



Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

600-177 Lombard Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 0W5, Canada

February 12, 2020

Dear friends in Christ,

I am writing today to encourage you to review the *Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* and to consider what might be your calling to engage the many issues documented by the report. This Valentine's Day, marches will be held across Canada, showing love for missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (2SLGBTQQIA) people and the families they left behind.

On June 3, 2019 the National Inquiry released its final report and issued 231 Calls for Justice. The report highlights the particular risk and vulnerability to violence experienced by First Nations, Inuit and Métis women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people. The report makes specific calls upon various institutions, governments and organizations.

I wish to draw your attention to a section entitled "Calls for Justice for All Canadians," (*Executive Summary of the Final Report*, page 85). This section includes a specific call to read the Final Report. I urge you to do so as an opportunity to develop your own knowledge, as a sign of respect for the stories told to the National Inquiry, and as a first step in expanding the work of promoting the safety of women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people. You can download the report at www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/.

This section also includes calls for all Canadians to speak out against violence and discrimination, to decolonize by learning the true history of Canada and Indigenous history, to become a strong ally, and to create time and space for relationships based on respect. In recent years, our church has felt called to address these matters and we hear in the final report a call to renew our commitments.

At the 2011 National Convention, the ELCIC committed to promoting right and renewed relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples within Canada¹ and to acting for justice when people are being treated unfairly on matters related to gender, sexual orientation

¹ www.elcic.ca/Public-Policy/documents/2011ELCICResolutiononRightRelationshipswithIndigenousPeoples.pdf

and human sexuality.² One of the ways we do this is by participating in the #ThursdaysInBlack campaign (www.oikoumene.org/en/get-involved/thursdays-in-black). Going forward from 2011 we have experienced a growing awareness of issues related to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, along with additional understanding of the depth of racism and the need for reconciliation.

The ELCIC recognizes the National Inquiry's use of the word "genocide" and accepts that this word expresses truth about the depth, breadth and scale of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. The ELCIC acknowledges the tragedy and magnitude of the human rights violations, and accepts the National Inquiry's assertion that the "Calls for Justice are legal imperatives – they are not optional."

The ELCIC joins the National Inquiry in calling for transformative change to eradicate violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA persons. Change of this magnitude takes time and long-term commitment. At the same, change begins today as each person discerns and chooses ways to ensure that Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people live in safety and dignity.

I acknowledge the courage and strength of survivors, families and loved ones who gave statements and testimonies to the National Inquiry over the course of its mandate. I offer my prayers for their continuing courage, strength, wisdom and healing.

Let us pray. Loving God, we pray for all those who mourn missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual people. Send your spirit of comfort to be with them and bring them peace. Protect all who are vulnerable. Strengthen our commitment to speak out against violence and racism. Amen.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan C. Johnson", with a small cross symbol to the left.

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

² www.elcic.ca/Human-Sexuality/documents/APPROVEDELICISocialStatementonHumanSexuality.pdf