

The Anglican Church of Canada



L'Église anglicane du Canada

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December 31, 2012

The Right Hon. Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ontario
Fax: 613-941-6900

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

We write to you in the midst of the crisis concerning Chief Theresa Spence's request for a meeting between you, Governor General David Johnston, and the leadership of First Nations. We urge you to meet with Chief Spence and immediately begin a process of consultation regarding the Nation to Nation relationship between Canada and First Nations. We ask this as a part of our own urgent commitment to reconciliation.

We believe that Chief Spence's fast is a sacrificial act of one for the many. In that alone, it demands respect and response. Its primary moral force, however, is the truth that walks behind it. As you have acknowledged in your apology of 2008, Canada has long needed a new and just relationship with the First Nations. Further, the needs of First Nations cry out for action. Chief Spence's fast is a clear echo of the many voices that have called for a foundational consultation. It is a righteous request for a re-commitment to the promising future presented in the framework of the treaties, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and in our God-given obligations and responsibilities to serve the well-being and rights of all humanity.

It is time to enter the new relationship of promise. The *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Interim Report* said in its recommendations:

Reconciliation also will require changes in the relationship between Aboriginal people and the government of Canada. The federal government, along with the provincial governments, historically has taken a social welfare approach to its dealings with Aboriginal people. This approach fails to recognize the unique legal status of Aboriginal peoples as the original peoples of this country. Without that recognition, we run the risk of continuing the assimilationist policies and the social harms that were integral to the residential schools.

Living the Marks of Mission

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We prayerfully stand with Chief Spence and the many First Nation voices that respectfully and urgently plead with you to provide the leadership of grace and vision that will bring us forward. In meeting with Chief Spence, in meeting with First Nations leaders towards a reconciled and just relationship, you will make real your apology of 2008. Without such a beginning, if we do not walk through the door that this crisis has opened, there is certainly no viable or moral way forward for Canada. We will all be diminished.

Sincerely,

The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz,
Primate, Anglican Church of Canada

The Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald,
National Indigenous Anglican Bishop

The Ven. Sidney Black,
Co-chair, Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples

The Rev. Norm Casey,
Co-Chair, Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples

The Rev. Ginny Doctor,
Coordinator, Indigenous Ministries, Anglican Church of Canada

The Rt. Rev. Lydia Mamakwa,
Bishop of the Northern Ontario Region

The Rt. Rev. Adam Halkett,
Bishop of Missinipi

Canon Laverne Jacobs,
Council of Elders

CC: Shawn Atleo, Chief Theresa Spence, and leaders of all federal parties