

Action and Intention – the Symbols in the Garden

Maltunthi – Bring Close Together

Project coordinator Margaret Gunn spoke at opening of the garden at Enfield Uniting Church on 9th December 2018

This garden honours people who share Kurna heritage.

It is not a memorial to the past, although there is so much to learn, and so much that has been lost. No - this is a living place – inviting relationships between First and Second Peoples - indigenous and non-indigenous - to grow and flourish.

I want to talk about eight symbols in this garden.

Symbols can be like empty words – but our church community wants them to speak of our commitment to on-going action.

1. The land itself offers a symbol of restoration and renewal.

This has always been Kurna land, even when it was ‘kindly presented’ to the fledgling Enfield Methodist Church by a wealthy settler in 1854. We are standing near one of the major intersections on the Adelaide Plains - running east to west, and north to south. Hasn’t it always been a gathering place? Now, it can be a place of restoration and renewal – somewhere First and Second Peoples can relate to one another.

2. The plants are a symbol of resilience and vulnerability. Those planted here are all native to the area – they belong here. But we can see how vulnerable plants can be. We lost the top out of one of the trees in the storm a couple of weeks ago. So on-going care and nurture is needed, just like in relationships, and commitment is needed to build new relationships. We can all be hardy one day – and vulnerable the next.

3. The path is a symbol of the openness that we hope might characterise our relationships with each other. We invite the public to walk through here, freely, without restriction, just as they have always done.

4. The beautiful screens witness to the garden being here. You can’t miss them as you drive or walk past. They help create a place of shelter and belonging, things we would like this church to offer.

5. Light is the fifth symbol and the new lights behind the screen mean they can now ‘speak’ at night as well as day. What do they say? That the respect of First Peoples for this land endures through times of light and darkness; that light overcomes darkness and brings hope to the relationships we seek to build from here?

6. The circular area in the middle of the path is surrounded by sitting rocks and echoes the traditional symbol for a meeting place in the centre of one of the screens. The new seat we’ve installed nearby in the alcove is another sign that people are welcome to gather here.

7. Perhaps the most significant symbol of all is **the name ‘Maltunthi’**. Our church continues to welcome people from across the world and across many of the barriers that divide. We’ve been using the phrase: ‘gathering place’ but ‘*Maltunthi - Bring Close Together*’ expresses our church’s longing for reconciliation between First and Second Peoples.

8. You will notice the sign is on **the shape of a small shield** that’s in the Indigenous gallery at the South Australian Museum. They report it was found only about 1 km away at Prospect Oval when an air raid shelter was being dug in 1942. This shield is a tangible link to Kurna ancestors and speaks of strength and determination. As we walk on this land, let’s remember - and ask ourselves: ‘What else is under our feet?’ Who else has walked here?’