

Prayer of Confession: Smashing Barriers Down

FM: The theme for Yuróra 2017 is “Uniting Culture”, and today we have been celebrating the diversity of cultures that have gathered here for this festival, through music, dance, storytelling, food and fun.

RSW: Here’s the thing: uniting cultures is really hard. It’s easy to exist together; it is much harder to truly unite. It’s difficult because there are so many aspects of who we are that become barriers that divide us up from one another. At their worst, these barriers can make us see the “other” as the enemy, to be feared and hated and ridiculed. This is particularly true in our world today, our world of Brexit and Trump and terrorism and asylum seeker policy and other things.

FM: But friends, this is not the way of Christ. In worship and bible studies today, you will have heard some stories of how Jesus and other men and women of faith worked to break down those barriers that divide all God’s children. At the core of that ongoing work stands the simple truth: all people are created in the image of God. All people – not just the ones that are like us.

RSW: In his great prayer in John 17, Jesus prays “that they may all be one” – still unique, but recognising the image of God in each other, beyond the things that make us different. So tonight, we are going to pray a prayer of confession, confessing some of the barriers that we place between one another, and in so doing, we will literally smash these barriers down. It is our hope that in doing so, we might go a step closer to truly uniting cultures. Will you join me in prayer?

(Steve to start playing soft music)

FM: Reconciling and renewing God, we name and confess the barrier we place between us due to ethnicity. We confess the times we think of our ethnicity as supreme over others, the times we buy into stereotypes about other ethnicities, and the times we think fairness is real beauty.

(Person 1 smashes tile)

FM: There is no longer Jew and Greek, for all are one in Jesus Christ.

RSW: Reconciling and renewing God, we name and confess the barrier we place between us due to age. We confess the times we say some are too young to be real leaders in the church, the times we say some are too old to still be of value in the church, and the times we dismiss the young as being leaders for tomorrow, not today... and we wonder when tomorrow will come.

(Person 2 smashes tile)

RSW: There is no longer old and young, for all are one in Jesus Christ.

FM: Reconciling and renewing God, we name and confess the barrier we place between us due to education. We confess the times we think of the more educated as nerdy and snobby, the times we think of the less educated as stupid and useless, and the times we equate education with intelligence.

(Person 3 smashes tile)

FM: There is no longer educated and uneducated, for all are one in Jesus Christ.

RSW: Reconciling and renewing God, we name and confess the barrier we place between us due to gender. We confess the times we think males are more suited to be leaders in the church, the times we think females are more suited to be servants in the church, and the times we value physical beauty over other God-given attributes.

(Person 4 smashes tile)

RSW: There is no longer male and female, for all are one in Jesus Christ.

FM: Reconciling and renewing God, we name and confess the barrier we place between us due to mental health. We confess the times we grow impatient in engaging with people who struggle with mental illness, the times we think of depression not as a disease, but as self-indulgent, and the times we suggest that church is only for cheerful fun people.

(Person 5 smashes tile)

FM: There is no longer happy and sad, for all are one in Jesus Christ.

RSW: Reconciling and renewing God, we name and confess the barrier we place between us due to sexuality. We confess the times we subconsciously think that God's love is reserved for straight people, the times we have bullied and demeaned those who identify as LGBTIQ, and the times we think of non-heterosexual people as lesser than us.

(Person 6 smashes tile)

RSW: There is no longer straight and gay, for all are one in Jesus Christ.

FM: Reconciling and renewing God, we name and confess the barrier we place between us due to geography. We confess the times we close our eyes and ears to the living situations of those in vastly different circumstances to our own, the times we make urban cities the holders of power, and the times we stay in our comfort zones, afraid to step out in faith.

(Person 7 smashes tile)

FM: There is no longer urban and rural, for all are one in Jesus Christ.

RSW: And so we join in the great prayer of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: may we be truly One people, united in our faith, and empowered together to be passionate disciples in the world. Amen

(Steve to stop playing)

FM: Hear the Good News, my sisters and brothers: neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor ethnicity nor age nor education nor gender nor mental health nor sexuality nor geography nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Our sins are forgiven; *thanks be to God*.

RSW: We are a forgiven people. What are you going to do about it? How are you going to live your life as a forgiven person? We would like you to make one commitment today. One commitment of one thing you will do to work for unity in the name of Christ. Perhaps you as a young person might commit to serving your church in a more upfront position, so the church recognises you as a leader today. Perhaps you might commit to befriending that gay person at school. Perhaps you might commit to talking with your city church about partnering with a rural church. What one thing will you do to break down the barriers that divide all God's children?

FM: The vollies will now pass out one Post-It for each of you, and pull out a pen if you have one, and if not put your hand up for one. In this time, we'd like you to write your commitment down on that Post-It, and when you are ready, come up to the cross in the centre, and stick it to it, as a way of saying, with Jesus as my strength, I commit to doing this one thing to break down the barriers that divide. You will have about 10 minutes for this, and at the end, we will see the beauty that comes from our commitments to serve the crucified Lord.

(Steve to play more as people do Post-Its; then FM to invite 4 vollies to bring cross up and strap to front of stage)