



The Teachings of the Seven Fires

And our response through
Our Song of Faith



In the seventh fire, the white race will be given a choice between two paths:
one will lead to destruction, the other to the lighting of the Eighth and final fire,
an Eternal Fire of Peace Love, and Brotherhood.

The Teachings of the Seven Fires

Native Teachings from Anishnabe 101 by Aimee Bailey

Song of Faith by United Church of Canada

Other text by Suzanne Nadon

Marlene Whiston and Suzanne Nadon wearing portable mikes are at the centre of the convention, and on powerpoint are images illustrating the text, one image for Marlene's words, the next image for Suzanne's words, then words to the "ALL" responses from the Song of Faith, and words to the hymns.

SN: I have the honour of being involved in worship this morning, with Marlene Whiston who is serving a First Nations Community in Alderville. The teachings this morning will come from two sources. The first is the Seven Fires prophecies as written in the book Anishnabe 101 by Aimee Bailey. The second source of teachings comes from our Song of Faith. All the responses that you will be invited to express and recite are from this statement of our faith.

The hymns we are singing are in Voices United, Numbers 308, 611 and 266. They will not be announced, but the words will be printed on the screen for your convenience. In the last hymn, in honour of the First Nations, we will sing one verse in the Algonquin dialect.

I invite you now to open your hearts to a new communion with all peoples on this land and with the One Creator of all living things.

One verse of VU 308 Many and Great as an introduction with the drum beat. Music only. No words. Last beat = the drum only.

MW: The accounts of Algonquin History that have been handed down to them by their Elders tell them that many years ago, seven prophets came to the Anishnabe. They came at a time when the people were living a full and peaceful life on the North-Eastern coast of North America. These prophets left the people with seven predictions of what the future would bring. Each of these prophecies was called a Fire; the teachings are therefore called the "Seven Fires".

SN: Our history can be traced back to our Story of a Loving Creator, and to a history of a people in search of God as told by prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures. Our stories also tell of a long journey towards a promised land, and an even longer journey to knowing the heart of God.

All: We sing a song of Faith, where
God is Holy Mystery,
beyond complete knowledge,
above perfect description.

Yet, in love,
the one eternal God seeks relationship.

So God creates the universe
and with it the possibility of being and relating.
God tends the universe,
mending the broken and reconciling the estranged.

God enlivens the universe,
guiding all things toward harmony with their Source.

Grateful for God's loving action,
We cannot keep from singing.

Hymn: VU 308 Many and Great (one full verse of intro)

1 Many and great, O God, are your works,
Maker of earth and sky.
Your hands have set the heavens with stars,
your fingers spread the mountains and plains.
Lo, at your word the waters were formed;
deep seas obey your voice.

2 Grant unto us communion with you,
O star-abiding one.
Come unto us and dwell with us,
with you are found the gifts of life.
Bless us with life that has no end,
eternal life with you.

MW: In the time of the **First Fire**, it was predicted that the Anishnabe nation would rise up and follow the Sacred Teachings. The Sacred Elders would lead the way to the chosen ground of the Anishnabe.

In the time of the **Second Fire**, a boy would be born to point the way back to the traditional ways that were lost. He would show the direction to the stepping stone to the future of the Anishnabe people.

SN: In Bethlehem a son was born. He was a boy who taught in the temple at a tender age, and when grown, he taught of love, forgiveness and wisdom right onto his death. Many people ignored Jesus' teachings, still calling themselves "chosen ones" in his name. Many people followed his teachings and formed loving communities in his name. Some of our people migrated westward from the promised land, and met with the Celts marrying an earthen tradition with the Christian teachings, until the Empire extinguished most of the embers of Celtic Christianity. Only a spark remained in the heart and souls of our mystics, and in those who continued to follow the mysteries of their tradition in secret.

MW: In the time of the **Third Fire**, it is said that the Anishnabe would find their chosen ground, a land in the West to which they would move their families. This would be the land where food grows on water. This food was wild rice.

In the time of the **Fourth Fire**, two prophets told of the coming of the light-skinned race. The prophets warned that some would come with the face of brotherhood and a handshake of peace. Others with weapons and a face of death.

SN: Our people set off on the high seas searching for a new world. A world where Empire could not strike or reach them. A land so abundant that famine was not possible. But when we reached New England and Nouvelle France, we discovered that many of us did not know how to live in this harsh land of deep snow winters. Many of our people were saved by the wisdom and generosity of this land's First Peoples. Some came in peace. Others came with weapons.

ALL: God is creative and self-giving,
generously moving
in all the near and distant corners of the universe.
Nothing exists that does not find its source in God.
Our first response to God's providence is gratitude.
We sing thanksgiving.

MW: In the time of the **Fifth Fire**, it was foretold that there would come a time of great struggle that would grip the lives of all the Anishnabe people. There were military attacks on our people launched by the light-skinned race aimed at taking away our land and our independence as a free and sovereign people. The false promise was of material riches embodied in the way of life of the light-skinned race.

In the time of the **Sixth Fire**, children would be taken away from the teachings of the Elders and the Elders would lose their purpose in life. A new sickness would come upon the people. The balance of many people would be disturbed. The cup of life would become the cup of grief. The Anishnabe language and religion would be taken from the children. The people would start to die at an early age. Our traditional ways would be in danger of being destroyed. The Elders would gather all the sacred bundles and scrolls that recorded the ceremonies and bury them deep in an ironwood log. When the time came, a little boy would dream of where to find these teachings.

SN: In the name of our Prince of Peace, we sought to share the good news of God with people we thought were inferior to us. We shared our sacred teachings, but assumed they were the only sacred teachings in the world. Our arrogance, our diseases, our greed and our wars nearly destroyed the soul of entire populations of First Nations in the new world. Many of us lost the way of our prophet Jesus, the way of compassion, understanding, love and brother and sisterhood.

All:
Made in the image of God,
we yearn for the fulfillment that is life in God.
Yet we choose to turn away from God.
We surrender ourselves to sin,
a disposition revealed in selfishness, cowardice, or apathy.
Becoming bound and complacent
in a web of false desires and wrong choices,
we bring harm to ourselves and others.
This brokenness in human life and community
is an outcome of sin.
Sin is not only personal
but accumulates
to become habitual and systemic forms
of injustice, violence, and hatred.

We are all touched by this brokenness:
the rise of selfish individualism
that erodes human solidarity;
the concentration of wealth and power
without regard for the needs of all;
the toxins of religious and ethnic bigotry;

the degradation of the blessedness of human bodies
and human passions through sexual exploitation;
the delusion of unchecked progress and limitless growth
that threatens our home, the earth;
the covert despair that lulls many into numb complicity
with empires and systems of domination.
We sing lament and repentance.

HYMN: 611 Out of the Depths (one full verse of intro)

- 1 Out of the depths, O God, we call to you.
Wounds of the past remain, affecting all we do.
Facing our lives, we need your love so much.
Here in this community, heal us by your touch.

- 2 Out of the depths of fear, O God, we speak.
Breaking the silences, the searing truth we seek.
Safe among friends, our grief and rage we share.
Here in this community, hold us in your care.

MW: In the time of the Seventh Fire it is promised that a young prophet will come forth. A prophet with a strange light in his eyes. He predicted that a new people will emerge. They will retrace their steps to find what was left by the trail. Their steps will take them to the Elders who will guide them on their journey. If the new people remain strong in their quest, then there will be a rebirth of the Anishnabe Nation and a rekindling of old flames. The Sacred Fire will again be lit.

SN: An Elder from a First Nations Community who also followed the path of Jesus spoke to many assemblies of our gathered people. He told his story of growing up near Fisher River, of being taken away from his family, of returning to his community. He spoke his grief. Then many others came forward and shared their stories and their grief. We began to listen. It took over a hundred years to see the error of our ways and to apologize and ask forgiveness for our sin of hubris. We give thanks to our former moderator and friend, Stan McKay for blazing the trail for many to follow.

MW: It is at the time of the Seventh Fire that the light-skinned race will be given a choice between two roads. If they make the wrong choice, then the destruction will come back to them. The rivers will run with poison and the fish will be unfit to eat. If they choose the right road, then the Seventh Fire will light the Eighth and final Fire, an Eternal Fire of Peace, Love, and Brotherhood.

All: Yet evil does not—cannot—
undermine or overcome the love of God.
God forgives,
and calls all of us to confess our fears and failings
with honesty and humility.
God reconciles,
and calls us to repent the part we have played
in damaging our world, ourselves, and each other.
God transforms,
and calls us to protect the vulnerable,

to pray for deliverance from evil,
to work with God for the healing of the world,
that all might have abundant life.
We sing of grace.

Hymn: VU 266 Amazing Grace (one full verse of intro)

1 Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
 that saved and strengthened me
 I once was lost, but now am found,
 was blind, but now I see.

2 Kwe- natj ki-tci twa wi si win
 Ak wa cin-ge ma gat
 Nin-gi gwa-ia ko ci-mi-gon
 Ni mod ji ke nin-dam.

3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
 We have already come;
 'tis grace that brought us safe thus far,
 and grace will lead us home.

All: And so we sing of God the Spirit,
 who from the beginning has swept over the face of creation,
 animating all energy and matter
 and moving in the human heart,
 redemptively active in the world,
 transforming us and the world.
 Amen.