



ELCIC National Bishop Susan C. Johnson's presentation to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

Alberta National Event March, 2014

I begin by acknowledging that we are gathered today on Treaty Six territory; on the traditional territory of the Plains Cree peoples.

Survivors of the Indian Residential Schools, family and descendants of survivors, elders, youth, distinguished guests, leaders and all who gather here today:

As National Bishop, I bring you greetings on behalf of the 150,000 members and 550 congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

I am honoured and humbled to be here today. I, and my church, continue to have much to learn about the history of Indigenous peoples, and about the history and difficult legacy of residential schools. Too often our church has ignored these realities. We now seek opportunities to listen, to learn, to repent, and to discover paths of healing.

As an Expression of Reconciliation, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada offers a certificate and a pottery pitcher, both blessed by our National Church Council.

The certificate contains the 2011 National Convention resolution that commits our church to encouraging right relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. During this convention, we explored the meaning of treaties as sacred covenants. The adopting of this resolution was our way of making a covenant with each other in the presence of God to do our part in seeking the renewal of relationships

We now give you our word that our church is committed to an ongoing process of finding truth and reconciliation together. It is our hope that the sincerity of our covenant will be demonstrated in our actions and in our attitudes. We understand this to be both an urgent and a long-term commitment.

Along with this certificate, we offer as an expression of reconciliation this pottery pitcher, commissioned for our 2011 convention to be given as gifts to those we wished to honour. Created with a spirit of gratitude, we offer it in thanksgiving for the opportunity to make an expression of reconciliation. As something of ours that we now offer to this sacred process, it is symbolic of a promise to give up all that we may need to give up, so that reconciliation may occur.

Our Lutheran tradition teaches that reconciliation is a gracious and precious gift from God. For true reconciliation to happen, the Creator must stir hearts. It is the creator who opens eyes and ears and souls that we may have the courage to speak truth, the patience to listen, the wisdom to confess and the humility to show respect. It is the Creator who calls us to hope for a better future and for a healing journey that will bring us to true community.

I know that the members of my church will need to draw on many spiritual resources to make this journey. And I pray that everyone will find appropriate spiritual and community support.

Today, I conclude, as the certificate concludes, with these words from the Christian scriptures:

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.

(Romans 12:9)

In these words we hear a call to humility, an invitation to listen, and a sign of hope for reconciliation.

Meegwetch. Thank you.