

## **To Christ's loved church in Australia,**

Brothers and sisters in faith, we are reminded in Paul's letters that we are *one body*. Despite our race, creed, denomination and differences, as followers of Jesus we are part of the same body, the Church. This truth has been forgotten. Nowhere is this more evident than looking at the gulf between our Indigenous brothers and sisters, and the broader church.

We have lost the ability to feel the pain and need of our Indigenous brothers and sisters. This pain is the broken leg of our Body. We as the Australian Church cannot function while we numb ourselves to this pain and fracturing. We cannot move forward if we continue to blind ourselves to the injustice our Indigenous brothers and sisters face.

Our Prime Minister has apologized to the Stolen Generations for actions and policies of our government towards Indigenous Australians. Many were removed from families. We know that these actions came out of a culture of discrimination and prejudice. This discrimination began with the first European arrivals that declared this land Terra Nullius and the Indigenous owners as less than human. This was followed by stealing of land, destruction of families and culture, murder and an endless list of crimes against the first inhabitants and owners of this country. These actions were explicitly or implicitly supported and condoned by the church. When not actively involved in policies that degraded and dehumanized Aboriginal people, we in the church remained silent. Not until 1967 were Aboriginal people given the right to vote in their own land. Even today dubious policies are directed towards Aboriginal people while we barely batter an eyelid. The NT intervention broadly removes civil rights from Aboriginal men, women and children based on race alone. Our prisons are full of Aboriginal young men. A frightening number of these young men have died in police custody. Yet, we say little, think about it rarely (if ever) and do nothing.

Yes, an apology is good. But, we believe that Jesus teaches us not to just say sorry, but to repent. The call of John the Baptist in the desert 2000 years ago is the call to the church in Australia today; "Repent ... and prepare the way for the Lord". Repent for stealing land, destroying cultures and devastating families. Repent for leaving whole people groups desolate, lost and lacking connection with their past and their holy country. Our government has said sorry, now it is time for our church to act in humble repentance.

It is time to turn from destructive ways and enter a new relationship with the Indigenous brothers and sisters whom we have too often cut off from our consciousness, left separate from our churches and alienated with our institutions. We need the kind of Christ-inspired repentance that initiates a fundamental change in us, our churches and our religious institutions. This is good news (the gospel) for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This country is waiting (needing) our Church to unite under Christ and begin to address the harm and damage we have done.

Our fear is that we will continue to turn away and ignore our Indigenous sisters and brothers. Will we continue to be blind to the crime, injustice, discrimination and inequality that have been perpetuated by our nation and our church? Our prayer is that we will all join together and recognise the damage, feel the pain, hear the anguish that is coming from within our own Body. The Church encompasses all of us, no matter our creed, denomination, race, cultural background or skin colour. This whole and holy Church is one that recognises us as one body Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. If we are truly part of this Body we will hurt, we will be angry and we will need to join as one in Christ to seek healing.

## NATIONAL CHURCH PRAYER

Pastor Ray Minniecon  
February 2010.

God and Creator of our all Aboriginal nations in Australia. You have lived among us since time immemorial. We have always known You. You gave this land to our ancestors and to all Aboriginal nations. You have not dispossessed us nor destroyed us. You are the only true God of Justice. People from other lands, who do not understand our unique culture, our unique lifestyle and our unique heritage have come and destroyed much of our way of life. Many of these people from other lands now want to understand and reconcile with us.

But for many of us Aboriginal people, we find this reconciliation business a little difficult because;

Too many of our children are still in jails. Many have died in custody without justice.

Too many of our children are still living in sub-standard housing.

Too many of our mothers are living on the streets or in refuges.

Too many of our children are still uneducated.

Too many of our children have no land and no community to go back to.

Too many of our children have not got opportunities for good employment.

Too many of our children are living in extremely unhealthy environments.

Too many of our children are living among violence and abuse.

Too many of our children are dying to drugs and other soul-destroying substances.

God our Dreaming and Creator of our people, we feel overwhelmed by these things. Many of us feel like we are refugees in our own land.

Today we are coming together again to cry out to You for mercy and justice for our children, for our families and for our land.

We pray that more resources will be given to our local community Churches to help us grow healthy and strong.

We pray that the leaders of our national churches will be given a heart of flesh instead of a heart of stone so that they can hear our cry, understand us and support us properly.

We pray that your Spirit will help and encourage us to grow good strong Aboriginal leaders.

Our heavenly Father we want to grow strong and healthy again in our own land. We want to take our rightful place in our land and make our contribution to the re-building of our families, our communities our nation and Your kingdom.

We ask these mercies in the name of Your Son. Amen.