# *Nîpin*, Summer Is HereWorship Service for the Indigenous Day of Prayer

June 21 is National Indigenous Peoples Day, and the Indigenous Day of Prayer may be celebrated the Sunday before or after June 21.

Welcome and Acknowledgement

We proudly and lovingly acknowledge the land and territory that we pray on as a congregation and family of the church. We acknowledge and pray for the peoples, ancestors, and presence of the Indigenous peoples of…. *(stated people of your location).* We also acknowledge all of the Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit of this great land of Turtle Island and their ancestors, and all seven generations before and after us in this place, this church, and country of Canada. Thanks be to God for all creation.

We always make it a point to leave a tobacco offering at certain places where it is needed for grace and gratitude. It’s our way as Indigenous peoples of giving blessings and thanks for all that one is, was, and is to become. It is a way to connect to God, our Mother Earth, and all of our ancestors and guides on all our paths in life. This planet that we call home is our first church. This land sings the stories of our peoples; many people don’t like to listen to the harmony that is a spiritual gift each day. The land always gives us life and wellbeing. We all need to pray and connect to that each moment that we can, because that’s God’s language, that’s the voice of our Mother, that’s the song of our people, our ancestors, and all our relations.

(Note: Please adapt the above Acknowledgement to fit your specific location. For more information, visit the [Worship Theme: Indigenous](https://www.united-church.ca/worship-theme/indigenous) page and download the resource *Acknowledging the Territory in Worship* found under “Extras.”)

Opening Prayer (with Tobacco)

Our loving God, our Creator, you have brought us here with our family, friends, and community to learn and experience the wonders of this great world you created for us to live in. You have brought us to our church, *(state name of church),* and we give you thanks. This experience and our travels will be many and varied. Please, look after us and allow us to accept the journey and the many blessings that face us each day. God, I ask you to continue to bless our Mother, Earth, as she grants us her grace to live with her. Allow our relationship with her to continue. She is a great teacher to humanity. And of course, dear God, I ask for the support and guidance of our ancestors and the ancestors of this land to be with us now and through our time here on Earth. I leave this offering to you, to our Mother and to our numerous ancestors who have lived, loved, and bled to be a people of the land. And as I lay this here, my spirit and heart are placed here as well for the respect of all your creations. Thank you, God. May Jesus walk with us on our path today, tomorrow, and for days to come. The light and life are with us now and forever more. In Jesus name, Amen.

Prayer of Approach

One: We call upon the light, God’s light. The light shall shine upon and within us.

**All: The light is God and it is great.**

One: It shall encourage us, strengthen us, guide us, protect us, shield us, love us, empower us, ground us, give us wisdom and the actions of God’s Holy Spirit.

**All: The light is calm. The light is never rushed. The light knows no time. The light is the Holy Spirit.**

One: We sense the light; we know, feel, and smell the light. It is like pure joy. Jesus was created by the light, truly God’s light.

**All: It shall never leave us.**

One: With all you have given and taught us, forgive us, loving God, for the times when we have rejected your light *(pause for a time for silent reflection).* Allow us to accept the light and creation of the lives we each lead.

**All: We love you, God. We love you, Holy Spirit. We love you, Jesus.**

One: With peace and forgiveness, in Jesus’ name.

**All: Amen.**

Share the Gift of Community

Share in morning greetings with all your community and relations.

Opening Hymn

“Sisters Let Us Walk Together” (MV 179)

“Morning Has Broken” (VU 409)

Learning Together: The Butterfly

The butterfly is a beautiful and gentle message of transformation. It’s a great representation and reminder of Jesus, who died on the cross, transformed, and resurrected to a new, holy being of light and love for all of us. The butterfly does the same thing in this season of summer. The butterfly starts as a caterpillar and cocoons itself into a metamorphosis phase and changes, transforms, and breaks out of its cocoon as a beautiful, colourful, and flittering butterfly. The butterfly, like Jesus, reminds us of the transformation and change that happens in our lives and in the world with the seasons. Summer is here and is celebrated with the beauty of the butterflies, bees, flowers, and trees, as well as the wonderful creatures that live with us in respect on this land. The Earth is alive! We shout with joy. Just as we shout the message that Jesus’ disciples and Mary Magdalene shouted when they were reunited with our beloved Jesus—Jesus is alive! As we see the butterfly in all its beauty and splendor we shout for the season—summer is here!

Hymn

“Jesus, Friend of Little Children” (VU 340)

First Reading

Proverbs 8:1–4, 22-31

Responsive Psalm

Psalm 8 (VU p. 732)

Second Reading

Romans 5:1–5

Gospel Reading

John 16:12–15

(Note: You may also add additional readings of your choice.)

Reflection

*Nîpin,* Summer Is Here

The summer is a time for reflection, and the summer is a time for fully embracing what the land has to offer us. Summer is a time when we give thanks to our Mother Earth for her gifts of the season. But, when we give thanks to God for the season and for the precious and sacred gifts of the land, we also wait for the call of the season so we can prepare in gratitude for summer.

The robin is such a beautiful representation of the summer season. With her call and her presence, we know that she embodies the nature of the season. And if it wasn’t for the gift from the Creator to have the robin in our land, we wouldn’t hear the true call of the season in such a way. You see, the robin has a beautiful call. And when she calls out the song, “nee-pin,” you know she’s around. And it’s that call of “nee-pin” that is the glorious message of summer. Grandmother Robin, in all her grace, always brings the message of summer to the Cree and Indigenous people on this land.

The Cree language is so rooted to the land and to our environment; it has such a beautiful and lineal connection to our Mother. This is the language that so many Indigenous people speak and try so desperately to preserve today. Many of us believe that it is the language that God speaks, for it was God who gave us the language to speak to our Mother, to the land, and to all of the animals and elements. The land is our teacher and our family. God connects us with who we are in a gifted and spiritual way. We are blessed to connect and be a part of this world, on this earth plain, and with all our relations—the winds, the fire, the stones, the waters, the four-legged, the fish, the winged, the nations of the two-legged, and all those in between.

*Nîpin* is the Cree word for summer. It is *Kokum* (Grandmother) Robin, *nîpin aya* (summer bird), who first signals the call for summer. “Nee-pin” is a song that means summer because *Kokum* reminds us so. When we hear that call, we know summer is coming and is here to stay. This spring, as I was walking home from my travels, in the distant mountain air I heard a light echo from afar, “Nee-pin.” I stopped in my tracks and paused for a few seconds to listen to that all familiar sound. “Nee-pin” came, a distant sound in the chilled breeze of the afternoon air. That was my call from *Kokum* Robin that summer, *nîpin,* is coming, prepare for its arrival, *nôsisim* (grandson). Then, after a few weeks had passed, I was on my walk in the morning, down my trails. In the trees above, in the warmth of a spring mountain morning sun, a closer reminder and call became much more vibrant to the ear and the spirit: “Nee-pin.” The reminder was from *Kokum* Robin, who had arrived and was sitting in the tree above my head, singing her song of summer, “Nee-pin.” With much more energy and assurance in her song, *Kokum* Robin made a more formal call to summer. “Prepare for summer, *nôsisim,* it is much closer. It’s time to pray for and celebrate all that God is giving us.”

And as this reminder and song of summer is clear and announced, it’s a blessed, annual atonement of the four seasons. We are reminded to respect and honour it, because it is the land and God’s messengers that pass on this wisdom song to acknowledge. Every time I hear *Kokum* Robin sing, it reminds me of Proverbs 8:22–31. *(Note: you may wish to reread this scripture text here).* *Kokum* Robin is a wise woman who teaches us to respect the seasons and to respect our land, our Mother, and each other. She teaches us to recognize God in all creation that is in our lives. Love like God loves, with a humble heart. “Nee-pin,” summer is here, my grandchildren. Thanks be to God.

**Questions for further reflection or discussion:**

How has our Mother alerted you that the seasons are changing?

When is it hard to recognize Creation in all things?

How can you show your respect and love to our Mother during these summer months?

Hymn

“Teach Me, God, to Wonder” (VU 299)

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God our Creator, we give thanks that you have given and provided for us this beautiful land.

We look to the east and give thanks for the direction where the sun rises each day. As the sun rises for a new day, let the grace of Jesus also rise in our hearts.

We look to the south, give thanks, and respond to the land and waters that are our Mother Earth. She provides us with the medicines and life force that allow us to be a part of your Creation. May we always give her the respect she needs as we are people of the land and are always reminded of that simple but sustainable purpose.

We look to the west and give thanks for the winds and the air that help move our seasons and celebrate the time we are in now—the season of summer. With the change in the air and temperatures, we are able to appreciate the beauty and nourishment of the breath of life that is within each one of us.

We look to the north and give thanks for the great wisdom of all that you give us. We appreciate the wisdom of our peoples, the elders, and the many ancestors and loved ones who came and left before us, and whom are with us still. For they are your wisdom and knowledge, and teachers of livelihood. All of your teachings, the good and the bad, are great. They make us the loving and blessed people we are today.

Hear us, loving God, as we pray. We pray for our Nations living together here on Turtle Island, within this country we call Canada, and the numerous territories of the Indigenous peoples of this great land. We pray for children and youth to grow strong and be mindful of your teachings and the wonderful land you have provided for all creations to live together as one. Jesus taught us about the path of love. Let your blessed love embrace all those, including us here today, that need and require a source of comfort and joy. And may we all journey along a humble path in the many ways we do—for the sake of unity and understanding, the acceptance of our differences, and kindness. With your gentle breeze, give us hope. We pray for this in Jesus’ name and for the ways of peace and grace. Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer

Offering and Prayer

Closing Hymn

“Creating God, We Give You Thanks” (VU 292)

Commissioning

Surround yourself in the Spirit;

God is with you.

Surround yourself in the Light;

God is with you.

Surround yourself in the Wisdom;

God is with you.

Surround yourself in the Love;

God is with you.

Be brave. Be strong. Be humble.

Be God.

Peace be with us.

In Jesus name, Amen.

*—This worship service was created by Murray Pruden. Murray is a student minister in his third year of studies in the Vancouver School of Theology’s Masters of Divinity program through the Indigenous Ministries program at the University of British Columbia. He also attends Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre in Beausejour, Manitoba. Murray is Cree from the Goodfish Lake and Saddle Lake First Nations in central Alberta. He is a direct descendant, fourth generation, of Rev. Henry Bird Steinhauer. Murray believes in connection, respecting all paths of spirituality, and honouring each other with our gifts.*