



From Our Vicar

Rev. Wayne Walters

Aboriginal Sunday – an invitation to hear the heart of First Nations brothers and sisters in Christ as we share in worship together.

I discovered some weeks back in conversation with my mum that she had a connection with Pastor Doug Nicholls, the 1930s Fitzroy and Victorian footballer and later Governor of South Australia.

Having moved from the country to Thornbury as a teenager, Mum and her church friends would often frequent the youth group at the church Doug Nicholls later pastored in Northcote. It was the happening place for young people at the time.

Doug Nicholls was quite a celebrity due to his sporting prowess and aboriginality. He became an advocate for recognition of the needs and rights of aboriginal people.

This Sunday we observe Aboriginal Sunday. Why? This idea harks back to 1939 when aboriginal Christian leader and spokesman William Cowper made this proposal to the Christian churches of all denominations.

The day was intended to raise awareness and express solidarity in seeking just and compassionate treatment of the original custodians of this land, whose culture and people had been decimated by the violent dispossession of their lands. NAIDOC Week is a direct result of his appeal.

The revival of this concept by Common Grace, an organisation of both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians which describes itself as 'passionate for Jesus and justice', is an invitation to the wider Christian church to listen to the voice of First Nations Christian leaders and people.

Listening can be confronting. We may not agree with all we hear. We may have urgent questions we want to raise. We may feel that important realities are being overlooked. We may well feel in our current times that we have heard quite enough. The service is offered in a spirit of humility and mutual respect. The video input from Common Grace is sensitive to the breadth of its audience, while frankly representing the faith and perspective and feeling of many in the First Nations community.

We will also hear from some of our own about this parish's significant past involvement with our local aboriginal community.

I warmly commend this Sunday's service to you.

God bless,
Wayne