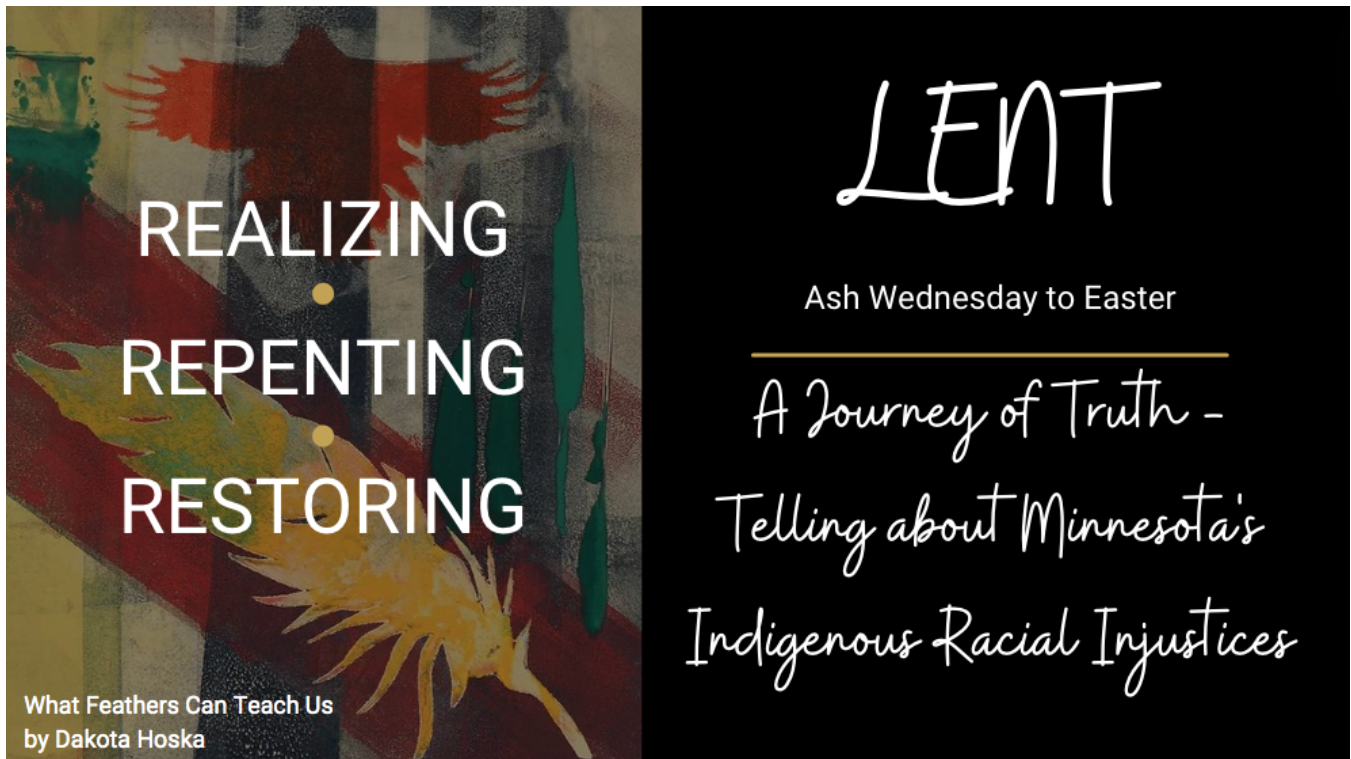

Lenten Devotional

Calvary Church Minneapolis, 2022



WE VALUE THE EARTH
as God's good creation
and will both responsibly enjoy its beauty
and care for its bounty as the stewards we are called to be.

Overview

What will our Lenten journey look like?

PURPOSE

During this Lenten Season, Calvary will embark on a path of learning and repenting in order to clear a way for communal and individual transformation around our Indigenous History. We will explore and make plans for restorative justice actions with and for those upon whose ancestral homeland we worship, work, and live. The focus of this devotional will be on the Dakota people, whose land we now sit upon, although this journey will encompass the Ojibwe, Lakota, and Ho-Chunk peoples as well, as historical and current stewards of this land.

GOALS

1. **Tell the truth** and confess the reality of systemic racism in our history as it relates to Minnesota's Indigenous people, particularly the Dakota.
2. **Begin actively working toward racial justice** with the Dakota people, including ongoing restorative actions and financial investments by Calvary and its people.

REALIZING THE TRUTH

The majority of Minnesotans and Christians have not acknowledged the immense and ongoing harms suffered by the Dakota, Ojibwe, and other Indigenous peoples ever since their homelands were invaded over 200 years ago. Many Dakota say that the wounds have never healed, and that injustices, including genocide, mass executions, death marches, land theft, and broken treaties, have not been made right. They paid, and continue to pay, the ultimate price for Minnesota's statehood and for the land on which our church, homes, and businesses sit.

REFLECTING & REPENTING

How have we as individuals, as the church, and as Minnesotans benefited from racism and injustice experienced then and now by Indigenous people, particularly the Dakota, who called these lands their home for thousands of years before Europeans arrived?

RESTORING IN ACTION & PRAYER

Doing justice is central to this process. Without justice, many Dakota say, healing and transformation *on both sides* cannot occur, and good, authentic relationships cannot develop between our peoples. Much of the spiritual and psychological work needs to happen on the "settler" side – descendants of non-Indigenous people who colonized and immigrated to these lands with the goal of displacing Indigenous people and forming permanent settlements. Settler-colonialism is a broad term that refers to this erasure of Indigenous people - and it's important we understand that it is not just in the past but still happening today. Indigenous people continue to have their land, power, and children stolen. During our Lenten journey we'll explore specific restoration actions we can take, as a collective church and as individuals.

Introduction Letter

Grounding in the Hope of our Faith

DEAR CALVARY,

We are embarking on a difficult journey together. We will wrestle collectively with these questions: How has Calvary Church and Minneapolis benefitted from broken treaties and land theft? How can we heal the hurt that the church has caused or been part of? What does a just Christian community look like, in right relation to our Native siblings? As a multicultural congregation, this Lenten season will have different meanings for each of us.

For those of us who are Indigenous, the truth of this pain has been present for a long time. This season may bring a sense of relief that the church is finally facing the truth; it may bring anger at the cruelty of settlers and the concealment of injustice for so long; it may bring both grief and hope at the justice and healing that is not yet here. For those of us who are non-Indigenous people of color, while a deep commitment to resisting white supremacy is not new, a solidarity against settler-colonialism and Indigenous erasure may be. We have much to learn from each other and much internal work to do in decolonizing our faith - in renewing our minds to understand Jesus as liberator of the marginalized and oppressed, rather than a Jesus who sides with worldly power, wealth, and control. God has promised to walk with us in this journey: “In all their affliction, God was afflicted; and the angel of God’s presence saved them; In God’s love and mercy, God redeemed them; and God lifted them and carried them all the days of old” (Isaiah 63:9).

For those of us who are white, there may be a struggle to read and accept the truths in this devotional. We may want to turn away and declare it “old history,” a wrong too distant to right. Feelings of guilt, shame, resistance, anger, grief, and denial may arise. But Jesus has called us to live in the light, and so we must shine a lamp on the shadows of our faith and our settler legacy. We remember that Jesus can redeem all people and all sins, and that this is a collective redemption, not just individual. Lean into the words of 1 John 1:8-9: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Collectively, we are all part of the Church and have shared responsibility in lamentation and repentance, for both the past and current wrongs. The injustices that Indigenous Minnesotans face do not just live in the past; they continue to this day. To lament is to call out to God in grief and sorrow at our pain and suffering – to demand that God be God and bring healing. We listen to the weeping of Rachel for her children; we cry out with Jeremiah, “Because my people are crushed, I am crushed; darkness and despair overwhelm me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then have my people not been restored to health?” (8:21-22).

To repent is to acknowledge our collective sins, to express regret for them, and to commit to a new way of being a people that turns away from those sins. We pray, “Open shame, O Lord, falls on us, our kings, our officials, and our ancestors, because we have sinned against you. To the Lord our God belongs mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by following his laws, which he set before us by his

servants the prophets” (Daniel 9:8-10). We listen to God’s command to us through the prophet Isaiah (1:16-17): “Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.”

One of Jesus’ most common demands of the people is to “Repent!” and know that God’s kingdom is near. He calls us to be new creations in God, to live as disciples of love, mercy, and truth. He shares with us his vision of what heaven on earth looks like, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19).

As we journey through this Lent season, we will come face to face with the depth of the evils of this world. We must resist the urge to rush through this process, and know that God’s people have modeled for us in the Bible how to weep in despair, cry for mercy, speak the truth, and slowly learn with baby steps how to be the people of God.

Yet even as we walk with Jesus throughout Lent in the full knowledge of the coming cross, and even as we wait in the darkness of the tomb, we will cling to the hope of Jesus’ resurrection. Paul reassures us, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (Romans 8:22-25).

Let us pray:

“Oh Great Father, the one who lives above us all,
Your name is sacred and holy.
Bring your good road to us,
Where the beauty of the world above is reflected in the earth below.
Provide for us, day by day - the elk, the buffalo, the salmon, the corn, the squash, and the wild rice,
All those good things we need every day to feed our families.
Release us from the things that we have done wrong,
In the same way, we release others from the things they have done wrong to us.
Guide us away from selfish desires that tempt us to stray from your good road
And rescue us from that evil one and his worthless ways.
Your good road with its great power and beauty will shine like the sun until the time beyond the end of all days.”

- *First Nations Version of the Lord’s Prayer, translated by Terry Wildman*

On This Journey,

Savannah Sisk, on behalf of the Racial Justice & Healing Committee

Ash Wednesday

The Doctrine of Discovery (by Nathan Weaver Olson)

TRUTH

When the land was taken, it could look like a cross planted on a patch of bare ground, or a flag fluttering on a silent beach. It could involve breaking branches or picking up and throwing stones. It could be done with great noise and pageantry or to an audience of none but a pair of witnesses. What in later years was referred to as the Doctrine of Discovery was really a painter's pallet of shifting legal strategies.

Whether based in English Common Law or the Spanish Siete Partidas, these strategies shared a certain vocabulary, concepts that grew out of Europe's complex web of religious and legal traditions, yet built upon a bedrock of Roman Law. It was a vocabulary rooted entirely in the European ways of private property, ownership, domination, and control - far removed from the values of stewardship and shared responsibility of the Indigenous people who were most impacted by the Doctrine of Discovery. Europeans claimed land through the "rights" of *res nullius*, empty or unowned things, of *vacuum domicilium*, unlive in and empty, or of *ius commune*, the commons, even though those same lands actually bustled with life and were riven with boundaries. They refused to see the careful cultivation of land and animals that millions of Indigenous people in thriving communities were already doing.

There were arguments based on religious authority as well. Religious icons doubled as boundary markers. The regular presence and theological support of Catholic and Protestant clergymen lent moral heft to sovereignty. The popes of the 15th and 16th centuries famously issued numerous decrees, collectively called the "Doctrine of Discovery", that granted Christian nations the right to divide the lands of the world's "unbelievers" between themselves in exchange for expanded temporal and spiritual domains of their own.

Expedience often superseded integrity. An English Protestant might reference, without irony, the 15th century Treaty of Tordesillas to support their acquisitions, although the Pope's authority was otherwise unimportant to an Englishman. Whatever the pretext, what mattered most was that the land remained theirs as long as no one could take it from them.

Just as the Doctrine of Discovery was not a single approach to ownership and dispossession, the legal arguments invoked changed over time. The theory of Just War, a key concept within an emerging notion of "international law", was central to debates over European sovereignty in the 16th-17th centuries. In the nineteenth century, uncultivated or under-cultivated land was claimed as *terra nullius*, empty or unowned land, by settlers who wished to turn its fertility (plus the labor of slaves) into goods they could sell within an emerging international marketplace. The definition of "uncultivated" entirely depended on European concepts of farming and agriculture, when the reality was that Indigenous people had been cultivating the land for thousands of years. At the same time, settlers sometimes acknowledged the legality of Native land ownership when such claims would support their efforts to acquire those lands through cession or payment.

It is true that many of these actions happened in the distant past, but they matter today because they set in place the legal machinery that was so essential to European and American

sovereignty and empire. They were the wheels and gears that would churn out the invasions, laws, and court decisions of the future.

REFLECTION

1. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Our nation was born in genocide when it embraced the doctrine that the original American, the Indian, was an inferior race. Even before there were large numbers of Negroes on our shore, the scar of racial hatred had already disfigured colonial society. From the sixteenth century forward, blood flowed in battles over racial supremacy. We are perhaps the only nation which tried as a matter of national policy to wipe out its indigenous population. Moreover, we elevated that tragic experience into a noble crusade. Indeed, even today we have not permitted ourselves to reject or feel remorse for this shameful episode. Our literature, our films, our drama, our folklore all exalt it. Our children are still taught to respect the violence which reduced a red-skinned people of an earlier culture into a few fragmented groups herded into impoverished reservations.” How does the idea that our nation was “born in genocide” compete with the story we’ve been told of revolution and freedom? Whose freedom? How did this belief in the inferiority of Indigenous people lead to “Manifest Destiny”?
2. How has the Doctrine of Discovery influenced American theology and our sense of being a “chosen people”? How is this a sin in light of colonization and land theft?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 12:14-21. How has the Doctrine of Discovery caused us to say we are not part of the body of Christ?
4. What does real repentance for the Doctrine of Discovery look like?

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

Oh God, teach us how to lament for the deep violence of settlers on this land, both in the past when the Doctrine of Discovery initiated a path of genocide, and in the present, when we still look at land as private property to be exploited and used.

Teach us to sit with grief. To wail and mourn the injustices. To see the truth.

Move our hearts, but do not stop there, as we lament the harm inflicted upon the Indigenous Peoples of Minnesota. Speak to us about how to walk a new path of healing and justice for all the people and land of Minnesota.

RESTORATIVE ACTIONS

- Read [Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery](#) by Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah
- Read [“There Must Be Real Repentance for the Doctrine of Discovery”](#), interview with Mark Charles
- Watch the Anglican Church documentary [“Doctrine of Discovery”](#)
- Advocate for the American Baptist Church USA denomination to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, as many other denominations have begun to do
- Join Calvary Church’s working group to write a Land Acknowledgement and Commitment that seriously looks at our use of stolen land

1st Sunday

Dakota & Ojibwe: Original People of this Place (by Bill Finnerty)

TRUTH

I'm a little uneasy writing these two Lenten reflections for a couple reasons. First, I'm not a historical scholar. Next, I don't want to appear to be telling someone else's story. Dr. Kate Bean, a Dakota scholar from the Minnesota Historical Society recently described it this way: "For a long time our native histories were told by others. We have always told our own stories, but they weren't always heard."

And so, it is with caution and humility that I share these Lenten reflections.

We who live in Minnesota are blessed with a rich and diverse history. Much of which occurred here well before 1492 and the arrival of Columbus and all he brought with him. And certainly, before the arrival of white settlers in the upper midwest in the mid 19th century.

The earliest identifiable group to live in Minnesota is the Dakota, whose oral history confirms they began living here over 13,000 years ago. This was followed by the arrival of the Ojibwe from the east in the mid-1600s, urged to migrate here by a prophesy of a land where "food grows on water" - wild rice.

For about 200 years the Dakota and Ojibwe coexisted in this region, most often in cooperation and sometimes in conflict. But any intertribal tensions were overshadowed with the arrival of white settlers - settlers who came to the upper Midwest with a vision of their own that was based heavily on the tone established 300 years earlier by the greedy, violent, profit-seeking Christopher Columbus. Even though Columbus' treacherous actions were thousands of miles from Minnesota, they set a precedent for how settlers reacted to Indigenous presence. Upon meeting the generous and welcoming indigenous population, Columbus didn't respond with wonder, curiosity, or gratitude. He immediately thought of selling them into slavery. On his first journey back from the "new world" he brought 500 Indigenous people with him as slaves.

The United States was founded as a commercial venture. And built on the removal, subjugation, and exploitation of people of color—native and black— for profit. Facing this painful history together is essential. Ojibwe scholar and author Anton Treuer has said that "Truth and reconciliation begins with truth." He went on to say that "It hurts more to be a victim of oppression than a beneficiary, but oppression dehumanizes everyone."

In her book "What Does Justice Look Like?", Dakota scholar, author and activist Dr. Waziyatawin wrote that finding a future of honest coexistence between natives and settlers will "require all of us to move beyond a simple re-education and acknowledgement of past harms. It requires action that will fundamentally alter the current power imbalance. It requires action that will ensure justice to the Original People of this place we call Minisota."

If we think of our nation as a fabric, woven by a loom, the warp thread of that loom is whiteness and white supremacy. A loom constructed by white people for white people. And it must be deconstructed by the same. As for me, I know that I will need ongoing help to make sure I'm seeing that hidden warp in our fabric. And that I must work in partnership with those who

clearly see the ways in which the fabric of this country---was not woven for them. And together begin to shed the dehumanizing effects of oppression.

REFLECTION

1. What land is important and/or sacred to you? To your family? How might it feel to be forced to leave that land?
2. Read Matthew 5:3-5. What meaning does this verse have for you in thinking about the history of this land?
3. What can we gain as a church by talking more honestly about the past?

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

We lament that the European invaders could not see the wisdom and richness of the spirituality, traditions, and cultures of the Indigenous Peoples of this land.

We lament the assumption that this was an empty land, just waiting to be discovered.

These may be hard things for many of us to name and acknowledge, and yet these assumptions destroyed Indigenous individuals, families, and communities.

And we are all the poorer.

What can we do but weep and wail at the injustice?

What can we do but lament the loss and destruction?

What can we do but ask for the courage and will to seek healing and justice?

(As are many of the prayers in this devotional, this is Adapted from Susan Lukey, Teresa Burnett-Cole, Maggie McLeod, and Alydia Smith. Gathering, Lent Easter 2017, pages 77–81)

RESTORATIVE ACTIONS

- Read [An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States](#) by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (there's a version for young people too, that is very accessible!)
- Explore Minnesota Historical Society's interactive map of Minnesota treaties: <https://www.usdakotawar.org/history/treaties/minnesota-treaty-interactive>
- Explore the [Bdote Memory map](#), which remaps the metro Twin Cities from the Dakota perspective
- Talk to your child's teacher or principal about what they are learning in school about Minnesota's Dakota and Ojibwe people
- Donate to the [Understand Native Minnesota](#) campaign to have Native history taught in an accurate way in K-12 schools

2nd Sunday

The 1862 Dakota Uprising & Aftermath (by Bill Finnerty)

TRUTH

In 1862, a major historic event occurred in Mankato, Minnesota that was a culmination of a period that fundamentally shaped our state and yet carries almost no weight in the Minnesota historical narrative. The US-Dakota “war” of 1862 resulted in the deaths of over 460 settlers and soldiers; the aftermath for the Dakota people resulted in the deaths of over 500 indigenous women, children, and warriors.

The implementation of a “debt for land” scheme designed by Thomas Jefferson worked flawlessly in Minnesota. The strategy involved encouraging the indigenous population to incur debt through trade and then have them resolve that debt with their land.

A disastrous 1851 treaty to relieve that debt ceded 35 million acres of Dakota land to the U.S. government for annual payments of \$60,000 in cash, food, and supplies. Repeated failures of these cash payments and supplies to the Dakota over years resulted in frustration, anger, and desperation. Finally, on the brink of starvation, the Dakota reached a breaking point in late summer of 1862.

Reluctantly led by Chief Little Crow in August of 1862, a band of about 200 Dakota men from the Lower Sioux Agency began a series of attacks along the Minnesota River Valley to drive out white settlers. There was great disagreement amongst the Dakota about whether to attack the settlers. In fact, they nearly fought with each other over it. After several bloody weeks with hundreds of white settlers killed, the Dakota were subdued. Many were imprisoned and exiled.

1700 Dakota, not involved in the fighting, surrendered to Henry Sibley after promises of fair treatment. They were marched 150 miles to internment at Fort Snelling, a structure perched on the bluffs just above “Bdote,” one the Dakota’s holiest places, the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers. Hundreds died that winter at Fort Snelling, hundreds more died while being marched to South Dakota for forced removal, and hundreds more after their exile.

The day after Christmas in 1862, in response to the uprising and on the orders of President Lincoln, 38 Dakota warriors were sentenced to death and executed by hanging in Mankato. This was the largest mass execution in the history of the United States.

In 1863, the US congress passed a law confiscating all Dakota land in Minnesota, even though only a fraction of Dakota people had been involved in the uprising or supported it. President Lincoln signed the law, and the Dakota were expelled from their homeland.

White Minnesotans, initially triumphant at winning, realized that “war” was poor marketing and created a mythology to mask the war. They created a new story of a natural paradise that was long ago occupied by “noble savages.” This marketing, as well as the tendency by white people in America to create fake histories to deal with discomfort and complexity, partially explains Minnesotan’s ignorance of this history.

In Mankato today, knowledge of the uprising is more common. Schools teach about it there and throughout the state. But patronizing mythology persists in some classrooms regarding how the Dakota didn't know how to solve their conflicts—"so they fought."

In 2012, 150 years after the uprising, the Dakota held a ceremony at the border with South Dakota, formally re-entering their homeland. The event was held the day after Governor Dayton declared a "Day of Reconciliation" in Minnesota. He repudiated the 1862 call of Governor Ramsey for the "extermination" of the Dakota people and further owned up to the taking of vast amounts of native land "by deception and force."

Pastor Jeff shared in a recent sermon called "decolonizing the mind" that justice comes through right relationship, and that right relationship requires that we see each other for who we really are. This in turn requires "renewing" our minds. I have come to understand that I have a lot to learn...and maybe even more to unlearn.

REFLECTION

1. Do you think that Minnesota has events in our history that have been suppressed because they don't reflect well on white Minnesotans? What can we gain, as communities and as a larger society, from talking more honestly about the past?
2. How does this history reframe the common stereotype of "savage Indians" killing "innocent, hard-working pioneers" on the Western frontier?
3. What is our responsibility as Christians in remembering crucial moments of oppression? What is the Biblical basis for this remembering?

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

We lament that the largest mass execution in U.S. history irreparably harmed a community, tearing families apart.

We lament that our collective story of "Minnesota Nice" is rooted in lies, deception, greed, theft, and murder. We repent for our role in perpetuating this myth.

We lament that for far too long we have viewed Fort Snelling as a neutral site of history instead of as a prison and concentration camp and a reminder of our violence towards Dakota women, children, and elders.

RESTORATIVE ACTIONS

- Watch Documentary Film "[Dakota 38](#)", produced by Smooth Feather
- Listen to the Seeing White podcast episode [Little War on the Prairie](#)
- Read [Minnesota Massacre: The Dakota War of 1862, the Most Violent Ethnic Conflict in American History](#) by Gary Clayton Anderson (very comprehensive)
- Read [What Does Justice Look Like?](#) By Waziyatawin (an intense book)
- Take your family to Fort Snelling and talk about the concentration camp; ask your children how we can remember this history so that the Dakota are centered
- Give feedback to Minneapolis Park & Rec Board on alternate names for Sibley Park: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Park-renaming>

3rd Sunday

Boarding Schools & Child Welfare (by Savannah Sisk)

TRUTH

We must confront the attempted cultural genocide of Indigenous people via Indian Boarding Schools. Children were forcibly torn from their native language, customs, religions, and families, often in the name of Christian evangelizing and “civilizing”. General R. H. Pratt, who ran the well-known Carlisle Indian School, succinctly explained one motive behind the schools: “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man.”

In total, there were at least 367 boarding schools in the U.S., about half of which were run by churches with federal funding. At least 16 schools were operated in Minnesota. It is estimated that by 1926, two years after Native Americans were granted the right to vote, there were nearly 70,000 Native children in boarding schools, about 83% of all school-age children.

Federal laws in 1891 made it a legal requirement for all Native children to attend a boarding school - parents were threatened with jail or loss of entitled rations. Children as young as four were kidnapped in many instances. A 1928 government report stated that malnourishment, corporal punishment, poor living conditions, and hard labor was having “disastrous effects” on the children’s mental health.

Reports of survivors of the Morris Indian School (where the University of MN- Morris campus is now) found that children were forced to chew lye soap if they were caught speaking their native language. They were given uniforms, had their hair cut off, and assigned a number. Epidemics were rampant. Sexual abuse, including the rape of young children by school leadership, occurred. Records indicate there could be up to 7 children who died at the school whose remains were never returned to their families.

Several other Minnesota boarding schools had involuntary “outing” programs to send children to white homes as unpaid laborers. Others had cells for punishment where children would only be given bread and water for several days. They could be severely beaten for running away if caught. Many tribes, parents, and children continued to resist regardless of the consequences, in defiance of this policy of abuse and cultural genocide. Most boarding schools were closed by the 1970s, but some still exist today.

The 1958 Indian Adoption Project transitioned from tearing apart families via boarding schools to tearing apart families via the child welfare system. Social workers were intentionally sent onto reservations to remove Native children from their homes and place them for adoption with white middle class families. Even the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act, which arose from Indigenous activism, did not end the removal of all Native children because of its limited applications. Today, 26% of children in foster care in Minnesota are Native, even though they represent only 2% of all children in the state. Rather than supporting families experiencing poverty or addiction because of the long legacy of oppression and boarding schools, children are taken away.

The trauma experienced by generations of Native families because of Indian Boarding Schools and adoption/foster care removal cannot be understated. Symptoms of severe generational trauma include poverty, addiction, and mental illness. There are current Indigenous movements to begin healing from the trauma of boarding schools. These include revitalizing Indigenous languages, particularly Ojibwe and Dakota in Minneapolis; integrating Native and Christian theology and practices, as many children experienced forced conversion in boarding schools; and truth telling around boarding schools. Secretary of the Interior Department, Deb Haaland, the first Native person in this role, is leading an investigation into U.S. boarding schools, including Minnesota's Pipestone School.

REFLECTION

1. Read Matthew 19:14 and Luke 17:2. How have the boarding schools and child welfare system caused children to “stumble” and be “hindered”?
2. How did church-run boarding schools support cultural genocide? What role do we have as Christians to repair those harms caused by the church?
3. Examine your assumptions about when children should be removed from their parents. What stereotypes do you have? What are other ways to support families?

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

We lament the pain, suffering, and damage that the Indian boarding school and child welfare systems caused and keep causing, as they tear apart families and force assimilation. We lament the physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental abuse experienced by too many of the students in Indian boarding schools and in foster care. We seek to repent for the role of churches in running these schools and in supporting their continued existence for over 100 years.

RESTORATIVE ACTIONS

- Read [Spirit Car: Journey to a Dakota Past](#) by Diane Wilson (accessible memoir)
- Read [“The Sad Legacy of American Indian Boarding Schools in Minnesota and the U.S.”](#) by Dr. Denise K. Lajimodiere of MinnPost (news article)
- Read [“Red Lake Nation Recognized for ‘Decolonized’ Approach to Child and Family Services”](#) by Andy Steiner of MinnPost (news article)
- Read [“Minnesota Foster Care System Perpetuates Legacy of Racist Boarding Schools”](#) by Jessica Washington of the Star Tribune
- Watch videos of [Dakota language](#) from the Dakota Wicohan project
- Advocate for the history of boarding schools in K-12 curriculum
- Learn about the work of the [National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition](#), which is based in Minneapolis
- Demand that political leaders support a Truth and Healing Commission on the U.S. Indian Boarding Schools
- Invest in local programs to revitalize Indigenous language and culture: [Migizi](#), [Dream of Wild Health](#), [Grassroots Indigenous Multimedia](#), or [Dakota Wicohan](#)

4th Sunday

American Baptist Church USA (by Savannah Sisk)

TRUTH

We lament that the American Baptist Church USA, the denomination to which Calvary Church belongs, was part of the efforts to “civilize” Native peoples. In 1824, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which was housed within the War Department, was created primarily to funnel money to churches from the Indian Civilization Fund to support “pioneer missionaries.” The 1868 Peace Policy actually gave Christian denominations power over Indian programs on reservations, which is what paved the way for church-run, federally-funded Indian Boarding Schools.

We know that Baptists ran at least 5 boarding schools in Utah, Idaho, and Oklahoma, affecting about 41,000 students. One, the Murrow Indian Children’s Home, for orphaned Native children, still exists today. Through the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS), missionaries worked on reservations of primarily the Creek, Seminole, Delaware, Shwano, Kickapoo, Sac, Fox, Choctaw, and Chickasaw tribes from the 1860s-1910s. One Baptist missionary, Isaac McCoy, advocated for the policy of “Indian Removal” and was hired by the U.S. Government to survey possible reservation lands. He supported the 1838 Potawatomi Trail of Tears - and yet was never recalled by ABHMS.

Although I could not find much information about Baptist missionary involvement in Minnesota or among Dakota people, our church was an active member of the ABC-USA denomination throughout its history. We have a responsibility to understand how Baptists benefitted from and contributed to Indigenous injustice, as well as to apologize and work towards restorative justice.

It may be easy to dismiss the efforts of other Baptists to evangelize Indigenous people, when our church was not directly involved. It may even be easy to dismiss the harm done because “at least souls were saved.” But we know the efforts of missionaries were not neutral. Paul had strong words to say to the church in 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, when some believed themselves superior to others, denying them basic needs. He stated, “your meetings do more harm than good.” We must repent for the past harms done by white missionaries toward Indigenous people in demanding allegiance to our “superior” ways of keeping the faith. Then, our church will be able to approach the Communion table with humility, ready to truly be in right relationship with our Native siblings.

REFLECTION

1. The American Baptist Church Policy Statement on Native American Indians (from 1979) states, “ Because our government and society has for generations been insensitive to many of the needs of Native American Indians, we must encourage the members of the churches to assume an advocacy role with state, federal and private agencies so that effective delivery of social services to Native American Indians becomes a reality. We must also advocate for innovative programs that not only help meet basic social service

needs, but do so in a manner which is appropriate to Native American Indian culture.” What could that advocacy look like today in Minnesota? What must “effective social services” include?

2. The ABC Policy Statement also states, “We must carefully assess any complicity that may be ours through investment in or use of corporations that will compromise our actions in any way with Native American Indians. We must commit our human and financial resources to a stronger partnership with Native American Indian tribal governments in retaining the use and control of the development of tribal land and other resources in order to more directly benefit Native American Indian people.” What is our obligation today to ensure that our finances do not harm Indigenous people and support partnerships with the Dakota people? Both as individual Christians and as Calvary Church?
3. Even today, there are Christian ministries to Native American people that prohibit use of traditional medicine and healing practices. They forbid expressions of Native spirituality, claiming they are from the “devil”. How does this harm the souls of our Native siblings? How does this harm our own souls?
4. What aspects of white Christianity do we take for granted that are actually legacies of European practices? What allows us to assume these practices are “neutral”? What would it mean to accept that every culture can view the Gospel through their own traditions? Is there a Biblical basis for this?

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

We lament the role of religious evangelism by American Baptists in attempts to assimilate and therefore eliminate Indigenous People as distinct peoples.

We lament the destruction of cultural artifacts and practices that were a foundation for each Indigenous Peoples’ community in the name of religious truth.

We lament that even today, the American Baptist Church USA denomination has not publicly apologized or repented for its role in harmful missionary practices.

RESTORATIVE ACTIONS

- Read:
 - ◆ [The American Baptist Church Policy Statement on Native American Indians](#)
 - ◆ [“American Indians Balance Native Customs with Christianity”](#) by Nikki Tundel on MPR (short, accessible article)
- Write a letter to the American Baptist Historical Society asking for an investigation into Baptist missionary work among Native Americans
- Talk with someone else at Calvary about how you can advocate for the current needs of Native Minnesotans, as part of repairing the harm done by Baptists
- Learn about Native spirituality and theology, such as through the works of Richard Twiss or Randy Woodley

5th Sunday

Calvary Church's Land (by Dean Caldwell-Tautges)

TRUTH

The literal foundation of Calvary Baptist Church has rested on stolen land for nearly 140 years. Our balance sheet says we have no mortgage debt, yet the place where we worship, celebrate life, and teach children is not debt free.

Quietly, during the pandemic, Calvary Baptist Church, established 1883, was honored by securing our place on the National Register of Historic Places. Such status is rooted in our architectural legacy, as well as how we care for the facility and share it with our community. My interest in the history of land started while researching my ancestors after my father died. In 1867 my German ancestors crossed the Atlantic to take advantage of Lincoln's Homestead Act and settled just a few miles from Fort Ridgley and New Ulm - where the U.S.-Dakota War led to the Dakota's expulsion just five years prior.

As a farmer's son, I understand that land is core to security, to home, and the stories we tell. This ancient truth runs even deeper for the Dakota, as their spirituality and their very names are intertwined with "Makoce" (land, or place, in Dakota). With this perspective, I started to research the story of Calvary's land.

The U.S. Military's presence was established on Bdote in 1805, but their control also extended to include Richfield, Bloomington, and most of Minneapolis, including Whittier. How did this happen? In 1805, the American explorer Zebulon Pike, despite having no legal authority to do so, made an agreement with just a few Dakota leaders for them to sell an area of land that the U.S. Senate later decided included 100,000 surrounding acres. No signed treaty has ever been found for this supposed agreement. The Senate set the value at \$2,000, despite Pike estimating the land value at \$200,000. No Dakota were present in D.C. to agree to these terms and President Jefferson did not proclaim it an official treaty, as was required.

In 1849 a young John True Blaisdell moved from Maine and staked a claim (squatted) in today's Whittier Neighborhood before the area was opened to settlement. Soon John, and his brother Robert Jr., owned all of Whittier west of Blaisdell Ave. (320 acres), including Calvary's land. They acquired this land via land patent grants in 1856, meaning they paid nothing and were only required to build a house and live there.

A few years after starting a mission outreach at 26th and Nicollet, Rev. Henry Herrick, a Baptist, created the Baptist Union and moved it to Calvary's corner in 1881. With the help of First Baptist downtown, an old chapel was moved on site. The land for the chapel, and soon after a new parsonage for Herrick, was purchased from the Blaisdells for \$1300 by Zelora Brown, a real estate developer and a member of First Baptist. Brown sold the land to his church for a profit and First Baptist then gave the land to Calvary Baptist in 1883. By 1887 Calvary was ready to replace the old chapel with a new church (today's Fellowship Hall) and purchased several more

corner plots for \$2,500 from John Blaisdell. In contrast, today our church's land is likely worth more than \$1,000,000.

As a Tautges and as a member of Calvary, I confess the land beneath our sanctuary and the land my family farms, was all originally obtained illegally, without fair payment, and through violence. Whether you call that a crime or a sin, the truth is our collective debt, just over 150 years old, remains unpaid.

REFLECTION

1. "As Jesus drew near Jerusalem, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If this day you only knew what makes for peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes." - *Luke 19:41-42*. Jesus weeps because all people are created in God's image and live in God's creation - the land. Jesus sees how blind we can be and yet He clearly sees that reconciliation and renewal is not only possible, but is God's will. How will you commit to justice and healing with your Dakota and Ojibwe neighbors?
2. Today the Dakota People own less than 1% of the Minnesota acres they once occupied as their homeland. As you consider that reality, and the history of Calvary's land, what does it mean for our property and any land you personally own? What could restorative actions look like in your life, and the life of our church?

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE


We lament the pain and injustice endured by the Dakota people so that our church could obtain the land for its property and make a home upon stolen acres.

We lament the assumption that Calvary and the broader Church has no responsibility for the history of its property and wealth.

These may be hard things for many of us to name and acknowledge, and yet these same assumptions destroyed Dakota People: individuals, families, culture, and communities. And we are all the poorer.

What can we do but weep and wail at the injustice? What can we do but ask for the courage and the will to seek true justice and healing?

RESTORATIVE ACTIONS

- Read: [History of Calvary's Land](#) by Dean Caldwell-Tautges: request a copy by emailing deanct3144@gmail.com
- Watch:  U.S.-Dakota War - Dakota Homeland
- Upcoming Events: Sacred Sites Tour May 21. See Calvary Happenings to sign up.
- Next Steps: Invest in Minnesota Dakota Land Recovery projects, such as <https://makeoicikcupi.com/our-dream/>
- Explore the [7 Steps to Healing](#) for decolonizing wealth

Palm Sunday

Issues of Sovereignty (by Stephanie Brown)

TRUTH

I am a citizen of two nations, the United States of America and the Cherokee Nation. I have identification papers, voting rights, and a level of protection from both nations. If the idea that being Native can include citizenship, not simply an ethnic identity or ancestral legacy, is new information, you are hardly alone. Indeed, the history of law and policy in the United States would seem to agree. The rights of Native nations inside the boundaries of what is now the United States have eroded down to a legal definition as “dependent communities,” over which the US claims full rights, even to terminating their existence – the legal fate of 109 tribes.

The question of sovereignty goes beyond the question of land. A sovereign nation has the right and the power to govern itself, not dependent on or handed down from any other entity. The US government did not create the Cherokee Nation, or the White Earth Band of Ojibwe, or the Dine’ (Navajo). Yet repeatedly, presently, the United States attempts to exercise jurisdiction over these nations, even when it requires rewriting America’s own laws to do so.

When Europeans first arrived on this continent, they came before the Native people of this land not as peers but as strangers and foreigners. As settler populations grew and alien diseases wrecked Native communities, power dynamics began to shift. After Independence, the US sent waves of negotiators to neighboring nations, laying out boundaries, setting terms of commerce, defining how cross-border crimes would be litigated. Treaties were written, broken, rewritten.

Then policy shifted – the settlers wanted the land and would not be gainsaid. The official US policy became removal, first ejecting all Native nations east of the Mississippi River, then ‘removal’ from choice lands all the way to the Pacific Ocean. When nearly all that remained of Dakota lands in present-day Minnesota were lost in the 1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, American negotiators argued for Congress to ratify the Treaty on the basis that “it is needed.” As with so many treaties before and after, Dakota leaders were told if they did not cede the land, it would be taken anyway. Sign the treaty, get what compensation you can (neglecting the truth that America rarely paid its bills).

By 1871, the United States government officially ended treaty-making with their Native neighbors, a backhanded acknowledgement of the farce it had become. The Bureau of Indian Affairs today sits in the Department of the Interior, which has responsibility for National Parks, not foreign affairs or treaty-making.

This was not an approach borne of ignorance or mismatched definitions of land ownership. The US styled itself as a conqueror. In a stunningly honest Supreme Court opinion from 1824 – which remains legal precedent – Chief Justice Marshall wrote, “Conquest gives a title which the courts of the conqueror cannot deny...It is not for the courts of this country to question the validity of this title.” In other words, if you look too hard at this thread of who legitimately owns the land, if you dare to pull it even a little, the entire system could come unspooled. Best to leave this one alone.

Despite it all, despite centuries of injustice and dismissal, hundreds of Native American nations continue to govern their people, protect their cultures and languages, and fight in the courts to defend their inherent sovereignty, the basic right to make their own decisions. Today, Native nations have, in many ways, less recognized authority than the City of Minneapolis. No ability to enforce laws or regulations on non-citizens in their own boundaries. Limited policing powers and criminal penalties. Heavy constraints on the ability to raise revenues to run our governments. Constant threats against treaty rights – rights Native people retained under treaties the US committed to – on and off tribal lands. There are pending court cases that threaten to erode existing rights even further.

We don't protect what we do not see, and the work to retain and reclaim Native sovereignty often goes forward in the margins. There's so much I still have to learn about my own citizenships, and the rights and responsibilities I have as a member of both nations. What responsibility do we all carry to speak to our governments?

REFLECTION

1. As Christians, when confronting dark political realities, it can be too easy to escape into the promise that “our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20), but the story of scripture is not a story of escaping political realities, but of challenging them. Today we celebrate Palm Sunday, the triumphant day when Jesus was heralded in the streets as King, after which his first act was to storm the temple courts, overturn the tables of the money changers, and declare that a house of prayer had become a den of robbers. What is the message of the Messiah to the legal and financial systems described above?
2. Read 1 John 4:4-12. What viewpoints of the world are we called to recognize as false? Where have we, like Chief Justice Marshall, chosen to take the easy path rather than disrupt the system of this world? What would it look like to choose a different way?
3. How is sovereignty for Native Americans about more than just returning land? Why should the Church claim a stake in the sovereignty of Indigenous people?

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

We lament that the Dakota and Ojibwe people were forced to accept unjust treaties and that even those treaties were repeatedly broken.

We lament that our U.S. government continues to deny full power and sovereignty over Native land and Native concerns to tribal authorities.

Guide us, God, in learning to challenge the powers that be and the “ways we have always done things” so that we can be good neighbors to the nations within our nation.

RESTORATIVE ACTIONS

- Read about Ojibwe legal advocacy: [“\\$59 Million Settlement Addresses 1800s Ojibwe Land Grabs in Minnesota and North Dakota”](#) by Patrick Springer of Park Rapids Enterprise
- Support the Native American Rights Funds ([NARF](#)) which provides critical legal assistance in areas of tribal sovereignty, treaty rights, and natural resource protection
- Follow Native news services, such as [Indian Country Today](#) and [Native News Online](#)

Maundy Thursday

Historical Indigenous Resistance (by C. John Hildebrand)

TRUTH

Indigenous peoples in the Americas have been engaged in a wide variety of types of resistance to European expansionism and settler colonialism for over 500 years. However, their posture toward these “discoverers” also involved offers of hospitality (later betrayed), intermarriage, trade, and accommodation. Some American Indians fought during the Revolutionary War, most on the side of the British, not out of loyalty to the crown, but as a way to stem colonial westward expansion. The war was very hard on Indigenous populations as they were punished for supporting the red coats, even if they had remained neutral in the conflict.

The colonial government pressured Native nations for land concessions, pitted them against one another, and spread devastating diseases that wiped out millions of Indigenous peoples. Not only did Native nations have to deal with encroaching settlers and state entities, they were also targeted for proselytization from missionaries and endured efforts to “civilize” their population by teachers, government agents, and others. Some accommodated these efforts in order to survive, but others resisted by forming alliances or confederacies in order to maintain their cultures and way of life even as they endured devastating loss of land, including traditional hunting and fishing grounds. The election of Andrew Jackson as president in 1828 led to the forced removal of tens of thousands of Indigenous people to what became known as “Indian Territory” – later the state of Oklahoma. Many died during this brutal removal period, including four thousand Cherokee in what became known as the “Trail of Tears.”

It is important to recognize what esteemed scholar Frederick E. Hoxie says: “Since 1492 Native people [have] spent far more time negotiating, lobbying and debating than they spent tomahawking settlers or shooting at soldiers.” Sadly those efforts to negotiate, lobby, and debate ultimately produced very few victories for Indigenous peoples. Treaties were negotiated, court cases were brought, and efforts were made to sway U.S. government entities, but those treaties were almost always broken, courts rarely ruled in favor of Native peoples, and there were few settlers who spoke up for the humanity of American Indians.

U.S. American soldiers and armed settler vigilantes continued to commit heinous acts of genocide, including massacres at Wounded Knee and Sand Creek. Around 300 Lakota women, men, elders, and children were brutally killed at Wounded Knee in 1890. 20 soldiers involved in the genocide received medals of honor. In November of 2021, seventeen members of Congress submitted a letter to President Biden to have those medals rescinded, something Lakota leaders have been pushing for over a century. The Sand Creek massacre of around 150 Cheyenne Indians, most of whom were women and children, occurred in 1864 in what is now known as Colorado. The Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site was dedicated on April 28, 2007, almost 142 years after the slaughter.

The 1960s brought a renewed movement for American Indian resistance. There was the creation of the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), which fought for fishing rights in Washington state among other issues. Later, Indigenous activists captured and occupied

Alcatraz Island in the San Francisco Bay in 1969. It gained widespread media attention and further emboldened Native activism around the country. Acclaimed writer, attorney, philosopher and activist Vine Deloria Jr. started the powerful National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), while Ojibwe activists Dennis Banks and Clyde Bellecourt started the American Indian Movement (AIM) in Minneapolis. These three organizations joined with five others to organize the “Trail of Broken Treaties” – with its 20-Point Position Paper that focused on the U.S. government’s responsibility to implement the treaties and respect Native sovereignty. This also led to the armed take over and sit-in of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) building in Washington, DC in 1972. The 20-point position paper later formed the basis for the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which has never been signed by the U.S..

REFLECTION

1. What other examples of Native resistance have you heard of before? What stories of resistance would you like to learn more about?
2. What Biblical characters also resisted Empire and oppression?
3. Proverbs 31: 8-9 says, “Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.” I John 3:17-18 says, “But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” What other Bible passages speak about resisting injustice and defending our neighbor?

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

As we enter the holy journey of the night before Jesus’ death, we begin a journey of another kind, a journey with Jesus into the depths of suffering and loss. May we be reminded that Creator God is with us on all the journeys we make, the journey to the cross and the journey to right relations between the Indigenous Peoples and the non-Indigenous peoples of Minnesota and beyond. Help us God to open our hearts to where we might be called to support Indigenous resistance as a part of our discipleship.

RESTORATIVE ACTIONS

- Read about the life of AIM founder [Clyde Bellecourt, Indigenous Rights Warrior](#) who passed away in January of 2022
- Read *[This Indian Country: American Indian Activists and the Place They Made](#)* by Fredrick E. Hoxie (2012)
- Watch the famous 1989 speech to the US Senate by [AIM activist Russell Means](#)
- Visit the [AIM Interpretive Center](#) in Minneapolis and donate if you are able
- Write to Congress in support of the U.S. to endorse the UN Declaration of Rights for Indigenous People
- Write to President Biden to urge him to rescind the 20 medals of honor given to soldiers who carried out the Wounded Knee Massacre

Good Friday

Standing Rock & Current Indigenous Resistance (by C. John Hildebrand)

TRUTH

In 1992, many Native American organizations publicly denounced that year's Columbus Day celebrations, pointing instead to 500 years of Indigenous resistance and survival. Dozens of gatherings were held across the U.S. and around the world, including the *Indigenous Voices Conference: Beyond 1992* which was sponsored by the Indian Treaty Rights Committee in Chicago. At a San Francisco conference, an elderly man stood up. "Five hundred years of resistance ends Oct. 11," he said. "On Oct. 12, we have to begin 500 years of restoration." The first Indigenous People's Day celebration was held that year in Berkley, CA, and now 30 years later, a growing number of cities have replaced Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day. President Joe Biden was the first sitting president to acknowledge the day in 2021.

Another important movement in recent years has been the Land Back movement, in some ways an update of the long-time rally cry among American Indian activists to Honor the Treaties. In 2020, the NDN Collective, an Indigenous advocacy organization in Rapid City, SD, formally launched the Land Back campaign. The hashtag #landback became viral and the movement continues to grow. While the NDN Collective takes a more confrontational approach in its activism, other groups, including churches and government entities have started to look at whether lands should be returned to the original inhabitants. In 2019, the United Methodist Church gave historic land back to the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma. One hundred years earlier, the US government had promised the tribe 148,000 acres of land in what is now Kansas City, Kansas. When 664 Wyandotte people arrived, the land had been given to someone else. Another example comes from 2020 when Congress approved a bill to return some 17 square miles to the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe in Minnesota, lands that had been "wrongly transferred" to the Chippewa National Forest, according to the Pioneer Press newspaper.

One of the largest and most remarkable examples of the repatriation of lands came in 2020 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that about half of the land in Oklahoma is within Native American reservations. The ruling has had immense legal implications for eastern Oklahoma. Most of Tulsa, the state's second-largest city, is located on Muscogee (Creek) land. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation cheered the court's decision. "The Supreme Court today kept the United States' sacred promise to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of a protected reservation," the tribe said in a statement. "Today's decision will allow the Nation to honor our ancestors by maintaining our established sovereignty and territorial boundaries."

In addition to the movement to retain traditional lands, Native American groups and tribal nations have been resisting the construction of pipelines on or near Indigenous lands. This fight is not just about respecting Native sovereignty; it has also been about preventing the growing threat of climate change. Many Indigenous activists have been on the front lines of the Climate Change movement in North America. In April 2016, young people from Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota organized a grassroots campaign to stop the massive Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) project because it threatened the local environment and would lead to greater climate change. Calling themselves "ReZpect Our Water", the youth, plus several adults,

including Joye Braun of the Indigenous Environmental Network and tribal historian LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, established a water protectors camp as a center for direct action, demonstrating spiritual resistance to the pipeline as both a defense of Indigenous sovereignty and cultural preservation. The #NoDAPL hashtag began to trend on social media, and the camps at Standing Rock gradually grew to thousands of people. Indigenous people from across North America came to stand in solidarity with the Standing Rock nation. The protests also drew thousands of young activists from all over and huge media coverage. In the end, the protest camps were shut down or flooded by the river, and the pipeline was finished. However, the fight has continued in the courts where the owners of the pipeline, Energy Transfer, have lost several legal fights that could shut down the pipeline.

Another pipeline fight took place in Minnesota in recent years with the resistance to Enbridge's Line 3 pipeline. While this pipeline did not attract the huge crowds of protesters that the DAPL did, there were several small protest camps that were set-up to try and stop it from being finished. Ultimately, the pipeline was completed, but activists are still pushing elected officials to intervene and shut it down. While these pipeline fights have not turned into clear "wins" for Native resistance leaders, they have inspired a whole new generation of activists.

REFLECTION

1. How do current Indigenous resistance movements connect to Calvary's value of earth as God's good creation and our role in stewardship?
2. How do you read Ephesians 6:12 in light of the evils that Native Minnesotans fight against? In what way is the exploitation of land and people connected to the "powers of this dark world"?
3. Read Isaiah 58:6 - how are we called as Christians to support liberation?

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

We lament that the tapestry of our land is still torn by injustice and racism toward Indigenous Peoples, as well as climate destruction that affects the future of Indigenous livelihoods. We lament that, in a country with great abundance, there exists within Indigenous communities a scarcity of clean drinking water, decent housing, quality health and family support services, and access to economic and educational opportunities.

We lament the slow progress of the journey toward right relations with the First Peoples of Minnesota.

What can we do but weep and wail at the injustice?

What can we do but lament the loss and destruction?

What can we do but ask for the courage and will to seek justice, restoration and healing?

RESTORATIVE ACTIONS

- Read about the [Dakota Access Pipeline](#) in Vox and [Standing Rock](#) in Rolling Stone
- Watch: [What Really Happened at Standing Rock | I Was There](#) (Strong language)
- Action: Learn about and donate to the [Indigenous Environmental Network](#)

Resurrection Sunday

The Church and Restorative Justice (by Stephanie Brown)

TRUTH

The good news, the gospel, is reconciliation and restoration made real. It is the call of our God, the work of the Spirit, the truth of the resurrection, and must be the mission of the Church.

Jesus opened his ministry quoting from the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah tells us, “Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in her inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land and everlasting joy will be yours. For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and wrong doing” (61:7-8).

We live in this world, and in this world, disgrace and shame so often feel more real than the joy of the Lord, than the life in abundance that Jesus promised (John 10:10). We may hate robbery and wrong doing, but those exist in such quantities that justice feels out of reach, a promise of heaven, not the life we live.

And there are so many burdens in this life, so close to us! We work and scrounge and save because it feels responsible. It gives us comfort and safety and a protection from the risks and threats around us, from needing to rely on others. We set boundaries around our compassion and generosity so that we don’t hit a wall where we’re too drained to carry on. We are told, we believe, and we tell others, that we must be cautious, careful, and rational in how we steward resources. We live a life constrained.

And in the midst of that constraint, how can we begin a conversation about not just lament and repentance, but restoration? The wrong is so big, and our resources are so small. And limited! What will we do when Calvary’s endowment runs out? Yes, the land transfers leading up to Calvary’s deed were beyond questionable, but what would the Dakota today want with a parcel in Whittier? And if they did want it, well, don’t we still need a place to meet? Won’t that place have the same issues? What would any of the actions in this devotional even change?

I don’t raise these questions because I have answers. I very much don’t.

But I do know, even when I can’t quite figure out how to believe it or what it means to do so, that the promise of God is abundance. Abundant life, abundant grace, abundant love, abundant provision. Exceedingly, abundantly beyond what we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). And as Abraham was blessed to be a blessing, this abundance is to be freely given.

Jesus told the people, “Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:38).

Pressed down, overflowing, and running over. What does that look like? It looks like the prophet Elisha and a widow terrified her sons would be sold into slavery over unpaid debts, who had nothing at all but a small jar of oil. Gather empty jars from your neighbors, Elisha told her. Don’t ask for just a few. And so she began pouring the oil from her little jar into the larger ones, jar after jar, her bottle overflowing, enough to sell to pay the debts and live on as a family

(2 Kings 4:1-7). It looks like Jesus feeding four thousand, five thousand, from a single meal. It looks like a dead Messiah, risen from the grave and standing before us.

It is into this abundance that we are called to live. “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus” (Acts 3:19-21).

And in that living, we are called to act. In the Torah, God speaks of restitution. “The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the Israelites: When a man or a woman wrongs another, breaking faith with the LORD, that person incurs guilt and shall confess the sin that has been committed. The person shall make full restitution for the wrong, adding one-fifth to it, and giving it to the one who was wronged” (Numbers 5:6-7). Standing before Jesus, Zacchaeus declared, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much” (Luke 19:8).

Leviticus 25 lays out a radical construct – a year of Jubilee, of rest for the land, of a resetting to ancient boundaries, “liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants.” And God knows our fears. He tells the people, “You may ask, ‘What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?’ I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years” (25:20-21). Jesus tells us the same: “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:31-33).

Why is the land not to be sold permanently? God tells us because the land is *God’s*, and we reside there as foreigners and strangers (Lev 25:23). Why are we not to store up our treasures here? “For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes” (Luke 12:23).

This is radical. This is *terrifying*.

When we hold on to our land, our resources, our governments, we are holding on to what was never ours to keep. And it is not our responsibility what anyone does with what we hand over. It was the disciples, not Jesus, who condemned the oil poured on his feet as a waste, better spent on higher needs (Matthew 26). The rich young ruler wasn’t told to set up a foundation and carefully allocate his wealth based on data-driven outcomes (Mark 10). The command is to give. To give it all. To make it right.

And let us be honest: the taking of life, land, and liberty from Native nations is not a conversation about giving to the poor. This is about acknowledging that we’re the cheating tax collector. It is about a release of the greed that governs us. You may be the first generation of your family to live here, or the fourth, and in either case this may not be a wrong you can trace in your own blood. But it is a wrong we can trace in our government, under which we live and in which we have a stake. Our brothers’ and sisters’ blood cries out from the ground.

Throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. Fix our eyes on Jesus. Let go of your burdens, and take up His. Give up everything you have and come follow Him. Seek justice, love mercy. Break every yoke. Confess our sins, one to another, and be healed.

REFLECTION

1. What does it mean to live in the reality of God's abundance?
2. Consider everything you have learned on this Lenten journey. How are you called as an individual to work towards restorative justice? How are we called as a Church body?
3. What could it look like to hold the systems under which we live to account? Whether it's our church, Minnesota, the US government or another place important to you, what responsibilities do we bear for the decisions our institutions make?
4. This may be a wholly new conversation for you, and it is a hard one. It is okay to feel the hard and take time. Where can you start? What has this stirred up for you as one place where you have accepted the paradigm of the world rather than the radical restoration Jesus promised? What would it look like to begin to live that one thing differently?

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

On this Resurrection Sunday, we are powerfully reminded that, with God, all things are possible for Christ is risen!

Out of the cross came new possibility. Out of death came life. Out of loss came hope. Out of suffering came joy. For Christ is risen!

Through the Lenten season, we lamented that there is not yet a right relationship between the Indigenous Peoples and the non-Indigenous peoples of Minnesota.

We continue to lament how long it has taken us to begin this journey. We pray for God's guidance as we continue on this path of healing.

As we bask in resurrection hope, let us hear the prophetic voices urging us toward right relations with the First Peoples, and reminding us that in the Spirit, we are all related to each other and to all of creation.

We commit ourselves to continuing the journey, for Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed. Hallelujah!

RESTORATIVE ACTIONS

- Read [Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys: A Native American Expression of the Jesus Way](#) by Richard Twiss
- Read [Becoming Rooted: One Hundred Days of Reconnecting with Sacred Earth](#) by Randy S. Woodley
- Read the short article ["With Indigenous Guidance, Wisconsin Churches Face Colonialism's Damage - and Start to Act"](#) by Hans Holznagel on UCC.org
- Invite someone into these conversations with you, to talk and pray and start to imagine differently alongside. Then bring in someone else.
- Ask Calvary's Board how we will commit to financial reparations
- Examine your family's budget – is there a line item for paying “back rent” to the Dakota or for contributing in solidarity to indigenous cultural, land, and environmental revitalization?
- Join Calvary's Racial Justice & Healing Committee to continue leading the church towards restorative justice and/or the Faith & Justice Committee at Calvary as they work to support environmental justice and our stewardship of land