

**TRIBAL & ADIVASI SUNDAY**

**9<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2026**



**Honouring Indigenous Midwives:  
Safeguarding Life and Well-being**



**Commission on Tribal/Adivasi Concerns  
National Council of Churches in India  
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## **FOREWORD**

The observance of the Tribal/ Adivasi Advocacy Sunday is around the corner again this year - 9th August 2026.

On this day we join the world community in remembering the rich resources with which the indigenous communities around the world are bestowed with. We remember the challenges that face them in the eye. We thank God for the rich spiritual and eco-sensitive heritages that we draw from peoples of indigenous communities.

This year's theme drawn from the theme of the UN for the day, focuses on Indigenous midwives and their role in safeguarding health and well being. We are aware that as last mile health delivery personnel, midwives in traditional settings have been the harbingers of Joy and Hope. In the discharge of their responsibilities they are an important and dependable link in safeguarding the health and well-being of communities.

NCCI invites members of all its Member Churches, and every constituent of the NCCI, to join in honouring the Indigenous midwives and pray for their 'ministries' in remote locations.

We join every tribe all through the nation in lifting the gifts that they bring to the world, and seek pardon from God and from them for our self-seeking behaviour patterns that have destroyed their habitat and sacrificed their dignity.

This year we commend TWO different liturgies to you for use as desired. Feel free to adapt them as appropriate. May this initiative honour the indigenous communities, their traditional knowledge systems and indigenous norms and mores.

**Rev. Asir Ebenezer**  
**General Secretary, NCCI**

## **PREFACE**

The observance of Tribal and Adivasi Sunday invites the Church to celebrate the rich heritage, faith, and contributions of Indigenous Peoples and Adivasi communities. It is also a time to reaffirm our commitment to justice, dignity, inclusion, and the protection of the God-given rights of all peoples.

This year, we reflect on the theme: **“Honouring Indigenous Midwives: Safeguarding Life and Well-being.”**

Across generations, Indigenous midwives have played a vital role in nurturing life, caring for mothers and newborns, and preserving knowledge related to health and well-being. Their ministry of care extends beyond childbirth; they are guardians of community wisdom, cultural identity, and holistic healing practices that have sustained Indigenous communities for centuries.

Historically, Indigenous midwives have been respected custodians of knowledge passed down through oral traditions and lived experience. In many remote and underserved regions, they have served as the primary caregivers for women and families, often working with limited resources yet demonstrating remarkable dedication and compassion. Their contribution reflects a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of physical, emotional, spiritual, and communal well-being.

As followers of Christ, we recognize the sacredness of every human life and the importance of caring for the most vulnerable. The ministry of Indigenous midwives reminds us of God’s loving concern for mothers and children and reflects Christ’s call to serve with compassion and humility. Their work embodies the Biblical values of nurturing life, protecting human value, worth, dignity, and promoting the well-being of communities in an around.

The Church stands in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples and Adivasi communities in recognizing and affirming the invaluable contribution of Indigenous midwives. We also acknowledge the need to preserve and respect their knowledge while encouraging collaboration with modern healthcare systems to ensure safe, accessible, and culturally sensitive maternal care for all.

May this Tribal and Adivasi Sunday deepen our appreciation for the wisdom, dedication, and service of Indigenous midwives. May it inspire us to uphold the dignity of women, protect the gift of life, and support efforts that promote health, justice, and well-being within Indigenous communities. Let us pray that God will bless all those who care for mothers and children, and guide us in building a future where every life is valued, every culture and tradition are respected, and every community flourishes in His love and grace.

**The Rt. Rev. Sameer Issac Khimla**  
**Chairperson**

Commission on Tribal/Adivasi Concerns  
National Council of Churches in India

## INTRODUCTION

The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples was first pronounced by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1994. By resolution 49/214 of 23 December 1994, the United Nations General Assembly decided that the International Day of the World's Indigenous People shall be observed on 9th August every year. By following this UN day, on 17 September 2010, during the Annual General Body Meeting of National Council of Churches in India in Bangalore, for the first-time announced observance of the NCCI-Tribal and Adivasi Sunday. NCCI, therefore, urges and requests constituent members to annually observe every Sunday closest to 9th August as NCCI -Tribal and Adivasi Sunday and the date to be marked in the Church calendar and dairy.

In order to have a better understanding of the life situation of the Tribal / Adivasi communities in India and to have a common form of worship for this special Sunday, NCCI therefore brings out this Liturgy. Nevertheless, NCCI acknowledges that many churches do not follow a liturgical form of worship; still NCCI requests those churches to adopt the Liturgy suitable to their own tradition. At the same time, NCCI is also aware of the absence of Tribal/ Adivasi communities in a few churches, yet NCCI requests all those churches to observe this special NCCI Tribal and Adivasi Sunday to show their solidarity to our fellow tribal /adivasi friends who are oppressed and marginalised in various ways. We hope that the observance of this special NCCI Tribal and Adivasi Sunday will be an enriching one in our faith affirmation and for widening the horizon of our ecumenical Journey. Since 2011, Tribal and Adivasi Sunday have been celebrated in many parts of our country in sensitizing the local congregation on Tribal and Adivasi Concerns. We would like to thank for the enormous support we have received from the churches, dioceses, parishes and institutions in celebrating this special Sunday.

The theme for this year's Tribal and Adivasi Sunday is “: **“Honouring Indigenous Midwives: Safeguarding Life and Well-being”**”. We take this opportunity to invite you to celebrate Tribal and Adivasi Sunday on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2026 in your church/local parish/institution in a creative way. Herewith we are sending you a special order of worship for the day. You may take the freedom to use the entire worship order and translate it in your vernacular language or adapt parts of it.

**Pradip Bansrior**

**Executive Secretary**

Commission on Tribal/ Adivasi Concerns

National Council of Churches in India

## ORDER OF WORSHIP

**Theme: Honouring Indigenous Midwives: Safeguarding Life and Well-being**

### CALL TO WORSHIP

**Leader:** Come *Makkave*<sup>1</sup>. Come from valleys and mountains where rivers remember our names and the rocky stones listened to our prayers.

**All:** God of our ancestors we come to worship you

**Leader:** Oh *Boeha-Misera ko*<sup>2</sup>. Come from the forest, where every leaf carries a lesson and every bird sings of the beauty of creation.

**All:** God of our ancestors we come to sing praises to you.

**Leader:** Come, *Monit*<sup>3</sup>. Come with stories, folktales, music, dances and worship the Creator who is the source of all life and whose love is revealed in every new birth.

**All:** God of *Apunikujum*<sup>4</sup> we come seeking your wisdom.

**Leader:** Oh *Hododko*<sup>5</sup>. We remember the contribution of our midwives in not only bringing life to the world, but also in transmitting our indigenous knowledge in sustaining life and wellbeing of the community

**All:** God of *Naawi-Nu*<sup>6</sup>. We come seeking for your overflowing love and compassion.

### OPENING PRAYER

*TasongJongban*,<sup>7</sup> you are the giver and sustainer of life. Before we were born, you knew us, and in your love, you continue to nurture every living being. Today we thank you for life and service of the Indigenous midwives whose wisdom, patience, and compassionate care have protected mothers and children sustaining life for generations. Through their knowledge of healing, their respect for creation, and commitment to community, they bear witness to your life-giving presence among your people. And this wisdom, courage, and life-nurturing knowledge rhythms its beat continually like the beating of the log drum even to this day.

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<sup>1</sup>*Makkave* translates as “people/community” in Badaga language of Badaga tribe.

<sup>2</sup>*Boeha-misera ko* translates as “people/community” in Santhali language of Santhal Tribe.

<sup>3</sup>*Monit* translates as “people/community” in Arleng/Karbi Alam language of Karbi Tribe.

<sup>4</sup>*Apunikujumi* translates as “midwives” in Sumi Naga dialect.

<sup>5</sup>*Hododko* translates as “people/community” in Mundari language of Munda Tribe.

<sup>6</sup>*Naawi-Nu* translates as “Midwives” from Soha dialect (under Nocte tribe)

<sup>7</sup>*TasongJongban* translates as “Almighty God” from Soha dialect (under Nocte tribe).

May the Holy Spirit kindle in our hearts a deeper willingness to hear the voices from the margins and to learn from their wisdom. Open our hearts to appreciate Indigenous knowledge, strengthen our commitment to uphold the dignity of women and children, and inspire us to build communities where healthcare is compassionate, accessible, and just. May we walk together in harmony with one another and with the creation, honoring the gifts of the past from our ancestors while embracing the responsibilities for the future. **Amen**

**OPENING HYMN- *In Christ There Is No East or West*<sup>8</sup>**

In Christ there is no east or west,  
In him no south or north,  
But one great fellowship of love  
Thru'out the whole wide Earth.  
In him shall true hearts ev'rywhere  
Their high communion find.  
His service is the golden cord  
Close binding humankind  
Join hands, then, children of the faith,  
Whate'er your race may be!  
Who serves my parent as a child  
Is surely kin to me.  
In Christ now meet both east and west,  
In him meet south and north;  
All Christly souls are one in him,  
Thru'out the whole wide Earth.

**CONFESSION OF SIN (*in Unison*)**

*Ka•sachakgipalSol*,<sup>9</sup> We confess our sins of negligence in ignoring the invaluable wisdom of our indigenous midwives in sustaining life in this world. We have undermined their indispensable knowledge in providing primary health care for the mothers and children as they transit through tumultuous change in life. We confess our sins of disregard to the sacredness of the life and service of our indigenous midwives in birthing your sacred creation

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<sup>8</sup>Composed by John Oxenham, "In Christ There Is No East or West" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-LqUJe-BMQ>

<sup>9</sup>*Ka•sachakgipalSol* translates as "Merciful God" in Garo language.

to this world. We have replaced their sacred ministry with systems powered by knowledge controlled by social and economically privileged, denying vulnerable families safe and dignified care. Teach us to honour the contribution of women and the midwives, give us courage to safeguard the invaluable knowledge of sustenance of life past down to us, and help us to preserve the sacredness of life, making life and right to living accessible to all. Renew our hearts towards this sustainability and compassion. **Amen.**

### **ASSURANCE OF PRAYER**

**Leader:** God hears the cries of the oppressed and renews those who seek justice. In Christ, we are forgiven, renewed and called to walk in truth and compassion.

**All:** Thanks be to God.

### **SCRIPTURE READING : Exodus 1:15-21**

### **REFLECTION:**

Indigenous women played a central role in providing health care and dispensing knowledge about well-being in the community although it is not acknowledged. Reasons such as cultural bias, gendered knowledge and post-Enlightenment Euro-centric understanding of health and healing that has been markedly andro-centric have contributed to the maligning and marginalisation of Indigenous women in the knowledge and practice of well-being.

Aizüni C was a unique woman in her sixties. She lived four houses down in the main street of our neighbourhood. There was a small garden, where zinnias and corns and pumpkin found their habitat. A pig sty was by the corner of the compound. The house was a rustic bamboo hut, not a cottage of our imagination, and it was dark and gloomy, save for the smoke that breathed through the thatched roof of the kitchen. Surely, it was uninviting, or so we were told. Aizüni C lived alone and had no 'job' unlike most of the parents. But she was a busy woman, as I recall. She was often seen going somewhere or returning from some errands. And in whispers, the children were told she's unique and she is not to be disturbed. The errands, Aizüni C performed were of mysterious nature or unspeakable act for a Christian, or so we were told.

Aizüni C was much sought-after healer, albeit covertly. A healer, untrained in the modern sciences, but possessing knowledge that must have been passed down to her from her

ancestors. She wore no uniforms, like the trained medical nurses, but she cared and attended the sick and the troubled. In hindsight, I think of Aizüni C and realise that she lived frugal and rustic because her knowledge was not valued as much as a medical professional trained in the modern ways, and therefore for her services she was paid in kind rather than cash, impoverishing her in a modern economy.

An Indigenous woman possessing unique knowledge of the ways of the human body and the sacred knowledge of herbs that could be foraged freely from the mountains or grown in the garden, Aizüni C lived isolated, exploited and marginalised. Because modern ways of a capitalist economy valued only trained professionals who functioned within a profit-making system.

Midwives or health-care professionals are found in almost all societies. They are usually women who possessed knowledge of childbirth and obstetrics, including emotional support for post-partum. Both cultures of ancient Israel and the neighbouring Ancient Near East have records of midwives and their important role in the society. For instance, Shiphrah and Puah in the narrative of Moses and the exodus of the Israelites (Ex.1:15-21). Because of their skill and knowledge, scholars suggest that midwives were as critical as prophets or priests in ancient communities. While biblical scholarship debates about the ethnicity of the two midwives, that Pharaoh ordered to perform infanticide of the Hebrew baby boys, Shiphrah and Puah certainly crossed cultural, political and class boundaries as midwives. The source of their insubordination to Pharaoh was their fear of God (Ex.1:17). Where God the creator takes the central place in society steeped with unjust hierarchies, the dignity of humanity is recognised.

Aizüni C, I think loved God and the community she served, because I recall she went to church on Sundays. In places where one's degree of love for God is measured in the efforts one makes to be among God's people on days of worship, Aizüni C taking her place in the pews of the neighbourhood church was a sign of her cognizance of God, the source of all power and knowledge.

As we celebrate Indigenous Peoples and their wisdom and knowledge, with the theme, ***Honouring Indigenous Midwives: Safeguarding Life and Well-being***, it is an opportunity to remember and recognise the many Aizüni Cs among Indigenous Peoples' communities.



Unloved, unrecognised, unpaid, and often ridiculed and marginalised, Indigenous midwives are knowledge keepers, caregivers, and wisdom holders. Despite loneliness, discrimination and structural barriers, Indigenous midwives share their knowledge, often crossing boundaries, for they know their vocation to be handmaidens of God the creator of life.

May the Holy Spirit enable us to recognise and value the midwives among us, may the Holy Spirit empower us to advocate for their welfare. May the Triune God be gracious for flourish of the whole creation.

### **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH<sup>10</sup>**

**We believe in the Supreme God, the Creator, Sustainer, Protector and Guardian of women and midwives through whom wisdom and knowledge are transmitted throughout the generations. We believe that, we were all created in the image of God, and deserve dignity, care and protection.**

**We believe in Jesus Christ, the faithful servant who came not to be served but to serve, and embodies the servitude nature in the midwives whose care and compassion have continued to nurture and safeguard the well-being of community.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the ever-present Companion, who inspires healing over broken relationships, restores harmony among kindred, reconciles peoples with one another and with creation, and strengthens community to protect mother, children for the future generation.**

We believe that every culture and community bears dignity before God. We commit ourselves to honour indigenous knowledge, promote justice in healthcare, care for creation and become the instrument of God's healing love.

**All: Amen**

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<sup>10</sup>Rephrase of "*Apostles Creed*" by Wangjoy Songthing

## **INTERCESSORY PRAYER**

**Leader:** God of life and justice, we bring before you the mothers, children, Indigenous midwives, and vulnerable communities whose lives and well-being depend upon compassionate care, ancestral wisdom, and the protection of dignity. Hear their cries, receive their hopes, and strengthen all who safeguard life and nurture healing within their communities.

### **Prayer for the Honour of Midwives**

**Leader:** *PathianEngkimSiamtu*,<sup>11</sup>

We give thanks for Indigenous midwives who carry ancestral wisdom and serve mothers with courage, tenderness, and compassion. Honour their knowledge and strengthen their hands. May their work be respected by communities, health systems, and institutions. Protect them from discrimination and grant them dignity, support, and recognition as guardians of life.

**All:** *HungkulibeüleiKahvang, hamiphoppüküjangshih*.<sup>12</sup>

### **Prayer against Colonization and Exploitation**

**Leader:** *Dandey Rangte*,<sup>13</sup>

We confess the wounds caused by colonization, discrimination, and the exploitation of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge. Help us to decolonize maternal healthcare and reclaim the indigenous wisdom by preserving and promoting indigenous midwifery practices that aims to foster community health and well-being. Give courage to those who resist injustice and wisdom to those in authority, that Indigenous knowledge and dignity may never again be controlled, misused, or erased.

**All:** *Vichar Nanu Dharme,Emhai Neanan Mena*.<sup>14</sup>

### **Prayer for Indigenous Lands and Ecological Protection**

**Leader:** *Bir, Gada, Buru aar Dharati Sisirjavit*,<sup>15</sup>

We pray for Indigenous lands, forests, rivers, and mountains that sustain communities and life. Protect them from mining, pollution, displacement, and destructive exploitation. Grant

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<sup>11</sup>*PathianEngkimSiamtu* Translates as “Creator God” in Duhlian dialect (Mizo).

<sup>12</sup>*HungkulibeüleiKahvang, hamiphoppüküjangshih* translate as “God of humanity, hear our prayer” from Phom dialect.

<sup>13</sup>*DandeyRangte* translate as “God of Justice” from Tutsa dialect.

<sup>14</sup>*VicharNanuDharme,EmhaiNeanan Mena* translate as “God of justice, hear our prayers” in Kurukh language of Oraon tribe.

<sup>15</sup>*Bir, Gada, Buru aarDharatiSisirjavit* translate as “Creator of forests, rivers, mountains, and earth” in Santhali language of Santhal tribe.

wisdom to governments and corporations to act responsibly. May Indigenous peoples continue to care for creation through their traditional knowledge, and may the earth remain a safe home for future generations.

**All:** *Chento pa hoanti Joban, Nihrangroam pa tat hih.*<sup>16</sup>

### **Prayer for Safeguard and Honour of Women**

**Leader:** *Je-hwonfüikya Zang,*<sup>17</sup>

We pray for all women, especially Indigenous women who face discrimination, violence, and unequal access to care. Protect their bodies, voices, and dignity. Strengthen communities to honour women and safeguard their well-being. May every mother receive compassionate and culturally respectful care, and may no woman suffer because her life is undervalued.

**All:** *Amiisak Rangte, Sengrangsoam Chaat he.*<sup>18</sup>

### **Prayer for Indigenous Young Women**

**Leader:** *Monglem Shuhpü Kahvang,*<sup>19</sup>

We pray for Indigenous young women who carry the dreams of their communities and future generations. Give them confidence, education, safety, and opportunities to flourish. May they value their cultural identity and ancestral wisdom. Protect them from violence, exploitation, and discrimination, and inspire them to become compassionate leaders and courageous guardians of life.

**All:** *Hontotiteiso, tetshen Kopangeibichuuyat.*<sup>20</sup>

### **Prayer for Love and Compassion**

**Leader:** *Sogge Eeru Dharme,*<sup>21</sup>

Soften our hearts and teach us compassion. Help us to listen to mothers, midwives, elders, and communities with humility. Remove indifference from our hearts and replace it with genuine care. May our churches, institutions, and communities become places where people are welcomed, supported, and treated with tenderness, dignity, and respect.

**All:** *PathianKhawngaihna a Khat, Kan TawngtainaNgaihla Ang Che.*<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>*Chento pa hoanti Joban, Nihrangroam pa tathi* translates as “God of creation, hear our prayer” from Nocte dialect.

<sup>17</sup>*Je-hwonfüikya Zang* translate as “God of wisdom” from Wancho dialect.

<sup>18</sup>*Amiisak Rangte, Seng rangsoam Chaat he* translates as “God of Truth, hear our prayers” from Tutsa dialect.

<sup>19</sup>*Monglem Shuhpü Kahvang* translate as “Hope-giving God” from Phom Dialect.

<sup>20</sup>*Hontotiteiso, tetshen Kopangeibichuuyat* translate as “God of Hope, hear our prayers” from Tangsa – Jangno dialect.

<sup>21</sup>*Sogge Eeru Dharme* translate as “Compassionate God” in Kurukh language of Oraon tribe.

### **Prayer for Truth and Wisdom**

**Leader:** *Ayin Thrüpuh*,<sup>23</sup>

Guide us to recognise the value of Indigenous knowledge and the experiences of those who have long safeguarded life. Give us discernment to challenge falsehood, prejudice, and harmful assumptions. Teach leaders, health workers, and communities to listen carefully, act wisely, and seek truth with humility, justice, and respect for every culture.

**All:** *Je-hwonfüikya Zang, Kwomejopkyaatathüi*.<sup>24</sup>

### **Prayer for Peace in the World**

**Leader:** *CingmeiAngpha*,<sup>25</sup>

We pray for a world wounded by war, violence, displacement, and fear. Bring healing to divided peoples and protect the vulnerable. Teach nations to choose dialogue rather than domination. May the wisdom of Indigenous communities, their respect for life and creation, inspire humanity to seek peaceful relationships, shared well-being, and justice for all.

**All:** *MungtsüThrünpuh, isayotamkhün-tamnüsojang*.<sup>26</sup>

### **Prayer for the Church and Faith Communities**

**Leader:** *MonghempuKahwang*,<sup>27</sup>

Awaken faith communities to honour Indigenous peoples and their knowledge. Make us humble listeners and faithful companions. Help churches to stand against discrimination and support culturally appropriate care. May our congregations become communities that protect life, affirm women's dignity, honour midwives, and work courageously for justice, healing, and well-being.

**All:** *Tarungtarehngeshumtiteiso, ngei bi chuuyattetshenkopa*.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>*PathianKhawngaihna a Khat, Kan TawngtainaNgathla Ang Che* translate as “God of compassion, hear our prayer” in Duhlian dialect (Mizo).

<sup>23</sup>*AyinThrüpuh* translates as “God of Light” from Yimkhiung Dialect.

<sup>24</sup>*Je-hwonfüikya Zang, Kwomejopkyaatathüi* translate as “God of wisdom, hear our prayers” from Wancho dialect.

<sup>25</sup>*CingmeiAngpha* translate as “prince of peace” in Konyak dialect.

<sup>26</sup>*MungtsüThrünpuh, isayotamkhün-tamnüsojang* translate as “God of peace, hear our prayer” from Yimkhiung dialect.

<sup>27</sup>*MonghempuKahwang* translate as “faithful God” in Konyak dialect.

<sup>28</sup>*Tarungtarehngeshumtiteiso, ngei bi chuuyattetshenkopa* translate as “God of Justice, hear our prayer” from Tangsa-Jangno dialect.

### **Prayer for a Hopeful and Humane Future**

**Leader:** *Ayur Ren Ishwar*,<sup>29</sup>

We entrust to you generations yet unborn. Lead humanity towards a future where every mother is cared for, every child is welcomed, and every community is treated with dignity. May Indigenous wisdom guide us towards a more humane world. Teach us to build societies founded on compassion, justice, respect, and hope.

**All:** *JangginiIsol, Chingni Bianiko Knapabo*.<sup>30</sup>

**Leader:** Faithful God, you have heard the prayers of your people. Receive our concerns for Indigenous midwives, mothers, women, communities, creation, and the world. Give us courage to become part of the answer to the prayers we have offered. May our lives honour life, protect the vulnerable, and nurture well-being. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

### **CLOSING HYMN : *Shiyamba***<sup>31</sup>

*Siyahambekukanyenkwenkhos (4X),*

*Siyahambekhambehsiyahambek, hambek,*

*Siyahambekukanyenkwenkhos,*

*Siyahambekhambehsiyahambek, hambek,*

*Siyahambekukanyenkwenkhos !2-*

We are marching in the light of God (4X)

We are marching, marching, we are marching, marching,

We are marching in the light of God,

We are marching, marching, we are marching, marching,

We are marching in the light of God !

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

**Leader:** Creator and Sustainer of life, thank you for gathering us in worship today. As we return to our homes and communities, may the witness of Indigenous midwives inspire us to value every human life, preserve indigenous wisdom, and work together where mothers, children and families flourish in safety, dignity and hope. Help us carry forward the ember of

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<sup>29</sup>*Ayur Ren Ishwar* translate as “God of the future” in Mundari language of Munda Tribe.

<sup>30</sup>*JangginiIsol, Chingni Bianiko Knapabo* translate as “God of life, hear our prayer” in Garo dialect.

<sup>31</sup>The song is from South Africa in Zulu language. <https://youtu.be/QGOiANtGmhE?si=2c4XDqM0kjQforAQ>

justice, wisdom, compassion, and your healing love. Give us courage to stand for justice, humility to learn from indigenous community and compassion to serve all people without discrimination. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **BENEDICTION**

**Leader:** May the Creator who wonderfully formed you. May Christ who came that we all may have life in abundance and May the Holy Spirit nurtures, heals, sustains creation, bless you and keep you. May you honour those who safeguard life, respect the wisdom of indigenous communities, serve with compassion, and become agency of healing and hope wherever God calls you today and always.

**All: Amen.**

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### **ORDER OF WORSHIP PREPARED BY:**

**Mr. Wangjoy Songthing** is a member of Nocte Baptist Church Association, Arunachal Pradesh and belongs to Nocte Tribe. He is currently pursuing his Master of Theology in the department of Christian theology at United Theological College, Bangalore.

**Ms. Shamima Minz** is a member of St. John's Church, Hatia- Dhurwa Parish, Diocese of Chottanagpur, Church of North India and belongs to Oraon Tribe. She is currently pursuing her Bachelor of Divinity at United Theological College, Bangalore.

### **REFLECTION IS PREPARED BY**

**Dr. Atola Longkumer** is a Naga Baptist and faculty at the United Theological College, Bengaluru.

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## ALTERNATE LITURGY

### *Honouring Indigenous Midwives: Safeguarding Life and Well-Being*

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

**L:** Come, let us gather with honour before the Creator, whose word gives birth to creation, whose love gives hope and whose hand renews to empower.

**All:** We come with gratitude for the Indigenous peoples of the world, whose cultures, knowledge, and resistance continue to bear witness of the God's sustaining presence.

#### OPENING PRAYER

God of life, Creator of every nation, tribe, language, and people, we gather in Your holy presence with hearts full of gratitude and reverence. On this International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, we thank You for the richness of Indigenous cultures, the strength of Indigenous communities, and the wisdom preserved through generations. We especially remember Indigenous midwives, whose faithful service reflects Your compassionate care as they accompany mothers through labour, protect the vulnerable, and welcome new life into the world with courage, skill, and profound love.

Forgive us for the ways humanity has ignored Indigenous voices, undervalued ancestral knowledge, and permitted injustice to threaten the dignity, health, and well-being of Indigenous communities. Remove from us every attitude of superiority and indifference. Teach us to recognize that authentic wisdom is measured by compassion, communal responsibility, respect for creation, and the preservation of life.

Let Your Holy Spirit inspire us to become a diligent worker in protecting Indigenous rights, promoting equitable healthcare, affirming traditional knowledge alongside ethical medical practice, and standing in solidarity with communities whose lives and livelihoods remain vulnerable. May our worship today move beyond words into faithful action where hope is born again in Your name Jesus Christ, Amen.

**OPENING HYMN:** An appropriate Hymn/Song can be sung

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Exodus 1:15-21, Matthew 2:10-15

#### REFLECTION:

**Theme:** "Honouring Indigenous Midwives: Safeguarding Life and Well-Being"

**Text:** Exodus 1:15-21, Matthew 2:10-15

## **1. Honouring Indigenous Midwives**

According to the United Nations, honouring Indigenous midwives recognises and affirms the Indigenous knowledge systems that have sustained the well-being of Indigenous peoples for generations. It supports the transmission of traditional knowledge, strengthens cultural identity, and ensures the continuity of Indigenous peoples' ways of life. Rooted in holistic worldviews that connect land, spirituality, community, culture, and relationships with creation, Indigenous midwifery embodies invaluable wisdom, values, and practices of care that have been passed down through generations.<sup>32</sup>

For centuries, Indigenous midwives have safeguarded mothers and new-born children through their traditional knowledge, skills, and compassionate care. They are not merely birth attendants but custodians of life, culture, and community well-being. Despite their invaluable contribution, their knowledge has often been overlooked or undermined within formal healthcare systems.<sup>33</sup> Even today, in many remote regions where adequate medical services remain inaccessible, Indigenous midwives continue to save lives and offer hope to countless mothers and children. Their vocation deserves recognition, protection, and meaningful support.

Across the world, many Indigenous peoples have endured colonisation, displacement, cultural assimilation, and the loss of their lands, languages, traditions, and knowledge systems in the name of modernisation, industrialisation, development, and neo-globalisation. Yet Indigenous communities continue to preserve life-giving knowledge that sustains their identity and nurtures both their communities and creation.

## **2. Choosing to Safeguard Life and Well-Being**

The Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, demonstrated remarkable courage by refusing Pharaoh's command to kill every Hebrew baby boy. They feared God rather than the king and chose to protect life despite the great risks they faced. Through their faithful resistance, God preserved the generation from which Moses, the liberator of Israel, would arise (Exodus 1:15–2:10).

The Gospel of Matthew echoes a similar witness. Although it does not speak about midwives, it presents faithful people who protected vulnerable life. When Herod sought to kill the infant Jesus, the Magi refused to cooperate with his evil intentions, and Joseph obeyed God's warning by fleeing to Egypt with Mary and the child Jesus. Through their obedience, they became guardians of God's saving work by protecting the vulnerable child (Matthew 2:10–15).

These biblical narratives remind us that God works through ordinary people who courageously protect life and resist injustice. Likewise, many Indigenous communities continue to defend their inherent rights, ancestral lands, freedom, dignity, self-determination, traditional knowledge systems, and distinct identities despite repeated attempts to

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<sup>32</sup>United Nations - Honouring Indigenous Midwives: Safeguarding Life and Well-being  
<https://www.un.org/en/observances/indigenous-day> (Accessed on 15-07-26).

<sup>33</sup> United Nations - Honouring Indigenous Midwives: Safeguarding Life and Well-being  
<https://www.un.org/en/observances/indigenous-day>.



marginalise, exploit, and silence them. Their resilience bears witness to a profound commitment to the well-being of their communities and the creation.

### **3. Resisting Oppressive Structures**

Both Exodus and Matthew reveal how oppressive political and patriarchal powers seek to preserve their authority by sacrificing the vulnerable. Such realities are not confined to the biblical world but continue to exist in many societies today, including within Indigenous communities. Women and children have long suffered violence, exploitation, and exclusion. At the same time, these narratives remind us that innocent boys and men also became victims of tyranny, revealing that violence destroys entire families, communities, and future generations.

God's response came through faithful women and men working together. Shiphrah and Puah protected life at birth. The Magi refused to cooperate with injustice. Joseph and Mary safeguarded the child Jesus through faithful obedience. Their witness reminds us that protecting life is a shared calling and responsibility.

Today, the Church is called to challenge every oppressive structure that denies human dignity, excludes women from leadership and decision-making, suppresses Indigenous voices, or exploits the vulnerable. Communities flourish when everyone works together, using their God-given gifts to nurture, protect, and sustain life.

### **4. Mutual Support to Safeguard Life**

Today, scientific and medical advancements have greatly improved maternal and child healthcare, saving countless lives. At the same time, the wisdom of Indigenous midwives continues to offer valuable knowledge, especially in communities where healthcare services remain limited. Therefore, rather than undermining Indigenous knowledge, modern healthcare and Indigenous knowledge should complement one another through mutual respect and collaboration.

By integrating appropriate medical care with Indigenous knowledge and experience, we can strengthen our shared commitment to protecting life, promoting the well-being of mothers and children, and fostering healthier communities.

### **5. The Church in Solidarity with Indigenous Communities**

The Church is called to stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples and with all who experience injustice and are deprived of their rights, livelihoods, and valuable knowledge. Every culture, language, and tradition reflects God's creative wisdom and deserves dignity, respect, and protection.

Like Shiphrah and Puah, the Magi, Joseph, and Mary, the Church is called to protect life, resist oppression, and accompany the vulnerable. Together, we are called to safeguard the sacredness of human life, affirming that every person is created in the image of God and called to live with equal dignity while working together for justice, peace, mutual respect, and the service of humanity.

Today, many Indigenous communities continue to face displacement, the loss of their ancestral lands, poverty, environmental destruction, and the erosion of their knowledge systems as a result of unjust models of development, corporate exploitation, and policies that prioritise profit over people and creation, and attitudes driven by superiority and domination. As the Church, we are called to stand alongside Indigenous peoples, affirm their rights and dignity, honour their knowledge and cultural heritage, and care for the integrity of creation. May our churches become communities where Indigenous peoples and their knowledge are honoured, life is protected, creation is cherished, and God's justice is made visible to all (Micah 6:8; Isaiah 1:17; Proverbs 31:8–9).

## INTERCESSORY PRAYER

**L:** God of Life, Creator of every people and every land, we give You thanks today for the estimated 476 million Indigenous Peoples living across 90 countries, representing more than 5,000 distinct cultures and speaking the majority of the world's approximately 7,000 languages.<sup>34</sup> We thank You for the richness of their cultures, the wisdom passed down through generations, and their enduring relationship with the land and all creation. We pray for the protection of their rights, for the recognition of their distinct identities and ways of life, and for the safeguarding of their traditional lands, territories, and natural resources.

**All:** *HeiyuRamai, EtaoVeachiKeinoupei-o*,<sup>35</sup> (God of Life, hear our prayer).

**L:** We give thanks especially for Indigenous midwives, whose gentle hands have welcomed countless children into the world and whose faithful presence has brought comfort in moments of fear, hope in times of uncertainty, and strength in the miracle of birth. We honour them as guardians of life, bearers of wisdom, companions of mothers, and keepers of indigenous knowledge lovingly passed from one generation to the next. May their vocation continue to remind us that every child is Your gift and every life is sacred.

**All:** *RigwnmeitiloumeiRavgwangc, AniwRavsuaiDaulou O*,<sup>36</sup> (God of Hope, hear our prayer)

**L:** God of compassion, we remember that many Indigenous communities continue to bear the wounds of history. We lament the injustice of lands taken, cultures silenced, languages lost, and lives marked by discrimination, exclusion, broken trust, poverty, displacement, and the ongoing violation of their rights. Forgive us whenever we have remained silent in the face of injustice or failed to recognize the dignity You have bestowed upon every people. Strengthen Indigenous communities with hope and courage. Guide governments, churches, civil societies, and all people to uphold justice and dignity, and inspire us to stand in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples so that they may live in peace, security, and the fullness of life.

**All:** *AmpeuKimiyeKiniu, ningukighinichilutsulo*,<sup>37</sup> (God of Mercy, hear our prayer)

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<sup>34</sup>United Nations - Honouring Indigenous Midwives: Safeguarding Life and Well-being <https://www.un.org/en/observances/indigenous-day> (Accessed on 15-07-26).

<sup>35</sup>*HeiyuRamai, EtaoVeachiKeinoupei-o*, as “God of Life, hear our prayer,” in Poula (Poumai Naga) dialect.

<sup>36</sup>*RigwnmeitiloumeiRavgwangc, AniwRavsuaiDaulou O (Ronglat)* as “God of Hope, hear our prayer,” in Rongmei dialect.

**L:** We pray for Indigenous mothers, newborn children, families, and communities, especially those living in places where poverty, conflict, environmental destruction, or limited access to healthcare threaten life and well-being. Protect those who bring life into the world and those entrusted with caring for them. Grant wisdom to all who serve in healthcare, and foster respectful collaboration that values both professional expertise and the gifts of Indigenous knowledge, so that every mother and every child may receive care with dignity, compassion, and hope.

**All:** *JangginiNokgipa; ChingBi•akoKnachakbo*,<sup>38</sup>(God of Life, hear our prayer)

**L:** Loving God, teach Your people to listen with humility and to walk alongside Indigenous Peoples as companions rather than strangers. Free us from prejudice, indifference, and fear. Open our hearts to receive the gifts You have planted among all peoples, so that together we may seek justice, cherish creation, protect the vulnerable, and build communities where every culture is respected and every person is welcomed with love.

**All:** *SendaBuginrenIshwar, AleyaBintiAyumkem*<sup>39</sup> (God of Wisdom, hear our prayer).

**L:** God of all peoples, You are the source of every culture, every language, every breath of life, and every hope for tomorrow. Send us into the world not merely as observers of justice but as its faithful witnesses, not merely as hearers of another's story but as companions on the journey, not merely as admirers of diversity but as builders of communities where every person is received with dignity, every culture is honoured with respect, and every life is treasured as Your sacred gift. Until the day when all peoples gather as one family around Your table, keep us steadfast in love, courageous in truth, and joyful in hope.

**All:** May the Creator who formed us, the Spirit who renews us, and the Love that binds us as one human family, lead us to protect life, pursue justice, cherish creation, and walk together in hope, today and always. Amen.

**CLOSING HYMN: An appropriate Hymn/Song can be sung**

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

Our Creator, who dwells among every people and in every culture.

May Your holy name be honoured not only in our sanctuaries but also in the birthing huts and hands where life is welcomed with trembling hands and steadfast hope.

May Your reign come, where the wisdom of Indigenous people is received as a gift rather than dismissed as primitive.

May Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

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<sup>37</sup> *AmpeuKimiyekiniu, ningukighinichilutsuloas* “God of Mercy, hear our prayer,” in Sumi dialect.

<sup>38</sup> *JangginiNokgipa; ChingBi•akoKnachakbo*, as “God of Life, hear our prayer,” in Garo dialect.

<sup>39</sup> “*SendaBuginrenIshwar, AleyaBintiAyumkem*” as “God of Wisdom, hear our prayer” in Mundari language, Munda Tribe, Jharkhand.

Give us today not only the bread that satisfies our hunger but also the ability to receive nourishment from those whom we have overlooked. Feed us with the courage to learn from Indigenous midwives, whose quiet faithfulness has safeguarded generations.

Forgive us our sins, especially when we have celebrated the birth of Christ while remaining silent about mothers who give birth without safety, dignity, justice, and, as we forgive those who have wounded our identity.

Lead us away from the temptation, and deliver us from the arrogance that celebrates civilization while erasing Indigenous peoples.

For Yours is the kingdom where every child is received as sacred, every mother is honoured with dignity, every midwife is recognized as a guardian of life, and every act of resistance reveals of Your reign and the glory forever. **Amen.**

### **Benediction**

Go in the peace of God, who is the Creator of every people, the Giver of every good gift, and the Source of all life. May Christ, the Lord of Life, lead us to honour the dignity of every person, uphold justice with humility, and become faithful stewards of the gifts entrusted to all peoples. May the Holy Spirit unite us in compassion, strengthen us in hope, and empower us to safeguard life, cherish creation, and walk together as one human family in the love and peace of God. And may the blessing of Almighty God, rest upon us, remain within us, now and always. **Amen.**

### **Liturgy Prepared by:**

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### **COVER POSTER IS DESIGNED BY**

**Rev. Vinod Shemron** is an ordained deacon of the Church of North India. He formerly worked with the SCMI and the NCCI. He is currently pursuing his doctoral research in Christian Theology at the North India Institute for Post Graduate Theological Studies, Kolkata.

### **DESCRIPTION OF COVER POSTER**

The image celebrates Indigenous midwives as custodians of life, health, and ancestral wisdom. The central Adivasi woman embodies the resilience, dignity, and nurturing spirit of

Indigenous communities, speaking into the tribal pot symbolizes the vessel of traditional knowledge that has been carefully preserved and passed down through generations. Within this pot, the unborn child signifies that every new life is nurtured not only by a mother's care but also by the accumulated wisdom of Indigenous midwives, their knowledge of childbirth, healing, nutrition, spirituality, and community-centred care, which safeguards the health and well-being of mothers, children and generations. The supporting hands beneath the womb affirm the collective responsibility of the community in protecting life, and the surrounding Indigenous motifs reflect the interconnectedness of people, culture, land, and creation. Together, the image honours Indigenous midwives, whose invaluable traditions continue to ensure the safety, dignity, and well-being of present and future generations.

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**For further details please contact**

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