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BIENNIUM RECONCILIATION INITIATIVE

July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2016

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson, National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) presented an Expression of Reconciliation on behalf of the ELCIC at the Seventh Truth and Reconciliation Commission National Event, March 27-30 in Edmonton, Alberta. Representatives from the ELCIC and its ecumenical partners were among the thousands gathered to hear survivor testimonies, celebrate Indigenous culture and resilience and work towards reconciliation.

Bishop Johnson acknowledged on our behalf that we “...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.”

Our 2011 ELCIC National Convention, after exploring the meaning of treaties as sacred covenants, passed a resolution that commits our church to encouraging right relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. That 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.

This Biennium Reconciliation Initiative recognizes that the sincerity of our efforts to find truth and reconciliation will be demonstrated in our actions and attitudes. We therefore understand that this Reconciliation Initiative is both urgent and long-term.

Our Eastern Synod ***Reconciliation Initiative*** includes:

- We call on our Synod Ministry Areas and their congregations, assemblies and members to seek out opportunities to deepen our understanding of Indigenous rights, to participate in the ongoing work of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation process, and to renew relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in our varied contexts.
- We acknowledge the injustices of the residential school system on Aboriginal peoples and the past harms and the continuing destructive legacy. With faith and hope in Christ, we will seek to be present for and walk with Indigenous people who are on their healing journeys from the harm done to them at residential schools.

- Our Lutheran tradition teaches that reconciliation is a gracious and precious gift from God. We earnestly pray that the Creator will stir our hearts and open our eyes, ears and souls so that we may have the courage to speak truth, the patience to listen, the wisdom to confess and the humility to show respect so that true reconciliation can happen. 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.
- We encourage the Synod Ministry Areas, their congregations, assemblies and members to attend local commemorative events hosted by Aboriginal organizations to honour those who attended residential schools.
- That Areas, their congregations, assemblies and other groups initiate one or more activities, events or gestures in the next 24 months that would be consistent with our desire to walk with Aboriginal peoples to find healing and wholeness together as God's people, and to share information about these initiatives with the Director of Public Policy and Service Ministries.
- That Areas and their congregations use resources (such as those posted on our Eastern Synod Website – <http://www.easternsynod.org/content/biennium-reconciliation-initiative> (Biennium Reconciliation Initiative))

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.

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Rationale

For over 100 years, Aboriginal children were removed from their families and sent to institutions called residential schools. The government-funded, church-run schools were located across Canada and established with the purpose to eliminate parental involvement in the spiritual, cultural and intellectual development of Aboriginal children. The last residential schools closed in the mid-1990s.

During this chapter in Canadian history, more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were forced to attend these schools some of which were hundreds of miles from their home. The cumulative impact of residential schools is a legacy of unresolved trauma passed from generation to generation and has had a profound effect on the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians.

Collective efforts from all peoples are necessary to revitalize the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society – reconciliation is the goal. It is a goal that will take the commitment of multiple generations but when it is achieved, when we have reconciliation - it will make for a better, stronger Canada.

From: *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* website:

<http://www.trc.ca/websites/reconciliation/index.php?p=312>