



Epiphany 3 (Day of Mourning) - Sunday January 25th, 2026

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Since 2019 the Uniting Church has marked a Day of Mourning on the Sunday before 26 January to reflect on the dispossession and ongoing injustices faced by Australia's First Peoples, acknowledge our shared history and renew our commitment to justice and healing.

Today's worship resource invites us into this space through both liturgy and reflection. The full Uniting Church resource for the Day of Mourning can be found at:

https://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Day-of-Mourning-2026_final.pdf

Isaiah 9*:

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

**² The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.**

**³ You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.**

**⁴ For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.**

**New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*

This powerful text declares light and truth. **We light the candle.**

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

The Ancient of Days breathed life into this land and her peoples. From time beyond our reckoning the *(please name the people on whose land you gather)* People, the Traditional Custodians, have blessed this place through their law and customs, their care and life. We pay 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.

Singing - Joyful the morning when Jesus Christ is risen TiS 383

OR: Praise the one (Rusty Edwards)

Tune: NETTLETON (TiS 392)

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Praise the one who breaks the darkness
with a liberating light.
Praise the one who frees the prisoners,
turning blindness into sight.
Praise the one who preached the Gospel,
healing every dread disease,
calming storms and feeding thousands
with the very bread of peace.

Praise the one who blessed the children
with a strong yet gentle word.
Praise the one who drove out demons
with a piercing two-edged sword.
Praise the one who brings cool water
to the desert's burning sand.
From this well comes living water,
quenching thirst in every land.

Praise the one true love incarnate:
Christ who suffered in our place.
Jesus died and rose for many
that we may know God by grace.
Let us sing for joy and gladness,
seeing what our God has done.
Praise the one redeeming glory,
praise the One who makes us one.

OR: Here in this place new light is streaming TiS 474



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Prayer

Lord our light and our salvation,
call us into this Light of Truth, to shine in the
darkness, to encourage others and welcome
them in from the wilderness to enjoy the warmth
of the campfire. In the interests of flourishing in
our nation and our communities, send your
Reconciling Spirit to give us courage and honesty
in the truth telling, and peace and forgiveness in
our divisions.

You have shattered the yoke and broken the rod
of the oppressor, yet we have contributed to the
suffering and oppression of people under our
watch.

You call us to seek your face, yet we hide our own
and we are ashamed. When we cry out loud,
answer us, bring justice, bring peace, bring
reconciliation. With the Psalmist we cry, "Do not
forsake us" and so we repent of the times when
we have forsaken each other. We know there are
times when we have cast each other away. You
have set us high on a rock, but we have neglected
to give others a hand up nor guided them to the
footholds.

You are our light and salvation, you offer us
strength and protection, we are not afraid with
you beside us. In courage we risk the flourishing
of others knowing we depend on it for our own
wellbeing.

Be gracious and answer us. Unite us in your
presence, held together under your Cross we
know your strength and power, made perfect in
weakness.

Under your Southern Cross in repentance and
sorrow we dare to stand together for peace and
justice saying, "We are sorry".

When we repent, when we turn back around to
God, we are offered forgiveness and
reconciliation.

Our sin is forgiven. **Thanks be to God.**

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 &
Matthew 4:12-23

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

Reflecting - Rev. Heather den Houting

In the Uniting Church in Australia, we are
encouraged to reflect on this day as a day of
mourning with the First Peoples of Australia. We
are asked to maintain a witness of reconciliation
by naming, understanding and committing
ourselves to the fullness of the history of this
country including its sometimes painful and
complex reality.

We do this prophetically knowing that not all
people are comfortable in this space, but
stepping into this space nonetheless. The turning
points into new ways of being do not come
without prophetic leadership. We do this with the
hope and fervent belief that God will take all of us
and create in us something that is new and
renewed. We do this as a witness and testament
to our faith that all of us are reconciled through
Christ.

A friend of mine, Rev Auntie Roberta Stanley
continually preaches the truth that "God did not
make junk". She reminds her beloved sisters and
brothers in Christ, that all people are made in
God's image and through the church we may find
our way into the future that God holds for us.
This message is made clear in the reading from
Corinthians, where we hear that there is no
hierarchy of faith in Christ. Each follower is called
to act in unity, knit together in the same purpose.
How then can the covenantal message of
reconciliation with First Nations people be
anything but natural for us?



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We can also see this journey in the words of encouragement from Isaiah. The thought that we are alone in our dispute and conflict can be so easily disproven by story after story in our biblical witness. Over the ages people have found themselves in times of despair and reckoning. But people have also found themselves, sometimes unexpectedly, in the pattern of how to live in the full hope of reconciliation. Lament, acknowledge, strive to do better. The encouragement is that this too can be our shared story.

And then we have the message of the Good News in Jesus Christ from Matthew. "Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people." That which we think is broken and wasted or impossible to achieve is possible in the power we can find together in Christ.

The overwhelming good news is that our shared stories will arise from deliberate and intentional connection with each other. There is nothing to fear in this space of lament. Division caused by fear and suspicion has little purchase in this overwhelming narrative of *agape* (love). Instead, the call to discipleship involves radical repentance, with the promise that in Christ, the best is yet to come.

On this day of mourning, the potential for this new day is glimmering in us. We can live in joy, even with conflicting views and disagreement, if we believe the will of God is for us to live in peace with the whole of creation. Peace in this sense is not drowning out our contested views, our complex history and opposing voices, but with humility allowing different voices to find a safe opportunity to be heard.

May your day be one of hope in the Lord, so that we may acknowledge and lament today in grace. That is to proclaim the gospel, to be followers of Jesus, to hold onto each other with love and

compassion and to stay in the foolishness that this story is always bigger than us. Amen.

Singing - Creator God (Keith Pearson)

Tune: ST PETERSBURG (TIS 375)

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Creator God, you made this land
and gave to us the gift of life.
You wish that we should live as one,
but we acknowledge sin and strife.
Let justice everywhere be found,
Let discord end and love abound.

Your covenants of old stand firm,
your ways are faithful, right and just.
Bind us together in your love
to live and work in growing trust.
Strengthen those ties which keep us true
to serve each other, serving you.

Our Saviour Christ, you came to earth.
You know our joys, our hopes, our pain.
To call us into covenant,
you gave your life and rose again.
You make us yours, you give us worth
to be your light in all the earth.

Great Spirit in this ancient land,
speak in the stillness deep within.
Remove all prejudice and fear,
give life to all, new hope begin.
Then help us gently walk as friends,
while on this land your peace descends.

OR: What a friend we have in Jesus TIS 590

OR: God of grace and God of glory TIS 611

Offering

Just as we bring our gifts to you, we also
acknowledge all your blessings bestowed on us.
And in the gifting, we recognise the responsibility
to give back into our world. Let us notice those in
need and share the abundant blessings of light
and love.



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Prayers for World & Community

(light a candle at each statement in italics or have someone else do so, and use a quiet pause)

Our light and our salvation:

Light your candle of love again in us. Shed your light through us into the very corners of our world. In the darkness of grieving, of death and separation. The places of incarceration and addiction and imprisonment. In the shame of deaths in custody in high numbers.

Shine your light

In the darkness of illness, the acuteness of pain, the waiting of health outcomes and the sadness of letting go. In closing gaps and taking the actions that needed to be taken.

Shine your light

In the conflicts and divisions which separate us, in our partnerships, our families, in our communities and in our world.

Shine your light

In the spaces of ill will, in the conversations of vitriol and push back, the places where our protective systems close us in and our opinions cause us to withhold. Open us up.

Shine your light

In the conversations of our community, where there are groups who are targeted, where First Nations people, refugees and immigrants are made outcasts from the place of privileged whiteness and colonial systems. When even acts of welcome are not encouraged.

Shine your light

In this sacred moment we hold in our hearts all those in our community who are struggling. We think of carers, our aged folks, our sick ones, our disheartened ones.

Shine your light, O God. Give us strength and courage to speak with honesty, to address the

wrongs, and the gaps which exist between First and Second Nations populations, the injustices of incarceration and health systems. The places of privilege where inequity exists without being recognised and acknowledged.

And as we pray the Lord's Prayer, we listen for what it asks of us in saying Your Kin-dom Come.

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 - O Lord Jesus Marrkapmirr TiS 253

OR: Be thou my vision O Lord of my heart TiS 547

OR: Filled with the Spirit's power TiS 411

OR: Jesus calls us TiS 589

Blessing

Come on, we follow Jesus as pilgrims on the way, announcing the good news of the Kin-dom, of justice and peace. Restored and reconciled, we go out into the world to be the Light.

Let us go, healing the sickness and disease of division along the way.

"Change your hearts and lives! Here comes the kingdom of Heaven"!

Go out in peace and love.

Reflection: Rev. Heather den Houting
Traralgon, VIC

Liturgy: Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson

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