



SPECIAL SYNOD MEETING March 22 2025

APOLOGY TO CONGRESS

We meet in Lent, a time for reflection, self-examination and repentance as, in the Spirit, we follow Jesus to Jerusalem and the cross and the resurrection. It is a season when we turn or return to the true way when we acknowledge something needing change.

Lenten reflection is a call to face reality – even what is uncomfortable – to own up about what has happened and to make changes. Followers of Jesus are called to a life of repentance.

In 1994, the President of the Uniting Church acknowledged, as part of our covenant commitment to Congress, that the impact of church and “western culture” often caused harm to First Peoples. Dr Jill Tabart specifically apologized for wrongs done “knowingly or unknowingly”.

I come today with an apology about recent events related to WA Congress and BKI in the spirit of the Covenant.

As a church, we have committed ourselves to the Covenant call to work together practically.

However, there are always cultural elements. Habits and practices of “western culture” which are built-into our processes sometimes mean that our ways of functioning as a church cause harm. Sometimes people are harmed by the time things take. Leaving decisions with meetings often means that we delay decisions.

Today, we lament that it took so long to deal with Congress WA’s request in 2023 to conclude the term of the BKI board then in place and the programs under its oversight.

We regret that this time meant continuing hurt for Congress and other church members and leaders.

We lament we took so long to find a solution when it became clear that those on the BKI Board that was in place at that time and those operating its programs were not just working outside Uniting Church values, but were also using the BKI Facebook page to undermine Congress priorities and abuse the UCA and its leaders.

We regret that, when it became clear that those linked with the suspended board of BKI and its operations would not fulfill their undertakings, we were not able to find a solution earlier.

We lament not finding a way to end quickly an untenable situation with trespassers and squatters at the Treasure Road site. We were shocked to hear that these people have denied Congress and BKI ownership and wanted to take control of the land.

We regret our part, knowingly or unknowingly, in this situation which has included the abuse of Congress leaders and members, the defamation of past Elders, and the damage this has been caused.

As Christians, we are not immune to struggle with how to respond to complex situations.

So, we come to you members of Congress WA; we confess our shortcomings, we regret the ways our actions have knowingly or unknowingly failed you, and we ask for your grace and forgiveness.

We ask that together we can learn from these experiences.

We commit to the Covenant we have made, and we pray that, through the grace of God, even as we stumble or make wrong turns, we will come back together and journey alongside each other as First and Second Peoples.

We meet today as the Synod. 'Synod' literally means being on the way together. As the people of God on the way, following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, we seek to go forward together in sole loyalty to Jesus, bearing witness to the unity which is both God's gift and will.

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Rev Dr Ian Tozer, Moderator