

Living on the Path of Respect

A Worship Service on the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery



Introduction

As Canada embarks on celebrating the 150th anniversary of Confederation, let us acknowledge that Canada's "origin story" does not begin with the British North America Act of 1867 signed by representatives of British and French colonial powers. Without the contributions of Indigenous Peoples present on the land for thousands of years prior to Confederation, Canada would not be the country it is today.

Congregations are encouraged to enact our commitment to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery in all aspects of ministry, including in worship. In this worship service, we are called to

- lament for our participation in this history
- repent of our blurred visions of ourselves and each other
- make a commitment to a new covenant of good relations

Here is a short summary of the Doctrine of Discovery suitable to include in a church bulletin. Worship leaders are encouraged to review the further background information referred to in the last sentence.

What is the Doctrine of Discovery? The Doctrine of Discovery refers to a set of proclamations from the Pope that reflected the belief that Europeans were the ones to discover the lands that are now called North and South America. This discounted the truth that many nations and peoples, with rich cultures and spirituality, were living on this land. The claim of “discovery” was based on the criterion that one had to be Christian to be considered human—it created categories of race. Since Christians were not present on the land, it was deemed “unoccupied.” It was therefore considered to be open for Christian European sovereigns to invade and lay claim to, and to subjugate and assimilate the peoples. *For more background*, please search “doctrine of discovery” at www.united-church.ca.

About this resource

A small group based in Toronto inspired by participation in a workshop on dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery initiated this resource; several others reviewed and revised it. It is created for a congregation that is primarily non-Indigenous. You are invited to use all or a portion of what we offer in a worship service in your setting. Feel free to adapt it or use it as a basis for your own creative worship expression in your particular context.

- We suggest using this service **during Lent**, as this is a season that calls us to reflect on our corporate and individual sin and to make a commitment to live in a new way in the world. You may also wish to refer to the Lenten laments from the Lent/Easter 2017 issue of *Gathering* posted on www.united-church.ca.
- An alternative time to use this service might be **May 21**, the 6th Sunday of Easter, in the context of Victoria Day weekend and how we have “imposed our [Western] civilization as a condition of accepting the gospel” ([1986 Apology to First Nations Peoples](#)).
- Another appropriate time might be on Sunday, **June 11**, the anniversary of the federal apology to residential schools students and their families.

About the image

- The circle has no beginning or end, and encircles our global home.
- The green colour represents growth and the plant world.
- The tan colour represents the soil of this good Earth.
- The orange colour represents the sun that helps us by giving us light and strength.
- The blue colour represents the water.
- The feather represents the connection to Creator through prayer and protection to remain on the path of respect.
- Look carefully you will see a baby. (Look upside down and look for the head, arm, and leg.) This represents that we are all God’s children preparing, living, and working to live in creation.
—Sandra Campbell

Living on the Path of Respect: Order of Worship

Acknowledgement of Territory

Search “acknowledging the territory” on www.united-church.ca for guidelines to develop an appropriate acknowledgement of the traditional territory where your community of faith worships.

Call to Worship

Creator has placed each and every one of us here with purpose!

Let us praise Creator for the earth below our feet.

For Mother Earth sustains us, and all creation cries out for justice.

Creator has given us the eastern direction:

the direction of vision, children, and the sun that rises on us each day.

Let us view the world with child-like wonder—full of awe and humility.

Thankful for the new day that dawns on us each and every morning,

we give thanks for God who gives us new mercies every day.

Creator has given us the southern direction:

the direction of honesty, adolescence, and growth.

Help us to speak only the truth, and open our hearts to hear the stories of others.

Inspire us to grow in the image of Christ who teaches us to walk the good path.

Creator has given us the western direction:

the direction of adulthood, harvesting, and deep spiritual understanding.

Give us the tools we need to act on the knowledge we are gathering,

allowing us to act with maturity and grace.

Creator has given us the northern direction:

the direction of Elders, achievement, and a deep connection to spirituality.

Empower us to learn from the past,

and to move forward to create your companionship of empowerment*

here on Mother Earth.

Holy Spirit, give us the teachings we need to correct any wrongs,

and to live lives full of love, peace, and hope.

Be with us now, Creator, as we worship you in awe-filled praise. Amen.

“Companionship of empowerment” is a term that John Dominic Crossan offers to replace the “Kingdom of God” (in Marcus Borg, ed., *Jesus at 2000* (Westview, 1998), p.22–55).

Opening Hymn

“Creator of All Time and Space” by Ruth Duck ([Pilgrim Press](#))

VU 288 “Great Is Thy Faithfulness”

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

VU 312 “Praise with Joy the World’s Creator”

Opening Prayer

Creator and Keeper of covenants and treaties old and new, whose voice we hear in the winds of the four directions, your Spirit inspires us to celebrate your presence and live with respect in creation. The false Doctrine of Discovery has distorted our relations upon these shores for centuries, with colonization twisting and blurring your image in us. Yet you call us, still, to walk* humbly seeking the good paths of justice. Our hearts and lands long for liberation and transformation. May our worship reconnect us to the truth of who you are, and who we are, and move us to claim our shared sacred responsibility, for we pray in the name of the broken and blessing one, Jesus. Amen.

*or journey

Hymn of Confession

“The Gospel Came With Foreign Tongue” by Brian Wren ([Hope Publishing](#))
VU 611 “Out of the Depths, O God, We Call to You”

Prayer of Confession

(in unison, based on Lamentations 5)

O Great Creator, look at what has happened:

lands have been stolen,

drinking water must be bought,

we are exhausted,

many must beg for food,

wars are waged against the innocent,

bodies are taken advantage of,

Elders are disrespected,

many work for low pay, in unsafe conditions.

The sounds of violence and loss drown out the melodies of music and laughter of play.

We feel like you have forgotten us.

We fear that you have rejected us in anger for the parts we have played
in the desecration of your creation.

O Great Creator, Earth cries out to you. Our hearts ache and our spirits are weary
from experiencing the rending of the web of all our relations.

O Gitchi-Manitou hear our prayer....

(silent prayers)

Assurance of Pardon

Creator has sent us Jesus to teach us how to walk the good road. His life and death showed us that we must always work toward justice, peace and love for all of creation no matter the cost. Ultimately, in God, we have been forgiven. There is nothing we can do to separate us from the absolute love of God that embraces us all. Let God’s peace fill your hearts, because when we follow Jesus, every day is a chance to start over again. God’s mercies are new every morning. Be at peace. Amen.

Hymn of Assurance

VU 269 “The Care the Eagle Gives Her Young”

VU 270 “Dear Mother God”

MV 94 “Love Knocks and Waits”

MV 95 “How Deep the Peace”

Children’s Story: “You Belong to the Land”

(This story is adapted by the Rev. Won Hur from an ancient Sufi wisdom story, which he first encountered in Tales for an Unknown City: Stories from One Thousand and One Friday Nights of Storytelling, collected by Dan Yashinsky (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), p.14. The central character is a person named Hodja who often uses humour to convey wisdom.)

A long time ago in a land far away, there was a man who owned a small but beautiful farm. He loved his land, took care of it, and grew fruits, vegetables, and grain. Unfortunately, he had to travel far away to visit his relatives and to take care of them. Since the land needed to be taken care of during his absence, he asked a friend to look after it. After what seemed like a very long time, the man finally returned. He was very happy to be back to his land and resume taking care of the land. But the friend who had taken care of his land did not want to give it back.

He said, “You were away from here for too long. During that time, I took care of it. I weeded it. I sowed and planted and reaped the harvest. I put my heart and soul into it as though I was taking care of my own child. So I don’t want to give it back. I consider it mine now.”

The owner of the land said, “No, it is mine. I only wanted you to take care of it while I was gone. You need to give it back.”

The friend answered, “It is my land now. Sorry.”

So there was a big argument. Both of the men refused to give in. Before letting the argument turn into a serious fight, they decided to consult with someone who is very wise living in their village, named Hodja.

Hodja came to the farm land the two people were arguing about. Hodja listened carefully to both sides of the story. After hearing their stories, Hodja put his ears on the ground. The two men were wondering, “Hodja, what are you doing with your head on the ground?”

Hodja replied, “I am listening to what the land has to say about all this.”

The two men thought that Hodja was a bit crazy and they started to laugh. Still laughing, they asked, “So what is the land saying?”

Hodja replied, “The land says the two of you belong to the land.”

Indeed, God, who created the universe, also created this Earth. As such, it belongs to God. God told us to take care of it. Our world is God’s magnificent creation. It is a beautiful gift that God has given to us for us to love not only for us but for all the children and grandchildren to come. We need to live with respect in creation.

Prayer

O God, it is you who is Creator of the universe. We thank you for entrusting to us such a beautiful Earth for us to live in and enjoy. Help us to respect your abundant gift. Be with us so that we can walk gently upon Earth and share what you have given to all of us. Help us to care for it and rejoice in it with all of your children. Amen.

Hymn

VU 282 "Long before the Night"

VU 307 "Touch the Earth Lightly"

MV 143 "We Cannot Own the Sunlit Sky"

Lectionary Readings and Sermon Starters

A number of options are possible for readings, depending on when you do this service and whether you want to tie it into the Year A Lenten lectionary. Suggested lectionary readings and sermon starters are provided at the end of this resource.

Hymns of Response/Going Forth

VU 112 "O God, How We Have Wandered"

VU 606 "In Christ There Is No East or West"

VU 678 "For the Healing of the Nations"

MV 135 "Called by Earth and Sky"

MV 141 "We Are All One People"

MV 159 "In Star and Crescent"

MV 165 "There Is a Time"

MV 169 "When Hands Reach Out Beyond Divides"

Offering

Consider collecting a special offering during Lent for the [Healing Fund](#) or [Gifts with Vision](#) that support an Indigenous ministry or reconciliation project.

Invitation to Offering

The scriptures ask us, "What does the Lord require of you?" (Micah 6:8) There are many ways that we can live in right relations with Indigenous communities and organizations. Let us offer these gifts as a sign of our commitment to share the world's resources so that all will live in God's abundance. Grateful for all that God our Creator has given us, and mindful of how we might share our abundance, let us offer our thanks. Our offering will now be received.

Offering Prayer

Creator God, we ask you to bless these gifts, which have been given in love. May our gifts be used in many ways to build good relations. May your will be done through these gifts and through us and in spite of ourselves. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayers of the People

(written in the voice of the “dominant” church or those who exercise White privilege)

One: Let us gather ourselves to be present here and now and join our hearts and minds as we offer praise and thanks and pray for mercy, grace, wisdom, hope, and new life.

Creator God, Holy Friend,

We are humbled in gratitude for this amazing gift of your creation, and for the teachings of Indigenous siblings and cousins that reconnect us to the land, water, sky, and creatures of all kinds. The wisdom of your creation’s balance and harmony is astounding, and we pray that such wisdom will both unite and enliven us even more, given that we are all latecomers to this amazing Earth.

All: Creator God, in thanksgiving inspire us. With your Spirit nurture an attitude of gratitude for all your gifts, and for the wisdom of the Indigenous perspective toward creation.

One: Creator God, Holy Friend,

We are humbled in repentance for the arrogance of Western European churches that turned things around in history, our ancestors making your image in theirs rather than their image in yours. We acknowledge that this distorted image was used to dehumanize others, to conquer nations, and to forcefully expropriate land and resources in your name.

All: Creator God, in your mercy forgive us. With your Spirit lead us to see your face in all humanity, and your spirit of love in all of creation.

One: Creator God, Holy Friend,

We are humbled in lament and sorrow for the Christian church coming to this land armed with the Doctrine of Discovery to confiscate land and to annihilate and dehumanize our Indigenous hosts. Pour your love into our hearts so that we might build right relations of mutuality, equity, and respect and be responsible keepers of the lands and waters.

All: Creator God, in your grace transform us. With your Spirit guide us in living out right relations with all people based on respect and equal rights.

One: Creator God, Holy Friend,

We are humbled in seeking healing for our churches as we move from a legacy of colonization and domination to creating a new history built on right relations and gracious mutual habitation on these lands. For the harm committed in your name against all the First Peoples of the land we are sorry. Despite inflicting such pain, we are aware of so much grace returned toward we who are settlers, as well as the great resilience among Indigenous Peoples themselves, as we share the hope of reconciliation.

All: Creator God, in your wisdom heal us. With your Spirit heal us and strengthen us to be agents of wholeness and wellness with all nations and peoples.

One: Creator God, Holy Friend,

We are humbled in our need for encouragement within the Christian churches who repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, that our repentance may go beyond words to actions of solidarity and justice. For this we ask for your mercy and wisdom and courage, both to change all doctrines that

promote hate and violence by our presumed superiority, and to take up the way of humility, compassion, and caring.

All: Creator God, in your hope give us courage. With your Spirit may we change the churches to live in harmony with all creation and be agents of care for all humanity.

One: Creator God, Holy Friend,

We are humbled as we pray for ourselves and for all Christian churches around the world, that we may faithfully follow the life of Jesus, the Nazarene who showed us the good path of justice, reconciliation, and peace-building. It is the way of life he represented, based on providing for the common good and the sharing of all your Earth's resources that will enable us, together, to re-create your loving and compassionate empowerment on Earth.

All: Creator God, in your love give us faith and new life. With your Spirit help us to be co-creators of a world of justice and peace. Amen.

Benediction or Sending Forth

Let us go forth called to God's holy covenant.

God continues to guide us:

attending to our stories,

healing us as brothers and sisters,

showing us how to live in right relations.

God promises to bless and encourage us on the path of respect.

So go with the peace and promise of God,

the energy of the Spirit of Love,

and the passion of Jesus. Amen.

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Living on the Path of Respect: Lectionary Readings and Sermon Starters

Lectionary Readings for Year A (Lent/Easter 2017)

First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 2: 15–17, 3:1–7 Humans are put in the garden to till and keep it. We were given knowledge and power to care for the Earth in a good way. How have we abused/misused knowledge and power, bringing shame upon us? How have we tried to hide our wrongdoing and deny it?

Psalms 32 We waste away and experience pain when we do not acknowledge our wrongdoing. Don't be like a mule. Blessed are those whose sins are forgiven.

Matthew 4: 1–11 In the wilderness, Jesus has nothing, yet he does not give in to the temptation of receiving bread alone, special spiritual attention, or the power and wealth of the kingdoms. Although in the earliest years of encounter, it seems explorers and traders realized how much they needed Indigenous Peoples to survive, that relationship shifted, largely after the Royal Proclamation of 1763. Leaders of empires, Christianity, and trading companies gave in to temptations to seize lands and dominate the inhabitants, disregarding their ways of praying and sharing food. It is time for us to return to the wilderness to fast, and seek the spiritual courage to trust in what Creator provides and respect all our relations.

“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”—attributed an Australian Aboriginal activist

There is a profound sense of interconnectedness, that our sense of liberation is bound up with another. It echoes our Prayer after Communion:

May your presence among us
provoke such longing for your realm,
that we will never be satisfied
until the whole earth knows
your justice, your peace, and your love. (*Celebrate God's Presence*, p.303.)

Members of the “settler” or “dominant” church need to ask themselves in what ways they are in need of healing. What thoughts bind them? What burdens weigh them down? If they were free of those thoughts and burdens, how might relationships change?

A daring preacher might elaborate on what is imbedded in the [1986 Apology to First Nations Peoples](#), which is a repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery and colonialism that exploited Earth's resources, of land grabbing, subjugation of peoples, racism, and oppression while making the colonizers wealthy and powerful. The theology behind the Doctrine, unfortunately, was in the service of the economic and political benefit of colonialism.

When interviewed during the rise of the Idle No More movement, Bishop Mark MacDonald, the Indigenous Bishop of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Canadian representative to the World Council of Churches, made a profound statement about the connection between the “world economy” and Native spirituality. “The relationship with the land is God-given and necessary for a good life,” he said. “To grow in the good life, in morality and spirituality, is to grow in the beneficial relationship with God and creation.... This means that the relationship with creation, with the land, is a moral absolute. It cannot be eclipsed by other considerations.” (“The Spiritual Side of Idle No More,” *Faith Exchange, Globe and Mail*, Feb. 18, 2013)

Third Sunday in Lent

Psalm 95 Depths of Earth, mountains, sea, and land are all in God's hands. Do not harden your hearts.

Romans 5:1–11 This is one of the few times that the word "reconciliation" is used in the Bible (NRSV). (Or, in *The Message*, being "set right" with God and each other, or having "an amazing friendship.") If our hearts are open to God's love, let us hope that we can dismantle the unjust structures and policies derived from applying the Doctrine of Discovery, which cause so much suffering.

John 4:5–42 In light of Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman, explore ways we can bring down barriers and enter into meaningful conversations between followers of Jesus and the First Peoples of this land. What can we learn from others who have different world views and spiritual practices? How can our conversations bring blessing and reconciliation?

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Ezekiel 37:1–14 There are many places in Canada that might seem like a "valley of dry bones," where resources have been mined and ghost towns and waste ponds are left behind, where forests are clear cut and flooding has ravaged the land, where food and water sources have been depleted or poisoned and peoples have been relocated. There is a Cree prophecy that warns of such a desolate situation: "Only after the last tree has been cut down,
Only after the last river has been poisoned,
Only after the last fish has been caught,
Only then will you find that money cannot be eaten." (www.quotes.net)

How might the breath of the Spirit and the winds of the four directions revive these lands? Explore how the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly the honouring of treaties and the principle of free, prior, and informed consent, could bring new life.

Psalm 130 "Out of the depths I cry to you..." With God, there is great power to redeem.

Sixth Sunday of Easter (May 21, 2017)

Acts 17:22–31 Paul acknowledges with the Athenians "the God who made the world and everything in it." How is Paul's approach to proclaiming the gospel different or similar to European explorers and missionaries in Turtle Island?

Other Scripture Suggestions and Sermon Starters

Micah 6: 6–8 "What does the Lord require of you?"

Amos 5: 21–24 "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

Jeremiah 31: 31–34 "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts."

Psalm 103 God fills life with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. God works righteousness and justice for all who are wronged.

Psalm 111 Great are your works...you keep your covenant always in mind.

Acts 2:43–47 The disciples would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.

Acts 4:31–35 Everything they owned was held in common.

2 Corinthians 5:16–21 "There is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" We are entrusted with the message of reconciliation. See sermon delivered in Sudbury marking the 30th anniversary of the 1986 apology by Moderator Cantwell in *Touchstone*, October 2016.

Romans 12:1–5 Be transformed by the renewal of your mind (and the thinking reflected in the Doctrine). Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Every part of the body is connected and important.

John 11:28–37 Jesus wept. As friends, we too weep over the disproportionate loss of Indigenous lives through poverty, violence, suicide, pollution, and addictions that are the impacts of historical trauma and codified racism.

Luke 13:31–35 “How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings.”

Thoughts on...

Treaty as Covenant, and What Is Required of Us

Most Indigenous Peoples would hold similar understandings about treaties throughout Canada as expressed by Ron Lameman, Treaty 6 Confederacy, presenting at Stanley Milner Library, Edmonton, October 27, 2016 (used with permission):

We want to repeat once again what our Elders have consistently affirmed to us through their oral history as it pertains to our Treaty: “Our ancestors did not cede, release or surrender our lands; they did not ‘give it up’ as the Crown through the Government of Canada would have you believe. Our great grandfathers and great grandmothers only agreed to share our portion of Mother Earth ‘to the depth of a plough’ so that the children and descendants of Queen Victoria could come and make a living in our country and live side by side with us in the spirit of mutual cooperation and respect.

“The real problem that is facing us today is a matter of treaty interpretation and understanding, which in a lot of instances leads to misinterpretation, and violation of this sacred covenant. It is only through proper and meaningful education and respect for the world view and life-ways of our Indigenous Peoples that we can begin to make right this historic injustice. A very classic and clear example of this misinterpretation by design is the true meaning of ‘reciprocal education.’ What is meant by this is that when the Treaty was negotiated and entered into there was a general agreement that not only would our people be given the benefit of the European style of education, it was also agreed that our Indigenous Peoples would continue to teach the settlers how to respect and live in harmony with our Mother Earth. Somewhere along the way this part of the agreement was disregarded and conveniently set aside by our Treaty partner and that is why we are where we are today.”

I want to quote from a statement that was made by the North American Indigenous Peoples Caucus on Agenda Item 5: Half-Day Discussion on North America at the Ninth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues: Page 2 on Land Rights:

“‘Delegates stressed the need for state governments to reverse their laws and policies that are based on the colonial Doctrine of Discovery.’ In the Canadian context, in areas where no treaties have been signed, this refers to the doctrine of *terra nullius* and the failure to recognize the inherent jurisdiction and land rights of Indigenous Peoples over their traditional territories. Canada’s current land rights policy, the Comprehensive Claims Policy, continues to aim at the extinguishment of Aboriginal Title, within the context of the Doctrine of Discovery framework, rather than implementing an approach based on recognition and co-existence.”

Indigenous Rights, Pipelines, Climate Change, and Differing Worldviews

We are in the throes of a clash in worldviews of the human relationship to land and water, and all creation; and what it means to hold all things in common (as the early Christians did) and seek the common good. We are called to critique attitudes of superiority and political-corporate insistence on knowing what is economically best for Canada.

Please see the [Moderator's letter of September 13, 2016](#), regarding the implementation of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly the principle of free, prior, and informed consent, and the briefing paper developed by KAIROS staffer John Dillon, ["Prime Minister Facing Moment of Truth on Indigenous Rights."](#)

The Moderator also wrote a letter to the church upon the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline, and a [Take Action](#) was issued. It is anticipated that similar stands will be taken in Canada as occurred at Standing Rock, North Dakota. It may be helpful to hold onto the concepts of "making a just transition" and "managed decline of the fossil fuel industry."

On November 3, 2016, over 500 clergy joined the Standing Rock water protectors, including two Canadian Anglican priests and National Bishop Mark MacDonald, at the invitation of Canon John Floberg, supervising priest for The Episcopal Church for the North Dakota side of Standing Rock. They symbolically burned copies of the Doctrine of Discovery. Read about their experience in two articles in the *Anglican Journal*: ["Peace and Violence at Standing Rock"](#); ["Peaceful, Prayerful Solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux."](#)

"All My Relations" vs the Doctrine of Discovery

The Doctrine of Discovery is a church doctrine deeply rooted in the European colonialism. It serves to equip and enable the economic benefit to the colonial powers. What prejudices, hatred, and assumptions are implied in the Doctrine? What are the subtle secrets that need to be made visible and addressed?

If the church does not properly address the legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery, how will it harm the church? What is at stake in all this?

When astronauts go out into space and look down on Earth, many have profound spiritual experiences. They see Earth in all its beauty. From space, they see Earth without the boundaries that divide the nations. They see humanity as one. All human beings belong to one race, as one people, living on one planet. There is a sense of interconnectedness of all life—as the phrase ["All my relations" on the United Church crest](#) implies. What affects one will affect all. When God rested on the seventh day and looked upon creation, God said, "It is good." Might we dare to look at our planet from such a perspective and say it with God, "It is good"?

Finally, Walter Brueggemann sums up what is at stake in all this: the reality of this world versus the reality of God:

Prophetic proclamation is the staging and performance of a contest between two narrative accounts of the world and an effort to show that the YHWH account of reality is more adequate and finally more reliable than the dominant narrative account that is cast among us as though it were true and beyond critique.

(Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination* (Fortress Press, 2012), p.3.)