

SPECIAL
SUNDAY

NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES

Sermon Starter



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church®

Sermon Starter

On Native American Ministries Sunday, you are invited to incorporate some of the ideas in this sermon starter. It is designed to stand alone or to coordinate with the Native American Ministries Sunday liturgy, children's activity, offering talk, children's message and children's bulletin.

Last spring, we began hearing about the unthinkable discovery of mass graves with the remains of more than 200 indigenous children in Canada. It is a reminder of the trauma inflicted by boarding schools, including those run by Methodists in the US, whose main purpose was to destroy language and the culture of Native Americans. Our church has directly been part of the genocide and trauma of Native American people.

"Why bring up ancient history? Why rock the boat?"
We might ask.

Because until we break open the evil among us and name it for what it is, we can't repent of our role in it and ask or receive forgiveness. In this season of resurrection, how do we proclaim life when our actions have caused such harm? We

If not already done earlier in the service, begin the sermon with a land acknowledgment: For thousands of years, the space where we prayerfully gather today was under the care of the SPECIFY THE NATIVE PEOPLE WHO ORIGINALLY LIVED WHERE YOUR CHURCH IS (this map can help you identify the unceded territory your church occupies: <https://native-land.ca/>).

Their presence in this region is remembered and woven into the history of our community. On this Native American Ministries Sunday and every day, we are encouraged to partner in repairing past harm and to move forward with awareness and respect, celebrating and embracing the contributions of First Americans.



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can't experience renewal until the ramifications have been faced and action has been taken for our own transgressions.

According to a letter from the Native American International Caucus to the Council of Bishops, "This unresolved historical trauma associated with the cultural genocide and years of stripping Native Americans of their culture, land and language through the church and government sanctioned boarding schools with the motto 'Kill the Indian, Save the Man,' has wreaked havoc on Native American families. From addictions and domestic abuse to suicide and mental illness, insufficient acknowledgement of the harm perpetuated, and the lack of reparations have damaged Native American communities for generations." (https://www.nejnamc.org/uploads/1/1/7/8/117898543/naic_childrens_advocacy_letter_june_2021.pdf)

In Revelation, John breaks open the reality of the Roman Empire. The oppressive empire is not to be worshipped. Salvation is not found in politics

or government but in relationship with God and God's creation.

As we consider the slaughter of the Native people, and the observation of Good Friday—the slaughter of Christ on the cross just a few weeks ago—do we recognize the power of resurrection that is possible through God's grace?

**“Worthy is the Lamb
that was slaughtered
to receive power and
wealth and wisdom
and might and
honor and glory
and blessing!”**

—Rev. 5:11-12

Are we ready to join our voices with the many angels surrounding the throne . . . the thousands and thousands, “singing with full voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev. 5:11-12).

Our salvation comes from Jesus as we repent and repair not with empty promises but with meaningful change of heart and mind. The United Methodist General Conference resolved in 2016 to affirm “the sacredness of American Indian people, their languages, cultures, and gifts to the church and the world.”



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We celebrate the ministries of our Native American family that are a source of hope and sustenance not only in the communities they serve but for all of us in The United Methodist family. The Rev. David Wilson is the assistant to the bishop in the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. He reminds us that Native Americans have persevered in the faith through the ordeal of being removed from their homelands, contending with racism and dealing with the challenges of unemployment and economic adversity. For more than 180 years, despite this trauma, First Americans have been working through Methodism for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Today we have an opportunity to give blessing and honor to Jesus, the Lamb. By supporting and celebrating Native American ministries with our offering, we begin to repair past harm and participate in sharing Christ's love through seminary scholarships and annual conference outreach, engaging in ministries that equip and empower Native American pastors, congregations and seminary students to authentically worship and serve Jesus with the fullness of culture and heritage.

(Use an example from your own annual conference or this one.) For example, a church of the Tribal people, St. John United Methodist in Fairfield Township, New Jersey, was founded in 1841. The Native American Ministries Sunday offering has provided the community with scholarship assistance, church and community leadership training, vacation Bible school and after school programs that reach children with cultural and scriptural education using a locally designed curriculum and gatherings for elders to study and learn within their own cultural community. And their relationship with other New Jersey churches has led to greater understandings and partnerships.

When we engage in right relationship with God and with God's creation, all the earth responds with joy, "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, "To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" (Rev. 5:13, NRSV).

Alleluia! Amen.

