# The Possibility of New Beginnings

# Worship Service for Indigenous Day of Prayer 2023

—*by Debbie Hubbard*

## Land Acknowledgement

This morning we acknowledge that we are gathering on the land of the (insert the local Indigenous Nations’ name and territory) people. We are mindful of the rich culture, history, and spirituality of the Indigenous Peoples who inhabited and cared for this land for generations—long before the first settlers arrived here. We gather in deep gratitude for their past and ongoing hospitality as we continue to live together on their land. We also recognize the contributions Métis, Inuit, and other Indigenous Peoples have made in shaping and strengthening this region, the provinces, and Canada as a whole. We commit as a community of faith to continue to work to build relationships that are just and equitable for us all.

## The Call as We Gather/Call to Worship

In the presence of Creator, we gather this day in a spirit of gratitude.
Gratitude for all the gifts of Creation—the air, the water, the land, the change of seasons as we move into summer.
Gratitude for all the creatures that walk, swim, fly, and crawl on this earth.
We gather seeking wisdom to help us live a generous and compassionate life.
We gather seeking wisdom to help us live together with respect and humility.
We gather seeking hearts and minds that are open to new possibilities and new beginnings.

## Gathering Prayer

\**Depending on the gathering space folks could be invited to turn to each of the four cardinal directions*

Creator,
We give thanks for the knowledge you give to us
through all the traditions of the world.
Help us to honour the gifts that each tradition offers.

**All: We seek to take the path of love.**

We give thanks for the east,
for the sun that rises to begin each new day.
We give thanks for new life, for youth.
We give thanks for new learning and new experiences.

**All: We seek to take the path of love.**

We give thanks for the south,
for the growth of the summertime in our lives,
for the teachings to be kind to ourselves and others.
Help us, who are elders, love and respect children and youth.
Help us to care for the elderly and those who cannot care for themselves.

**All: We seek to take the path of love.**

We give thanks for the west,
for the understanding of how to care for the earth.
Creator, help us to use this understanding
to bring joy and new life to the world.

**All: We seek to take the path of love.**

We give thanks for the north.
Help us to receive gifts of wisdom and new perspectives from all peoples.
Help us to grow our roots of compassion deeper as we journey.

**All: Together we will take the path of love for ourselves and for each other. Amen.**

## Wisdom Readings

* A reading from the Hebrew scriptures: 1 Kings 3:5‒12 – King Solomon Seeking Wisdom
* A reading from the Christian scriptures: Matthew 19:16‒22 – The Rich Young Man
* A reading from a contemporary Wisdom source: You might use Richard Wagamese, *Richard Wagamese Selected: What Comes from Spirit* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2022) or another source of your choosing with a quote related to new beginnings in life.

## Reflection: The Possibility of New Beginnings

I imagine that most of us have experienced new beginnings in our lives, whether it is a new job, a new relationship, a new home, a new neighbour.

These new beginnings can be filled with joy and excitement. However, they are frequently accompanied by feelings of uncertainty and anxiety.

And so it is with the readings this morning….

Wisdom, discernment, and unsettling are all themes that these readings explore. What insights might they offer us at this time?

Our gospel reading from Matthew is about a young man who comes to Jesus seeking the answer to how he might have “a perfect” and “eternal” life. Jesus’ instructions are pretty explicit to him: “Go and sell your possessions, give your money to those who are poor, and then come follow me.” In other words, to build a new life, this young man must give up what is familiar and comforting to him. I suspect that Jesus’s answer “unsettles” him. This new path means letting go of the young man’s current identity and wealth. The reading tells us that he walked away from Jesus grieving, for he had many possessions. It appeared that for him the lure of a new life was not enough compensation for the sacrifices he would have to make.

And then there is Solomon in our reading from 1 Kings. At a very young age, he finds himself in a leadership role as the new king. He is quite anxious about how to follow in the footsteps of his famous father, King David. One night, he has a dream where he meets up with God and asks God for wisdom and understanding. He is seeking wisdom because he wants to be a good leader and make the best possible decisions for the people that he is leading.

Perhaps Solomon and the young man might serve as metaphors for us given this time in our own history and story as The United Church of Canada. We are indeed in some “unsettling” and “interesting” times that involve letting go and opening up to new possibilities.

In 2022, the 44th General Council of the United Church gathered. At that gathering, the National Indigenous Council proposed that the church identify and remove any structural barriers that would prevent developing and sustaining an autonomous National Indigenous Organization within The United Church of Canada.

When there is a requested change in church structure that alters the Basis of Union of *The Manual*, a remit is required. The 44th General Council authorized the remit to test the will of the church on this requested change. The remit requires a vote by every regional council and each pastoral charge’s governing body.

If the remit is passed it will

* enable the Indigenous Church to determine its place and structure within the United Church, and
* enable the creation of an autonomous National Indigenous Organization within The United Church of Canada

Indigenous Peoples’ rights to their own spiritual identities and to self-determination would be acknowledged by the passing of the remit and would be consistent with the [Calls to the Church](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/being-community/indigenous-ministries/calls-church)and the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](https://united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/reconciliation-and-indigenous-justice/un-declaration-rights-indigenous-peoples).

Like the young man in the story from Matthew, all sorts of new possibilities and opportunities are in front of us, accompanied as well by uncertainty and questions.

Some of the questions that might be arising at this time:

* Are we willing to sacrifice what is familiar to us for the possibility of a new story?
* Are we prepared to create space and time for the Indigenous Church to discern their own story?
* Are we willing to dismantle the structure of the church as we know it and await the birthing of something new?
* What will that new structure look like?

Unlike the rich young man, we don’t have Jesus telling us what our options are. The path to our new beginning is less obvious and a little less certain. Will we accept this invitation to a new life, or will we be like the young man and walk away?

Like Solomon, we need to seek wisdom and understanding. Maybe this is a *kairos* moment for us—a time for us to contemplate and invite renewal not only for the Indigenous Church but for us as well. Maybe this is the time for us to trust that there will be uncertainty, but collectively we believe we can forge a new future. We proclaim to be a church with a commitment to seek justice. Perhaps this is one more invitation to live into that commitment.

So, today on this Indigenous Day of Prayer, may we be unlike that wealthy young man. May we respond more like Solomon. May we be wise and understanding people of faith with hearts open to the uncertainty of change. Whatever unfolds in the future, we welcome the promise of new possibilities and trust that we will find our way.

Amen.

### Children’s Time

Leona Prince and Gabrielle Prince*, Be a Good Ancestor* (Victoria, BC: Orca Book Publishers, 2022).

### Prayers of the People/Pastoral Prayer

Creator….
Quiet our hearts. Still our busy minds that we may know your voice.

This morning we give thanks for the beginning of summer—warmer weather, time for a break from our regular routines, the sounds of children playing outside, the abundance of nature and all that it offers to refresh our spirits.

We give thanks for the presence of the members of the Indigenous Church. We are grateful to them for the courage they have modelled in asking for what they need to continue their journeys of healing and rediscovery.

We remember as well those individuals and families here at (*name of the community of faith*) and outside this community who are in need of healing and support. May their spirits be lifted. We name them now—aloud or in the silence of our hearts.

We offer now, O God, the deep yearnings of our hearts…those places and situations where we need your guidance and your presence in our own lives and in the lives of the larger community…

Spirit of our yesterdays, our todays, and our tomorrows,
you make all things new.
Transform us during this time of transition—may each of us be wise as we consider the ask of the Indigenous Church,
an ask that seeks to build a new relationship—a relationship based on mutual respect, shared hope, and better understanding.
Amen

### Blessing

Wherever we journey this week let us be a message of justice and love
Let us listen to the voices of others—especially those who are new to our table and spaces
Let us encourage others with patience.
Let us live our life joyfully.
And as we leave this time and place remember that we are called to bring justice, compassion and love to the world.
In this task we are not alone.
Amen

### Music Suggestions

* “Mother Earth, Our Mother Birthing,” MV 39
* “Called by Earth and Sky,” MV 135
* “I Am the Dream,” MV 106
* “O Beautiful Gaia,” MV 41
* “Bless Now, O God, the Journey,” VU 633
* “Like a Healing Stream,” MV 144
* “Let There Be light,” VU 679
* “River Running in You and Me,” MV 163
* “Deep in Our Hearts,” MV 154
* “Dance with the Spirit,” MV 156
* “We Cannot Own the Sunlit Sky,” MV 143
* My Love Colours Outside the Lines,” MV 138

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