



ST JOHN'S
DIAMOND CREEK

Reflect

Reconciliation Action Plan

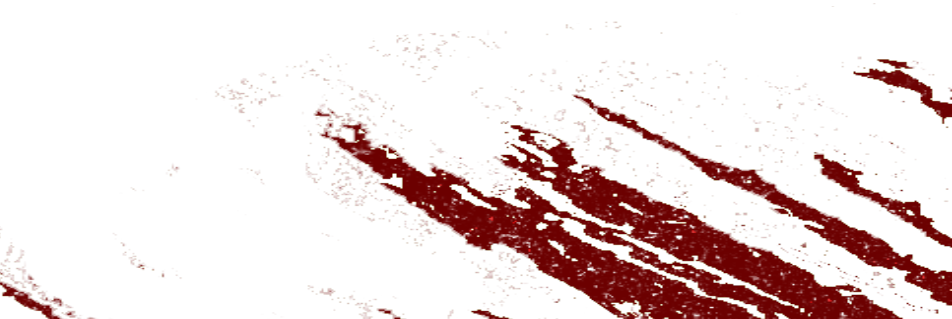


The Gospel and Reconciliation

Reconciliation is about restoring relationships that have been damaged and broken. Reconciliation lies at the heart of our faith as followers of Jesus. The Apostle Paul describes God's accomplishment through Jesus using the language of reconciliation in Colossians 1:19-20:

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

God is all about the reconciliation of relationships. He wants people to be reconciled with him through Jesus (the vertical dimension) and so enjoy peace with him and an active and loving relationship. He also wants us to be reconciled to each other and live together in relationships of love and peace (the horizontal dimension). Working for reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians is an outworking of our gospel commitment and an expression of our faith in Jesus.



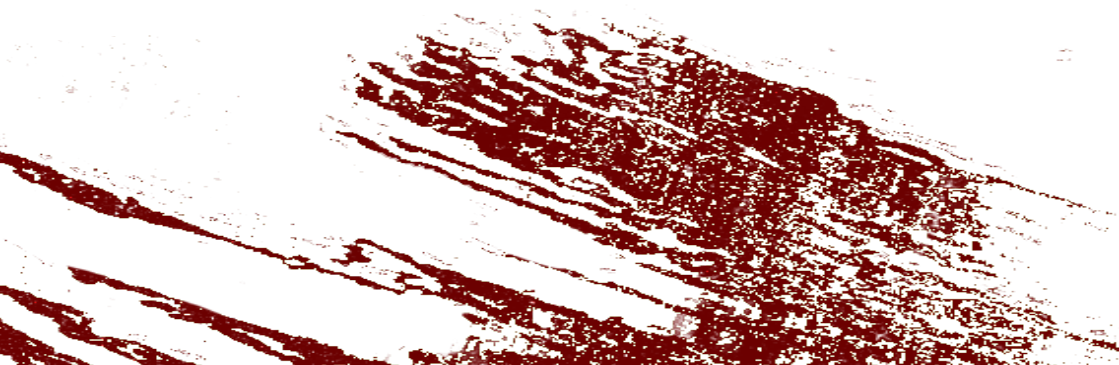
The Need for Reconciliation

The arrival of European settlers in 1788 led directly to consequences that still exist today. The loss of traditional lands, the decimation of the Aboriginal population through war and disease, the stolen generation and the disruption to culture has led to a significant gap between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Australia. This gap exists in areas like health, life expectancy, education, access to employment and more.

As a church we have participated in aspects of this sad history, and we have gained benefits at the expense of indigenous Australians. We may not have been present at the point in history when actions and decisions were taken but we bear a responsibility as the current expression of the church in this place and at this time to do what we can to work for reconciliation.

In recent decades we have seen signs of hope in the process of reconciliation: at a government level, for example with the apology given to the Stolen Generation in 2008, and at a church level, with Melbourne Diocese and our mission partners like Bush Church Aid (BCA) developing their own RAPS. These signs of hope have been an encouragement and a resource for us.

The details of this RAP highlights actions we will take to keep learning, raise cultural awareness and seek after reconciled relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-indigenous Australians.



Developing the RAP

This RAP has been developed by a working group made up of Tim Johnson, Chloe Manson, Lenny Barras, and Rob Shackleton. We have been guided by Aunty Gail Smith and Aunty Julieanne Axford from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, through a cultural consultation meeting facilitated by Nillumbik Shire Council.

The framework for our RAP is the Walk Alongside Church Toolkit for Reconciliation developed by World Vision and Reconciliation Australia. The framework has three focus areas: **Relationships, Respect, and Opportunities.**

Reconciliation Australia speaks about 4 different types of RAPs: Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate. We are at the first stage, Reflect. Reflect RAPs are for 12 months and are right if an organisation is new to reconciliation. They focus on preparing an organisation for reconciliation initiatives in future RAPs. Committing to a Reflect RAP means scoping and developing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, deciding on a vision for reconciliation and exploring your sphere of influence.

Hence most of the actions in our RAP are initial learning steps and will be completed over the course of 2022. It is envisaged that future RAPs will be written to extend and build on the current plan.



Relationships

*Desired Outcome:
Our church creates
pathways and
opportunities for the
building of stronger
relationships with
Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander people.*

Action 1: Participate in Aboriginal Sunday and promote the RAP Process

Utilize some materials developed by Common Grace for Aboriginal Sunday (23rd January 2022) in all 4 services to acknowledge the prior stewardship of these lands by indigenous peoples before European settlement and introduce people to our RAP process.

Action 2: Reflect on the centrality of reconciliation to the message of the gospel

For Reconciliation week on Sunday 29th May, Tim Johnson to preach on the topic of reconciliation and reflect on how this impacts our relationships with indigenous Australians.

Action 3: Listen to Indigenous Christian voices to grow in our understanding

During NAIDOC week on Sunday 3rd July and Sunday 10th July have indigenous preachers at all our services: Rev'd Neville Naden from BCA and Bianca Manning (tbc) from Common Grace for these two Sundays.

Action 4: Consider the role of reconciliation in the review church values and vision

With a new Vision needing to be developed for St John's we want to pay attention during this process to what our values and vision are in relationship to reconciliation and our ability to engage effectively with different cultures.

Respect

Desired Outcome: Our church demonstrates cultural sensitivity and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Action 5: Engage with and learn from local indigenous elders and communities

Meet regularly with members of the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation through a cultural consultation meeting facilitated by Nillumbik Shire Council.

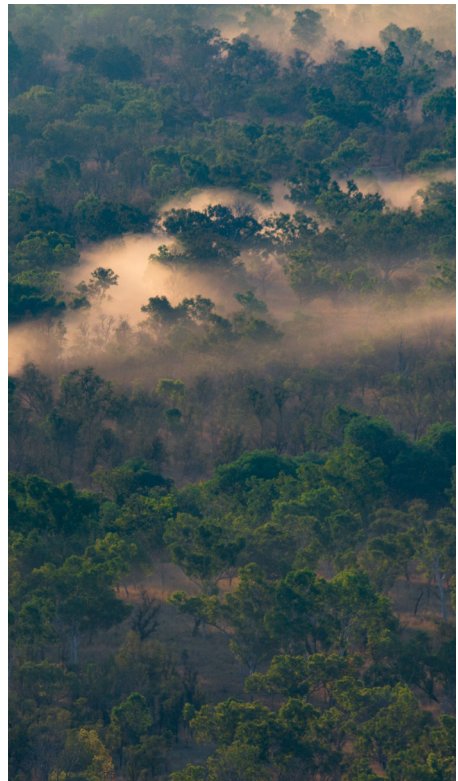
Action 6: Acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land where our church is situated

Include an Acknowledgement of Country regularly in the life of our church. Parish Council to make a decision by October 2022 about where and how often this should be done. The RAP Working Group will bring a proposal to the Parish Council about this. Feedback is invited from the congregation on this matter.

In addition, the RAP Working Group suggests erecting a permanent plaque which acknowledges the tradition custodians of the land on which St John's is situated.

Action 7: Participate in local indigenous events

On June 19, 2022 organise a church social event to walk the Gawa Wurundjeri Resource Walk in Watsons Creek to learn more about the indigenous history in our local area.



Opportunities

Desired Outcome: Our church is participating in advocacy and development initiatives alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

Action 8: Support causes that walk alongside and advance the wellbeing of Indigenous communities to bring about lasting, positive change

We do this primarily through our mission partnerships which include:

- Derek and Rosemary Snibson – Assisting Aboriginal Church leaders in the Northern Territory
- David Blackman – Translating the bible and language resources into Alyawarr
- Nungalinga College – Supporting the training of Indigenous Christian leaders

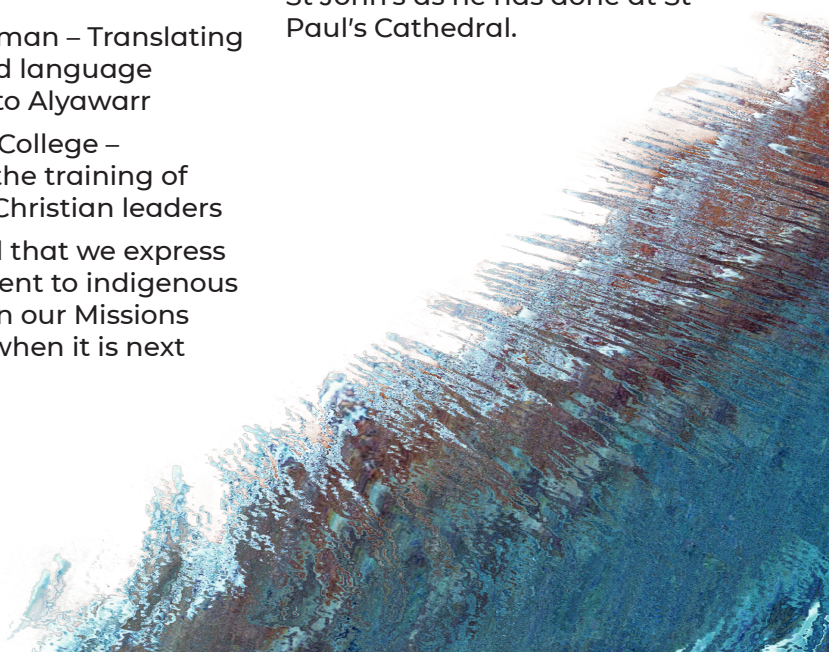
It is suggested that we express this commitment to indigenous partnerships in our Missions Giving Policy when it is next updated.

Action 9: Partner with programs that walk alongside indigenous peoples

Promote the Australians Together materials through our Life Groups and for individuals within our church and in May-July 2022 make this a focus for our Life Groups.

Action 10: Connect with our Diocese's indigenous ministry

Seek advice from Canon Glenn Loughrey on advancing the work of this RAP and subsequent initiatives in the diocese that we can participate in. Invite Glenn to undertake cultural awareness training for St John's as he has done at St Paul's Cathedral.



Reconciliation Action Plan

Reflect

*A prayer for Reconciliation. Written by
Bishop Arthur Malcolm*

*Lord God, bring us together as one,
Reconciled with you and with each other.
You made us in your likeness.*

*You gave us your Son, Jesus Christ.
He has given us forgiveness from sin.*

*Lord God, bring us together as one,
Different in culture, but given new life in
Jesus Christ:*

*Together as your body, your church, your
people.*

*Lord God, bring us together as one,
Reconciled, healed, forgiven,
Sharing you with others as you have
called us to do.*

*In Jesus Christ, let us be together as one.
Amen*

**ST JOHN'S
DIAMOND CREEK**

Released May, 2022