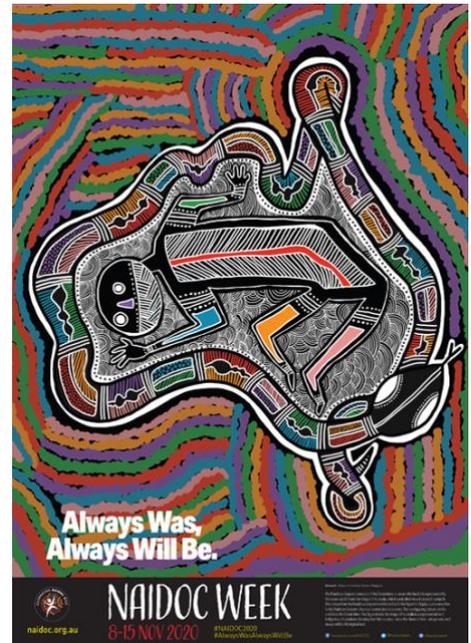


*A video of the readings and reflection for this service can be found here:  
<https://vimeo.com/477880045/0fbba85b97>*

**WELCOME/ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY  
A Prayer for NAIDOC 2020 – Always Was, Always Will Be**

Loving Creator God,  
We rejoice in the beauty of this ancient land and her waters.  
We marvel at the awesome way they have been formed.  
We give thanks for her First Nations Peoples, their stories of creation sung by countless Ancestors. It is right, Loving Mystery that we name the dispossession, violence and bloodshed, which First Peoples endured at the hands of Second Peoples.  
We ask your forgiveness, and their forgiveness, on behalf of our forebears.  
We pray for your healing of this land and her Peoples. We pray that love will make a new way, a harmony way, the way of Jesus.  
Holy God,  
Today we are grateful, and we celebrate this nation's true history, beginning long before time.  
The First People of this ancient land who gave them birth, who gives them life – Mother Earth.  
We honour them and share their joy.  
You, Wisdom, call us body, call us one,  
To walk together, people from many lands, under this same golden sun, together First Nations Peoples and all of us who have since come. Together there is a new song to be sung, as old as time.  
Hear the *yidaki*, hear the *bilma*, the Ancestors call.  
Wisdom, help us to listen, to follow, to learn, to grow.  
In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.



***[Yidaki is the Yolŋu word for didgeridoo as bilma is for clap stick]***

*Stu McMillan, National Consultant Covenanting  
Assembly Resourcing Unit  
Uniting Church in Australia*

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

### ***Paraphrase of Psalm 78***

Are you listening to what I'm saying? Pay attention, this is important.

We have been entrusted with a precious gift and with the gift comes sacred task.

I'll share it with you in a story, I'll remind you of words spoken long ago,

Things we know deep in our hearts, passed down from one generation to another.

Don't you see how important it is? Our children will never understand what God has done for us unless we tell them. We need to tell them of His glory, of all the times we've experienced His grace, been blessed by His provision, the times when it was only His strength that got us through.

His word reminds us how vital it is that we pass on this knowledge so that children who haven't even been born yet will inherit this incredible legacy of knowing who God is and what He has done.

We're preparing the way so they can fix their hearts on the One who formed them.

We're helping to write the truth about God's love, not on paper but on their hearts so they will always walk knowing they are loved and treasured.

## **PRAYER**

### **MUSIC – Ancient Words – Michael W Smith**

Holy words long preserved

for our walk in this world,

They resound with God's own heart

Oh, let the Ancient words impart.

Words of Life, words of Hope

Give us strength, help us cope

In this world, where e'er we roam

Ancient words will guide us Home.

Ancient words ever true

Changing me, and changing you.

We have come with open hearts

Oh let the ancient words impart.

Holy words of our Faith

Handed down to this age.

Came to us through sacrifice

Oh heed the faithful words of Christ.

Holy words long preserved

For our walk in this world.

They resound with God's own heart

Oh let the ancient words impart.

Ancient words ever true

Changing me, and changing you.

We have come with open hearts

Oh let the ancient words impart.

## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

1938 was a significant year for a number of reasons. On Australia Day 1938 William Cooper, a Yorta Yorta man called on the churches to hold a day of mourning – a tradition that continues today.

In May of that year he asked the churches to recognise Aboriginal Sunday. That was the beginning of Naidoc week.

On the 9th & 10th November 1938 the Nazis systematically destroyed Jewish communities across Germany and Austria. 30,000 Jews were transported to concentration camps, the Holocaust was underway. To describe it, the Nazis coined the phrase Kristallnacht or Night of Broken Glass. Tomorrow, marks 88 years since Kristallnacht.

One month later, on the 6th December, here in Australia, a Yorta Yorta man, William Cooper, is the only person known to have staged a private protest against Kristallnacht and the treatment of the Jews. Yes, that's the same William Cooper.

(from a service in New South Wales)

*We remember a night of darkness and fear that swept the heartland of Christian Europe like a scourge. We remember those who were persecuted. Jews for being Jews. We remember those who spoke out, brave souls who tried to save a world. And we remember the silence! How many stood aside, mute and unconcerned forgetting the divine command: "You shall not stand idle while your neighbour bleeds."*

*For the sin of silence,*

*For the sin of indifference,*

*For the secret complicity of the neutral,*

*For the closing of borders,*

*For the washing of hands from blame,*

*For the crime of forgetfulness,*

*For the sin of meaningless rhetoric,*

*Let there be no forgetfulness before God, and let memory startle us at any moment, when we lie down and when we rise up. Let us remember and never forget.*

This year Naidoc week has been transferred from July to November. Today, as Naidoc Week begins, as Kristallnacht comes again, let's come in prayer:

Loving, Creator God, today we remember the pain of our First Nations; people who were hunted, beaten and killed; children who were taken from their families; families who hid their identity for fear of repercussions; our First Nations brothers and sisters who today continue to be weighed down by the past and by the hurts and injustices they face every day.

*And we recognise and acknowledge the silence! These many years when we have stood aside, mute and unconcerned forgetting the divine command: "You shall not stand idle while your neighbour bleeds."*

*For the sin of silence, +++*

*For the sin of indifference, +++*

*For the secret complicity of the neutral, +++*

*For the closing of doors and hearts, +++  
For the washing of hands from blame, +++  
For the crime of forgetfulness, +++  
For the sin of meaningless rhetoric, +++  
Let there be no forgetfulness before God, and let memory startle us at any moment,  
when we lie down and when we rise up. Let us remember and never forget. +++*

*Loving God we know that in our own lives, our own relationships  
there have been times when we were silent  
times when we have closed our hearts,  
times when we could have reached out,  
times when we could have spoken words of truth and healing  
forgive us Lord and make us mindful  
so that tomorrow we might not repeat the mistakes of yesterday.*

*Always You are watching and waiting for us to turn towards you  
Always You are longing to pour our Your love and forgiveness on us  
Help us to receive Your love and embrace Your forgiveness.*

**READING: Joshua 24: 1-3, 14-25**

Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

<sup>2</sup> Joshua said to all the people, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: "Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River Euphrates and worshipped other gods. <sup>3</sup> But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants.

<sup>14</sup> 'Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshipped beyond the River Euphrates and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. <sup>15</sup> But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.'

<sup>16</sup> Then the people answered, 'Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! <sup>17</sup> It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we travelled. <sup>18</sup> And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God.'

<sup>19</sup> Joshua said to the people, 'You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. <sup>20</sup> If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.'

<sup>21</sup> But the people said to Joshua, 'No! We will serve the LORD.'

<sup>22</sup> Then Joshua said, 'You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD.'

'Yes, we are witnesses,' they replied.

<sup>23</sup>'Now then,' said Joshua, 'throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.'

<sup>24</sup>And the people said to Joshua, 'We will serve the LORD our God and obey him.'

<sup>25</sup>On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws.

### **READING: Matthew 25: 1-13**

'At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish and five were wise.<sup>3</sup> The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. <sup>4</sup> The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

<sup>6</sup>'At midnight the cry rang out: "Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!"

<sup>7</sup>'Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps.<sup>8</sup> The foolish ones said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out."

<sup>9</sup>"No," they replied, "there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves."

<sup>10</sup>'But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

<sup>11</sup>'Later the others also came. "Lord, Lord," they said, "open the door for us!"

<sup>12</sup>'But he replied, "Truly I tell you, I don't know you."

<sup>13</sup>'Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

### **MESSAGE**

Throughout our lives we come to places where we are called on to make decisions that will have an ongoing impact on us, on those around us, even on our community or on the world. We have to decide where we stand, who we trust, who we are going to depend on.

In today's reading the children of Israel are at another one of those places. Joshua knows how important these moments are, rather like a signpost or GPS reference, something you can look back to when things get tough; something that reminds you why you're walking this path.

What do you do with those moments?

When have you faced a covenant moment? A place where you needed to stand up and say who God is for you?

How did you mark it?

Joshua knows how to make his point! You can make up your own minds. But make a decision. Go back to your idols, follow the gods of Egypt, but decide! As for me, I know who I'm going to count on!

The Israelites respond exactly as he thought - one after another they begin to recall what they have seen.

He brought us out of Egypt

He led our ancestors to freedom

He brought us out of slavery

He did great things in our sight

He protected us and directed our path  
He drove out the Amorites  
At every turn he proved his faithfulness

If you were rewriting these verses from Joshua, what would your list look like?

Our First Nations have a strong connection with this kind of thinking - laws for life are recited, or sung, spoken about, stories told to illustrate. Bound to the body, even painted on bodies and other objects. What can we learn from First Nations Peoples practices and life-giving ways which reinterpret this Scripture, or give deeper meaning?

As we have followed the children of Israel out of Egypt, through the desert, we've been talking about what transformation looks like. What it means to be transformed. We are standing at one of those signpost places as a community - all the things we thought we could count on turned upside down; wanting to move forward but not sure what that is going to look like; wanting to go back to how things were - but maybe God is using this time to sweep things away, to change how we do things or what we do. This year is almost over – 3 weeks – on the 29th November we begin the new year.

As a community, looking back at the journey, standing on the threshold of a new but still uncertain future, what would it look like to rewrite these verses? What have we learnt about freedom? What are the great things God has done? Where have we seen His direction and protection?

**MUSIC – Eucharist – Paul Gurr**

<https://youtu.be/Da-jA6o4xcI>

**MUSIC – These alone are enough – Dan Schutte**

Take my mind with all its plans and schemes.  
Give me nothing more than your love and grace.  
These alone, O God, are enough for me.

Take my tears, my joys, my liberty.  
Give me nothing more than your love and grace.  
These alone, O God, are enough for me.

I return to you your gifts untold.  
Give me nothing more than your love and grace.  
These alone, O God, are enough for me.

Take the very breath that sang your praise.  
Give me nothing more than your love and grace.  
These alone, O God, are enough for me.

## **PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

**There are so many situations and people who need our prayers today, sit quietly with your hands open and take a few moments to bring those people and concerns to God. You might like to then pray these words.**

*God, we live in darkness, unseeing.  
We close our eyes, and see your light.  
We walk a path untrod,  
only your footprints before us.*

*Forces of anger and evil surround us,  
the power of selfishness unleashed.  
We fear for our future, unknowing,  
yet your love is supreme, unfailing.*

*Children waiting for the war's end,  
we long for the noise to stop.  
But beneath the raging, your Silence  
that calms our trembling hearts.*

*Beloved, hold us in the darkness,  
our unknowing trust your praise,  
your love our gravity, our end,  
and tomorrow's willing embrace.  
We wait for the morning, we wait,  
but your light is already here.*

Psalm of Unknowing – Steve Garnaas-Holmes (Unfolding Light)

## **MUSIC – As we go now – Stephen Fischbacher**

As we go now, from this moment  
As we leave behind our time together.  
May we walk with, one another  
May we help each other on the way.  
As we go now, from this moment  
As we go into the future together.  
May we treasure one another,  
May we realise how precious we are  
May we realise how precious we are  
May we realise how precious we are.

## **BENEDICTION**

Go out into this day and each day ahead knowing the love and grace of God, walking with Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit. Amen.