

## Rest: Reconcile

Sunday 24 January 2021

### Before You Begin

Our hope is that this is a resource that will help us to engage meaningfully with God's word and invite us into a sense of worship, despite being unable to meet face-to-face. Use it in a way that feels comfortable and helpful to you.

A table of contents has been added to give you a sense of what will follow and allow you to move more easily through the worship elements.

#### *Prepare*

Have your Bible close by and some food and drink prepared for communion. It doesn't have to be bread and grape juice; it could be whatever is available (tea and a biscuit) to use in this symbolic time.

#### *Get into a 'Sacred' Space*

Be intentional. Sit somewhere. Have some visual representation of God (perhaps a small cross, your Bible, a symbol or image) or you might play some reflective music. Start with a few moments of silence and deep breathing.

#### *Consider your environment*

What will work for you in the space you have? If you have others in your house (housemates/family), consider sharing this time with them, each reading or participating as appropriate. You might simply reflect individually, in your own time and space. Afterwards, you might connect with others through technology to share your reflections, or an encouragement, with them.



### What's Inside

*On a computer, you can click these links*

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## Call to Worship

*Janet Woodlock*

Hi there, my name's Janet Woodlock, and I'd like to welcome you to this service of worship for Ringwood Church of Christ in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Today is Aboriginal Sunday and today's theme is reconciliation – reconciliation with God, with one another, and especially with the Aboriginal people of Australia. I'd like to begin by acknowledging country. If you are reading this material some distance from Ringwood, I encourage you to find out more about the traditional custodians where you are seated right now.

So I would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, the Traditional Custodians of this land. I would also like to pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Let us now pray together with a prayer written by Brooke Prentice of Common Grace:

*Great Creator Spirit,  
We gather together from across these lands now called Australia.  
We acknowledge you as the Creator of all things.  
We humble ourselves before you in prayer.  
We have answered your call to prayer and so we pray  
For your forgiveness – as we acknowledge the lack  
of relationship between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal peoples  
For your grace – as we acknowledge the times we  
allow our differences to separate us  
For your courage – as we acknowledge ignorance,  
lack of education, lack of will, and racism that  
keeps us from the truth*

*You are a God of love, and so we come together in community, at a time of  
division in the nation of Australia, seeking to be your hands and feet, so that  
through you, we can Change The Heart of Australia, to see healing and hope  
for all peoples.*

*We long for the Truth to set us free.*

*Lord, Hear our prayer.*

*Amen*

## Great Southland

This is Your nation  
This is Your land,  
A land of dreaming  
A forgotten past:  
A kindred people  
Willing to share,

This sacred land,  
This is our home.

This is the Great Southland  
Of the Holy Spirit  
A land of red dust  
Plains and summer rains  
To this sunburnt land  
We will see a flood  
And to this Great Southland  
His Spirit comes

This is our nation  
This is our land  
This land of plenty  
This land of hope  
The richest harvest  
Is in her peoples  
We see revival  
His Spirit comes

This is our nation  
This is our land  
This lucky country  
Of dreams gone dry  
And to these peoples  
We see a harvest  
And to this land  
Revival comes

CCLI Song # 917642  
Geoff Bullock  
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## **Dwelling in the Word**

*Pat Greig*

Rest can be experienced in a range of ways. One of those is dwelling in the word.

As you prepare to read our bible reading for today, I would invite you to adjust your position so that you are sitting or lying in a comfortable position.

Take some time then to be aware of your breathing. As you breathe in ... and out ... notice the gentle rise and fall of your chest ... and abdomen.

Notice that your breathe is slightly cooler as you breathe in and warmer as you breather out. There is no need to control your breathing in any way. Just let the breath breathe itself.

Now be aware of your thoughts. Just notice them, acknowledge their presence and let them go like passing cars.

Now in space of stillness, allow your mind to dwell fully in the word as you read the Scripture passage for today.

## **Bible Reading: John 15:5-9 (NIV)**

*Read this reading slowly, dwelling in the Word.*

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.”

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## **Message**

*Kaye Reid*

Its great to be back after two months of being on leave, after two months of rest. It has been so good to have a break from my usual responsibilities, time pressures, and schedule. It has been time and space for rest and reflection, and for being refreshed and reinvigorated ready for this year and the next five years.

I was conscious of trying to balance a posture of both contemplation and of action, Richard Rohr reflects:

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*“God offers us quiet, contemplative eyes; and God also calls us to prophetic and critical involvement in the pain and sufferings of our world—both at the same time. This is so obvious in the life and ministry of Jesus.”*

*—Richard Rohr, daily meditation 29/12/20*

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This speaks to us now – as we focus on Rest in January, but particularly this week as we focus on our resting, our abiding in God, refreshing and equipping us to live into our calling to a ministry of reconciliation.

Let's centre ourselves in prayer.

*As we reconnect with you God during our worship today we ask that you would be working in us and through us and into our communities, with your eyes and ears to see and listen, and with our hearts filled with your compassion.  
Amen.*



We are all well aware that there are many significant problems in our world that emerge from issues such as climate, race, equality, and that our culture seems to be becoming even more divisive, polarising, and intolerant of difference ... In the last year we have seen this through the Black Lives Matter actions, through divisive and polarising politics, the rigour of democracy seemingly under threat, and just recently here in Australia changes to language about our own national identity, with the Prime Minister changing the wording of our national anthem to being 'one and free',

seemingly without community consultation or responding to the much deeper dialogue about recognition and reconciliation that is needed. And just this last week. A familiar cheese product was in the news regarding the change of name from the well-known Coon brand to the new name of Cheer.

Perhaps like me you hadn't made the connection. I thought it was just a name, a brand. Apparently, it was the name of a person involved in the patent, but it is also a deeply offensive term for people of colour because of the way white people have used that word as a negative and derogatory slur.

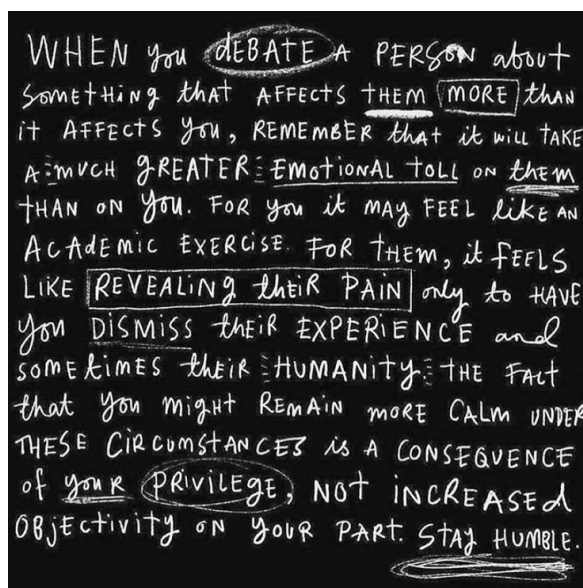
There have been others – some of our well loved and familiar lollies - redskins, chicos, etc. It takes you by surprise because you haven't noticed. There are lots of figures of speech that similarly until you stop and think about it or someone brings it to your attention, like happened to me this week, you just don't realise – to kill two birds with one stone, to take a few more scalps, etc.

On Facebook this past week some people were posting "I don't find the name offensive, share if you agree!"

Sigh. Yes, I know what they are saying, and they are right, for them, they probably don't find it offensive, but that's not the point! Its not about whether it is offensive to me! The point simply is that it is offensive to some people. Not just because of some personal preference but because of deep, heart-breaking, life-destroying injustices that have occurred and are deeply, systemically, ingrained into white culture. And the people who find it offensive have said so. Shame on us that they needed to. And still we aren't able to hear.



This image and words help me to understand what is happening here:



WHEN you DEBATE A PERSON about something that AFFECTS THEM MORE than it AFFECTS you, REMEMBER that it will TAKE A MUCH GREATER EMOTIONAL TOLL ON THEM THAN ON YOU. FOR YOU it MAY FEEL LIKE AN ACADEMIC EXERCISE. FOR THEM, it FEELS LIKE REVEALING their PAIN only to HAVE you DISMISS their EXPERIENCE and SOMETIMES their HUMANITY. THE FACT that you might REMAIN MORE CALM UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES IS A CONSEQUENCE of your PRIVILEGE, NOT INCREASED OBJECTIVITY ON YOUR PART. STAY HUMBLE.

Let's stick with that advice. Stay humble. And like Jesus, ask questions. Jesus asked questions and told stories. Rather than state 'I don't find this offensive', ask 'What does this mean to you/them?' Find out; read and listen - with an open mind and a soft heart. I read. It was an academic calling for the change of the name of Coon cheese. I read further. It was an Indigenous academic. Revealing their pain. So, I listened, and I heard him, and then I got it. Yes, change that name! Sorry it was there all along without realising it was offensive. I am humbled that I have such a poor insight into the world of some other people that is different than mine.

Let's come back to questions and stories again. Like Jesus.

Brian McLaren, US author and public theologian, is a former English teacher who understands the power of stories. Brian says a framing story "gives people direction, values, vision, and inspiration by providing a framework for their lives. It tells them who they are, where they come from, where they are, what's going on, where things are going, and what they should do." While we all have stories that answer those questions on a personal level, a "framing story" dictates the general beliefs of a culture, nation, religion, and even humanity as a whole.

Brian observes, what you probably already know, that "our growing list of global crises [*even before the COVID-19 pandemic*], together with our inability to address them effectively, gives us strong evidence that our world's dominant framing story is failing." He reflects:

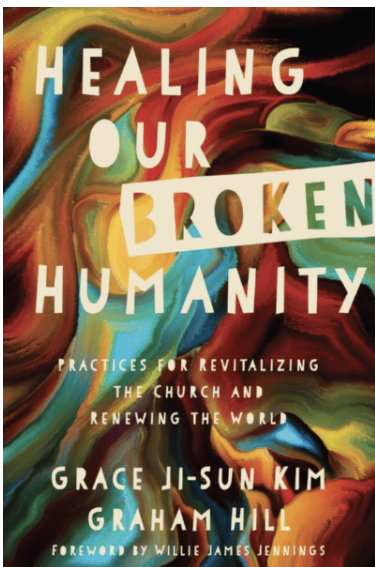
If it [our framing story] tells us that the purpose of life is for individuals or nations to accumulate an abundance of possessions and to experience the maximum amount of pleasure during the maximum number of minutes of our short lives, then we will have little reason to manage our consumption. If our framing story tells us that we are in life-and-death competition with each

other . . . then we will have little reason to seek reconciliation and collaboration and nonviolent resolutions to our conflicts.

But if our framing story tells us that we are free and responsible creatures in a creation made by a good, wise, and loving God, and that our Creator wants us to pursue virtue, collaboration, peace, and mutual care for one another and all living creatures, and that our lives can have profound meaning if we align ourselves with God’s wisdom, character, and dreams for us . . . then our society will take a radically different direction, and our world will become a very different place.

(Source: Brian D. McLaren, *Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope* [Thomas Nelson: 2007], 5–6, 67, 68, quoted by Richard Rohr, daily meditation, 11/1/21)

This is the world I want. This is the framing story I choose to live under.



Graham Hill and Grace Ji-Sun Kim have written a book called *Healing our Broken Humanity*. It includes numerous practices for renewing our world, all of which work towards reconciliation – lament, repentance, relinquishing power and affirming agency, restoring justice (Brooke Prentis, CEO of Common Grace, will be sharing a message with us on 7 March), providing hospitality and doing life together.

This will be our focus throughout February and March. You might want to buy it and read it at the same time or with your life group, as it also includes study material and prompts for action for groups to do together. Graham is the new principal at Stirling Theological College and you would have ‘seen and heard’ him sharing a message with us last November about Hiding God’s Word in our Hearts.

In the book, key elements of reconciliation are acknowledged as seeing, hearing and engaging with the other, and the importance of breaking down power dynamics towards equal, mutual and reciprocal partnerships. We need to ensure our mindset and practices don’t position people on the margins of power or privilege or capacity as recipients but as partners.

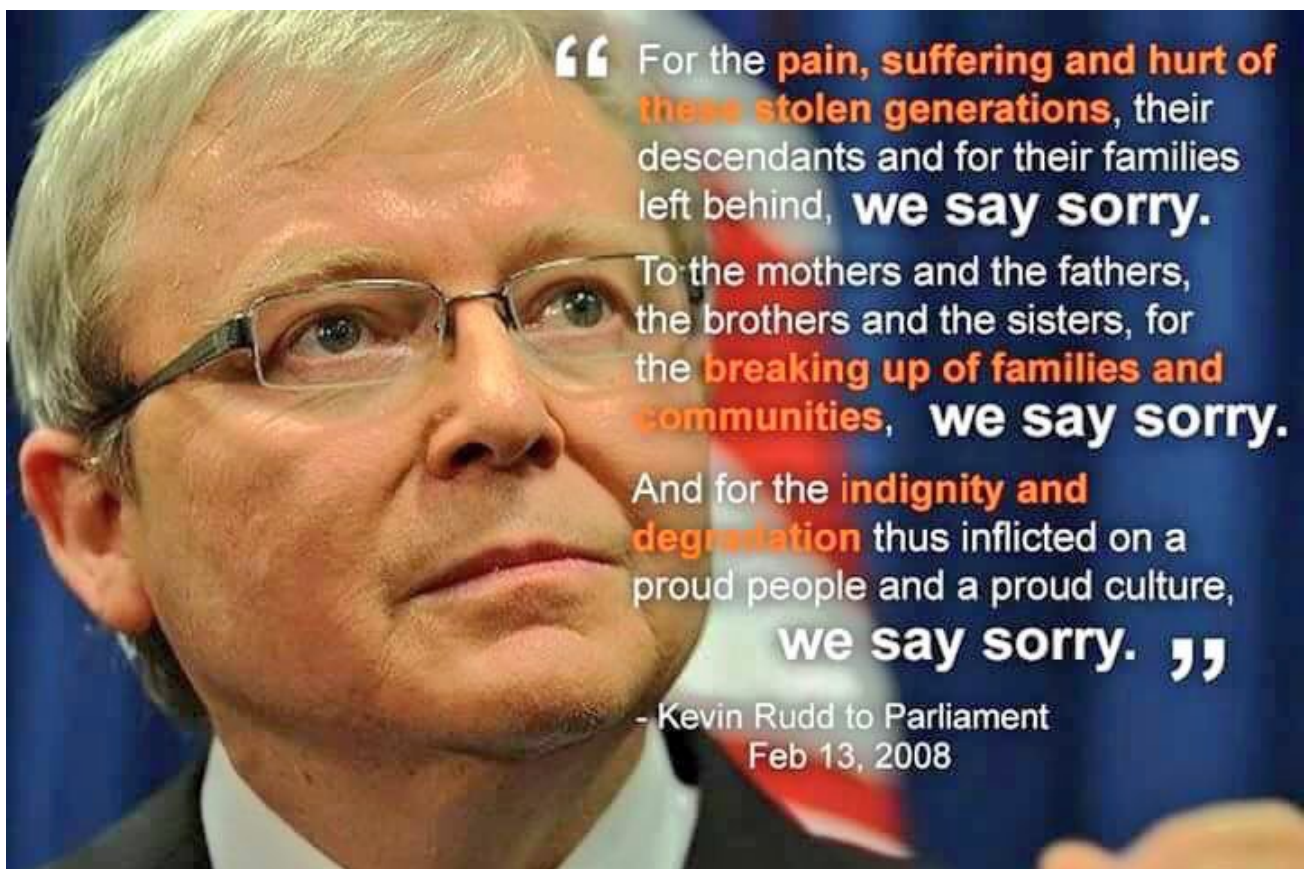
Brenda Salter McNeil in her book *Roadmap to Reconciliation* identifies that “Reconciliation is an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God’s original intention for all creation to flourish.” (Source: Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* [Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2015] p22). It is a wonderful image that points us back to God’s good creation and God’s desire that everyone is able to flourish.



As part of our culture, and as people of faith, we are involved in this work towards all things being reconciled. For example, we are fortunate to live in a multi-ethnic culture that is enriched by each other. However, we have also failed dismally to ensure there is justice and recognition for all. We see glimpses and highlights in catalyst events like the handing back of Wave Hill Station to the traditional custodians in 1975, with the iconic



image of Vincent Lingiari and Gough Whitlam, and even the song immortalising this moment by Paul Kelly that shapes and influences our cultural understanding. There is Kevin Rudd's apology to the stolen generation in 2008 and the impact of sporting codes using their profile and voice to raise awareness and appreciation of our first nations peoples. A simple but moving and humbling example of this for me is where this is flipped by the generosity of the indigenous community each time in welcome to country.





I remember in particular how I felt during the Welcome to Country at the 2019 AFL grand final. Aunty Joy Murphy (who has now written a book about welcome to country) welcomed us to Wurundjeri country. As she so often does, cloaked in a native animal skin, she holds some gum leaves, acknowledges elders, explains the custom of coming onto country - someone else's country - and she extends a welcome. *Wominjeka*. This is familiar to us. But are we so familiar with this that we don't have eyes to see or ears to hear? Aunty Joy welcomes us, everyone, to country, to the lands, that we, us, our culture, have already taken by force, by denial of their existence and culture, without ever having ceded sovereignty. You are welcome she says. We have much to learn. Still.

The authors of *Healing our Broken Humanity* write "God wants to ... fill us with a passion for reconciliation. The mission of the church in the world is to proclaim and embody the gospel of reconciliation, which is God restoring all things and people to Godself, and reconciling people to each other and to creation."

God to us  
us to others  
others to others  
and with creation  
This is about abiding,  
This is about relationships,  
This is about systems.

In Scripture, John gives us a metaphor of abiding in Jesus the true vine, who is the source of our hope, our compassion, our eyes to see and our ears to hear. In resting in the intimate presence of our saviour we find ourselves refreshed for the challenges of what it means to be about God's reconciling Kingdom work today!

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love."* John 15:5-9 (NIV)

The Ministry of Reconciliation is what we are called and equipped for through doing our inner transformative work with God –

Being in Christ, abiding in Christ, living from a centre of abiding.



Wanting to live from a deep place of love, joy and peace.  
Practicing living from attention and awareness in the presence of God.  
Engaging in practices that help us to make this our foundation - sabbath, silence and solitude, simplicity of living, and slowing down.  
Practicing a rhythm that puts a check on the busyness, restlessness and anxious striving.

All of this enables us to keep coming back to our most true and best selves and to God. Abiding. Our gift to the world in love is simply to do this work and allow the transformation and the out working of that in us to be what the world receives.

Through this ministry of reconciliation God shows the world what God intends the world to be, as described through a word picture of a new community worshipping God in Revelation 7:9-10:

*“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:*

*‘Salvation belongs to our God,  
who sits on the throne,  
and to the Lamb.’”*

The authors reflect that “This reconciled community comes from every society, ethnicity, gender, class, nationality, language, and age, and it seeks to bring God's peace and reconciliation to the world. This is a vision of human flourishing, of peace and shalom, of forgiveness and justice, of faith, hope, and love.”

This is a beautiful soaring image, for which we must engage our imagination and hopefulness, one of which for now we see just in glimpses of humanity at its best – inclusive, integrated, uplifting. Reconciliation requires of us a personal and collective change of heart, a seeing and responding, a listening and being receptive, a transformation and an enlightenment, lament and repentance, forgiveness and grace, a new spirit and continuing practices of reconciliation.

Let us be open to God's spirit within us as we consider these questions for ourselves:

*What has come to mind for you in relation to reconciliation?*

Perhaps particular individuals, or relationships, justice issues, race, climate.

*What are you feeling nudged or prompted about?*

A particular broken relationship, a particular issue or a range of justice issues, a situation, an imbalance of voices, representation, power and privilege.

*What actions are you feeling called to take?*

Making contact with a particular person, praying and discerning, reading/listening/watching, lament and repentance, making connections, advocating and activism, making some different choices and changing behaviours, reviewing language and making changes, noticing and paying attention to power, peacemaking and non-violence.

A starting point might be to check out Reconciliation Australia. Reconciliation Australia ([reconciliation.org.au](http://reconciliation.org.au)) is the lead body for reconciliation in Australia. It promotes and facilitates reconciliation by building relationships, respect and trust between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The vision of Reconciliation Australia is for a just, equitable and reconciled Australia.

Each year Reconciliation Australia survey and then publish an annual barometer of reconciliation.

You can view the summary at:

[www.reconciliation.org.au/australian-reconciliation-barometer-2020/](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/australian-reconciliation-barometer-2020/)

or google reconciliation barometer 2020.

Sending out:

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*You're sent into this world to be a people of reconciliation. You are sent to heal, to break down the walls between you and your neighbours, locally, nationally, and globally. Before all distinctions, the separations, and the walls built on foundations of fear, there was a unity in the mind and heart of God. Out of that unity, you are sent into this world for a little while to claim that you and every other human being belongs to the same God of Love who lives from eternity to eternity.*

*–Henri Nouwen, daily meditation, 29/12/21*

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Further resource:

The welcome to country at 2020 AFL Grand Final followed by the song *From Little Things Big Things Grow* at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=lptWKXokzVE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lptWKXokzVE).

## The Stand

You stood before creation  
Eternity in Your hand  
You spoke the earth into motion  
My soul now to stand

You stood before my failure  
And carried the cross for my shame  
My sin weighed upon Your shoulders  
My soul now to stand

So what can I say  
And what can I do  
But offer this heart O God

Completely to You

So I'll walk upon salvation  
Your Spirit alive in me  
My life to declare Your promise  
My soul now to stand

So I'll stand  
With arms high and heart abandoned  
In awe of the One who gave it all  
I'll stand  
My soul Lord to You surrendered  
All I am is Yours

CCLI Song # 4705248

Joel Houston

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## Communion

*Have some food and drink prepared for this time*

**Welcome to this time of Communion. Today our theme is Rest: Reconcile.**

*Janet Woodlock*

What things have you learned from others? May I suggest ... almost everything!

When you were a baby, you learned to speak because you heard your parents and others speaking around you. When you were a small child, you probably learned how to read and write because your teachers knew how to read and write. You probably learned about numbers because your teachers knew how to add, subtract, multiply and so on.

When you were older, you probably learned to drive by watching others, then by getting instruction on how to do this. And then, lots of practice.

You've probably spent much of your life self-educating in one way or another. You've done this by reading or watching or hearing ... learning from the expertise of others. You've learned through books, newspapers, radio, TV, podcasts and also through conversation with significant people in your life. You've gained wisdom by watching and listening.

Our growth as human beings depends on others. This is how we all learn ... by observation and imitation and reflection.

How does this apply to us, particularly today as we reflect on the theme of reconciliation?

I believe as children of God we are invited to learn from our Heavenly Father. To listen. To watch. To imitate. We are invited in love to learn from Jesus Christ. We are invited toward transformation

through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are invited to listen to the Word of God and to know the heart of God.

2 Corinthians 5:18 says that:

“God ... reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”  
Every week as we take communion, we are reminded that Christ took the initiative in reconciliation. We did nothing to deserve Christ’s love and kindness. We did nothing to earn Christ’s death for us. Christ died and rose for us because we are loved more than we can imagine ... not because we earned enough brownie points from God.

Today I invite you to meditate on God’s unconditional love as you take communion today. Let us take the bread that reminds us of Christ body given for us. Let us drink the wine that reminds us of Christ’s blood. Let us be reconciled to God again.

As children of God ... we look to, listen to, and learn from our Heavenly Father. We soak in his love and grace, so we can be agents of love and grace to others. We are reconciled to God, so we can be agents of reconciliation.

As we reflect today on the need to work toward reconciliation for all Australians, and especially for our indigenous brothers and sisters, let us be inspired by Christ’s example of love and sacrifice. We look to Christ’s love, we are renewed ... our hope is restored.

Let us pray:

*Heavenly Father, thank you for your great love, and that we have been reconciled to you through Christ.*

*We acknowledge that we have fallen short of Christ’s example. Please fill us with your love for all, with your heart for justice, with your compassion for those who struggle. Please empower us to work for reconciliation in this great nation.*

*Please heal our hearts and heal our nation.*

*In your loving name we pray,*

*Amen.*

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*We invite you to eat and drink in remembrance of Him*

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## **Change the Heart**

You are invited by one of our most senior Aboriginal Christian Leaders, Aunty Jean Phillips, to gather together to pray in unison to #ChangeTheHeart on the evening before January 26. The service will be streamed on [commongrace.org.au](http://commongrace.org.au) on January 25 at 7:30pm.



## **January Update**

*Brendan Petty*

From Sunday 31 January we will no longer have a paper church resource or a pre-recorded worship video. Our worship services will move back to a predominately in-person service in the chapel. We are still working through how we may be able to make our services available for those who aren't able to attend on a Sunday morning. We will endeavour to keep you informed but please feel free to contact our church office for worship resources to use at home.

### **Connect cards online**

*Click this link or enter it into your web browser [rngwd.com/connect](http://rngwd.com/connect).*

We love to know that you have been able to connect through worship today. Please click on the link (or enter it into your web browser) to our online connect cards letting us know which ways you have been able to worship, and if you want to let us know how we can praying with you. You are welcome to call or email the office too.

Thank you!