

St. Alban's Richmond
June 21, 2015

Good morning

I would like to begin by acknowledging that we meet this morning on Coast Salish territory and to give thanks to God our creator for the Musqueam and Tsawwassen and Semihamoo First Nations who have cared for this land for centuries.

When I was last with you a month ago, I was preparing to go to Ottawa for the closing ceremonies of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools and today I am with you on National Aboriginal Day.

Since we were last together:

The number of Drinking Water Advisories reached 169 in 129 First Nations communities across Canada,

9 members of an historic black activist church in South Carolina were killed by a white supremacist. The oldest black congregation in the South it has been targeted with racist violence throughout its history

The RCMP are investigating the possibility that a serial killer is targeting vulnerable Aboriginal women hitch-hikers near Edmonton.

The Dominican Republic is engaged in the mass deportation of Dominicans of Haitian descent—that is black Dominicans

And a bus full of residential school survivors, including Kelvin Bee, from our diocese, who attended —St. Michael's school, was turned away from a reception at Rideau Hall—b/c someone in security decided that they didn't look like the kind of people who would be invited to the home of the Governor General.

I pray a prayer from the late Art Solomon, Anishinabe poet, essayist, residential school survivor.

Grandfather--Look at our brokenness. We know that in all creation only the human family has strayed from the sacred way. We know that we are the ones who are divided and we are the one who must come back together to walk in the sacred way.

Grandfather, Sacred One--Teach us love, compassion and honor that we may heal the Earth and each other.

In addition to my work on Indigenous Justice, I am part of the diocesan team that delivers anti-racism training and a group of people looking at how the Anglican church can make changes for racial justice both inside our church and outside of it.

To think and pray and act in response to racism in terms of our vocation as Christians, in terms of sin and repentance and our baptismal vow to “strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being”

For me issues of racial justice, indigenous justice and colonization are real and present every day –but as a white person, I have the privilege of choosing if and how I address racism.

And I often find it difficult, in the face of so much violence, to do more than express my outrage, to call out the racism that I see. It is much harder to invite people who genuinely ask “what can I do?” to become allies, to build solidarity.

Normally I tend to mentally bypass the epistle, on the way from Hebrew Bible to Gospel, But today’s passage from Philippians gives me real, concrete direction in my ongoing struggle to be a part of disrupting racism.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

This is not platitude, not empty “Don’t worry, say a prayer, everything is going to be fine”

but Pray. Pay Attention to what is good, Think (use the critical skills that you have) and Keep on Doing (not just do, but “keep on”, persevere in doing) what you have learned and received (and for me particularly what I have learned from Indigenous people)

And not “everything is going to be fine” but “god will be with you”

this is really a mandate for effective ally work

So what do YOU notice that is good, that is working --“true, honourable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent, worthy of praise?”

In Ottawa I was with our Bishop, diocesan Archivist, Anglican Indigenous Justice ministries coordinator, survivors and generational survivors for the presentation of the Commissioners’ summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation –

We were in an enormous banquet room with more than 1000 people in chairs and many hundreds more sitting on the floor in the aisles, standing packed tight in the back and on the sides. When Justice Murray Sinclair, the chief commissioner, took the floor there was a huge outpouring of emotion—a standing ovation and sustained applause—It was an expression of deepest respect for his strength and leadership through five plus incredibly difficult, years of hearing the truth and telling the truth.

It was an affirmation of the other commissioners, of the survivors and of their children and grandchildren. It was as well, an affirmation of all of us—indigenous and non-indigenous, that we had done this incredibly hard thing together

whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just,

The report is actually a “Call to Action” 94 recommendations based on the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As members of our church, parts of this document are addressed directly to you. —it is easy to find on the internet, 10 pages and takes 30 minutes to read. I strongly encourage you to do so.

Think about these things, keep on doing the things that you have learned

When the commissioner read Call to Action #41, the call for a public inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls (well over 600 cases by the most conservative counts),—Women of all ages leapt to their feet, elders pounded their canes in approval, I saw young men openly weeping

This was the clearest, most unified response that I have been witness to in my work with the TRC. I pray that you will support the leadership of indigenous people calling for an inquiry, and for action that has concrete meaningful results in the lives of Aboriginal girls and women.

Think about these things, keep on doing what you have received.

Now, Aboriginal day is not only, or even primarily, about Residential Schools, it is a celebration and an affirmation of the gifts, strengths, cultures and rights of First Nation, Inuit and Metis peoples.

So I want to share a few examples that are “*pleasing, commendable, excellent and worthy of praise*”

The prayers and readings for today are the work of Anglican Council of Indigenous People—a leadership body of our church that has existed since 1988

Since 2007, we have had a National Aboriginal Bishop—Mark McDonald, who serves pastoral leader to indigenous Anglicans all over the church

A little over a year ago Lydia Mamakwa was installed as bishop of Mishamikoweesh (Mi SHAM a queesh)—in northern Ontario and Manitoba, the first autonomous Indigenous diocese

There are approximately 130 Indigenous Anglican priests in Canada and about 225 congregations have Indigenous majority.

In this diocese—

St. James offered the blanket exercise, a participatory learning exercise about the history of Canada developed by KAIROS Canada. But they did it in a really special way—based on slow and careful building of relationships, First Nation and metis parishioners hosted the event using the traditional West Coast ceremonial protocols including brushing with cedar, calling and blanketing witnesses and giving of gifts.

The Coming Home society, an organization begun in this diocese to serve Aboriginal youth, trained 149 youth workers on resilience in Indigenous traditions. And is meeting with Urban Native Youth Association to provide skills programming for young adults and parenting support for young fathers. —a gift to them is a gift well spent.

Today all over the country people are celebrating Indigenous gifts and culture. From 1—3 at the Gulf of Georgia Cannery in Steveston—there will be storytellers, drummers, canoes and youth dancers

This afternoon until 5, I will be at the Trout lake celebrations—crafts, canoeing, performances, food

These are celebrations we are all invited to, a new beginning we can all be part of.

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