



St Stephens Williamstown Uniting Church in Australia

Service of the Word for the Gathered at Home

UCA Liturgy of Acknowledgment and Lament on the National Apology of the Survivors of

Institutional Childhood Sexual Abuse / Sunday 18th October 2020

By UCA Assembly – UCA President Dr Deidre Palmer / Adapted for St Stephens

Place a cross and Bible (for Reading) on a table with a **Green** cloth - today's Liturgical Colour. Open internet: copy then paste link OR click on link.

TRIGGER WARNING

This liturgy is to mark the anniversary of the national apology to survivors of institutional childhood sexual abuse.

It acknowledges the experiences of survivors but is not intended to focus on personal stories.

It is possible that this liturgy could raise concerns for people, particularly for those where child sexual abuse has been part of their lives.

For Professional Support Helplines see details at the end of this Liturgy.

You may ring for pastoral support Rev. S. Juliette Maua'i (mobile 0456690291) or your Pastoral Carer.



† In the name of the Creator, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

WE GATHER AS PEOPLE OF GOD

Song: TIS 418 Enemy of Apathy/She sits like a bird – John Bell

<https://youtu.be/Gb2uGWqBAE8>

Please be seated

DEDICATION OF WATER.

Through the waters of baptism we remember that we are the beloved of God and are raised to newness of life with Christ.

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

Christ said: "I am the light of the world". The light shines in the darkness; and the darkness has not overcome it.

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLES

As we look upon the hills and valleys, we see the love poured out upon this Land

by those who have cared for this Land since time beyond measure.

This land is God's land and God's Spirit dwells here.

We honour those who have gone before and those who are yet to come.

We acknowledge the Yalukit – Willam Boon Wurrung people, traditional custodians of this land under God.

We acknowledge that the First People 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 purpose of God found in the good news about Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Today we mark the anniversary of the National Apology to survivors of institutional childhood sexual abuse.

To support all survivors, we will open our hearts and we will be still. We will not turn away.

Let us pray:

God of the vulnerable,

God of the oppressed

God who gathers up the little child and
shows them to the world as precious beyond words.

Help us to be present to your Spirit

Help us to walk boldly into this house of grief

We come here today to remember the folded past

We come here today to remember the catastrophic history of sexual abuse of children

Today is a Day of Mourning.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayers.**

Merciful God,

We, the community of faith, acknowledge and lament

the violence and abuse done to the survivors of childhood sexual abuse in the history of this nation.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayers.**

Today is a Day of Lament.

We remember the stories of brokenness and the terrible breach of trust.
We lift the profound suffering to God, and we bring before you our prayers for all survivors.
And we say sorry.

We acknowledge and lament the way in which their innocence was ripped from them
We pray for their hidden memories and fear of the past.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayers.**

We acknowledge and lament
the way in which the Christian church was so often not only complicit in abuse but also used cheap forgiveness to mask ongoing suffering.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayers.**

Today we come and pray for restoration. We commit ourselves to truth telling,
Give us courage, O Lord,
to stay in the unbearable moments, to never forget the past,
to shine your light in all that is hidden.

Today is a Day of Change.

We acknowledge and lament.
In a time of crying out for justice, our communities have been indifferent when we should have been outraged, we have been silent when we should have spoken out.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayers.**

Today we come and pray for healing.
We commit ourselves to building a culture of safety, making the Church safe for all people,
taking survivors and communities to a place where all can thrive.

God of mercy,
forgive us
for we have failed survivors in the past,
give us the grace to make a fresh start.

By your Spirit, transform our compassion
so that we may see what Christ sees
hear what Christ hears
love how Christ loves.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayers.**

Hear the promise of God's love to us all.... May God forgive us and the Spirit enable us to grow in love.

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD - Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
God will not let your foot be moved; God who keeps you will not slumber.
God who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper;
The Lord stands beside you as your protective shade.
The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.
The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now
and forever.

Luke 18:1-8 The Parable of the Persistent Widow
These are the words of faith. **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON: Reflection notes

If the Church is not a safe place, it is not a place where the gracious love of God in Christ can call people into community in

which all can share, grow and serve. It is not a place where all in the gathered community might hear the message of Christ. This is the challenge that faces Churches as a result of the Royal Commission.

It is easy to identify this issue as ‘other’ than us. “It couldn’t/ didn’t happen here”. When we make this issue someone else’s, we open ourselves to complacency and we ignore the challenge for us all... that to bear witness to God’s love in Jesus Christ is to create a community of welcome and safety, for all who may engage it.

This is the challenge the Church is invested in. For all those who have been harmed in the life of the Church, there must be appropriate processes of redress and apology, appropriate processes for restoration.

For all those who are in the community of faith, the witness that this community of faith is a community of safety.

And, as we seek to continue to bear witness to Christ, the challenge, for each one of us, is that being a community of safety is our responsibility... together.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Loving God, we know that you hold us in the palm of your hand.

We know it is so.

So why, O God, why?

This sin against your small ones

Why this assault on body and on soul, this destruction of innocence.

Why, O God, O why?

We pray today for survivors of child sexual abuse, we pray for justice, for strength and healing.

God open us to your courage

We pray for family and friends of child abuse survivors, and all who provide care and support.

God open us to your love

We pray for those whose family member or friend has died as a result of their abuse.

God open us to your holy grief

We acknowledge with gratitude the work of the Royal Commission who enabled survivors to speak of their suffering, showed us our sin and called us to mend our ways.

We give thanks.

We acknowledge with gratitude, advocates who exposed the truth about institutional child abuse and who campaigned for truth- telling and justice.

We give thanks.

We acknowledge our need to change as a Church. Strengthen us to act with justice towards survivors, to listen to our children and to implement policies and practices which create safer communities.

Reform us O God.

We commit ourselves as your Church to being places of safety, free of abuse and exploitation.

We commit ourselves as your Church to be communities, where people can flourish in life-giving ways of trust and love.

Reform us O God.

Through Christ we pray, Amen.

THE LORD’S PRAYER... *And now with the confidence of the children of God, let us pray the prayer Jesus taught us in our heart language.*

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 for ever. Amen.



Offertory Call – What will you give to extend God’s love and care to others?

Your giving helps our St Stephen’s community for God’s mission in Jesus’ name.

Your offering is gratefully received.

Offertory Prayer – Liberating God,

Receive our lives and our tithing as offerings for your ministry and service into a world that desperately needs your healing for all your children. In the name of Jesus we pray. **Amen.**

THE SENDING FORTH OF THE PEOPLE

The Peace

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

BENEDICTION

May the love of God enfold us,
the wisdom of Christ enlighten us,
and the fire of the Spirit fill us with passion for the Gospel; and may the blessing of the holy triune God rest upon us and
abide with us, now and evermore. **Amen.**

Song: For You, Deep Stillness - Robin Mann and Julie Perrin <https://youtu.be/a5EcC0L1vMo>

Healing Daily Prayer

"LORD, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress." ~ Isaiah 33:2

Dealing with trauma from childhood sexual abuse requires specialised support.

A list of services in each State and Territory can be accessed at:
<https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/support/explore>

24-hour telephone assistance is available through:

- *BeyondBlue* [https://www.beyondblue.org.au/1300 224 636](https://www.beyondblue.org.au/1300224636)
- *MensLine* [https://mensline.org.au/1300 789 978](https://mensline.org.au/1300789978)
- *Lifeline* [https://www.lifeline.org.au/13 11 14](https://www.lifeline.org.au/131114)

Specialised support for survivors of abuse is available through Blue Knot Foundation from 9am-5pm AEDT Mon-Sun.
[https://www.blueknot.org.au/1300 657 380.](https://www.blueknot.org.au/1300657380)