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June is National Indigenous History Month in Canada. So, today, we will hear words and Scripture in a First Nations translation as we continue to learn from each other. Some of the words are taken from services for the National Indigenous Day of Prayer from past years. Let us open our time together.

In the First Nations culture they will sometimes call the Holy Spirit, Great Spirit, God as the Honoured Chief, and Jesus as Creator Sets Free. Join me in our responsive call to worship.

Come Great Spirit, as we gather in your name.

We face East: To your symbol colour Red, the hue of revelation; To your animal symbol the Eagle, strong and nurturing; To your lessons calling us to the balance of your Spirit in Harmony with brothers and sisters; To invoke your wisdom and grace, the goodness of the ages, We pray:

ALL: Come Holy Spirit, Come.

We turn to face South: To your symbol colour Gold for the morning star. To your symbol Brother Sun that enlightens our intellect and brings light on our path to live responsibly; To your lessons calling us to balance of Mind

in the Spirit of humility; To invoke your spirit of illumination and far sighted vision; Help us to love you and one another with our whole heart, our whole mind, and our whole soul. We pray:

ALL: Come Holy Spirit, Come.

We turn to face West: To your symbol colour Black, still and quiet. To your animal symbol the Thunderbird; To your symbol the Thunder mighty and purposeful; To your lessons calling us to balance our emotions in the spirit of Gentleness and Honesty; To invoke your spirit of introspection, seeing within; Give us your strength and the courage to endure, We pray:

ALL: Come Holy Spirit, Come.

We turn to face North: To your symbol colour white of clarity and brightness. To your animal symbol the swan which brings us in touch with Mother Earth and growing things; To your lessons calling us to balance of our Body in the spirit of a good sense of humour; To invoke your spirit of innocence, trust and love; Help us to open our eyes to the sacredness of every living thing, We pray:

ALL: Come Holy Spirit, Come.

We turn to complete the circle and to look: To God, our Creator who cleanses our Mother Earth with snow, wind and rain; To Jesus Christ, the Peacemaker who fills us with

the wideness of mercy and lovingly embraces all, and the Holy Spirit who inspires us to action:

ALL: Come Holy Spirit, Come.

Hear the First Nations Translation of Philippians 4:4-9

Always dance with joy before our Honoured Chief! I will say it again: dance with joy! Let everyone see how kind and thoughtful you are. Our Honoured Chief is close at hand. Do not let your hearts be weighed down with anything. Instead, with every step you take, send your voice to the Great Spirit, asking him for the things you need. And in all your prayers remember to give him thanks. Then the peace and harmony of the Great Spirit, which goes far beyond our small and weak ways of thinking, will watch over your hearts and minds through the Chosen One, Creator Sets Free (Jesus). Last of all, my sacred family members, if anything can be seen as good and honourable, think deeply about these things. Things that are true and noble, upright and pure, full of beauty and worthy of respect. Follow the way of life you have seen in me, the things you have learned from me, heard from me, and received from me. Keep walking in the traditions I have passed on to you. Then the Great Spirit of Peace will continue to walk with you on this road.

Let us pray,

Creator God, from you every family in heaven and earth takes its name. You have rooted and grounded us in your covenant love, and empowered us by your Spirit to speak the truth in love, and to walk in your way towards justice and wholeness. Mercifully grant that your people, journeying together in partnership, may be strengthened and guided to help one another to grow into the full stature of Christ, who is our light and our life. And as we prepare ourselves for worship, through singing, prayers, Scripture, and your message, may our hearts and minds be open to what you are calling and asking us. Come Holy Spirit, come. Amen.

Songs

Children's Story

Pusu'l - This means hello in the Mi'kmaq language. Maria is a girl who lives in Mi'kma'ki, which we know as Nova Scotia. She lives on a reserve, where she goes to a school and learns about her people and the Mi'kmaq language that they spoke many years ago. Maria's grandmother is known as a knowledge keeper, which means she knows many stories about the Mi'kmaq people. The Mi'kmaq will often tell stories instead of writing them down, similar to the people of the Bible times, when much wasn't written

down. Then a lot was spread through an oral culture. For the Mi'kmaq, sometimes they drew pictures to leave a message for their friends. Do you know what the pictures were called? Petroglyphs. When we've gone to Keji there are areas blocked off that people are not allowed to go to because of the preservation of the petroglyphs, which they would tell stories through these pictures. (Show video.)

In The Gospel of Luke, Jesus tells a story we call, The Good Samaritan, about a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho who is attacked by robbers, beaten, and left half dead on the road. He's ignored by a priest and a levite. But a Samaritan — someone Jews at the time would have looked down on — stops, feels compassion, bandages the man's wounds, puts him on his donkey, takes him to an inn, and pays for his care.

Jesus ends by asking: "Which of these was a neighbor?" The answer: the one who showed mercy. Jesus says, "Go and do likewise."

The parable teaches that loving your neighbor means showing compassion and mercy to anyone in need, regardless of differences, prejudice, or social boundaries.

Unfortunately, when there are differences between cultures, some people don't treat those with differences very nicely. The lady in the video mentions that the French Catholics had a good relationship with the Mi'kmaq

people, but we also hear stories of how First Nations people have not always been treated well, especially more recently through the residential schools. And so, I want you to think, when you meet people who come from different cultures, or different backgrounds, instead of trying to change them to make them more like you, why not learn about them and their culture. This is one of the things I have enjoyed the most at the Acadia Divinity College, is meeting people from around the world and getting to know more about them, where they are from, and their cultures. We all can learn from each other, and can show a little more compassion and mercy to those in need around us. Remember what Jesus says at the end of this parable...Go and do likewise.

Prayer (When I say, Lord in your mercy...you respond with, hear our prayer)

O God, we come together as a human family, blessed to be alive, blessed to be on this land, blessed to have neighbours as diverse as your creation. You surround us with air we breathe, water we drink, all manner of living plants and animals that delight us and sustain us. Thank you, Creator, for all you provide...Hear us as we give thanks saying, Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

O God, today we give thanks for Indigenous leaders, neighbours and friends in our community. We lament that historic and contemporary racism continues to mar our relations. We lament the church's role as beneficiaries of an economic and governance system that privileges settler peoples at the expense of the First Peoples of this land. We lament apathy in the face of the need for change, change that recognizes the sovereignty of the First Peoples and recognizes at long last, in ways that make a difference, the sacredness of the land and the need for all of us to walk humbly upon it. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Hear us now as we pray for those hurting and in pain in all our communities: For anyone worn down by systemic racism, including by government and by the church, that settler Canadians and those with power will change their thinking and how they live so justice will finally come. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

For survivors of residential schools, and their families that continue to live with that legacy, that justice will finally come. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

For those Indigenous women and girls who are among the

thousands of murdered and missing, for them and their families, our lament at the shame of what has happened and our pledge to advocate for their safety, that justice will finally come. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

For the air, that all might breathe it clean and free, that justice might finally come. For the waters—marshlands, lakes, rivers, streams. For the great seas and oceans. That they might be protected for the benefit of seven generations hence, that justice will finally come. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

For the lands, forests, grass, and farmlands. For the prairies, foothills, and mountains. For their beauty, for the life that teems within, upon, and over them, for the reprioritization of the health of ecosystems over profit, so justice will finally come. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

For the animals, birds, fish, and life of all kinds whose viability is being threatened by unsustainable human activity, that their lives will begin to count so that justice will finally come. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

All this, as well as the prayers of our hearts, O God, we lift

up to you. Hear our celebrations as we claim anew our kinship with you and with all our relations. Hear our laments, and grow our hearts full of compassion for self and other as we leave this place to be a better friend and neighbour to all. We pray in the name of Creator, who is Mother and Father of us all. We pray as well in the Spirit of Christ, whose words continue to guide our lives today. Praying the words he taught us:

Our Father...

Luke 10:25-37 (First Nations Translation)

A scroll keeper, one who was skilled in his knowledge of tribal law, came to Creator Sets Free (Jesus) to test him and trap him in his words. "Wisdomkeeper," he said. "What path must I walk to have the life of the world to come that never fades away, full of beauty and harmony?" He answered him, "What is written in our tribal law about this? Tell me, how do you see it?" The scroll keeper spoke from the words of the law, "You must love the Great Spirit from deep within, with the strength of your arms, the thoughts of your mind, and the courage of your heart, and you must love your fellow human beings in the same way you love yourselves. "You have answered well," Creator Set Free (Jesus) said back to him. "If you walk this path you will live." But the scroll keeper, wanting to look good to others,

asked him, "Who are my fellow human beings?" Creator Set Free (Jesus) answered him with a story. "There was a man walking the road from Village of Peace (Jerusalem) to Moon Village (Jericho). On the way he was attacked by thieves, who beat him, stripped him of his clothes, and left him bleeding to death. Now it happened that a holy man was on the same road, not far behind. When he saw the man, he went around him on the other side of the road. Not far behind him was another man, also from the tribe hole men are chosen from. When he saw the wounded man, he did the same thing as the holy man. Then a man from High Place (Samaria), who was also walking the road, saw the wounded man. Even though he was not a Tribal Member but a mixed blood despised by the tribal people, he felt pity for the man. He helped him by pouring good medicine on his wounds and wrapping them in a cloth. He put the man on his own animal and took him to a lodging house to care for him. The next day, when the man of High Place (Samaria) was leaving, he gave from his own money pouch to the keeper of the lodging house. 'Use this to care for him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will give you anything more that is needed.'" Creator Set Free (Jesus) then looked at the scroll keeper and said, "Which one of these three acted as a fellow human being to the man who was attacked by the thieves?" The scroll keeper answered, "The one who had pity on him." "Go," Creator Set Free (Jesus) said, "and walk in the same way."

Everyone is you, living a different life. Treat them as such.

The story of the Good Samaritan that we read today, Jesus begins with “What is written in the law?”, as the lawyer has asked what must he do to inherit eternal life. The lawyer responds, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus says, “Correct, do this.” This can take us back to another passage in the Gospel of Luke, known as the Golden Rule, when Jesus says in Luke 6:31 “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” And I would say, as humanity, we’re not really good at doing to others as we would have them do to us.

Everyone is someone loved by God, living a different life and carrying different burdens. Treat them with the same grace, dignity, and care you hope to receive yourself. Jesus teaches us in the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” This is more than treating people according to our own preferences; it calls us to love our neighbours with empathy, humility, and compassion.

As someone once said, “Real love listens. It seeks to understand before speaking, and to serve rather than assume.” But how much assumptions do we often do! “We

[need to] recognize that our experiences are not universal, and that every person has joys, wounds, fears, and hopes we may not fully see. Empathy grows when we take time to know others genuinely and heart-to-heart — listening without rushing to judgment or criticism. This kind of love reflects the way Christ sees people. When we begin to see others not as problems to solve or categories to sort, but as fellow image-bearers of God, it changes how we respond to injustice, oppression, loneliness, and suffering. Christian discipleship calls us to love our neighbours deeply, pursue justice humbly, and reflect the compassion of Christ in a hurting world.”

It's not always easy. I remember when I worked at an experiential school for at-risk youth, there was a lot of prejudice toward some of the students. People would sometimes assume they were lazy, dangerous, disrespectful, or beyond help before ever hearing their stories. Some came from difficult home situations, struggled with mental health, poverty, trauma, or addiction in their families. Others had simply made mistakes that followed them everywhere. Because of these labels, some of them found it easier to just let the labels continue than to try to change people's minds. Or they were so used to people letting them down they weren't willing to open up, it was easier to keep their hard outer shell...and can you blame them? I remember how hard it could be to connect

with some of them as they didn't want to open up, they didn't want to let anyone in. They had opened up before and only got hurt. It reminded me how quickly we can label people instead of seeing them as human beings loved by God. But Jesus consistently looked beyond labels. He saw the person first.

A few different years with these groups, we travelled to Bear River First Nations, and for three days, two nights, we had the pleasure of experiencing some of the Mi'kmaq culture. We lived in cabins within the woods, eating some of the Mi'kmaq food, learning their traditions, we got to make wood flowers, baskets, learn dances, and many other aspects of their culture, as we learned from various elders. What stood out to me most was how people who had often felt unseen or misunderstood began to truly see one another. Walls started coming down. Students who were used to being judged were welcomed with patience and dignity. And many of us realized how much we miss when we rely on stereotypes instead of listening to people's stories. It reminded me that reconciliation, compassion, and love all begin the same way: by choosing to see the person in front of us as someone made in the image of God. It reminded me of the Good Samaritan. Compassion begins when we stop defining people by labels, assumptions, or differences and start seeing them as neighbours.

When the lawyer continues, asking “Who is my neighbour?” This is where Jesus responds with the story of the neighbour. For most Jews, a neighbour was another Jew, not a Samaritan or a Gentile. But Jesus deliberately chose an outsider, and a hated one at that, for his hero in order to indicate that being a neighbor is not a matter of nationality or race. Who is Jesus asking you to be a neighbour to?

The other night I went for a late night stroll with Oreo throughout town. There have been lots of conversation about the homeless situation in Kentville recently. People have started complaining and were saying they were now scared to go walking at night, but what I saw when I walked the streets, didn't scare me, it pained me. I knew of the situation, but this was the first time I had seen so many sleeping in any little hole they could find. Three on this door step, another three curled together for warmth on the next step, across the step someone else, then another. It seemed like everywhere I turned, there was another human being, one of God's creation, with all of their belongings they owned, stuffed into a bag, being used a pillow between their head and the hard concrete. Unfortunately, many of them have labels placed upon them, and sometimes it becomes easier to live into those labels than to fight against them. Compassion begins when we stop defining people by labels, assumptions, or

differences and start seeing them as neighbours.

Murray Sinclair was an Anishinaabe from Manitoba and attended a residential school as a child. He spoke about the loneliness, racism, and loss many Indigenous children experienced in those schools. Due to labels, assumptions, and differences, many children were treated as though their culture, language, and identity were something to be erased rather than valued. Instead of being seen as children created in the image of God, they were often made to feel invisible, unwanted, and less than human. Instead of allowing that pain to define his future, Murray devoted his life to justice, truth, and reconciliation. He became the first Indigenous judge appointed in Manitoba, a lawyer and senator, and most famously, the chair of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. One of Murray Sinclair's most quoted statements was: "Education got us into this mess, and education will get us out." And for me, this education is found in Scripture, following the life Jesus led, through the stories we hear: who does God call us to be to our neighbours?

The Good Samaritan story ends with mercy and restoration. But in our world, many stories do not end so neatly. For many Indigenous families affected by the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, or families affected by Residential Schools there has been deep grief, unanswered questions, and generations of pain.

In 2023 the Reverend Victoria Scott stated, "There are epidemic rates of suicide, diabetes, addiction, violence and incarceration among Indigenous peoples. There are many Indigenous communities without access to clean water." And when you think of the trauma that has happened throughout their history, why wouldn't there be? How can we support our First Nations brothers and sisters?

Can you imagine living without access to clean water?...There is one community in Neskantaga First Nation, that has been under a boil-water advisory for over 30 years. Can you imagine? One day, and I've had enough! That means an entire generation of people growing up never being able to safely drink water from the tap. Community members have often had to rely on bottled water or boil water for drinking, cooking, brushing teeth, and bathing. We would be outraged and demand this situation to be fixed, if we lived in that community.

It's been seven years, "since the Final Report on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls which revealed that persistent and deliberate human and Indigenous rights violations and abuses are the root cause behind Canada's staggering rates of violence against Indigenous women and girls. Present brokenness in Indigenous communities, harms to Indigenous people, tells us that we are not living from a place of heart connection where our thoughts and actions acknowledge that "Everyone is

someone loved by God, living a different life and carrying different burdens. Treat them as such.”

Jesus came proclaiming a message of radical love and acceptance, but this is not always what we live out. It is certainly not what was lived out in the Residential Schools. It is not lived out when we question the truths that Residential School survivors tell, or when we try to relegate the trauma and suffering of survivors to a dark chapter in the past. Jesus came proclaiming a message of solidarity, particularly with those who are vulnerable and marginalized. Jesus’ message of radical love, acceptance and solidarity is not lived out when we condemn identities and relationships that might look different from our own.

The call of Jesus in the Good Samaritan is not simply to feel pity from a distance. It is to become neighbours — to listen...to notice suffering, to refuse indifference, and to respond with compassion, dignity, and action. Perhaps one of the hardest questions for us today is this: Who have we passed by? Who has been left wounded at the side of the road while society looked away? Jesus calls His followers not to cross to the other side, but to see, to stop, to listen, and to act with compassion and justice.

The Seven Grandfather Teachings are traditional Indigenous teachings that have been passed down through generations, emphasizing virtues that help people live in right relationship with the Creator, one another, and

creation. Each teaching is represented by an animal and finds meaningful connections with biblical wisdom.

Love (Eagle) – Love begins with the Creator and is expressed through love for oneself and others. As Colossians 3:14 reminds us, *“And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”*

Respect (Buffalo) – The buffalo symbolizes respect through its willingness to give of itself for the good of others. Scripture calls us to this same humility and honor toward one another: *“Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another”* (1 Peter 5:5).

Courage (Bear) – The true definition of courage is a mother bear’s ferociousness when it comes to her cubs being approached, very much like a human mother when she comes to her child. Courage is facing fear and difficulty with strength and determination. The bear teaches bravery, with 2 Timothy 1:7 declaring, *“God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”*

Honesty (Sabe) – Long ago, there was a giant called Kitchi-Sabe. It walked among the people to remind them to be honest to the law of the Creator and with each other. The highest honour bestowed on a person was the saying, *“There walks an honest man, he can be trusted.”* Keeping the promises one made to the Creator or to others and self was to be truly honest. The Elders said live true to your

spirit, never try to be someone else. Honesty means living truthfully and being faithful to our commitments.

Ephesians 4:25 echoes this value: *“Put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.”*

Wisdom (Beaver) – The beaver’s example of using its sharp teeth for cutting down trees and branches to build its dams and lodges expresses this teaching. If the beaver didn’t use its teeth in this way, the teeth would continue to grow until they became useless, ultimately making it impossible for the beaver to sustain itself. The same can be said for human beings. One’s spirit will grow weak if it is not fulfilling its use. Wisdom comes from using our God-given gifts well for the benefit of the community. James 3:13 teaches, *“Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.”*

Humility (Wolf) – The wolf teaches them humility; it bows his head in the presence of others in deference, and once it has hunted the wolf will not take any of the food until it can be shared with the pack. Humility recognizes the Creator as greater than ourselves and places others before self. Proverbs 18:12 reminds us, *“Humility comes before honor.”*

Truth (Turtle) – Truth is knowing and remaining faithful to the Creator's ways. As 1 John 5:20 proclaims, *“We may know him who is true... He is the true God and eternal life.”*

These teachings remind us of values that are deeply cherished in many First Nations communities and that resonate strongly with the biblical call to live lives marked by love, respect, courage, honesty, wisdom, humility, and truth. These teachings remind us that faith is not only something we believe, but something we live. Love, humility, respect, honesty, courage, wisdom, and truth are not meant to remain ideas we admire from a distance — they are meant to shape the way we see one another and the way we walk through the world as neighbours. We are called into relationship — with God, with one another, and with creation itself. Try to live as if everyone is you, living a different life. Treat them as such. Amen.