

Aboriginal Sunday Celebration and Thanksgiving Service

This resource offers ways for your community to celebrate [National Aboriginal Day](#) on June 21 or the closest Sunday. The following could be used in a study group or special program or incorporated into Sunday worship. Please feel free to adapt these tools to fit the needs of your community.

“I tell you, if [the crowds] were silent, the stones would shout out.”
Luke 19:40

Goals for the Session:

In this service participants are invited to explore what reconciliation means and to dream about what reconciliation might look like in their community of faith.

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.

Opening Hymn:

“Many and Great, O God, Are Your Works,” VU 308

Opening Prayer:

Great Comforter,
we know that we are surrounded by a legacy of pain.
We acknowledge the pain, grief, and sorrow
caused by not living respectfully with all people,
and we are sorry for the ways that we have dishonoured the depths of this pain.
Open us, Creator, to the power of interconnectedness:
Help us to receive the painful stories as well as the inspiring stories;
Grant us the courage to own any feelings of vulnerability, shame, fear, and guilt that
may come from our interactions with each other;
And with your healing grace, lead us through our aching
toward your dream of wholeness.
Transform us and our community so that we may continually work toward reconciliation
and new life.
Amen.

Hymn:

“Spirit, Open My Heart,” MV 79 “Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness,” VU 375

Sacred Stones (Learning Together/ Children’s Time...)

(Have a stone for each member of the community ready to distribute after the learning together)

Stones are sacred holders of wisdom and story.

(Share a story of significance attached to a stone with the congregation. The worship leader might share a personal or biblical story, or you might invite a couple of people from the congregation to share brief testimonies of reconciliation and hope.)

These stories, like these stones, will change with time. We do not know what this stone will look like 100 years from now, but we know that it will still be here. By attaching a story to the stone, by sharing the story with others, we affirm that the story will live beyond us.

(Hand out stones to the congregation. Invite each person to take a stone and to grasp it tightly for the remainder of the service. They will be asked to attach a dream of reconciliation or of peace/right relations to the stone.)

Hymn:

“Like a Rock,” MV 92 “Come Now, O God of Peace,” VU 34

Scripture Readings:

- Genesis 32:22–31: Jacob Wrestles with God

Jacob, the heal-snatcher, always gets what he wants! He wanted his Brother Esau’s birthright, he wanted his Father Isaac’s blessing, and he wanted his Cousin Rachel’s hand in marriage, just to name a few. And he got them all, at a cost. The cost of tricking Esau out of his birthright and blessing was having to flee from his fratricidal brother whom we know Jacob loved. Now Jacob wants to return home and reconcile with his brother and we can expect that this will come at a cost as well. Part of the cost is represented in an all-night wrestle with an unknown man that Jacob later declares to be God. Many things are left unknown in this passage. What we do know is that Jacob at some point became convinced that he was wrestling with God and that Jacob wanted to receive a blessing from God, regardless of what it might physically cost him. Why did Jacob want a blessing so badly? Perhaps Jacob is seeking a blessing of healing and reconciliation. Perhaps he no longer wishes to be the heal-snatcher and is looking for a fresh start. Eventually, before the dawn, it is granted to him—represented by his physical transformation and his new name, Israel.

- Luke 19:28-40: Jesus’s Triumphal Entry

Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem marks a transition point in his ministry; Jesus is about to confront the powers and principalities, with the knowledge that it will result in his death. When the gathered crowd offered their praise to Jesus—“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”—some Pharisees ask Jesus to quiet the crowd (perhaps in fear that the crowd will be persecuted for such blasphemy). Jesus’s response: It is pointless; even if the crowd was silent the stones would cry out. Like the crowd, the stones are a witness to the story and will testify when needed. In Micah, we are told to “plead [our] case before the mountains and let the hills hear [our] voice” (6:1).

Stones are a living part of creation that hold our sacred stories.

Sermon:

*God forgives,
and calls all of us to confess our fears and failings
with honesty and humility.*

*God reconciles,
and calls us to repent the part we have played
in damaging our world, ourselves, and each other.*

*God transforms,
and calls us to protect the vulnerable,
to pray for deliverance from evil,
to work with God for the healing of the world,
that all might have abundant life.*

We sing of grace.

—A Song of Faith

Explore what reconciliation means from a Christian perspective. You may wish to use video clips, stories, and testimonies to expand on or add to the following starting points.

Reconciliation is

- a journey (not a goal or final destination)
- complex (you cannot authentically begin a reconciliation process without examining all the factors involved)
- personal (and often painful)
- a part of living faithfully

Reconciliation requires

- trust
- truth-telling
- relationships
- a life-long commitment
- time

Time of Reflection:

Invite people to dream a dream of reconciliation through a few moments of silence while holding their stones. Encourage people, listening for the movement of the Spirit, to imagine what reconciliation might look like in their community and attach that dream to their stone. Come out of the silence with a simple repeat-after-me prayer such as: “We dedicate these dreams of reconciliation to you, God; our living testimonies to your promise of renewed life and hope. Amen.”

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our living testimonies to your promise of renewed life and hope.

Amen.

Amen.

Time of Sharing:

Invite people to share their dream with a neighbour while entrusting the neighbour with the stone that they have attached their dream to. Close the sharing time with a repeat-after-me prayer (so that people do not need to hold onto the order of service) such as: “Thank you, God, for entrusting me with this dream. May I hold it as sacred and let its presence inform my thoughts, actions, and prayers. Amen”

Thank you, God, for entrusting me with this dream.

Thank you, God, for entrusting me with this dream.

May I hold it as sacred,

May I hold it as sacred,

and let its presence inform my thoughts, actions, and prayers.

and let its presence inform my thoughts, actions, and prayers

Amen.

Amen.

Presentation of Offering

Offertory Hymn:

“Blest Be the Tie That Binds,” VU 602

Prayer of Dedication

A Prayer of Reconciliation

Closing Hymn:

“Hey Ney Yana,” MV 217

“O Day of Peace,” VU 682

Commissioning and Benediction