

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH

LENT 5

7TH March



Christ expelling the Money Changers from the Temple

Salvator Rosa (Arenella, Naples 1615 – Rome 1673)

Through Lent this year we are focussing each week on the relationship between the First and Second Peoples of Australia. This relationship is broken. There is much which needs to be healed and, while we have begun to acknowledge that much has been wrong, the work of reconciliation is slow and difficult and key people are resisting it.

Lent is a time of introspection and penitence. Sometimes this call to penitence work seems a bit self-indulgent, picking through the minutiae of our lives to find something amiss. But the truth is that there is much wrong with our national soul while we continue to paper over the relationship with and the condition of the First Peoples of Australia. So, we can be truly penitent about this and ponder what needs to change and what needs to be done as we do this work. And, while we may not feel we have much influence, there are conversations to be had: with children and grandchildren, with neighbours and friends, with colleagues and those we come in contact with regularly – prayerfully, we can advance the cause of this work and build the groundswell to bring reconciliation and healing.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF FIRST PEOPLES

We acknowledge the Bun Wurrung peoples,
the first inhabitants of this place
from time beyond remembering.

We acknowledge that through this land,
God nurtured and sustained
the First Peoples of this country,
the Aboriginal and Islander peoples.
We honour them for their custodianship
of the land on which we gather today.

We pay our respects to their elders:
Those who have gone before us,
Those who lead today in these times of change,
Those elders emerging.
We acknowledge their struggle and their suffering.
We honour them for their grace,
We honour them for their courage,
We honour them for their patience with us.
We pray that reconciliation and mutual flourishing
May be our future together.

CALL TO WORSHIP

The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the decrees of the Lord are sure,
making wise the simple;

Prayer

Creator of all things,
Both seen and unseen,
Speak to us in your great wisdom.

Make us strong as we seek your help and guidance.
Teach us to love all people,
Regardless of race or colour or belief.

May we listen with great care
To the heartbeat of this land
And to its people,
Who cared for it so well
And for so long.

May the peace these people and their land
Have always enjoyed
Continue to be strengthened and preserved
By all who wish to come to be part of
This country and its ancient dreaming.

We pray in the name of your embodied wisdom,
Jesus the Christ, **Amen**

Psalm 19

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.
There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun,
which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.
Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them;
and nothing is hidden from its heat.

The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the decrees of the Lord are sure,
making wise the simple;
the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is clear,
enlightening the eyes;

the fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring for ever;
the ordinances of the Lord are true
and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey,
and drippings of the honeycomb.

Moreover by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
But who can detect their errors?
Clear me from hidden faults.
Keep back your servant also from the insolent;
do not let them have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

1 Corinthians 1. 18-25

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, after Jesus makes his triumphal entry into Jerusalem at the beginning of the week leading to his crucifixion, he then goes to the temple and drives out the money-changers. In John though, this clearing of the temple takes place at the beginning of the gospel, rather than at the end. It's not that Jesus cleared the temple twice, it's just that John places the event there for reasons of emphasis. John invites us to have the longings of the prophets in the backs of our minds as we read. Repeatedly the prophets give voice to a longing that God would dwell in the hearts of his people, placing his spirit in them and making them temples of God's dwelling.

Gospel – John 2. 13-22

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'

The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.



Reflecting

The name Truganini has always conjured up for me a sense of pathetic tragedy. There was only one woman we know who bore this name, this infamous name. *Truganini: the last Tasmanian aborigine* is how we have understood this woman. The sense I have carried of her is one of inevitability; what happened to her and her people was inevitable. She has in many senses been emblematic of the end of an era, the end of the Tasmanian aborigine. Tragic, but inevitable.

Recently Chris and I spent two weeks in Tasmania. A friend and colleague suggested I read a just-published book: *Truganini: journey through the apocalypse* by Cassandra Pybus. I bought the book with some hesitation, knowing I was delving into a difficult story, maybe one maybe I honestly didn't want to know too much about.

Truganini's country was Bruny Island, a long island south of Hobart comprising two large headlands joined by a long sand-spit. The connection between the author of this biography and Truganini is that Cassandra Pybus' ancestor was given a government land grant on Bruny Island in the 19th century. Her people had displaced Truganini's people from their country. So, this is a biography with 'flesh in the game' as they say. Pybus' story is tied to Truganini's story.

In the late 1820s, early 1830s the aboriginal people of Tasmania were under threat. There was tremendous conflict between their desire to continue to occupy their country and pastoral settlements with a government mandate to settle, occupy, clear and colonise Tasmania. The island was being civilised. The displacement of the "sub-human" aborigine, as they were defined, was a necessary by-product of this colonisation.

Between the first penal settlement in 1803 and the late 1840s Tasmania's native population is reduced to less than 50 full-blood aborigines. While Truganini lives until 1876 her people were decimated in these years by murder, disease, displacement, kidnapping and violence of all kinds. Somehow Truganini survives all of this, living into her 70s. She was a strong, resilient, capable and formidable woman. After reading this book, it seems she is clearly not one to be pitied. All those settlers around her come out as self-serving, immoral and capricious.

The book has both informed me of the truth of her story and caused me to reflect on the sense of piteous inevitability that I have had of her.

The apostle Paul says to the Roman Christians in writing to them: *be transformed by the renewing of your minds*. Often our ways of viewing the world, our experience of the world, the intractable problems for us are the result of our ways of thinking. We think that some problem is intractable, some situation is inevitable because of the way we think about the world.

As I reflected on Truganini's story I realised that I carried this story of inevitability about her people which I had been given. Usually an image of her bore the title: Truganini: the last Tasmanian aborigine. As I reflected, I realised that I had been infected with what some social scientists have called 'social Darwinism', that is, that Darwin's theory of evolution which suggests 'survival of the fittest' also applies to humans. The observation that Darwin made was that individual animals survived because they were fitter, more resilient, stronger than others. And this theory was and is applied to whole species of animals and plants too. It is not a big leap to apply this to the human being and a convenient one to make if we want to justify our actions or mollify our consciences in the wake of what has taken place.

I grew up with a sense that the aboriginal people of Tasmania were no more. But what has taken place in the last few decades is that many people have begun to identify themselves as indigenous Tasmanians. This has come as a surprise to many and an affront to others. But they all died out, is the inference. The reality is that many young aboriginal women were raped by white settlers, bearing the children of that violence, while others were kidnapped by settlers, particularly whalers and sealers and they lived with these men and raised families with them. Many of those who identify now as aboriginal are the descendants of these unions.



I found some thoughts lurking in myself.

If the last full-blooded aboriginal died out, these people are no more was lurking in the back of my mind. The longest continuous culture in the world. No more. So, I have found myself unsettled when someone claims Tasmanian aboriginal descent. But, I hear myself ask: do I not say of myself that I carry some Irish and Scottish ancestry. Am I not proud of this ancestry? Do I not claim it for myself? Do I not feel connected when I have visited the places my ancestors left more than 160 years ago? They are part of me; I am part of them. So, I thought, how can we deny this of people who wish to claim their aboriginal identity – in spite of all the violence and ill-intent that was directed to them?

Reflecting on the denial of aboriginality by some I recognised a mindset that holds genocide as an option, as a real possibility. Because when we look at someone with white skin who claims aboriginality and wish to deny their claim, at some level we are saying to them, you were wiped out, the aboriginal was bred out of you – look, you are no longer a black person, you cannot be aboriginal. I might call this the genocidal option, certainly an embrace of “survival of the fittest” of particular skin types of the human specie. You were wiped out. You can’t claim aboriginality.

The notion of inevitability absolves us of culpability, absolves us of the healing work that is required, absolves us of the re-thinking and reorienting which comes from this, absolves us of renewal and transformation. And we became less than human, indeed inhuman if we want to claim this ‘inevitability’ option for ourselves.

This thinking sent Jesus to the cross. In the cross we are invited to rethink ourselves and our world – it is a stumbling block and a scandal in the way it confronts us but in contemplating it and taking in its power we may be transformed and renewed and made whole by the one who gave himself that we might understand these things. We pray for ourselves, our country, our world that the persecution in all its forms may stop, that we may be remade in the image of the crucified and risen one and delight in his foolishness for us.

Prayer – prepared by Brenda Grootendorst

Lord God – you have made us yours and you listen when we call – hear our prayers for all your people.

Lord, these past few weeks we have heard many cries for help as a result of recent Royal Commissions and Inquiries. We have been made even more aware than before, of the many vulnerable people who have struggled in silence, some for many years.

We pray for all elderly people in our society and especially those who live in aged care facilities and for those who live alone at home who wait for years for adequate support. We pray that the response to the Royal Commission may not just be a ‘pen and paper’ and ‘dollars and cents’ response but also one that comes from the heart, reflecting compassion, respect and dignity. May our elderly be assured of a safe and well supported future where they feel valued and loved.

Lord we pray for all who struggle with mental health illness. This week we have heard just how broken and inadequate our mental health system in Victoria is. We pray for all those who have a voice but have not been able to speak out and, like the elderly, have struggled on in silence – we

thank you for those who advocate for them and ask that through this enquiry meaningful outcomes will help to make a difference to their lives.

Lord, few of us have not been touched by mental illness either directly ourselves or by our loved ones and friends. May we all be assured that you are with us through every challenge and struggle we face in our lives.

Lord we hear the desperate calls for help from Refugees around the world and in Australia. We are grateful for the decision to release some from hotel detention and pray for those who wait for their release – and for those fast becoming forgotten on Nauru, Manus Island and Christmas Island. We pray for those who live in community detention whose lives have been so restricted and for those who have visas but are unable to find work, have no financial support and a very uncertain future. We pray for compassion and justice for all Refugees and for a safe home and country to call their own.

Lord we pray for the First Peoples of our land, our Indigenous brothers and sisters. We hear their cries of distress with the memories of children being taken away from them, their land and sacred sites disrespected and in some cases destroyed. We have learnt about the massacres at Coniston and Portland. Lord we ask for your guidance as we, in this congregation during Lent, come together to learn more of the pain and shame of our history. May we not be afraid to confront the difficult questions in our efforts to learn and understand more.

We pray for those who legislate in our country, that they may listen to, and respect, the first peoples of our land – and that we all may have the courage to accept the realities of our history so we can build a better future for our Nation.

The Rainbow Prayer by Rev'd Robyn Davis, NATSIAC Life Member, Diocese of Bendigo.

Loving Lord, Creator of all,
You created us in your own image,
One image - many colours,
One image - many cultures.
You made us come together like a rainbow,
Separate parts but coming together in one creation.
Help us to see the beauty you have created in each and every one of us.

Loving Lord, we are your creation,
Hear the cries of your people.
You give us ears to hear and eyes to see,
Open our eyes to what you want us to see,
Help us always to look to you to see the wisdom of your ways.

Loving Lord, Creator of all,
You gave us hearts to love and minds to reason.
Help us to understand our differences and grow in love for each other.
Help us to come together as the rainbow comes together, many colours, shining as one creation over all the earth as you intended us to be.
In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

Blessing

Bless us, O God, as we depart in peace:
give us a generous spirit, kind hearts,
and the grace to walk alongside our First Peoples,
as brothers and sisters in Christ. **Amen.**

Rev. Andrew Boyle

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NEWS AND NOTICES

SUNDAY EVENING WALKS DURING LENT

As part of our Lenten observance this year you are invited to take part in a meditative walk each Sunday evening over the six weeks. We will gather at Allnutt Park on Wheatley Road at 6pm and be given a provocation and question to reflect on as we walk. We will gather at the Wright Street Rotunda near the centre of the park. Enquiries to: Ron Townsend.

BOOKCLUB

Book 1 for the year

"Reconciliation Searching For Australia's Soul" by Norman Habel (188 pp 1999)

Reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians continues to tear at the heart of Australia, exposing our struggle or soul. In the deepest sense, this is not just political and social, but also spiritual and human.

ROSTER FILL-INS

We are seeking anyone interested to assist with Counting Duties on the following weeks of Worship, due to the availability of some members now limited.

Weeks that fill-ins are required are:

28 March, 16 May, 20 June, 1 August, 5 Sept, 10 Oct, 14 Nov.

If available to help please contact the office with your availability.

office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

ORMOND LEARNING HUB: AN OPEN AND CURIOUS FAITH LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

We are delighted that our plans to launch a full year of courses for the Learning HUB are well advanced. The team of Lisa Saffin, Lynley Moore, Brad Denniston and Andrew Boyle have been working together over January and are excited about our program for the year. This is our first course:

Believing in our Contemporary World –

N.B. – START DATE DEFERRED ONE WEEK

As Christians, how do we reconcile tensions between being educated in a rational, secular context while drawing on ancient texts as the inspiration and guide to our faith. In three video sessions we will hear scholars and pastors unpack these issues.

Dates: Thursdays, 11th, 18th & 25th March

Time: 7.00 - 9.00pm

Format: Face-to-face

Location: Ormond Uniting Church, cnr North and Booran Roads

Cost: \$30

Facilitators: Andrew Boyle & Brad Denniston

More information on the church website

Enrolments to: learninghub@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

ROSTER for Sunday 14 March 2021

READING	Kristina Parish	
PRAYERS	Warwick Barry	
DOOR DUTY	Lorraine Denniston	Brenda Grootendorst
SOUND	Robyn Mulder	
COUNTING	Jan Rose	Dot Rose
MUSIC	Karen Roberts	
RESOURCES DELIVERY (Fri 12 March)	Warwick & Anne Barry	

Are you interested in exploring Aboriginal issues?

Here are some ideas:

Movies:

1. "In My Blood it Runs". – movie ABC ivew

Confronting movie about a small lad's life as an indigenous boy. . Definitely worth viewing.

2. "Samson and Delilah" – movie (Google Play)

Two teenagers find love and look for a place where they can be together in peace in this comedy drama from Australia.

3. "First Australians" – series SBS On Demand

An opportunity to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice issues and the true history of this land now called Australia.

Read/Borrow (Heather and David have a copy of these):

1. "Dark Emu" – Bruce Pascoe
2. "Young Dark Emu" – Bruce Pascoe
3. "Finding our Heart" – Thomas Mayor

Act:

To stop Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Resources and template letter –
https://www.commongrace.org.au/key_event_resources

Pray:

Collated prayers and blessings written by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christians as well as prayeers for First NBations Peoples written by non-indigenous Christians –

https://www.commongrace.org.au/aboriginal_prayer_resources