

The Covenant of Reconciliation:  
Worship Service for the Indigenous Day of Prayer 2020  
**St. Albert United Church**

—This worship service was created by Rev. Carolyn Wilson Wynne. Carolyn is a diaconal minister currently serving Valley-Greenfield United Church in Valley, NS. From 2008–2013 she served St. Clair United Church on *Aaamjiwnaang First Nation, Sarnia, ON*.

*Additions (with source reference) and changes have been made to adapt the service for the congregation of St. Albert United Church and in light of the ongoing need to gather by virtual means during this pandemic time.*

COMMUNITY WELCOME <https://youtu.be/jybex4PhrJ0>

Tawow, Bienvenue, Welcome to St. Albert United Church on this the Indigenous Day of Prayer Sunday as we gather through the wonder of virtual means.

*As we come together, we acknowledge that we do so in the traditional lands of Treaty 6 First Nations and a significant trading community of the Métis Nation. Where we now gather, generations gathered long before Europeans landed on these shores. The original inhabitants of this land, known to some Indigenous peoples as Turtle Island, took seriously the Creator's call to be stewards of air, land, water, and creature. This morning we pray our thanks for their conservancy; we exist in this place because of the lessons they continue to teach. Let us come before the Creating One as we offer our prayers, hear holy story, and sing sacred songs.*

We also affirm all are welcome to share fully in our life and work regardless of age, race, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, belief, economic circumstance, ability or background. St. Albert United Church: a place where EVERYONE has room to grow.

If you have a concern regarding someone who is ill, grieving or in need, please inform the ministers.

Note that for the songs/hymns there is a link for the words and music.  
Simply copy and paste.

***We gather, cultivating space for everyone...***

**LIGHTING A CANDLE/OJIBWE – MORNING PRAYER SONG**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qRo-z0EyrE>

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

We gather to share in God’s dream of abundant life for all. We gather to give and receive gifts of deep emotion, deep wisdom, and deep love. With gratitude we gather as a community to praise God, to seek transformation, and to celebrate the power of the Spirit who is always moving.

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**GATHERING PRAYER:**

Creator God, Great Spirit, we pray our thanks for the opportunity to gather in this sacred space. Here we are most aware of the gift of wind:

and the four directions from which it comes.

Here we are most aware of the gift of sun:

and the four directions on which it shines.

Here we are most aware of the gift of humanity:

and the four directions in which we exist.

Here we are most aware of the gift of Creation:

and the four directions which support our living, breathing, and being.

This day we pray thanksgiving for the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people of Canada;

and we commit ourselves to be people of reconciliation in the tradition of our beloved Jesus. We pray in his name. Amen.

**OPENING HYMN: VU 226 “For the Beauty of the Earth”**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGt4-KyFwe4>

Female Duo with piano

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUU6jkHh1n8>

Mormon Tabernacle Choir with organ

TIME FOR ALL AGES:

THE WORD INDIGENOUS EXPLAINED / CBC KIDS NEWS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CISeEFTsgDA>

SONG: “The Canada Song” by Judy Lea

Multicultural/Canada Kids/Indigenous/Celebrate Diversity/Anti Racial

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9ZP2Ap5sp8>

***We listen, attentive to the voice of Jesus***

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

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We need be reminded that justice is a cornerstone of God’s love; therefore, this day as we reflect on the need for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people it is good to hear the psalmist’s words! It is all of our prayer that justice flourish and peace abound.

A Reading from the Psalms:

Psalm 72:1-8

Prayer for Guidance and Support for the Ruler

*Of Solomon.*

- <sup>1</sup> Give the ruler your justice, O God,  
and your righteousness to a royal heir.
- <sup>2</sup> for judging your people with righteousness,  
and your poor with justice.
- <sup>3</sup> May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,  
and the hills, in righteousness.
- <sup>4</sup> May your anointed defend the cause of the poor of the people,  
give deliverance to the needy,  
and crush the oppressor.

- <sup>5</sup> May your anointed live<sup>[a]</sup> while the sun endures,  
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.
- <sup>6</sup> May your anointed be like rain that falls on the mown grass,  
like showers that water the earth.
- <sup>7</sup> In your anointed's days may righteousness flourish  
and peace abound, until the moon is no more.
- <sup>8</sup> May your anointed have dominion from sea to sea,  
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

One: Herein we seek wisdom. **All: Thanks be to God.**

The NRSV translation of this passage uses a word that is relevant to our time together today. The author of Matthew's gospel speaks of reconciliation and the need for it before one makes an offering. In other words, before we give to God what is sacred to us, the gift needs be given with integrity. Let the ancient words wash over you and reside in your heart and spirit.

A Reading from the Gospels:

Matthew 5:21-24

### Concerning Anger

<sup>21</sup> "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister,<sup>[a]</sup> you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult<sup>[b]</sup> a brother or sister,<sup>[c]</sup> you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell<sup>[d]</sup> of fire. <sup>23</sup> So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister<sup>[e]</sup> has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister,<sup>[f]</sup> and then come and offer your gift.

One: Herein we seek wisdom. **All: Thanks be to God.**

SILENT REFLECTION:

*We take a few moments to reflect on all we have heard.*

HYMN: VU 601 “For the Beauty of the Earth”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHRI-wez1DY>

MESSAGE:

In his 2012 book *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*, Indigenous author Thomas King points out that relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples have not changed much over the centuries. “Guns and bugles” may be a thing of the past, but 21st century North America continues to hold onto its feelings of disdain and superiority.

That may not be what you want to hear on this day when we honour the Indigenous peoples with whom we share this country. However, in light of the racism encountered in response to the rail barricades erected in support of the Wet’suwet’en traditional leaders (the hereditary chiefs), the reality King describes is more accurate than is comfortable. Social media was rife with racist comments; there seemed little willingness on the part of settler folks to consider that possibly this was more than a single issue.

Many non-Indigenous/settler people have wrestled with the legacy of 500 years of racist policies; let us pray that this agreement enables changes that uphold just and fair relations. We must hold out hope because the inertia that accompanies our current state of relationship needs to shift dramatically.

June 2020 is the fifth anniversary of the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s \(TRC’s\) release of its 94 Calls to Action](#). How many of our United Church people have read all 94 Calls, or even just those that are directed particularly at churches? What is the likelihood that there are good people in our pews who don’t remember there was a Truth and Reconciliation Commission? And that it wasn’t the altruism of federal government that birthed the TRC, but rather a condition of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement?

Prior to the release of its report, from 2008–2014 the TRC crisscrossed this country listening to the survivors of Residential Schools speak their truth of abuses—physical, emotional, spiritual.

Survivors shared the horrors that traumatized and continue to traumatize. Settler folk were shocked by the accounts of sexual and physical abuse, dietary restrictions, electric chairs, and sensory deprivation.

Truth is, the survivors had been telling these stories for generations; we didn't listen until they were broadcast into our living rooms. The report that concluded the work of the TRC is a document Canadians should have a look at, if not a complete read. And the Calls to Action should be required reading! The United Church of Canada is one of the parties to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and 14 of the 94 Calls relate to that relationship—numbers 29, 46, 48, 49, 58, 59, 60, 61, 73, 74, 75, 76, 81, 82.

*(Notes:*

- *For more information, visit the [United Church's TRC webpage](#) and read "United Church Response to the TRC Calls to Action" available under Downloads at the bottom of the page.*
- *The full text of all 94 Calls is available for download as a [pdf on the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation's website](#).*
- *You may also wish to visit [Beyond 94](#), an interactive feature from CBC News to learn about some of the ways how the TRC Calls to Action are being lived out through events and educational opportunities.)*

On this National Indigenous Day of Prayer, let's focus on Call 46:

*We call upon the parties to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement to develop and sign a Covenant of Reconciliation that would identify principles for working collaboratively to advance reconciliation in Canadian society, and that would include, but not be limited to:*

- i. Reaffirmation of the parties' commitment to reconciliation.*
- ii. Repudiation of concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius, and the reformation of laws, governance structures, and policies within their respective institutions that continue to rely on such concepts.*

- iii. Full adoption and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation.*
- iv. Support for the renewal or establishment of Treaty relationships based on principles of mutual recognition, mutual respect, and shared responsibility for maintaining those relationships into the future.*
- v. Enabling those excluded from the Settlement Agreement to sign onto the Covenant of Reconciliation.*
- vi. Enabling additional parties to sign onto the Covenant of Reconciliation.*

It is a concern that the word reconciliation has become a bit of a buzzword in our culture. As people of faith we need to recognize this is a Biblical principle and a tenet of our faith tradition found in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5:23-24 states: “When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister and then come and offer your gift.” Reconciliation is key to relationships that are mutual and respectful, in which all parties in the relationship are valued. Only then, according to Jesus, can we offer our best at the altar. Only then does our gift have integrity! When we recognize there’s conflict, it’s our responsibility to seek restoration of the relationship. The key, of course, is that wounds need to heal and that requires time and patience—on all sides in the conflict! Seeking reconciliation manifests the kingdom/kingdom/realm/dominion/commonwealth of our God! In our midst!

Call to Action 46 relies upon the Settlement Agreement parties (of which our church is one) to be vigilant about reconciliation and to understand the possible impact on relationships between communities of faith and Indigenous communities as we live into a reconciled relationship. Our church has been earnest and sincere in the years since the TRC Report was presented. Even though the United Church operated residential schools, many in our congregations continue to be unaware of that truth.

Education has been and continues to be paramount in our journey to reconciliation. Indigenous people were forever changed by their experiences **in our care.**

The generations following continue to deal with the legacy—the trauma is multi-generational. Non-Indigenous/settler people must grapple with Christianity's role in the genocide many continue to deny.

Do you know about the [Justice and Reconciliation Fund](#)? It was established in 2000 by the Residential Schools Steering Committee of the United Church and assists the church in understanding and responding to the legacy of harm and broken relationships that have resulted from the Indian Residential Schools System. The fund supports projects by United Church groups and partners that foster education, dialogue, reconciliation, and relationship-building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Monies are available to communities of faith who meet the goals of the fund. The good news is that the number of applications has increased in the last couple of years so there are people in our midst aware of the Calls to Action and willing to make the effort to seek reconciliation. It is our hope and prayer that all parties to the Indian Residential Schools Agreement will soon develop and enter into the Covenant of Reconciliation described in Call 46. This will be good news for all of us!

It is our communal prayer that soon, very soon, every community of faith will gain an understanding about the historical racism that birthed the Residential School System and the *Indian Act*. It continues to be our prayer that reluctance to see the latest attempts by Indigenous people and allies to influence the dominant culture's ignorance to the lack of just relationships will be diminished.

With every fibre of his being, our beloved Jesus lived and modelled relationships grounded in mutuality.

The Kingdom/kingdom/realm/dominion/commonwealth he and our Loving God wish each of us to live in is here and coming! Let all of us work toward that reality for our siblings.

And then, perhaps authors like Thomas King can soon write about how the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people has become one that upholds all of us!

Amen.

SOLO: “The Divinity Our Love Can Liberate” sung by Jamoof

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7OWdU-Bh\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7OWdU-Bh_o)

#### PRAYER OF CREATION:

Creator God, Great Spirit, whose compassion has been known in our lives more times than we can count, we open our hearts and souls to the needs of this world. On this Indigenous Day of Prayer, we acknowledge the great injustices perpetrated against those who lived on and cared for this land long before our ancestors arrived. We pray that with compassion and determination we will continue to make ourselves aware of the impact of Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, and the suppression of Indigenous culture and tradition so that the legacy of colonization is acknowledged by each of us.

Creator God, Great Spirit, you call us to relationships rooted in equality and respect. This day we covenant to be more aware of the racism that the Indigenous, Métis and Inuit people of this country experience. We commit ourselves to raise our voices when we hear prejudiced comments, to guide others in the sacred direction of celebrating diversity that is Your gift to humanity.

Creator God, Great Spirit, in the quiet of our hearts and through the witness of our beings we pray thanks for Your accompaniment on the journey toward individual and communal wisdom and understanding. Let us who are the Church stand in solidarity and true to Jesus’ call to reconcile with sisters and brothers.

Creator God, Great Spirit, hear our prayers and guide our actions from this moment on. We pray using Jesus’ words:

THE LORD'S PRAYER IN CREE: Read by author Sylvia Caribou

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEeRzILMKio>

### SHARING OF GIFTS

It is very important that we remember to continue to share our gifts of time, connection, prayer, talent and resources with God's people. Please, consider continuing to support agencies and associations which have relied on your financial support prior to these changing world circumstances. We recognize that during these difficult times, personal finances may be severely diminished. However, please consider contributing financially as you are able to support St. Albert United Church's ministry. Expenses continue even with the suspension of services and operations.

**Please check the church website for ways in which you can support ministry with time, talents and resources.**

([www.stalbertunited.ca](http://www.stalbertunited.ca))

### SHARING OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN GOD'S WORK

Reach out in a variety of ways to your family, friends, and fellow congregation members—connect with and support each other.

**Please check the church website for updates and information.**

([www.stalbertunited.ca](http://www.stalbertunited.ca))

HYMN: MV 144 "Like a Healing Stream"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0ItwNE0VQE>

CREE PRAYER WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwV-uRhPUNY>

BLESSING:

Move from here a reconciled and reconciling people with assurance that Creator God, Great Spirit accompanies you this day and every day. Amen.

MUSICAL POSTLUDE