

A Prayer Service for Children of Indian Boarding Schools

Prepare: Consider having a candle to light, a bowl of water, paper and writing tools, any images/items for the altar that tell the story of the children.

Song

“Many and Great, O God” (ELW 837)

Opening Prayer

Today we remember the innocent children who were torn from their families, taken to boarding schools and abused by their caregivers, and who died so far away from their communities. Hear our prayer for the innocent sacred lives of all Indigenous children who survived, who have been found and who remain lost. Move our hearts by your mercy as we acknowledge and repent all the suffering that our churches caused. Guide and restore us to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Scripture Readings

Jeremiah 31:15-17

Psalm 124

Matthew 2:13-18

Prayer of Lament

A sung response is used throughout the prayer, derived from the first phrase of the second stanza of “Many and Great, O God” (ELW 837).

O God of all Creation, our tears flow freely,
Weeping for the pain our children have experienced.
Singing: Grant unto us communion with you, O star-abiding One.

We weep for the sacred children whose bodies have been found,
For the many children who remain lost,
For those who survived and have carried the trauma through generations,
And for the reopened wounds that we are forced to endure.

Together we grieve.

Hear our cries of deep sorrow, O Lord:

Singing: Grant unto us communion with you, O star-abiding One.

We weep for the families and communities who lost a child
And carried through the generations a broken heart.
Our tears flow like rivers that never stop,
mourning the pain of the survivors.

Together we grieve.

Hear our cries of deep sorrow, O Lord:

Singing: **Grant unto us communion with you, O star-abiding One.**

Just as Jesus wept, we weep and pray:

O God of love, come to us during this time of pain.

Comfort all who grieve, and weep with those full of sorrow.

**Hear the stories of remembrance, carried by generations,
and transform our grief into determination**

and our tears into action so that your creation hears their stories.

Amen.

Poem

Echoes of the Forgotten

By Dr. Kelly Sherman-Conroy (Oglala Lakota)

In the hallowed heart of ancestral land, a chilling discovery, hard to understand. Children of our kin, silenced by past years, in forgotten graves, echo of untold fears.

Torn from loving arms, under the church's guise, in boarding school halls, where their spirit dies. A mother's heartache, a father's stifled cry, for the stolen laughter and the dreams that lie.

Yet undying is the love, deep within our hearts, stronger than the sorrow, mending broken parts. Their spirits whisper in the wind, hum in the river's flow. In each dawn their presence in soft glow.

Churches of stone, bearers of the cross, in your halls of learning, what was the cost? Justice demands answers for the lives you took, for every innocent smile, in your history book.

We seek not revenge but the healing truth, to honor our children, to reclaim their youth. To remember their names, their unspoken tales. Against the winds of injustice, our love prevails.

Around sacred fires, their stories we weave, in the silent night, their loss we grieve. Though the church may falter and its authority wane, our love for our children will forever remain.

With peace as our compass, justice our quest, we'll forge a future where no child is oppressed. From the depths of despair, hope will arise, for love is the legacy that never dies.

Song

"O Lord, Hear My Prayer" (ELW 751)

Time of Reflection

As we sit in silence, hear our prayers.

During this time of silence we will write our own collect. The collect is one of the oldest forms of prayer, using a short, thematic form. Using the following form, write your own collect and then place it on the altar:

1. A name for God.
2. Something more about God or God's attributes.
3. A specific request (one line).
4. Why are you making this request (one or two lines).
5. A line of praise.

Song

“O Lord, Hear My Prayer” (ELW 751)

Prayer for the Children

Hear within our breath the grief we carry for all the sacred children who lost their lives or survived the abuse at the hands of those who brought suffering onto children in the name of God.

We weep in sorrow and we lament our participation in a system that allowed these deaths to happen.

We humbly ask for forgiveness in the complicity we maintained.

O Holy Spirit, who we know is found in all creation, during times of indescribable pain,

when silence is in place of words we cannot speak,

when our cries drown out the world around us because our pain is too much,

alleviate the trauma and hurt that many families have been left feeling

without the life, love and laughter these sacred children represent.

The emotions felt within the communities who lost their sacred children:

anger, guilt, confusion, fear.

Hear their suffering.

Care for the hearts and minds of survivors and relatives as the trauma is forced to surface again, flooding their hearts with memories of their own trauma and suffering.

As the world around us denies this painful history,

bring us back into the truth of this history.

Where injustice exists, move us to act.

Let us sit silent no longer.

Hear our prayer, God of all creation, in the name of your son, the Reconciler of all that is.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Intercession of Healing

As you leave, stop at the bowl of water for healing. Reflect on all that has entered your mind during this prayer service. Each time a need, person or situation comes to you, dip your finger(s) in the bowl of water and touch the water to your head or heart or wherever you carry the need, person or situation within you.

Closing Prayer

God of peace,

We ask you to comfort all who are grieving. If we weep, weep with us. Hear the stories of the sacred children who have suffered. Make the release of our sorrows holy. Embrace us with your eternal love and break down the walls that separate us as your holy family. Instead, through the Holy Spirit, unite us to becoming a beloved community that serves you daily. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Blessing

God of all creation, who created this world with all its magnificent wonder and awe, awaken us to the beauty of all our sacred relations. Mold our hearts with thankfulness and care as we journey daily in prayer, seeking the fulfillment of your eternal blessings.

Amen.