

6 LENTEN STUDIES
based on
**A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS:
LISTENING TO THE STATEMENT
FROM THE HEART**



"Turning to the Heavens and The Earth I" by Rev Glenn Loughrey

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INTRODUCTION

Why spend time with the Statement from the Heart this Lent?

The Statement from the Heart came out of the most extensive consultation of First Nations people ever.

To gain the agreement of such a diversity of people from all over Australia, urban and remote, from the centre to the Torres Strait, is an extraordinary thing.

The Statement is also beautifully written, concise, powerful and deep.

It speaks into our understanding of what it is to be Australian and what it is to be an Australian church.

It has been endorsed by both the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council and the National Aboriginal Bishop.

All this means that Australians generally, and the church in particular, need to listen very carefully to what it is saying to us.

Lent is a particular apposite time as we choose to turn away from our busyness to listen for the voice crying in the wilderness.

Any prophetic call is likely to be strange and challenging.

But it may also be the way to hear the voice of God for our time.

What to do

This Leader's Guide contains 6 Lent Studies based on the material in 'A Voice in the Wilderness: Listening to the Statement from the Heart'.

Each participant needs their own copy of 'A Voice in the Wilderness'.

This can be ordered in hard copy or downloaded for free at abmission.org/voice

Each Study is based on a particular part of the full document and the discussion will be richer if participants have time to consider the relevant sections before the discussion group meets.

However these Studies are designed so that they can be run without participants pre-reading.

The ideas in Parts 4 and 5 of 'A Voice in the Wilderness' are its' heart, but are not easily discussed without participants having read them in full. For this reason they are not included in these Lent Studies but it is hoped that participants will be prompted to go and read them in their own time.

Please adapt these Studies to the needs of your particular group.

You may decide to do the entire Study, to focus only on the sections that particularly engage your group or to supplement the Study with material that you think is relevant from 'A Voice in the Wilderness'.

This is difficult material and raises issues that are hard to grapple with and hard to resolve.

The aim is to listen well to both the material cited in the Study and to each other as you discuss together as a group. It is not to come to agreement at the end of each Study.

SESSION 1

Pre-reading before Session: Pages 6-20 (Introduction & *Statement from the Heart* & Part 1)

Listening to the *Statement from the Heart*

Ask each member to introduce themselves and describe why they are here and what they hope to gain from the group.

Read the *Statement from the Heart* on page 10 aloud.

(Ask participants to listen to the words rather than follow along in their own copy).

Go round the group three times to hear each person's answer to:

What resonates with you the most? Why?

What troubles you the most? Why?

What intrigues you/what would like to know more about?

"How can we solve the Aboriginal problem?"

Have you encountered the question 'how can we solve the Aboriginal problem?'

When and in what context?

Is it a question you have wrestled with yourself?

What good motivations might be behind it?

What problematic assumptions might be contained within it?

Part 1: The doctrine of discovery

READ ALOUD

"Cook did not discover us, because we saw him. We were telling each other with smoke, yet in his diary, he said "discovered"."

*Torres Strait Consultation
Our Story
Final Report of the Referendum Council*

At the heart of the doctrine of discovery is the idea that Indigenous people are a primitive form of human life and therefore discoverable.

Bishop Mark McDonald¹

In July 2014, a statue of John McDouall Stuart appeared in an Alice Springs park where many First Nations people hang out.

He is very bronze and very tall and is carrying a huge rifle...

The statue's inscription reads in part:

"John McDouall Stuart and his companions were the first Europeans to pass through this region, going on to discover the centre of Australia in April 1860."

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A Voice in the Wilderness: Listening to the Statement from the Heart

WATCH

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ygk3X5Xjjh4>

*Bishop Mark McDonald
National Indigenous Anglican Bishop of the Anglican Church of Canada*

Note: you can watch this and other recommended clips on a computer, a smart TV or someone's phone with the sound turned up high – it is the sound that matters.

QUESTIONS

¹ <https://adelaideanglicans.com/stories/2017/10/time-to-confront-the-doctrine-of-discovery>

In what sense is the use of the word 'discover' to describe what Captain Cook did true? In what sense is it false?

What are the implications of this word?

What do you particularly like in Bishop Mark McDonald's speech? What troubles you?

Bishop Mark McDonald is speaking about Canada here. Does his speech apply to Australia? Why or why not?

READ ALOUD

Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.

2 Corinthians 10: 2-5

Strongholds are habits of thinking that hurt people - that create division between people. The doctrine of discovery is one of those strongholds.

*Bishop Mark McDonald
National Indigenous Anglican Bishop of the Anglican Church of Canada*

QUESTIONS

Consider Bishop Mark McDonald's reading of this text.

Do you agree? Disagree? What do you consider to be the 'strongholds' we face in Australia in 2019.

READ ALOUD

On May 27 1967, Australians voted to remove part of the Australian Constitution that treated Indigenous Australians as inferior to non-Indigenous Australians:

"In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives should not be counted."

*Section 127 of the Australian Constitution
(Removed by the 1967 Referendum)*

"In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard."

Statement from the Heart

"It was maintained by many of the colony that the blacks had no language at all but were only a race of the monkey tribe. This was a convenient assumption, for if it could be proved that the Aborigines...were only a species of wild beasts, there could be no guilt attributed to those who shot them or poisoned them."

*Lancelot Threlkeld
Australian Reminiscences and Papers of L.E. Threlkeld, Missionary to the
Aborigines, 1824-1859*

"Because the primitive lords of the soil interfere, in some of the frontier stations, with the easy and lucrative grazing of cattle and sheep, they are felt by the sensitive pockets of the graziers to be a nuisance; and the best pleas that these "gentlemen" can set up for their rights to abuse the nuisance by the summary processes of stabbing, burning and poisoning, is that the offenders are below the level of the white man's species."

*Editorial
The Colonist
16 January 1839*

QUESTIONS

Rhetoric that treats one lot of people as less human than another lot of people is still very common.

Have you come across it generally? In what context?

Have you heard the sort of rhetoric that treats First Nations people as lesser

humans? As more like children? Or animals?

Have you seen societal attitudes in this area change during your lifetime?
Have your own attitudes changed?

Why is the belief that one group of humans counts less than another such a persistent one?

What is a Christian response to this?

(Your group may run with this themselves. If they would like further direction there is a discussion of the Parable of the Good Samaritan on p 16-17)

Where do you, deep down, have a tendency to do this?

CLOSING THE DISCUSSION

Go round the group and ask each person to say one thing they are taking away from the discussion (a wondering, a question, a struggle, something they want to explore further....)

PRAY

Close with the prayer from the Wontulp-Bi-Buya Indigenous Theology Working Group on p 19 of the study.

SESSION 2

Pre-reading before Session: Pages 22-30 (Part 2)

Part 2: Lucky for who?

READ ALOUD

The words 'settlement' and 'invasion' are highly charged for both sides of this historic encounter, but there is no use denying these two perspectives. It is understandable why some Australians speak of settlement, and why some speak of invasion. The maturation of Australia will be marked by our ability to understand both perspectives.

Final Report Referendum Council

QUESTIONS

Why do some people consider colonisation was a 'settlement'?

Why do some people consider colonisation was an 'invasion'?

READ ALOUD

We seek...truth-telling about our history.

Statement from the Heart

Australia must acknowledge its history, its true history. Not Captain Cook. What happened all across Australia: the massacres and the wars. If that were taught in schools, we might have one nation, where we are all together.

Darwin Consultation

Our Story

Final Report of the Referendum Council

Listening to the Rev Glenn Loughrey's art

Take the group to Rev Glenn Loughrey's painting "A Portrait of Australia with Important Bits Missing" on the Front Cover of A Voice in the Wilderness.

Read his description of it on p 4.

Go round the group and ask each person to describe their reaction to the painting.

Take the group to Rev Glenn Loughrey's painting "From the Depth, Life Rises" on p 22.

Read his description of it on p 23.

Go round the group and ask each person to describe their reaction to the painting.

QUESTIONS

Our own family history

Have there been shameful things covered up in your own family tree?

Why do we do this?

Does it matter to you that your ancestors behaved well?

Why? Or why not?

Why is it so hard for many of us to talk about this?

Truth-telling

READ ALOUD

Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?"

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

John 18:37-8

However, beware! Whenever people wonder 'What is the truth?' usually it is because the truth is just under their nose - but it would be very inconvenient to acknowledge it. And thus, against his own better judgement, Pilate yields to the will of the crowd and lets Jesus be crucified.

Pilate's problem was not how to ascertain Jesus' innocence. This was easy enough: it was obvious. No, the real problem was that, in the end - like all of us, most of the time - he found it more expedient to wash his hands of the truth.

Simon Leys

QUESTIONS

Have there been shameful things covered up in your institution? In your church? What are the competing concerns or the reasons we do this?

Do the institutions you work for prioritise telling the truth? Does your family? What about your church?

What would it look like to be a person or a church that was known for telling the truth?

Are truthfulness and sincerity the same thing?

READ ALOUD

The awful but surely undeniable fact of Aboriginal history, the one fact which transcends all other facts and all other estimates, reconstructions, analyses, guesses, misrepresentations, truths, half-truths and lies, is the fact of the immense and appalling reduction in the Aboriginal population during the first 150 years of European settlement.

John Harris

Hiding the bodies: the myth of the humane colonisation of Aboriginal Australia

For the Lord comes out from his place

to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity;
the earth will disclose the blood shed on it,
and will no longer cover its slain.

Isaiah 26:19

Death does not end relationships between human persons and between human persons and God; and this may be sobering news as well as joyful, sobering especially for an empire with blood on its hands.

Rowan Williams
Archbishop of Canterbury's Easter Sermon, 2004²

QUESTIONS

No matter what benefits colonisation brought it effectively caused the death of the majority of people who were living here already (see p 27-8 for further discussion of this).

Where is Christ in this part of our history?

What do we make of these deaths theologically?

Does Scripture speak to this? Where? How?

CLOSING THE DISCUSSION

Go round the group and ask each person to say one thing they are taking away from the discussion (a wondering, a question, a struggle, something they want to explore further....)

PRAY

Close with the Aboriginal Thanksgiving Prayer written by Rev Lenore Parker that appears on p 30.

² <http://www.thinkinganglicans.org.uk/archives/000556.html>

SESSION 3

Pre-reading before session: Pages 32-41 (Part 3)

Part 3: We don't listen

READ ALOUD

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard.

Statement from the Heart

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Statement from the Heart

A constitutionally entrenched Voice appealed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities because of the history of poor or non-existent consultation with communities by the Commonwealth. Consultation is either very superficial or it is more meaningful, but then wholly ignored.

For Dialogue participants, the logic of a constitutionally enshrined Voice – rather than a legislative body alone – is that it provides reassurance and recognition that this new norm of participation and consultation would be different to the practices of the past.

Final Report of the Referendum Council

QUESTIONS

Have you ever not been listened to when you said something that really mattered to you?

How did it affect you?

Have you ever found out later that you didn't listen to someone else about something that really mattered to them?

How did it affect you?

What was it that prevented you hearing?

READ ALOUD

John 7

QUESTIONS

List out the reasons people won't listen to Jesus.

Are they the sorts of reasons we use today?

Have you ever used them yourself? Or have they been used against you?

In the circles you are part of how do you evaluate who is worth listening to?

Do you tend to listen more to people who are like you?

What are the requirements to be heard in your church? In your institution?

Do they exclude particular types of people?

READ ALOUD

(from p 38 of 'A Voice in the Wilderness')

In 2007 the Howard Government introduced sweeping changes to land, governance, income, work, schooling, medical treatment and welfare in Indigenous Communities across the Northern Territory.

They did not consult anyone affected.

"As people in our own land, we are shocked by the failure of democratic processes, of the failure to consult with us and the total disregard for us as human beings."

Elders Statement against NT Intervention

7 February 2011³

"I acknowledge that the instigation of the NTER [Northern Territory Emergency Response] by the [Howard] government was a major shock to many Aboriginal people and communities in the Northern Territory and was seen as a serious affront. There was no consultation before it was initiated, and the nature of some of the measures and coercive tone utilised undoubtedly caused anger, fear and distrust."

Jenny Macklin

*Minister for Families, Housing, Community Service and Indigenous Affairs*⁴

QUESTION

Why do you think the Government didn't consult?

READ ALOUD

Most Australians do not know how to relate to Aboriginal people. They relate to stories told by former colonists.

*Professor Marcia Langton*⁵

QUESTIONS

Is this true for you?

Think of the ways you have learned about Australian history. Whose point of view are they from?

³ The signatories are Rosalie Kunoth Monks, Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra, Harry Nelson, Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, Djapirri Mununggiritj, Dhanggal Gurruwiwi, George Gaymarani Pascoe. Read the whole statement at:

<https://www.creativespirits.info/downloads/Elders-statement-against-nt-intervention-07-02-2011.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=25496>

⁵ <http://afcarchive.screenaustralia.gov.au/downloads/pubs/WellIHeard.pdf>

CLOSING THE DISCUSSION

Go round the group and ask each person to say one thing they are taking away from the discussion (a wondering, a question, a struggle, something they want to explore further....)

PRAY

"Listen carefully and incline the ear of your heart."

Rule of St Benedict

God is, of course, the ultimate strange other.

Spend your prayer time today in silence, inclining the ear of your heart to God.

NOTE:

Parts 4 and 5 of "Voice in the Wilderness: Listening to the Statement from the Heart" are background to the request for a Constitutional Voice; one of the two key calls of the Statement. If participants are interested in exploring this further then they should read those parts in full. The Lent studies now skip to Part 6.

SESSION 4

Pre-reading before session: Pages 64-74 (Part 6)

Part 6: Helping is not always helpful

READ ALOUD

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

Statement from the Heart

[Bono] has been generating and reproducing ways of seeing the developing world, especially Africa, that are no more than a slick mix of traditional missionary and commercial colonialism, in which the poor world exists as a task for the rich world to complete.

Harry Browne

The Frontman: Bono (In the Name of Power)

QUESTIONS

Look at the picture on p 70.

How do you feel about this picture?

"The poor world exists as a task for the rich world to complete"

What is true about this statement? What is false about it?

When have you been helped and it has been good?

When has someone tried to help you and it has been bad?

READ ALOUD

(from p 68 of 'A Voice in the Wilderness')

In 1963, Yolngu leaders wrote letters to the Northern Territory Government expressing their grave concerns about the proposed Gove Peninsula Mine.

One received the following reply:

Dear Narijan,

I have received your letter telling me of your worries about the mining people going into your tribal country on Gove Peninsula. Firstly, I want to tell you that I only want to help you and all the other Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. I would not allow anything to happen that would harm you and am only interested in doing things that will help you people to learn how to live and work in the same way and side by side with the white man. Now you might think that because the government has let the mining people go into Gove that it does not look as though I am helping you; but I am certain that as mining work goes on and gets bigger, that your Aboriginal people at Yirrkala are going to benefit in a lot of ways....

Your sincerely, (H.C. Giese) Director of Welfare⁶

In the mid-2000s the West Australian Government decided to build a LNG plant on land subject to native-title claims at James Price Point in the Kimberley.

Premier Colin Barnett was unable to get an agreement to use the land on terms that pleased him and in 2010 he threatened to compulsorily acquire the land to put pressure on the negotiations. He justified this to reporters by citing:

high rates of unemployment, poor education, poor health standards, domestic violence, abuse and neglect of children. Am I as the Premier of Western Australia going to sit back and say I'm going to give up the opportunity to help those people? I'm sorry. I will not do that.⁷

Professor Michael Dodson said:

⁶ cited in John Harris, *One Blood*

⁷ <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/rush-to-riches/8952822>

*Compulsorily acquisition...cuts across people's power to make decisions in their best interest...What the Premier is perhaps saying is that "well I know what's in your best interest." What we should be saying is, wait Mr Premier, where is the evidence around Australia that that is what will happen because invariably it doesn't turn out that way"*⁸

QUESTIONS

If you had received the letter from Mr Giese in reference to acquisition of your own land how would you take it?

Do you think the letter from Mr Giese is sincere? What about the words of Premier Barnett?

Why are they talking about helping?

How can you tell if something that claims to be helpful is in fact helpful?

READ ALOUD

John 3:30

Philippians 2: 1-8

There isn't a great theological precedent for one lot of people with power over another lot, retaining that power and using it to 'help'.

John the Baptist, Jesus and Paul conducted their ministries whilst having pretty well no earthly power.

There is a stark difference between 'helping' and giving over some power because justice requires it.

Helping retains the power. Justice involves giving some of it up.

Of course, when they clash, we choose helping more often than not.

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⁸ <http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2010-09-02/gas-hub-land-to-be-compulsorily-acquired/2245784>

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QUESTION

How can you tell a time to help from a time to hand over power?

READ ALOUD

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: *the coming together after a struggle*. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

Statement from the Heart

Galarrwuy Yunupingu a Gumatj clan leader and Yothu Yindi Foundation chairman explains:

“The principles of makarrata have guided Yolngu people in North East Arnhem Land through difficult disputes for centuries and they are useful as a guide to the current challenge.

First, the disputing parties must be brought together. Then, each party, led by their elders, must speak carefully and calmly about the dispute. They must put the facts on the table and air their grievances. If a person speaks wildly, or out of turn, he or she is sent away and shall not be included any further in the process. Those who come for vengeance, or for other purposes, will also be sent away, for they can only disrupt the process.

The leaders must always seek a full understanding of the dispute: what lies behind it; who is responsible; what each party wants, and all things that are normal to peacemaking efforts. When that understanding is arrived at, then a settlement can be agreed upon. This settlement is also a symbolic reckoning — an action that says to the world that from now on and forever the dispute is settled; that the dispute no longer exists, it is finished. And from the honesty of the process and the

submission of both parties to finding the truth, then the dispute is ended. In past times a leader came forward and accepted a punishment and this leader once punished was then immediately taken into the heart of the aggrieved clan. The leader's wounds were healed by the men and women of the aggrieved clan, and the leader was given gifts and shown respect — and this former foe, who had caused pain and suffering to people, would live with those that had been harmed and the peace was made — not just for them but for future generations."

*Makarrata the map to Reconciliation
Published in The Australian, July 2017*

QUESTIONS

What is familiar to you in this process? What is new?

How is it similar to your current understanding of 'reconciliation'? How is it different?

How is this similar or dissimilar to 'closing the gap'?

How is it different to asking for 'help'?

READ ALOUD

"We will always get blamed for it. It is: We have come to save you and you don't want to be saved, and it's your fault. It is like bushfire victims. We are going to evacuate this area from bushfires but if you do not come it is your fault, you die. That sort of process. That is what happened with Aboriginal people and still happens today. They say: We dictate the policy, you won't have any input into the policy, but we'll dictate the policy and this is what we think you should be doing. If you don't do it then it's your fault, it's not our fault. We've been there trying to help you."

*Tracker Tilmouth
Tracker
Alexis Wright*

QUESTION

How are help and blame linked?

CLOSING THE DISCUSSION

Go round the group and ask each person to say one thing they are taking away from the discussion (a wondering, a question, a struggle, something they want to explore further....)

PRAY

Pray either or both of the prayers written by Michael Leunig that appear on p 74

OR

The Magnificat

And Mary said,
‘My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.’

Luke 1: 46-55

SESSION 5

Pre-reading before Session: Pages 76-86 (Part 7)

Part 7: A 60, 000 year old Australian church?

READ ALOUD

The church is very much a pot plant on this land without becoming a part of this land. Its age is 230 years old when in reality it can become 60,000 years old.

*The Reverend Dianne Langham
Life Member of NATSIAC
Anglican Chaplain, Cessnock Correctional Centre⁹*

Listening to the Rev Glenn Loughrey's art

Take the group to Rev Glenn Loughrey's painting 'The Baptism on the Banks of the Goulburn River with White Cockatoo' on p 76.

Read his description of it on p 77.

QUESTIONS

What does it mean to be an Australian church? How is it different from an English church? How is it the same?

How much English culture is incorporated into the way you do church?

How much Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is incorporated into the way you do church?

How would your church start to become a 60,000 year-old Australian church?

The problem of Syncretism

READ ALOUD

(from p 81 of 'A Voice in the Wilderness')

⁹ Private communication quoted with permission

One of the barriers to the full expression of Indigenous Christianity in our churches is the concern about syncretism of Christianity and Indigenous culture.

(That is the mixing of Christianity with Indigenous culture so that it becomes a different gospel).

This is an issue, but one I would argue First Nations Christians themselves take very seriously and have considerable experience and wisdom in working through.

Strangely there seems to be much less concern about a much larger issue: the syncretism of Christianity with Western Culture.

QUESTIONS

How has Christianity been syncretic with Western Culture historically?

How is Christianity syncretic with Western Culture now?

READ ALOUD

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

‘The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

‘No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Matthew 6: 19-24

Colonisation everywhere from Columbus forward had two expressed aims: spreading ‘civilisation and Christianity’ and acquiring wealth...

[This] was a fatal flaw built into colonisation even on its own terms.

Treating the colonised well and acquiring wealth always came into tension (it being not beyond the bounds of possibility that the people didn't want to give up their lands, or labour, or resources) and when they did, the wealth won.

That is, it was not possible to serve God and wealth.¹⁰

This founding tension between what is right and what makes money is still with us.

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QUESTIONS

How has serving wealth blinded us historically and theologically?

How does serving wealth blind us now?

In a world that runs by wealth, how do we live in this tension?

CLOSING THE DISCUSSION

Go round the group and ask each person to say one thing they are taking away from the discussion (a wondering, a question, a struggle, something they want to explore further....)

PRAY

Close with the Prayer of the Aboriginal People that appears on p 85.

¹⁰ 'Humane' and 'colonisation' were antithetical. Colonisation was engaged in because it was profitable. This profitability was based solely upon the exploitation of the colonised people and their resources. Colonisation was everywhere exploitative.

SESSION 6

Pre-reading before Session: Pages 88-102 (Part 8, Conclusion)

Part 8: What is land for?

READ ALOUD

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

Statement from the Heart

QUESTIONS

How would people in your circles answer the question 'what is land for?'

How would you answer the question 'what is land for?'

How much of your life (time, energy, money, passion) goes on land?

READ ALOUD

Apmereyanhe, our language-Land, is like a root or tie to us. It holds all of us. The only way that we can translate into English how we see our relationship

with the Land is with the words 'hold' and 'connect'. The roots of the country and its people are twined together. We are part of the Land. The Land is us, and we are the Land. That's how we hold our land.

And it's really important for our kids to know why we want our Land to live on, to go back to. Because we've got a strong tie to it. It's like a big twirl of string that holds us in there with our families. That's where all our culture, and our names, our skin names come from. That's why we hold a big treasure of Land for us. And we have a special name for that tie or string, it's called *utyerre*.

Utyerre can be like, *utyerre-arle*, you might say, "*utyerre*enge awake, I'm hearing a message from that line". And that *utyerre* means a telephone. And when he's hearing on the telephone, that person can see – in his mind he knows it – what that line runs, they can see it, where the message's coming from, like a string. And *utyerre* also is like a vein in yourself, and in your country. And how you relate. One time I was talking to this person here, and I was describing it: "It's like when we used to dig yam. When you dig for yam, you find a yam, it's like a bean in there. But also there's another string coming from it that lays further down, that's *utyerre*. And when you follow that *utyerre* you find another yam". So that's how we call *utyerre*. It's like those lines that go straight and connect to this, and connect to this, and connect to this.

Margaret Kemarre Turner OAM
Iwenhe Tyerrtye – what it means to be an Aboriginal Person

(MK Turner is an Arrernte elder, painter, writer, educator and translator currently living in Alice Springs)

QUESTIONS

Do you experience any of this yourself?

Do you feel connected to land?

How would you answer the question 'what is land for?' theologically?

Is land sacred or holy to you?

OPTIONAL EXTRA

MK Turner's words also appear as a song.

You can play it at:

<https://johncoleman.bandcamp.com/track/utyerre>

READ ALOUD

Genesis 4: 1-16

There are some striking parallels between this ancient story and recent Australian history.

Our land is soaked with blood.

There is a restlessness and rootlessness that characterises modernity which could well be described as being a 'wanderer on the earth'.

P 94

A Voice in the Wilderness: Listening to the Statement from the Heart

PLAY

<https://johncoleman.bandcamp.com/track/blood-cries-out>

QUESTIONS

Does Genesis 4 speak into the Australian situation to you? Why or Why not?

READ ALOUD

The whole conclusion (pages 100-101 including quotes).

QUESTIONS

What do you make of the parallel to the book of Exodus?

Do you think the *Statement from the Heart* is something that demands a Christian response? Why or why not? If so, what?

CONCLUSION

Go round the Group and ask:

What have you found the most interesting about these Studies?

What have you struggled the most with?

What draws you onward and what do you feel moved to do about that?

LISTEN

One Blood by Yothu Yindi

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHuMvm_dM-o

PRAY

Close with the Prayer for Reconciliation written by Bishop Arthur and Mrs Colleen Malcolm that appears on p 104.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION

Read *Our Story*

The Referendum Council organised the 12 Regional Dialogues that preceded the National Constitutional Convention at Uluru in May 2017.

On 30 July 2017 they issued the *Final Report of the Referendum Council*, which recommended adopting the recommendations in the *Statement from the Heart*.

Their report included *Our Story*; a vivid summary of the 12 Regional Dialogues.

You can find it at:

https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au/sites/default/files/report_attachments/Referendum_Council_Final_Report.pdf

(Scroll down a bit as *Our Story* appears at 2.2.1)

Read the complete ‘Voice in the Wilderness: Listening to the Statement from the Heart’ and follow up whichever of the many books, speeches or stories quoted that are of particular interest to you.

Seek out and Listen to First Nations Voices.

Get to know the First Nations peoples in your area and support them in their concerns and priorities.

Find out the history of the people who originally lived where you live or where you work or where you grew up.

Pray for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council and the National Aboriginal Bishop

Pray for leaders in our church and nation who care for justice and are not afraid of the truth.

Support ABM’s Australian Project Work.