

# **BASIS OF UNION AND CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA**

## **PREAMBLE TO CONSTITUTION**

The Uniting Church in Australia was formed on 22 June, 1977 by the union of the Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia and the Presbyterian Church of Australia after the approval of "The Basis of Union" by the Councils and Courts of those three churches, guided by **the belief that they had been called by God** into this union.

As the Church believes God guided it into union so it **believes that God is calling it** to continually seek a renewal of its life as a community of First Peoples and of Second Peoples from many lands, and as part of that to RECOGNISE THAT

1. When the churches that formed the Uniting Church arrived in Australia as part of the process of colonisation they entered a land that had been created **and sustained** by the Triune God they knew in Jesus Christ.
2. Through this land God had **nurtured and sustained** the First Peoples of this country, the Aboriginal and Islander peoples, who continue to understand themselves to be the traditional owners and custodians (meaning **'sovereign'** in the languages of the First Peoples) of these lands and waters since time immemorial.
3. The First Peoples had already **encountered the Creator God** before the arrival of the colonisers; the **Spirit was already in the land** revealing God to the people through law, custom and ceremony. The same love and grace that was finally and fully revealed in **Jesus Christ sustained the First Peoples** and gave them **particular insights** into God's ways.
4. Some members of the uniting churches approached the First Peoples with good intentions,  
standing with them in the name of justice; considering their well being, culture and language  
as the churches proclaimed the reconciling purpose of the Triune God found in the good news about Jesus Christ.
5. Many in the uniting churches, however, shared the values and relationships of the emerging  
colonial society including paternalism and racism towards the First Peoples: They were complicit in the injustice that resulted in many of the First Peoples being dispossessed from  
their land, their language, their culture and spirituality, becoming strangers in their own land.
6. The uniting churches were largely silent as the dominant culture of Australia constructed and propagated a distorted version of history that **denied this land was occupied**, utilised, cultivated and harvested by these First Peoples who also had complex systems of trade and  
interrelationships. As a result of **this denial**, relationships were broken and the very integrity  
of the Gospel proclaimed by the churches was diminished.
7. From the beginning of colonisation the First Peoples challenged their dispossession and the  
denial of their proper place in this land. In time this was taken up in the community, in the courts, in the parliaments, in the way history was recorded and told, and in the Uniting Church in Australia.
8. In 1985 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the Uniting Church in Australia formed the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.
9. In 1988 the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress invited the other members of  
the Church to join in a solemn act of covenanting before God.
10. After much struggle and debate, in 1994 the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia

discovered God's call, accepted this invitation and entered into an ever deepening covenantal relationship with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. This was so that all may see a destiny together, praying and working together for a fuller expression of our reconciliation in Jesus Christ. AND THUS the Church celebrates this Covenantal relationship as a foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation.

*Adopted by the 12th Assembly, 2009.*