Welcome and Acknowledgement of Traditional Territory
Welcome to this service on the theme of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. We begin by acknowledging the traditional territory upon which we gather this morning. For many thousands of years, the (name the nation or nations) have sought to walk gently on this land. They offered assistance to the first European travellers to this territory and shared their knowledge for survival in what was at times a harsh climate. We seek a new relationship with the Original Peoples of this land, one based in honour and deep respect.

Lighting of the Christ Candle
As we light the Christ candle we are reminded that Christ came into the world to be a light and inspiration to all peoples and not just to a select few. We are called to follow that light by living with respect for all of creation.

Call to Worship
One: Let us give thanks to our Creator, for the Creator is always with us.
All: Creator and creating God, you have given life to all around us.
One: You call us to be with you whether we are inside in the shelter of these walls or outside in the shelter of your trees.
All: God is with us when we gather together and when we are alone.
One: We are here to answer that call.
All: We will sing joyfully and we will listen attentively for your whispering voice.


This outline, texts and prayers are meant as resources for a worship service on or around May 31, 2015, the Sunday that begins four days of events in Ottawa marking the formal closing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They can flow as a whole service or liturgy or represent options for your consideration. These resources have been prepared largely from the perspective of non-Indigenous Canadians, seeking reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Please adapt to suit your needs.


Deep gratitude to Rick Balson, Sheryl Johnson, and Emma Hebb for preparing these worship resources.
Opening Hymn

The Gospel Came with Foreign Tongue
(To the tune of "Winscott", music in VU #589, BP #597)

The gospel came with foreign tongue
disrupting all the ancient ways,
Beside the merchant and the gun,
in search of profit, souls and slaves.

With God we weep, lament, confess
how holy zeal and bloodied hand
Reached out to kill and dispossess,
proclaiming love and taking land.

How hard, today, to meet and share
our needs, suspicions, hopes and fears,
When some have ease, and food to spare,
while others walk a trail of tears!

In hope we come, by grace reborn,
As clashing stories still collide,
to listen, pray, and travel on,
companions of the Crucified.

We tell our varied memories,
assembled in our global room,
that Christ may wash our histories,
as threads for Love's eternal loom.

Opening Prayer: A Prayer for All Peoples

All: Creator God, our country has journeyed for six years in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process, seeking understanding, healing, and reconciliation.
It has not always been an easy path, but we have sought to walk it together.
We have tried to listen to each other’s stories.
We have sought to understand without judgement.
We have noted the differences in values and traditions, but also the places where we share values and traditions.
We are all your children.
You embrace all in your love.
You call us now to reflect that love to each other.
You call us to be brothers and sisters on the path to reconciliation.
Amen.

Hymn

Words by Brian Wren
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Hymn Options:
Many and Great, O God, Are Your Works: VU #308; CP #407, EL #837, BP #301, H #35, WS #16
Let us Build a House: MV #1
Miren qué bueno, qué bueno es: CP #473
Gather Us In: CB #587, CP #465

Hymn

KAIROS unites eleven Christian churches and religious organizations in a faithful ecumenical response to Micah 6:8.
www.kairoscanada.org  May 31, 2015
Children’s reflection time

What does it mean to be sorry? By Emma Hebb

Have you ever felt like someone wasn’t really sorry when they apologized to you?

Wait for answers

Sometimes people say they are sorry, but then their actions afterwards tell us they are not really willing to change, or to stop hurting us. Sometimes it’s just small things, but sometimes it’s big things.

When European settlers first came to Canada there were already people here ... Indigenous peoples. They already had families, languages, forms of government, and ways to hunt and grow food. They were and are really great people. And they are also not just one group of people. Within what we call Canada there are many different Indigenous Nations. Can you name some? ...Mi’Kmaq, Cree, Huron, Dene, Haida...so many different nations within our country.

When European settlers came, they very quickly had the idea that their way was the only way, the right way. Many couldn’t see the beauty of all the different nations, and they couldn’t appreciate the ways of knowing that each nation could have offered them. They felt that what was best was to make everyone do things the same way--their way.

Since the beginning of calling this place Canada, settler Canadians have worked to make all the Indigenous Nations more like Europeans. One really terrible idea was to take Indigenous children away from their families and create schools for them. There they were punished if they spoke their own language, were forced to be Christian, and, sometimes, forced to change their names to names that sounded more like Europeans. Many of these schools were run by churches. We called them Residential Schools because the children had to live at them; they weren’t allowed to go home very often or at all. It was thought it’d be easier if everyone was the same.

What was forgotten was that God creates everyone uniquely for a reason. A lot of hurt was caused by trying to make everyone the same. Often, when children went home, they couldn’t talk to their parents because now they spoke different languages. Since before you and I were born, Indigenous peoples have been deeply hurt. I really hope that all of you will be able to join with all of us to help it stop.

Background Notes for the Children’s Story:

Even very young children can understand the difference between being truly sorry and being compelled to say sorry by an adult or other authority figure. Often children are asked to apologize for things they do wrong, and they do so without being sincere. In the same way, they have received these forced apologies. Amongst siblings this can be an almost daily practice.

Some of the realities of Canadian history and Indigenous peoples are horrifying, even for adults. Despite this it is important to expose children to the reality of this history so that they do not continue the cycle of racism and intolerance. We need to balance the legitimate concern not to traumatize children with details of atrocities with the need to give them a basis of understanding that they can build on later in life. It is also important to start where children are. Words like reconciliation may be beyond their vocabulary. It is a challenge to speak to them about complex issues in language they can understand without simplifying the problem.

This story is voiced from a non-Indigenous Euro-Canadian perspective. Please adapt this reflection to better serve you or your context.
Lately, Canada has been trying to say sorry. Part of saying sorry, right, is to really listen to the person you hurt about how you hurt them. We’ve had six years of meetings called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or the TRC, all over the country to listen to Indigenous people about how we hurt them.

Now the meetings are over, but that doesn’t mean the apology is over. Now we have to change, we have to stop hurting Indigenous peoples. Even now Indigenous people don’t have the same access to water, food, or housing that you and I do. Even now their schools don’t get as much money, attention, or support as your school does. Even now mines are built or oil drilled on land that belongs to Indigenous Nations without asking them.

We need to changes. We need to respect all different Nations, all different peoples. One of the Bible stories today is about the Prophet Isaiah, and how when God was looking for someone to speak to everyone else about what is right, Isaiah said “Here I am,” and went about speaking to people about how they needed to change. Now that the meetings are over, it’s our time to say, “Here I am,” and to go out into the world speaking to people about the changes we need to ensure we treat the Indigenous people of Canada with deep respect and equality. How about it, can we all say “Here I am”?

*Everyone—(the congregation can be invited to do so also)—says “Here I am”*

**Children’s prayer**

**Leader:** Creator, today we pray for those in Ottawa at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ceremonies, that their gathering may signify the beginning of a new relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. We pray that we may have the strength that the Prophet Isaiah did, to say, “Here I am,” and go out into the world speaking for what is right. We pray that we may have the strength to truly change.

**Amen.**
Prayer of Confession

Leader: God, how often have we spoken what we thought to be a joke, only to see the hurt on the others’ face? We did not think that our words would hurt, but they did. How often have we stood by as someone else spoke hurtful words, and did nothing? How often have we allowed a stereotype or a bias to get in the way of actually seeing the individual in front of us?

All: We confess that we do not always see or hear with our hearts. We confess that we do not always act with your justice.

Leader: We sometimes feel that we were not there when the children were taken from their parents and sent away to school. For most, our parents were not there nor were our grandparents.

All: We confess that sometimes we don’t see why we are being held to account for the actions of people that we did not know and, so long ago.

Leader: But, we are the bearers of many blessings of our ancestors of blood or faith. Therefore, we must also bear their burdens and responsibilities. The last Residential School closed in 1996, that was in our time and we did not know the truth.

All: We apologize for the actions of our country and our churches in running Indian Residential Schools. We seek your forgiveness for what has been done to your children. We seek acceptance of our commitment to justice and our desire to walk towards reconciliation. We ask for your grace to heal all of us.
Amen.

Assurance

Leader: Forgiving, Merciful, and Righteous One: Forgiving One, your love is higher than the starry heavens. Merciful One, your kindness is deeper than the ocean. Righteous One, let each of us be the transformation of your love and kindness into energy for speaking the truth and reconciling with one another.
Amen.

Prayer of Illumination

As we hear and read the Scripture, O God, open our hearts and minds to discover your Word for us today, and help us interpret and translate that word into action every day. Amen.

(George Allan, Chatham, Ontario, “Gathering,” Summer/Autumn 2012, p. 44. Used with permission).

The churches in Canada have different experiences related to Residential Schools; some ran the schools with the government and some did not. If your church is part of the Settlement Agreement, you might choose to use a more appropriate litany of confession related to your denomination’s or community’s apology.

As Canadians, all of us share in some responsibility, even if we are not members of a church that helped to run the schools. Christian churches of all denominations played a role in the broader process of colonization which has resulted in a vastly inequitable country, with Indigenous peoples now the poorest of its citizens.

Another option might be to read together a part of the Government of Canada’s apology:
https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015644/1100100015649

Or, you might choose to use the reading and response on page 8.
Scripture
By Sheryl Johnson  Included below are thematic commentaries prepared on the biblical texts proposed by the revised common lectionary.

Isaiah 6:1-8
The death of a king (such as King Uzziah described here who died in the 8th century BCE) often initiates a liminal time, a time of transition and change where new leadership and new directions can emerge. As we think about the close of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we can understand ourselves in Canada to be moving into such a time of change and possibility. King Uzziah was known for building up industry and for increasing the size of the army as well as for various social abuses, in some ways similar to issues that come with the project of colonialism in Canada.

The narrator (Isaiah) in this story is aware of his own imperfections – that he is lost and impure by the standards of the purity codes of the day – but quickly these issues are resolved by the touch of a live coal brought by a seraph (angel). Isaiah as a prophet does not only decry the actions of others, particularly those in power, but is aware also of his own culpability. This is important as we engage in work for reconciliation as settlers – we must be aware of the ways we have and continue to benefit from colonialism, that the need for change is not only on the part of those in power. However, this culpability does not excuse us from acting. Metaphorically, we too may receive “live coals” that can be signs of forgiveness as we engage in acts of repentance and reconciliation.

The expression of call in verse eight is also quite interesting. Unlike the descriptions of God’s call of others (e.g., Moses) where God directly instructs people to serve, in this instance God only asks for someone to serve and it is Isaiah who chooses and responds that he will go. This can be a helpful reminder that we do not always need God to call us to do something directly – we can take initiative ourselves. For example, in the case of reconciliation, we might only need to listen for requests and be ready to respond – we may not need to wait to be asked directly.

Psalm 29
Psalm 29 contains many wonderful descriptions of God’s presence in creation. Verses 3-9 are understood to describe a storm where God’s voice (qol in Hebrew) is said to be expressed through various aspects of this storm. Many scholars suggest that this was originally a Canaanite psalm that was adapted and adopted by the Israelites, suggesting its popularity. The idea of gods controlling the rains was prominent – the Canaanite god Baal (or Hadad) was understood to control the rain and fertility.

There are certainly criticisms, however, of ascribing divine control to the weather, particularly when this weather is destructive and even deadly. However, understanding God’s presence to be in natural phenomena can at the same time prove interesting. In the Truth and Reconciliation process, ecological justice and land rights are integral to fulsome reconciliation. Remembering that humans do not own or control the earth is important, as can be seeing signs of ecological devastation (including increasingly severe storms) as the voice of God calling out for ecological sustainability. Indigenous peoples and cultures have much to teach about listening to the voice of the Spirit in creation and living respectfully as part of creation ourselves.

Romans 8:12-17
This text from Romans seems to be ripe with dualisms, between body and spirit, death and eternal life, slavery and familial relationship. Dualisms can be tricky things. Certainly many of us know the problems of creating a hierarchy of mind and spirit over the body and of clearly separating people into groups of good and bad. However, at the same time, there can be power in clearly saying no to one thing.
and yes to something else. Many of us know that in movements for justice and peace, it can be so important to name oppression and injustice and cry for its end. Similarly, it can be so important to name and imagine the sort of changes we want to see and describe what those will look like and how they will feel.

In that way, a separation of what is good from what is bad is not necessarily problematic. However, we may need to be careful not to do that in ways that perpetuate dualisms such as those between the spirit and the body. When we think about the legacy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, what incarnations of reconciliation and justice do we need to cry “yes” to? What are the ongoing legacies of colonialism and oppression that we desperately need to end—so say “no” to? How can we move from relationships of economic injustice (i.e., slavery referred to in 8:15-16) towards ones where all people are understood to be family (i.e., where we understand ourselves to be all siblings as children of God)?

**John 3:1-17**

The part of this text that might be the most familiar to many comes at the end, specifically 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” The way that this verse is often interpreted does not generally lead towards a justice-oriented approach or anything beyond individual salvation (and, at that, for Christians alone). However, the context of the rest of the story about Nicodemus’ night visit to Jesus can be particularly helpful in widening our understanding of how this “eternal life” can be understood. In John’s gospel, the Jewish people are generally depicted as unreceptive towards Jesus, which sets up our expectations for a meeting, particularly an unusual night time one, between Nicodemus, a learned, wealthy Pharisee and leader of the Jewish people, and Jesus.

Nicodemus can be easy to identify with, in that he is perplexed by this notion of being born again. Further, Jesus points out that although he is seen as wise by his community (3:10), there is still much that he does not know. This again is a paradox that we can see today as many who are educated and wise by certain standards, including often ourselves, still have much to learn particularly when it comes to justice and right relations. The Greek adverb describing this second birth is *anothen* which can mean either “again,” “anew,” or “from above,” although many scholars confirm the last meaning, “from above.” This can be helpful in that it implies that the character of the Kingdom of God (“from above” in heaven), which can be understood as a reign of justice and peace, is what this second birth is oriented towards.

Although birth in its most conventional sense is generally thought of as a private and individual process, we know that this is rarely true. Generally, pregnancy, birth, and caring for an infant involve the support and participation of many people as well as larger social structures. Metaphorically, we can imagine larger communities and societies being re-born as well. It is important not to negate conventional human birth but rather to see the two as interconnected. How can communal re-birth towards a more just society support the flourishing of all children? How can children and the process of birth contribute to our imagining or creating of that good, re-born, society?

As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission draws to a close, it is crucial that Canadians take the testimonies and recommendations that have been shared and act upon them in ways that will bring re-birth and new life through true reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, as well as all of the earth. It is challenging work, but it can be informed and supported by the bold articulations of truth that have been spoken by Indigenous peoples and by processes of this new birth towards reconciliation already underway.

*KAIROS unites eleven Christian churches and religious organizations in a faithful ecumenical response to Micah 6:8.*

Reading
Consider the use of this reading, or another of your choosing, to bring an Indigenous voice into the reflection. This reading and response might also be used in place of the earlier confession.

Reconciliation
By Rebeka Tabobondung

We are waking up to our history from a forced slumber
We are breathing it into our lungs so it will be a part of us again
It will make us angry at first because we will see how much you stole from us and for how long you watched us suffer we will see how you see us and how when we copied your ways we killed our own.

We will cry and cry and cry because we can never be the same again But we will go home to cry and we will see ourselves in this huge mess and we will gently whisper the circle back and it will be old and it will be new.

Then we will breathe our history back to you you will feel how strong and alive it is and you will feel yourself become a part of it And it will shock you at first because it is too big to see all at once and you won’t want to believe it you will see how you see us and all the disaster in your ways how much we lost.

And you will cry and cry and cry because we can never be the same again but we will cry with you and we will see ourselves in this huge mess and we will gently whisper the circle back and it will be old and it will be new.


Possible response:
Leader: We hear. We cry. We learn. We apologize.

All: We believe. We pray. We hope. We act.

Leader: God in your mercy, help us whisper the circle back.

All: So it may be old and it may be new.
Sermon/Reflection
By Sheryl Johnson. While you will likely prepare your own sermon based on the commentaries or the experience with truth and reconciliation in your community, this reflection is offered as a resource.

The story of Nicodemus that we heard this morning seems fitting in many ways as this weekend in Ottawa the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission being presented. Both have an air of change about them, and suggest a liminal, threshold time. Jesus tells Nicodemus of his need to be born again, or to be born from above or to be born anew – all are possible translations of the original Greek – in order to enter heaven. We anticipate that the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, marking the culmination of the process that was officially established in 2008 to deal with the legacy of Indian Residential Schools in Canada, will describe the need for a new relationship marked by a new spirit of justice, to be forged between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

In the story from John’s gospel, Nicodemus goes to visit Jesus at night, which is very unusual for meetings between Jesus and others in the Bible. Some commentators suggest that night and darkness in John’s gospel are used to convey something devious or negative – as contrasted with positivity and godliness associated with daylight. You might recall the metaphor of light used in the very first part of the book of John “in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (4-5). Many criticisms have been made of dualistic thinking, particularly as such dualism has been extended to humanity and used to justify colonialism and other forms of oppression. These dualisms include men over women, light skinned over dark, adults over children, rich over poor, Western civilization over others.

Despite the connotations of the night time setting of the story, Nicodemus seems to come to Jesus in humility and uses the “right” words when speaking with Jesus – he is respectful and deferential, but Jesus seems to have no patience for these niceties and goes straight to the heart of the question of Nicodemus’ salvation, telling him that he needs to be born a second time to enter the kingdom of heaven – again, a dualism, this time, of body and spirit. Nicodemus, though wise and learned in a conventional sense, seems perplexed by this proposition of a second birth, as have generations of Christians. Here we have yet one more dualism – this time, between conventional knowledge and spiritual understanding.

While birth, and perhaps re-birth even more so, are often spoken of as relatively private and personal matters, the story of Nicodemus has often been held up as a metaphor for broader social transformation; communal re-birth. The political and communal aspects of re-birth are aspects that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. saw in this story when he used Nicodemus’ re-birth as a metaphor for the whole United States to re-start itself in order to address social and economic inequality in a 1967 speech to the Southern Christian Leadership Convention in Atlanta, Georgia.

What might re-birth mean in the context of Canada today? For you? For your church? For your community? How might we both be critical of the danger presented, inflicted, and justified through dualisms, while also claiming the prophetic power of dualism when used to reject injustice in favour of abundant life for all? How might our understanding of re-birth be informed and shaped by the years of testimonies, official and unofficial, those recorded in the public record of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and those whispered in the silence of the night, if spoken at all? Many have said that the Truth and Reconciliation process thus far has largely been one of truth-telling – true reconciliation, paths towards justice and right relations, are still dreams at this point.
As we anticipate the end of the formal Truth and Reconciliation process, it is crucial that we demonstrate having heard the testimonies of survivors of Residential Schools through work for deep reconciliation. We must be sure to not only be, as Nicodemus, using the right words and speaking in humility, but also to be ready to act in ways that might turn our whole lives upside down. We need to be ready to be born again as individuals and as a society.

However, just as birth involves a process of months or years in some cases, we need not imagine that the birth of reconciliation will be quick or easy. Nor is it completely beyond us. In some places we can see that preparations for this new life are already well underway; that movement towards deep reconciliation is already afoot.

KAIROS, the ecological justice and human rights organization of the Canadian churches, works closely with the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society. The Caring Society was formed in 1998, developing out of a national meeting of First Nations child and family service agencies. Justice and equality for Indigenous children is essential for the birth of true reconciliation in Canada. Childhood is a critical time – as we heard time and again in the testimonies of Residential School survivors. We must act on the truth we are hearing about the ongoing inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, such as the fact that less funding for education, housing and child welfare services are provided to First Nations children on reserves than to non-Indigenous children.

Justice must be birthed in response to these inequalities. The “I am a Witness campaign” is one way to be part of birthing a reconciled relationship by supporting the complaint made to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal about these ongoing inequalities. Acting for reconciliation can mean watching for the decision of the tribunal, which is expected this year. It can mean educating yourself and others about it, speaking to elected officials, and advocating for equality. It can also mean work for reconciliation on other issues such as land claims and self-determination, racism and ongoing colonialism, ecological justice, Free Prior and Informed Consent, and implementation of other aspects of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

For settlers, we must remember that our lives will be forever changed by the path toward reconciliation. Reconciliation cannot happen without us and it will change our own lives in such a way that we are born again. As Jesus expressed to Nicodemus, the right words are not enough, birth and re-birth are embodied realities. Although this birth may be difficult, we are not alone in it. God’s presence is with us in communities already making preparations for the birth of reconciliation. God’s presence is with us in the truth of challenging testimonies, unsettling us to leave behind the lives we have known. God’s presence is with us, beckoning us onward with the promise of the kingdom of heaven, the realization of true justice, peace, and right relations.

Hymn

**Offering**

**Leader:** God, whatever we have is from you. These offerings return but some of our treasure to do the work that Jesus walked among us to do. Use what is on these plates, with our time, our talents and what is in our hearts, to help in the healing of your broken world. **Amen.**

**Hymn Options:** Let there be Light: VU #679, CP #572, BP #727, H #371

O God of Every Nation: EL #533, LW #416, CP #593, VU #677, PH #606
Sung Response: Your Work, O God, Needs Many Hands
Your work, O God, needs many hands to help you everywhere, and some there are who cannot serve unless our gifts we share.  
(Words: Calvin Weiss Laufer  Music: Neil Dougall, Public Domain) VU #537

Community Prayer
Leader: Creator, we give thanks that you speak to us in our own ways, in our own traditions. Thank you that you also speak through the traditions of others. Help us to see your love in all things and to be guided with loving hearts to do that which is best in our homes and in our communities.

(From "The Dancing Sun Vol. VI," Anglican Church of Canada and United Church of Canada, 1995).

Lord’s Prayer

Closing Hymn

Blessing /Benediction
All: Return now to the circle of Life, knowing, That the love of Creator God is with us, The compassion of Jesus inspires us, The hope of the Holy Spirit comforts us. May everyone we meet know of our praise of God’s name, by the singing and dancing of our hands, heart, and feet!

(By Lee Claus, Francis Sandy Theological Centre, 2008)

For more information on events across the country on the theme of reconciliation, see http://www.kairoscanada.org/events. For events in Ottawa to mark the ceremonial close, or to get more involved see http://www.kairoscanada.org/time4reconciliation. KAIROS is co-sponsoring a reconciliation action that involves planting Heart Gardens. Find out more: http://www.kairoscanada.org/time4reconciliation/heart-gardens
**Additional Prayers**

**Remembering the Children**

God of our Ancestors, who holds the spirits of our grandmothers and grandfathers
and the spirits of our grandchildren,

Remembering the Children, we now pledge ourselves to speak the Truth, and with our hearts and our souls
to act upon the Truth we have heard
of the injustices lived,
of the sufferings inflicted,
of the tears cried,
of the misguided intentions imposed,
and of the power of prejudice and racism which were allowed to smother the sounds and laughter of the forgotten children.

Hear our cries of lament
for what was allowed to happen,
and for what will never be.
In speaking and hearing and acting upon the Truth
may we as individuals and as a nation meet the hope
of a new beginning.

Great Creator God
who desires that all creation live in harmony and peace,
Remembering the Children
we dare to dream of a Path of Reconciliation
where apology from the heart leads to healing
of the heart
and the chance of restoring the circle,
where justice walks with all,
where respect leads to true partnership, and
where the power to change comes from each heart.

Hear our prayer of hope,
and guide this country of Canada
on a new and different path.

(by Rev. Lillian Roberts, for the launch of the Church Leaders Tour which marked the original launch of the TRC)

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**Grief in the Aboriginal Community**

Creator, we thank you
that there are different paths to wholeness.
We see your wonder in creation all around us,
in the singing birds and the flowing water.
We give thanks for the opportunity to share,
and for everything that the Creator has given to us.
We give thanks for connectedness to each other
for our interconnectedness to all Creation,
to the whole cosmos, the whole created world.
We give thanks that Jesus Christ
has been in our past and is in our present
and will be with us in our future.
We give thanks for laughter, for humour,
for the many different ways that we are able to be together,
and to be in community and we give thanks
as well for the differentness between us and for the respect we have for the different paths that people take.

We give thanks for the Elders,
for the opportunities to be respected no matter what our views are, and to celebrate the different views that we have.
We give thanks for different approaches to grief,
and for the sharing, and the opportunities to laugh and to share and to care
and that we are each different and yet together.
We give thanks for new understandings,
for bridges we are able to build between people.
Help us to be open to new life and to vision,
to bring new life to our homes, to heal and to be healers
in our families and in our communities.


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**A Children’s Prayer**

(This can be done as a ‘repeat after me’ prayer)

God, reconciliation is a big word,
Help me to always listen with my heart, as well as my ears.
Help me to see with my heart, as well as my eyes.
Help me to speak the truth, and to listen for the truth
And then I will be on the path towards reconciliation. Amen