# 2020 Indigenous Day of Prayer: The Seven Grandfather Teachings

*By Deb Anderson Pratt*

## Hymn

“Creator, We Gather” (*Voices United* 532)

## Call to Worship

We gather to share in Creator’s gift of abundant life for all.

We fix ourselves on you, Creator.

Come fill our hearts with your endless love, and send the wind of your Spirit to new hope through our lives.

Come light our souls to rise in faith, to reach out for your kingdom.

Come pour out your Spirit upon us as we stand together as brothers and sisters.

Lift up our heads, brush away the shadows, and shine your grace into our minds.

So, Creator, we rise to worship, we shake off the shackles of a fallen world and

join our hearts together.

With gratitude we gather as a community in praise, Creator, to seek transformation

and to celebrate the power of your Spirit that is always moving.

## Welcome

## Land and Treaty Acknowledgement

(*See the end of this service for a list of post-Confederation numbered treaties and the download “Acknowledging the Territory in Worship” on the United Church’s* [*Prayer, Action and Community*](https://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/prayer-action-and-community) *webpage.*)

## Lighting of the Christ Candle

## Opening Prayer

Eternal God, you are our rock, you are the firm foundation for everything we build.

You give gifts to your people for the good of the church.

You equip and train your people to carry out the good works you have prepared for us in advance.

As we meet today, we ask that you would provide wisdom, guidance, and direction.

Remind us that you are our living ally, you are our fortress, you are our tower

of strength, and you are our rescuer.

Everything we need is found in you.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

## Apology and Response

Reading of [1986 Apology to Indigenous Peoples](https://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/apologies)

Reading of [1988 Response to Apology](https://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/apologies)

## Reflection

Imagine living in harmony with Mother Earth, the animals around and with each other, before strangers came to your lands. We had a belief system that helped us to live a good life. Without trying to understand our beliefs the newcomers condemned this belief system and our people as barbaric, demonic, hedonistic, and savage.

Imagine you have a certain way of doing things. It’s always the way you’ve done it as long as you can remember, and then someone comes along and tells you a different way you should or have to do it. For example: I like doing my dishes a certain way. I wash the cups and silverware first, the saucers and bowls, the big plates next, followed by the serving bowl, and then the pots and pans last. My sister does the pots and pans first and then all the rest. Thankfully we don’t interfere with each other’s way of doing them: a simplistic example of living in harmony with each other. That’s how our ancestors, grandparents, and parents lived. They each had their role in the community and didn’t interfere with each other. They lived a very simple life.

Some of the teachings we lived by were the Grandfather Teachings, which consist of Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Wisdom, Humility, and Truth, teachings you also find in the Bible. Before contact these teachings were taught freely and daily in our communities. The mothers spoke of them to their unborn children. They were the first lessons a child was taught that were repeated throughout their lives. After contact the teachings were presented in secret and taught very subtly.

My great-grandmother was my teacher. She was very subtle in teaching them. She had to be to avoid being thrown in jail for practising her way of life. She was so subtle in the teachings that I was totally unaware that I had them within my being until I took a life skills program in 1986. The instructor had a woman come in to teach them to the class. Back in that time I had no voice and could barely speak up. As I listened to the woman present the teachings I apparently made a “humph” sound. She asked if I had something to say. It took some coaxing on her part, but I was finally able to tell her that I knew all of what she was teaching and I didn’t learn it off any blackboard.

There are seven Grandfather Teachings or Laws our people lived by daily.

**Love:** To know love is to know the Creator, therefore it’s expected one’s first love is for that of the Creator or Great Spirit. Creator is the parent of all children. The love given to the Great Spirit is expressed through self-love; if you can’t love yourself how can you love anyone else? The Great Spirit chose the eagle to represent love because the eagle soars the highest of all creatures in bringing pure vision to the seeker. Although love is the supplier of the greatest and most powerful medicine, it can also be the most elusive of the teachings as it depends on a world that acknowledges the importance of spirituality.

Colossians 3:14 states:

*And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (NIV)*

**Respect** is the condition of being honoured. Respect is represented by the buffalo. Through giving its life and sharing every part of its being the buffalo showed the deepest respect it had for people. No animal was more important to the existence of our people. Its gifts provided shelter, clothing, and utensils for our daily life. Our people believed we were the true caretakers of the herds and developed a sustainable relationship with the buffalo that resulted in a relationship of true respect. I remember all the teachings my great-grandmother gave us in regards to respect; a few of them were:

* Respect our Elders by listening to what they said and do what they told us to do. In teaching my own children, I taught them to do only what felt right and respectful. I did this to teach them to protect themselves from sexual abuse.
* Give your seat up to Elders. It is considered very disrespectful to see a young person seated and an Elder standing.
* Respect your siblings, especially your brothers. Do not step over your brother. It was taboo to step over the men in the family because a girl/woman may be close to or on her time of month; it was believed that women are very powerful when they are on their time and could cripple a man if they stepped over them.

1 Peter 5:5 teaches:

*Likewise, you who are younger be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (ESV)*

**Courage** is the ability to face danger, fear, or change with confidence and bravery. The bear teaches us courage with many lessons in the way it lives. Courage is the most important teaching the bear offers. The true definition of courage is a mother bear’s ferociousness when it comes to her cubs being approached, very much like a human mother when she comes to her child. This same ferociousness is needed to have the moral and mental strength to overcome fears that prevent us from living our true spirit as human beings. Living in the heart and spirit is difficult. The bear’s example shows us how to face any danger to achieve courage in our lives.

2 Timothy 1:7 speaks of the spirit:

*God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. (ESV)*

**Honesty** is speaking and acting truthfully, thereby remaining morally upright. The Sabe (Sasquatch) represents honesty. Long ago, there was a giant called Kitchi-Sabe. It walked among the people to remind them to be honest to the law of the Creator and with each other. The highest honour bestowed on a person was the saying, “There walks an honest man, he can be trusted.” Keeping the promises one made to the Creator or to others and self was to be truly honest. The Elders said live true to your spirit, never try to be someone else.

Ephesians 4:25 says what our ancestors passed down long before Christianity came to our people:

*Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. (NIV)*

**Wisdom** is the ability to make decisions based on personal knowledge and experience. The beaver teaches us wisdom. Community is entirely dependent on the gifts given to each member by the Creator. The beaver’s example of using its sharp teeth for cutting down trees and branches to build its dams and lodges expresses this teaching. If the beaver didn’t use its teeth in this way, the teeth would continue to grow until they became useless, ultimately making it impossible for the beaver to sustain itself. The same can be said for human beings. One’s spirit will grow weak if it is not fulfilling its use. When used properly, one’s gifts contribute to the development of a peaceful and healthy being and community.

James 3:13 says:

*Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. (NIV)*

The beaver is wise and understanding in knowing he has to use his teeth for them to be productive.

**Humility** is recognizing and acknowledging that Creator is a higher power than people. This is truly humbling. True humility is being humble and not arrogant. To capture true humility one must express deference or submission to the Creator, through the acceptance that all human beings are equal. The expression of this humility is manifested through the consideration of others before oneself. The wolf teaches us humility; it bows his head in the presence of others in deference, and once it has hunted the wolf will not take any of the food until it can be shared with the pack. The wolf’s lack of arrogance and its respect for its community is a hard lesson, but in our people’s way. The wolf’s actions bring to mind Chief Marie-Anne Day Walker-Pelletier, who has been Chief of Okanese First Nation since 1981. Whenever there was a community meal taking place she always waited till the last to eat to ensure all the people were fed first.

Proverbs 18:12 says:

*Before a downfall the heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor. (NIV)*

I believe the wolf and Chief Marie-Anne Day Walker-Pelletier are true examples of humility and honour.

**Truth** is to know and understand all of the original laws given by the Creator and to remain faithful to them. The turtle teaches us about truth. It is said that in the beginning when the Creator made humanity and gave them the Sacred Laws, the Grandmother Turtle was present to ensure that the laws would never be forgotten.

On the back of a turtle are the 13 moons, each representing the truth of one cycle of the earth around the sun. The 28 markings on the turtle’s back represent the cycle of the moon of a woman’s body. The shell of the turtle represents the body’s real events as created by a higher power, and serves as a reminder of the Creator’s will and teachings.

1 John 5:20 teaches:

*We know also the Son of God has come and given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. (NIV)*

## Hymn

“Spirit of Gentleness” (VU 375)

## Prayers of the people

**God, Creator and Great Mystery, we praise you this day for the gifts you have provided your people.**

**We lift our people up for healing comfort and your compassion.**

**We pray for the missing and murdered women, young girls, men, and boys of your people.**

**May they be wrapped in your arms of comfort.**

**We pray for the families of the missing and murdered, that they receive comfort in their loss.**

**We pray for our warriors who fight against the injustices our people endure; we pray they have your compassionate ear; we pray for strength and endurance for them.**

**We pray just as the Elders prayed, for renewal and for the restoration of beauty to the land and its people.**

**We pray for Mother Earth, the waters, the winds, for our siblings the animals, birds, and fish, and all of life that surrounds us.**

**We pray that we will walk the good Red Road of life, and that we will walk with courage, honesty, humility, love, respect, truth, and wisdom.**

**We offer this prayer in humility and hope and in the name of our brother Jesus, the one who lights our path to wholeness, justice, and peace. Amen.**

## Offertory

## Our Response

“Your Work O God, Needs Many Hands” (VU 537)

## We Dedicate Our Gifts and Ourselves

We give these gifts freely, we receive these gifts gratefully.

We dedicate these gifts to the work of our congregation: serving human wholeness, caring for our planet, upholding religious freedom, welcoming the stranger, loving one another.

## Hymn

“We Are Pilgrims on a Journey” (VU 595)

## Benediction

May our footsteps on these ancient lands remind us of creation and connectedness, in our search for truth.

May the Gum Tree, from its roots to its branches, remind us to dig deep and reach high, in our action for justice.

May the Eagle, who soars in the sky, remind us of the power, in our call for love.

May the expanse of the lands and seas, of the sky and stars, remind us of God’s timing in our faith in hope.

May the Holy Three, Creator Spirit, Lord God, Papa Jesus, remind us of community.

So with grace, mercy, and peace, go in truth, justice, love, and hope.

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## Post-Confederation Numbered Treaties, 1871‒1921

### Treaty 1

Was established August 3, 1871, between the Annishinabe Swampy Cree and Ojibway with the Imperial Crown of Great Britain and Ireland

Areas: Lower Fort Garry, Fort Alexander, Broken Head, Sagkeeng, Long Plain, Pequis

### Treaty 2

Was established August 21, 1871, between the Chippewa and Cree with the Queen of England

Areas: Manitoba House, Rupert’s Land, Dauphin River, Ebb & Flow, Keseekowenink, Lake St. Martin, Lake Manitoba, Little Saskatchewan, O-chi-chak-Ko-Sipi, Pinamootang, Skownan

### Treaty 3

Was established October 3, 1873, between the Ojibway and Queen Victoria and Métis

Areas: Northwestern Ontario, eastern Manitoba to Lake of the Woods; 28 First Nation communities

### Treaty 4

Was established September 15, 1874, between the Cree, Saulteaux, and Assiniboine with her Majesty the Queen

Areas: Southern Saskatchewan and small portions of Manitoba and Alberta, Fort Qu’Appelle, Fort Ellice, Swan Lake, Fort Pelly, Fort Walsh

### Treaty 5

Was established September 1875 between the Saulteaux and Cree with Queen Victoria

Areas: Lake Winnipeg in District of Keewatin, Berens River, Norway House, Grand River

### Treaty 6

Was established August 23, 1876, at Fort Carlton; September 9, 1876, at Fort Pitt between the Cree, Assiniboine, and Ojibway with the Crown

Areas: Fort Carlton, Fort Pitt

### Treaty 7

Was established September 22, 1877, between the Siksika (Blackfoot), Kainai (Blood), Piikani (Peigan), Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut’naa (Sarcee) with the Canadian Government

**Areas:** Blackfoot Crossing of the Bow River, Fort MacLeod, southern portions of Alberta, Bear Paw First Nation (Stoney First Nation), Chinika First Nation (Stoney First Nation), Blood Tribe (Kainai Nation, Blackfoot), Piikani Nation (Blackfoot), Siksika Nation (Blackfoot), Tsuut’ina (Sarcee) Wesley First Nation (Stoney First Nation/Nakoda)

Another signing on December 4, 1877

### Treaty 8

Was established June 21, 1899, between the Crown and First Nations of the Lesser Slave Lake area, Cree, Denesuline (Chippewyan), Dan-zaa (Beaver)

Areas: Lesser Slave Lake, Peace River Landing, Fort Vermillion, Fond-du-Lac, Dunvegan, Fort Chipewyan, Smith’s Landing, Fort McMurray, Wapiscow Lake

### Treaty 9

Was established July 1905 between the Cree and Ojibway with King Edward VII with final signatory in 1929 and 1937

Areas: Osnaburt, Fort Hope, Marten Fall, Fort Albany, Moose Factory, New Post, Abatibe, Matachewan, Mattagami, Flying Post, New Brunswick House, Long Lake

### Treaty 10

Was established in 1906‒07 between Cree Ojibway and Dene with King Edward VII

Areas: Île-à-la-Crosse, Lac Brochet

### Treaty 11

Was established 1921‒22 between Dene, Gwich’n, Tlicho (Dogrib), and Sahtu with King George V

Areas: Northwest Territories, Fort Providence, Fort Simpson, Fort Wrigley, Fort Norman, Good Hope, Arctic Red River, Fort McPherson, Fort Laird, Fort Rae