

Walking the Trail of Repentance & Healing with Indigenous Persons

I. Introduction

Begin with someone saying:

At General Conference 2012, an Act of Repentance & Healing Relationships with Indigenous Persons was held on April 27, 2012.¹ Here's a brief explanation about why that service was held.

[Video: 1. Journey to the 2012 Act of Repentance Overview]

So the journey continues in each Annual and Central Conference. For repentance and healing to be genuine and sincere, we must first listen and learn from indigenous persons in our conference areas. This study guide has been created as a model of various indigenous persons sharing their thoughts and feelings.

Goals for this study include:

- Listen: Open minds and hearts to hear voices of indigenous persons in the study guide.
- Reflect: Seek to understand what is said by each person.
- Respond: Desire to respond in positive and creative ways.
- Act: Work with your conference leadership in the following ways:
 - Consult your conference's Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM) or other responsible conference committee.
 - Learn who the indigenous persons are and where they live in your annual/central conference. If original inhabitants have been removed from your area, learn where they are now.
 - Ask about their openness to experience listening sessions in your annual/central conference.
 - Take direction from those willing to engage in listening sessions.
 - Share in listening sessions around your annual /central conference.

- Take next steps: After listening and learning in your annual /central conference:
 - Build relationships with indigenous persons as equal partners in the journey of listening and learning. Create an authentic service of repentance and healing for your Annual/Central Conference once relationships have been established with indigenous persons.

The full service is available on Disc 2. Additional copies can be obtained by contacting the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns at 212-870-3800.

Let's start with our first listening session:

[Video: 2. Introduction - Bishop Robert Hayes, OK Conference and OIMC]

SCRIPTURE: "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance." Mt.3:8

QUESTIONS

- 1) How does an individual Christian prepare to repent?
- 2) How can a system (church) repent for any sin?
- 3) What does Bishop Hayes mean when he says, "The results of what happened are still in our community?"
- 4) How does an individual Christian take the first step on a journey toward repentance?

PRAY: for the Holy Spirit's guidance

II. THOUGHTS FOR THE JOURNEY

[Video: 3. Otto Braided Hair, Sand Creek Massacre Survivor Descendant]

Print and distribute to all article on Sand Creek Massacre

SCRIPTURE: "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints." Ephesians 1:18

QUESTIONS

- 1) Did you know anything about The Methodist Church's role in the Sand Creek Massacre before hearing Otto Braided Hair? What did you hear? From whom?
- 2) Have you heard of other historical atrocities and oppression of indigenous people in your conference? Where did you learn about them?
- 3) Define in your own words *historical trauma*.
- 4) What are the effects of past traumas that are still being dealt with by indigenous people in your area?
- 5) In what sense could one say that the oppression continues?

PRAY: for compassion (*the ability to suffer with*) and clarity

[Video: 4. Rev. Anita Phillips, NACP Interview I]

SCRIPTURE: "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Hebrews 4:12

QUESTIONS

- 1) What is your hope for this journey of repentance and healing?
- 2) What is your fear for this journey?
- 3) What is the difference between understanding with the head and understanding through "the thoughts of the heart?"
- 4) What does the church risk if it does not complete this journey?
- 5) What do indigenous people risk?

PRAY: for a pure heart and a courageous spirit

**[Videos: 5. Rev. Chebon Kernell, Norman First American, UMC and
6. Bishop Melvin Talbert, AOR Advisory Council]**

SCRIPTURE: But take care, and watch yourselves closely so as neither to forget the things your eyes have seen nor let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them “ Deuteronomy 4:9

QUESTIONS

- 1) How do we as The United Methodist Church apologize for past wrong-doings?
- 2) What does Chebon mean when he says that victims can be “re-traumatized?”
- 3) What relationship is put into play when we ask victims what we should do?
- 4) How does the church look honestly at its history and extend an authentic and sincere invitation to indigenous people to enter into this journey together?
- 5) What does Bishop Talbert mean when he says, “We need to take steps *not for but with* indigenous people?”

PRAY: for honest reflection and insight

[Video: 7. Rev. Yngvar Ruud, Norway]

SCRIPTURE: “So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:27

QUESTIONS

- 1) What role does self-esteem play in one’s identity as an individual? As a member of any group?
- 2) How is self-esteem built?
- 3) What role does culture, language, and history play in our identity?
- 4) Can a system (church) impose an identity on a group of people without destroying self-esteem?
- 5) Is the relationship you have with your past important to how you relate to others today?

PRAY: for open hearts to accept God’s good work in others

[Video: 8. Dr. Gladys Mangiduyos, Philippines]

SCRIPTURE: “...And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

QUESTIONS

- 1) When one nation colonizes another, how is the dignity of indigenous persons destroyed?
- 2) What degree of culpability does the Christianity of history have when missionary efforts, for the most part, were aligned with the colonizers?

- 3) How can we share the good news of the saving grace of Jesus Christ without destroying the culture, dignity and self-esteem of others?

PRAY: for justice, mercy and humility

[Video: 9. Rev. Beauty Maenzanise, Africa University, Zimbabwe]

SCRIPTURE: “Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘this is the way; walk in it.’” Isaiah 30:21

QUESTIONS

- 1) In the current realities of first peoples and land, what is The United Methodist Church’s role in repairing and healing relationships with indigenous people?
- 2) What relationships need to be healed today? What difference will that make to the former colonists?
- 3) What are some specific actions that can be instituted?
- 4) How is this role related to our daily walk with Christ?

PRAY: for healing of relationships

I. MOVING ON/GIVING SUBSTANCE TO WORDS/A PROCESS NOT A PROGRAM

Print and distribute brochure, *Giving Substance to Words*, included in the resource section of the DVD.

[Video: 10. Rev. Anita Phillips, NACP, Interview 2]

SCRIPTURE: “In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead.” James 2:17

QUESTIONS

- 1) Anita asserts that “apology won’t make a difference.” What is the difference between apology and repentance?
- 2) How is repentance a journey or a process instead of a program?
- 3) What difference does relationship make?
- 4) How can you and your local church make the repentance process credible in your community?
- 5) Anita names three things United Methodist faith communities can do on the journey to repentance and healing. What would these suggestions look like in your local church and community? Be specific.
- 6) In what sense does a church have a soul? Do you agree with Anita that “without Native and indigenous people the circle is not complete?” Why?

PRAY: for wisdom and discernment

[Video: 11. Rev. Thom White Wolf Fassett, AOR Advisory Council]

SCRIPTURE: “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me....The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” Psalms 51: 10-12, 17.

- 1) What do you think Thom means when he says that, “Only with repentance, forgiveness and atonement achieved, will an Act of Repentance make a difference.”? What would atonement look like in your church after an Act of Repentance? What would be different about how you relate to indigenous people in your area?
- 2) Thom suggests that to participate in each other’s healing The United Methodist Church needs to make changes in the consciousness of our bishops, annual conferences, boards, agencies, and local churches. What changes would you be willing to make in your local church? Why is this an important step to take?
- 3) From the brochure, *Giving Substance to Words*, or from your own thinking, write down the following:
 - a. A change you are willing to make in your personal thinking, speaking or actions.
 - b. A change in your church you would work toward.
 - c. A change in your community you would advocate and work toward.

PRAY: for the commitments you have made in your heart.

Complete study by viewing

- Full AOR service from General Conference on Disc 2 [2 hours – perhaps invite people to stop at various points to discuss aspects of the service].

For additional Act of Repentance resources, visit www.gccuic-umc.org.