



Abundant
Grace
Liberating
Hope

Uniting Church in Australia
Assembly

26/09/2019

Letter from President to accompany Liturgy of Acknowledgement and Lament

Dear Friends,

October 22 marks the first anniversary of the National Apology to Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse.

The Assembly has developed a Liturgy of Acknowledgement and Lament to support congregations in marking this anniversary.

We acknowledge and lament the role of the Uniting Church in causing harm to children. We acknowledge the terrible breach of trust and the damage done to individuals, communities and relationships. This is part of our story that we will continue to acknowledge so that we never forget and never become complacent.

Through this liturgy, we also look to the future, renewing our commitment to living the Gospel of Christ by being a Church that is a place of safety for all people.

We again affirm our commitment to ensuring these abuses never happen again. We are living this out daily, by our participation in the National Redress Scheme, by our establishment of the National Safe Church Unit, by the commitment of resources to child safety in our Synods, Congregations, Schools and Agencies.

We invite congregations and others in our church to mark the anniversary on Sunday 20 October or another time close to the Anniversary (22 October). You may like to draw upon the Assembly Liturgy and adapt it to your local context.

As you consider how this liturgy might be adapted, it is important to consider the pastoral care you have in place, so that people who are survivors of abuse, their family and friends and others who are distressed at recalling this failure of our Church are offered the support that is needed.

You may wish to consider informing your congregation about the nature of the liturgy ahead of time so that those who may be affected can prepare.

Specialised services are available at <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/contact>.

While it is difficult and distressing to talk about and it can be hard to hear, it is important that we engage in these conversations. The Royal Commission showed that for too long these harmful acts took place in the dark with survivors being dismissed or silenced.

It is only by continuing to speak openly and honestly about the abuse and its impacts that there can be growth for survivors and communities and ongoing diligence in protecting children in the future.

Thank you to those who have been involved in the development of this liturgy. Your commitment is a gift to the life and mission of our Church.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Deidre Palmer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Deidre Palmer
President
Uniting Church in Australia Assembly