

SPECIAL
SUNDAY

NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES SUNDAY

SERMON STARTER



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church®

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This sermon starter is part of the Native American Ministries Sunday pastor and leader kit and connects with the theme “God’s Promise of Restoration” based on Acts 2:14a, 36-41. It can be adapted for your context.

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 Indigenous 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 participate in repairing past harm and moving forward with awareness and respect, celebrating and embracing the contributions of First Americans.

As we consider the history of Methodism in relation to Native American communities, we recognize complicity in genocide and trauma. Sadly, the

Sand Creek Massacre was led by a Methodist pastor in 1863. The attack destroyed a village and slaughtered 230 people, two-thirds of whom were women, children and the elderly.

Boarding schools, including those run by Methodists in the US, inflicted trauma on Native American children. Some of the Indian boarding schools were established by Methodists, including The Shawnee Methodist Indian Manual Labor School in Fairway, Kansas, and Asbury Manual Labor School in Fort Mitchell, Alabama.

And how many of us have turned away from the epidemic of missing and murdered Native women and girls? Lord have mercy!

In today’s scripture reading, Peter encourages the people whom he accused of crucifying Jesus to repent. It is in acts of repentance that we find forgiveness and “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”



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Now surely, there were people whom Peter addressed who thought, “Wait. I wasn’t even in Jerusalem at the time. This doesn’t apply to me.”

But Peter recognizes the corruption in systems that allows evil to flourish. And through the power of the Holy Spirit, through acts of repentance, we can move to a place of healing. We can live in the fullness of our baptismal vows. We can receive fully the promise of the resurrection and new life that God offers us. And, we can ensure others have the opportunity to fully receive God’s promises.

It was just a few weeks ago that we observed Good Friday. We continue to participate in the crucifixion of God’s people when we fail to repair the harm against our Native siblings who are asking for our support and recognition. Do we recognize the power of resurrection that is possible through God’s grace? Do we recognize the restoration of God’s people in acts of repentance, healing and celebration?

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.”

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. For more

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than 180 years, First Americans have been working through Methodism for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In November 2022, the Rev. David Wilson was elected to become the first Native American bishop in the history of The United Methodist Church,



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...serving as the episcopal leader of the Great Plains Conference. As a member of the Choctaw Nation, his election to the episcopacy is but one more sign that the gifts and graces of God's children can bring about restoration.

Today we have an opportunity to continue that restoration of relationship in partnership with God. 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 worship and serve Jesus with the fullness of culture and heritage.

When we are in right relationship with God and with God's creation, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and we join in the promise that Peter proclaimed is "for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him."

Alleluia! Amen.



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