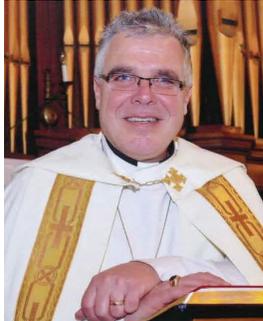


The Eastern Synod Lutheran

June 16, 2014

Volume 31



Bishop Michael J. Pryse

Toward a Biennium Reconciliation Initiative

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.

At this year's Synod Assembly we will consider approving a Biennium Reconciliation Initiative wherein our synod will commit to advancing this cause, recognizing that the sincerity of our efforts to find truth and reconciliation will be demonstrated in our actions and attitudes.

Our proposed Eastern Synod Biennium Reconciliation Initiative reads as follows:

*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 Website - www.easternsynod.org/content/biennium-reconciliation-initiative)

Our indigenous friends welcome this partnership. Indeed, many would tell us that among faith communities, Lutherans are in a unique position because we were not directly involved in the terrible legacy of the residential school system. But this does not mean that as Canadians and Christians, we don't bear responsibility for helping to correct past wrongs and establish right and just relations.

While Canada is regularly rated among the top five or ten countries in the world in which to live, indigenous communities, using the same scale, would rate in the high sixties or low seventies. Indigenous peoples are among the poorest members of our society. Their life expectancy is among the lowest. Suicide rates among indigenous youth are among the highest in the world. Over 100 communities don't have access to clean water or indoor plumbing. As Canadians we must help to address these shameful realities.

And as Christians, we need to acknowledge the sad truth that our faith traditions were misused in ways that caused great harm to our indigenous neighbours. Christians have a particular obligation to make things right. I'm grateful that our church is trying to do what it can to be a part of the solution. I'm proud of those groups and individuals within our synod who have taken steps to help us engage these important matters. But I'm especially grateful that God our Creator has given us this call and opportunity to seek and experience a fuller measure of right relationship with our aboriginal siblings. God is indeed gracious and good!



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NEW

A Look at Ourselves

by Rev. Deborah Ann Taylor

pictured here with Bishop Pryse & Jackson



Allow me to introduce myself.

I am a middle aged, female, Lutheran, Canadian pastor. My ethnic roots are of German and English descent and were planted in North American soil by my too-many-greats-to-remember grandparents. They made their homes in the Appalachian and Blue Ridge Mountains of the United States. After spending most of my life in Minnesota, I brought my twig of the family tree to Ontario in 2002.

My move from the American Midwest to Ottawa was largely without duress. There were a few minor inconveniences associated with my immigration, of course. The officer at the border was less than thrilled with the fur my Alaskan malamute deposited on the leg of his uniform, for example. But other than that, I entered into my new country pretty much unhindered. To look at me, no one would suspect that I wasn't born here, and if I avoided pronouncing words like "schedule" and "been" with an American accent and remembered to add a "u" after "o" in words I had always spelled without one, I fit in just fine.

Canadian stores stocked the makeup, shampoo and conditioners that were appropriate for my skin tone and hair. I was treated with courtesy most places I went and was casually accepted as a part of the social and professional circles in which I traveled. When I worshipped at a Lutheran church on my first Sunday in Canada, I found the liturgy and hymns to be pretty much what I'd expected. I had no problem following the flow of the service or joining in the singing. Even unfamiliar hymns were in keeping with the style and metre I anticipated.

Aside from Ottawa's tendency to change

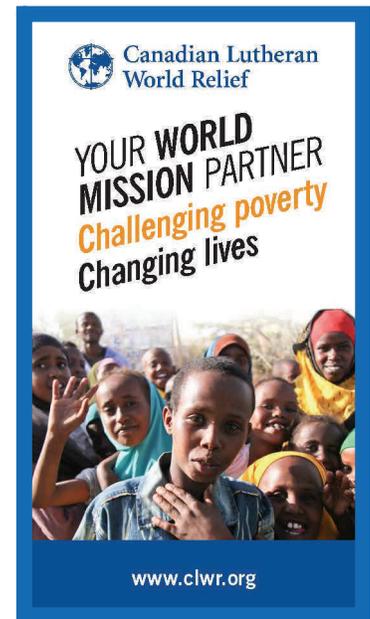
the names of streets and avenues at every intersection, I encountered few obstacles to life in my new city. I made friends. I was treated fairly. As a middle aged, female, Lutheran, Canadian pastor, I was right at home. (I should mention, by the way, that my skin color is a pinkish light-tan commonly referenced as "white.")

That last parenthetical statement speaks volumes.

I "fit in," was accepted, had confidence that I would be treated fairly, experienced minimal upset in the process of adjusting to life in Canada, because I was easily identified as part of this country's dominant culture; because I looked and sounded like most people I met. My "whiteness" afforded me the privilege of being accepted, treated without partiality, and knowing what to anticipate in my worship, social, and professional circles. That same privilege also insulated me. Because I am White, there are things that I just didn't have to think about: Like whether or not the store where I shopped would carry appropriate cosmetics or the possibility that I might be passed over for a job because I did not look or speak like the people who interviewed me. Nor did I have to think about how to "fit in" to a Lutheran church that defined "the" liturgy in terms of a cultural heritage not my own. What's more: I knew that what I projected as the norm wouldn't change all that much as time went by. Things would remain the way they were because... well... that's the way it is. Isn't it?

You may be wondering what this introduction has to do with the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission or the establishment of the residential schools. My lack-luster cultural profile may seem an odd launching pad for a discussion of these painful and difficult issues. Perhaps *your* cultural profile seems an equally unusual place to begin. It has become clear, however, that your story and mine is precisely the place to start. "The work we need to do is to look at ourselves," says Pastor Jonathan Schmidt, Co-Director of Canadian Churches Forum, an ecumenical organization whose mission fosters intercultural ministry. "There is a danger when we place our focus on the residential schools or on First Nations people. They are not the problem. We are."¹

Let me be clear: My identity as a White person is not in and of itself problematic. What is problematic is the unnamed and often un-



conscious assumptions that my (White) dominant culture makes about that identity, and in so doing, about the identity of others. It is a very short step from a casual acceptance of my cultural identity as *normative* to the subconscious assumption that it is *better*, and thus, prescriptive for others. That my values, religion, musical tastes, worship style, language, et alia define the identity of most Canadians is separated by a hair's width from the supposition that these things ought to define the identities of groups and persons who are not like me. What is equally problematic is that it is not incumbent upon me, in our current cultural and religious milieu, to think intentionally or even consciously about that assumption. Those of us who are part of the dominant culture don't *have* to think about the ways in which our behaviours impact the lives of other people. We might even assume that we do others a favor by integrating them into our way of being, thinking, believing, speaking or acting.

If we are Christian, we might conclude that we do a service by suppressing non-Christian religious practices in favor of a Christian alternative. If English or French is the language of our dominant culture, we might conclude that we are helping children by providing an educational environment that will teach them the languages they need in order to find their path in the mainstream of Canadian life. If we do not question the assumption that our culture offers a

Cont'd from page 2

better way to live and worship, we may see no harm in removing children from their homes and placing them in residential schools, away from the cultural and religious identities of their families, social systems, and communal life. If we assume that our dominant culture is better and thus, other cultures are inferior, the assimilation of those other cultures into our own may seem a well-intentioned goal.

We are not dealing in 'maybes' however.

We are dealing in historical facts to which the testimonies of residential school survivors bear painful witness through the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We are dealing, as White Canadians, with a tragedy deeply rooted in our own cultural profiles and our assumptions about them.

Which brings us back to where we started:

*"The work we need to do is to look at ourselves."*²

¹ Jonathan Schmidt in interview with the author, April 14, 2014

² This essay is an outgrowth of conversations with Jonathan Schmidt, Phil Heinze and Allen Jorgenson

Congregational Treasurer's Workshops

Hosted by Keith Myra,
Synod Council Treasurer

Sat. Sept. 13, 2014
St. Matthew's, Hanover, ON

Sat. Sept. 27, 2014
Trinity, Sudbury, ON

Sat. Oct. 18, 2014
St. Paul's, Bridgewater, NS

Sat. Nov. 1, 2014
Redeemer, London, ON

Sat. Nov. 8, 2014
St. James, New Dundee, ON

go to easternsynod.org for details



Our prayers go out to **Rev. Heather Spence-Stoltz and her husband Wayne** as they mourn the death of her father, and also to **Janet Weber and her husband Rev. Steve Weber** as they deal with the loss of her father.

Congratulations to **Rev. Rob Wiesner and his wife Kyla** as they welcome their son Micah Henry and to Pastor Christie Morrow-Wolfe and her husband Mark on the birth of their daughter Caroline Christina.

Praise Appeal 2014

The following original artwork was done by Kassity Musselman, a highschool student from Calvary Memorial United Church, Kitchener. Calvary, along with St. Mark's Lutheran Church prepare a meal for about 80 people each Wednesday throughout the year.

Our heartfelt congratulations go out to Rev. Dr. Kimber McNabb, and Rev. Dr. Dwight Biggs on completion of their doctorate studies.



This is the second in a series of articles aimed at exploring these questions. The articles will be published on the Eastern Synod website as a resource for you and your congregation. Each one will evolve from interviews with persons active in the implementation of the 2012 Assembly resolution.

The Report of the Treasurer, as of May 31, 2014 has now been posted on our website and is available for download..

http://www.easternsynod.org/sites/default/files/content/report_of_the_treasurer_-_to_may_31_2014.pdf



May I Introduce You To.....



Rev. Wendell Grahlman Synod Council Secretary

I've served as secretary of the Synod for the past 12 years. I guess I didn't know much about the position way back then, because at first I thought it was about taking minutes at synod council meetings, and doing a few other occasional administrative things (like signing ordination certificates); maybe I thought there'd be a photo-op or two. Well, did I ever get my constitution amended!

Now to be fair, I do take minutes at synod council and officers' meetings, and at synod assemblies. And my responsibilities also include the annual processes related to the On Leave from Call list, the Nominating Committee, and a small list of corporate and organizational stuff that you can read in the job description of the synod's constitution. No photo-ops, but I do get to be part of the process to create and publish a book: the Biennial Year Book.

But what's not in that job description is another part of the job that I spend a lot of time with: Constitutions! Not many people like fussing with things like constitutions and bylaws and all that – but I do! Alright, call me weird, but somebody's gotta do it, and I have to admit I like it. In fact, I've learned a lot over the years with respect to constitutions, incorporation, governance, organizational process... I'm certainly no expert but I've grown wiser in a few of these things.

That's not my whole life, however. I have happily served in parish ministry for 28 years. And during the past couple of years, I have been expanding my interests in labyrinth training and facilitation, restorative practice, leadership training, and things relating to good, positive and healthy congregational practices for ministry.

Last, but not least? Yes, I like hats. They're not just something to cover my follicly challenged pate, but a fun, stylish and practical way for warmth in cold weather and protection from summer sun.

On a closing word, I have had some great people, colleagues and friends who have been a part of this journey. They know who they are. My deepest appreciation and thanks goes to them and all the support they have given to me.

Altarpieces help Community

*Submitted by Andrea Millward,
St. Mark's, Midland*

In medieval Europe, when plagues decimated the population, people found strength in the Gospel as depicted in art, including altarpieces that told the Christian stories of hope and resurrection.

With support from the Reverend Judy Oatway, an Anglican theologian from Ottawa and a Kenyan artist and priest, the Reverend Wilfred Alero, the people of Siki, Kenya designed and stitched thirteen altarpieces for their church. It was in the creative process of engaging with the Gospel and discovering what the stories meant to them, that the community was knit back together.

The centrepiece is the road to Emmaus story. All donations go directly to the village school building project and clean water maintenance.



Above Rev. Judy Oatway at St. Mark's, Midland

Pastoral Vacancies

The following Eastern Synod Congregations are seeking pastors. If you are interested please contact Rev. Douglas Reble, Assistant to the Bishop.

All Saints, Newcombville, Mount Olivet, Upper LaHave & St. Luke's, Rhodes Corner, NS

St. Paul's, Montreal, QC
St. John's, Mahone Bay
St. Mark's, Kitchener, ON
St. Paul's, Magnetawan, ON
St. David's Anglican-Lutheran, Orillia, ON
St. John's, South Porcupine, ON

Leadership for Healthy
Congregations
Hosted by Pastor Riitta Hepomaki & Jeff Pym

Sat. Oct. 4, 2014
Faith, Hamilton, ON

Sat. Oct. 18, 2014
St. Matthew's, Kitchener, ON

Sat. Nov. 15, 2014
St. Mark's, Kingston, ON

To register please contact Liz, 519-743-1461 or email ezehr@elcic.ca.

Word & Sacrament Ministry Study Guide

The Faith, Order, and Doctrine Committee of the ELCIC is conducting a study on how Word and Sacrament ministry can continue to be provided to ELCIC congregations in this time of changing demographics and new realities. This study guide is available at <http://www.elcic.ca/faithorderdoctrine/> and is suitable for use by congregational study groups, clericus groups, area ministry groups, etc. The Faith, Order, and Doctrine Committee would like people to respond by December 15, 2014.



Our National magazine
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bwiebe@elcic.ca