

Healing and Hope

Resources suitable for worship and
prayer in response to the Royal
Commission into Institutional
Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

FEBRUARY 2018



Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY

These suggested resources can be used in a worship service or a small gathering that encourages the Church to engage in lament and to honour our commitment to be the safest Church we can be for children in our care.

You may follow a simple structure as follows:

- A welcome acknowledging why you have gathered
- A time of lament
- UCA President's statement read aloud
- Commitment to creating a safe church for all
- Prayer for survivors



INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT¹

Friends, I welcome you in the name of Jesus Christ, and in the spirit of the common good. The peace of the Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Today we gather to express our deep concern for the victims of sexual abuse.

"From east and west, north and south, from pain and disillusionment, from anger and confusion, from sadness looking for hope".

We come together to lament in faith institutionalised sexual abuse and express our deep sorrow for the wrong that was done and the injustice this has caused.

Survivors have recounted experiences of humiliation, assault on their dignity and self-esteem; they have experienced fear, anxiety, isolation and abandonment. May all survivors know the transforming and surpassing power of God's love.

We lament this national tragedy of child sexual abuse.

We lament our failure to protect innocent children in our Australian orphanages, children's homes, missions and foster care, churches and charities.

We lament our terrible history of sexual abuse and will devote ourselves to redress for all forms of abuse and neglect.

We commit today to ensure justice for all people affected and recommit our efforts to be a safe and welcoming church in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY²

As we gather here,
We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land,
We give our respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging:
And we own that we took their land, without their permission.

Some of our forebears were forced here, as convicts.
Some came as soldiers and settlers
and others as refugee boat people of an earlier time.
Some simply came because they chose to live here,
Seeking a better life for themselves and their families.
***We are gathered here today
to look our history in the face and lament our present day.***

PRAYER FOR HEALING³

God of endless love,
ever caring, ever strong,
always present, always just:
You gave your only Son
to save us by the blood of his cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

Hear our cries as we agonize
over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers,
soothe restless hearts with hope,
steady shaken spirits with faith:
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people's wounds
and transform our brokenness.
Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,
so that we may act with justice
and find peace in you.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

HYMN: TIS 689 SORROWING SONG (Robin Mann)

THE LAMENT⁴

Leader

In the name of the Triune God,
We have come here tonight from many places,
from east and west, north and south, from pain and
disillusionment,
from anger and confusion, from sadness looking for hope.
We come together for one thing only:
To raise our hearts and voices and bodies to God,
in the hope that the very act of raising them in lament yet in
faith, they may be touched in their brokenness and know the
transforming and surpassing power of God's love.

Leader

O Holy God hear us as we cry out to you. Our pain is more than
we can bear alone...

People Respond:

**Oh...Oh...Oh...Oh..., Sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble...**

Leader

Unable to forget the violation done to us,
Still bearing the marks of our wounds,
Struggling to overcome our fears,
Mourning our loss of innocence, we cry...

People:

**Oh...Oh...Oh...Oh..., Sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble...**

Not knowing where to turn in our misery and isolation,
Wondering how your grace permitted this,
Bowed down by the weakness of human frailty,
Longing for families who can bear our truths with us,

Looking for justice where none seems possible,
Searching for the kind of faith that once sustained us all,
Covered in shame and confusion, wanting to stand safe and
secure again,
we cry...

People:

**Oh...Oh...Oh...Oh..., Sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble...**

Hoping for kindness and truth to meet, justice and peace to kiss,
Desperate for the courage to face our own demons,
Wanting to put all this behind us and live in wholeness,
Outraged by the actions of those who should have known better,
we cry...

People:

**Oh...Oh...Oh...Oh..., Sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble...**

Bearing with one another the burdens of our own and not of our
own making,
Lost, looking for your guidance and direction,
Amidst the shattered images of godliness and ministry,
Out of darkness of our despair, into the cloud of our unknowing,
Not even knowing how to help each other or where to go from
here, we cry...

People:

**Oh...Oh...Oh...Oh..., Sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble...**

**HONOURING OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY
PASTORAL STATEMENT
PRESIDENT STUART MCMILLAN^s**

Five years after its announcement, Australia's landmark Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse has handed its Final Report to Government.

On this occasion I want to acknowledge the extensive and invaluable body of work produced by the Royal Commission and its staff, and remind all Church members of our solemn commitment to child safety that is informed by the Commission's work.

As Chief Commissioner Justice Peter McClellan AM warned at the Royal Commission's final sitting, the sexual abuse of children is not just a problem from the past.

Justice McClellan said: "Poor practices, inadequate governance structures, failures to record and report complaints, or understating the seriousness of complaints, have been frequent."

He went on to say: "If the problems we have identified are to be adequately addressed, changes must be made. There must be changes in the culture, structure and governance practices of many institutions."

The Uniting Church in Australia will consider the Royal Commission's Final Report carefully, reflect on its findings and recommendations, and implement measures to deliver the best quality of care, service and support for children.

At this time, I would again like to sincerely apologise to all children in our care who suffered sexual abuse in our Church, whether it happened after our foundation in 1977 or before that, in our predecessor Churches.

We are, and I am, deeply sorry that we did not protect and care in accordance with our Christian values for those children. I again want to acknowledge the impact that it's had in the lives of those young people and their families, and to say that I am truly sorry.

We must never forget the courage of survivors who've come forward to tell their stories in public and in private. The Uniting Church will continue to work constructively with Government and other stakeholders for a truly national redress scheme, as the most equitable way to support survivors wherever they might be.

Our Church's commitment is that we will seek to make amends and to strive to ensure others will not suffer as they have. Our prayers and a determined focus will be required if we are to build a robust culture of child safety.

With the collaboration of Synods and many others across our Church, we have begun applying the learnings of the Royal Commission through a National Child Safe Policy Framework.

The work of implementation will continue to be resourced into the future through the National Royal Commission Task Group and support staff, who will work to incorporate the recommendations of the Final Report in the weeks and months ahead.

I urge all Church members to remain vigilant, to ensure that wherever you are in our Church, agencies or schools, you are focussed on child safety. If you are a Church member and would like information about safe church training, please contact your Synod or Presbytery.

In the years ahead, may God grant us the strength and wisdom to honour our pledge to be the safest church we can be for children, and for all people in our midst.

THE WORD OF HOPE (Revelation 21: 1, 3-5)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth;
for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,
and the sea was no more.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
 'See, the home of God is among mortals.
 He will dwell with them;
 they will be his peoples,
 and God himself will be with them;
 he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
 Death will be no more;
 mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
 for the first things have passed away.'

And the one who was seated on the throne said,
'See, I am making all things new.'

HYMN: All Together for Good 563 HOW LONG? (Robin Mann)

RENEWED COMMITMENT⁶

Let us affirm our faith and renew our commitment:

On the wood of the cross Jesus Christ bore our infirmities
and took upon himself the consequences of all our sinfulness.
In the wood of the cross we find solidarity
with our own suffering and brokenness.
Through the wood of the cross we too are lifted up
and raised to the glory of God.

We are all held in the hollow of God's hand,
loved children of the universe,
born from the life which flows from God,
freed to the fullness of God's creation
with all its beauty and variety.

We are all worth dying for in Christ Jesus,
and called to risen life in Christ's rising.
The way of Jesus gives us footprints for our following
and our trials and longings are known
in the vulnerability of Christ's birth among us
and the courage of Christ's walking before us.

We are called to new things in the Spirit,
and pledge to create and live out a safe Church
for all people, and especially those most vulnerable.
We commit to an ethic of care and will
recognise and respond to inappropriate
behaviours towards children, before any child is harmed.
We commit ourselves to continue to understand
and to implement the lessons of the Royal Commission
and remain open to the insights of survivors and professionals
We pledge to continuously seek improvement;
to regularly renew our policies and practices in all parts of our
Church,
to ensure that they reflect the best practice for care,
service and support of children.
We pledge to ensure the priorities of safe church
are integrated into our organisational culture and practices.
This is our commitment to all survivors of sexual abuse
in the name of the father and of the son and the of the Holy
Spirit, Amen.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION⁷

Gracious and healing God,

we thank you for the many ways that you enrich our lives - giving us hope in the midst of despair; comfort and strength to live, when we are at our most vulnerable.

Be with all those today who are suffering - living with brokenness and pain.

We particularly think of people who were sexually abused as children.

May your Spirit be a comforting and healing presence in their lives.

May they find peace and nurture within relationships and communities of safety and trust.

Open our eyes and give us wisdom to see where we can bring your healing and hope in our relationships, neighbourhoods and communities as your hopeful and compassionate people.

Give us courage, insight, power and passion that we might work with you for justice and liberation of all those who are abused and oppressed.

Lord, hear us

Lord, hear our prayer

Holy God, through Jesus your Son, in the power of the Spirit, you brought your church into being.

Imbue it in these challenging days with a willingness to courageously and honestly face the mistakes of the past.

Help us all to confront and confess our failures that we may continue with integrity to speak out for truth and justice in our nation

and boldly declare the salvation promised to all who repent and believe in the good news revealed in Jesus your Son.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, hear our prayer

We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours.
Now and for ever.
Amen.

HYMN: Anglican Hymns 452 CHRIST BE OUR LIGHT (Bernadette Farrell)

During verse 2 and onwards, candles may be lit, spreading out from the Christ candle. The leader starts by lighting his/her candle from the Christ candle and lighting those of one person on either side of the church, who lights that of their neighbours to side and behind, and so on as a symbol of Christ's light and hope for the survivors of sexual abuse.

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL⁸

4 voices standing at each corner of the room and to speak loudly:

N Restore our fortunes O Lord,
Like the watercourses in the Negeb.

E May those who sow in tears
Reap with shouts of joy.

S Those who go out weeping
Bearing the seed for sowing...

W Shall come home, with shouts of joy
Carrying their sheaves.

(Psalm 126:4-6)

Leader: Let us lift up our eyes to see those who wait for love:

People: and open our ears to the cries of the world.

Leader: Let us speak for those who have no voice:

People: and take our stand on the ground of mercy and justice.

And may God the Creator go on creating in us,
Christ the Human One walk beside us
and the loving passion of the Holy Spirit burn within us.

Amen.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Drawn from: <https://www.futurechurch.org/justice-in-church/liturgy-of-lament>; Liturgy written by Rev Dorothy McRae-McMahon, R. K. (2013, August 3). Service of Lament for Refugees. Sydney, NSW, Australia. Rev Charissa Suli
- ² Liturgy written by Rev Dorothy McRae-McMahon, R. K. (2013, August 3). Service of Lament for Refugees. Sydney, NSW, Australia.
- ³ Retrieved February 2nd, 2018, from United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/prayer-for-healing-victims-of-abuse.cfm>
- ⁴ Liturgy written by Rev Dorothy McRae-McMahon, R. K. (2013, August 3). Service of Lament for Refugees. Sydney, NSW, Australia.
- ⁵ UCA Assembly, <https://www.assembly.uca.org.au/royalcommission/news/item/2767-honouring-our-commitment-to-child-safety>
- ⁶ Liturgy written by Rev Dorothy McRae-McMahon, R. K. (2013, August 3). Service of Lament for Refugees. Sydney, NSW, Australia.
- ⁷ UCA Assembly, <https://www.assembly.uca.org.au/royalcommission/news/item/2767-honouring-our-commitment-to-child-safety>
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