



Anglican Church of Canada

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June 14, 2011

“Journeying Together in Partnership”

Dear Friends,

“Journeying together in partnership” is the theme from the Collect appointed for National Aboriginal Day, June 21st. At General Synod 2010 our church approved the inclusion of that observance in its calendar. The readings designated for the day are especially appropriate to the theme of walking together in new ways. Isaiah reminds us that “in waiting on the Lord we shall renew our strength. We shall run and not be weary. We shall walk and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:31) Paul calls us to think on those things that are true and honourable and just and pure and pleasing. (Philippians 4:8) In the prologue of John’s Gospel we are called to rejoice in this, that from the fullness of Christ’s love, we “receive grace upon grace”. (John 1:16)

The journey in which we are engaged began at the invitation of Indigenous Peoples holding out the hand of fellowship to all who would walk with them in their hope for healing from their experiences in the residential schools, their cry for help in the face of so many longstanding injustices and their deep desire for self-determination within their communities.

In this journey there have been moments of painful truth-telling and listening, moments of contrition and apology. There have also been moments of vision and of dreams fulfilled, moments of prayers made and answered. Among them all, there are several that have shaped the way we look into one another’s eyes, and take next steps together. Perhaps most notable is the apology made by Archbishop Michael Peers, then Primate, at the National Native Convocation in 1993. In saying on behalf of our church that he was sorry for the wrongs we had committed, he also said he knew that “words without actions are empty” and he committed our church to a continuing work of healing and reconciliation.

In 1994, we signed The Anglican Indigenous Covenant committing our church to work with Indigenous Peoples to pursue self-determination in local ministry, governance and leadership. .

At the call of the Sacred Circle of 2005, steps were taken to appoint a National Anglican Indigenous Bishop. In 2007, The Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald was appointed and installed into that office and his ministry has been well received across the church. In the spirit of self-determination, Lydia Mamakwa was elected and consecrated as the Area Bishop for Northern Ontario in the Diocese of Keewatin. Similar initiatives are underway in northern Manitoba and northern Saskatchewan.

The General Synod of 2010 in Halifax took significant actions in the spirit of “journeying together in partnership”. Legislation was passed enshrining the office of the National Indigenous

Anglican Bishop in the Constitution, giving voice and vote to members of the Council of General Synod representing the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples, enacting a Canon for Indigenous Peoples, and honouring the important place of Sacred Circle gatherings across the country.

Synod repudiated the doctrine of discovery which provided legal rights to the use and possession of land found by European arrivals. . Synod endorsed the 2007 UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for its own practice and called on the Government of Canada to do the same. When the Government endorsed the UN Declaration in November 2010, we urged it to seriously implement the articles of the Declaration.

We affirmed the mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and committed to the provision of adequate financial resources for our Church's continuing support of the work of the Commission over the next five years. The mandate is to hear, record and preserve the story of the residential schools and to set this country on a new and different path with respect to its regard for the First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples. Our church is deeply committed to this journey.

In partnership with Indigenous Peoples, we seek to speak out against systemic racism in this country, to name the injustices associated with inadequate health care, housing, and education in well constructed schools. Together, we call for steps to be taken in addressing the growing number of social problems facing so many First Nations people living in large urban centres. Together we struggle to address the pandemic of suicide, especially among young people. The Amazing Grace Project in which so many of us participated in 2009 generated \$100,000 for Suicide Prevention Program coordination across the country.

As we come to National Aboriginal Day this year, we have, it seems to me, so much for which to be prayerful. Some of our prayers express contrition, some thanksgiving, and some express our strong need for the continuing guidance of the Creator.

May God bless our vows to journey in partnership one with another. Till we've seen the journey through may God's will and word be "a lantern to our feet, a light upon our path". (Psalm 119:105)

In Christ,

I am,

Sincerely yours,

Fred J. Hiltz
Archbishop and Primate