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Newsletter of the Tasmanian Council of Churches

An Epistle from the Tasmanian Council of Churches to Christians of Tasmania on the subject of **Reconciliation with First Nations' Peoples**

Launceston, 20th of March 2021

The Tasmanian Council of Churches (TCC) is a fellowship of Christian Churches in Tasmania committed to the promotion of Christian dialogue and practical cooperation. In keeping with our mission, representatives met to learn from and share with each other our Churches' progress towards reconciliation with First Nations' Peoples. As a record of this meeting, we send this epistle – a combination of the insights and questions from our meeting that challenge us all to let our lives speak:

Makarrata* is a Yolngu word with many layers of meaning, describing a process of respectful truth-telling, listening, conflict resolution, peacemaking, and justice. It is entirely consistent with the teachings of the gospel and Christian beliefs about reconciliation. We can all learn from the process of Makarrata in our lives. What steps will we take to learn more about, and engage with, Makarrata?

There is a need for our Churches to place importance on the truth of the experiences of both past and present Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples. Denying or avoiding this truth only serves to take us away from our responsibility as disciples of Jesus. Will we stand firm with a commitment to respectful truth-telling, listening, conflict resolution, peacemaking, and justice if there are differences of perspective, or disagreement, about the issues and their solutions?

continued on page 2/...

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Makarrata can be a faith-full activity of every disciple of Jesus Christ, not only for formal organisations and structures, yet some of our church members relinquish responsibility for reconciliation and Makarrata to the leadership of their church as a way of avoiding taking individual action. How can we encourage and empower all to take individual responsibility for the process of Makarrata?

Some of our church congregations are enriched by their First Nations members. Some congregations have members who are on the journey of discovering their First Nations ancestry and what that means to their identity. However, many congregations have no First Nations members, or are unaware that they do. How do we ensure in both symbolic and practical ways that our places of worship are always welcoming to First Nations people?

Many Christians are unsure how to take the next step or even where to begin. Some are uncertain about the words to use, or fear that their intentions will be misinterpreted. For some, it is too hard or painful, and they retreat from the process altogether. Christian reconciliation is the idea of being made right with God and right with others and is an ongoing process. It is neither a once-off activity nor always easy. Do you have the courage to live your faith in the modern world?

* <https://fromtheheart.com.au/explore-the-ururu-statement/>



The Tasmanian Council of Churches (TCC)

is a fellowship of Christian Churches in Tasmania committed to the promotion of Christian unity.

Member Churches are

Anglican Church of Australia (Diocese of Tasmania)

Churches of Christ Tasmania

Roman Catholic Church (Archdiocese of Hobart)

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) - Tasmania Regional Meeting

The Salvation Army (Tasmanian Command)

Uniting Church in Australia (Presbytery of Tasmania)