

DAY 17: MONDAY

All My Relations

Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

1 John 4:11-12

Reflect

On the Indigenous Day of Prayer in 2019, I was invited to an Indigenous church to preach. Since I arrived at Grand River United Church in Ohsweken, Ontario, earlier than planned, I had time to visit the banks of the river, the village, and the fields of Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation. As a Chinese immigrant to Canada, I was excited to learn about the land, the oral history, as well as the teachings and traditions of the Six Nations people. My visit reminded me that all people are God's people, and the Creator works through and in all languages and cultures.

What can non-Indigenous Christians learn from Indigenous people about how to do intercultural ministry and mission? During my visit, I learned about a teaching that can offer guidance: *Akwe Nia'Tetewá:neren*—a Mohawk phrase meaning “All my relations.” It is pronounced *aw gway-nyah day waw-nay renh*.

As I understand it, the concept of “All my relations” means that we are related to all of creation; human beings, animals, and plants are our relatives. This teaching informs my understanding of how the United Church can live into its vision of being an intercultural church. As Christians, we are to love all of God's creation. We are to exist in a relationship of harmony and balance with all things, animate and inanimate. God's deepest longing is for us to exist in right relation with one another. I am thankful for Indigenous teachings, which encourage me to respect and care for all living things.

Through Indigenous teachings and traditions, the Creator offers us wisdom on how to live. Thanks be to God.

Ponder

- How does the Indigenous teaching of “All my relations” enrich you and your reading of scripture?
- Why are right relations between Indigenous people in Canada and new immigrants important?

Pray

O Lord, the Indigenous people of this land have much to teach us about how to live together in a relationship of peace, harmony, and balance with all of creation. We hope to move to right relations marked by care and respect. Give us wisdom to discern how to live in equality. Amen.

Practise

Visit or get to know a predominantly Indigenous United Church, or take part in an Indigenous-led project or event in your community. Before you go, review the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and reflect on how you will respond to one of the calls. You might also familiarize yourself with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and why its implementation is so important.

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