

June 1, 2014

AN OPEN LETTER
TO
ALL UNITED METHODIST BISHOPS
SERVING IN THE UNITED STATES

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Greetings, grace, and peace in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

For several years it has been my honor to serve as the representative from the Council of Bishops to the Native American Comprehensive Plan (NACP). The NACP is one of three groups within our United Methodist structure that monitor and oversee the work of ministry among Native Americans and other indigenous people. The other two entities are the Native American International Caucus and the office of Native American and Indigenous Ministries of the General Board of Global Ministries. All three organizations provide valuable insights and information regarding the First Americans.

In 2012 at our General Conference in Tampa, Florida, our denomination entered into a four-year process of intentionally nurturing relationships and engaging in genuine healing work with Native Americans and indigenous people. A first step was when we participated at that conference in “An Act of Repentance Toward Healing Relationships with Indigenous People.” Also, we approved Resolution No. 3324, “Trail of Repentance and Healing.” Since that time some of our annual conferences have taken action to recognize the harm inflicted by the Church and to celebrate the contributions of Native people; others have not.

For United Methodists in the United States to acknowledge the plight of those who have suffered at the hands of our government and Church, we are required to do more than have one worship service. We can and should do more to develop reconciling connections.

Enclosed with this letter is a document that has been crafted by leaders of the three groups named above. I commend it to you. This extremely important correspondence beckons our United Methodist Church to action regarding Native people. This is a “wake-up call” that deserves your attention and response.

In just a few months, the Council of Bishops will journey to Oklahoma to continue this Council’s engagement in repentance and reconciliation, building upon our time last November in Cherokee, North Carolina. It is my prayer that we will come with a resolve that allows us to move beyond rhetoric to display genuine compassion and concern.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Hayes, Jr.
Oklahoma Area, The United Methodist Church