



An original painting by Indigenous Sudbury artist, Leland Bell. A gift given to Archbishop Anne by the people of Sudbury/Manitoulin Deanery on the occasion of her consecration.

Dear friends in Christ,

*Below is an article I prepared for the Moosonee Northland Newspaper for publication in June.*

*With the discovery of the remains of 215 children on the grounds of the Kamloops Residential School earlier this month, and the outcry around the nation from Indigenous peoples and their allies, there is a particular poignancy around today's celebration of National Indigenous Peoples' Day.*

*Last evening Archbishop Fred and I gathered with close to 70 participants from around Canada for a Service of Prayer, Lament, Confession and Remembrance. Some participants wore orange in honour of the children, while others wore red, yellow, black and white ribbons.*

*Although we came together on a Zoom platform, time and distance fell away as we honoured the 215 children and all victims of the Residential School system.*

*In one of the prayer petitions we prayed for those who continue to carry pain, and for those who left this world 'having heard no words of apology'.*

*Hearing those words last evening reminded me of what I wrote for the Northland. As we continue to walk the road towards healing and reconciliation may our hearts be filled with courage so that ancient wrongs will be redressed, broken promises forgiven and a new covenant based on truth, honesty, respect, and love forged.*

It was an honour for me to be present at General Synod in Vancouver, July 2019, to hear the (then) Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, Archbishop Fred Hiltz offering 'An Apology for Spiritual Harm' at the desire of many in the church, and with the authority of the Council of General Synod – *“For our cultural and spiritual arrogance toward all Indigenous Peoples – First Nations, Inuit and Métis – and the harm we inflicted on you.”* (Archbishop Hiltz)

The Apology is the confession of the Anglican Church of Canada to the First Peoples of the Land for a failure to recognize the spiritual relationship the First Peoples had with the Creator and with the Land, and how that spirituality infused their governance, social structures and family life.

The Apology is the confession of the Anglican Church of Canada for dismissing Indigenous Spiritualities and practises as being contrary or incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and it is a confession for 'robbing' Indigenous children and youth of the opportunity to know their spiritual ancestry.

The Apology is a commitment of the Church to turn to our Creator and, with steadfastness of will, help heal the spiritual wounds we have inflicted.

Archbishop Fred (Assisting Bishop of Moosonee) and I are committed to the important work of healing and reconciliation in Moosonee with the First Peoples of the Land and also with one another.

If we think about reconciliation in terms of our calling as disciples of Christ, pursuing peace and living lives of reconciliation is a task that is entrusted to each of us. It is a way of being as we live into our baptismal promise to work at transforming unjust structures within our society, challenging violence of every kind.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul reminds us that we are new creations, a gift given to us from Christ, and that Christ has also 'given us the ministry of reconciliation' (2. Cor. 5.18) This demands something from us - the truth is that the world is changed by ordinary human beings who choose to live in a new way.

The good news for those who are committed to the ministry of reconciliation is that it is a journey. It begins from where we are in our lives – in that place of deep hurt and resentment, or with a particular viewpoint on something, and not from where we think we ought to be in a relationship or conversation. It is something that always takes place in relationship with other people.

Sometimes it happens quickly, and sometimes it takes years, but if it is undertaken seriously, it is rich and fulfilling, leading to loving, transformed lives.

As a Christocentric community we keep our eyes on Jesus, placing the Gospel at the centre of our lives, and in so doing set out a pattern for building relationships as a healthy way to transform conflict together.

The regular pattern in Moosonee over the last year has been for us to gather weekly for 'Gospel based discipleship'. Lives are being transformed as we listen first to the Gospel for the day and then to one another. "What is God calling me to do?" has been the question each of us has taken away from our time together. Often, the answer is to change an old way of thinking to a new way. I encourage all of our congregations to use this GBD, or other short Bible studies before all board meetings take place in a parish.

Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we hear God's story of reconciling love as it is recounted in the story of our salvation and experienced in bread and wine. Worship ends with us being sent out into the world to live that peace and be a reconciling community wherever we find ourselves.

There is a beautiful image of a new way of 'living reconciliation' in the book by that title. Author Phil Groves describes a drum whose sound calls people to attention. The type of sound of a drum is determined by the kind of skin used on top of the drum. As Christians we use the genuine leather of love, forgiveness and grace to make our drum of reconciliation.

The trunk and skin of the drum is held together by strings which are essential in ensuring the drum produces its sound. Here are the new strings for making reconciliation possible:

- The first string on the drum is *relationship* which includes building new relationships, healing broken relationships and fostering new relationships. As relationships are built we see one another as part of a community that stands together in all circumstances.
- The second string on the drum is that of conversation. It can only happen once trusting relationships within a community are established. In that new community it is expected that people will hold diverse opinions.
- The third string on the drum is finding a *place of meeting* where the community can come together to discuss concerns and share one another's 'burdens, weaknesses, strengths and encouragements.'
- The fourth string on the drum is an increasing appreciation of our uniqueness. This allows members to use *their* best qualities, skills, and talents to enrich the life of the community. Each person brings something with them into each conversation and is valued for who they are intrinsically in Christ, not only for what they bring.
- The fifth string of the drum is committing to walking together, even through difficult times.

May God bless our journey towards reconciliation and healing and keep us in love,

+*Anne*