

*Week of Prayer
for
Reconciliation
and
Christian Unity.*



National Council of
Churches in Australia
NATSIEC



**National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Ecumenical Commission**

Locked Bag 199
Sydney NSW 1230

E: natsiec@ncca.org.au
W: www.ncca.org.au/natsiec
T: 02 9299 2215

*‘See the person, not the stereotype’**

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3rd June: Mabo Day

Pray for: The Torres Strait Islander Communities and all those searching to reclaim their lands.

Reading: Ezek 37.

“Hold in your hand the two sticks and let the Clans see them. Then tell them that I, the Creator Spirit, will take all my people who have been displaced, gather them together and bring them back to their own land. I will unite them as one people in the land that was once theirs. They will live there forever, so will their children and all their descendents. I will establish them and increase their population. I will live there with them for I am their Creator and they are my People.”



Reflection:

Let us think of the unique place that Torres Strait Islanders hold in Australia. In particular, we remember the courageous fight of Eddie Koiki Mabo to regain his land and sea. We remember with gratitude the custodians of this land, waterways and all within— past present and future.

Acknowledgements: The reading of Ezekiel 37 was developed by the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Melbourne’s group Thooamie. This group met to re-tell Bible stories—Aboriginal way. Used with permission.

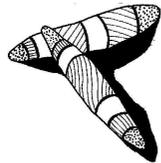
*“See the Person not the Stereotype” is the theme for this year’s National Reconciliation Week.

2nd June

Pray for: All the Tribal groups who are divided in Clan disagreements because of the coming of the foreigners.

Reading: Ezek 37.

"When the people ask you to tell them what this means, tell them that I the Creator, am going to take the stick representing the Clans from this side of the river and put it with the one representing the Clans from the other side of the river. Out of the two I will make one stick and bring you back to the one nation you were."



Reflection:

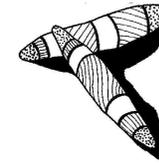
Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are divided between clans and within clans. This is because the system brought by the foreigners has led to dispossession and dislocation and has fractured communities. We need to break the rivers which divide these peoples so that they can again form their strong united nations.

26th May: Sorry Day

Pray for: The Members of the Stolen Generations; their families and all those who work for their healing.

Reading: Ezek 37.

I felt the powerful presence of the Creator; He took me and sat me down in a sacred place where the ground was covered with bones. The Creator led me through this ancient burial site to the sacred hills. I could see that there were very many bones and that they were very dry. The Creator said to me: "Can these bones come back to life?" I replied: "Creator Spirit, only You can answer that."



Reflection:

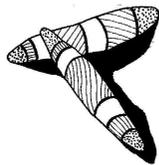
Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples were affected by the policies which brought about the Stolen Generations. Those who were removed, and their families, still carry the pain of loss and separation. The road has been hard for many and they have been left feeling like dried bones, lifeless and abandoned. The Government's Apology has brought healing for many but the pain is so great there is still a long journey ahead. We are ever hopeful that those in pain can find peace and rest in the knowledge that God the Creator is there to walk with them on this Journey of Healing.

27th May: Referendum Day

Pray for: All who fight for Justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. People such as [insert names].

Reading: Ezek 37.

The Creator said: "Speak to the bones; tell these dry bones to listen; tell them that I am speaking to them. I'm going to put breath into you and bring you back to life. I will give you sinews and muscles and cover you with skin. I will put breath into you and give you back the life you had before. Then you will know I am the Creator."



Reflection:

We, as Christians, are called to stand in solidarity with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sisters and brothers, and speak out against the injustices perpetrated against them, even today. They need to know that the whole of the Christian Community stands with them and that they are worthwhile citizens in this land we now call Australia. God has given them many gifts which contribute to the wellbeing of our Nation. God loves them and we do this as Jesus' hands, mouth, legs and arms. We are his physical presence on earth.

1st June

Pray for: We pray for the strength and unity in the Spirit

Reading: Ezek 37.

The Creator spoke to me again. He said, "Take this wooden stick and write on it this message: "The Clans from this 'side of the river' Then take another stick and write on it the message, 'The Clans from the other side of the river.' Then hold the two sticks end to end in your hand so that they look like one."



Reflection:

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders are diverse Peoples blessed with many different cultures and languages. But they also have many things in common as the true Indigenous Peoples of this land. Let us build trust and respect between one another.

31st May: Pentecost Sunday

Pray for: That through the Spirit we can be true witnesses in our Nations and World

Reading: Acts 2: 1-11

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, "Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.



Reflection:

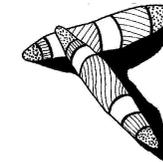
Many Nations hear the witness that Jesus is alive and that we are his messengers in their own tongues. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also hear Jesus' message in their own tongues and experience it through their cultural ways. Their ways of hearing and speaking the message can enrich the experience and understanding of Jesus' message for us all.

28th May

Pray for: All who work for unity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Reading: Ezek 37.

So I spoke as I had been told. While I was speaking, I heard a rattling noise and the bones began to join together. While I watched, the bones were covered with sinew, muscles and then skin, but there was no breath in the bodies.



Reflection:

As we work towards true unity there is always something that holds us back. Perhaps it is because we do not trust one another. Perhaps it is because we see ourselves as superior. Perhaps we are there to prop up our own ego rather than to bring about the best for all of us. Sometimes we can build up something but it lacks that special thing that brings it life. For us as Christians, we know that special thing is God's love through Jesus Christ. This is what is truly leading us to unity.

29th May

Pray for: The many people who have worked to bring about self determination in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.

Reading: Ezek 37.

The Creator said to me: "Speak to the wind and tell the wind that the Spirit calls it from every direction to breathe into these bodies and to bring them back to life." So I spoke as I had been told and breath entered the bodies and they came to life and stood up.



Reflection:

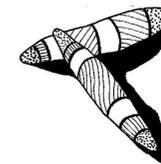
"They came to life and they stood up". We are challenged to give life by bringing about better conditions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. This however, is not enough, we must also allow them to stand up and be in control of their own lives and futures. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples must also embrace this challenge and carry forward the journey to self determination.

30th May

Pray for: the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to rise and take their rightful place in this nation.

Reading: Ezek 37.

The Creator said to me: "Your people are like these bones. They say that they are dried up without any hope and without future. So speak to my people and tell them that I, the Creator, will uncover their bones and bring them back to their own inherited land. When I uncover the place where my people are buried and bring them back, their presence in this land will be revealed. I will put my breath in them. They will have the life they had before. They will live in the land where there is justice and truth. Then everyone will know that I am the Creator. I have promised that I would do this, and I will."



Reflection:

God calls us all to be the best person we can be. It is hard at times but with God all is possible. It is the Creators' promise 'I will be with you always'. We need his support but we will overcome. Arise and come forth. The time for you is now!