# Prayer Service to Remember the Children

## Gathering Music

## Words of Welcome

In this service of prayer, we seek to remember and honour the children (through words, actions, and silence) who were forced to attend church-run residential institutions. We also hope to affirm that the God of compassion is with us in our despair, heartache, and grief; we are never alone.

God has told us, “I will never forget you, my children; I have carved you in the palm of my hand.”

## Scripture Sentence

Mark 10:14─15

Jesus…said to them, “Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

## Opening Prayer

Today, may we share the work and responsibility of worshipping our Creator while honouring each other: those present in this virtual room, those joining in another space and time, and those whose absence we feel deeply.

May all who come to worship drink freely of the Living Water. A Living Water, that like love, transforms and changes depending on where we are, but never goes away.

And may that Living Water, like the mighty ever-flowing streams of justice in our dreams, sustain us into the work of love, justice, and rconciliation.

With our commitment and the Spirit’s guidance, may it be so.

Amen

## Hymn

“Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying,” Voices United 400

## Scripture

Luke 18:15─17

People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them, and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. But Jesus called for them and said, “Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”

## Silence

Light a candle followed by one minute of silence.

## Remembering the Children

Play the video[Phyllis Webstad - On Orange Shirt Day](https://youtu.be/EuW4WbekhxY), or share a reflection from your community.

## Prayer: 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 moves with all,
 where respect leads to true partnership,
 where the power to change comes from each heart.

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

—[rememberingthechildren.ca](http://www.rememberingthechildren.ca/)

## Silence

Light a candle followed by one minute of silence.

## Community Action of Lament and Commitment

Adapt these words as an example of your own action of lament and commitment.

I light this candle to remember the beloved children whose lights were stolen by people who should have protected them. I light this candle as a sign of my hope in the refining fires of the Creator and their power to call out evils. I light this candle as a testament to my passion and commitment to protect the lights of others.

You are invited to light a candle and to speak out loud your lament, your commitment, and your hope for right relations, justice, and reconciliation.

Candles are lit while people share their petitions out loud or in silence.

**Blazing Spirit,
accept these bright burning flames,
our laments, our commitments, and our hopes,
symbols of our longings, passion, and dreams for a better country
 and a better world for all children.**

**Amen.**

## Hymn

“Unto the Hills,” VU p. 843, Psalm 121, is “Ma gwa we je wun” (Ojibway); “Se wen ni io sa wen tsi ia tion he as kwen ten re” (Mohawk)

Other options could be an anthem based on Isaiah 40 or Psalm 137.

## Prayer

Powerful Christ,
we are grateful that you came to us as a child
who grew out of a community that nurtured, supported, and taught you the way of your ancestors.

You have asked us to do the same:
 to treat every child as we would treat you,
 to love every person as you have loved us.

We are grateful that
your power is rooted in love, not force;
 your strength is displayed through community, not might.
You have taught us to work toward a better world where all of creation thrives,
 and where every child matters.

We the stolen childhood of all the children forcibly raised by church-run institutions,
known as residential schools.

We lament how these institutions
 stole from children the opportunity to grow in a safe and loving environment,
 stole from Elders the opportunity to share their teachings and wisdom with younger
 generations; and
 stole from communities the opportunity to live intergenerationally.

We mourn the children who never made it home,
 the communities that were destroyed,
 the broken hearts,
 the stories never shared, and
 the shattered relationships.

We ask that you provide
 comfort to all who are seeking healing and who daily wrestle with the ongoing harmful
legacy of
 these colonial institutions,
 strength to all who name how colonial powers have harmed us as peoples and as a nation;
 often at great personal cost, and
 courage to all who are working toward reconciliation.

Christ Child,
As you grew, you reminded us to always welcome and care for children.
We remember your children today.

We lament and acknowledge the sinful ways colonial powers tried to eradicate Indigenous cultures in Canada,
 breaking Indigenous families,
 removing children from their homes while destroying communities.
And we pray for healing,
so we who live together in this country
 can also work together to build a better future
 where all children are cherished, beloved, and given what they need to thrive.
So that we may treat all children as we would treat you, our Beloved.
May it be so.
Amen.

## Hymn or Musical Meditation

[“Love Letters to God,” Nahko and Medicine for the People](https://youtu.be/E-QGkYNc0Ls) or this [lyrics version](https://youtu.be/jfOfqs1rHXE).

or

“God Says,” More Voices 172

# Blessing

Friends of Jesus,
We have been invited to rest by our friend, who says to us:
“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”

Children of God,
We have been promised grace by our Creator, who says:
“I will never forget you, my children; I have carved you in the palm of my hand.”

So let us go with Christ’s comfort,
let us go with God’s assurance,
to do the work of love, justice and reconciliation.
Amen