



Interwoven Storytelling by Grace Williams

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY 23 January 2022

*“The places
where different worlds meet
can be places of connection
enrichment and transformation.”*

—Ambelin Kwaymullina

Since its endorsement by the 15th Assembly in 2018, the Uniting Church marks a Day of Mourning each year on the Sunday closest to Australia Day to reflect on the dispossession of Australia’s First Peoples and the ongoing injustices faced by First Nations people in this land. For those of us who are Second Peoples, we lament that we were and remain complicit.

Some of the prayers below come from this year’s Assembly worship resource for the Day of Mourning including an option for a video reflection by Rev Mark Kickett from the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress with whom the UCA shared a covenant.

Acknowledgement of Country

As you begin this time of prayer, take a moment to become aware of your space.

*Notice the flora and fauna around you,
the smell of the air, the sounds of the land.*

Bring to mind the original custodians of the place where you find yourself

(the Kurna people if you are in the Adelaide Plains).

*Pay your respects to elders past, present and emerging
who teach us to listen deeply to the Ancient Spirit in all things.*

Invitation to Prayer

This land is alive with the glory of God;
desert sands hum and gum trees dance.
Brown grasses sing
and mountains breathe their stillness,
created things add their rhythms of delight
and even stones rap out their praise.

May my voice mingle
with those of the earth;
may my heart join the beat of her joy,
for triune God is everywhere—
the Source of all being surrounds me,
Christ Jesus walks beside and before me,
the Spirit moves within and between us.
Blessed be God!

Prayer

Eternal Creator flowing in the rivers,
twinkling in the southern sky,
pulsing in the sun on the wide horizon,
resting in the billabongs and tidal pools:
I praise you for your glorious beauty
and thank you
for the constancy of your love.
You gift all creation
with your recreative Spirit
that all Australians might face
our past and present with grace and truth.
Inspire us with fresh vision
for what, with you, might be.
Amen.

ENCOUNTERING THE LIVING WORD

Scripture Reading—Luke 4:14–21

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. Jesus unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release
to the captives and recovery of sight
to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

And Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus returns to Nazareth and enters the synagogue where he grew up. After the scene above, the locals drive Jesus from the synagogue and try to throw him off a cliff. Sometimes it can be hard to see that which is most familiar for what it really is. We can be used to the way things are, even when there is suffering and injustice. The Day of Mourning provides an opportunity to hear from First Peoples and reflect on the ongoing need for healing and restorative justice in our homeland.

- What is it like for you to sit with the realities of our history and to hear the pain and anger of the First Peoples now?

Jesus confirms that he has come to bring healing and goodness, not harm. The Spirit of God is upon him and his intention is love, especially where it is needed most.

- As later arrivals to this land, how might we live in ways that are healing and restorative for our country? What practical things might you do to fulfill the words from Isaiah?

The gospel connects Jesus with the words of the prophet Isaiah and implies that Jesus is the one who has come to bring good news to the poor.

- How does the way if Jesus shed a light on the path of healing in Australia?

Reflection on the Word

*You might wish to listen to this reflection from UAICC National Chair Rev Mark Kickett recorded during the 2021 Day of Mourning service recorded at Nunyara Conference Centre in Belair, South Australia.
<https://vimeo.com/656849791>*

RESPONDING WITH OUR LIVES

Prayers of the People

God of all:

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 those who are 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 on which we build our families, our communities and our nation. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Disciples' 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

Blessing

May we rise from prayer ready to live out the covenant into which we,
the First and Second Peoples of this land, have entered with one another.

May we confront and challenge injustice wherever we see it,
act justly and insist others do the same.

May we rejoice in the richness of our diverse cultures
and learn from one another
as we celebrate and demonstrate the unity we share in Jesus our Lord.

The love of God,
the grace of Jesus Christ
and the communion of the Spirit
be with us forever.