

A Complete Service of Remembrance, Lament, and Commitment on Red Dress Sunday

Introduction to the National REDress Project:

The National REDress Project is honoured annually on May 5th. It was originally designed and installed in 2010 by Manitoba based Métis artist, Jamie Black to be a stark visual reminder of the violence perpetrated against thousands of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, children, and 2-spirit peoples in Canada; many of whom still are missing.

In honouring this day, communities are encouraged to hang red dresses in public spaces as a poignant reminder of the violence that continues to be perpetrated against Indigenous women, children, and 2-spirited peoples. The hanging red dresses also are symbols of the resilience Indigenous women, children, and 2-spirited peoples and their communities demonstrate in the face of continued systemic barriers to equality and racist attitudes that make them more vulnerable to violence.

The results of a National Inquiry to the extent of Murdered and Missing Indigenous women and children and 2-spirited peoples in Canada was tabled in 2019. It reported that the crisis constituted a “genocide” of Indigenous people. This crisis continues to this day.

In May 2023, as further testimony to the continued ongoing crisis of violence against Indigenous women and children and 2-spirited people, the House of Commons unanimously backed a motion declaring the deaths and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls a “Canada-wide emergency.” The declaration called further for the funding for a new system to alert the public when someone goes missing.

Today, as we come together as followers of the path of Jesus, the peace maker and justice seeker, we respectfully and humbly join this national time of witness to remember the precious lives that have been lost. And we open our hearts to raise the voices, and attend to the stories of grieving families, as we honour the lives of these missing and murdered Indigenous women and children. We further call on God’s grace to help us to create equitable systems and safety, and to transform harmful racist attitudes that all, especially Indigenous women, children and 2-spirited peoples may know God’s love and live safely and well in God’s world.

Consider hanging red dresses and ribbons outside or inside your gathering space in remembrance of these women and to symbolize what has been declared an ongoing genocide.

Call to Worship:

Say their names:

Dinah, Tamar, Bathsheba, Vashti, Suzannah
The Hebrew Scriptures do not hide the truth,
About women being subjected to violence
As Being the Truth,
Even among God's People.

Say their names:

Violence against Women and Girls,
Disproportionately experienced by Indigenous Families,
Is a lineage of names reaching back in time.

We come to worship with Creator,
Whose preference is for those who are hurting,
Who is moved to act by the tears of suffering,
Who comforts the grieving and sorrow-filled.
We come to join our hearts to Creator's heart.
So that healing and hope can flow through us,
Into a world that hurts.

Scripture Text:

Luke 18:1-8

Sermon Seed:

The Parable of the Persistent Widow and the Unjust Judge. We are not given detail in the scripture about the women's particular experience, it is enough to know that injustice was experienced. This Parable lifts up and validates women who persevere in calling out injustice – and calling in those who are powerful and have responsibility to act. As a contrast to the Unjust Judge, scripture lifts up Jesus – whose message to those who hold positions of privilege and power, that they have the responsibility to work for justice, especially in response to the voices that persistently name the harms they are experiencing.

Call to Prayer:

On this National Red Dress Day, let us gather our minds and hearts together as we pray, to remember all the Indigenous women who have been taken, to lament our complacency

and silence in the ongoing oppression, and to commit ourselves in covenant with God and one another to be co-creators of a world of justice, safety, dignity and respect for all Indigenous women.

Let us pray:

Leader: For all the women disappeared, taken, and forgotten,
Left in the rubble of land fills, and forgotten in our hearts,
For all those barely surviving on our streets, afraid, alone, under oppression of
strangers and perpetrators

Oh Creator of Love and Mercy,
Let us ask forgiveness for our silence, and

All: Empower us to create safety and protection for all women and children.

Leader: For all Indigenous families, communities, and relations
Who have lost daughters, nieces, mothers, aunties, friends, and children
Who are left wandering, searching, mourning, with holes in their hearts, and
grief and rage in their bodies,

Oh Creator of Love and Justice,
Let us remember our sacred relatives and

**All: Empower us to bring them comfort and closure and justice for all those who
have been taken from them.**

Leader: For systems that deny Indigenous women and their children access to
To transportation, housing, homes, food, safety, education, employment and
health,
Creating homelessness, and making women and their children more vulnerable
to abuse,

Oh Creator of Love and Courage,
Let us lament the creation of pass systems and reserve systems, and lack of re-
sources too many of us take for granted

**All: Empower us to create economic and political systems that provide equal ac-
cess to education, housing, homes, and health for all.**

Leader: For attitudes of patriarchy that demean and devalue
Women's sacred lives, bodies, hearts, and minds
Diminishing the value, creativity, and contributions that women and women
identifying persons and their children make to this glorious world

Oh Creator of Love and Justified Rage,
Let us challenge these attitudes and patriarchal actions and

**All: Empower us to transform our minds and hearts that all of us view Indigenous
women and their children with dignity and respect.**

Leader: For all of us that have felt overwhelmed in the face of these injustices,
Creating silos of solitude and silence, inertia and ignorance,
Instead of relationships of support, cooperation, and care

God of love and covenant,
Let us be beacons of hope in word and action.

**All: Empower us to build right relations with all those who are courageous protec-
tors and co-creators of your shalom.**

Suggested songs:

Voices Together 6 Let's Walk Together
Voices Together 24 There's a River of Life
Voices Together 527 Bless the Arms that Comfort
Voices Together 651 Lord, Have Mercy
Voices Together 802 Draw the Circle
Voices Together 742 Way way way (sung refrain during prayers)
More Voices 154 Deep in Our Hearts
More Voices 396 Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness

Closing Prayer:

On this National Red Dress Day....let us pray together
Asking for God's grace,
To remember,
To lament, and

To renew our minds and hearts
That we may be empowered to be co-creators of a world where all have dignity, wellness, and respect.
We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Benediction:

May God bless us with a broken heart
Responding to vulnerable truth-telling
So that we may live from deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with anger
At injustice, oppression, and exploitation of our kin
So that we may walk the good way of peacemaking.

May God bless us with tears
Shed for those who are hurting
So that we may offer comfort and solidarity.

In the name of the Creator, the Christ and the Companion,
One God, who Mothers us all.

Other Red Dress Day Resources:

<https://www.commonword.ca/go/3875>

<https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/MMIW-October-4-Vigil-Resource1.pdf>

<https://easternsynod.org/reddress/>

<https://easternsynod.org/the-red-dress-journey/> (prayers found in pp. 17ff)

<https://www.stanselms.ca/news/red-dress-day-may-5>

<https://united-church.ca/prayers/god-hope-and-love>

<https://www.jaimeblackartist.com/exhibitions/>

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