

# Seeds of Sovereignty

## A Worship Service by Margaret Tusz-King

### CALL TO WORSHIP

*(read responsively)*

O God, source of all life,  
**you are with us always.**  
 You reveal yourself as a seed,  
**that we may taste, be nourished, and grow in you.**  
 You reveal yourself as water,  
**that we may be softened and cleansed by you.**  
 You reveal yourself as earth,  
**that we may be nurtured and grounded in you.**  
 You reveal yourself as wind,  
**that we may be touched and inspired by you.**  
 You reveal yourself as fire,  
**that we may be refined and energized by you.**  
 You reveal yourself as a child,  
**that we may wonder with amazement at your wisdom and beauty.**  
**We are your people, God. We come to worship you!**

### GATHERING HYMN

*More Voices #135, "Called by Earth and Sky" or Voices United #226, "For the Beauty of the Earth"*

### PRAYER OF APPROACH

God, you create life  
**out of simple things, like soil, water, sunlight, and seeds.**  
 You catch our attention  
**with sunrises, sunsets, rhododendrons, and butterflies.**  
 You hold our hearts  
**in cupped hands that are the shape of lovers, of families, of communities.**  
 You move our spirits  
**like a breeze, like flowing water, like nighttime turning to day.**  
 You are all that we need  
**to live with dignity, justice, wellness, and fulfillment.**  
 Help us to feel your embrace and care  
 in every precious moment and place.

### LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

**Leader:** Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God, we do our best to walk in your light.  
 But we confess, O God, that  
**Sometimes, we forget that we live in you.**  
 Sometimes, we forget that we live in community, connected with all of life.

**Sometimes, we forget that our lives are gifts of love and delight.**

Sometimes, we indulge in diversions and selfishness, forgetting our brothers, and sisters, and creation.

**Sometimes, we consume too much and share too little.**

We are frail, and seek your forgiveness.

**God, heal our frailties, enable our learning, and continue to light our footsteps in our life journey toward you.**

*(silent meditation)*

**Amen.**

### ASSURANCE OF PARDON

**Leader:** God promises us grace and forgiveness. God gives us light. We are loved and forgiven. Thanks be to God!  
 Amen.

Friends, food is at the heart of our way of living, of our families and of our relationships in community. How we grow, share, and eat food is important to all of us. How much we grow, share, and eat is also key. It affects our health, the health of the planet, and justice in the world.

In our worship together, we will explore what the Bible tells us, as well as hear about courageous principles that can help us sort out the best way we can live faithfully, with food and in relationships, in God's world.

### SCRIPTURE

Exodus 16:13–30, Acts 4, 32–37

### HYMN RESPONSE

*More Voices #151, "Your Will Be Done" or Voices United #520, "We Plough the Fields"*

### MESSAGE

#### Option One: Drama about Food Sovereignty

See [united-church.ca/getinvolved/seeding-life](http://united-church.ca/getinvolved/seeding-life) (under Worship Resources) for a three-person drama that takes place in a coffee shop and includes a surprising conversation with a farmer from another country who explains the principles of food sovereignty and makes recommendations about how faithful people might take action.

#### Option Two: Engaging Discussion about Food Sovereignty

Lead a process of small-group discussion, reflection, and sharing.

Begin by explaining that food sovereignty is a new term being used regarding food justice. It is about the right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and

their right to define their own food and agricultural systems. Its seven principles, or pillars, evoke such Christian values as equality, inclusion, ecological sustainability, social justice, and the sacredness of life.

Print out each of the Seven Pillars of Food Sovereignty, below, form seven small groups, and hand a pillar to each

group. Ask each to read the pillar, then talk about biblical stories and local examples or experiences that come to mind related to the pillar.

Then ask each group to report to the large group on what their pillar was and one good demonstration of its expression from either the Bible or real-life story.

## THE SEVEN PILLARS OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

### 1 Focus on Food for People

In the perspective of food sovereignty, food—along with the land, knowledge, seeds, and water needed to produce it—are understood primarily as sources of life, not as “natural resources” or as mere commodities to be bought and sold for profit. The fundamental goal of a healthy food system, then, is to provide sufficient, safe, healthy, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for all people—regardless of their economic or social circumstances—not to generate profits.

### 2 Value Food Providers

All those who work to provide food—farmers, fishers, gatherers, and hunters—as well as those who transport, distribute, and prepare food, should enjoy safe and dignified working conditions and earn an adequate livelihood. Socially and culturally, the place of those who provide food should be valued. So, adequate services and education should be available for all food providers, particularly those in rural areas who may have traditionally been neglected by governments.

### 3 Localize Food Systems

Local producers seek to grow, cultivate, raise, and gather food first and foremost for local and regional needs. The scale of production is such that farmers and other producers can earn a dignified livelihood, but not so large that a few individuals (or corporate entities) gain significant power over others or over essential resources. Indeed, local populations and producers maintain control over the land, water, and seeds needed to produce sufficient safe, healthy, and culturally appropriate food for all.

### 4 Put Control Locally

Food sovereignty involves moving control of the food system away from large corporations and other forms of central control to local people. This implies the need for local participatory decision making over key policies and resources affecting food production.

### 5 Build Knowledge and Skills

In a system valuing food sovereignty, social justice, and ecological sustainability, knowledge that contributes to creating a better food system—including growing, preparing, and preserving food—is shared freely and respectfully. At the same time, traditional and Indigenous knowledge is valued and preserved.

### 6 Work with Nature

Food systems should—to the greatest degree possible—work in harmony with local ecosystems and mimic natural cycles in nature so that clean water, healthy soil, and biodiversity are fostered and protected. Food systems need to be designed in such a way as to minimize inputs of water, energy, and other external inputs. The use of synthetic chemicals that can damage human or biological health should be avoided.

### 7 Recognize That Food Is Sacred

Food sovereignty—building on Indigenous insights—understands food as sacred and part of a web of relationships with the natural world that sustains culture and community. Food is recognized as being an essential part of human culture and human community. As such, while it is a physical necessity, it is more than a physical necessity—it is an embodiment of culture, traditional wisdom, and celebration.

—from “Toward Food Sovereignty for All,” United Church of Canada policy statement, 2013.

**HYMN RESPONSE**

*More Voices* #198, “When We Gather at the Table” or *Voices United* #460, “All Who Hunger”

**OFFERING**

**Leader:** All that we have received comes from you, God. Let us offer our gifts, for sharing in your world.

**Doxology:** (Refrain from *Voices United* #520, “We Plough the Fields”)

All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;  
We thank you, God, O holy God, for all your love.

**Offertory Prayer**

(*unison*)

Bountiful and gracious God,  
we share what you have given us  
with love, joy, and commitment,  
that your love may root and grow,  
wherever needed in the world.  
Amen.

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

(*from A New Creed, read responsively*)

God, we humbly pray,

**We are not alone. We live in your world.**

We pray for the health of the earth, upon which all of life depends. We pray for all who touch the earth as farmers, miners, foresters, fishers, and backyard gardeners, that we all may remember that you are with us, and that this is your world.

**We are called to be the church.**

We pray for all who gather in your name, who seek to do your will. May we, like seeds, be full of promise, be whole, and grow in fertile soil as examples of your goodness in your world.

**We are called to celebrate God’s presence.**

We are amazed by your constancy! We pray for awareness of your presence in the world, in the beauty of flowers, the singing of birds, the scents and flavours of foods, in our tinglings of feelings.

**We are called to live with respect in Creation.**

We understand that we are just one part of the balance of

your creation. We pray that we may understand how to live respectfully with all life here. May we learn to live interdependently and justly with our neighbours.

**We are called to love and serve others.**

We, now, are the hands and feet of Christ in the world. We pray for the caregivers, whose kindness, mercy, and compassion demonstrate your love. We pray for those who suffer, who are oppressed, who are marginalized. May we, like seeds planted in good soil, receive what is needed to live meaningful lives that serve you.

**We are called to seek justice and resist evil.**

We live in a world of conflict and injustice. May we recognize opportunities to build peace and reconciliation. We pray for the peacemakers and justice-seekers who bring your message of peace, love, and holy wisdom through courageous and inspiring actions.

**We are called to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.**

We are inspired by Jesus, a seed of love, who demonstrated compassion through his actions, educated for justice through his parables, and is our living hope through his death.

And God, we offer these prayers that we carry silently in our hearts (*silence*).

**In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.**

**We are not alone. Thanks be to God. Amen.**

**HYMN**

*More Voices* # 171, “Christ Has No Body Now but Yours” or *Voices United* #713, “I See a New Heaven”

**SENDING FORTH**

As we return to our daily lives,  
may our thoughts be prayerful,  
our prayers be actions,  
and our actions be seeds of blessing  
in God’s world.  
Amen.

**Margaret Tusz-King** lives in Sackville New Brunswick, and works with Open Sky Co-operative, a social enterprise that improves the lives of adults facing barriers due to social, developmental, or mental health challenges through organic farming, life skills development, and social supports.

## The Dancing Sun An Aboriginal Advent Resource

**Five services for the four Sundays of Advent and Christmas Eve** (or Day) are centred around the personal stories of Aboriginal community leaders. Some stories refer to hurts engendered due to Residential School experiences; some refer to the loss of community traditions. All are lifted by the Advent themes of hope, love, and waiting for God-with-us. Each worship service includes activities for all ages and an additional activity session that can continue after the service or be held mid-week. These worship experiences offer a unique combination of Aboriginal spirituality and Christian understanding. This digital resource is a downloadable file. It includes three downloadable illustrations by First Nations artist Annette Loutit.

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