



Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY

For Such a Time as This

Post-referendum worship
and prayer resources



For Such a Time as This

Liturgical resources compiled by the Uniting Church in Australia Assembly in response to the result of the 2023 referendum on a Voice to Parliament. The referendum would have enshrined an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament in the Constitution.

These resources have been produced by the Uniting Church in Australia Assembly Resourcing Unit and may be freely used and adapted with acknowledgement.

From the President	2
Video from QLD Congress	3
Liturgies and Rituals	4
1: A worship liturgy	4
2: Post-referendum Gathering	12
3: A Prayer Ritual	14
Prayers	16
Reflective questions	28
Support Services	28



Foreword

Beloved community of the Uniting Church,

As we process the results of the referendum I firstly want to acknowledge the deep grief of many First Nations people, including members of Congress, who long for recognition and to be heard in their own land.

I acknowledge the many Uniting Church people who prayed, hoped and voted for a change to the Constitution who now feel disappointed and dismayed. I acknowledge those in the Uniting Church who may have voted no to this change for a range of reasons.

In a national conversation as significant as this one, people of goodwill and discernment can come to differing decisions.

No matter how we may have voted and how we are feeling, I pray we might enlarge our hearts to the structural disadvantage of Indigenous people in this country and to their desire to shape and control the solutions to this disadvantage. I pray that we will recognise their deep wisdom and join them in their quest for justice.

I commend this resource to you. It has prayers, liturgies and rituals that will hold your communities and give voice to our feelings before God and in the company of our fellow travellers.

In the days ahead, may the Spirit which has dwelt in these lands since creation bind us in love and solidarity and dwell with us in our ache for justice.

Rev Sharon Hollis

President

Uniting Church in Australia





Video from QLD Congress

The Queensland Synod has released a video featuring Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress leaders responding to the referendum result. Find it via the Vimeo link.

<https://vimeo.com/874027031>





Liturgies and Rituals

1: A worship liturgy

PASTORAL INTRODUCTION

Given [wide support in the Uniting Church](#) for the Voice to Parliament, a majority 'No' result from the national referendum can be expected to generate disappointment and distress. The following resources for prayer are suggested to invite such feelings before God. They may be adjusted for use by persons praying alone or in an assembly for worship. In either case, they will require some adaptation. In an assembly they will need a little preparation and extemporisation by the ones who lead.

NOTES

1. The language of our prayer

The sound of prayer and scripture should convey that we all stand equally before God's grace and gaze.

Prayer is addressed to God. Its words are never a 'lesson' for human persons with whom one may disagree. Scripture is addressed to all, including the lector and the assembly, and never read as if a word from 'us' to 'them'. Please bear that in mind in this context, as always.

2. Non-biblical reading

Scripture reading is at the heart of these resources. In-between (but not in place of) scripture portions, non-biblical readings may be used: First People's stories of creation that complement the biblical myths, poetry written by First People, and portions of the [Statement from the Heart](#) are among readings that could be appropriate. So too are portions of the [Basis of Union](#) or the [Statement to the Nation](#). There are many other possibilities. As a rule of thumb, any non-biblical readings used should not be longer than the scripture portions themselves.

3. Voices in the assembly

Except for the Prayer That Jesus Taught, just one moment of unison speech is invited if these resources are used in an assembly for worship: in an acknowledgement of First Peoples.

Except for the Prayer That Jesus Taught—a prayer for every occasion—unison prayers (in **bold**, for 'all') are best avoided. In place of these, extempore words are invited, allowing those so moved to voice prayer in their own words but without putting their words into other people's mouths. If any of the texts for prayer provided in what follows are used (one or more, or none, may be), they would best be led by whomsoever is moved to lead them,



allowing those who recognise their prayer in the words to sound their voice (see note 1). Free speech is encouraged in preparation to acknowledge First Peoples. The presider will need to encourage others to be free to speak and also to be brief and to the point. If First People are present, they should be welcomed to speak if they are moved to do so. They should be heard without interruption or question.

4. Ordered liberty

As with all worship resources in the Uniting Church, the principle of ordered liberty prevails in any use of what follows. Texts may be abbreviated, otherwise adjusted, used as a model for extemporisation, and supplemented in ways consonant with the church's doctrine.

In adjusting patriarchal language for the divine, consider the practice of the Reformed synagogue, in which the printed word 'Lord' is rendered in speech as the non-gendered 'the Eternal'. But note also that the feudal context of old English language means that tradition can suggest the meaning of 'Lord' as 'the one who provides bread'—a rendering which neatly echoes the Prayer That Jesus Taught. Where alternative idioms are sought, those voicing prayer may wish to consider for example the biblical ascription of Christ Jesus as 'Beloved' (Mt 3.13, Mk 1.11; Lk 3.21; Eph 1.4) and any affectionate names towards the saviour shared by local First Peoples.

The liturgy follows.



CALL TO WORSHIP

Hear these words of scripture:

Either:

Pray always and do not lose heart.

cf. LUKE 18.1

Or:

Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 THESSALONIANS 5.16–18

OPENING PRAYER

[Let us pray for an open heart...]

Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Gregorian Sacramentary, 590AD, Uniting in Worship, 235; Uniting in Worship 2, 151)

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

One or more of the following scripture portions (or another scripture portion) should be read. Between scripture portions, silence may be held or non-biblical readings may be used (see note 2).

A reading from the prophecy of Isaiah:

ISAIAH 58.6–12

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them and not to hide yourself from your own kin? ⁸ Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. ⁹ Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am." If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, ¹⁰ if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. ¹¹ The Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your needs in parched places and



make your bones strong, and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters never fail. ¹² Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

A reading from the prophecy of Joel:

JOEL 2.12–18

Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³ rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment. ¹⁴ Who knows whether he will not turn and relent and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God? ¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; ¹⁶ gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her canopy. ¹⁷ Between the vestibule and the altar, let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep. Let them say, “Spare your people, O Lord, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”

¹⁸ Then the Lord became jealous for his land and had pity on his people.

A reading from the gospel of Matthew:

MATTHEW 6.1-6, 16–18

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them, for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. ² “So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your alms may be done in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁵ “And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁶ And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they mark their faces to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

A reading from the gospel of Luke:

LUKE 6.20–28

Then he looked up at his disciples and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹ Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. ²² Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. ²³ Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven, for that is how their



ancestors treated the prophets.

²⁴ But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. ²⁵ Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. ²⁶ Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

²⁷ But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; ²⁸ bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks of you, and if anyone takes away what is yours, do not ask for it back again. ³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FIRST PEOPLES

After the readings, members of the assembly may speak briefly about their continuing commitment to First Peoples.

When all so moved have been included, the assembly stands in solidarity.

We acknowledge the N people,
the first inhabitants of this place.

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

(Uniting in Worship 2, 239)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One or more (or none) of the following may be used, and may be led by any person so moved. The person giving voice to the prayer might invite others with the brief biddings suggested or with other brief extemporised words that are apt.

[Let us pray for courage to glorify God by struggling for justice...]

Almighty God, who created us in your own image:
grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil
and to make no peace with oppression;
and that we may reverently use our freedom,
help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice
in our communities and among the nations,
to the glory of your holy name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Book of Common Prayer 1979, 260)

[Let us pray for healing of division in this country and in our communities]

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit



may so move every human heart [and especially the hearts of the people of this land],
that barriers which divide us may crumble,
suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease;
that our divisions being healed we may live in justice and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Book of Common Prayer 1979, 823)

[Let us pray for our local and national politicians...]

O God our heavenly Father,
you have blessed us and given us dominion over all the earth:
increase our reverence before the mystery of life;
and give us new insight into your purposes for the human race,
and new wisdom and determination in making provision
for its future in accordance with your will;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Book of Common Prayer 1979, 828)

[Let us pray for one another in our witness and service]

O God whose word is fruitless
when the mighty are not pulled down,
the humble remain humiliated,
the hungry are not filled,
and the rich are:
make good your word,
and begin with us.
Open our hearts and unblock our ears
to hear the voices of the poor
and share their struggle:
and send us away empty with longing
for your promises come true in Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Bread for Tomorrow, 179–80)

[Let us pray for people everywhere to turn to and trust in God...]

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light,
look favourably on your whole church,
that wonderful and sacred mystery;
and by the peaceful operation of your providence
carry out the work of our salvation.
And let the whole world feel and see
that things that were cast down are being raised up,



and things which had grown old are being made new,
and all things are returning to perfection
through him from whom they took their origin;
even through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Gelasian Sacramentary, 7th century; [Uniting in Worship](#), 216)

If some unison prayer seems appropriate, A Litany of General Intercession ([UiW](#), 172–175; [UiW2](#), 281–84) might be used as an alternative to bidding prayers.

THE PRAYER THAT JESUS TAUGHT

The Prayer That Jesus Taught is always used.
It may be prayed in unison, in the heart languages of the members of the assembly.

A GENERAL THANKSGIVING

It may be appropriate to include the following thanksgiving.

Accept, O God, our thanks and praise
for all you have done for us.
We thank you for the splendour of the whole creation,
for the beauty of this world,
for the wonder of life,
and for the mystery of love.
We thank you for the blessing of family and friends,
and for the loving care that surrounds us on every side.
We thank you for setting us tasks
that demand our best efforts,
and for leading us to accomplishments
that satisfy and delight us.
We thank you also for those disappointments and failures
that lead us to acknowledge our dependence
on you alone.
Above all, we thank you for your Son Jesus Christ:
for the truth of his word and the example of his life;
for his steadfast obedience,
by which he overcame temptation;
for his dying, through which he overcame death;
for his rising to life again,
in which we are raised to the life of your kingdom.
Grant us the gift of your Spirit,
that we may know Christ and make him known;
and through him, at all times and in all places,
may give thanks to you in all things.



Amen.

(Uniting in Worship 2, 276)

CLOSING WORDS

Hear these words of scripture:

Either:

Pray always and do not lose heart.

cf. LUKE 18.1

Or:

Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 THESSALONIANS

5.16–18

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Scripture portions are from the New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

The following material is copyright and should be accompanied by use of the following resources to hand: *Uniting in Worship* (Melbourne: Uniting Church Press, 1988); *Uniting in Worship 2* (Sydney: Uniting Church Press, 2005); *All Desires Known* (Janet Morley) (London: SPCK, revised edition 2005); *Bread of Tomorrow: Praying with the World's Poor* (ed. by Janet Morley; London: SPCK, 1992).

The Book of Common Prayer 1979 of the Episcopal Church is in the public domain.



2: Post-referendum Gathering

The purpose of this ritual is to allow people time, space and opportunity to reflect on the lead-up to, the outcome, and the implications of the decision of the Referendum on the Indigenous Voice to Parliament. This can be offered at the beginning of worship, or instead of a usual service, or as an open-door event.

Begin with the prayer by our UCA President.

Set a generous time for engagement in the spaces.

Play gentle music if it seems appropriate.

Invite people to move around in quiet reflection, stay in one prayer space, or simply be still.

Have paper and pens or pencils at each station.

Allow an opportunity to come together and share responses prayerfully as people are able.

Offer a blessing.

Consider bringing and setting up as prayer spaces:

- shells for safe places of comfort
- sand tray and candles for peace
- seeds and soil for hope
- bowl of water and bowl of salt for tears
- rocks for hard feelings or stepping stones of courage
- paper hearts for gratitude
- food and drink for nourishment and sharing

Prayer:

A prayer for after the Referendum

Uniting Church President, Rev Sharon Hollis

God, ancient of days,
we give you thanks for the ways in which First Nations people
have cared for Country since creation
and for their unbroken Sovereignty
over their lands and waters.

We give you thanks for the ways in which they encountered you
through law, custom and ceremony and for their particular insights into your ways.
We give you thanks for the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress,
for the ways it nurtures Indigenous spirituality
and shares holistic ministry with First Nations People.

We pray for all First Nations People today,
acknowledging all they endure as a result of colonisation
and lamenting the racism and vitriol
experienced across the Referendum campaign.



We pray for our nation,
that following the Referendum we might seek unity
in reconciliation, justice and truth telling.

We pray for our Church, that we might grow into our Covenant more fully
and continue walking together as First and Second Peoples.
In the name of Christ, our lodestar. Amen

Blessing:

Go in peace, knowing that you are not alone.
Hold fast to the good you have found.
See the seeds of hope planted in fertile soil,
and take courage from the companionship of others.

May the presence of the Spirit guard and guide you,
the path of the Christ lead you on,
and the embrace of the Creator enfold you,
this day and always, Amen.



3: A Prayer Ritual

Resources

Before the service, gather some gum leaves, enough for everyone in the congregation. Place these in the centre of your gathering - perhaps on some fabric on a low table or on the floor. Before you begin this prayer, explain that during this prayer there will be an invitation for people to take a gum leaf, hold it, pray in silence, and then place it around the Christ candle, in their own time. No rushing!

If extended silence will feel too awkward in your congregation, during the 'leaf prayer-reflection' time, you might like to play a piece of music. For example, [Amazing Grace](#) or [Wiyathul](#) by Dr G (Gurumul).

The invitation is to read the Psalm responsively. The congregation could be split in two, with one side of the room reading verse 1, and the other side of the room reading verse 2 etc or a worship leader could read the first verse, and then all the people could read the second verse etc.

THE RITUAL

Psalm 85 - slowly reading the Psalm responsively together:

- ¹ Lord, you were favourable to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
- ² **You forgave the iniquity of your people;
you pardoned all their sin. *Selah***
- ³ You withdrew all your wrath;
you turned from your hot anger.
- ⁴ **Restore us again, O God of our salvation,
and put away your indignation toward us.**
- ⁵ Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you prolong your anger to all generations?
- ⁶ **Will you not revive us again,
so that your people may rejoice in you?**
- ⁷ Show us your steadfast love, O Lord,
and grant us your salvation.
- ⁸ **Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,
for God will speak peace to God's people,
to God's faithful, to those who turn to God in their hearts.**
- ⁹ Surely God's salvation is at hand for those who fear God,
that God's glory may dwell in our land.
- ¹⁰ **Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss each other.**



In extended silence, or with quiet music in the background, people in the congregation are invited to each take a gum leaf, hold this, and offer inner prayer for our nation. After praying silently, the invitation is to place these leaves around the Christ candle. Take time for this.

¹¹ Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,
and righteousness will look down from the sky.

¹² **The Lord will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.**

¹³ Righteousness will go before the Lord,
and will make a path for the Lord's steps.

A brief silence is kept before the concluding prayer

Holy One - Sacred Three,

may your kind kingdom come,

may your loving will be done throughout this land.

through Christ who brings life out of death, we pray. Amen.



Prayers

A prayer for the Referendum

Pangari Winamaldi*,
May our homes, our communities, our nation, and those around the world watching, become havens of peace, let us act as a reflection of Jesus Christ who sat on the margins listening to those without a voice.

Pangari Winamaldi,
we ask for your Grace to see all people as a child of God,
regardless of race, language or culture and hear and share the wisdom and receive the stories and experiences of those different from ourselves and to respond with respect, compassion, and love.
Winamaldi, give us the strength to teach our children
how to resolve our differences respectfully,
and the courage to model it in our own behaviour and within our homes.

Winamaldi bless our wider UCA family,
that we will continue to celebrate and welcome the diverse faces of Christ in our worship,
our ministries, and our leaders within our Church, congregations, and communities.

Lord comfort those who are having difficult conversations about the Referendum,
and to give everyone an opportunity to be respectfully heard by those who want to speak
and may this be a better appreciation of how our words and actions can make positive impacts within our communities.

Lord I also pray for those in solidarity with Australia at this time - our global human family,
that we may work together to protect those who are most vulnerable and most in need.

Lord, I send my love and prayers to the wider Congress family across the country during this time and may the Lord continue to provide a cloak of love, comfort, strength, resilience, and peace to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

**Pangari Winamaldi means Creator Spirit*



Shhh

Firstly... from our preamble, we in the Uniting Church recognise the truth that:

The First Peoples had already encountered the Creator God
before the arrival of the colonizers;
and that the Spirit was already in the land revealing God to the people
through law, custom and ceremony.
And that the same love and grace that was finally revealed in Jesus Christ
sustained the First Peoples and gave them particular insights into God's ways.
So now we sit together and open our hearts.

We who have said yes, we who have said no.
We sit with our division and revision
and the confusion and our pain.

We sit.

Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

Now is not the time for speeches.
Now is holy silence.

No more words.

Not yet.

Be still and know that God is God.
Be still and know that the
"arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."
Be still.

And then,
when we can,
we will resume the work of love.



Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

People of prayer,
open your ears to hear God's word,
and your lips to proclaim God's praise.

People of prayer,
pray for our nation
that though divided
we may seek a better future together.

People of prayer,
responding to the First Peoples of this land,
and the invitation from Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress
continue to walk in paths of reconciliation.

People of prayer,
bring your fears and longings,
your tears and dreams,
your anticipation and hopes.
God meets us here and holds us even as we hold our breath
waiting for what may be.

Let us join together in prayer:
God who waits with us,
draw us near to you.
You know what it is to wait –
in hope, in fear,
with action, silence, solidarity, stillness.
Be with us in this moment,
at the threshold of the referendum,
as we wait to know what future for our nation may emerge.
In the name of God, source of strength, truth, equality, courage and hope, we pray, Amen.



Call to Worship

God of all nations, of all times and all places,

Place our feet upon sacred ground that reveals the wisdom of time
and tells the story of eons past.

Let our spirits soar in skies that reveal the glory of this moment
and tells the story of today.

Wash our souls in clear water that reveals the promise of tomorrow
and will shape the rocks of the future.

Hold our hearts in your hands for your presence is revealed
in the certainty of every beat.

God of the past, present and the future,
of the curve of history and the beat of butterfly wing,
you meet us here
and so we centre ourselves in your love,
ready to listen for your call upon our lives,
and to ready to respond with all of our heart.



Prayer for the Future

God who tends to woundedness,
we are a broken people,
limping and bruised by this referendum.
Come, healing presence,
bind our wounds and heal our hearts.

God of anger and justice,
how long must your people suffer?
Once more vulnerable people have carried the heaviest burden.
Once more marginalised people have been pushed aside.
Come, revealing presence,
shake our nation awake to find paths of truth-telling.

God of hope,
you call us to lift our eyes to see your paths.
Light flames of passion,
that a future of equality may be brighter.
Come, transforming presence,
change us and re-orient our living.

God of compassion,
you love every person,
help us to see the sacredness of one another,
beloved children of God,
and act with respect and kindness.
Come, loving presence,
shape our words and our actions.

God of tomorrow,
you walk beside us,
offering us glimpses of the kingdom of heaven
that we may know how to live in faithfulness.
In gentleness and in passion,
in anger and in peace,
remind us of your call upon our lives,
and your companionship upon the road,
that we might follow in your way.
This we pray,
Amen.



Prayer for the Future

God of justice, love and peace,
you call us to be attentive to the voices of those who are oppressed,
those who have been silenced.

We pray that this may be a watershed moment for our nation,
when history will reveal that justice flows like a river
and goodness like an ever flowing stream.

We pray that we may say our nation has birthed a new way of being,
a new way of walking,
a new way of listening,
a new way of honouring the First Peoples of this land.

We see the division and the reflection in the mirror that this referendum offers.
The reality of a nation divided, racism unmasked, hatred and division seeded
is one we would rather ignore.

We pray that in the wake of the referendum we may be able to share truth.

We pray that the wellbeing of one enhances the wellbeing of the other
so that all may thrive in Australia, all may be valued,
and that together we may walk boldly into a future with hope.

With hearts of hope, that long for justice and seek your peace, we pray,
Amen.



Prayer Seeking Justice

God of the prophets,
cry out to us and help us to listen
so that the path may be straightened,
and the presence of Christ, peace-bringer and way-maker, may be known.

Hear the voices of your people,
God of liberation.

Hear the voices of those who have been silenced, beaten and bruised;
those who have endured alienation from land, culture, language and family.

Come, O God of justice,
bring your rivers of truth and streams of kindness into barren landscapes,
where hatred and pain has brought brokenness and unknown destruction.

Come, O God of truth,
speak to our nation of the horrors of the past that we might be moved to understand our
place in creating a future.

Come, O God of compassion,
move cold hearts and break open our spirits that we might find a path to walk with you and
with one another.

Holy God,
you are steadfast in your love,
and your promises are certain.
You set free the Israelites from the bondage of slavery,
you returned the people from exile.
In your child, Jesus Christ,
you showed us the path of humility and hope.
As we pray this day, we hold our breath in hope,
daring to believe that you make a way where there is no way.

With hope and assurance of your steadfast love we pray, Amen.



Reflection

What grace-filled gesture is this
that you would offer me your hand
and invite me to walk?

We have taken your land,
diminished your being
with harsh words and
unforgivable actions.

And yet, you offer your hand and
simply ask me
to walk,
to listen,
to respect and honour.

Such a gift I do not deserve.

Humbled, I will say yes
and take your hand
and listen
and together we will walk
towards a future with hope.

Prayer of Fearful Followers

God of all creation,

We pray your kingdom come, your will be done, but we are afraid that what we believe is your will, may not be done and we may further drift away from the kingdom you call us to. God of small sparks, help us hold faith.

God who hears the cries of the oppressed and brings liberation to the captives, we are afraid that we will once more be instruments of hate and violence and greed and selfishness. God who melts cold hearts, help us hold hope.

God whose steadfast love echoes off mountains and glistens on seascapes, we are afraid that your love is not big enough to resound through this nation so closed-minded and hard-hearted that we are.

God whose heart holds all creation, help us to keep loving, keep hoping, keep following.

Amen.



Prayer of Hope

God of grief and sorrow,
you know what it is to take brokenness
and make something new.

Take these shards,
take these splinters,
take these shattered bones and bleeding wounds,
take this dust and these crumbs
and with your spirit breathe new life
that from this cocoon
something beautiful may be found.

With hope we pray, Amen.

Prayer for Wisdom

God of the great river red gum,
grant us your wisdom to reach beyond the surface and find healing waters,
to stretch towards the sky and find a future of hope,
to wave in the wind
and be refreshed by Spirit's breath
and where our bark sheds
May we witness signs of growth and the revelation of new life.
Amen.

Blessing

May the God of rich red earth ground you in love.
May the God of sparkling stars enliven your spirit.
May the God of clear blue skies enlarge you in hope.
May the God of river ripple and crashing wave refresh you in peace.
In the name of God, creator of all time and every heart. Amen.



The Prayer we pray we won't need to pray

Based on 2 Corinthians, found in the First Nations Bible.

God,
We are heartbroken. We are downcast. We are lost.
We have no words, and yet, our minds are racing.
We try to speak and feel anger.
We suspiciously look around this morning.

Hold us close, Loving God, hold us through our anger.

All we can do is come together.
We come together in prayer and in lament.

We feel like broken clay pots.
Discarded, fragmented, smashed.
We had such hopes, we were full of such dreams,
And now we feel empty. We feel shattered.

Remind us that Your eternal light shines through our broken old clay pots.
You are our light and our sustainer.

Take our sorrow and turn it into something good.
We are afraid to hope.
Give us the courage to keep dreaming.
Give us the courage to remain hopeful.
Give us the courage to trust in You.

Loving God,
We know that this isn't the end.
We think back through our shared history;
we think of those setbacks we've suffered together.

We think back over the ways You've held our Aunties and Uncles,
our Elders and our Ancestors.
Loving God, Hold us together.

Help us Second Peoples in the UCA learn from and with our siblings in the UAICC.
Remind us, Loving God, we don't travel alone.
We travel as Your Children, First and Second Peoples of this land.
We travel in covenantal relationship.
We travel together.

Turn our sorrows into dancing,
Turn our anger into justice.
Turn our prayers into relationships. Amen.



Lament, after we said no

Oh Holy One,
we were so afraid
of what we did not know:
we were too afraid to try.

Oh Holy One,
are we so afraid
of one another?
Too afraid to love?

Oh Holy One,
we are so afraid
politicians will betray us again:
too afraid for trust.

Oh Holy One,
we've been so afraid:
we've let fear take the reins.
Will fear bring us undone?

Oh Holy One,
we may be afraid
now of the future we have created:
afraid enough to give up?

We cry to you.
We yearn for you.
Send your love
to quell our fear;
send peace, send hope,
don't leave us alone.



Flow

Spirit of God,
Flow around us.
Wash our weariness away,
Leaving our cleansed eyes to see the hurt of others
Remove any soiling of cruel and disparaging actions
Rinse clean our mouths from wounding words that infect the lives of the vulnerable.
Swirl within our hearts, washing it clean of prejudice and selflessness
In this moment,
We bathe ourselves in your refreshing life giving Spirit
Flow in and through and over us
To be your people of grace and generosity.
Amen

Every one of us

Each and every one is yours, O God.
Beyond our ideas of separation and individuality,
We, at our very centre, belong to you.
Just as shells scatter on our shores after travelling on journeys unknown to us,
So may we, in all our travels, join in the diversity of life, together as one.
May we recognise the life held in our individual shell
That is innately connected to the life in all those whom we meet at the shoreline of rest.
In contemplation and consideration,
We, each and everyone, are yours, O God.



Reflective questions

1. As members of the Uniting church how do we ensure that the 1994 Covenant we made with Congress, and First Nations peoples, achieves a fuller expression of our reconciliation in Jesus Christ?
2. What deep wells will First and Second Peoples draw on to sustain work for change after the referendum outcome?
3. How are we going to love the people before us after the outcome to help make a better future for Indigenous people?
4. For Second Peoples, what steps will you take, personally or as a church, to form or deepen relationships with First Peoples in the area where you live? What can you do to keep the issue of justice-love for First Peoples alive in your church and community?
5. For Second Peoples, how will we support the First Nations people who will be hurt, disillusioned and despairing about this result?

Support Services

- **eSafety Commission:** A suite of resources for First Nations digital wellbeing, including practical actions to protect yourself online, and ways to report harmful content on the internet, are available via the Office of the eSafety Commissioner. <https://www.esafety.gov.au/first-nations>
- **13YARN:** For culturally safe First Nations crisis support, you can give 13YARN a call on 13 92 76. They offer a free, confidential one-on-one yarning opportunity with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <https://www.13yarn.org.au/>
- **Wellmob:** Online social, emotional and cultural resources, developed by and for First Nations people, are available through Wellmob. This includes websites, apps, podcasts, videos, social media, and online counselling with a focus on social and emotional wellbeing. Explore the WellMob resources. <https://wellmob.org.au/>
- **AIMhi-Y:** A mobile app to support the wellbeing of First Nations young people, aged 12-25, called AIMhi-Y. The app is a strengths-based, digital wellbeing tool that integrates education and brief intervention, embedding guidance from Elders, and building connection with culture, Country and language. The AIMhi-Y app is available for download on mobile devices via the App Store (Apple) or Google Play (Android). [More information.](#)
- **Call It Out** is a secure, online register to report racism and discrimination experienced by First Nations people. Its purpose is to collect information on racism, including how it is experienced, how often it is occurring and the impact it is having on people. This data is hoped to progressively impact public policy into the future. <https://callitout.com.au/>