



Healing Rites for Seven Sites

A Stations of the Southern Cross Walk

We come together today to walk the way of the Southern Cross, and visit seven sites from our shared history. There is suffering in these events, and there are questions for us to grapple with. We will hear the words of Christ on the cross, what might his words spoken in pain tell us? We seek to participate in a process of learning, repentance and healing in our land.

We acknowledge that we gather today on the land of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and the Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation – people who have known the Creator Spirit, shared stories, and walked in this place since time immemorial – our elders past, present and future.

With the Creator Spirit

We walk the way of the Southern Cross.

Under the Southern Cross

We hear again the words of Christ on the cross.

With God deep among us

We seek healing and justice in our land.

Acknowledgements

Aunty Doreen Wandin renamed Spencer St station to Southern Cross because they were able to see stars at the homestead in Coranderrk. Aunty Joy Wandin named Wurundjeri Way... We identify this constellation with “home”, and commit to the journey of finding and following the way home under these stars.

Uncle Wanta Jampijimpa has preached on the correlation of the stars of the Southern Cross to the wounds on Jesus’ body... We acknowledge the terrible and complex legacy of the church as colonisers in this place and give deep thanks for elders wisdom and grace in leading us to deeper truth and understanding the Creator Spirit who has always been here in this place.

Bill Wylie Kellerman, co-author of “Resistance and Public Liturgy”, role models and teaches us that liturgy implicates. Undertaking activism on high holidays gives layers of meaning to the action. He said: “We believe God has already intervened, breaking in to break out on behalf of human kind. We recognise the authority of God [as bigger/beyond figureheads of power], we believe this is the meaning of the resurrection and we have come to say so”... What does it mean for us – in this time, this place, this context - to be mindful of and respond well to matters of justice from a framework of hope as people of all faiths and none?

The Indigenous Hospitality House (IHH) community who shared their resource with us based on the work of Dr Norman Habel, the author of “Reconciliation: Searching for Australia’s Soul” which outlines the model for combining storytelling to action as a means for right relationship between people and with the land... We seek to participate in a process of learning, repentance and healing in our land.

Site 1: A Thirst for Justice

We are standing outside the Royal Hotel. One night in November last year police were called. A 12 year old girl was arrested for allegedly stabbing a 37-year-old woman to death. Her case is being heard at the Supreme Court this week.

We are not told her name, she has no lines to speak in this story. What we are told about her is to know something of her life, not who she is. These are news excerpts:

The girl, who was in state care, has a mental disability. She suffered abuse and had been [reported missing from state care 275 times](#).

Victoria's Commissioner for Children and Young People said she had "significant concerns" about the care provided to the girl before the alleged murder, and has launched an investigation into potential failures.

This girl was already known to Police. Allegedly she had carried out several violent attacks in the lead-up to the November incident.

Victorian prosecutors could drop the case against her, and are waiting on a psychiatrist's report before making their decision.

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing is planning to move her to a "bespoke facility" in Melbourne that will be surrounded by a very high fence.

Department barrister Sarala Fitzgerald said it was likely the girl would remain in state care at the new site even if the murder charge was dropped by prosecutors. "It would be appropriate for her while she still poses a significant risk to others to still live in the bespoke facility," Ms Fitzgerald said. If the case did go to trial and the girl was found not guilty, she would also end up at the facility, Ms Fitzgerald said.

If a guilty verdict was the outcome, she would then be transferred to a youth justice prison to begin her sentence.

Word 1: I Thirst

John 19:28-29

Reflection:

They gave him sour wine to drink.

Institutions were meant to provide a safe home.

They gave him sour wine to dull the pain.

Institutions were meant to provide a safe family.

They gave him sour wine to drink.

Institutions we trust to be responsible for children, fail them.

I thirst.

No matter what decision is made, the outcome for this child is an institution.

I thirst.

Listen to the story of this 12 year old

I thirst.

She is thirsting for justice.

Rite 1: Take and make life

The early Jewish people were told by God to keep a 'rite' every year to remember the night they painted lamb's blood with a hyssop branch on the doorposts of their houses when they were slaves in Egypt, so that the Angel of Death would 'Pass Over'. The mingling of the hyssop and the blood means 'purification' and 'life'.

Creating and chasing bubbles can be a whimsical delight. Has this child known many moments of whimsy? Many moments of delight? If our wand can be a hyssop branch, and bubble mix the blood – let us say, death is not welcome at this house, in the life of this girl, and that instead there be abundant and beautiful life.

Action. Take bubble mix from the basket and blow some bubbles high enough to surpass all institutional fences.

Closure:

Creator Spirit

Help us to uncover our forgotten stories

Suffering God

Help our tears to flow for the pain

Reconciling Spirit

Heal our shame and our wounds, and call us into action.

We are searching in the darkness for the first signs of new life.

Site 2: Reaching Out

Reaching Out is a local outreach service that meets here in the mall every Monday from 5:30pm. Their core mission revolves around providing essential resources to those experiencing homelessness and hardship. From nourishing, home-cooked vegetarian meals to comforting blankets, pillows, and toiletries, they extend a helping hand to uplift spirits and restore dignity.

During the pandemic, some weeks there were over 200 people in the line, with the cost of living crisis – there is now often over 500 people in the line. Sometimes reaching out for help can feel like our own crucifixion. We can experience isolation and abandonment, judgements from ourselves and others about how we do and don't fit in; About whether we are enough.

Inequality and poverty in Australia are growing. There are now about 3.3 million people living in poverty, including 761,000 kids. Centrelink will never be enough. It is like a well from which we draw water, but there seems to be an increasing drought not only of money, but of healthy soil, and healthy people; people whose lives are rich in compassion, joy, generosity and the types of kindness that sows grace amongst the powers. For many who wait in this line – care and conversation are hungers satisfied as much as food.

Word 2: “Woman, here is your son”

John 19:25-27

Reflection

This, and sacred texts of many traditions, tell us to honour our mothers and fathers, our sons and daughters. To know that our own growth and ability to live is intrinsically caught up in family; a family that transcends bloodlines.

For those that experience the pain of judgement and poverty.

We will reach out. Creator Spirit, prepare a new room in us.

For those that experience loneliness, brokenness and isolation.

We will reach out. Creator Spirit, prepare a new room in us.

For those who are hungry, wondering how they will make ends meet

We will reach out. Creator Spirit, prepare a new room in us.

We commit to finding radical ways to be family to one another.

Rite 2: Letters from Grace

Action Write a note “To whoever sees this...”

Someone called Grace has been leaving notes on a lamp post I walk past. And I came to wonder whether there is a person called ‘Grace’ or whether the grace is the space being offered, a gentle invitation to live into all you have it in you to be... What grace-space would you invite others into? What counsel, what love letter would you leave on a lamp post? We don’t have to be rich ourselves in order to have richness to share.

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Site 3: Wominjeka Tarnuk Yooroom

Wominjeka! This installation is called wominjeka tarnuk yooroom, meaning Welcome Bowl. It is made from these bluestones in the shape of a traditional coolamon (a wooden vessel) used to hold gum leaves used for Welcome to Country ceremonies. This design was a collaboration between artists Vicki Couzens, Maree Clark and Jeph Neale. The rocks connects this place to Country beneath.

At Merri Creek, on 6 June 1835, Ngurungaeta Bebejan, Billibellary and six other Wurundjeri Elders met with John Batman, the leader of the Port Phillip Association, and signed a land use agreement. It was more likely understood to be a tanderrum agreement for temporary access only. Guests were welcome to everything from the tops of the trees to the roots of the earth, as long as they didn't harm the land or the children of Bundjil. For 600,000 acres of Melbourne, the Wurundjeri received 40 pairs of blankets, 42 tomahawks, 130 knives, 62 pairs of scissors, 40 looking glasses, 250 handkerchiefs, 18 shirts, 4 flannel jackets, 4 suits of clothes and 150 pounds of flour. Batman's treaty was declared void within months.

Today there are new calls for a treaty. In June 2020, the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria called for a truth and justice process to happen first, In March 2021, the creation of the Yoorrook Justice Commission was announced and a call for Commissioners went out. Yoorrook is looking into both past and ongoing injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria in all areas of life since colonisation. Yoorrook: will:

- Establish an official record of the impact of colonisation on First Peoples in Victoria.
- Develop a shared understanding among all Victorians of the impact of colonisation, as well as the diversity, strength and resilience of First Peoples' cultures.
- Make recommendations for healing, system reform and practical changes to laws, policy and education, as well as to matters to be included in future treaties.

Word 3: It is finished

John 19:30-37

Reflection

One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear

We are a part of a force that works against life

None of his bones were broken

We were extended a welcome.

They were robbed and paid off with handkerchiefs and knives.

They will look upon the one they have pierced

We must observe what we ignore and what we notice

It is finished

We signed an agreement, but the treaty was broken.

It is finished

But the calls for Treaty ring through.

It is finished

But the calls for justice ring through.

Rite 3: Wominjeka | Come with purpose

Action Spread gum leaves around the outline of the coolamon to honour the history, position, and presence, of First Nations peoples and their relationship to Country here: You are not forsaken. We lay leaves as a sign of our commitment, and our responsibility, to keep promises we make and work for justice.

You also might like to follow the work of the Yoorook Justice Commission...

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Site 4: A Bridge For Peace

Yorta Yorta man William Cooper had a vision for his people to live a better life, to be treated as equal citizens. His story is remarkable and of great courage and strength, he fought for not only his people but for others around the world being persecuted. In his 70s he formed the Australian Aborigines League (AAL), William became secretary and began writing many letters and petitionings to government calling for civil rights and changes in government policy.

In November 1938, events were taking place in Europe which inspired William Cooper to reach out and try to help another mob. That mob was Germany's and Austria's Jews. The events would become known as Kristallnacht - The Night of the Broken Glass. The events of Kristallnacht (9 to 10 Nov, 1938) saw Nazis across Germany and Austria torch synagogues, vandalise Jewish homes, schools and businesses and kill close to 100 Jews. In the aftermath of Kristallnacht, some 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to Nazi concentration camps. The broken glass scattered across pavements following this night of terror gave Kristallnacht its name.

One month after Kristallnacht, at approximately seven in the morning, a group met at William Cooper's house in Footscray. They walked approximately 11 kms to the German Consulate on Collins Street in Melbourne. Uncle William Cooper was 77 years of age, and he was in declining health, so the trip was slow. They had an 11.30am appointment and planned to present the Consular General of Germany with a letter. The letter read: *"On behalf of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia, we wish to have it registered and on record that we protest wholeheartedly at the cruel persecution of the Jewish people by the Nazi government in Germany. We plead that you would make it known to your government and its military leaders that this cruel persecution of their fellow citizens must be brought to an end."*

The German Consulate refused to allow the delegation to enter the building, and a letter was left for the Consul to forward it the German Government.

William in his life time wrote over eighty letters petitioning for Aboriginal rights, equality and human rights and he never gave up the fight and his vision for a better future for his people.

Word 4: Today you will be with me in paradise

Luke 23:39-43

Reflection

This week, UN human rights expert Francesca Albanese presented the conclusion of her report that "there are reasonable grounds to believe that the threshold indicating the commission of the crime of genocide against Palestinians as a group in Gaza has been met".

A letter to the Israeli consulate might read:

"On behalf of the inhabitants of the continent known as Australia, we wish to have it registered and on record that we protest wholeheartedly at the cruel persecution of the Palestinian people by the Likud coalition government in Israel. We plead that you would make it known to your government and its military leaders that this cruel persecution of their fellow citizens must be brought to an end."

Rite 4: A stone in your shoe

Action Sing the refrain for Peace sung at Gembrook Retreat encompassing the Ukrainian/Russian, Arabic and Israeli words for peace as an invocation:

Peace, mir|мир, salaam, shalom x4

Walk with a stone in your shoe as we move to our next location; as a reminder of the constant loss, pain and anxiety faced by those who are displaced by war.

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Site 5: Earth Out of Balance

We all rely on the earth and its natural systems for life itself. Its resources sustain us and grow us, yet our actions and failure to be good custodians continues to push things out of balance. Taking more than we need, prioritising short term gain over long term sustainable thinking.

Human activity is altering the climate, changing rainfall patterns, reducing water availability, and increasing the frequency of severe weather events such as bushfires and storms. We acknowledge those yet rebuilding and recovering in the wake of these storms, fires and floods.

More than 500 properties were impacted when the Maribyrnong River breached its banks in the early hours of 14 October 2022. Hundreds of residents were displaced, more than a year on many are still unable to return to their homes and others are still managing ongoing challenges with insurance and repairs.

Sea levels are predicted to rise by at least 600mm by 2070, this change in sea level will widen the Maribyrnong River, flood lower lying areas permanently, and begin to change the face of our locality. Why has the Council approved aged care accommodation to be built here? And development along the embankments? Allowed the racecourse flood wall to be built? We are not making decisions informed by the wisdom of the custodians of Country, nor science.

The call to be “custodians of creation” is a critical one, which invites us from the crushing weight of a global disaster to a place of restoration, respect and gratitude.

Word 5: Father forgive them

Reflection

And darkness covered the whole land

Our blindness and greed continues to damage creation, we squabble over coal like soldiers casting lots for robes with no idea of the broader consequences of our actions

And darkness covered the whole land

The enormity of our predicament overwhelms us

God, forgive us, we do not know what we are doing.

Heat, floods and fire destroy livelihood and hope.

God, forgive us, we do not know what we are doing.

Those with the least continue to suffer

God, forgive us, we do not know what we are doing.

Why do we let it continue?

And silence covered the whole land.

Rite 5: Collateral renewal

Our actions *can* make a change to this balance, and through small acts of “rebalancing” we can start to rebuild respect and gratitude for all of creation... slowly beginning the healing process.

Action In actions of ‘making up’ we can be told to hug or shake hands. Contact renews connection. When is that last time you intentionally connected with Creation? I invite you to make contact with the river.

*Reflect on the ways your actions may keep creation out of balance.
Consider your role as a custodian.
Plan some simple steps to begin the healing process.*

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Site 6: Queers Be With You

The identity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people has been ignored and persecuted in Australia.

For those who attend church, they can be asked not to raise their own questions, their doubts, their insecurities and their suffering as a gay person of faith. They have too often been told that they are broken and the gifts they might offer and roles they might play in their communities has been limited or denied.

Queer identifying folk have been told they would only be embraced in that faith community if they lived by standards which violated their own conscience and divine design.

The Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act commenced 2022 in VIC and similar law passed in NSW this week. The law puts measures into place to protect people from, and respond to, the serious damage and trauma caused by change and suppression practices that seek to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Jesus' life has lots of stories about offering hospitality to those that ignorance, fear, purity codes and pride would otherwise exclude. We have failed to love our neighbour as we would ourselves.

Word 6: Why have you forsaken me?

Matthew 27:45-54

Reflection

Having been told we were broken, sick, or unnatural, we prayed and worked for deliverance.

We have felt abandoned by God.

We pleaded for sanctuary among our pews and people, but found none in our sacred spaces.

We sought to be comforted, but found isolation.

We were rejected, scorned, and marginalised.

Family, friends, and churches have rejected us.

We were given to authorities who ignored us, gave false report, or even persecuted us.

We have suffered injustice and ignorance.

We were hated, and some of us have been killed.

We have hated ourselves because others first hated us.

Our suffering and our voices often go unheard.
The pain has, too often, been too much to bear.

Why have you forsaken me?

Rite 6: Celebrate new life

The Trans Day of Visibility (TDOV) is held each year on 31 March, which this year falls today on Easter Sunday. We read a prayer for this occasion written by trans minister, Rev Dr Jo Inkpin.

Loving source and light of all creation,
Your life and wisdom is gloriously revealed in gender diversity and in the kaleidoscopic beauty of human difference.
We give you thanks for a gender diverse people.
Bless them with the assurance of your love.
Grant them strength and joy in their lives, bodies and relationships.
And enable us all to celebrate their gifts; that all may flourish as full and equal expressions of embodied love.
In the power and mystery of Your presence and peace. Amen

Action Enjoy an Easter egg as you take in this art installation

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Site 7: Language and Voice

Cut Paw Paw which is the Parish/Cadastral name for Footscray is an anglicised version of the Aboriginal term 'Koort Boort Boort', which translates as 'Clumps of Many She Oaks'.

At the start of William Thomas' journal, an early settler, he meets an Aboriginal person for the first time and gets introduced to the trees and the birds... this is the name for this tree, for this bird... this is my cousin, this is my Uncle... Aunty Fay Muir tells us: Everything is connected and related. Connecting to Country, connecting visitors to care for Country. You can't break one part off. Everything is connected.

Custodians of the land tell us Drooping Sheoak wood is hard and ideal for making implements like spears, spear throwers, clubs, shields, digging sticks and clapping sticks. She oaks don't drop branches, so they are safe to sleep under and the leaf scales on the branchlets get under the scales on the belly of a snake so they stay away.

The Australian Indigenous Voice referendum was a constitutional referendum held on 14 October 2023 proposing to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.

The referendum did not pass.

Word 7: Into your hands I commit my spirit

Luke 22:14-19, 23:44-46

Reflection

Into your hands I commit my spirit

We acknowledge the grace and generosity of first nations people who are still waiting for us to connect to them and to connect to Country

Into your hands I commit my spirit

We feel the despair today of the stranger unwelcomed, who is at the same time the homeowner unrecognised, unfulfilled waiting for justice to come

Into your hands I commit my spirit

We taste the hunger and thirst today of those unfulfilled waiting for justice to come

Into your hands I commit my spirit

We feel the despair of the cousins and uncles, whose names we don't know, who have so much to offer, unfulfilled waiting for justice to come

Take and drink, this is given for you. Take and eat, this is given for you.

We acknowledge we are called to restorative and gracious exchanges of hospitality and we have not lived into that example as we should

Do this, in remembrance of me.

Rite 7: Value voice

Action I invite you to introduce yourself and greet something alive – silently or aloud. Say Hello, your name, tell them about why you came today, maybe how you are feeling. Allow space to receive a reply.

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