861-prayers-liturgies>
National Council of Churches in Australia (NATSIEC), www.ncca.org.au/index.php/about-us-1
and theology resources www.ncca.org.au/index.php/resources/theology
Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC), uaicc.org.au
UnitingJustice website – various resources - www.unitingjustice.org.au/justice-for-indigenous-australians

Session Two: A Destiny Together

Purposes of Session

- To explore what it means to see ourselves as First and Second Peoples
- To understand the nature of the Uniting Church's covenant with Indigenous peoples
- To explore what 'a destiny together' might mean for the Uniting Church and for all Australians

Introduction

In this session, we will explore further what it might mean to acknowledge First Peoples and Second Peoples, and what that means for Second Peoples. We will also look at what the Uniting Church's covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress might mean for our future.

Once again you will be hearing from some Uniting Church leaders and have the opportunity to reflect together as a group.

Bible Readings

Psalm 78:1-8; 2 Corinthians 5:16-19

Prayer

*Creator God,
we pray for this land, our culture, our customs.
our languages, our people and our nation.
Gather us together to look after this land
so that the beauty of our mother earth
may be preserved for all future generations.*

*Jesus, our brother, give us your grace,
to be united in one mind, in one heart and in one action
so that we can continue the journey of reconciliation,
and enable all Australians to work together
in love, peace and joy.*

*We ask you, God the Holy Spirit.
overshadow us with your presence.
We ask you to guide all people, whether black, white
or yellow, so that we can truly learn and have better
understanding in the knowledge of language and
culture in this land, Australia. Amen.*

Bishop Saibo Mabo, Chairperson, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC), 2012

Group gathering exercise

Have you had friendships or encounters with indigenous Australians that have been significant for you? Take some time to allow people to speak about these.

What reflections have you had about our conversations in the first session?

First Peoples and Second Peoples

As the Church believes God guided it into union, so it believes that God is calling it to continually seek a renewal of its life as a community of First Peoples and of Second Peoples from many lands...

Preamble to the Constitution

Watch Video #3 - "First Peoples, Second Peoples"

Duration - 6 mins 15 secs

You may wish to make some notes about what is said.

What does it mean to be Second Peoples?

Chris Budden indicates that the terms "First Peoples" and "Second Peoples" are new to the Uniting Church and originated in the drafting of the revised Preamble. The Preamble defines the First Peoples as the Aboriginal and Islander peoples. While the Second Peoples are not defined as such, certainly the term is used to speak of those not of Aboriginal or Islander descent who came later to Australia.

At the 2009 Assembly, there was some unease expressed by people about who the Second Peoples included, as some migrant communities had not participated in British colonisation. Perhaps they were Third Peoples who might want to speak in their own voices about the past and the present. Myung Hwa Park and Jason Kioa indicate that there is a range of views about what the Preamble says to such communities across our multicultural church.

Chris Budden points out that the main purpose of the terms is to be clear about who was in this land first, regardless of who came later, and to make important statements about the First People's relationship with the land, their law, custom and ceremony, and their experience of colonisation.

Discuss

What else did you hear from the speakers in the video?

How do you feel about the terms "First Peoples" and "Second Peoples"?

In what ways are they helpful? In what ways (if any) do they raise questions for you?

What might it mean for both church and society to give greater acknowledgement that indigenous people are the First Peoples?

How should we then live?

After much struggle and debate, in 1994 the Assembly 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.

Preamble, Clause 10.

We come to this covenanting table with our gifts of Aboriginal spirituality, our culture, our Aboriginal way of loving and caring, our instinctive concern and a willingness to share and teach our history and every good aspect about being Aboriginal and Islander. Our commitment to walk together with you as equals will be measured by our willingness to share with you our friendship and our love for God's creation.

Covenanting Statement, 1994

I believe that there are two things that need to happen before the Christian gospel can take deep root in the rich soil of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Church. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Churches need to look at culturally appropriate ways of worshipping God...I also see that the wider church needs to work with indigenous people to bring about a greater respect and value for Aboriginal culture through the process of reconciliation and covenanting so as to affirm the dignity of indigenous Christians. I believe this will bring about a freedom and confidence in what we know and in who we were meant to be, to be able to seek after God and be found by Him.

Rev Denise Champion, Yarta Wandatha, 2014.

How do we as a Uniting Church live out our covenant with the UAICC and our commitment to reconciliation with First Peoples? What is our future destiny together?

Watch Video #4 - "Living Our Covenant"

Duration 6 mins 30 secs.

Discuss

What statements from the speakers stood out to you?

What would you want to affirm? What questions were raised for you?

We seek to journey together in the true spirit of Christ as we discover what it means to be bound to one another in a covenant. Christ has bound us each to himself, giving himself for us, and he has bound us to each other with his commandment 'Love one another as I have loved you'. It is our desire to work in solidarity with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress for the advancement of God's kingdom of justice and righteousness in this land, and we reaffirm the commitment made at the 1985 Assembly to do so.

1994 Assembly, Covenanting Statement.

Download and read the Covenanting Statement from assembly.uca.org.au/walkingtogether

Discuss

How well is the covenant known in your congregation?

What do you think the covenant means for the people in your congregation in terms of commitments, values and relationships?

What might the Covenant mean for you as an individual?

What might building on the Covenant look like in your community? Uncovering history? Raising awareness? Building relationships? Changing attitudes? Taking action?

In the video, President Stuart McMillan raises the issue of sovereignty. Clause 2 of the revised Preamble explains that for First Peoples this means custodians. While there is a move for Australia to recognise indigenous people in its Constitution, the claim of sovereignty is different. At the very least, it is a reminder that First Peoples did not give up their sense of traditional ownership and custodianship, and cannot simply be assimilated into Australian society at the cost of their languages, law, customs and culture, indeed their identities. Whether or not the Australian government were to recognise sovereignty, we as a church can offer the acknowledgement and respect that our First Peoples deserve. The 2015 Assembly meeting agreed to “determine that a significant priority for its life during the next triennium is to explore with Congress what it would mean for the practices of the Church to recognise and affirm that First Peoples are sovereign Peoples.”

Discuss

Alistair Macrae suggests that we have failed to listen to and learn from our indigenous sisters and brothers. What might the acknowledgement of sovereignty mean for the relationships between First Peoples and Second Peoples?

The World Council of Churches 2012 Statement on the doctrine of discovery and its enduring impact on indigenous peoples says this:

- 1. Indigenous Peoples have the oldest living cultures in the world. Three hundred to five hundred million Indigenous Peoples today live in over 72 countries around the world, and they comprise at least 5,000 distinct peoples. The ways of life, identities, well-being and very existence of Indigenous Peoples are threatened by the continuing effects of colonization and national policies, regulations and laws that attempt to force them to assimilate into the cultures of majoritarian societies. A fundamental historical basis and legal precedent for these policies and laws is the “Doctrine of Discovery”, the idea that Christians enjoy a moral and legal right based solely on their religious identity to invade and seize indigenous lands and to dominate Indigenous Peoples.*
- 2. Around the world, Indigenous Peoples are over-represented in all categories of disadvantage. In most indigenous communities people live in poverty without clean water and necessary infrastructure, lacking adequate health care, education, employment and housing. Many indigenous communities still suffer the effects of dispossession, forced removals from homelands and families, inter-generational trauma and racism, the effects of which are manifested in social welfare issues such as alcohol and drug problems, violence and social breakdown. Basic health outcomes dramatize the disparity in well-being between Indigenous Peoples and European descendants.*

The 2015 Assembly on the Uniting Church affirmed the WCC statement and “encouraged its consideration in the church”. A link to the full statement is provided below, as well as a link to a video about the Doctrine of Discovery.

Discuss

To what extent have Christians promoted or supported this “Doctrine of Discovery” historically? How do you react to the statement?

The WCC statement clearly links the Doctrine of Discovery with the plight of many indigenous peoples. *What do you see as the responsibilities of Second Peoples to seek fairness, justice and opportunity for First Peoples?*

Denise Champion shares her hope that we will leave the next generation with a better shared future. *What are your hopes for the next generation of Australians?*

Reflection

Spend some time individually reflecting on the session and writing some notes.

What new insights have you gained from the session – about our history, about the church, about God, about yourself?

What has challenged you in this session – your understandings, your attitudes, your faith?

What questions do you have at this time?

You are invited to share with the whole group a couple of things that you have written.

Prayer

You are invited to say together this affirmation of faith based on the revised Preamble. If you wish, you may also use some of the accompanying images that are part of the Preamble Resource Kit. Then close in shared prayer.

*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,
getting hearts and minds ready 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
for the sake of the Kingdom of God here on earth.*

*We are full of joy that we can learn, grow and serve together
as a pilgrim people
in the name of Christ.*

Resources

Assembly, Uniting Church in Australia, *Covenanting Statement: 1994*,
<http://assembly.uca.org.au/resources/covenanting/item/135-covenanting-statement-1994>
Doctrine of Discovery movie and other resources - dofdmenna.org/movie/
(Produced by a group of US Mennonites.)

Statement on the doctrine of discovery and its enduring impact on indigenous peoples, World Council of Churches, Bossey, 2012.

www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/executive-committee/2012-02/statement-on-the-doctrine-of-discovery-and-its-enduring-impact-on-indigenous-peoples

Long before my people came to this land your people were here. You were nurtured by your traditions, by the land, and by the Mystery that surrounds us all and binds all creation together.

My people did not hear you when you shared your understanding and your Dreaming. In our zeal to share with you the Good News of Jesus Christ, we were closed to your spirituality and your wisdom.

It is our desire to work in solidarity with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress for the advancement of God's kingdom of justice and righteousness in this land...

We come to this covenanting table with our gifts of Aboriginal spirituality, our culture, our Aboriginal way of loving and caring, our instinctive concern and a willingness to share and teach our history and every good aspect about being Aboriginal and Islander.

Our commitment to walk together with you as equals will be measured by our willingness to share with you our friendship and our love for God's creation.

Covenanting Statement, 1994.

