

This “**Day of Mourning**” Resource compiled by our former President, Rev Stuart McMillan, invites UCA congregations to hold services that reflect on the effect of invasion and colonisation on Australia’s First Peoples and our identity as a nation.

The observance was endorsed by the Fifteenth Assembly at the request of our sisters and brothers in the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC).

Our declaration of a **Day of Mourning** allows us to stand together in remembering the truth of our history and honouring the culture of Australia’s First Peoples, their families and the next generations.

This worship service will be an annual fixture on our liturgical calendar that reminds us of the dispossession and violence against First Peoples and laments that as a Church and as Second Peoples we were and remain complicit.

Order of Worship
St.Margaret’s Uniting Church
Mooroolbark
Sunday 20th January, 2019



The Day of Mourning
Rev Ric Holland

Call to Worship

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.**

Acknowledgement of First Peoples

Today, as we gather to worship, we acknowledge the Wurundjeri peoples, the first inhabitants of this place from time beyond remembering. We acknowledge that through this land, God nurtured and sustained the First Peoples of this country, the Aboriginal and Islander peoples.

**We honour them for their custodianship
of the land on which we gather today.**

We acknowledge that 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.**

We acknowledge that 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;

**and so we rejoice in the reconciling purposes of God
found in the good news about Jesus Christ.**

Hymn

(Tune Hanover 10.10 11.11)

Can peace come on earth?

Can we sow the seed?

Can we give it birth?

Can it be our creed?

We ponder the answers; we long for Shalom;

We hunger for good-will abroad and at home.

The gospel of peace –
In Jesus we see
That conflicts don't cease;
He hangs on a tree!
Yet weapons he used were compassion and grace;
His non-violent life shows that hate has no place.

When conflicts arise
And fierce they can be,
When peace is the prize
There is but one plea –
“Don't act violently and then think it is right;
For violence breeds violence with no end in sight.”

Peace can come on earth
When we sow the seed,
When we give it birth
And make it our creed;
We can make a difference, correct what is wrong,
If our love and mercy are zealously strong.

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. But today is also a day of worship.

So we come together and give thanks to God for the abundant grace and liberating hope which we know through Jesus Christ and which is for all people.

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

And also with you.

Prayers

Invocation

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

Jesus Christ, brother and friend, Liberator, stand beside us as bearer of our humanity, and sharer of God's grace.

Creator Spirit, giver of new life, purposeful guest, prod us to praise, calling us to be a people of hope and faith in Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

Lament and Confession

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

We acknowledge and 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 acknowledge and lament 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.

Liberating Jesus, hear our lament and by your Spirit bring healing, hope and transformation to the lives of our First Nations sisters and brothers and their communities, we pray.

Gracious God, hear our acknowledgements — 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.

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.

Hymn

(Tune Eventide 10.10 10.10)

Many the question flood into our lives
When, without reason, cripp'ling pain invades,
When heavy sorrows raid our family home,
Forcing retreat from light into the shades.

In heavy darkness shock and fear take charge;
All we can do is hide our face and cry;
Stark emptiness pervades our soul and mind;
In pain we shout our silent question, "Why?"

No answers come that ever satisfy;
In this confusion can there be some light?
That's when we need to melt in loving arms
Of those who care, who help us through the night.

With love surrounding, with love by our side,
As love enfolds us, takes us by the hand,
We may find strength to face another day;
From shrinking downwards, rise again and stand.

God is within and knows our aching pain;
God is within and shares the grief we own;
God is the love that comes when others care;
God whispers from within, "You're not alone."

Day of Mourning 2019 A RESPONSE

Compiled by Joyce Dodge, and Ken & Katharine Davies and presented by Joyce -

The following comments are made in the interests of Reconciliation.

In a setting like this it is often assumed we are all non-Aboriginal . In fact the group may include people who are Aboriginal or have some Aboriginal inheritance.

St Margaret's always acknowledges the Wurundjeri nation who are the original custodians of this area, but several other nations are living in our Council area. According to the latest census, 1327 people identify as Aboriginal in the Yarra Ranges Council area, but the Australian Board of Statistics thinks the true number is double this.

There are two significant places where the Aboriginal community meets together around here and support each other. One is in Healesville and the other is in East Ringwood. Ken and Katharine have regular contact with the latter as they are part of their choir. Katharine asked Aunty Irene who is the choir conductor, what she would say on this occasion. She said so many people have lost track of their families – not just Aboriginal people.

In Mooroolbark there is a lady of Aboriginal inheritance who has spent years helping people to make contact with their families. One day, a few years ago, I had a meeting at my home about an education matter. At the table was a Taungurong young lady. Just by chance the friend came to visit. I introduced her to the group and the Taungurong lady jumped from her chair and hugged the visitor. They had not met before but had emailed each other as my friend had helped the young lady find her family connections.

At St Margaret's we have our Reconciliation tree and on a couple of occasions the property has been used for official gatherings of Aboriginal people. Maybe we can think of other contributions we can make.

Some within our local Council are interested in uncovering more of the local Aboriginal heritage and honouring leaders of the past and present. As we travel around the streets, we can assume that many of

the main ones (not always straight) were routes which the Aboriginal people took in the past. The other day someone said that the roads at the five ways probably met at a billabong.

We have an opportunity to celebrate Aboriginal culture with music, dance, speakers and activities for all the family by joining with two or three thousand other people at the Belgrave Survival day. This will be on Saturday 26th January at Borthwick Park from 12:00 to 4:30.

As you know, Ken is currently in rehab following knee surgery. These are his comments.

Almost all of us know what it is like to have a relationship fall down, to be not appreciated and not understood. Worse still to realize that we have not appreciated and understood another person, and are scared we have not been forgiven. Such has often been the case in relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

And a prayer: *Dear Lord, we ask for your forgiveness for when we have not listened, not appreciated, not seen what we can do. Help us make a real difference in the lives of people with whom we come in contact.*
Amen

The Service of the Word

Bible Readings

Micah 6: 6 – 8 “With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Mark 10: 17 – 31 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother.’” He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money^[a] to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is¹ to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

Preaching of the Word - “The Day of Mourning”

The Prophet Micah lived around 700 BC. During his life time he saw the invasion of Judah by a strong foreign power, Assyria, and the consequence of that upon what was then, the native people. Nevertheless, his chief concerns were not so much political (the Assyrians are not even mentioned by name in his utterances) as social and religious.

Despite apparent high religious observances, they were not translated into ethical behaviour. Their religion and the action in their lives were separated.

I think this is relevant now as we consider the recent past of our nation, and by recent past I mean within the last 230 years or so. Remember 230 years is nothing set alongside a nation which has been well in excess of 50,000 years, the oldest surviving people in the world. In considering this the President of the UCA and the National Assembly has declared the Sunday before Australia Day as a Day of Mourning. And the service which we are now participating in will be an annual fixture in our liturgical calendar.

As the President says "Remembering our history is an important part of our journey towards reconciliation as First and Second Peoples. The service reminds us of the dispossession and violence against First Peoples and laments that as a Church and as Second Peoples, we were, and remain complicit".

We acknowledged this in the Uniting Church when we apologised to the Stolen Generations in 1997.

We also acknowledged this by revising the Preamble to our Constitution which was approved by the 9th Assembly in 2009.

We acknowledged this in affirming First Peoples as "the sovereign peoples of this land".

Our declaration of a Day of Mourning allows us to stand together in remembering the truth of our history, and honouring the culture of Australia's First Peoples, their families and the next generations.

And so I believe that the first thing we must do today is:

Acknowledge the past with all its flaws, mistakes and horrors.

We neither deny nor excuse that past. My people, predominantly the Brits, in the main adopted from that first day, the 24th January 1788, an attitude of superiority. This is not unusual; the Brits had been adopting this attitude for hundreds of years, as did other colonising nations like the French, the Spanish, and Belgians. Way back into the Old Testament so did the Assyrians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans. It is a common characteristic of the powerful.

It was a characteristic not that long ago in Australia when we professed the White Australia Policy. I believe it is also clearly shown in attitudes towards women by men in power.

The number of massacres from 1788 onwards is clearly documented and demonstrates this attitude of absolute right to kill and maim thousands and thousands of innocent men, women and children. When I looked this up on the internet, I stopped reading the lists after 30 odd pages. Which continued well into the 20th century. I couldn't continue as it was so upsetting.

That same attitude continues of course. The stolen generation represents thousands of children taken from their families because one race considered themselves able to make decisions about another's.

Don't be persuaded by skewed views and misconceptions.

There are many misconceptions around about what the Brits found when they first arrived, often as if to excuse shocking behaviour. One of the most common is that the First Peoples were 'just savages' that needed taming and that western civilisation was actually a good thing for Aboriginal people. I have heard Tony Abbot espouse this quite recently.

However, when one really reaches back to those early days of settlement, one finds an ancient people who had developed a strong and profitable agricultural community. The explorer and surveyor Major Thomas Mitchell as he crossed the Australian frontier wrote "The grass is pulled and piled in hayricks creating a hay field extending for miles".

He later writes "the seed is made into a kind of bread". What we have here then is not only classic farming; we also have probably the oldest production of bread in the world. Mitchell also describes the villages he saw of sophisticated buildings with heating and cooling designs incorporated. Explorer George Grey also writes in his diaries whilst traveling in Western Australia in 1829, of villages of superior design and that the land around them had been cultivated producing what we would understand as vegetables, supported by irrigation systems. Archaeologist Prof. David Frankel describes agricultural sites

in South Australia mass producing Yams. Again, there are countless examples of vegetable and grain growing in an organised and productive way. Plants had been domesticated and fed large numbers of people. There were game farms where kangaroos and emus were bred, controlled and cared for as a farm species.

Aqua culture was strongly evident throughout Australia with large scale fish, clam and abalone farms and organised fish traps with some being able to support communities of 10,000 people.

Much of the remnants of all this has been destroyed and the history of sophisticated food production over thousands of years lost to history. But thanks to the work of modern scholars we are being able to re-construct them. I commend Dr. Bruce Pascoe's book "**Dark Emu**" to you to follow this up further.

The point I am making is ...put away our superior attitudes that we needed to teach these natives a thing or two.

Commit ourselves and our Church not just to say sorry, but together to work towards true reconciliation.

WE have mistreated and abused our First People. I am proud of the way the Uniting Church is having a go at this. We should stand alongside our brothers and sisters and fight for rights and justice. We should support a proper treaty and give back to the first people in this land, some degree of respect and a role in self-determination.

And finally understand that the oldest nation on earth has much to teach us.

Let's be open to listening and understanding our fellow human beings. Let's acknowledge that the second peoples have only been here for a tiny part of this country's history. And let's echo the words of a great, sadly now late, friend of mine Eddie Kneebone. "We are all Australians".

Story of Eddie and the boots..... We are all Australians.

Offering & Notices

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.**

Sending Forth of the People of God

Hymn

(Tune Arnsberg (Wunderbarker Konig) 668 D 33.66)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. God becomes a presence
In this world of struggle
When our love is dominating;
God becomes a presence
Bold and true and certain
When our love is unabating;
God is then
Known again
In our acts of kindness;
Bringing light to darkness. | Standing by the victims
Of injustice and oppression;
God becomes a presence
When we stand beside them
Offering them our protection;
God is then
Known again
When we risk for others,
Shielding sisters, brothers. |
| 2. God becomes a presence
When forgiveness triumphs
Over all our hurtful passion;
God becomes a presence
When revenge is halted
And we counter with compassion;
God is then | 4. God becomes a presence
When we look at Jesus;
When we listen to his preaching;
God becomes a presence
When we follow Jesus,
Taking heed of all his teaching;
God is then
Known again
Shown in all the glory
Of the Jesus story. |
| 3. God becomes a presence | |

Word of Mission

People of God, go from here to live out the covenant into which we,

the First and Second Peoples of this land, have entered with one another.

Confront and challenge injustice wherever you see it. Act justly yourselves and insist that others do the same. Rejoice in the richness of our diverse cultures and learn from them. Celebrate and demonstrate the unity we share in Jesus our Lord. Commit to worship, witness and serve as one people under God, Until God's promised reconciliation of all creation is complete.

Blessing

**Bless us therefore,
as we depart this place:
give us a generous spirit, a kind heart, and the grace
to walk alongside our First Peoples,
as brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in the power of God's good Spirit:
with the gentle fire of God's zeal,
with the breath of life,
ready to work for justice and peace.
We go in Christ's name. Amen.