# All God’s Beloved ChildrenWorship Service for Indigenous Day of Prayer 2022

## Quote for Contemplation

[Henri Nouwen’s meditation on hospitality](https://henrinouwen.org/meditations/hospitality/) from Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life (Doubleday, 1975)

## Call to Worship

One: Our souls long for you, O God.
 By day, Eternal One, you proclaim steadfast love,

**All: and at night your song sounds within each one of us.**

One: Creator, send out your light and your truth; let them lead us;

**All: let them bring us to your holy dwelling.**

One: We approach your altar, God, to worship you, the author of our joy;

**All: we praise you, O God, our Creator.**

(Inspired by verses of Psalms 42 and 43)

## Opening Prayer

One: Creator, in love and through love, you have called all things into being. We thank you for mother earth, our home. We thank you for the heavens that watch over us and the starlight that warms and guides us. We thank you for all the plants―for those that are medicine, for those that nourish us, for those that express your delight through their beauty and diversity. We thank you for all of our fellow creatures; may we share this earth with them in respect, with reverence. We thank you for soil, water, fire, air; for forests, plains, and mountains, deserts and tundra and oceans. And now, when so much of the world is threatened with destruction, help us to walk in humility with gratitude among all these sacred gifts from you.

We thank you for being a God of liberation, for you are ever seeking to bring us into the joy of your salvation; into a just, equitable, and holistic celebration of life.

We thank you for your compassion, which holds each and every one of us. We thank you for coming to us as Jesus, our teacher, brother, and friend―for dying on the cross and breaking the power of death in order to bring us back into harmony with you and all of Creation.

**All: Creator, thank you for your truth and wisdom, and for inviting us to travel the healing path with you; we offer you our hearts and minds so that we might embody your grace and share your blessings with all who live upon the earth. Amen.**

## Possible Hymns

*More Voices* 21 Open Our Hearts, Open Our Minds (Ouvre nos cœurs, ouvre nos pensées)

MV 81 Love Us into Fullness
*Voices United* 217 All Creatures of Our God and King (Vous créatures du Seigneur)
VU 697 O for a World
VU 288 Great Is Thy Faithfulness
VU 301 Touch the Earth Lightly
VU 626 I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say
VU 699 Live into Hope
VU 681 Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life

## Offering Prayer

Holy and Gracious God,
pour out your Spirit upon us and the gifts we bring
so that we might do deeds of love, in your name, and for your sake, Amen.

## Scripture

1 Kings 19:1–4, (5–7), 8–15*a*
Galatians 3:23–29
Luke 8:26–39

## Sermon/Reflection: All God’s Beloved Children

God’s beloved,

Grateful for the wisdom, humility, and patience of Indigenous siblings who follow the way of Jesus, we turn to contemplate the lessons that we’ve heard today. We prepare for our contemplations with an affirmation of the Creator’s deep and abiding love.

We begin with a practice familiar to many spiritual directors and the people they accompany―namely, an invitation to recognize the false images that affect our lives and relationships. We have inherited and internalized false images of God; often we are afflicted by false images of ourselves.

In reading about Jesus’ healing of the man called Legion, we find a key for exploring the passages from 1 Kings and Paul’s letter to the Galatians. If, in the gospel narrative, we replace the word “demons” with “lies” we would not be far from the truth. For what torments us are the lies that we are not good enough, not lovable enough…or the lies that we are self-made and need no one.

I believe the root of these torments is our inherited images of an angry, aloof, or judgmental Creator. In our New Creed we speak of Jesus, our judge and our hope. Intellectually we might speak gratefully of divine love―but until we repeatedly welcome the reality of Creator’s love into our very cells, the subconscious mind easily replays words or images that speak of condemnation and rejection so that some part of ourselves believes in a jealous, unforgiving God along with Elijah.

Susceptibility to half-truths might make us think that Paul is speaking of cookie-cutter uniformity and not the beauty of Jesus’ reconciling and uniting love. The results of living with false images of God, false images of ourselves, can be disastrously destructive. We find we’ve become a church that fails to embody love that is invitational and accepting of differences.

Let us consider Elijah. He tells God that he has been very zealous for his Lord. He has even murdered those who worshipped another god. I find that Elijah’s self-recognition that he is no better than his ancestors connects with his recognition that he is a murderer. He believes he killed others for the jealous God he served―yet the warrior God he venerates didn’t appear in destructive displays of earthquake, wind, or fire. The God who had repeatedly sheltered and rescued not only Elijah but also others, even “outsiders”―the God who indeed had a remnant of faithful followers―spoke in the silence, a still, small voice.

We are seduced by drama. We see the zealous, if murderous, actions of the great prophet and let it shape our theology almost unconsciously. We nearly miss the lesson that shows us we need to grow quiet enough to receive the actual voice of our Creator. Do we notice that Elijah, so focused on what was wrong, has lost sight of God’s compassion, has lost the joy of being in relationship with God?

Think of the joy of the man who was Legion when he is freed from the lies that controlled him during his exile among the dead. His fear frightened all who saw him except for the One who liberated him with a word of empowering love.

We might not be afflicted with as many false understandings of God and ourselves as the man Jesus healed, but Paul sees us all as imprisoned. He speaks of the law as a tutor that watches over us until we experience liberation through our trusting in the grace that is manifested through Jesus. All that is required of us for liberation is trust. We are invited to trust that we are loved simply because we are God’s delightful creation and not for anything we do. We are loved despite many of the things we do, despite the important things we’ve left undone.

In writing to the church in Galatia, Paul is speaking contrary to the divisions that haunted the early church. He speaks to us today. No one, regardless of differences in ceremony or philosophy, is better than another; no one, regardless of differences in societal status or gender, is less precious than anyone else. In the beauty of our differences, we are one family in Christ Jesus. We are all God’s beloved children.

May we hear Creator speaking in the stillness of our hearts. May we take courage and prayerfully investigate the false images that afflict us. May we go forth to embody the compassion of Jesus. Amen.

## Pastoral Prayer

Holy One,
We praise you for your deep and abiding love, which holds each one of us every moment of our lives.
We praise you for your generous spirit and your infinite patience as you wait for us to embrace your transforming love and accept your forgiveness.
Help us to bring these words of praise from our minds to our hearts so we can live into sharing your gracious compassion and extravagant blessings with all our neighbours, known and unknown.
Accept, we pray, our sorrow and shame for the times when we have not shown compassion and mercy to those you have created in love and for love. Help us grow in courage and hope so we are no longer bound by the lies that have been spoken to us, free us from the untruths that prevent us from being your faithful partners in the healing of Creation.
You have embodied truth and mercy, you have suffered for and with us―accept our faltering words of gratitude; breathe your Spirit upon us once again, and kindle in us the love that would ever reflect your creative joy and peace.
Thank you, Creator, for inviting us to lay claims upon your heart; we come with these petitions, knowing that ours is a mutual relationship and you ask us to be your heart, and hands, and voice in this world.
We pray for all the war-torn places in this world… We pray for the millions of displaced persons sojourning upon this earth, for all who have lost nearly everything… We pray for your precious children who are being murdered, trafficked, and enslaved… Thank you for holding our collective grief.
We pray for our country; guide us and our leaders into the ways of truth-telling and compassion. While our truest citizenship is found in being with you, O God, help us to live responsibly and generously among all the people of this land.
We pray for all your faithful people, that we and all who follow your pathways would embrace your wisdom and humility and embody your compassion.
We pray for our communities, especially for those who are lonely or afraid and those who need healing of body, mind, and spirit. We pray for those who are hungry, for those who are unhoused. By the prompting of your Spirit, guide us so that we offer kind words and deeds of love in gratitude for all that we have received from your gracious kindness. Holy One, we thank you for all the countless people who have given their lives to ease the suffering that fills this world. Bless them and empower each of us to find our own ways to create justice and peace out of your love.
We pray for those we hold closely to our hearts, for all who are grieving deep losses, for all who need mercy, love, healing… In silence we pray, entrusting them to your great compassion….
Thank you, Creator. Thank you for your everlasting love. Amen.

―Jan Jorgensen

The Reverend Jan Jorgensen shares ministry with Robert Patton, a Kanien'kehá:ka Congregational Designated Minister and Elder, and the people of Kahnawake United Church.