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Why Australian Christians Should Support an Indigenous Voice to Parliament

by Graham Joseph Hill | May 3, 2023 | Bible & Theology, Church & Ministry, Culture & Society | 0
comments

Aunty Jean Phillips grew up when Aboriginal people were not
allowed to vote or have a say in decisions that affected their lives.

She experienced firsthand the effects of colonialism and the systemic discrimination faced by Indigenous Australians. Despite this, she never lost faith in God; her Christian faith inspired her to work for justice and reconciliation.

In 2018, Aunty Jean Phillips called for a national gathering of Christians to listen to Indigenous Australians' voices and work towards reconciliation. The "Grasstree Gathering" was held in Canberra and brought together over 300 Christians from different denominations and backgrounds.

At the gathering, Aunty Jean Phillips spoke about the need for Christians to support the Indigenous Voice to Parliament. She talked about the importance of listening to Indigenous voices and

f acknowledging past injustices. She also spoke about the role of
p Christians in working towards reconciliation and building bridges
in between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

t The Grasstree Gathering was a powerful example of how Christians can unite to support the Indigenous Voice to Parliament and work towards reconciliation. It showed that the Christian faith could be a source of inspiration and motivation for social justice and that Christians have an important role to play in building a more just and equitable society.

The story of Aunty Jean Phillips and the Grasstree Gathering illustrates why Christians should support the Indigenous Voice to Parliament. It shows that the Christian faith can inspire us to work for justice and reconciliation and that we are responsible for listening to the voices of Indigenous Australians and supporting their right to

have a say in decisions that affect their lives and communities.

I'm convinced that Australian Christians should support an Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

In this article, I explore these crucial questions related to the Voice:

Part One: Understanding the Indigenous Voice to Parliament

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2. A concise summary of the Voice

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Note: I do not represent any institution or organisation in this post – my views in this post are entirely mine. Also, Christians may decide to vote another way out of conscience and their reading of the Bible. The theological reasons to support the Voice are compelling, and the Voice proposal covers the practical concerns. Still, people can vote another way out of conscience and their reading of Scripture. I may disagree with them, but the point of a civil society is that people are free to vote with their conscience after weighing all the evidence and arguments.

f ***Part One: Understanding the Indigenous***

p ***Voice to Parliament***

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t In Part One, I map the origins and details of the Voice.

1. What is the Voice?

The Indigenous Voice to Parliament refers to the proposal for establishing a “First Nations Voice” in the Australian Constitution to give Indigenous Australians a say in the decisions that affect their lives. The idea of the Voice was first proposed in the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart, which was the culmination of a national consultation process with Indigenous Australians.

The proposal for the Voice involves creating a constitutionally enshrined body to advise parliament on matters related to Indigenous

affairs, including laws, policies, and programs. The body would consist of Indigenous leaders from across the country elected by Indigenous people.

Reconciliation Australia writes,

“Senior Counsel and referendum working group member Tony McAvoy outlined the principles [of the Voice] . . .

1. The Voice will give independent advice to the Parliament and Government

2. It will be chosen by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people based on the wishes of local communities

3. It will be representative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

f communities, gender-balanced and include youth

p
in 4. It will be empowering community-led, inclusive, respectful, and culturally informed

t 5. It will be accountable and transparent

6. It will work alongside existing organisations and traditional structures

7. It will not have a program delivery function

8. It will not have a veto power.”

2. A concise summary of the Voice

Here is a summary of the proposal for the Indigenous Voice to Parliament:

1. The Indigenous Voice to Parliament proposal is an initiative to provide a constitutionally enshrined representative body for Australia's Indigenous peoples.

2. It was one of the key recommendations made in the 2017 'Uluru Statement from the Heart', which came out of a First Nations National Constitutional Convention.

3. The proposal calls for the amendment of the Australian Constitution to establish the Voice to Parliament.

4. The body would serve as a formal channel of communication and consultation between Indigenous peoples and the Australian Parliament.

f 5. The Indigenous Voice would not have veto power but would allow
p Indigenous Australians to express their views on legislation and
in policies that impact them directly.

t 6. The proposal recommends that representatives form the Indigenous Voice from each of the major Indigenous regions across Australia.

7. These representatives would ideally be chosen through local Indigenous decision-making processes to ensure they genuinely represent their communities.

8. The Indigenous Voice to Parliament would offer advice and recommendations on matters relevant to Indigenous peoples.

9. It aims to create more informed and effective policies by ensuring that Indigenous voices are heard, and their unique perspectives are

considered.

10. The body would work on various issues, including land rights, cultural preservation, education, health, and social and economic disparities.

11. The Indigenous Voice to Parliament would also work towards reconciliation and recognise Indigenous Australians' rights, history, and contribution to the country.

12. Establishing the Voice is seen as a crucial step in addressing the longstanding marginalization and disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians.

13. Some critics argue that the Voice could potentially create a form of "racial division," but proponents believe it's a critical measure to address systemic injustices.

14. The proposal has yet to be put to a referendum, a necessary step for amending the Australian Constitution.

15. The Indigenous Voice to Parliament would also serve an educational role, increasing awareness about Indigenous cultures and histories amongst non-Indigenous Australians.

16. It's seen as a potential catalyst for nation-building and strengthening democracy by including previously silenced voices in decision-making processes.

17. The Indigenous Voice proposal encourages the recognition of Indigenous peoples as sovereign entities with inherent rights.

18. The proposal is an element of a broader push for a treaty or

treaties between the Australian Government and Indigenous peoples.

19. The actual structure and operation of the Voice are subject to further deliberation and consultation with Indigenous communities.

20. The Indigenous Voice to Parliament is seen as a critical step in the path towards reconciliation and healing the wounds of Australia's colonial past.

21. The proposal is supported by many Indigenous leaders and community groups (and as much as 80% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders), most Christian religious denominations, and some non-Indigenous politicians and organisations.

22. The proposal is an ongoing issue of national importance and can potentially shape the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians for generations to come.

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3. How the Uluru Statement relates to the Voice

Indigenous Australian leaders released the Uluru Statement from the Heart in May 2017. The Uluru Statement from the Heart was attended by 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates from across Australia. The delegates represented a diverse range of Indigenous communities and organizations, and their contributions were the basis of the Uluru Statement. Many Indigenous organizations and leaders subsequently endorsed the statement.

The Uluru statement calls for constitutional reform and structural change to address the ongoing marginalization of Indigenous

Australians. The key points of the Uluru Statement are:

1. Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples.
2. Establishment of a "First Nations Voice" enshrined in the Constitution that will enable Indigenous Australians to have a say in laws and policies that affect them.
3. Makarrata, a process of agreement-making, truth-telling, and treaty-making between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.
4. Establish a Makarrata Commission to supervise the process of agreement-making and to oversee a process of truth-telling about Australia's history.

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The Uluru Statement calls for recognising Indigenous Australians as the land's traditional owners and for protecting and promoting their cultures, languages, and heritage. It also calls for redressing past injustices, including the forced removal of children from their families, and for establishing a process of reconciliation and healing.

Overall, the Uluru Statement represents a call for structural change and constitutional reform to address the ongoing marginalization of Indigenous Australians and to build a more just and equitable society for all Australians.

Some suggest that the current proposal for a Voice goes well beyond what was asked for in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. That is not true. The current Indigenous Voice to Parliament proposal is based on the principles outlined in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The Uluru Statement called for a "First Nations Voice" to be enshrined in

the Constitution, which would advise Parliament on matters relating to Indigenous affairs and ensure Indigenous voices are heard in policymaking. The proposed Voice would be a representative body made up of Indigenous people from across Australia.

The proposal for the Indigenous Voice to Parliament is consistent with the recommendations of the Referendum Council, which the Australian government established in response to the Uluru Statement. The Council conducted extensive consultations with Indigenous communities across the country. It recommended that a “Voice to Parliament” be established to provide a mechanism for Indigenous people to have a say on matters that affect them. In summary, the current proposal for the Indigenous Voice to Parliament is in line with the principles outlined in the Uluru Statement and the recommendations of the Referendum Council. It does not go beyond what was proposed in the Uluru Statement.

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4. A broad summary of the arguments for and against the Voice

Arguments for the Indigenous Voice:

1. Recognition and Representation: The Voice would provide a long-overdue recognition and representation of Indigenous Australians in policy-making, acknowledging their unique status as the nation’s first peoples.

2. Better Policy Outcomes: The Voice would give Indigenous Australians a direct say in policies and laws that affect them, potentially leading to better outcomes in areas like health, education,

and social justice.

3. Reconciliation and Healing: The establishment of the Voice is seen as a significant step towards reconciliation and healing the wounds of the past, acknowledging the systemic disadvantages Indigenous Australians have faced.

4. Preserving Culture and Language: The Voice could play a crucial role in preserving Indigenous culture, language, and traditions by ensuring they have a central place in national decision-making.

5. Self-determination: The Voice would advance Indigenous self-determination, allowing Indigenous Australians to have a greater say in their own affairs.

f Arguments against the Indigenous Voice:



1. Constitutional Complexity: Some critics argue that amending the



Constitution to include the Voice would add unnecessary complexity



and that Indigenous issues should be handled through existing political and legal structures.

2. Risk of 'Separate' Systems: There are concerns that establishing the Voice could create a perception of separate legal and political systems for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, which could be divisive.

3. Representation Concerns: Some argue that it may be challenging to ensure that the Voice genuinely represents the diverse views and interests of Indigenous Australians due to the variety of languages, cultures, and experiences across communities.

4. **Political Feasibility:** There are concerns about the political feasibility of the proposal, given the challenge of achieving bipartisan support and the high threshold required to change the Australian Constitution.

5. **Effectiveness:** Critics question whether the Voice would have real influence, given that it's proposed as an advisory body without the power to veto legislation.

In this ABC Big Ideas podcast episode, four distinguished guests (Warren Mundine, Jacinta Price, Tony McAvooy and Shireen Morris) argue the motion: 'We need to alter the constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice', presented by the Centre for Independent

f Studies. It's a healthy, respectful debate among representatives of
p the Yes and No camps. See the podcast episode
in here: <https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/big-ideas/id164330831?i=1000611719710>
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The debate over the Voice is ongoing, and differing opinions exist on its potential benefits and drawbacks.

5. Why is the Voice needed when we already have the NIAA and other government-funded initiatives?

The proposed Indigenous Voice to Parliament is seen by many as a necessary addition to existing structures and initiatives, including the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) and other government-funded programs. Here are a few reasons why the Voice

is still needed:

1. **Direct Representation:** While the NIAA and similar initiatives play important roles in developing and implementing Indigenous policies, they do not provide direct representation for Indigenous Australians in a way that the Voice is intended to. The Voice is meant to include Indigenous people in the conversation and policy-making process in a more direct and meaningful way.

2. **Unique Perspectives:** Indigenous people's unique perspectives and experiences can help create more effective policies. The Voice aims to ensure that these insights are incorporated into the policy-making process at a high level.



3. **Self-determination:** The Voice to Parliament is also about self-determination. It's about Indigenous peoples having a say in their own affairs, as opposed to policies being determined solely by governmental agencies.



4. **Constitutional Recognition:** The proposal for the Voice also involves constitutional recognition. This would provide a stronger, more permanent form of recognition than administrative bodies like the NIAA, which could potentially be dissolved or restructured by future governments.

5. Addressing Historical Disadvantages: Despite the existence of the NIAA and similar initiatives, significant disparities still exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in areas such as health, education, and social justice. The Voice could help address these ongoing issues by giving Indigenous peoples a more significant say in policy decisions that affect them.

6. Nation-Building: The establishment of the Voice is seen by many as an essential nation-building measure. It's about acknowledging the unique status of Indigenous Australians as the nation's first peoples and ensuring their voices are heard at the highest levels of decision-making.

In summary, while the NIAA and similar initiatives are important,

f many believe the proposed Indigenous Voice to Parliament would
p provide a more direct, meaningful, and constitutionally recognized
in representation for Indigenous Australians. The Indigenous Voice to
t Parliament would be a more effective and equitable way of ensuring
that Indigenous Australians have a genuine say in the decisions that
affect their lives and communities.

6. Have we been given enough detail about the Voice?

While some argue that the proposal lacks detail, I argue it has already provided enough information.

Here are some of them:

1. Extensive Consultation: The proposal is based on extensive

consultation with Indigenous communities, organizations, and individuals across Australia, which suggests a thorough and inclusive approach to its design.

2. The Interim Report: The Interim Report on the Indigenous Voice co-design process provided a significant amount of information about potential models for the Voice, including local, regional, and national elements.

3. Guiding Principles: The proposal outlines clear guiding principles for the Voice, such as inclusivity, cultural leadership, and community-driven representation, providing a framework for its operation.

4. Transparency in Process: The ongoing process of consultation and co-design has been carried out with a high level of transparency, with regular updates and opportunities for public input, making information about the proposal readily available.



5. Clear Mandate: There is a clear mandate for the Voice's primary function – to provide the Australian Government with advice on laws, policies, and programs affecting Indigenous Australians.

6. Local and Regional Engagement: Details on local and regional decision-making processes have been provided, showing how the Voice would engage with and represent communities at these levels.

The Indigenous Voice proposal has already provided enough detail to be considered a viable and practical proposal for establishing a constitutionally enshrined advisory body to give Indigenous Australians a voice in Parliament. The proposal results from extensive consultations, outlines clear objectives, has precedents in

other countries, and provides a solid foundation for further development.

7. Will the Voice divide the nation along racial lines?

Sadly, the Australian nation was founded on the division between races (excluding First Nations people from voting, property rights, freedom of marriage, participation in decisions that affect them, etc.) for a long time. The Voice seeks to address this by bringing people together in their shared understanding of these injustices and shared commitment to addressing past wrongs. Listening to the marginalised does not divide people.

f Here are the reasons why the Voice will not divide Australia along
p racial lines:

in 1. Historical Context and Addressing Disparities: It's essential to
t understand the Voice within Australia's historical and socio-political context. As the first peoples, Indigenous Australians have unique rights and interests that haven't been adequately represented in the nation's decision-making processes. The Voice seeks to address these historical disparities and disadvantages, not create new divisions.

2. Advisory, Not Legislative: The proposed Voice to Parliament is meant to be an advisory body, not a legislative one. It will not have the power to enact or veto legislation. Rather, it would offer guidance and perspectives on legislation and policies impacting Indigenous communities. They argue that This advisory role does not constitute

a racial divide but enriches the legislative process with more diverse viewpoints.

3. Equality Through Equity: The principle of equality does not always mean treating everyone the same. Instead, it often involves recognizing and addressing historical and structural disadvantages to achieve substantive equality. In this sense, the Voice is about promoting equity, not fostering division.

4. Inclusion and Nation-building: The Voice is seen as a crucial step towards including previously silenced or marginalized voices in the nation's political processes. This inclusion is viewed as a nation-building measure that strengthens, rather than divides, Australia.

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5. International Precedent: Globally, there are numerous examples of specific representative mechanisms for indigenous populations within national political structures, such as in New Zealand, Canada, and the Nordic countries. These structures are generally not seen as creating racial divisions but rather as acknowledging and respecting indigenous rights and perspectives.

Part Two: Responding to the Indigenous Voice to Parliament

In Part Two, I explore biblical concepts that shape our response to the Voice.

8. Why I believe that Australian Christians

should support the Voice

Here are a few reasons why I think Australian Christians should support the Voice:

1. Seeking justice and reconciliation: The Bible calls for justice and reconciliation between people, especially those who have been oppressed or marginalized. Supporting an Indigenous Voice to Parliament is a step towards acknowledging and addressing the historical injustices suffered by Indigenous Australians and promoting reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

It is difficult to estimate the exact number of deaths of First Nations people during European occupation, as many deaths were not recorded or documented. However, it is estimated that the population of Indigenous Australians declined by approximately 90% in the century following European settlement due to disease, violence, and forced removal from their lands. Some estimates suggest that up to 20,000 Indigenous Australians were killed during this period of colonisation.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of people who were forcibly removed during the Stolen Generations, as no comprehensive records are available. However, it is estimated that tens of thousands of Indigenous children were removed from their families between the late 1800s and the 1970s under various state and territory laws and policies that aimed to assimilate Indigenous people into mainstream Australian society. The exact number of children removed is unknown, as records were often incomplete, lost, or destroyed. The practice of forced removal had a devastating



impact on Indigenous communities and has had ongoing effects on Indigenous families and individuals in Australia.

Supporting the Voice recognises the Australian Christian church's historical and contemporary complicity in the invasion, dispossession, injustice, and oppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and lands. There are many examples of ways that Australian churches have participated in the oppression and violence against First Nations peoples from the first European settlement until now. Some examples include:

* The establishment of missions and reserves: Churches played a significant role in establishing missions and reserves, which were often used to control and assimilate Indigenous people. The missions

f and reserves were places where Indigenous people were forced to
p live and were subject to European religious and cultural practices.

in * The practice of forced removals: Churches were involved in the
t practice of forced removals of Indigenous children from their families.
Many children were taken from their families and placed in church-run institutions or foster homes, where they were subjected to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

* The promotion of racist attitudes: Churches have promoted racist attitudes towards Indigenous people, with some church leaders arguing that Indigenous people were inferior and in need of “civilizing”. These attitudes were used to justify the forced removals and other policies of assimilation.

* The exclusion of Indigenous people from church activities:
Indigenous people were often excluded from church activities and

worship services, with some churches even refusing to allow Indigenous people to attend. This exclusion was based on racist attitudes and beliefs about the supposed superiority of European culture and Christianity.

* The failure to acknowledge and address past wrongs: Many churches have been slow to acknowledge their role in the oppression and violence against Indigenous people and have not taken sufficient action to address past wrongs or to support Indigenous self-determination and reconciliation.

However, it is important to note that not all churches or Christians have participated in these actions, and many have worked to support Indigenous rights and reconciliation.



Acknowledging the historical and ongoing oppression suffered by Indigenous Australians and providing them with a voice in the decisions that affect their lives is a crucial step towards reconciliation and healing.

2. Respecting diversity and equality: The Bible teaches that all people are created in the image of God and are of equal value and worth. Supporting an Indigenous Voice to Parliament is an expression of respect for the diversity of Australia's population and a recognition of the equality of all people.

3. Showing compassion and empathy: The Bible encourages compassion and empathy towards those who are suffering or disadvantaged. Supporting an Indigenous Voice to Parliament expresses compassion and empathy towards Indigenous Australians who have experienced significant social, economic, and political

disadvantages.

4. Honouring biblical principles: Christians believe in the biblical principles of justice, compassion, and respect for human dignity. Supporting the Indigenous Voice aligns with these principles by recognising Indigenous Australians' inherent worth and value and promoting their well-being. Supporting the Voice aligns with biblical principles and the just, reconciling, and compassionate nature of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Galatians chapter 3 and Genesis chapters 1 and 2 provide biblical and theological reasons why Christians should support the Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

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In Galatians chapter 3, the apostle Paul teaches that all believers are equal in Christ regardless of ethnicity, gender, or social status. He writes, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). This teaching affirms the inherent value and dignity of all people, regardless of their background, and emphasises the need for justice and equality. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been robbed of dignity and equality in our nation's history, and the Voice seeks to ensure equality.

Similarly, in Genesis chapters 1 and 2, we see that all human beings are created in the image of God and are given a divine mandate to care for and steward the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). This means that all people have inherent value and worth and are called to work together to create a just and equitable society for all. Our nation has marginalised, colonised, and excluded First Nations voices for

generations, and the Voice seeks to ensure equality, justice, dignity, and reconciliation.

The Indigenous Voice to Parliament is an important initiative that seeks to give Indigenous Australians a more significant say in the laws and policies that affect them. By supporting the Indigenous Voice to Parliament, Christians can help to promote justice, equality, and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This is consistent with the biblical teachings of Galatians chapter 3 and Genesis chapters 1 and 2, which affirm the inherent value and dignity of all people and call us to work together to build a more just and equitable society for all.

5. Pursuing stewardship of the land: The Bible teaches that

f humans are responsible for caring for the natural world and being
p good stewards of the land. Supporting an Indigenous Voice to
in Parliament is consistent with this biblical principle, as it recognizes
t the unique connection that Indigenous Australians have with the land
and their role as custodians of it.

6. Listening to marginalised voices: Christians recognise the importance of listening to and learning from marginalised communities. The Indigenous Voice would provide an opportunity for Indigenous Australians to share their perspectives and wisdom, which could enrich Australian society as a whole.

The Indigenous Voice to Parliament is an opportunity to promote justice, reconciliation, and mutual respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

If we don't support the Voice, significant damage will be done to our

relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and great damage will also be done to our faith and public witness.

9. Damage to the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australian Christians

The relationship between Australian Christianity and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will be damaged if Australian Christians do not support the Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

There are several reasons for this:

Firstly, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are

f Christians, and their faith is an important part of their cultural identity.

p The Christian churches played a significant role in Australia's

in colonisation history, including the forcibly removing Indigenous

t children from their families. This has led to ongoing trauma and

intergenerational trauma in Indigenous communities. Failure to

support the Indigenous Voice to Parliament could be seen as a lack

of acknowledgement of this history and its ongoing effects.

Secondly, the Indigenous Voice to Parliament is a proposal that many

Indigenous leaders and community groups support and it has been

developed through extensive consultation with Indigenous

communities. Failure to support the Indigenous Voice to Parliament

could be seen as a lack of respect for Indigenous voices and

opinions.

Thirdly, the Indigenous Voice to Parliament is an essential step

towards reconciliation and addressing the legacy of colonisation in Australia. Failure to support the Indigenous Voice to Parliament could be seen as a lack of commitment to reconciliation and addressing past and current injustices.

In short, failure to support the Indigenous Voice to Parliament could be seen as a lack of empathy, respect, and commitment towards Indigenous Australians and their ongoing struggle for justice and equality. This will damage the relationship between Australian Christianity and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and hinder efforts towards reconciliation and healing.

10. Imitating Jesus Christ and reflecting the values of the kingdom of God



Supporting the Indigenous Voice to Parliament can reflect the values, words, and example of Jesus Christ and the values of the kingdom of God in several ways:

1. Justice: Jesus spoke out against oppression and injustice and showed compassion for the oppressed, exploited, and marginalized. Supporting the Indigenous Voice to Parliament can be seen as a way of standing up for justice and advocating for those who have been historically marginalized and excluded.

2. Reconciliation: Jesus taught about the importance of reconciliation and forgiveness. Supporting the Indigenous Voice to Parliament can be seen as a way of working towards reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and acknowledging past injustices.

3. Community: Jesus emphasized the importance of community and caring for one another. Supporting the Indigenous Voice to Parliament can be seen as a way of fostering a sense of community and unity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and promoting the well-being of all members of society.

4. Humility: Jesus taught about the importance of humility and putting others first. Supporting the Indigenous Voice to Parliament

f can be seen as a way of acknowledging the perspectives and
p experiences of Indigenous Australians and recognizing their right to
in have a say in decisions that affect their lives and communities.

🐦 **5. Love:** Jesus taught about the importance of love and treating others with respect and dignity. Supporting the Indigenous Voice to Parliament can be seen as a way of demonstrating love and respect for Indigenous Australians and recognizing their inherent worth and dignity as human beings.

Supporting the Indigenous Voice to Parliament is a way of living out the values, words, and example of Jesus Christ and promoting the values of the Kingdom of God, such as justice, reconciliation, compassion, community, humility, and love.

11. Learning from Aunty Jean Phillips, the

Grasstree Gathering, the Redfern Statement, and Father Frank Brennan

Aside from the example of Aunty Jean Phillips and the Grasstree Gathering, another story that illustrates why Christians should support the Indigenous Voice to Parliament is that of the Redfern Statement, which was released in 2016 by a coalition of Indigenous organizations and leaders.

The Redfern Statement was a call to action for the Australian Government to address Indigenous Australians' systemic disadvantage and work towards reconciliation. The statement included a number of key demands, including establishing a national Indigenous representative body to advise on policy and legislation affecting Indigenous Australians.



The statement was launched at the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence in Redfern, Sydney. It was endorsed by a number of prominent Indigenous leaders and organizations, as well as by many non-Indigenous Australians.

One of the supporters of the Redfern Statement was Father Frank Brennan, a prominent Catholic priest and human rights lawyer.

Father Brennan spoke out in support of the statement, calling on the Australian Government to take concrete steps to address the ongoing injustice Indigenous Australians face.

Father Brennan emphasized the importance of listening to Indigenous voices and acknowledging the wrongs of the past. He also stressed the need for non-Indigenous Australians to support the

Indigenous Voice to Parliament and to work towards reconciliation.

The story of the Redfern Statement and Father Brennan's support for it illustrates why Christians should support the Indigenous Voice to Parliament. It shows that Christians are responsible for standing up for justice and working towards reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It also highlights the importance of listening to Indigenous voices and supporting their right to have a say in decisions that affect their lives and communities.

The story of Aunty Jean Phillips and the Grasstree Gathering, and the story of the Redfern Statement and Father Brennan's support for it, are powerful reminders of the Christian values of justice, compassion, and reconciliation, and the importance of supporting the

f Indigenous Voice to Parliament in order to build a more just and
p equitable society.

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Image Credit: <https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/beautiful-view-uluru-ayers-rock-before-291622457>

Graham Joseph Hill

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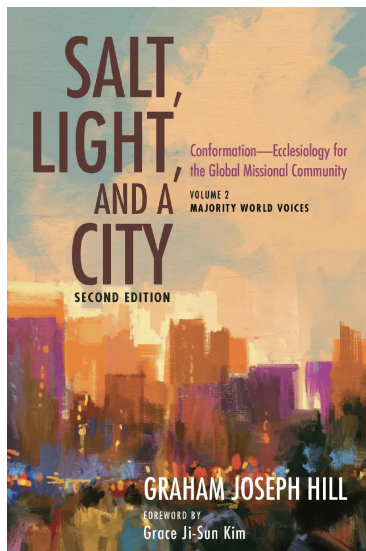
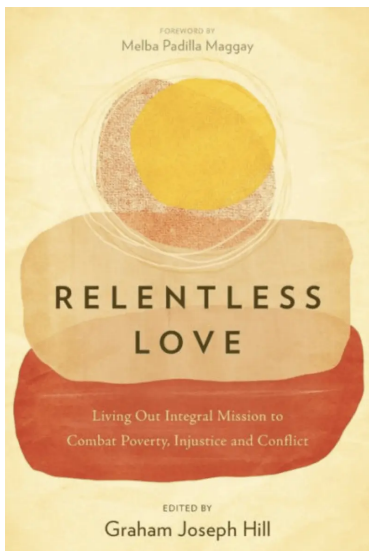
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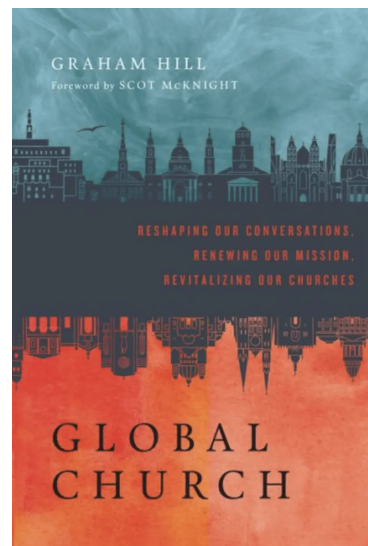
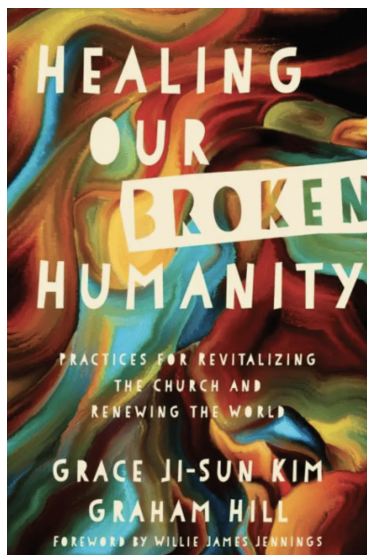
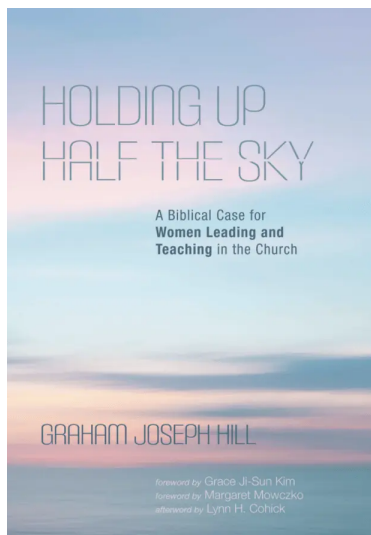
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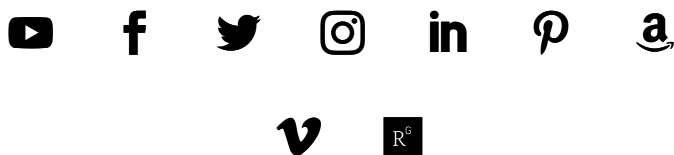
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CONNECT WITH f GRAHAM JOSEPH HILL

 I acknowledge and respect the traditional custodians and their stewardship of
 the land that sustains us all and upon which I now live. I live and work on
 Nyoongar land.



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