



The United Church of Canada General Council

GC36 Residential School Apology/Repentance (1997R271)

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Jesus said, "When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go: first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift." (Matt. 5:23-24)

We now realize that the offering of the churches and of countless faithful and caring servants of the churches, through their participation in the residential school system has tragically resulted in pain and suffering and injustice for many.

whereas the United Church supported the residential school system, and

whereas the native residential school system contributed in a primary way to the uprooting of native societies and to the rejection of native culture by removing children from their communities and by denying them access to their language, traditions and spirituality, and

whereas those losses were compounded in many instances by a wide variety of profound injustices and acute deprivations, and

whereas the destructive consequences of the residential school system continue to this day, and

whereas an individual has been convicted of numerous counts of sexual and physical abuse in connection with the Port Alberni residential school; and

whereas systemic racism makes it difficult to hear the pain of our brothers and sisters; and

whereas any healing initiative will be inadequate in the absence of a clear statement of repentance and contrition by the United Church, and

whereas such a statement would set a positive example that the Government of Canada should be persuaded to follow:

Therefore be it resolved that the 36th General Council:

1. recommit ourselves to living out the apology of The United Church of Canada to native congregations offered in 1986, and specifically the fourth paragraph which states:

‘We imposed our civilization as a condition for accepting the gospel.

We tried to make you like us and in so doing we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result you and we are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred, and we are not what we were meant by the Creator to be.’;

2. acknowledge the role that the federally-funded and controlled residential school system has had in the suffering of native people, in their loss of wholeness, of life, of language, of culture, and of spirituality, and our role in that system;
3. express our deep regret and sorrow to the First Nations of Canada for the injustices that were done and for the role of The United Church of Canada in the native residential school system, and as part of our expression write an open letter to the First Nations of Canada;

4. continue dialogue and consultation with the First Nations of Canada in order to consider appropriate means to express our repentance and to take further steps along the healing path and towards reconciliation;
5. urge individuals, congregations, Presbyteries/Districts, Conferences, and Divisions and the Ethnic Ministries Council of General Council to learn directly from native persons their experiences in residential schools and/or to study resources such as those provided by The Healing Fund;
6. urge individuals, congregations, Presbyteries/Districts, Conferences, to join the General Council in petitioning the Government of Canada to accept the Government's responsibility for the abuses of the residential schools and to take meaningful steps immediately to redress those abuses.”

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