

United in faith

About 70 representatives from different faith communities and organisations joined together in prayers for Ukraine and those affected by recent weather events in Australia at an ecumenical service held in St Francis Xavier's Cathedral Adelaide last night.



*Faith leaders at the ecumenical prayer service held in St Francis Xavier's Cathedral.
Picture: Nat Rogers.*

Lindy McNamara, *The Southern Cross*, 31 March 2022

Called 'Healing Prayers for a Wounded World' the service brought together members of the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim faiths, with representatives from the Ahmadiyya, Baha'i and Quaker communities late apologies due to COVID close contact restrictions.

In welcoming people to the Cathedral, Archbishop Patrick O'Regan said the service was a chance for prayer, silence and song at a time of acute conflict and climate crisis in the world.

"In our busy world pushing the pause button is not easy, in our noisy world pushing the silent button is not easy," he said.

"But what we are doing tonight are both of those things – trying to pause, trying to be silent...tonight we come to listen to the deepest voice of all and for whatever our faith, that is the deep voice for us of God, in whose image we are created.

"The lost art of pausing, of being silent is in our gift tonight. Whatever faith tradition inspires us, those things that help us remember who we are, are important.

"Tonight we are creating that space in our own heart, in our collective heart, to allow not only our own voice to speak but the authentic and gracious gift of God to be present and speak with us as well."

The service was broken into three parts – acknowledgement of a wounded world, healing and solace, and peacemaking and justice seeking – with faith leaders offering prayers as the congregation listened and reflected.

Fr Zenjo Racki CSsR, from Adelaide's Ukrainian Catholic community, spoke of the humanitarian crisis unfolding in his homeland and the need for politicians and governments around the world to do more.

“In spite of this Ukrainians have demonstrated how determined and brave they are and ready to give their lives to in order to protect their families, their people, their land from the aggressor,” he said.

“We are not without hope. We put our trust in God and believe that all this will work out for the greater good. We pray that our Lord strengthens us and increases our faith in these trying times.”

Rabbi Shoshana Kaminsky from Beit Shalom Synagogue drew on the parallels between the Book of Lamentations and people of today who have lost their homes due to floods and war.

“For the people of Jerusalem seeing their beloved temple destroyed and forced to leave their homes we see parallels that haunt us today,” she told the gathering.

“Parallels with the First Nations of this country whose homes were taken away from them along with so much of their culture; the people of New South Wales and Queensland who have lost their homes to the floods, that warn us of the catastrophic effects of climate change; and the people of Ukraine who have been forced to flee their homes to try to find a place of safety.

“These words from so long ago still haunt us today. So we continue to pray that all those who are in need of safe shelters might find them.”

Other community leaders at the service were Kurna elder John Lochowiak from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council, who performed the Welcome to Country; Venerable Thubten Dondrub, Buddha House FPMT; Vani Shukla and Sri Dilip Chirmuley, Hindu Council of Australia; Rev Chris McLeod, National Aboriginal Bishop of the Anglican Church of Australia and Dean of St Peter's Cathedral; Dr Deirdre Palmer, past-president Uniting Church in Australia; Professor Mohamad Abdalla, Centre of Islamic Thought and Education; Rev Anne Hewitt, Churches Together SA; Philippa Rowland, Multifaith Association of SA; and Clement Kuek, African Catholic Choir.