



The Anglican Church of Canada

**Prayers and Ceremony Resource
at Vigils for
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls**



Vigil Prayers and Ceremony for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

**Guidelines for Prayers and Ceremony at Vigils for Missing and Murdered
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Creating Sacred Space – It is recommended that smudging or an appropriate ceremony for the location be used to create Sacred space to honour and remember Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Smudging is an act of purification and protection. It is used to bring people together to be of a “good mind” as the Creator wants us to be. It is comparable to the use of incense by the Hebrew people: “For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name...” (Malachi 1:11).

If appropriate, an elder from the land should welcome people to the ceremony and explain why we are being called to pray. The purpose of creating Sacred Space is to help participants feel safe and build a community of trust and faith. A special prayer may be written for the occasion, one that takes into account the Land and the people of the Land. Arrange chairs in a circle with a table in the centre.

Sing an appropriate song/hymn. *Please see suggestions below.*

Lighting of Candles – each participant is given a votive candle to light to remember Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. They may choose to say a name or not, as it is up to their discretion and this should be explained before the ceremony begins.

Sing an appropriate song/hymn.

Story telling – ask if anyone would like to share a story of a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Woman and Girl that they may know from their community. Be prepared to console and support. It may be possible to invite a guest story teller, someone who has been working to bring awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Sing an appropriate song/hymn.

Prayers for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls – these prayers should include a general prayer for the women and girls, for those who are grieving, for those who are investigating, for those who need to be involved, for justice and reconciliation and healing from all trauma experienced by First Nations/Inuit/Métis people. Use of a drum can be very effective while saying the prayers but make sure the use of a drum is appropriate for that community.

Closing the Circle – invite each person to make a commitment to create an awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. What will they tell their community, their neighborhood, or their political leaders? After each makes a commitment, they extinguish their candle. Some may not be able to make a commitment and that’s okay -- tell them this is the beginning. A commitment could be to set aside a certain time every day to pray for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Invite them to take a candle and light it when praying for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Closing Prayer – this is another place for a specially written prayer or for the Lord’s Prayer in the language of their choice.

Sing an appropriate song/hymn.

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Traditional food always brings comfort. It would be good to have bannock or fried bread with jam, tea, coffee, or juice. It doesn't have to be an elaborate meal and may be good to ask those attending to bring something to share. Orange and/or red are colours known to have been used to commemorate Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. You may wish to make ribbons and have pins available, similar to those used for breast cancer awareness.

Recommended Hymns/Songs, Scripture and Prayers for the October 4 Vigil to remember the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Hymns/Songs:

Many and Great (Common Praise (CP) Hymnal #407)
Peace Before Us (Wonder, Love and Praise)
She Flies On (CP Hymnal #656)
We Cannot Measure How You Heal (CP Hymnal #292)
Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness (CP Hymnal #397)
How Could Anyone – Libby Roderick
God on the Mountain – Tracy G. Dartt
Singing For Our Lives – Holly Near
No More Genocide – Holly Near
Over the Rainbow – Harold Arlen/E. Harburg
River of Jordan – Peter Yarrow
We Shall Overcome
The 23rd Psalm (Dedicated to My Mother) – Bobby McFerrin

The Lord is my Shepherd, I have all I need,
She makes me lie down in green meadows,
Beside the still waters, She will lead.

She restores my soul, She rights my wrongs,
She leads me in a path of good things,
And fills my heart with songs.

Even though I walk, through a dark & dreary land,
There is nothing that can shake me,
She has said She won't forsake me,
I'm in her hand.

She sets a table before me,
in the presence of my foes,
She anoints my head with oil,
And my cup overflows.

Surely, surely goodness and kindness will follow me,
All the days of my life,
And I will live in her house,
Forever, forever and ever.

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Glory be to our Mother and Daughter,
And to the Holy of Holies,
As it was in the beginning, is now & ever shall be,
World, without end. Amen.

Suggestions for Scripture reading and reflection

Mark 16: 1 - 11

This is the story of the resurrection. Two important questions could be asked. First, who will roll away the stone that is blocking the government from taking action? Second, how do we restore the honour to women and how do we promote this honour in all of society?

Jesus gave women a great honour in this passage. In our First Nations Societies women are honoured for being wisdom keepers, carriers of the culture and for being child bearers. Many First Nations are matrilineal. For example, the Six Nations have a clan system and each clan has a clan mother. The clan mother is expected to select the chief for the clan and also has the power to remove the chief if he does not do what is best for the people. Usually, the clan mother consults with clan members when making these kinds of decisions.

Mark 5: 21 – 43

The story of Jairus' daughter and the hemorrhaging woman are two stories within one – a girl of privilege and a woman at the margins according to religious purity laws. Both are in need of healing and are healed by Jesus.

What cultural taboos is Jesus breaking in his respect and love for girls and women? How does he restore the girl to life and the woman to wholeness and social acceptance? What is the Creator saying to us in this passage?

Prayers:

Creator, we come to you with humility, respect, courage, and honesty, seeking your wisdom, generosity and love. Help us to understand those things that lead our people into despair; guide us to help make changes and restore the spirituality of our people. For all the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, we give thanks for their lives and pray that they have found peace with You.

Give your comfort to family and friends, help them to heal and find ways to honour their loved ones. Give us strength to prevent our people from falling into mind-changing substances and ways of life that are not in harmony with our traditional teachings. Creator, mend our circle, restore us to the good way; we ask this in your name and the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, the Peacemaker. Amen.

Since October 4 is St. Francis Day, the following prayer attributed to St. Francis may also be appropriate:

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Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, joy; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.
(public domain)

Prepared by the Rev. Canon Ginny Doctor, Henriette Thompson and a Sacred Circle advisory group, September 2015

**Resources for the Word or Celebrations of the Holy Eucharist
for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**

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This year, October 4, the National Day of Remembrance for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, falls on a Sunday. The following are suggested options and resources for those preparing worship, suitable for services of the Word or for celebrations of the Holy Eucharist.

From amongst the existing liturgical text authorized by the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, we suggest the use of:

- *Supplemental Eucharistic Prayer #2* (2001), for its tone of lament and the ways in which it evokes particular solidarity with the marginalized and suffering.
- The *Propers for Holy Innocents* (BAS p. 398-399) offer rich biblical imagery.
- Please see page 4 of this resource for hymns from *Common Praise*

Prayers

The following prayers were developed within the 22 Days campaign for the community of Church House staff and friends, and are suitable for use in a variety of contexts of prayer for missing and murdered indigenous women, such as within the prayers of the people in the Eucharist or service of the word, or in special prayer vigils. These are offered in the spirit of sharing gifts; we encourage you to adapt them to your context.

Creator God, accept all we offer you this day:
our prayers for your vulnerable children;
our grief for your beloved Indigenous women
our hope in your healing and reconciling love.
Receive the sacred colours, food,
and medicines we lay before you
and, through them, work the healing of our souls
for the service of your mission.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Eternal God,
you comfort the afflicted and heal the broken.
You have fed us this day at the table of life and hope.
Teach us to walk the ways of gentleness and peace in your world.
Keep your people from callous indifference
to racism, sexism, and violence
that your children from all four directions may flourish
in the beautiful life that is your intention for creation.
Amen.
(Adaptation of prayer after Communion, BAS, Holy Innocents)

Gathering of the Community or Prayers of the People

The following may be appropriate within the Gathering of the Community, or in the Prayers of the People.

Come Great Spirit, as we gather in your name. We face East (*all turn and face east*): To your symbol colour – Yellow for the morning star. To your animal sign – the Eagle which can soar ever upward in praise of God and calls us to do the same. To your lessons calling us to balance of Mind in the Spirit of Humility. To treasure the newborn and children and young people in our communities. Help us love you and one another with our whole heart, our whole mind, and our whole soul, we pray.

Come Holy Spirit, come.

We remember before you all the Indigenous girls and very young women who have suffered abuse, rape, and violence. All those from the East of our land who are missing or have been confirmed to be murdered, for their communities and families and all who mourn. May we turn our hearts, minds, souls and bodies to care, to advocate, and to seek justice.

We turn to face South (*turn*) To your symbol colour –Red, the hue of revelation. To your animal symbol – the Buffalo, strong and nurturing. To your lessons calling us to the balance of our Spirit in Harmony with brothers and sisters. To the young bursting into adulthood with vigour. To invoke your wisdom and grace and the goodness of the ages, we pray:

Come Holy Spirit, come.

We remember before you all the Indigenous women, who, coming into the greening and beautiful springtime of life have been violated, beaten, and cut down. All those from the South of our land who are missing or murdered, for all their families and communities and all who mourn. May we seek ways to support the children and families of these women, with true nurture and care.

We turn to face West (*turn*): To your symbol colour – Black, still and quiet. To your animal symbol – the Bear. To your symbol, the Thunder mighty and purposeful. To your lessons calling us to balance our Emotions in the Spirit of Gentleness and Honesty. To those in the strength of the middle of life. To invoke your Spirit of Introspection – seeing within. Give us your strength and the courage to endure, we pray:

Come Holy Spirit, come.

We remember before you all the Indigenous women, who, as mothers of girls and women who have been brutalized are seared with the burning pain of grief. For all those from the West of our land who are missing or murdered, for all their families and communities and for all who mourn. May their fathers and mothers find healing in memory, and the hope for justice into which are called into partnership.

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We turn to face North (*turn*): To your symbol colour – White of clarity and brightness. To your animal symbol – the Quetzal which brings us in touch with earthiness and growing things. To your lessons calling us to balance of our Body in the Spirit of a good sense of humour. We turn to the elders in our midst and in our memories. To invoke your Spirit of Wisdom, Trust and Love. Help us to open our eyes to the sacredness of every living thing, we pray:

Come Holy Spirit, come.

We remember before you all the Indigenous women Elders who bring the wisdom of their lives to guide the younger generations. We give thanks for their strength and courage, for those who have shared their healing journeys. We pray for continued healing and relief for them for the grief they carry for their grandchildren, Indigenous girls and women missing or murdered, as they near the end of their days. May we so honour these Elders that their stories of survival and healing from violence may guide us and teach us deeply.

We come back to the centre, which is our place of prayer today.

May all who inhabit this sacred space today, in body, soul, mind and heart, be drawn even more deeply through compassion into love for our Indigenous sisters and all their relations; may they be renewed in your hope; and may they be strengthened to serve along the pathways to which they are called.

This we pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, through Jesus, our brother.

Amen.

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Psalm

The following is a paraphrase of Psalm 22

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me and are so far from my cry for help? O my God, I cry by day and by night, but you don't hear me. I can't sleep. But you are the Holy Creator.

Pause, spoken or sung Kyrie or other meditative chant

Our ancestors put their trust in you; they trusted, and you kept them safe and guided them. They cried out to you and you helped them; they trusted in you and had no reason to feel any shame. But as for me, I am a worm and barely human anymore, cast aside by the system and despised by society. Those who see me laugh at me cruelly; they move to the other side of the street and say, "You trusted in the ways of the Creator; hah! Let that God rescue you. You already get enough government help." You're the one who took me safely out of my mother's womb, and kept me safe at her breast.

My grandparents entrusted me to you when I was born; you were my Creator even before I was born.

Pause... Kyrie, etc.

Stay close to me... I am in trouble and nobody – Nobody – is here to help me. Night after night, it's like beastly monsters fencing me in, stalking me, following me at night. They sneer and they salivate and they cat call and catch me and violate me and hurt me and threaten me and leave me poured out like water; all my bones have been beaten out of joint; my heart within my breast is melting wax. My mouth is dried out like clay; my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; and it's like you've put me in into a dusty grave. Gangs of men close in on me and abusers circle around me; they pierce my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones while they stare and gloat over me. They strip me of my clothes and toss them about among them, my best things going to the highest bidder.

Pause ... Kyrie, etc.

Be not far away, Strong Creator; you are my strength; hasten to help me. Save me from the fist, the knife, the gun, the stranglehold, the spirits of despair and depression that rule our lives. Save my life, my body and my soul from the power of these spirits of evil. I will declare your name to all my relations; in the midst of the whole community I will praise you. Praise the Creator, you that fear God; stand in awe of God, O children from seven generations into seven generations. All peoples. Because you, Great Spirit, do not hate or abuse the poor in their poverty; you don't turn away from them; when they cry to you, you really do hear them.

Pause... Kyrie, etc.

I will offer you my praise and gratitude before the whole community. The poor shall have a huge feast and be satisfied, and those who seek you shall give praise: "May your heart live for ever!" All four directions of the earth shall remember and turn to you, and all the relations of all the nations shall bow before their Creator who sets the teachings for all the nations. Even the dead who now sleep in the earth will bow down in worship. My soul shall live for God; my descendants shall serve God; they shall be known as the Creator's forever. They shall come and tell the story to the next generations how God has saved us.

Pause... Kyrie, etc.

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Closing rite

Suitable as a closing rite:

Creator God, Great Spirit, Brother Jesus, community of the Holy Trinity, we give you thanks and praise for the gift of prayer that presence makes rise up in us, in our grief and solidarity and yearning for justice. You are with us in spirit, love, and truth. We thank you for receiving into your heart our prayers, our grief, our confusion, our questions, our anger, our pain, and our hope for the healing of all who suffer abuse and grief. May this day humble us to the needs of the world, especially to the suffering of vulnerable Indigenous women.

(As the bells have rung) we ask you to grant eternal rest to these your beloved women. May light perpetual shine on them. Give rest, O Christ, to your children with your saints, where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting. Give comfort to their families and communities, to mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunties, uncles and children of those missing and murdered.

Strengthen us as we seek to serve your mission of healing of your beloved creation. As you cradle the world and all its creatures in your love, help us to trust in the firm and gentle hold of that embrace, that we might commit ourselves with steadfast faith and persistent hard work to pursue justice, to speak truth in the light where violence hides in the dark. Sustain and guide us as we seek to heal the festering conditions that breed violence and hatred. Be our teacher in the ways of compassionate care. Make firm and longstanding our commitments.

The people may be invited to make commitments such as the following, based on the Baptismal Covenant:

When we break bread together, will you share in prayer for our Indigenous sisters?

I will, with God's help.

Will you resist the powers and structures of evil that create violence and abuse, racism and sexism, and, when you come face to face with your place of privilege, will you turn in repentance and keep the circle strong?

I will, with God's help.

Will you proclaim by word and deed the good news in Christ that you have witnessed in the stories of pain, struggle, and healing to which we are paying attention in these 22 Days?

I will, with God's help.

As you live out this good news of salvation, will you work to recognize your own needs for healing, will you seek out and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself?

I will, with God's help.

The whole creation yearns for us, the children of God, to be revealed in our care for each other and for all of creation. Will you join the struggle against the social, racial, economic and land injustices that affect the lives of First Nations people and harm the earth?

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I will, with God' s help.

Great Creator, you have given us new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, forgiven our sins, and freed us to be one in Christ to serve in the healing of the world. Walk with us from this sacred place, and keep us strong, faithful, loving and wise in our commitments. All this we ask through Christ, our brother and Lord. **Amen.**