



PATHWAY TO RECONCILIATION FROM 2019

Prepared by the Do Justice Group

St Margaret's Anglican Church, Eltham
acknowledges the Wurundjeri of the Kulin Nation,
the traditional custodians of the land on which this church stands,
and pays tribute to Elders, past, present and emerging.

In 2015 Archbishop Dr Philip Freier wrote a commendation for the inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan of the Diocese of Melbourne, which was presented to Synod in October 2014.

The arrival of European settlers in 1788 had consequences for the indigenous people of this land which are still unfolding. The loss of traditional lands, the decimation of the Aboriginal population through war and imported disease, the dispossession, the Stolen Generation and the disruption to culture means that today there remains a significant gap between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-indigenous Australians. The gap exists in health, life expectancy, education, access to employment and more. We need to recognize the inter-generational trauma suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We need to listen to the stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as we work towards reconciliation and recognition of the place Aboriginal people occupy in our national identity.

Reconciliation for Christians is fundamental to our faith. Christ's life and death brought about reconciliation of creation with God, and calls us into the ministry of seeking reconciliation with others. Our faith demands that we love one another and that we implement policies and practices which seek to bridge gaps and bring about healing. This Pathway highlights actions to which we commit ourselves, in order to raise cultural awareness and contribute towards reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-indigenous Australians.

In Victoria the State Government has an agenda to work towards recognition and self-determination in order to improve the lives of people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. We support these efforts, and those of our leaders and law makers, to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a Voice and recognition. We support the aims of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* (2017), in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people named their desires, among which were: commitment to truth-telling, an Aboriginal Voice to Parliament, recognition in the Constitution, and a Treaty recognizing the sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We at St Margaret's want to strive in whatever ways we can to see these requests honoured and become reality.

WHY RECONCILIATION? WHAT IS RECONCILIATION?

Why as a church should we be concerned about reconciliation with indigenous people? Many people say “I did not personally steal the land. I did not personally kill indigenous people. I did not personally remove the children.” So who has benefitted from the stealing of the land during colonization and the accompanying loss for the indigenous people of livelihood, culture and language? Every Australian. The wealth of Australia has been built on the loss of land, resulting in a wound at the heart of our nation that still waits to be healed.

Christians are called to be people of reconciliation and healing. We have been reconciled to God through Christ. As the apostle Paul puts it: *“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them.”* (Romans 5:10)

Several years ago a plaque acknowledging the Wurundjeri as traditional custodians of the land on which we meet was placed at the entrance to the church. The Acknowledgement is used at the start of services and at church meetings and there is a notice in the pewsheets. Our Pathway will encourage us to find a way forward as a parish to help us welcome indigenous peoples and work towards reconciliation in developing Relationships, fostering Respect, and taking Action.

In these three approaches, we commit to truth-telling: to **recognise** the history and impact of colonization; to **express regret** for the pain and suffering of the indigenous people; to **repent** of the disrespect, cruelty and marginalization of indigenous people in our systems of society; to **make restitution** by listening respectfully and truly hearing the voice of our first nations peoples and where possible offering appropriate reparation; and through all of this, that we may together **rejoice** in the mutual enrichment of our lives and the flourishing of the land.

RELATIONSHIPS

Issue	Responsibility	Timeline	Comments
Do Justice Group will meet at least two monthly to review Pathway activities	Coordinator	2019 onwards	Pathway reviewed annually, with a monthly agenda item to keep the RAP before our awareness.
Involve other church groups from local churches in Pathway activities	Coordinator and members of Do Justice	2019 onwards	Examples of this cooperation: NAIDOC forum, ecumenical engagement in justice initiatives, commitment to raising awareness among our church groups, regular articles in Parish Matters.
Develop external relationships with local indigenous people	Do Justice Coordinator	2019	Compile a list of local Aboriginal groups and engage with them to listen, learn and develop relationships. (Reconciliation Victoria, ANTAR, Wurundjeri Council) Invite these groups to the launch of Pathways. Where they have one, sign up for newsletters/email lists.
Connect with Nillumbik Reconciliation Group	Nominated representative of Do Justice	2019	NRG is a good resource of knowledge about local indigenous issues, with potential for engagement with them in justice initiatives.

RESPECT

Issue	Responsibility	Timeline	Comment
Ensure that parish communications include commitment by the parish to justice for indigenous people	The Vicar, parish groups, Communications Team	2019	Consider inclusion of statement of commitment to support indigenous justice in parish letterhead. Include Acknowledgement of country on website/Facebook/other communications. Display Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in the foyer of the church as a welcoming gesture.
Ensure that Acknowledgement of country is made at parish meetings and gatherings	The Vicar, parish groups, parish administration	2019	Parish groups to be encouraged to make verbal Acknowledgements in meetings. Conduct an annual Audit in June each year.
Ensure that there is regular prayer for indigenous justice	Vicar and ministry team	2019	The vicar and intercessors to pray regularly for justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the intercessions. Other prayer resources to be distributed as opportunity arises. Consideration of indigenous themes to be included in Creation liturgies where they occur.

ACTION

Issue	Responsibility	Timeline	Comment
Raise awareness in the parish of the Pathway.	DO J Group	2019	Parish Matters to have two Articles per year. Parish Matters to have a box for information (Diocesan logo, explanation of Country, Songlines, etc)
Organise Cultural Experiences for the parish to engage in indigenous culture and raise awareness of issues	DO J Group	2019	Share visits including Gawa Wurundjeri Resource Trail, Panton Hill (Reserves and Pound Bend). Visits to exhibitions in museums such as Ian Potter NGV. One cultural engagement to be organized per year. Look out for films, eg at Healesville and in neighbouring Shires.
Plan a calendar of events (within the parish) to be presented to Parish council for approval	DOJ	2019	Calendar of justice events (at least 2 per year) to be presented to Parish Council each November of the year prior to that in which they occur. Parish Council to sponsor advertisement appropriate to each event, eg in Intercessions, pewsheets, TMA.
Invite an Aboriginal speaker to present a sermon once each year in services	The Vicar	2019 onwards	Providing a voice for indigenous people in a liturgical context of prayer and praise.
Commit to truth-telling and respecting the story.	Do Justice Group	2019 onwards	Write articles for Parish Matters that address the consequences of colonization, the effect on indigenous people and our need to recognize their pain. Keep in the general awareness through these articles the Aboriginal request for a Voice, a Treaty, and truth-telling. One article every two months.
Church to give annually financial support to initiatives that support indigenous justice	Parishioners, coordinated by Do Justice Group	2019 onwards	Engage in the ABM Lenten appeal. Include Indigenous justice initiatives in annual Parish Mission Giving.
Engage in advocacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	Parishioners, coordinated by Do Justice Group	2019 onwards	Write letters to politicians and other leaders raising awareness and indicating support for indigenous justice. Lobby government to accept and implement the objectives of the Uluru Statement, and lobby support for the Victorian Treaty process. Join marches and rallies promoting indigenous justice in health, unemployment, homelessness issues. Keep alert for opportunities to raise awareness and engage in actions to bring about change.

REFERENCES

The following people, websites, and documents were consulted in the drawing up of this Pathways plan:

The Reconciliation Plan of the Diocese of Melbourne
Pathways by All Saints Church, Greensborough
Nillumbik Shire Council
Nillumbik Reconciliation Group
The Revd Glenn Loughrey
Aboriginal Liaison officer at Austin Hospital, Mr Hayden Jones
State Government: Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework
Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place
Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Centre, Lilydale

Additional References:

History & Impact of Colonisation of the Aboriginal People:

Ellender I 1994 *The Aboriginal Heritage of the Shire of Eltham*,
Marshall B 1999 *Banyule City Council Aboriginal Heritage Study*
Pascoe Bruce 2018 *Dark Emu*
Presland Gary 2011 *First People: The Eastern Kulin of Melbourne, Port Phillip & Central Victoria*
Reynolds Henry 2013 *Forgotten War*