

“BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW” (Revelation: 21:5):

PRAYING TOWARDS SEPTEMBER 26-27, WHEN WE ARE TO BE LED IN PRAYER BY OUR FIRST NATION CHRISTIAN LEADERS, IN A NATIONAL SOLEMN ASSEMBLY.

AN INVITATION WITH SOME BACKGROUND AND NOTES ON NEXT STEPS.

BACKGROUND:

1. In the healing power of our Risen Lord Jesus, we know there is a great need for healing of our nation and our world.

The NCCA Newsletter of Friday 21 August includes information about our “Call for further Prayer and Fasting: Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 September.”

You can view this at: <https://www.ncca.org.au/ncca-newsletter/august-2020-2/item/2256-ncca-call-for-further-prayer-and-fasting-2020082>

Just prior to the Newsletter, our General Secretary, Ms Elizabeth Stone, and I wrote to the Heads of NCCA Member Churches, encouraging this further wave of prayer on these dates and conveying how these dates coincided with prayerful initiatives happening internationally on that same weekend.

This NCCA Newsletter also includes a reflection on why our God asks us to pray for what we need.

This call for prayer is both as regards the pandemic but also because of all that has been amplified by the pandemic.

Some have used the analogy of it being like an X-Ray on our current life, which is revealing multiple viruses.

2. Wanting to unite our Churches in praying for an end to the pandemic has led us into deepening conversations, which I certainly did not anticipate!

Most recently for me, with Pastor Peter Walker, Aboriginal elder of the Bundjalung people, based in Casino, NSW.

In our prayerful conversations, Ps. Peter shared visions and dreams given by God, going back over a decade.

These are visions and dreams, he conveyed, that have been given to other First Nation Christian leaders over this period and earlier.

Peter’s telling of this has an authenticity like we see when the Apostles describe their experiences in the Acts of the Apostles.

In sum, these are that we are to gather for a Solemn Assembly, a Sacred Assembly to pray for the healing of our land and of all our people.

I write now to encourage your participation and to convey our discernment that the Holy Spirit prompts that we should be so gathered by our First Nation Christian leaders, for this purpose.

Listening, we have concluded that this is what we should do on September 26 and 27.

Pastor Peter draws on 2 Chronicles 7:14 and also Joel 2:15 where we read: "Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people."

Looking at our world and our Australia, as the Body of Christ and thus with the eyes of Jesus, we see our parallel to "when Jesus went ashore ...saw a great crowd, and ...had compassion on them and healed their sick. " (Matthew 14:14).

The One who says, "Before Abraham was, I AM", (John 8: 58) gathers up the word in 2 Chronicles 7:14 and Joel 2:15, and now seems to be drawing us to a Solemn Assembly, led by the First Nation Christian leaders of our land on September 26-27.

This is what our prayers are leading to, at this point.

We can see why this might be happening, given the matters gathered, for example, under the categories of "Climate Change" and "Black Lives Matter".

Our way of life has been exploitative of our land and sea, damaging to vulnerable species, to our Pacific neighbours, to the future of our little children as well as to future generations.

The cruelty of racism, both historic and contemporary, gives us further reason to be on our knees in repentance, seeking forgiveness so that we can continue the unfinished journey of reconciliation, under God. Racism is such a cruel folly, given that we are all made in the divine image and likeness. Yet it persists...

All these matters, as you well know, have been amplified by the pandemic.

So we are being called to pray humbly and sincerely together.

It is utterly appropriate that we should be led in this by our First Nation Christian leaders.

What other way would be as appropriate?

The weekend we shaped our plan was the "Pastor Sir Doug Nicholls Indigenous Round" of the AFL, highlighting our wonderful Indigenous players.

Pastor Doug was a beautiful Australian - a Church of Christ pastor working with the very disadvantaged, a brilliant footballer, a Yorta Yorta man, a pioneering campaigner for reconciliation. He endured much racism with Godly grace and strength, later to be a Governor of South Australia.

He is the inspiration for more than a Round of AFL, good as this is.

We are blessed beyond measure that our God continues to raise up these Christian leaders - Pastor Doug to Pastor Peter, many others.

I learned more of Ps Peter Walker's story within 40 Stories at:

<https://youtu.be/NGXINIlwwn4>

(All the 40 Stories are at <https://40stories.com.au>)

3. As we prepare for September 26-27, listening to the inspiration God has given, I am mindful of how our Saviour is described in Colossians 1.15-20 - the One who is “before all things and in whom all things hold together”.

I was introduced to Ps Peter by Warwick Marsh who co-ordinates the National Day of Prayer and Fasting (www.nationaldayofprayer.org.au).

Warwick and I connected more deeply during our earlier Sunday August 2 National Day of Prayer. He and his team gathered, at various points in the day, around a 1000 Australian Christians praying together that Sunday.

Warwick’s email is warwick@webshield.net.au

Our initial conversation with Ps. Peter also included James Condon, well known in the NCCA from his many years as Salvation Army Commissioner and now also offering leadership in the National Day of Prayer and Fasting.

4. We held a planning Zoom meeting on Friday August 21 and included some other female and male Indigenous Christian leaders. One was Robyn Beezley. Robyn’s story is at: <https://youtu.be/sKagIjMVD9A>

We reached some important conclusions on that Friday which, with this Background for you, I write now to convey.

NEXT STEPS TOWARDS A “NATIONAL SOLEMN ASSEMBLY, 26-27 SEPTEMBER:

‘FOR THE HEALING OF THE LAND’, LED BY OUR FIRST NATION CHRISTIAN LEADERS.

1. Our National Solemn Assembly will be largely “Virtual”, by Zoom. Work is already going on to ensure those in remote communities are also able to join in.

It is hoped there might also be a Gathering for Prayer in Canberra, perhaps near our Federal Parliament. (This, of course, is subject to COVID A.C.T. Restrictions, as at September 26-27).

2. The concept, so far then, is primarily through Zoom with 12 hours each day, from 9am to 9 pm on both Saturday and Sunday. Obviously, people will come and go as they are able.
3. To plan all the logistics, we are going to meet by Zoom at 4pm on Tuesday 25 August and then, at 4pm each Tuesday, until September 26-27.

The unified and unifying nature of our prayerful initiative means this note is an invitation to join these next Zoom Planning meetings.

If you rsvp by email to Warwick at the above email, he can provide the Zoom address.

4. In the days and weeks ahead, we hope to ensure that all First Nation Christian leaders know about this and are able to offer their prayers, with any reflections, over 26-27 September.

Pastor Peter Walker’s email to get involved or to ask any clarifying questions is: peter.walker.ministries@gmail.com

5. It is hoped that our Heads of NCCA Member Churches and our other Australian Church leaders will also participate in this National Assembly - joining in over the weekend and offering the Prayers of their hearts "For the Healing of our Land".

I am sure this invitation will be embraced and our leaders will spend what time they can, both listening and praying.

For purposes of co- ordination it will be best to email Warwick, with a copy to me at bphiliphuggins@gmail.com

6. Our further hope is that we can stream our National Assembly to our friends in our Asia and the Pacific Region and that their leaders might also offer a prayer. The importance of this is underscored by the intersecting issues.

Again, for purposes of co- ordination, an email to Warwick and myself is best.

Near the end of our meeting on Friday, we were drawn into deep meditation on Jesus' prayer for our unity in John17- Our unity, thus, as disciples of Jesus in Australia and in our Asia/ Pacific region.

CONCLUSION.

Our invitation, as shaped humbly by Pastor Peter, reads in summary, given what is already conveyed above:

"We invite the people of Australia and other Indigenous Elders to join with us as we seek God's face for the healing of the land".

We are praying for "times of refreshing" and for the "healing of the land" as the scripture says in Acts 3:19.

"This is what Australia needs. We are praying that Australia will get a revelation of the love of God through Jesus Christ.

Matthew 18:20 gives us the key," Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them".

Pastor Peter thanks those of us who are helping "to facilitate the National Solemn Assembly on behalf of the First Nation People."

"We encourage you to pray together in your churches, in your homes and on the hills as we lift our nation up before God.

"Join us, as you are able on Zoom between 9am- 9pm any time on both days at meeting room number 776881184:<https://zoom.us/j/776881184>
www.nationaldayofprayer.org.au/Solemn-Assembly.

So, dear friends, speaking personally, I have a profound sense of the Godly significance of what we are being asked to do, now and over Saturday 26-Sunday27 September, Jesus in our midst.

With prayers now in the grace and peace of Jesus,

Bishop Philip Huggins.

(President, NCCA).