

The Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC/Congress) First Peoples, nurtured and sustained by God before colonisation, are celebrated at the very heart of what it means to be the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA). This is the core commitment and vision encompassed by the first Assembly Covenanting Action Plan (ACAP) to be launched in July 2021. In living out the ACAP, the Assembly seeks to embody its commitment to be in a covenantal relationship where "First Peoples' sovereignty is affirmed, First Peoples have a voice in the decision-making of our Church and are empowered to live out their right to self-determination."

The ACAP articulates a vision where, "As First and Second Peoples of the Uniting Church, we are bound together in covenantal relationship, walking together, creating socially just and culturally safe relationships, listening and learning from one another."

Our Walking Together as First and Second Peoples began in 1982 when First Nations peoples first determined to start a First Peoples Church within the Uniting Church in Australia.

The introduction to the ACAP tells the story of this journey from the birth of Congress right through to the decision of the 15th Assembly in 2018 to affirm the Sovereignty of First Nations peoples. One of the key moments in this journey was when the 12th Assembly (2009) resolved to endorse a new Preamble to the UCA Constitution, a groundbreaking decision for truth telling of our Nation's, and our Church's history together. The same year, the Australian Government, finally endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) which states: *"We seek in our Covenant relationship to reflect the universal human rights which flow from the source of all creation and which point to the new creation, the new humanity, the end in view for the whole creation."* (Stuart McMillan, Assembly Consultant Covenanting)

## Planning Team

The planning team for the Symposium and Workshop includes Dr Marelle Harisun (Convenor), Tarlee Leondaris (Covenanting Officer, SA Synod), Dr Di Russell, Peter Russell, Rev Liellie McLaughlin, Meredith Edwards, and Rev Sandy Boyce, Dianne Watters and Ruth Lyddon. (in collaboration with Uniting College)

## Contact details

Tarlee Leondaris, [tleondaris@sa.uca.org.au](mailto:tleondaris@sa.uca.org.au)  
Pilgrim Office, [office@pilgrim.org.au](mailto:office@pilgrim.org.au)  
Ph. 82123295, [www.pilgrim.org.au](http://www.pilgrim.org.au)

## Payment

Eventbrite, bank transfer or cash at the door  
BSB: 035-006 (Westpac)  
Account Number: 224080 (Pilgrim Church UCA)  
Lodgement Reference: Symposium

Group booking discount - congregations are encouraged to bring groups and individuals to bring friends.

RSVP desirable to the Pilgrim office (details above).  
Registration will help with organisational logistics.

More details will be uploaded to the Pilgrim website as they come to hand, including Eventbrite details, and updated list of speakers & facilitators.

Note: Candidates for ministry may explore a guided reading topic which includes participation in these events.



**Pilgrim**  
Uniting Church

# ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

SYMPOSIUM  
FRIDAY 2ND JULY  
7.30 - 9.30 PM  
PILGRIM UNITING CHURCH

WORKSHOP  
SATURDAY 3RD JULY  
9 AM - 4 PM  
UNITING COLLEGE  
BROOKLYN PARK

# PILGRIM SYMPOSIUM

## 2ND JULY, 7.30-9.30PM

VENUE: PILGRIM UNITING CHURCH  
12 FLINDERS ST, ADELAIDE

**Topic:** "The Statement from the Heart and Sovereignty: exploring the overall picture"

**Guest speaker:** Rev Dr Chris Budden is a Uniting Church Minister and author of *Following Jesus in Invaded Space: Doing Theology on Aboriginal Land & Why Indigenous Sovereignty Should Matter to Christians*.



### Panel members

Rev Dr Auntie Denise Champion is an Adnyamathanha woman, theologian and Uniting Church minister, and author of *Yarta wandatha* & the recently published *Anadij: The way things are*.

Rev Dr Vicky Balabanski is Senior Lecturer in New Testament at Flinders University Department of Theology, Director of Biblical Studies at the Uniting College for Leadership and Theology, and Minister of the Word in the Uniting Church in Australia.

Tarlee Leondaris, Covenanting Officer, is a proud Aboriginal woman who traces her ancestry to the Wakaya people of the Barkly Tablelands (Northern Territory).



Cost for attending the Symposium:  
\$20 waged /\$15 concession

# WORKSHOP

## 3RD JULY, 9AM-4PM

VENUE: UNITING COLLEGE,  
BROOKLYN PARK

**Topic:** "Sovereignty and the Statement from the Heart: Listening to the voices of First Peoples".

### Speakers and facilitators include:

Rev Dr Chris Budden  
Rev Dr Denise Champion  
Rev Dr Vicky Balabanski  
Eddie Synot (via Zoom from Sydney)  
Indigenous facilitators

Dusty Feet Mob will do a presentation at lunchtime.

Session 1: Truth Telling - background history and the role of the Church and its impact on theology and UCA commitments to First Peoples, followed by small groups with Indigenous facilitators.

Session 2: Treaty and recognition of sovereignty, implications for relationships between First and Second Peoples in this country, followed by small groups, with Indigenous facilitators.

Session 3: Treaty and how it gives expression to voice in national politics, followed by opportunity to work on and share Reconciliation/Covenanting Action Plan.

The day will conclude with Eucharist.

Cost for an individual	\$30/\$25
Symposium and Workshop together	\$40/\$30
Group registration (any size group):	\$50

We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this **Statement from the Heart**:

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future. These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is the torment of our powerlessness.

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: the coming together after a struggle. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard.

We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.