

Preparation:

If you have a children's group or Sunday school, consider introducing the activity a week before the service so that they know the routine and can help guide the congregation through it. You can also draw on the young people in the congregation as readers.

Materials:

- Candles (enough for congregation); have both regular wax candles and, for safety, small battery candles on hand
- Sticky notes numbered 1–40 (or more)
- Litany text projected (preferred) or printed in bulletin (note that reading from the bulletin with a lit candle can be a safety concern)

Roles:

- Leader
- Readers: 2–4 people to read responsive lines in one strong voice
- Greeters: to hand out candles and numbered sticky notes at the door (be sure at least numbers 1–32 are handed out; if you expect fewer people, review the litany and adjust as necessary)

Process:

As people are greeted at the door, they are each given a candle and a numbered sticky note. (Have both regular wax candles and small battery candles on hand. Some people may be concerned about burns, shaking hands, small children, etc., and prefer battery candles)

The worship leader announces that today we will be moving around the hall during the service. If you don't want to move, please make sure your sticky note number is higher than 16; if it's lower, take a moment now to trade it with someone who has a number higher than 16.

Litany:

Invite people holding sticky notes 1 and 2 to come from where they are sitting in the congregation, move to the Christ candle, light their candles from it, and move to the north end and south end of the sanctuary. As they walk to their positions, the leader begins the responsive litany. Readers read their line when the candle bearers arrive and stop in their spot.

1 and 2 move from the congregation, light candles at Christ candle, and move to the north and south sides of the sanctuary.

Leader: Creator God, in you we live and move and have our being.

Readers: We are the North Pole and South Pole of planet Earth.

People: Praise God from here to infinity.

Invite people holding sticky notes 3 and 4 forward. 3 and 4 move from congregation, light candles at Christ candle and move to east and west sides of the sanctuary.

Leader: Encompassing God, you make sunrise and sunset; the darkness and the light.

Readers: We are the directions of east and west.

People: In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is our guide.

Invite people holding sticky notes 5 and 6 forward. 5 and 6 move from congregation, light candles and move to the two midpoints, one between west and north and the other between east and north.

Leader: Almighty God, you created vast expanses of water and land.
Readers: We are salty seas, fertile soil, and fresh spring water.
People: **Praise God, who does all things well.**

Invite people holding sticky notes 7 and 8 forward. 7 and 8 move from congregation, light candles and move to the two midpoints between west and south and between east and south.

Leader: Amazing God, you created plants and animals on the land, in seas and sky.
Readers: We are wild berries, pine trees, bison, and whales.
People: **Praise the Provider, for the bounty of Mother Earth.**

Invite people holding sticky notes 9–12 forward. 9, 10, 11, and 12 come from congregation, light candles, and move to four midpoints between the people already standing in the northern hemisphere.

Leader: Creator God, you made human beings in your own image.
Readers: We remember the ancestors of the First Peoples who are Indigenous to this land.
People: **Praise the Creator for grandparents, children, and storytelling.**

Invite people holding sticky notes 13–16 forward. 13, 14, 15, and 16 come from congregation, light candles, and move to four midpoints between the people already standing in the southern hemisphere.

Leader: Creator God, you made human beings in your own image.
Readers: We remember the mixed and varied ancestry of the people who have come to this land.
People: **Praise the Creator, for the chance of a better life.**

16 people now stand in a circle facing the people still seated in pews/chairs.
Invite people holding sticky notes 17–20 to stand, holding their unlit candles.

Leader: Great Comforter and Provider, receive our prayers.
Readers: We honour human beings clinging to the fringes of life.
People: **Hold us in your love, God. Don't let go.**

Invite people holding sticky notes 21–24 to rise as they are able, holding their unlit candles.

Leader: God, our Rock and our Foundation, receive our prayers.
Readers: We call to mind people of every class, age, and ability.
People: **Hold us in your love, God. Don't let go.**

Invite people holding sticky notes 25–28 to rise as they are able, holding their unlit candles.

Leader: Empowering God, you work in us and others by the Spirit
Readers: We call to mind the tired and disillusioned, the goal-oriented, and those who still thirst.
People: **Open our hearts and minds to the needs of others.**

Invite people holding sticky notes 29–32 to rise as they are able, holding their unlit candles.

Leader: Universal God, freely and graciously, you pour out your love for all.

Readers: We are human beings, all part of Creation, yet we still hunger.

People: **Open our hearts and minds to love others the way you love us.**

Sixteen people have now risen in the seating area holding unlit candles; 16 stand in a circle around the outside holding lighted candles. Other people remain seated holding unlit candles. As the leader begins to speak, each one of the outer 16 walk toward the inner standing 16 people and light their candles, then return to the outer circle. The inner 16 remain standing, now with lit candles. The candles of the people seated, the leader, and the readers remain unlit.

Leader: Friends, we are all human beings, each one of us a part of the Circle of Life and God's Creation, a humanity in need of humane treatment, in need of the basic necessities: clean water and food, shelter and love.

Readers: We all live on common ground within the Circle of Life; we all have shared needs.

People: **But in society there are great divides. Between the haves and the have nots; the powerful and the weak, the hopeful and the hopeless.**

Leader: If your candle is burning, blow it out. In this quiet moment reflect on the past and consider colonization, Indigenous children torn from home and family and forced into residential schools, First Nations forced onto reserves, smallpox epidemics, buffalo slaughtered to near extinction.

Readers: Consider the present. Consider boil water advisories, no clean running water, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the physical and mental scars that still persist because the colonizers thought their way was the only way. Consider formal apologies, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the cultural resurgence reflected in APTN Aboriginal People's Television Network, the rising popularity of Indigenous musicians and writers in mainstream media, the Annual Aboriginal Music Awards.

Leader: Turn to the east. A new day is dawning. Focus on Christ's candle. Live into the light. Find solace in the solstice. Follow the way Christ leads us, non-Indigenous and Indigenous, into right relationship.

People: **Let us embrace a new way of life and live in harmony with one another and all Creation, as we help to heal the hurting.**

Of the 16 people in the outer circle, the East person, the one closest to the Christ candle, lights their candle from the Christ candle and then lights the candle of the person closest to them in the circle. One person lights the next one's candle around the circle until all 16 outer circle candles are lit. These 16 people walk around and light 16 other people's candles and ask each to light someone else's. The original 16 return to their spot, forming an outer circle of light. People continue to light each other's candles until everyone is holding a lit candle.

End the litany in song.

Hymn: VU 684, "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace"

Invite everyone to blow out their candles, thus transforming the light.

Hymn: MV 209, "Go, Make a Difference"

—Bev Leadbeater is a wife, mother, and grandmother who actively lives and works on a family farm in southern Manitoba. She is in her third year serving as a Congregational Designated Minister for Rock Lake Pastoral Charge in Crystal City, MB.