

**National Day of Mourning Service  
St George's Cathedral  
Thursday 22 January 2026**

*Theme: Light will win; a gathering of unity and remembrance*

Let me begin with a poem called "How the light comes" by Jan Richardson.

I cannot tell you  
how the light comes.  
What I know  
is that it is more ancient  
than imagining.  
That it travels  
across an astounding expanse  
to reach us.  
That it loves  
searching out  
what is hidden  
what is lost  
what is forgotten  
or in peril  
or in pain.  
That it has a fondness  
for the body  
for finding its way  
toward flesh  
for tracing the edges  
of form  
for shining forth  
through the eye,  
the hand,  
the heart.  
I cannot tell you  
how the light comes,  
but that it does.  
That it will.  
That it works its way  
into the deepest dark  
that enfolds you,  
though it may seem  
long ages in coming  
or arrive in a shape  
you did not foresee.  
And so  
may we this day  
turn ourselves toward it.  
May we lift our faces  
to let it find us.

May we bend our bodies  
to follow the arc it makes.  
May we open  
and open more  
and open still  
to the blessed light  
that comes.<sup>i</sup>

People right across Australia are gathering today in unity and remembrance. Wherever we are, we're holding before us a simple and powerful conviction: light will prevail. Light will win.

We don't say these words casually, and not because the darkness has been small. The very opposite.

The violence that erupted in a place of everyday joy at Bondi on 14 December shattered lives, families, community and the sense of safety many 21st century Australians have been able to take for granted. We gather today not to deny the darkness of that day and the days since, but to stand honestly within that darkness. We gather to affirm that it does not, that it will not have the final word.

Thousands of years ago, the ancient prophet Isaiah spoke into a moment not unlike this one, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you".

Isaiah wasn't pretending the darkness was imagined. It was real, it was thick, it was overwhelming. Yet the call he made was not to run away from it. Rather, he called his people to rise within that darkness, and to let their God kindle glorious light precisely where it was most needed. The prophet's words were comfort to a suffering people.

Light, however, does more than simply comfort us. Light reveals things. Light brings into sharp focus what darkness has been concealing. Light shows up the wounds carried by people, the damage done to families, the fractures in community life. In the light, we see the ravages of grief visible in the faces of those who bear its pain most personally. In the light, reality can no longer be hidden. The light reveals hard truths upon us.

And yet, Isaiah also offered this promise: "The Lord will be your everlasting light ... your days of mourning shall be ended".

Your days of mourning shall be ended.

Not ended quickly, not ended cheaply, but held within a larger horizon of hope. God's light accompanies through mourning, even as it slowly transforms us.

Psalms 142 gives voice to this, "I cry aloud to the Lord... I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him". This isn't quiet, private grief. It's spoken, communal, and honest grief. We hear the depth of prayerful struggle. Light makes room for truth-telling, for naming fear, sorrow, and confusion without shame.

Today, we stand in that light together, allowing the depth of our shared grief to be seen.

In the wider faith landscape, the Christian Scriptures also speak of the power of light to overcome darkness. John's gospel names Jesus Christ as the light that has come into the world, the true light that the darkness could not overcome.

And what sustains light in dark times is not power or certainty. Jesus did not come with power or certainty. Jesus came with love. We heard the apostle Paul's words on this subject: "Love is patient; love is kind ... It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things ... faith, hope and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love".

These words are often read at weddings, but they were written for a fragile, fledgling community under strain, learning how to remain human toward one another in difficult times. Love, Paul insists, is not sentimental. Love is strong. Love acts. Love endures. We take this love forward as we walk in the light.

This truth is recognised across religious traditions. In Jewish teaching, loving action - *mitzvah* - is not optional goodness; it's a sacred responsibility. A deed of compassion repairs something that's been torn in the world. It restores what violence has damaged. In these days of mourning, *mitzvah* actions are everywhere: people helping strangers, people standing watch, people offering care, people refusing to look away. These are actions that matter. They are light made tangible.

Hope takes root not in denying grief, but in responding to it with courage and care. Hope in humanity. Hope in friendship. Hope in the shared values that bind us together across faiths and cultures, and among those who claim no faith at all. We take this hope forward as we walk in the light.

Light will win, not because the world is unbroken, but because love continues to show up. Light will win because compassion is stronger than fear, and solidarity is more enduring than hostility. Light will win because we choose to remain open to one another, especially when there is so much to mourn.

Today, we remember those who have died. We honour the survivors, whose lives have been changed forever. We acknowledge the wounds that may take a lifetime to heal. And so, together, we choose light.

Light will prevail. Light will win. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Jan Richardson How the light comes, [How the Light Comes by Jan Richardson | Heart Poems](#)