

Proverbs 21:3 *To do justice and walk in Grandfather's right ways means more to him than ceremonial offerings.*

Smudge, song and drum, and blessing prayer for attendees arriving at entry into church.
 First Nations Version (FNV) Psalms and Proverbs (P&P) distributed on check in (Chris).
 MMIWR AK Resource and Sheet available in hardcopy and electronically.

BIBLE STUDY

Land Acknowledgement (Shannon) - [SLIDE: intro slide]

- “We acknowledge that we are on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Dena’ina Athabascan people. We recognize their long-standing care for this land and pledge to learn from their Indigenous knowledge systems and stewardship. Chin'an (thank you)”

Opening Prayer (Deb) and **Lighting of seal oil lamp** (Shannon) – [SLIDE: seal oil lamp]

Creator God,

As we light the sacred seal oil lamp, help us to remember what we know. Help us to honor the traditions of our ancestors and Elders. A long time ago is just like today.

Women were the keepers of the lamp. Fire tenders. Women kept us warm and fed. Energy givers. Women melted water so we could drink. Sustainers. Women kept us in the light so we could see. Tradition keepers. Women carried us into this world. Life bearers.

Thank you, God, for the women. Thank you for the light. Thank you for keeping us warm and fed. Thank you for the blessed water, the water of our baptism. Thank you for your Son and keeping us in His light so that we can see our path. Thank you, Mothering God, for creating us.

Help us, God, to remember those lost to us. Help us to continue to seek justice for our relatives who are missing. Murdered. Taken from us. Stolen. Help us to continue to search and to provide love and mercy to the families of our stolen relatives. Sustain us with your promise so we may have the strength to carry on.

Creator God, You are our fire tender. Energy giver. Sustainer. Tradition keeper. Life bearer. We honor you with the traditions of our ancestors as our Elders have taught us.

As we live our life in the light of your sacred light, help us to remember what we know.

Amen

MMIW National Day of Awareness on May 5th (Shannon) [SLIDE: MMIWR]

- “The red dress and the handprint we see on this slide represent our sisters, mothers, and daughters who are no longer in the light of our lamps. Doing justice means more than just wearing a color, but visibility is a powerful first step. ***We challenge each of you to return to your congregations and invite your members to wear red on Sunday, May 3rd.*** Let us fill

our sanctuaries with this color of remembrance to show that our relatives are not forgotten and that our churches are committed to the hard work of safety, advocacy, and bringing our relatives home. Justice is the 'right way' we must walk. Here are some other ways to take action: join a local MMIW awareness walk in your community or post a photo of yourself in red on May 5th using hashtags like **#MMIW**, **#MMIWG2S**, and **#NoMoreStolenSisters**. When we walk and post together, we use our collective voice to ensure our relatives are never forgotten.”

Context of FNV P&P

- (Deb) “The First Nations Version of Psalms & Proverbs is a gift from the Synod Multicultural Committee and funding from a Strategies Toward Authentic Diversity grant. 40 copies were purchased and someone from each church in the Synod should have received a copy at check in.”
- (Shannon) “Beginning on page 169 is a glossary of Hebrew words and cultural metaphors. Last year we distributed the New Testament and folks were very appreciative, so we are back. This version uses metaphors to bring the text to life: instead of 'sin,' you'll see 'bad hearts and broken ways'; instead of 'peace,' you'll see 'harmony.’”
- (Shannon) Self intro
- (Deb) Self intro
- (Shannon) “Pages 170-172 provide a description of YHWH or God as Great Spirit, Creator, Most Holy One, Maker of Life, Giver of Breath and Grandfather. In our Native communities Grandfathers, Elders, are given the utmost respect. Grandfathers pass down ancient wisdom and when they speak, we listen. It is our hope that in our study today, Grandfather’s wisdom is shared. Our study today comes from Proverbs 21 found on page 153.”

Read aloud Proverbs 21 [SLIDE: Prov 21]

- (Shannon) reads verses 1-15
- (Deb) reads verses 16-31

The seal oil lamp is tended (Shannon) and Verse 3 is read aloud (Deb) [SLIDE: Prov 21:3]

- “We will focus our study on verse 3 found on page 153. *To do justice and walk in Grandfather’s right ways means more to him than ceremonial offerings.*”

Instruction for small group (4-6) discussion (Deb) [SLIDE: Small group discussion]

- “In a moment we are going to gather into small groups of 4-6 people. We will do this with the people you are seated by. If you are able, you may want to turn around in your pew so that you can group with folks behind you. It is going to be lively, loud, in this space with folks sharing in their small groups, but we can do it. You will be discussing three questions which we will display on the screen. You will have 5-6 minutes for each question, and I will let you know when you should prepare to discuss the next question. Each question will be displayed one at a time. At the end of your small group discussion, we will have one or two groups come to the

mic to share aha's of their learning with the whole group for each of the questions. We're going to group up with 4-6 people. We're going to discuss three questions about Verse 3, one at a time. We will reconvene as a large group. A speaker from 1 or 2 groups will share with the large group for each question. Have you made eye contact with your small group?"

Small group questions (displayed and paper copies on standby)

1. (Shannon) [SLIDE: *What does the word ceremony mean to you in your culture, tradition, or ethnicity inside or outside of your faith?*]
2. (Deb) [SLIDE: *What does the phrase "walk in Grandfather's right ways" mean to you?*]
3. (Shannon) [SLIDE: *What practical steps do you plan to take to prioritize justice and hope in your ministry?*]

Instruction for large group sharing (Deb) [SLIDE: Large group sharing]

- "Thank you for coming back together. We have time for a speaker from 1 or 2 groups to share for each question. Please briefly share what you learned, what surprised you, what the real-world impact might be from your discussion, or what next steps you are planning to take."

Large group sharing (1-2 groups/question at mic)

1. (Shannon) [SLIDE: *What does the word ceremony mean to you in your culture, tradition, or ethnicity inside or outside of your faith?*]
2. (Deb) [SLIDE: *What does the phrase "walk in Grandfather's right ways" mean to you?*]
3. (Shannon) [SLIDE: *What practical steps do you plan to take to prioritize justice and hope in your ministry?*]

Closing prayer (Deb) and **Extinguishing of seal oil lamp** (Shannon) [SLIDE: seal oil lamp]

Creator God,

Thank you for this sacred time learning in this circle with our relatives who have traveled far to be together. Miigwech for the opportunity for us to do the work of our church, to do as you have called us to do, to love you, to love our neighbors, to serve one another, to walk the good road. As we walk humbly with you, Creator God, we thank you again for your sacred light. May it continue to protect us and give us strength to do justice as we care for all of our relations in your creation. Amen

"Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women