



Sunday January 21st, 2024

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

The Uniting Church invites congregations to mark the Sunday before January 26 as a *Day of Mourning*. This comes in response to a request from First Nations people within our church.

For the full resource and more information see:
<https://uniting.church/dayofmourning/>

Items marked with * are from the *Day of Mourning* resource.

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle*

Our land is alive with the glory of God;
desert sands hum and gum trees dance.

Brown grasses sing and mountains
breathe their stillness.
All created things add their rhythms of delight
and even stones rap out their praise.

Let our voices mingle with those of the earth;
may our hearts join the beat of her joy,
for our triune God is with us:
the Source of all being surrounds and upholds us.

Christ Jesus walks beside and before us.
The Spirit moves within and between us.
Blessed be God, our wonder and delight.

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging*



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress

We acknowledge the _____
Clan/Nation the sovereign First Peoples of this
place. We honour their elders past, present and
emerging together with all descendants of this
Nation, for their care for these lands and waters
since creation.

Singing - Praise to the Lord TiS 111

OR: Sing praise and thanksgiving TiS 107

OR: God himself is present TiS 121

Greeting*

Today friends, we are remembering the tragic history of our nation and the violent dispossession of her First Peoples.

Today is a Day of Mourning. Today we mark in lament the truth of our shared history and we lift up to God our prayers for First Peoples and our nation.

We say sorry and we pray for forgiveness,
healing and hope.

We also come together and give thanks to God for the grace which enables us to face ourselves and the wrongs in our country and seek healing and be given the courage to repent and seek to mend our wrongs.

The God of all justice,
The God of all peace,
be with you all.
And also with you.

Invocation*

Abba, Father,
Bäpa** God,
source of all life,
answer our call,
as a mother responds
to the cry of a child in the night.

Jesus Christ,
teacher and liberator,
friend of the poor,
dwell with us
as healer of creation,
and restorer of hope.

Creator Spirit,
bringer of hope,
source of courage,
help us to listen,
and open our hearts
to the stories of these lands.
Amen.

***Bäpa means Father in the Yolŋu languages of North Eastern Arnhemland*

*The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Friends of the Fig Tree, Uniting Church in Australia
with blessings and permission to use the content in worship services with acknowledgement.*



Lament and confession*

Merciful God,
we, the Second Peoples of this land, lament the
injustice and abuse that has so often marked the
treatment of the First Peoples of this land.

**We lament the way in which
their land was taken from them
and their language, culture,
law and spirituality
despised and suppressed.
We acknowledge and lament
the way in which the Christian church
was so often not only complicit
in this process but actively involved in it.**

**We lament that in our own time,
the injustice and abuse has continued.
We have been indifferent.
Gracious God, hear our confession —**

**We have not loved you with our whole heart,
nor have we loved First Peoples
and other neighbours as ourselves.
God of mercy, forgive us for our failures,
past and present and give us the grace today
to make a fresh start.**

**By your Spirit transform our minds and hearts
so that we may love as you have loved us,
that we may boldly speak your truth
and courageously do your will.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

*At this point in the service if First Peoples are
participating they could be invited to offer a
response to the lament and confession.*

Alternative Prayer

God of fishers and all assorted folk,
we offer our thanks that you know us
and call us by name.

We recognise that you are a rock
when we feel the world fails us.
You are our hope
when the world seems hopeless.
You are our fortress
when we are in fear of the world.

The psalmist (Ps 62) says 'I will not be shaken'
yet we know there are many things that shake us
and cause us to doubt or fall.

Forgive us when we struggle to trust
that you are rock enough for us.

Forgive us when we fail to hope
that you are enough to uphold us.

Forgive us when we can no longer see
that you are our deliverance and salvation.

(time for silent reflection)

Declaration of forgiveness*

This is the best of all:
When we are empty, God fills us;
when we are disheartened,
God is compassionate;
when we are wounded,
God brings healing;
when we confess our sin,
God forgives.

In Christ,
through Christ
and because of Christ,
our sins are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God.
You refill the cup of life, O God.
In Christ, we find refuge, strength and hope.
Amen.**

Passing the peace

May the Peace of God dwell with you:
and also with you.



Listening

Read: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 &
Mark 1:14-20

For these words of faith
and for Jesus the Word
Thanks be to God.

Reflecting - Rev. Jennie Gordon

You are reading this, or hearing this, because God reached out to you and called you. You might think it was your idea, but it wasn't. You have been called, and like Jonah maybe you said 'No', once, often, frequently, but here you are now and the fact that you have got this far probably means that somehow, somewhere, sometime, you said 'Yes' to the Spirit's persistent/irresistible invitation. That might be a point in time you can clearly remember, or not. It doesn't matter. Alongside the fishermen, you have been called.

Now, let's be real, none of us feel that we are fully equipped to deal with life as a faithful follower of Jesus, we are just so ordinary! But that's exactly why we are called. This outrageous God who breathes life and loved us enough to pitch a tent amongst us, calls ordinary people into this extraordinary, collective, subversive mission of love. Jesus trusted that the people he called to form his band of followers would be equipped along the way, that they would learn from their misunderstandings, sufferings and failures and would continue to grow into a common people of hope, known for their love shown in truth, healing and justice.

Today we are invited by the Uniting Church into a Day of Mourning, to faithfully face the reality of the history of the colonisation of this land and the subsequent devastation to people, country, and culture because of this invasion. We are not separate from it, and it is not over. As a descendant of the people who came and benefitted from the dispossession and destruction, I often feel fearfully unequipped to contribute in this tough and tender space. I often feel like Jonah; I just don't want to go to that

Nineveh. I'm afraid of putting a foot wrong, of making a mistake, of contributing more to the hurt than the healing. I'm also afraid of what it might cost. But time and again God calls me to step up. To make the journey. To listen with my whole heart and respond out of love, in hope. After all, when Jonah finally did go and tell the folk of Nineveh what God wanted them to hear, all the people, ALL the people, great and small, put on garments of lament and mourning and ceased their usual lives of eating and drinking to focus on turning things around.

Oh. Oh, what might that look like?

The reading from Mark begins with a darkness; 'After John was arrested', After John was arrested, Jesus begins his ministry of proclaiming the Good News of God. There's a chilling theme tune playing in the background here. It's dangerous Good News; life-threateningly dangerous, right from the outset, because it threatens the power of greed and division. Jesus is not deterred by John's arrest, although I imagine he was deeply troubled, but rather he steps out in mission and invites some ordinary fisherfolk along to help him. The work of reconciling love needs people who are willing to say 'Yes', to leave behind old words and ways and to accompany the one who walks us through the valley of death to life.

Today as disciples of Jesus, as the Uniting Church, we are called into Covenant again as First and Second Peoples, by a God who trusts and equips us to walk together in faith, proclaiming the Good News. We say 'Yes' and follow, believing that we will learn from the horror of the past, from our misunderstandings and failures and will continue to grow into a people of hope, known for our love shown in truth, healing and justice.

May it be so, Amen.

Singing - Inspired by love and anger TiS 674

OR: Will you come and follow me (All Together OK 413)
OR: Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult (TiS 589)



Offering

As we respond to your call upon us, loving God,
bless what we offer in your name. May these
offerings belong to the good news of Jesus Christ
as your kingdom comes near. Amen.

Prayers of the people*

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

May your power and love
be the foundations on which we:
walk together as First and Second Peoples;
and build our families,
our communities
and our nation.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

We pray together then as Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Singing - Be thou my vision TiS 547

OR: All my hope on God is founded (TiS 560)
OR: Forth in your name (TiS 571)

Word of mission*

People of God,
be strong and of good courage,
live as people of the Covenant,
seek justice and resist evil,
honour First Nations People
and confront racism,
love and care for creation
and turn from exploitation of the earth,
proclaim truth and challenge lies
until we are reconciled through God's love.

Blessing

The blessing of God our rock be upon you,
Creator,
Redeemer,
Sustainer,
Amen.

Reflection: Rev. Jennie Gordon
St. John's Cowes,
Shearwater Ministry Team



Liturgy: Rev. Arnie Wierenga
Leongatha, Korumburra, Loch-Poowong
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Uniting Church in Australia
'Day of Mourning 2024' resource*

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