



# Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

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May 20, 2015

Dear friends in Christ,

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is holding its closing events in Ottawa, May 31-June 3, 2015. I am writing to invite you into prayer for the closing events and for renewal in our commitments to healing and reconciliation.

I begin by acknowledging the survivors of residential schools and their families who continue to live with the legacy of this tragic chapter in Canadian history. I offer my prayers for your continuing courage, strength, wisdom and healing. And I offer my prayers for all of us as we engage together the work of promoting right and renewed relationships.

For more than 120 years, tens of thousands of Indigenous children were sent to Indian Residential Schools funded by the federal government and run by the churches. They were taken from their families and communities in order to be stripped of language, cultural identity and traditions. Canada's attempt to wipe out Indigenous cultures failed. It left an urgent need for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. We also remember the over 4,000 children who died while attending these schools.

For the last 6 years, the TRC has been listening to the stories and gathering the statements of survivors of the Indian Residential Schools and anyone else who feels they have been impacted by the schools and their legacy in order to hear and document the truth of what happened. The TRC has also been considering what is required for reconciliation. While the work of the TRC is concluding, the recommendations of the TRC will be a new call to form more respectful, just and equitable relationships.

Our church is committed to participating in an ongoing process of finding truth and reconciliation. 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.

There are a variety of ways that you can engage this present moment:

- Pray. For survivors and their families, for the work of reconciliation, and for new understanding.
- Get involved. KAIROS Canada has prepared resources to encourage engagement in this "Time for Reconciliation." Events are being planned for both Ottawa and across the country. Activities have been identified that can be done anywhere, including worship resources, planting a heart garden and watching livestream.

[\(http://www.kairoscanada.org/events/time4reconciliation/\)](http://www.kairoscanada.org/events/time4reconciliation/)

- Make a commitment. Our Full Communion partner, the Anglican Church of Canada, has invited the Church into 22 Days of prayer and renewal in our commitments to healing and reconciliation among all people. ([22 Days website](#) and #22days) These 22 Days will take us to the National Aboriginal Day of Prayer, on Sunday, June 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Attend events. If you aren't able to attend the closing Ottawa event, consider attending a regional event. The KAIROS website ([www.kairoscanada.org/events/time4reconciliation/local-events/](http://www.kairoscanada.org/events/time4reconciliation/local-events/)) has a list of events and check out whether there are other events being held in your area.
- Engage in the work of our church. The ELCIC National Convention will hear from TRC Commissioner Marie Wilson and will consider a resolution to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery. In the coming weeks, you will see more details in the ELCIC's Countdown to Convention e-newsletter and online at [www.elcic.ca](http://www.elcic.ca).
- Find out more. You can learn more about the TRC process and its recommendations at [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca).

Our Lutheran tradition teaches us that reconciliation is a gracious and precious gift from God our Creator. 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.

We will need to draw on many spiritual resources to make this journey. I pray that everyone will find appropriate spiritual and community support.

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

*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)*

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan C. Johnson", preceded by a small cross symbol.

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson

National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada