

C Change

Small group discipleship resources for the 21st Century



Worksheet 4: Covenanting

living together with integrity

The Fifth Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia met in 1988, the year of the bicentenary of English settlement in Australia.

Indigenous members of the Assembly brought proposals for the establishment of a covenanting process. They said:

"We seek a covenant, a binding commitment of love to one another... We seek a covenant because we belong to a covenanting people whose deepest expressions of unity and purpose are reflected in our covenant with God."

Since then, many congregations have been enriched by contacting Indigenous people in their area, getting to know them and covenanting with them.

a reflection

Aboriginal Covenanting has raised our awareness, but it is hard for us non-Indigenous people to really understand because of our colonial privileges. We need to admit to our colonial blindness.

There is no Aboriginal problem in this country only a "white" problem. I am always tempted to go back into the privileged side of the colonial matrix.

I can't disinherit myself. I can't suddenly become Indigenous, but I can follow Christ. I can pick up my cross and follow Christ. And Christ in this country lives in Redfern... and Port Augusta, and Galiwinku, and Lake Condah. Christ lives with whoever is being crucified by people like me. But following Jesus leads us into the light and into truth. Covenanting and reconciliation can be fair dinkum when we have moments of faithfulness through the grace of God.

(Peter Lewis, former National Director for Covenanting)

further reading

Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation: www.antar.org.au
Your Voice: www.yourvoice.org.au

This sheet is part of a series on discipleship in the 21st century. It is offered by the National Assembly as a discussion starter for small groups, in congregations, faith communities or other settings. It may also be used for personal reflection. Low resolution copies of this sheet can be downloaded free of charge from the Assembly website or high quality print versions can be purchased from MediaCom for a small fee to cover printing costs.

the passing of a wonderful lady

Aunty Ida was one of the most courageous and inspirational people I have had the privilege of meeting.



She was a positive and forceful disciple of Christ and leader of her people. The national recognition she received as Elder of the Year in 2001 demonstrated the respect she received and deserved from the Indigenous nations of these lands and waters.

Aunty Ida's graciousness, strength and courage are treasures which we need to appreciate this day and everyday and keep in our collective remembrance as we journey in our search for justice and just relationships. Her life breathes a spirit of truth into our self-deceiving nation and blesses the often stumbling Uniting Church.

Her life reminds me of the great power of God's connecting love in the face of the powers and principalities of this world.

**“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
(Romans 8:38-39 NRSV)**

fact file....

- 60,000 BC and beyond – Indigenous civilisations spread throughout Australia – about 500 nations
- The 1788 Invasion by Britain began the process of dispossession, cultural and filial separation and lack of acknowledgement of the humanity of Indigenous Australians
- 1967 Referendum passed granting Indigenous people citizenship
- 1974-6 Land Rights Legislation
- 1992 Mabo High Court Decision
- 1996 Wik High Court Decision
- 1997 Bringing Them Home Report released – May 26
- 1998 First Sorry Day – May 26
- 1998 Native Title Amendment Act passed – strips away rights recognised by Mabo and Wik Decisions
- 2004 ATSIC abolished

try these....

- 1) Join Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation.
- 2) Join “Your Voice” movement.
- 3) Get to know some Congress people in your area (find out from the Synod office how you can contact them).



Cartoon courtesy the Melbourne Age

reflections...

- Find out about the history of the place where you live.
- How did the land “change hands”?
- Who are the traditional owners?
- How can your local church give honour and respect to the traditional owners?

“Reconciliation means facing up to racism.

Reconciliation means giving Indigenous peoples a say in their future.

Reconciliation means self-determination and human rights for Indigenous peoples.

Reconciliation means better health, housing, education and employment outcomes.

Reconciliation means a healthier nation.”

(Statement by Faith Communities for Reconciliation)