

Giving Substance to Words

This pamphlet lists some of the important insights we have heard and gives some suggestions about how to continue this journey of healing and hope in each conference as we move together into a more faithful future



“For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.”

James 2:26

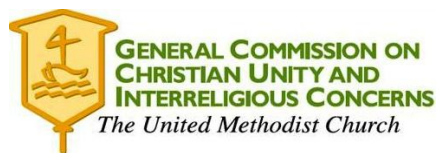
Saying the right words at the appropriate time and place is important, but — to paraphrase James—words without actions are also dead. Deeds give substance to what we say.

The people of The United Methodist Church have been called to a spiritual journey that begins with words spoken at the Act of Repentance at the General Conference of 2012. Delegates, observers, guests, and visitors will be invited to confess to God many of the atrocities, injustices, and indignities we have committed, through sins of omission and commission, against indigenous and native individuals and communities. Descendants of the people who suffered from the sins of the past suffer today in varying degrees through historical trauma, societal breakdown, and cultural genocide. The leadership of the Council of Bishops will guide us in words of confession at the General Conference, the highest legislative authority of our church.

The 2008-2012 Quadrennium was a period of preparation. The journey began with the 2008 Resolution #3323 Healing Relationships with Indigenous Persons. This resolution assigned the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns (GCCUIC) the tasks of developing resources that can be used in the conferences for study, dialogue, and acts of repentance and also the task to

“hold an Act of Repentance Service at the 2012 gathering of the Conference.” The document resolved that “this service will launch study, dialogue, and acts of repentance in all annual [and central] conferences over the following quadrennium.”

GCCUIC began by listening--- listening to the personal stories and histories of indigenous people in the five jurisdictions in the United States and in two central conferences. We visited in their communities and listened deeply to their pain, grief, anger, and disillusionment. We also heard glimmers of hope and strong faith and commitment to a better future. We are enormously grateful for the generosity of spirit we found in those who were willing---once again---to tell their stories even though these stories have not been heard in ways that make a difference yet. The church’s task of listening is not complete. Listening must continue in local congregations and communities to make repentance authentic, credible and effective. Then the words we say at the General Conference 2012 Act of Repentance must be given substance by actions.



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We Have Heard.....From Native/Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines, Norway, and the United States

- Listen to us!
- We are invisible because of our small and scattered demographics. We are voiceless because you do not listen. We are speaking, but you do not hear.
- Know your history----and tell it accurately.
- The atrocities and injustices of the past live on in the historic trauma of today.
- Your guilt does not help us. Your partnership and advocacy does.
- Words mean nothing if not followed by action.
- Become partners with us in our political issues
- The sins of omission are just as egregious as the sins of commission.

- We are not all alike. We do not always agree. There is great diversity of gifts, culture, perspective and identity among indigenous people.
- Repentance is a process—not a program!
- We are not victims.
- We want to walk into a new future with you, not led by you.
- We are not sure the Act of Repentance will help. The church has broken promises and participated in the failure of the government to keep its promises.
- You (the church) need healing also.
- We have rich cultures and spiritual treasures that we might share with you if we come to trust you.
- Build relationships with us on a personal level. This takes time and honesty

Healing Relationships in Your Annual or Central Conference

- Meet and establish relationships with native and/or indigenous people in your community and conference
- Learn the history of relationships with the indigenous population and The United Methodist Church's role in the history of expansion in that area

- Listen to indigenous persons to learn the current issues of the indigenous or native communities in your conference
- Do the appropriate study to prepare for an Act of Repentance and Healing in your conference
- Commit to host an Act of Repentance and Healing in your conference
- If you have already held an Act of Repentance in your conference, develop concrete steps to follow up
- Develop relationships by partnering congregations with indigenous congregations in your conference
- Support Native Ministries Sunday and indigenous and native ministries in your conference
- Support committees on Native American and indigenous ministries
- Establish committees of support in partnership with indigenous people
- Promote the UN Resolution on Indigenous Rights
- Participate in efforts to support sacred sites or land within your conference
- Support efforts to repatriate ancestral remains

- Develop relationships with indigenous communities outside your conference whose ancestors were removed from their lands within your conference
- Develop a statement that demonstrates a respect for the diversity of indigenous ministries
- Create a list of goals with action steps that will indicate your conference's commitment to changing relationships with and among indigenous/native United Methodists and The United Methodist Church
- Commit to advocacy related to land rights, sovereignty of native/indigenous communities, better health care, education, and the rights and security of women.
- Commit to look for opportunities to return land back to indigenous peoples—for instance when a church closes, consider giving the property to indigenous/native peoples who owned it first
- Explore the possibility of working ecumenically with other churches in



Rev. Thom White Wolf Fasset
photo by Ginny Underwood

your
conference