

Truth and Reconciliation – An Invitation to Prayer on June 13, 2010

The first national event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada will take place at the Forks in Winnipeg, Manitoba from June 16 to 19, 2010.

Church members across Canada are asked to set aside Sunday, June 13, 2010 to pray for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its work:

- for survivors of Indian Residential Schools, for former school staff members, for commissioners, speakers, and all Canadians, that we may speak, hear, and act upon the truth, and that we as individuals and as a nation may meet the hope of a new beginning.

About the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Winnipeg Consultation

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada is part of a comprehensive response to the legacy of Indian Residential Schools as set out in the Indian Residential Schools' Settlement Agreement reached in May 2006. The Commission is mandated to look at activities within residential schools, as well as the impacts of the schools' stated aim to assimilate Aboriginal children.

The National Consultation in Winnipeg will be an opportunity for survivors of residential schools, their families and communities, for church members, people of faith, and other concerned Canadians to gather for truth telling, learning and reflection, artistic expression, remembering and commemorating, healing, repenting, and reconciling.

Suggested Resources for Prayer and Reflection

The attached PDF document contains selected resources for use on June 13.

- Call to Reflection
- Covenant Collect
- Prayer for a New Beginning
- Homily/Notes on the Lectionary Readings of the Day
- Circle of Prayer
- Prayer of Lamentation – Litany of the Dispossessed
- Eucharistic Prayer

Additional Resources

Remembering the Children Prayer

- <http://www.rememberingthechildren.ca/tour/documents/prayer.pdf>

The Anglican Church of Canada – New Agape

- www.anglican.ca/newagape

The Presbyterian Church in Canada

- www.presbyterian.ca/resources/online/5265
- www.presbyterian.ca/healing

The United Church of Canada

- www.united-church.ca/aboriginal/schools/resources/trservice
- www.united-church.ca/planning/seasons/firstnations

Dancing the Dream

- <http://www.msgr.ca/msgr-3/native.htm>

Apologies and Confessions

- Anglican - <http://www.rememberingthechildren.ca/press/acc-apology.htm>
- Presbyterian - <http://www.rememberingthechildren.ca/press/pcc-confession.htm>
- United - <http://www.rememberingthechildren.ca/press/ucc-apology.htm>

Truth and Reconciliation – Liturgical Resources for June 13, 2010

This compendium of resources was compiled in consultation with an ecumenical working group based in Winnipeg: the Rev. Canon Murray Still, the Rev. Canon Bob Webster, the Rev. Mary Lysecki, the Rev. Barbara Shoomski (The Anglican Church of Canada, Diocese of Rupert's Land), the Rev. Henry Hildebrandt (The Presbyterian Church in Canada), Mr. Julian Fradette (Roman Catholic, Archdiocese of St. Boniface), the Very Rev. Stan McKay, Ted Dodd (The United Church of Canada).

A Call to Reflection

For many church people in recent years, the re-examination of Canadian history with a particular focus on the damage done to Aboriginal peoples by European colonialism has involved an unveiling of evil in ourselves and in our institutions for which we were not prepared. The process has been painful and humbling. It has also been a grace, making possible a kind of collective repentance. This has been expressed, for example, in the public apologies offered by the four churches which were historically involved in administering Indian residential schools on behalf of the federal government. We grieve that the churches were aligned with the damaging and misguided assimilationist policies of Canadian governments and Canadian society as a whole.

[ARC document "Aboriginal Land Rights: A Jubilee Challenge Facing Canada"]

A Covenant Collect

Creator God, from you every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. You have rooted and grounded us in your covenant love, and empowered us by your Spirit to speak the truth in love, and to walk in your way towards justice and wholeness.

Mercifully grant that your people, journeying together in partnership, may be strengthened and guided to help one another to grow into the full stature of Christ, who is our light and our life. Amen

[A NEW AGAPE: Worship Resources, www.anglican.ca/newagape]

Prayer for a Vision of New Beginnings **The Rt. Rev. David Giuliano, United Church of Canada**

Creator God,
Who whispers to us the mysteries of this life,
Who causes the long grasses to dance in summer,
Who calls the salmon against the current in fall,
Who invites us to rest like the soil in winter
And in the spring to rise again like hungry bears
Searching for the sweetness of you to sustain us.

On this day, as with all days
There are endings and beginnings
And there is the continuation of a journey
Set in motion beyond living memory
And into an unimagined future.

You call us to healing, wholeness, and right relations.

So we give ourselves to the care of our place
In the circle that has no beginning and no end
Beyond you who are the alpha and omega.
We do not know where it will lead but we trust that you are with us always.

Give us what we need for this next part of the walk,
Gratitude for the visionaries, the healers and prophets
Who have gone before us,
Humility to know that many will follow when we are gone,
Joy to lighten the load and wisdom to see the way.
Respect to strengthen our bonds and
Tender kindness to soften hardened hearts.

Guide us, source of all light, in this season of [our common life]
So that our eyes and our lives will be open to love
And we will walk together in a good way.

“ Hold the holy light in front of us to follow
As we walk together as brothers and sisters in all faiths.”
[Evelyn Broadfoot, Circle and Cross]

Notes on the Lectionary Readings – June 13, 2010

By Ted Dodd, Centre for Christian Studies, Winnipeg, MB

1 Kings 21:1-10(11-14), 15-21a

For this Sunday, the reading from the Hebrew Scriptures in the Revised Common Lectionary, tells the story of Naboth's vineyard. Jezebel and Ahab act with manipulative treachery and unbridled ambition in order to seize Naboth's land. This is not just a cautionary tale of individual wickedness and greed. Ahab and Jezebel represent the power structure of an oppressive social order where innocents, like Naboth, are systemically victimized.

The connections to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions seem transparently obvious. Since the arrival of the first Europeans, Aboriginal peoples in Canada have had their land taken away just like Naboth. An interwoven system of political, financial, religious and cultural power, cheated the First Peoples of, not only their land, but, their way of life. The Indian Residential Schools (IRS), run by the churches for the government, were part of this arrangement. Young children carried away from their homes lost their language, their culture, their freedom, their dignity and their identity. The stated government mandate for the IRS was assimilation, "to kill the Indian in the child." Without parental or communal guidance and affection, children who grew up in these abusive circumstances were deeply wounded. Subsequent generations have suffered because of the scars of this tragedy.

In our biblical story, Elijah confronts Ahab with the truth of his ruthless behavior. Similarly, the truth of the IRS needs to be shared with all the people of Canada, particularly those in the church. Many in our pews are ignorant of this harsh reality of our country. This may be a painful and unpopular message on a Sunday morning, but this is not the time to ignore the suffering many Aboriginal people have experienced; these stories deserve, at the very least, reverential and attentive listening and acknowledgement. Can you find respectful ways to share one or two of these stories in your homily/sermon time?

This is not the time for finger pointing shame and blame preaching which will only result in guilty paralysis or indignant defensiveness. But neither is this the time to push for easy forgiveness and reconciliation. Not included in the verses for this lectionary are the verse (27) that describes Naboth's dejected response to Elijah's confrontation. He tears his clothes, wears sackcloth, fasts; he laments. Maybe before we jump to reconciliation we need to take time to hear the truth and lament the sadness to which the IRS led. How might you encourage that kind of expression with your people?

2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, 13-15

In the Roman Catholic lectionary, the Hebrew Scripture reading for this Sunday relates the story of Nathan's condemnation of King David's callous treatment of Uriah and Bathsheba. This story has parallels to Naboth's vineyard. Like Ahab, David is willing to commit murder in order to get whatever he desires. Like Elijah, Nathan prophetically confronts his ruler. Again, outside the verses prescribed for this day's lection, elements of vivid and graphic lamentation are depicted.

As stated above, this tragic tale does not have to remain merely an admonition against individual abuse of power. David was able to exploit his privilege because of the social constructs and arrangements that enabled him to take advantage of those who were more vulnerable. Nathan creatively exposed David's guilt; societal patterns and structures which perpetuate oppression and abuse bear exposing as well.

The comparisons to the vision of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are obvious. The Indian Residential Schools violated the minds, bodies and spirits of Aboriginal peoples. This sorrowful

aspect of our collective history needs to be known and recognized by all the peoples of Canada.

Nathan was powerfully able to get David to realize his sinful failing; there was no room for dismissive rationalization or continuing self-deception. Like Nathan, the homilist today needs to find creative and sensitive ways that will enable the listener to understand the painful truth of the IRS. And the preacher has the opportunity to encourage constructive engagement with the TRC process.

Luke 7:36-8:3

The gospel reading centers around two people who are described as sinners. One is a woman who has heard a message from Jesus of acceptance and divine pardon. In gratitude she responds in hospitality by bathing, kissing and anointing Jesus' feet. Simon the Pharisee is the other sinner. He reacts negatively to the woman's extravagant behavior, finding her actions offensive and her presence a scandalous intrusion. Jesus intervenes: "Simon I have something to say to you." Then, with an artful parable Jesus exposes Simon's mean-spirited small-mindedness. In this story, Jesus is acting as a prophet. He is able to find a way to speak the uncomfortable truth.

In many congregations and parishes it might be difficult or awkward to raise the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The heartbreaking experience of the Indian Residential Schools was a reprehensible part of our collective past. It can be hard to hear about the pain that was inflicted and the damage has ensued. It is understandable that many want to avoid unpleasantness and turn away. Yet, the truth has to be spoken in order for us to move on. And those who have been victimized warrant a deeply attentive audience. The preacher today will need to raise that truth with clarity and courage. It might be worth beginning as Jesus did "Friends, I have something to say to you."

In the book, *Act Justly, Love Tenderly, Walk Humbly*, Walter Brueggemann describes justice as "sorting out what belongs to whom and returning it to them." Jesus uses a parable about forgiveness of debts to lure Simon's attention and uncover his actions. The pardoning of financial obligations would have been an unambiguous and unmistakable symbol for the original peasant listeners. Excusing monetary commitments would have pointed toward the restoration of life and the renewal of hope.

The work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission aims toward such new life and hope. The TRC has set as an over-all goal acknowledging the realities of those who experienced the IRS, and to bring about renewed relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada through mutual understanding and respect. The IRS are now in the past but the experience continues to impact survivors, their families and communities, in the present. In order to work towards a just and healthy future, it is imperative that this process sincerely recognize both the injustices and the need for continued healing.

Circle of Prayer

Gathered in a circle, we bring our prayers and praise to our loving Creator whose Spirit is at work praying within us, through the power of Jesus. As a stone is passed from person to person around the Sacred Circle, I invite you to offer your prayers

- for the world
- for the church
- for our circle of family and friends, and
- the wider circle of the earth and its creatures.

All are invited, around the circle, to offer prayers. At the end the worship leader says:

Into your hands, O God,
we commend all for whom we pray,
trusting in your abundant love and grace;
through our brother Jesus, who died and rose to life with you,
world without end. Amen.

A Prayer of Lamentation - Litany of the Dispossessed

One: We found the land unoccupied....except for them.

All: **And they grew poor,**

One: while we grew wealthy.

All: **They grew powerless,**

One: while we grew powerful.

All: **They were pushed aside,**

One: While we thanked God for land.

All: **They filled our jails**

One: while we thanked God for freedom.

All: **They despaired**

One: while we grew wealthy. Then the Lord replied: Woe to those who pile up stolen goods, and make themselves wealthy by extortion.

All: **How long must this go on?**

One: Woe to them who build a city with bloodshed and establish a town by crime.

All: **How long must this go on ?**

One: Woe to them who give drink to their neighbours, pouring it from the wineskin until they are drunk so that they can gaze on their nakedness.

All: **How long must this go on?**

One: The Lord is in the Holy Temple

All: **Let all the earth be silent before God.**

[Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative Year III Educational Resource: Restoring Right Relations]