

Synod '24



Proposal 8

Stand Against Racism

That the Synod of SA resolves to:

1. **NOTE** that The Uniting Church in Australia Synod of South Australia maintains the view and upholds God's vision of a community where all people are included and treated equally. Divisions created upon appearance or assumed characteristics based on race, culture, religion, or ethnicity with the result that they stop treating people with care and respect have no place in Australian society.
2. **ENCOURAGE** congregations to understand the church's position against racism and remain vigilant against any form of racism in the life of the Church. (See [Resources](#) below.)
3. **ENCOURAGE** congregations as part of our stand against racism, to advocate and affirm their commitment to the Covenant between the UCA and the UAICC in the life of the Church,
4. **AFFIRM** the work of the Assembly in leading the Uniting Church to stand against racism; and **ENCOURAGE** the Assembly to continue to call the church to stand against racism.

Proposers:

Covenanting Committee of SA Synod (current attendees)

Rev Uncle Ken Sumner (co-chair)	Ms Anne Magarey
Rev Peter Morel (co-chair)	Ms Jan Oliver
Rev Jonathan Barker	Ms Di Russell
Rev Dr Aunty Denise Champion	Mr Peter Russell
Mr Ian Dempster	Rev Jesse Size
Mr Allen Edwards	Mr Mark Waters
Rev Anne Hewitt	Rev Richard Telfer
Rev Mark Hewitt	

Rationale:

It is with a heavy heart that we acknowledge that racism remains a part of Australian society and that we add our voice again with those speaking out on this blight on Australian life that is the experience of many.

This has come to the fore again in part because of the Israel/Palestine conflict which has seen an increase in islamophobia and antisemitism. And after the result of the Referendum for a First Peoples Voice to Parliament, there has been an increase in racism towards the First Peoples of this land.

The Uniting Church since its inception has spoken out against racism. That racism is counter to our faith and in opposition to the vision God has for this world.

This is not the first time the UCA has raised its voice in opposition to Racism.

There are many statements or documents voicing our opposition.

Definition

To enable mutual understanding, the twofold definitions of racism for this proposal are put forward by the United Nations:

- [prejudice](#), discrimination, or [antagonism](#) by an individual, community, or institution against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or [marginalized](#)
- the belief that different races possess distinct characteristics, abilities, or qualities, especially so as to distinguish them as [inferior](#) or superior to one another.

This encompasses systemic racism as well as individual instances of racism.

Pastoral Statement - Dr Deidre Palmer - Racism and Police Brutality

UCA Assembly 3rd June 2020:

“... We need to focus on the racism which blights our land, the racism, which leads to Aboriginal deaths in custody, which has First Peoples experiencing discrimination, poverty, ill health and disadvantage. We began this National Reconciliation week by saying we need to strengthen our actions for justice, healing and reconciliation. This is not an abstract call – it is seen expressed daily in our relationships with one another in this country. It is seen when we:

1. *Call out racism*
2. *Tell the truth about the history of colonisation, dispossession and the undermining of First People’s culture, language and spirituality*
3. *Advocate for First People’s voice to be heard in determining their future*

4. *Respect and appreciate the culture and stories of First Peoples, and work together to deepen our relationships based on reconciliation that arises from justice, and leads to healing, and*
5. *Live in harmony with the sacred land that we share.*

To stand by and remain silent is to be complicit in contributing to a system and world that is against God's intention for us all. 'What God desires is for us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God'. (Micah 6:8)"

Racism Remains a Human Rights Issue

The Uniting Church in Australia sees discrimination as a human rights issue.

Reaffirming that discrimination between human beings on the grounds of race, colour or ethnic origin is an obstacle to friendly and peaceful relations among nations and is capable of disturbing peace and security among peoples and the harmony of persons living side by side even within one and the same State, (International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1965)

The *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) has been accepted at the national level as a core reference point for our conversations with our First Nations peoples in Australia (see [Resources](#) below):

Convinced that the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples in this Declaration will enhance harmonious and cooperative relations between the State and indigenous peoples, based on principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and good faith ...

Background Data

The Reconciliation Australian Biennial Barometer 2022 reports the following:

'Worsening' experience of Racial Prejudice

- 60% of First Nations Australians had experienced at least one form of racial prejudice in the past 6 months, compared to 52% in 2020
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are still more likely to agree **Australia is a racist country (57%)**, than the general community (42%).
- 1 in 4 First Nations respondents continue to **strongly agree Australia is a racist country**, up markedly since 2018 (19%).
- **More First Nations respondents have witnessed prejudice** towards others in the context of refused entry to a venue (34%), refused service in a shop (33%), physical violence (35%) and verbal abuse (49%), than two years ago.

Conclusion

In light of the continual presence of racism in our public discourse, it is opportune for the UCA SA to take action against racism and in this year of the 30th Anniversary of the *Covenant* between the UCA and the UAIC – and as a positive action, have congregations advocate and affirm their commitment to the *Covenant Statement*, a foundational document for our future and our ‘walking together’ as first and second peoples.

Resources to support anti-racism

Covenant (NOTE: Our Synod Covenant website is being *refreshed*: [UCA SA - Covenanting](#))

Original Covenant document

https://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Covenanting-Statement-Poster_Final.pdf

[Covenanting in the Uniting Church – Uniting Church Australia](#)

Covenantal Action Plan 2021-2024

https://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Assembly-Covenant-Action-Plan-2021_Feb2021-FINAL.pdf

The Assembly *Covenant Action Plan* (awaiting renewal as at 2024) declared that: ‘We seek in our Covenant relationship to reflect the universal human rights which flow from the source of all creation and which point to the new creation, the new humanity, the end in view for the whole creation’.

Justice

Our Vision for a Just Australia, UCA Assembly 2021

<https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/711>

Statements against racism

Racism (ASC) (1985).

UCA Assembly, <https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/130>

Apartheid, racism and 'Status confessions' (ASC) (1985).

UCA Assembly, <https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/19>

UCA Second Statement to the Nation 1988

UCA Assembly <https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/151>

Human rights abuses & racism (2005).

UCA Assembly, <https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/78>

Pastoral Statement - Dr Deidre Palmer - Racism and Police Brutality (3rd June 2020). UCA Assembly, <https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/652>

UAICC Pastoral Letter - Rev Mark Kickett - Racism and Police Brutality (3rd June 2020). UCA Assembly, <https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/653>

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) 1 was approved by the General Council of the United Nations in 2007, and the Australian Government endorsed the Declaration in April 2009.'