

CANDLELIGHT
VIGIL FOR
MURDERED AND
MISSING WOMEN



VIGIL WRITTEN BY

DR. KELLY SHERMAN-CONROY
(OGLALA LAKOTA)

GUIDELINES FOR CANDLELIGHT PRAYER VIGIL

When you remember me, it means that you have carried something of who I am with you, that I have left some mark of who I am on who you are. It means that you can summon me back to your mind, even though countless years and miles may stand between us. It means that if we meet again, you will know me. It means that even after I die, you can still see my face and hear my voice and speak to me in your heart.

-Theologian Frederick Buechner



The prayer vigil is held to remember and honor the Indigenous women who have gone missing, been murdered, or suffered from violence. It is also an opportunity to raise awareness, provide support, and seek justice for these women and their families. These guidelines have been established to ensure the vigil is held with respect, dignity, and solemnity. Below are some suggested guidelines to follow:

Venue Selection: Choose an appropriate, safe, and respectful location. It should be a sacred space where attendees can come together without distraction or disturbance.

Participants: The prayer vigil is open to people of all ages, genders, and ethnicities who are committed to standing in solidarity with Indigenous women and communities.

Song/Hymns: Select appropriate songs or hymns that recognize and honor Indigenous women. Ensure that the music is culturally-sensitive and respectful.

Lighting Candles: Participants can light candles to honor and remember the missing and murdered indigenous women. The candles will also signify their commitment to seeking justice for these women and their families.

Prayers: Include prayers that recognize the strength and resilience of Indigenous women, seek justice for those who have been harmed, and prioritize healing for survivors. Participants can also bring their own prayers and offer them during the vigil.

End the gathering with a prayer that acknowledges the importance of community support and solidarity in seeking justice for murdered and missing indigenous women.

Respect: Participants will respect each other's space and individual beliefs. All activities will be done in a respectful and dignified manner, keeping in mind the seriousness of the situation.

Follow-Up: Participants should be encouraged to join or support local organizations that help to address the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women. These organizations may provide resources, support, and advocacy for families of missing or murdered indigenous women.

It is also vital to consider the sensitivity and emotions of attendees in this prayer vigil. Ensure that all participants honor and respect one another, avoid victim-blaming or trivializing the issue at hand and that everyone has an opportunity to grieve and honor the lives lost. These guidelines should be followed to create a safe, respectful, and meaningful prayer vigil to remember and honor the lives of murdered and missing Indigenous women.

MMIW CANDLELIGHT PRAYER VIGIL



Call to Prayer:

Leader: We gather today in remembrance of the countless murdered and missing Indigenous women whose lives have been taken or forever changed. We lift up their families who courageously seek answers, justice, and healing. Let us pray:

All: Gracious God, we come before you holding a broken heart for the injustice these families have faced.

Leader: Indigenous women are four times more likely to experience violence than non-Indigenous women. And yet, little has been done to address this issue.

All: We ask for forgiveness for the ways we have failed our sisters. We pray for a change of heart in our society, for an end to violence against Indigenous women, and for healing for those who have suffered.

Leader: Today, we remember that we are all children of God, and we are called to honor every life. These women are not statistics, they are daughters, sisters, mothers, and wives, and their absence has left a deep void in the hearts of their loved ones.

All: Loving God, we pray for the families of these women who have experienced unimaginable loss and pain. We ask that you comfort them in their grief and give them the courage to continue their pursuit of justice.

Leader: The lack of action by our governments, law enforcement, and society as a whole in addressing this issue is unacceptable.

All: Merciful God, may we as a society actively engage in dismantling colonial structures that perpetuate harm towards Indigenous peoples.

Leader: Let us not forget that every person has inherent dignity and worth and that violence against Indigenous women is an affront to that dignity.

All: May we continue to pray, advocate, and work towards a world where every person feels safe and valued. Amen.

Opening Prayer:

All: Our hearts are heavy as we come to you, God, seeking your mercy and grace for the Indigenous women and girls who have been taken from us too soon. Provide the families and communities with comfort and peace.

We pray for guidance and strength as we fight for justice on their behalf. We will not forget those who have lost their lives or the love that remains in their wake. Today, we honor their memory in prayer, grateful for the hope you provide in times of heartache and injustice.

Hear us as we offer our prayers and plea for justice. Amen.

Time of Reflection and Remembrance (*Lighting of the Candles*)

The candles are to be large candles. Each candle will be lit while reading the following prompts:

Candle of Sorrow (*Light the Candle*)

In this moment of solemn reflection, we pay tribute to the countless Indigenous women who have been taken from us. We honor their memory with a flickering flame, a symbol of our unwavering commitment to keeping their spirit alive. As our hearts ache with the weight of their absence, we recognize that every tear shed is a testament to the love we carry for them.

As we gather in prayer, we offer our strength and support to the families and communities who continue to carry this devastating burden. We hold space for their grief, and pledge to work towards justice and healing for all our relations.

Candle of Remembrance (*Light the Candle*)

Let us take a moment to honor and cherish the lives of Indigenous women who have left their footprints in the hearts of their communities forever. With a flickering candle, we pay tribute to their existence and the precious memories of their laughter, kindness, and warmth that will always resonate with so many. As we remember them, we acknowledge the deep connection Indigenous people have with this land and the profound legacy of compassion, courage, and persistence they have gifted all of creation. May their spirit and resilience inspire generations to come.

Candle of Peace (*Light the Candle*)

As the flame flickers, we honor those who have suffered unimaginable loss and pain. In the midst of the ongoing brutalities faced by Indigenous women, we light this candle to symbolize the hope for peace. Our hearts ache for those who have been taken and for those who are left behind to mourn. We pray for comfort and healing, for rest and reflection. May the light of this candle gently illuminate the path towards peace, and may we all be touched by the peace that transcends all understanding. Together, we stand in solidarity, holding space for those who have been deeply impacted.

Candle of Hope (*Light the Candle*)

Let us ignite this flame, igniting hope for the days of recovery and renewal ahead. This candle serves as a beacon, shining bright with optimism and promise. In these times of adversity, those who have suffered loss may encounter unfamiliar paths; yet, we are steadfast beside them with an overflow of support and compassion.

As we bask in the glow of this candle's tremendous vitality, let hope prosper and flourish within each and every one of us. We yearn for comfort in times of hardship, revitalization of our spirits and peace within our souls, trust in the benevolence and steadfastness of God, and the hope of a brighter future for Indigenous communities.

Candle of Love (*Light the Candle*)

Together, we gather to honor and celebrate the power of love. As we light this candle, we are reminded of the warmth and comfort that love brings to those who are grieving. Love is a light that shines brightly and guides us through even the darkest of times. We give thanks for the opportunity to love deeply and for the precious memories that we carry in our hearts. Though our loved ones may be gone, their love and light will continue to shine through us. We pledge to live fully and love fiercely and to be a beacon of hope and kindness for our Indigenous siblings. Let us honor their loved ones by sharing our lights and spreading love wherever we go.

Candles of Remembrance

Everyone in attendance can light a candle in remembrance of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women. Prior to the vigil, find the names of MMIW in your area. You are welcome to share their names in the chat. Have people say the names as they light their candles and sing the hymn.

A time of silence will happen while candles are being prepared.

Hymn

Responsive Prayer*

Leader: God of mercy, we come before you with heavy hearts.

People: Receive our prayer.

Leader: We remember Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people who are missing or murdered.

People: Hold them in your eternal care.

Leader: We lift up families and communities who grieve and wait for answers.

People: Surround them with comfort and strength.

Leader: We confess the ways injustice, indifference, and broken systems have caused harm.

People: Call us to repentance and renewal.

Leader: Send us out as people of compassion and courage, to listen, to protect, and to seek justice.

People: Make us instruments of your peace.

Leader: We trust all these prayers to you, O God.

People: Amen.

Closing Prayer

Leader: As a community, we come together tonight to recognize the pain and sorrow we feel for the Indigenous Women who have suffered from senseless violence and loss.

People: We take a moment to light a candle to honor their memory and the grief of their families and communities. Let this small light be a symbol of hope and healing.

Leader: By lighting these candles, we acknowledge the strength and power in remembering those we have lost. We also recognize the importance of using our own light to shine brightly in the world.

People: We hold on to the words, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness shall not overcome it." Let us give thanks for their light and continue to spread love and compassion. AMEN

**added by Racial Justice Committee of Women of the ELCA for 2026 Vigil. Written by Sylvia Eley.*