## Worship for 150 Years Since the Confederation of Canada 1867–2017

## Introduction

This is a service of celebration and lament marking 150 years since the Confederation of Canada. It is planned for use in a primarily non-Indigenous congregation. It is not a civic celebration but rather a worship service of faithful reflection on who we are as Canadian people. Please adapt as appropriate for your context. The tone of the service is balanced between celebrating who we are as Canadians and lamenting the past and present injustice to the Indigenous Peoples and other Canadian peoples. As we mark 150 years since Confederation, it is time to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery that has been propagated in the telling of Canadian history, in schools, textbooks, and even worship. Celebrating 150 years of Canadian Confederation can only be a true celebration if first we acknowledge and lament, and then commit ourselves to continuing to work toward right relations with the First Peoples of this country. May God be our helper!

## Ideas for This Worship Service

* *If possible, gather with an Indigenous congregation in your area for this service, another service on a significant occasion, a meal together, or some other bridging event.*
* Please do not make use of sweetgrass or other Indigenous symbols unless they are offered by someone of Indigenous background. We cannot take someone else’s cultural symbols and use them as our own, for in doing so, we lose the true meaning and purpose of those symbols.
* This service in its entirety would be lengthy, so please adapt as appropriate for context and time.

#### Gathering

#### Call to Worship

We gather today for worship marking the 150th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada.

As we gather, we recognize that a history of a people is not all glory.

The history of Canada has both joy and sorrow, both triumph and tragedy.

We have much to celebrate, much to lament,

and much to dream.

Come, let us gather in the presence of God,  
our Creator.

Come, let us worship the Creator in whom we,   
and all of creation, are one.

Come, let us open our hearts in thanksgiving.

Come, let us be filled with the Spirit’s vision as we worship today.

Acknowledging the Territory (see examples in Gathering, Lent Easter 2017, page 69, or search [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca) for “acknowledging the territory”)

#### Opening Prayer: VU 525 “You embrace all peoples”

*or*

O God of shepherd, warrior, and prophet;

Creator of First Peoples, pioneer, and   
saddlebag preacher;

Light of immigrant, loyalist, and seeker:

we live with history and we love your presence in it.

We trace our roots to your creative powers.

We embrace one another as children of your Spirit.

As we celebrate our history today, help us remember all of it:

that which makes us proud

and that which makes us ashamed;

that which reveals our closeness to your Word

and that which reveals our distance.

Remind us of your constant presence:

forgiving, restoring, recreating, and making all things new.

Hear us, Redeemer God, as we dwell for a moment in your goodness. Amen.

Robin Wardlaw, Glen Rhodes U.C., Toronto, Ont.

**Hymn:** MV 1 “Let us build a house” or VU 308

“Many and great, O God, are your works”

or MV 30 “It’s a song of praise to the Maker”

#### Remembering the Tapestry of Cultures

The truth is that anyone who is not Indigenous is an immigrant to this nation. The first immigrants were welcomed with hospitality by the First Peoples of this land now called Canada. Since that time, we have had a history as Canadians of welcoming immigrants. (*Light different-coloured candles or different styles of candle representing the various nations, both Indigenous and immigrant, represented in your congregation. Invite a person from each culture to light the candle and to say, “Peace be with you” in the language of that culture.*)

*Or*

#### Passing the Peace

Raise your hand\* if your ancestors were Indigenous.

Raise your hand if your great-grandparents were born in Canada.

Raise your hand if your grandparents were born in Canada.

Raise your hand if your parents were born in (*name of province, territory, or treaty area*).

Raise your hand if you live in (*name of province, territory, or treaty area*).

Pass the peace and ask, “Where are your ancestors from?”

***Pam Milton,*** Irricana U.C., Irricana, Alta, from Gathering Summer-Autumn 2008 (adapted)

\*or another action that is accessible to all members of your congregation

Hymn: VU 269 “The care the eagle gives her young”

or MV 141 “We are all one people”

#### Hearing the Word

#### Prayer of Illumination

We have heard the words of scripture so often

that we assume we know what they mean.

We fail to notice the cultural lenses through which we view the stories,

the assumptions we make based on what we have been taught.

Today, may we receive these words afresh, Loving God.

May we notice what we have not noticed before,

by the power of your Spirit working through these words. Amen.

Scripture: Luke 1:46–55: Justice turns the world upside down and inside out  
or sing VU p. 899 “Song of Mary” or MV 120 “My soul cries out”

#### A Story from the Indigenous Peoples

*Tell a story related to the land, bodies of water, or animals and birds of your area from the perspective of the Indigenous Peoples. If possible, invite someone from an Indigenous community near you to share in their own voice.*

Sung Response: VU 239 “O Great Spirit” or MV 217 “Hey ney yana”

#### Scripture:

John 8:31–24: Knowing freedom through truth

*and/or* 2 Corinthians 5:17–21: The ministry of reconciliation

#### A Story from Your Local History

*Choose a story from your congregational or community history, paying attention to its appropriateness with regard to decolonization and repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery.*

Sung Response: VU 239 “O Great Spirit” or MV 217 “Hey ney yana”

Sermon:an idea for a brief message

Reflect on what it means to know the truth about past events in Canadian history. Our tendency on a significant occasion such as a 150th anniversary is to want to focus on what is good and happy, but, as faithful people, we cannot stop there. We must acknowledge and lament the painful parts of our history, for many people in our nation have suffered and continue to suffer because of these actions and decisions. Jesus said, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.” In letting our hearts break as we hear the truth, we can then move into the ministry of reconciliation to which we are called as followers of the Way of Jesus. Only through lament can we find the path to celebration and a better future. As Canadians, there are many values we hold dear: generosity, hospitality, inclusiveness, peacemaking, and sharing our resources. We must not rest until all Canadians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, receive the benefit of the abundance of this nation.

Special Music (Choir anthem, solo, or recording)

#### or Hymn: “This path we walk” by S. Curtis Tufts (see Gathering, Lent Easter 2017, page 75, or search [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca) for “apology 30th anniversary hymn))

#### Responding to the Word

*What does it mean to be Canadian? Invite those representing many different ages, genders, cultures, and backgrounds to share a few sentences about what Canada means to them and what they hope for the Canada of the future.*

Song: VU 524 “O Canada” (change second line to “in all of us command”)

As we sing, let us hold in our hearts the Indigenous Peoples, new immigrants, those who live in vulnerable situations, those serving in the Armed Forces, and all Canadians from sea to sea to sea.

#### Marking 150 Years of Confederation— Prayers of Gratitude, Lament, and Hope

Gracious and Loving God,

in whom all of creation and all peoples live

and move and have our being,

we gather to celebrate the 150th year since   
the Confederation of Canada.

We gather in gratitude for the richness of this land that goes from sea to sea to sea:

For the First Peoples, who discovered this land millennia ago, and who teach us that we are all one with creation and with each other,

we offer our gratitude to you, Creator of Life.

For the rich natural resources, the wonder of the variety of landscapes and ecosystems in our country, urban and rural, prairie and maritime, tundra and mountains, Canadian Shield and foothills,

we offer our gratitude to you, Creator of Life.

For the wonderful tapestry of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures that make up our nation, making us all richer for the diversity,

we offer our gratitude to you, Creator of Life.

For a country in which we are free and safe to cast our vote, where our vote and our voice count, and where we can give voice to what we believe,

we offer our gratitude to you, Creator of Life.

For what our country has offered the world through inventions from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, such as a cure for scurvy, canoes and kayaks, medicinal insulin, the Canadarm, the IMAX movie system, walkie-talkies, toboggans, snowshoes, life jackets, maple syrup, the snowmobile, the electric wheelchair, the prosthetic arm, the garbage bag, the caulking gun, the Robertson screw, and many sports and games such as Trivial Pursuit, ice hockey, lacrosse, basketball, and five-pin bowling,

we offer our gratitude to you, Creator of Life.

For Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists, musicians, and actors who contribute to the richness of Canada and also on the world stage (*add specific names of artists, musicians, and actors if you wish*),

we offer our gratitude to you, Creator of Life.

For Indigenous and non-Indigenous athletes who give heart, soul, and energy in striving to be the top of their sport, representing Canada in competition around the world (*add specific names of athletes if you wish*),

we offer our gratitude to you, Creator of Life.

For (*add events important to your context and congregation*),

we offer our gratitude to you, Creator of Life.

We pray in awe and wonder, seeking to live daily lives that reflect gratitude.

We gather in lament for the painful parts of our 150-year history:

For the devastation caused to the Indigenous Peoples through colonization of this land, the overuse of natural resources, and the loss of their cultures, spirituality, and traditions,

this we lament, God-who-enters-into-suffering.

For the pain and suffering experienced in the Indian residential schools by too many Indigenous children; while some teachers and supervisors were good and kind, the system itself was cruel, and too much abuse happened that cannot be excused or justified;

this we lament, God-who-enters-into-suffering.

For seizing people’s property and money and confining them in internment camps (Ukrainian Canadians during and after the First World War and Japanese Canadians during and after the Second World War), naming them as “enemy aliens” rather than seeing them as devoted Canadians,

this we lament, God-who-enters-into-suffering.

For all others in our country who have been discriminated against, abused, and devalued because of their ethnicity, beliefs, or country of origin,

this we lament, God-who-enters-into-suffering.

For those who gave their lives and those who continue to experience the traumatic effects of their service in the Armed Forces, during both world wars, as peacekeepers, and in other conflicts,

this we lament, God-who-enters-into-suffering.

For the stolen sisters (the missing and murdered Indigenous women), for the 14 female engineering students who were murdered at l’École Polytechnique de Montréal on December 6, 1989, and for the violence and abuse that women in our nation continue to experience,

this we lament, God-who-enters-into-suffering.

For the continuing violent and derogatory attitudes and actions that prevent those of the LGBTQ2 community from living freely who they are,

this we lament, God-who-enters-into-suffering.

For those who have suffered devastation in both natural and human-made disasters in Canada,

this we lament, God-who-enters-into-suffering.

For (*add events important to your context and congregation*),

this we lament, God-who-enters-into-suffering.

We join our voices to cry out for justice for the continuing wrongs in our country.

We dream of the future for our beloved land of Canada:

For a country where the best of Canadian values of peacemaking, compassion, hospitality, generosity, fairness, and kindness are lived day by day and extended to everyone in this land,

to this we commit ourselves as your faithful people, Loving God.

For a country where everyone shares in the abundance, where everyone has food, shelter, safety, and employment, where everyone is valued as they are for who they truly are,

to this we commit ourselves as your faithful people, Loving God.

For a country where we care for the land, the environment, and the creatures, and live with respect in creation, making wise use of our natural resources and understanding that we are one with all of creation,

to this we commit ourselves as your faithful people, Loving God.

For the possibilities and promise we have as a nation in which every one of us can contribute our ideas, our imagination, and our creativity for the good of all,

to this we commit ourselves as your faithful people, Loving God.

For the leadership and example we can offer as a nation to the world, in building right relationships between all people and in treating all citizens, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, with dignity and respect, and in radical caring for the environment,

to this we commit ourselves as your faithful people, Loving God.

For the vision and encouragement we can offer as The United Church of Canada by striving for right relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, in seeking justice and proclaiming hope, as we seek to follow the Way of Jesus,

to this we commit ourselves as your faithful people, Loving God.

For (*add hopes and vision important to your context and congregation*),

to this we commit ourselves as your faithful people, Loving God.

On this 150th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada,

We give thanks, we lament, and we dream,

gathering all of our prayers together as we pray the words of Jesus, “Our Father…”

#### Offering

#### Sending Forth

#### Hymn: VU 678 “For the healing of the nations” or VU 288 “Great is thy faithfulness”

or MV 37 “Each blade of grass”

#### Commissioning

Let us go forth from this time of worship,

recommitted as followers of the Way of Jesus

to working for reconciliation and right relations,

open to the wisdom of God’s Spirit guiding us day by day.

#### Blessing

Sung response: VU 298 “When you walk from here”

*A Gathering Worship Resource Service 2017*

*Compiled by* ***Susan Lukey,*** *editor.*

*Prayers not credited are written by Susan Lukey, High River U.C., High River, Alta.*