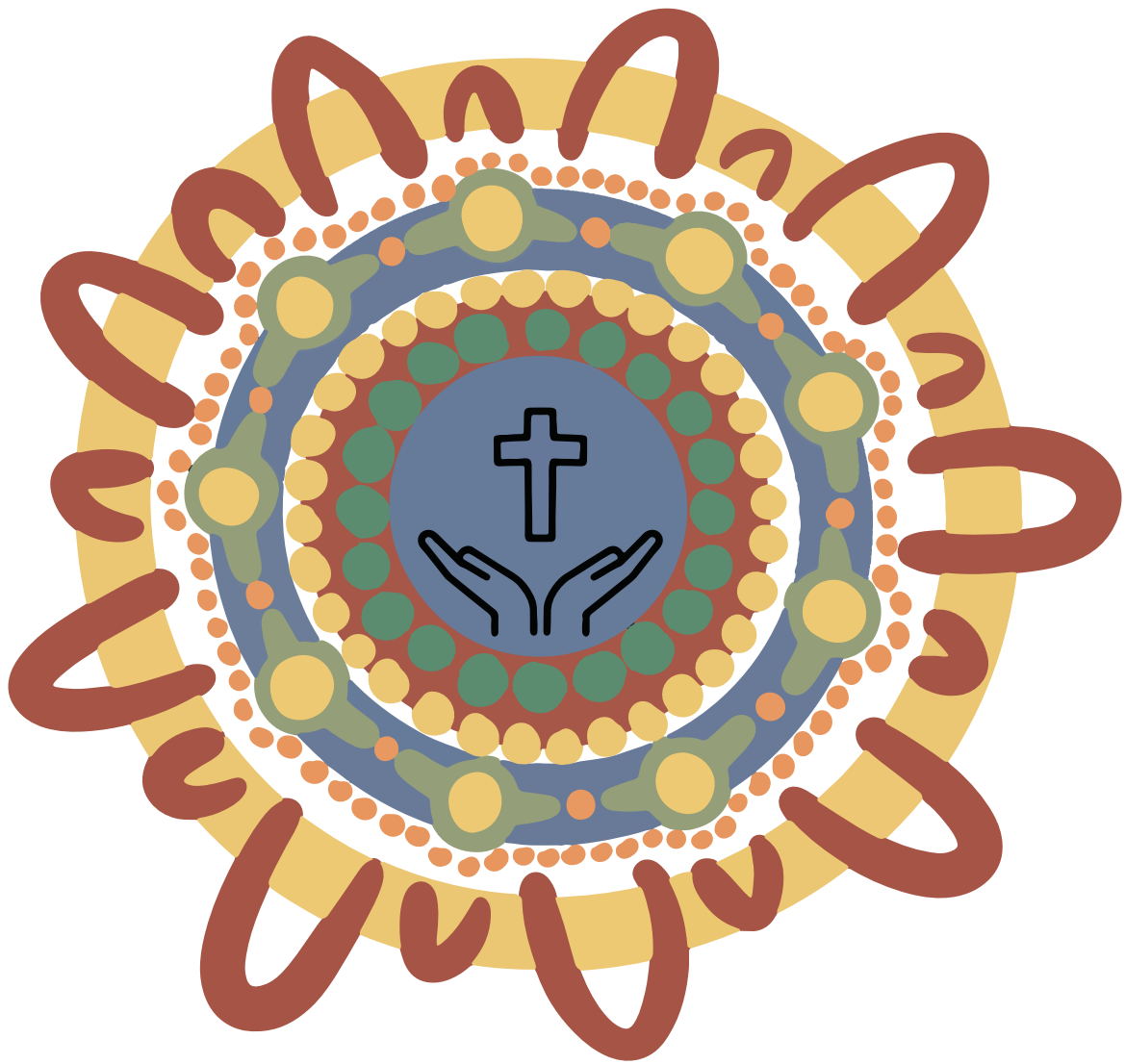


Walking Together

in Covenantal Relationship



**A Local Plan for Practical
Acts of Reconciliation**

ACKNOWLEDGE | AFFIRM | AWAKEN



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

Framing

Walking together in unity must begin by first acknowledging that we as First and Second Peoples of Australia do not share an equal history, nor do we currently share equal prospects for an abundant life.

As followers of the Gospel, we are instructed to **acknowledge** injustice, **affirm** another's rightful and unique place in the Kingdom of God, and **awaken** to a new way of being in reconciling relationship through Jesus and with each other and all of creation.

"The Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress believes it is just for the Uniting Church, as a result of its enlightened understanding of the Gospel implications of creating new community, to offer a practical response to the past history of dispossession and resulting disenfranchisement of Aboriginal and Islander people from their social, economic and spiritual development of Australia."
(The Covenanting Statement – Uniting Church Australia, n.d.)

1 John 4:7-8 teaches us *"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love."*

As the Uniting Church in Australia, our foundational document – The Basis of Union – calls us into renewal under Christ's rules:

"The Uniting Church acknowledges that the Church is able to live and endure through the changes of history only because its Lord comes, addresses, and deals with people in and through the news of his completed work. Christ who is present when he is preached among people is the Word of God who acquits the guilty, who gives life to the dead and who brings into being what otherwise could not exist. Through human witness in word and action, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ reaches out to command people's attention and awaken faith; he calls people into the fellowship of his sufferings, to be the disciples of a crucified Lord; in his own strange way Christ constitutes, rules and renews them as his Church."
(Basis of Union – Uniting Church Australia, n.d.)

We must be faithful in serving our obligations of seeking fellowship, truth and justice, so that we might experience the promise of a true and renewing life for all under Christ.

It is our responsibility to support better futures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families.

22,908

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE¹

Making up 41% of children in out-of-home care, but only 6% of all children in Australia

10.8 x

MORE LIKELY TO BE IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE THAN NON-INDIGENOUS CHILDREN

41%

= LESS THAN HALF ARE LIVING WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER RELATIVES AND CARERS

ONLY 15%

OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING IS SPENT ON PREVENTION, SUCH AS FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES.

The rest is spent on child protection and out-of-home care services²

11.5 x

MORE LIKELY BE REMOVED INTO OUT-OF-HOME CARE AS AN INFANT (<1 YEAR)

ONLY 6%
OF CHILD PROTECTION FUNDING WENT TO ACCOS*

1. Includes children in out-of-home care and on third-party parental responsibility orders
2. Funding relates to child protection expenditure by Australian, state and territory governments
Source: Family Matters Snapshot Data 2024

SCAN TO READ
THE FULL FAMILY MATTERS
2024 REPORT



*Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations

Our history



1982 First Nations Christian leaders gathered at Crystal Creek, forming the genesis of the UAICC.

1983 Formal resolution to establish the Congress amidst the UCA's stance on land rights and national bicentennial celebrations.

1985 First Indigenous Moderator, the late Rev Dr D Gondarra.

1985 The Congress was ratified, but the UCA Assembly's withdrawal from bicentennial commitments led to significant hurt among First Peoples, culminating in protest rallies in 1988.

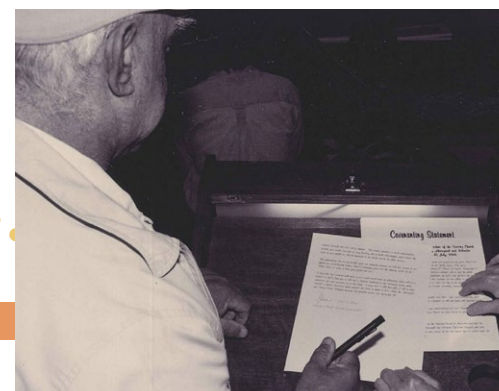
ORIGIN STORY

1985 Rev Charles Harris, Rev Dr D Gondarra, and UAICC leaders proposed a Covenant to bind the UCA and UAICC in a relationship of listening and respect through God. The Assembly endorsed this call.

CALL FOR A COVENANT

1994 The Covenant was signed by Pastor Bill Hollingsworth (UAICC Chairperson) and Dr Jill Tabart (UCA President), accompanied by an artwork symbolizing reconciliation through the Wukindi ceremony.

SIGNING OF THE COVENANT



1994 The UCA formally apologises to Stolen Generations.

MEANINGFUL STEPS

2009 The UCA Constitution acknowledges God's revelation to First Peoples before colonisation.

REVISED PREAMBLE

2018 The UCA 15th Assembly affirms First Peoples of Australia, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as sovereign peoples of these lands.

2022 The UCA signed a resolution in support of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

AFFIRMING ACTS OF ADVOCACY

2022 The UCA reaffirmed the covenant with the UAICC.

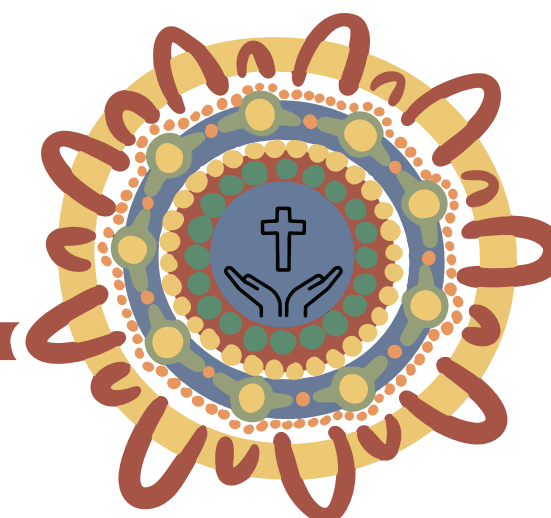
2023 The UCA and the UAICC publicly supported a constitutionally enshrined First Nations Voice.

2024 The UCA 17th Assembly, as part of acknowledging the 30th anniversary of the Covenant, endorsed a renewed commitment to the Covenant between First and Second peoples, and endorsed the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), as a guiding document, particularly in relation to self-determination of First Peoples within the church and more broadly in our society.

WALKING STRONGLY TOGETHER INTO A RENEWING FUTURE



UAICC Qld Muth arrak members at Cairns Gathering - October 2024.



Truth

All corporate transformational healing and spiritual growth begins with accepting the hurtful truths of our collective past. We must seek enlightened knowing, to be in a place of doing better towards each other.

Romans 12 instructs us to be living sacrifices, *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

An offering of hopeful challenge from Ps Sono Weatherall, from Zillmere UAICC Uniting Church, is that when we look to make promises to each other we can seek strength from God who has made us the ultimate promise of love through salvation.

We can ask ourselves what is a promise? An answer could be that a promise is a covenant or declaration that one will do exactly what they say or that something will happen as pledged.

A message from Rev Bruce Moore, Moderator of the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod:

Covenanting is at the heart of who we are as a Church. Our history as a nation is far from perfect, and our shared history as First and Second Peoples is steeped in trauma and dispossession. We believe it doesn’t have to be this way, but that to move forward in a new and renewed story, we have to acknowledge the past. I believe God has an abundant future and plan for First Peoples and it is our joy and our honour to walk together in covenant, committing ourselves to doing what is necessary to bring this future to bear as we are awakened by the voice of the Spirit.

A message from Rev Aunty Roberta Stanley, Chairperson UIACC Regional Council Queensland (Muth arrak):

We as the first born of this nation have gifts and spiritual insights to share as brothers and sisters in Christ. We ask that all within our church look to build genuine friendships with First Peoples in the churches and communities. We within the Uniting Church have a lot of work to do together in seeing God’s reconciling work done. But we are strengthened in the knowledge that our God is a big God, who is there to support the faithful in their works. I commit this toolkit to you, and invite you and your community to prayerfully consider what may be your responsibilities to the Covenant.

Forgiveness

There can be no reconciliation between peoples without the surrender of wrongdoing and the asking for forgiveness. True and lasting forgiveness cannot be sustained until there is a change of character from those who have perpetrated the wrong doings towards another.

The power of Christians to restore or reconcile lies within their desire to first, be in good relationship with God, and to strive to be of a renewed Christ like character. A character that seeks to do God’s will and be in ongoing loving, listening and reconciling relationship with God and with others.

When considering how we walk together as reconciling First and Second Peoples of this nation, it is helpful to consider the additional frameworks to those outlined earlier within this document, which can support greater understanding of why we should, and how we can reconcile as peoples through God.

Helpful links include:

[A Theological Framework for Reconciliation, With Special Reference to The Indigenous Peoples of Australia](#)

[The United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

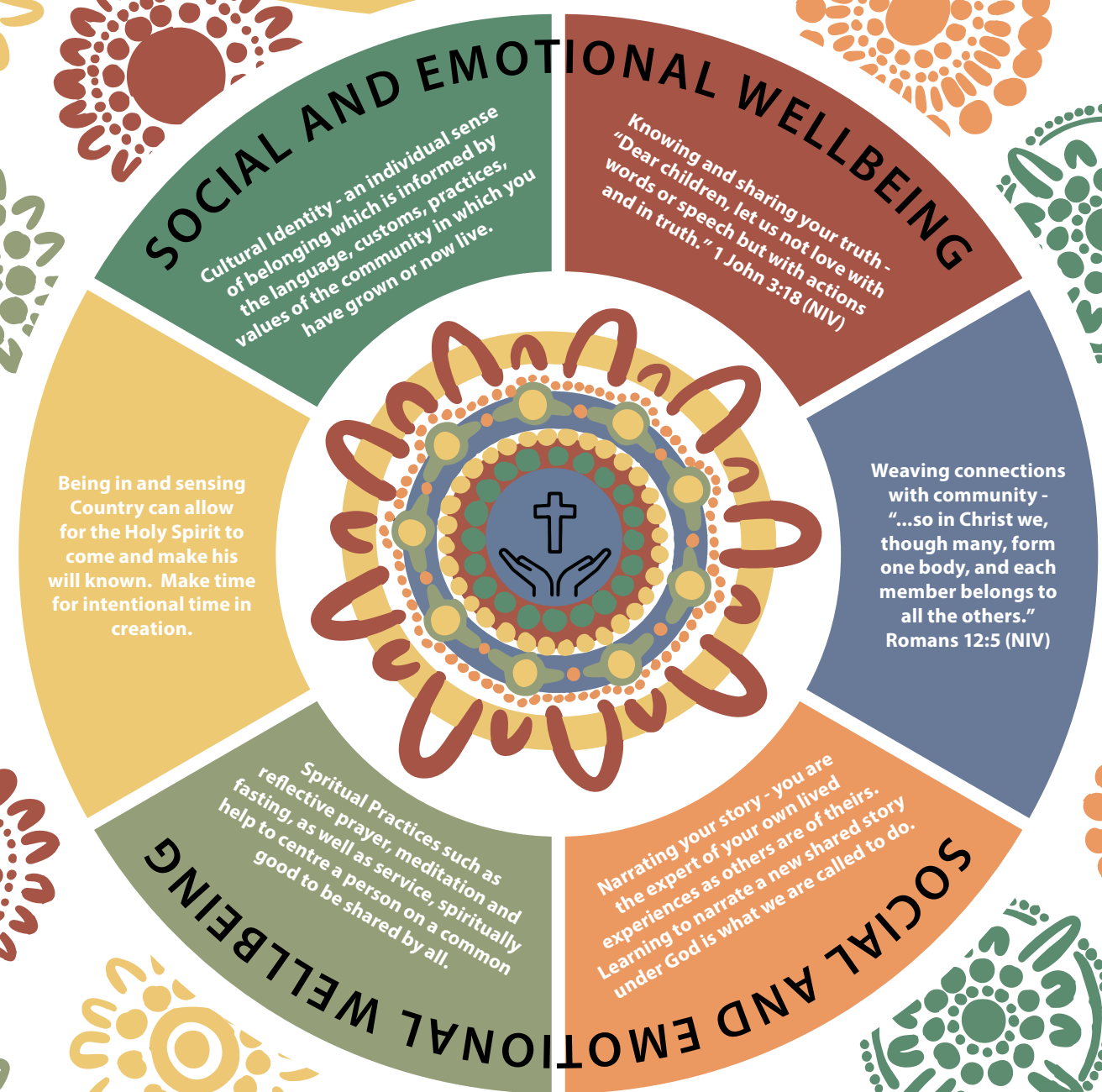
[Cultural Protocols of First Peoples within a local context](#)

[Voices of our Covenant](#)

[Our Covenant in the Uniting Church](#)

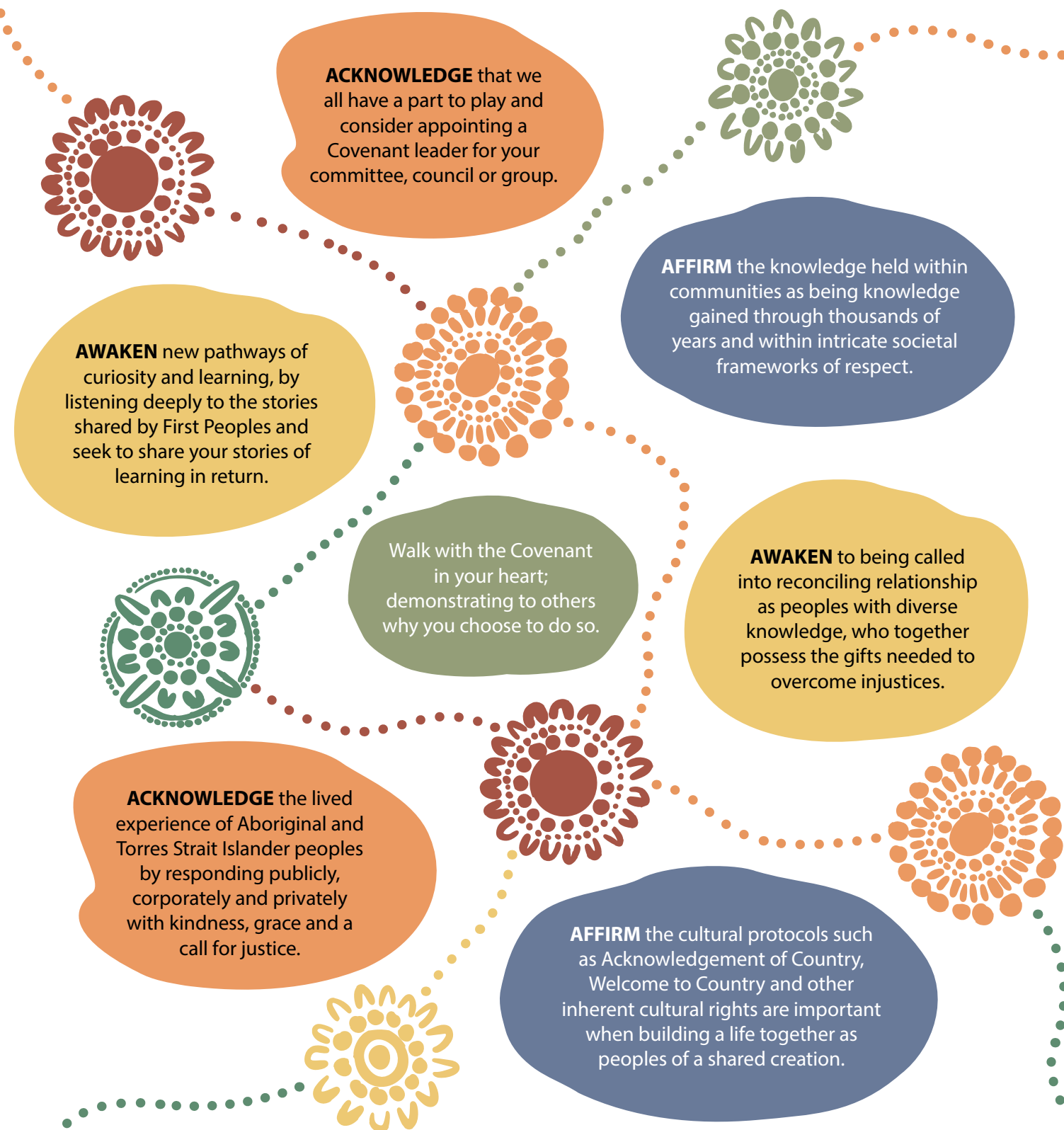
We are all here as part of God's creation, to love, learn, grow in faith, and contribute to the creating communities who live out the promises gifted to us.

To care for ourselves, each other and creation and return home to be with our great and loving God.



Belonging and living well relies upon an interconnected journey of knowing and growing self, and being a contributor to the legacy story God would have us write for ourselves and our communities.

Equip yourself with the knowledge you need to better understand the Covenant and preamble to the Uniting Church in Australia Constitution.



Affirming that Indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples, while recognising the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such.

Source: <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/un-declaration-rights-indigenous-people>

Acknowledge
Affirm
Awaken

To assist you in discerning how you might approach creating a Walking in Covenantal Relationship plan for your Congregation, we offer the following.

Acknowledge

Reconciliation between First and Second peoples of these lands requires that we acknowledge the injustices both past and present that keep us from experiencing equity in opportunities to live abundantly.

- Through prayerfully reflecting, you can focus on acknowledging past and present brokenness in achieving deeper levels of reconciliation. One of the steps that may come from this acknowledging is for each Council to revisit and/or discuss for the first time the Preamble and the Covenant and how that relates to the life of their Church.
- To prayerfully reflect upon the current social and emotional wellbeing matters that may be barriers for First and Second Peoples coming into relationship with each other, and to spend time discussing this together as a Council and Congregation.
- First Peoples' cultural identity revolves around the community from which they come, the community in which they spend time, their kinship connections, their stories, and their cultural protocols.

How does your Congregation signpost markers of cultural safety and respecting cultural identity, diversity, and inclusion within your Church?

Do you display posters of the Covenant or Preamble, offer Acknowledgement of Country during service or during meetings, or even have a written acknowledgement on the wall of the church somewhere?

- A guided conversation or yarn could be facilitated with your Church Council by a member of the Mission Accompanying Team or a member of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress in Qld (Muth arrak).
- It is also important to acknowledge and celebrate the connections you have already made with First Peoples, as well as the reconciliation steps that you have made singularly and collectively as a Congregation or Faith Community.

[illegible]

Affirming another person's lived experience as an act of validating their humanity helps you to see each other in renewing ways.

Knowing and sharing your truth and narrating your story relies upon being able to share experiences held within identity in a safe space, alongside people who wish to know you on a deeper level.

- Would your Church be open to creating space and time for First Peoples within your community to share their truth and begin the steps of writing a new story for themselves and alongside the Congregation?

The Uniting Church acknowledges that God created the traditional lands upon which your Church is placed, and that the First Peoples were the Traditional Custodians of this land.

- Does your Church know and affirm the stories of the peoples God entrusted to care for his creation for generations?
- Does your Church hold services to affirm the Day of Mourning, NAIDOC Week events, National Reconciliation Week, or other weeks of local reconciliation significance?
- Do you know who may be First Peoples' members within your Congregation and how would you safely invite them to identify and enter a closer walk with you or the UAICC?

[illegible]

Awaken

The apostle Paul calls us into living a life of Christ-like action and awakening the fruits of the spirit through acts that promote unity, tolerance, justice, equity, and oneness.

- In your Church's journey of Awakening, have you acted in ways that bring those you don't know into your life? And more specifically, are First Peoples part of your Congregation's continuing renewal plans?

Being in and Sensing Country, Weaving Connections with Community, and Spiritual Practices are all protocols of cultural and spiritual formation for First Peoples. Your Congregation can make themselves aware through connection with Community of how these protocols work practically in people's lives.

Suggested actions for your Congregation members:

- Attend local NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week events.
- Stay abreast of the Congress calendar and the Congress actions within their communities.
- Invite a Congress member to speak or preach at your Church.
- Seek out ways you may walk on Country with Traditional Custodians to learn the stories held within the lands which surround you.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. In the top right corner, there is a decorative green circular graphic with white dots and swirls. In the bottom left corner, there is a small orange semi-circle. The paper is otherwise empty of text or other markings.

For further information and guidance, get in touch at covenanting@ucaqld.com.au

The background features several abstract elements: a large yellow shape in the top left, a blue shape with a yellow interior in the top center, a large green shape on the right, and orange circular patterns in the top right and bottom left. A dotted green line curves from the top right towards the bottom left.

Awaken (in us) a new spirit of hopefulness

Prayer offered by Kym Korbe, Koa Kuku Yalanji woman and UAICC RCQ member

Gracious Creator God, giver of life through
redeeming love and your son Jesus Christ.
You knew us before we knew ourselves,
You made us to be bearers of your light.

Alongside all our efforts and good intentions,
we will fail in what you have called us to be.
But we know through you all things are possible,
if we are humbled in serving your will.

We thank you for the gift of this creation we inhabit.
You created peoples who were original custodians,
and peoples who came after.
We these peoples are yet to know each other well,
as neighbours under your name.
Help us to become what you call us to be,
through daily reconciling acts.

Teach us to be careful and protect the gates of our eyes,
the gates of our ears and the gates of our mouths.

Help us to be more open to receiving with grace
what we do not understand about each other,
and to become your peoples of these lands.
Let us become a new, hopeful and
flourishing story of your church,
written together in many languages.



For more information, or to have a yarn about covenanting, contact:

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