

Sunday Worship on September 29, 2024 (Truth and Reconciliation Sunday)

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Christine Tian)

Land Acknowledgement of Town of Aurora (for Truth and Reconciliation Sunday)

Sunday Order of worship

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Call to worship
- Praise song BOP 57 You who dwell in the shelter
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song BOP 475 I am the church! You are the church!

We Listen

- Sung prayer for illumination (BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord)
- First reading: Zachariah 8:16-17
- Second reading: Psalm 18:7-15 (refrain Psalm 17-2)
- Third reading: Romans 13:8-10
- Sermon: Love is fulfilling of the law.
- Hymn 381 Holy Spirit, hear us (Vs. 1-4)
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey BOP 717 We cannot own the sunlit sky

We Serve

- Benediction
- A Sung Blessing

Land Acknowledgement of Town of Aurora (for Truth and Reconciliation Sunday)

Today is Truth and Reconciliation Sunday. So, to remember and honour the land right of the Indigenous people, we would like to start today's worship with the Land Acknowledgement. A Land Acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes our relationship between Indigenous peoples and their traditional territories.

Acknowledging the land is an Indigenous practice that has been happening for thousands of years. It recognizes and respects the legal and spiritual relationship Indigenous peoples have with their territories. Today, a land acknowledgement remains a way of recognizing and expressing gratitude to the Indigenous peoples whose land we reside on.

At the Town of Aurora, we open our public meetings and events with the following Land Acknowledgement. This statement is available to all members of our community to be used as appropriate.

Land Acknowledgement of Town of Aurora

The Town of Aurora acknowledges that the Anishinaabe lands on which we live and work are the traditional and Treaty #20 territories of the Chippewas of Georgina Island, as well as many other Nations whose presence here continues to this day. As the closest First Nation community to Aurora, we recognize the special relationship the Chippewas have with the lands and waters of this territory. They are the water protectors and environmental stewards of these lands, and as a municipality we join them in these responsibilities. We further acknowledge that Aurora is part of the treaty lands of the Mississaugas and Chippewas, recognized through Treaty #13 as well as the Williams Treaties of 1923. A shared understanding of the rich cultural heritage that has existed for centuries, and how our collective past brought us to where we are today, will help us walk together into a better future.

Welcome and Announcement:

Responsive Call to Worship

We are called together

To worship God as the people of God.

God calls us by name and knows what rests in our minds and our hearts, and calls us:

To worship God as the people of God.

We come yearning to be transformed and redirected to paths of justice and in ways of love so that in truth we can turn to God:

To worship God as the people of God.

God invites us to worship as beloved and loving people and together:

To worship God as the people of God.

Praise song – BOP 57 You who dwell in the shelter

Prayer of Adoration

Holy and loving God, blessed are you in all the universe: your goodness is seen in creation, your holiness is incomprehensible, your truth and wisdom are radiant, your justice rolls down like waters, your love is wider than all the universe and your mercy greater than the heights of heaven. And so, with our lips we sing your praises and we join with your good creation in joyful praise of you as Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit.

In recalling all that you are and all that you have done, we recall then who we are and what we have done. And so, to begin again with you and one another, we confess our sins:

Prayer of confession (Unison) (Let us come to God with the Prayer of confession in Unison)

We confess that we have failed to comfort those in pain, ignored the needs of others, and not sought peace or worked for justice. And we confess the sins of your church in running residential schools that separated children from their families. We confess that in our cultural arrogance where there was laughter, we stifled it; where families lived warmly together, we broke them up, and where there was dignity, and we stole it. We repent of our past sins and pray for the strength to walk a new good way with you and one another.

Heavenly Father, hear us, as we offer the Prayer that Jesus taught us: (The Lord's Prayer:)

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Words of Assurance

By God's grace we have been saved and this is not our own doing; it is a gift of God.

May the Peace of the Lord be with you.

Praise song – BOP 475 I am the church! You are the church!

Sung prayer for illumination (BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord)

- First reading: Zachariah 8:16-17
- Second reading: Psalm 18:7-15 (refrain Psalm 17-2)
- Third reading: Romans 13:8-10

“This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God.”

SERMON: Love is fulfilling of the law

Today is Truth and Reconciliation Sunday. As we read the land acknowledge in the beginning of today's worship, today, we honour and remember Indigenous people and the need for healing from their painful history such as residential school.

In 2010, former Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper made a statement of apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools, on behalf of the Canadian Government.

At that time, I was actively involved in Native People short-term mission trips for 10 years. I was able to visit few different the Indigenous reserves. Do you know what **Indigenous Reserve** is? It is a piece of land set aside under the Indian Act and treaty agreements for the exclusive use of an Indian band. Indigenous people have right to live on that reserved land only. The name of the treaty itself is wrong, using term Indian, but they were called Indians before.

So, I was able to ask about this apology of Harper government to the people who were experiencing this in their actual life. It could be different by each residential reserve. Each reserve has chief and they form their own governing body. The reserve I was involved had a very respectful chief and he was fairly honest and transparent. But, I heard some chiefs from other Indigenous reserves took government funding for their own person use. So, as a result of the apology, in a fairly good reserve, each person received \$1000. \$1000, only.

Financial compensation is not everything. Yet, that recognition itself is valuable. But, in their real life, what difference can this \$1000 make? They lost their right to live anywhere they want and they lost their culture and they lost the connection between generations.

Each person who lives in the reserve receives government funding every two weeks. Just by living in their reserves, they are able to receive free money for their entire life. In order to get money, they have to live in their reserves. If they leave, the funding stops. In Toronto down, there are so many indigenous street-people. One person I met regularly mentioned that he was trying to save money to get back to his own reserve.

I have various thoughts on this Indigenous people, but I am just telling you the facts.

So, on this Truth and Reconciliation Sunday, we remember their experiences. They were taken away from their parents and had to live in the residential schools. They lost their native languages. Residential schools ran **from 1831 until 1990s**. Not all, but some last ones. About

160 years. Incredibly long time. If we say that one generation is 30 years, then it's about 5 generations. 150 years of disconnectedness from their ancestors.

When we think about them, we experience very difficult and challenging emotions. So far, we have been running away from this. On this Truth and Reconciliation Sunday, not only we remember "Every child matters," but also let us recognize what Indigenous people had to go through.

Today's sermon title, "love is fulfilling of the law," is from Romans 13 passage, which tells us to love. What is love? And how do we love?

The apostle Paul mentions few of the 10 Commandments.

No adultery, no murder, no steal, no covet. And he sums the commandments in v9, "**Love your neighbour as yourself.**" This is the second half of Jesus' answer to this question. **Mark 12:28, "One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"**

Jesus answered, **Mark 12:30, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. V31 The second is this: Love your neighbour as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these.**

Therefore, we can safely say that the short summary of Christianity is "**Love God and love people.**" When church first opened the residential school, what do they have in their minds? To teach them the word of God. They wanted to save the people who did not know God. It was started with a good intention, even holy intention.

V10, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor."

Some say that not doing the things she or he doesn't want is more important in love relationship. But, many times, according to my experience as well, we want to love in the way we want to love others.

What did the church do? With the good intention of teaching the word of God, they took away children from their parents and put them in residential schools. Did they ask, did they get the permission signature? I doubt it. Did the parents want to see them? Of course, but the children were not allowed to go and visit their homes. The parents could not visit their children because the church thought what they were teaching was good for them. They wanted to separate the children from their old teachings. "**The old has passed away, see, everything has become new!**" Wrong interpretation of the biblical teaching because they were too passionate. They were walking ahead of God because they closed their eyes and hearts out of their piety. Scary, isn't it? Anything including spiritual event that magnifies itself or some other activity but does not direct our attention to God is counterfeit.¹

Good intention, but wrong way of loving. In other words, wrong interpretation. This caused so much pain and loss of the Indigenous people.

¹ In Touch (Devoted living), September 2024, Pg. 44.

When we talk about Indigenous people, we have to know what happened and where they are at now. Then, where are we in terms of this issue? What do we feel? What kind of responsibilities do we have?

I stopped going to Native Reserves because I didn't see the future, including other situations. I was overwhelmed. I talked about the future and hope and the ways to help them realistically with many of my friends. But, we could not come up with any possible solutions. In my heart, at that time, giving back their land was the only solution. We concluded that we needed government-level-solution, regardless how hard we tried. Now, considering what's happening, trying to remember the wrongdoings and trying to honour their right, we are very grateful that we can talk about it now, openly.

As mentioned before, giving back \$1000 to each person is a huge action for government. It is a great attempt and effort.

Zechariah 8:16, NLT, "But this is what you much do: Tell the truth to each other. Render verdicts in your courts that are just and that lead to peace." MSG, "Do the right thing by one another, both personally and in your courts. Don't cook up plans to take unfair advantage of others."

God does not want anyone to be treated unfairly. God cares for every single person. God cares for the person who came up with the idea of residential school. God cares for a child who missed her parents and cried at night. God cares for a boy who could not sleep at night because of the fear of war. God cares for the leaders of the countries who cannot give up their wars. And God cares for the spouses who are experiencing conflicts and passive aggressive emotions. God cares each of us who experience ups and downs, sometimes forget about God and become selfish. God cares for an Indigenous youth who is struggling to make decision to leave her Reserve and go to university OR to stay in her reserve and receive the government funding. God cheers for us when we try to come close to the truth and to try to grow.

On this Truth and Reconciliation Sunday, let us have hope for our future. Compensating for the past mistake is important, but having the right mindset matters more.

I will conclude today's message with a paragraph from my daily reading meditational book.

What matters more than material blessings are the things He is teaching us in our spirit. Obeying the Lord naturally positions us to receive what He's already trying to give us. But when we fail to trust Him and refuse to do what He says, we're the ones choosing ourselves off from some of the good God would have accomplished in our life. Have you only partially cooperated? If God says to give more than you think you're able to part with, know that He will provide.²

Fixing everything for the Indigenous people seems too much for us now. In our given situations, let us be sensitive to God and let us trust God that he is working in us. At the same time, let us pray for Indigenous people, our siblings in Christ, for the healing and guidance of God.

We can only love. Let us love God with all our hearts, and let us love one another and encourage each other and hope for good. God may open up your ears and give you courage and strength.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Praise song – BOP 381 Holy Spirit, hear us (Vs. 1-4)

²² In Touch (Devoted Living), September 2024 Pg. 40.

Prayer for the people

Thank you God for giving us the opportunity to think about our Indigenous siblings in God. Thank you for teaching us what they had to go through. Thank you for giving us courage to face our mistake in history. Through this, God, help us learn how to love and how to live our lives in accordance with your truth.

We bring you our prayers for the world, for people and communities harmed by discrimination and hate, for your church and for those we are in relationships with and love.

Creator God, you created us in your image and set us in the world to live in peace with you and one another. We pray for those who are hurt and hurting because of false beliefs about the superiority of a particular race, class, or gender; let your truth and justice bring healing.

Comforting God, we pray for healing in the communities and families of all who experienced residential schools. Hold in your loving care and bless with strength and courage those who pursue healing, truth and reconciliation: let your grace and power bring new life.

We pray for strength and healing for all Survivors and intergenerational Survivors of residential schools. And we pray for healing for the siblings, family, and friends of those were taken from home but did not return, and for the intergenerational impacts the schools continue to cause today in families and communities.

God of transforming love, the wounds of racism continue to this day, imbedded in the fabric of our institutions and governments. Let your compassion and wisdom flow through all public policies and practices. Where power is hoarded, bring your equity and justice. Where racism is resisted, bring your courage and strength to acknowledge and address it. We pray that our communities, churches and country will be places where there is justice and where people advocate for dignity of all creation.

We pray for people whose bodies, minds and souls are in pain and those struggling with physical or mental illness;

We pray for people who experience violence in their relationships, in their home, workplace, community or country, and for those who have been displaced by war, unjust economic systems, the climate crisis, and ongoing impacts of colonization around the world;

We pray for people living with housing insecurity: where home is inadequate for the needs of the people. Provide adequate shelter where there is unsafe, unaffordable, or inaccessible;

We pray for people who are struggling with economic insecurity, barriers to education or employment, unfairness in policies or practices. Especially, the people who are overwhelmed by their works and work-stress.

We pray for people at the frontlines of social support systems who daily face the evidence of systemic racism and continue to strive for the safety and dignity of people and creation.

God, hear our prayers and answer us in your ways, in your time. Give us faith. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering:

Let us come to God with the confession of his Lordship. Giving back what we have is the acknowledgment of God's Lordship. We have because he gave. We have because God wants us to become his hands and feet helping others providing their needs. Let us live accordingly. As we praise and worship God with our gifts, let us glorify him with the Doxology (BOP #830.)

Offering prayer:

All that we have comes from you, O God. Use our lives and the gifts we offer to build a more peaceful and just world that reflects the principles of your reign and the Good News of peace, healing and reconciliation Christ taught. We worship you and we love you. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Song for the Journey – BOP 717 We cannot own the sunlit sky

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world where God called us to be. Place your hope in the Lord, not the situations nor our ability. God will accomplish what he had planned.

Benediction:

Go into God's good creation
praying that the Spirit will open our minds to receive truth,
open our hearts to seek peace,
and strengthen our bodies to work for justice.
Let the Spirit guide you in ways of love and justice,
to walk lightly and humbly and seek truth, reconciliation, healing, and wholeness.
And may the Blessing of Creator, Christ and Spirit rest upon you this day and every day.