



Resources for Reconciliation Sunday

National Reconciliation week runs from **May 27 until June 3, 2025** with the theme 'bridging now to next'. The Sunday June 1st will be observed by many Australian churches as *Reconciliation Sunday*.

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/bridging-now-to-next-nrw-2025/>

<https://craigmitchell.com.au/aboriginal-culture/>

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

(using Psalm 97)

The Lord rules! Let the earth rejoice!
Let all the islands celebrate!
Clouds and thick darkness surround God.
His throne is built on righteousness and justice.

As we gather together, let us be like lightning, lighting up the world with heaven's proclamation of the righteousness of God. Let us plant seeds of light and of joy, standing on the side of good and giving thanks to God.

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging

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: Praise with Joy the World's Creator TIS 179

OR: God has spoken by his prophets TIS 158

OR: This, this is the God we adore TIS 220



Prayer

What a world you have given us! The Psalm speaks of lightning and mountains melting like wax before you.

For such a world: **We say thanks.**

Australia is the land of the Holy Spirit, present here through more generations than we can count. Thank you for the blessing that this land is by its very nature, its diversity, its incredible landscape, its creatures and its plants.

For this great land: **We say thanks.**

Prayer continues

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Prayer continues

For the peoples who came before us, those who have cared for our land throughout those generations, those who have been custodians and walked gently on the land, we owe a debt of gratitude.

For the custodians: **We say thanks.**

For those who follow on from us, we give thanks that together we can learn from the past and face the future with optimism and hope. Let us walk the path of reconciliation and justice seeking together, in anticipation of a world that can prosper.

For your peoples across our lands: **We say thanks.**

Guard the lives of your faithful ones, O God, and deliver us from wickedness and evil. Make our hearts right with you and with each other as we stand for acts of justice and mercy. Let us not be put to shame and keep us from being servants of those who would do evil and harm to others.

The Psalm reminds us not to align ourselves with powers and systems who seek control and do not protect the vulnerable. Those for whom justice is not their motivation or their priority. Keep us in your kingdom and in alignment with your cause.

Jesus prayed for us, just as we pray that you will make your love known in and through us. Keep us focused and aligned with you. You are in us, present in our hearts, just as you are present in all those who are 'other' to us. We only flourish when all can flourish together.

Forgive us for the times when your justice and mercy have not been our motivation, when seeking the good of others has not been our priority.

And when we falter, when we just don't get it right, forgive us and realign us to you. Help us to seek reconciliation with you and with all your people, for this is our expression of our love for you. Amen.

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Revelation 22:12-14,16-17,20-21 & John 17:20-26,

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

Reflecting Rev. Sandra Houghton

In my childhood, in the 1950's and 1960's, there seemed to be a great divide in our society between Catholics and Protestants. In the schoolyard and on the street, I witnessed bigotry, mostly in the form of name calling and abuse, but sometimes fights. But there also were more subtle manifestations of mistrust and prejudice. It was well known that certain professions and associations were off limit to either Catholics or Protestants. And there certainly was, in my Methodist childhood, the suggestion by certain preachers and Bible study leaders that Catholics were not really Christians and that their salvation was in doubt.

Thank goodness a lot of that bigotry and distrust has disappeared in Australian society. The ecumenical movement can take quite a lot of credit as it has encouraged Christians from different denominations to focus on the faith they have in common and to form relationships. Then, out of these relationships, to encourage one another, to uphold each other in prayer, and to enter into dialogue with one another listening and seeking to understand the other rather than try to convert them.

Churches have also been encouraged to not do by themselves that which could be better done together. I benefited from this when I was studying theology because I studied alongside Anglicans and Catholics and was taught by lecturers from those two denominations as well as by Uniting Church

Reflecting continues

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teachers. I give thanks to God for the richness of that experience which taught me so much and gave me the joy of mixing with committed Christians from very different backgrounds to my own. And I am sure that we have all enjoyed combined worship services and fellowship events.

This growing openness to one another, and the forging of positive and helpful relationships has been manifested in a warm outpouring of love and rejoicing with our Catholic brothers and sisters as they welcomed the election of a new pope.

As our Uniting Church President, Rev Charissa Suli, said in her open letter,

“The Uniting Church in Australia joins with Christians around the world in prayerful thanksgiving and deep reverence as the Roman Catholic Church welcomes a new spiritual leader, Pope Leo XIV. This is a sacred and historic moment, not only for the Roman Catholic Church but for the whole body of Christ.”

When we share love, respect, and friendship with our fellow Christians, no matter what their denomination, we are manifesting some of the Oneness that Jesus called his followers to emulate. He said, in his farewell message to the disciples in John’s Gospel, “I ask,..... that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, **so that the world may believe that you have sent me**” (John 17:20-21).

Jesus, whose life was completely bound up in relationship with God and saturated in the love of God, knew that if the disciples (and those who followed them in the life of the Church) needed to be bound together in God’s love. Jesus knew that they needed that love and unity to survive in the challenging days that lay ahead, but also that the power of their witness to the world lay in that love they shared. How could they talk to non-Christians about how God loved them if they did not share that love?

Unfortunately, the history of the Christian Church has included a lot of divisions, disputes, and down right hostility and hatred that has no doubt made many people reluctant to be involved in the church or listen to the voices of those who preached the Gospel. We know also that these divisions have caused a lot of confusion in mission fields, leading in some cases to churches joining together in Uniting/ United Churches like the Church of South India and the United Church in the Highlands of PNG. These missionaries realised that denominations just didn’t make sense to those new to the Christian faith.

Our own church, The Uniting Church in Australia, came together out of a longing by many Christians to try to be part of a movement towards the Oneness that Jesus described. It is far from completely manifesting that Oneness but it is a step on the way, as is the growing warmth in our relationships with other churches.

Rev Suli, in her open letter went on to say, “We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Pope Leo XIV, whose first greeting in Italian and Spanish began with the simple yet profound words of the risen Christ: “Peace be with you all.” We affirm our shared hope in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and our call to be bridge builders, bearing witness to justice, peace and reconciliation in a fractured world.

We pray that God will grant Pope Leo XIV the wisdom to lead with humility, the courage to walk with truth and love and the grace to listen deeply to the cries of the earth and the hopes of all people. May this new season of leadership be marked by compassion, faithfulness and unity in Christ.

On behalf of the Uniting Church in Australia, I offer our prayers and our ongoing commitment to nurturing the ecumenical relationship we share with the Roman Catholic Church. **Together, as one people of faith, we walk in step with the Spirit who unites us.”**

Amen to that.





Singing: The church's one foundation TiS 457

OR: We are your people TiS 468

OR: Now we come TiS 462



Offering

Just as you have given us grace in abundance, we seek to be generous in our response. Take these gifts and bless them for the work of your Kingdom. Bless us in your service we pray. Amen.

Notices

National Reconciliation Week continues until **June 3.**

June 5 World Environment Day.

June 8 World Oceans Day and Pentecost Sunday.

Prayers for World & Community

We sit in silence awhile O God, as we bring our world into our prayers this day. We open our hearts to you in this quiet moment of reflection. Just as Jesus prayed for us, so we pray for one another.

Our world:

The Gospel of John tells us that this world is the expression of the creative love of God. Help us to do a better job at listening to the earth, of hearing her heartbeat and appreciating your handiwork. We offer our gratitude with joy and thanksgiving. Help us to enjoy her bounty while cherishing her beauty and caring for her creative systems.

Her peoples:

We pray for our leaders, for our world in conflict and pain. We feel helpless before systems which oppress others. We know that there is conflict and division amongst our peoples, that fear and greed and the need for power drive arguments and wars. Help us bring peace, to shine the light of your love into the world through acts of kindness and grace. Let us be your justice seekers. We give thanks for our First Peoples and seek to walk in grace and reconciliation together.

Her flora:

The Revelation reading speaks of the Tree of Life. We are reminded that trees and plants are necessary to us for all life, they give us medicine, food, the very air we breathe. Let us treat them with care and enjoy the life they bring to us.

Her fauna:

Every creature is formed by you and part of the goodness and gift that is creation. The creatures rely on us to treat our shared world well. Let us be gracious carers of our animals and take seriously our responsibility to seek their welfare.

Our cosmic world:

We look to the heavens, the works of your hands. Help us to truly appreciate the need to protect and care for the whole cosmos, of every part of the environment in order to continue your work of loving the world and beyond.

Our friends and family and faith community:

We bring those we know of who are hurting, in physical pain, in distress, in economic pain, those who need to make big decisions and feel troubled. Those who grieve, who are in mental distress. Those who have been hurt by the attitudes of others.

Those who are vulnerable:

Prayer continues

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Prayer continues

The Acts reading tells of slavegirls in marketplaces, reminding us that there are still slave girls and street people who are struggling and needing our prayers. That there are still those in power who treat people who are different as a resource in order to validate their own political credentials. Still people like this young child, in mental pain and anguish, sometimes due to the actions of others and the stigma of feeling different and appearing outspoken. Help us to bring your healing love to others and help us recognise and appreciate diverse ways to be. Help us stand up in righteousness and solidarity with your world and her peoples. Let our priorities align with yours in justice seeking as we follow you.

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: Filled with the Spirit's power TiS 411

*OR: Community of Christ TiS 473
OR: Love divine TiS 217
OR: Guide me O thou great Redeemer TiS 569*

Blessing

Jesus asks that we make his way known. That we share the love of God. He made it clear that he will be in us and with us and he calls us to unity and reconciliation and reminds us that the Christ has been with us from before the world was made. We are sent into the world as the expression of love that God has for the world. Let us go now to be the love and light of God.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.

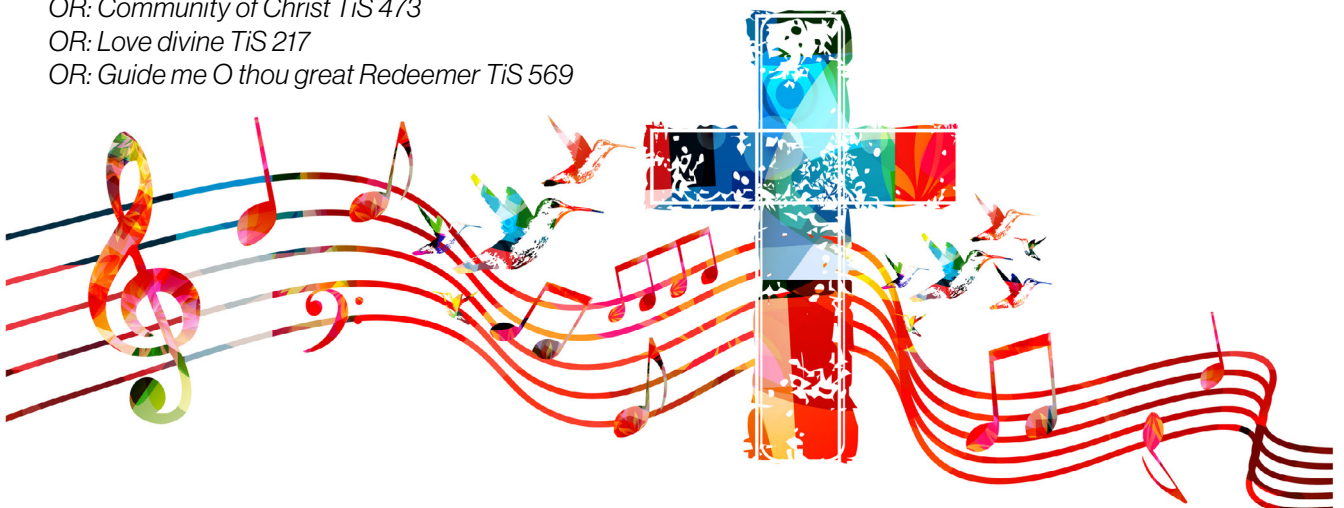
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