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Gathering and Sending: Welcome, Greetings, Blessings WEBINAR II

Donald W. Sjoberg and Susan C. Johnson*

Acknowledgement[†] of Indigenous Neighbours and Territories: Taking A Google Earth Perspective¹

Blessings to everyone, the Lord be with you. Don invited us at the last webinar to get to meet our *neighbors* as a way of sharing the Gospel, and so tonight I am going to begin with Acknowledging some of our First Nations, Inuit, and Metis neighbours as Lutherans from coast to coast to coast.

I'm going to begin with the People of the Dawn, those who receive the first light, and I'm going to move across to the setting of the Sun.² So tonight, we greet and give thanks to the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet people, our neighbors in the East, in the Atlantic. And we acknowledge all the Peoples of the Wabanaki Confederacy, and we give thanks for their extended kindness to us.³

We greet and give thanks to the Peoples of the Great Peace of 1701 signed at Montreal,⁴ the confederacy and treaty agreement that extended from south of the St. Lawrence including the Haudenosaunee peoples and north of the St. Lawrence extending to include all of the peoples around Montreal and into northern Quebec, but extending more so, into the Council Fires of the Great Lakes.

And we greet and we give thanks for the First Peoples of the East, the Inuit peoples who first met our Lutheran ancestors when Jens Munk/Munck and Rasmus Jensen came through the Hudson Strait back in 1619.⁵ We give thanks for the hospitality and the kindness they have shown to us and our ancestors. And we greet and give thanks for the First Peoples of the Named Treaties,⁶ those who were participating in later treaties with us as People of Canada, we greet you and we give thanks for you.

We greet and give thanks for the Peoples of the Numbered Treaties.⁷ Particularly we think of the Peoples of Treaty One Territory in Winnipeg, the Homeland of the Metis. But the Numbered Treaty territories extended back into northern Ontario after having begun around Winnipeg, so we greet tonight and give thanks for all of the many peoples of the Numbered Treaties who are our treaty neighbours.

And we greet and give thanks for all of the prairie First Nations and Metis Peoples⁸ who have been our neighbors for so long—and through such considerable difficult times—

* See the Foreword of this issue of *Consensus* for biographical information.

† Karen Kuhnert gave this Acknowledgement to open Webinar II of the Webinar Series “For the Sake of the Gospel,” hosted by the Remembering Today for the Church of Tomorrow Project in partnership with Martin Luther University College and Lutheran Theological Seminary. This Acknowledgement was given November 15, 2022. The Acknowledgement was done while using Google Earth to take webinar participants across the land, air, and water of the Territories and Peoples being Acknowledged—this is a decolonizing technique. This decolonizing technique breaks the internalized Google Maps view of many Settler people and offers reconnection through a “Google Earth” view (see Endnote 1).

including drought, and including snow and ice; we greet and give thanks for them. And as we cross over the Rocky Mountains, we recognize the First Peoples of the Pacific, the First Nations along our western coastline and the interior of those mountain territories; we greet and give thanks for them.⁹

And we greet and give thanks for the peoples of the North. Particularly we think of those in the Yukon Territory, and especially our dear friends the Gwitch'In.¹⁰ We give thanks for them and greet them. And we give thanks and greet the Inuvialuit of the Western Arctic; we greet you and give thanks for you. We recognize these many First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Peoples among whom we have been blessed to call this place home. We give thanks for your stewardship, for your kindness, and for the ways that you have treated us as neighbours. And we ask that we can live now and always into better treaty relationship with you.

Prayer

For all of these whom we have greeted,
we give you thanks, O God, for your love and for your grace. Amen.¹¹

Gathering: Welcome and Greetings

Don Sjoberg

Karen, that was beautiful, your greeting, your prayer. Thank you for joining us—everyone! It is fun to look over faces and recognize many of you. It is great to be together. I'm so pleased that Susan, Bishop Susan Johnson, is with us after her return a short few days ago from the World Council of Churches Executive Committee meeting. Bishop Susan will be speaking to us at the close and leading us in prayer and blessing, and we look forward to that.

I thank Susan and the Conference of Bishops for their encouragement for our project. We feel good in being able to report to them somewhat of what we are about. We mean nothing that is injurious to the welfare of our church and so forth, but are earnestly trusting that our efforts to remember the past will be useful for the church of tomorrow.

And it is wonderful that we have representation at these webinars that is throughout our ELCIC. Thank you. I want to recognize Bishop Michael Pryse; I was able to spot him of the Eastern Synod. And welcome Bishop Jason Zinko of the Manitoba–Northwestern Ontario Synod. We are so pleased to once again be with you in this way. I, for one, am looking forward to another great presentation by Dr. Gordon Jensen, which will be a little later on.¹² Thank you.

Bishop Susan, it is so good to see you. Seeing you brings back many memories of you and your father and, oh my goodness, your grandfather. I'm just thinking, what is it like to be National Bishop today? It's been almost 30 years since I retired from that Office. I remember, as I left the Office as synod bishop to go to become the national bishop, I didn't have the same kind of relationships with pastors and congregations, and I thought—what is my role now? It was an exciting one because we were growing, we were together and so forth, and busy with this national office, but I was still wondering “What am I about?” And one of the synod bishops said, “Don, you are now the national expression, our national church expression in the world and in Canada.” What is it to be an expression?

I'm speaking of you now. I saw the expression of you at the Truth and Reconciliation gathering in Edmonton in 2014.¹³ You spoke so beautifully, with sensitivity and empathy. Even though our church was not involved, you recognized our sins of omission as it were,

and our full responsibility to be reconciled in the whole way we have to go, and that was beautiful. That was an expression that I wanted in our church, and you gave it.¹⁴

And then I'm thinking of other forms of expression. I see your face with a smile and so forth. I'd wondered whether you'd be back from Geneva to be with us, and Paul Gehrs assured me that you would. He said, "She loves to give greetings." And I would think that one of your gifts is delight. You take delight, as it were, in the worship, and in the Lord, and with people and so forth. That is gospel life. That's beautiful. And I thank you for that. That's a gift.

And we also are delighted in your delight. And we are delighted that you are here. Thank you so much.

Susan Johnson

Don, Bishop Don. It is so weird for me to hear you call me "Bishop," because of course—you are the national expression of our church to me still. I feel like an impostor compared to you. But thank you so much for your kind words, and thank you first, for recognizing delight as a gift. I'm going to treasure that; that's lovely.

I am just back from Geneva, where I was representing not just our church, but all Canadian churches, on the World Council of Churches Executive Committee. I am the only Canadian on the Executive Committee. The Lord has an incredible sense of humor because I'm on the Finance sub-committee. And have also been appointed to the Audit subcommittee, so I have to brush up on some skills I don't get to use as much. But it is an honor to represent our church.

I love our church—sinful as it sometimes is, and shrinking as it is, and struggling as it is. I love our church and it's always a delight to be able to bring greetings wherever I am, most recently in Geneva, but not long before that in Argentina and Uruguay, where we have partner church relationships, and then in Brazil. So, I always greet from our siblings in Christ, from coast to coast to coast that make up this part of the family of God that we call the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

And that's the way I think of us, as a church family. And families have challenges sometimes. And families love to get together other times. And families have a lot of memories and stories that they tell. And I want to thank you, and Karen and Stephen and Gordon, and the two seminaries and others (who I have probably missed some names of), for helping bring together this day of storytelling. I found myself both embarrassed and very touched by the Campus Ministry video because of the many, many memories it brought for me of a really significant part of my life. And of course, as you mentioned, Don, of my father as well. So thank you all for that gift.¹⁵

Gordon, I took notes and I will be thinking about what you said. I'll probably ask for your paper, please. But it's true. We need to keep focusing on how God is calling us now to respond for the sake of the gospel.

Sending: Blessings¹⁶

I'd like to close with a prayer from a collection put together by Sarah Bessey; it's called *The Rhythm of Prayer* and if you don't have it, you should get it because it's wonderful. The prayer I want to use today is called "a Prayer For the Tired Angry Ones."

God, we're so tired.

We want to do justice, but the work feels endless and the results look so small in our exhausted hands.

We want to love mercy, but our enemies are relentless and it feels like foolishness to prioritize gentleness in this unbelievably cruel world.

We want to walk humbly, but self-promotion is seductive and we are afraid that if we don't look after ourselves, no one else will.

We want to be kind, but our anger feels insatiable. Jesus, in this never-ending wilderness, come to us and grant us grace.

Give us the courage to keep showing up to impossible battles, trusting that it is our commitment to faithfulness and not our obsession with results that will bring in your Shalom.

Grant us the vulnerability to risk loving our difficult and complicated neighbor, rejecting the lie that some people are made more in the image of God than others.

Grant us the humility of a de-centered but beloved self.

As we continue to take the single step that is in front of us, Jesus keep us from becoming what we are called to transform.

Protect us from using the Empire's violence in our words, in our theology, in our activism, and in our politics for your Kingdom of peace.

Keep our anger from becoming meanness.

Keep our sorrow from collapsing into self-pity.

Keep our hearts soft enough to keep breaking.

Keep our outrage turned towards justice, not cruelty.

Remind us that all of this, every bit of it, is for love.

Keep us fiercely kind.

Amen

Endnotes

¹ To "look again" at our history with a Google Maps/Google Earth "zoom in" and "zoom out" perspective and a Spirit of Adventure was articulated in Kuhnert, Karen (2012) "Only If: Lutheran Identity in Canada," *Consensus*, 34, no 1, Article 3. <https://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol34/iss1/3>. This was also presented to the Eastern Synod Deans and Directors Meeting in the Spring of 2012. Interactive Google Maps of each ELCIC Ministry Area by Synod of Lutherans and First Nations, Inuit, and Metis neighbours (*with contact information for determining resources to Acknowledge and build relationships*) were provided at the ELCIC National Church convention, July 2015.

² This understanding was informed by a presentation on the Wabanaki Confederacy, the Nanfan Treaty (Albany, 1701) and the Great Peace of Montreal (Montreal, 1701) by Wolastoqiyik Maliseet Elder Alma Brooks and Passamaquoddy Chief Hugh Akagi given to the Kairos Indigenous Rights Circle Meeting November 22, 2012, St. Andrews by-the-Sea, New Brunswick with Karen Kuhnert in attendance. This understanding was informed by the gathering host who made additional presentations, KIRC/KAIROS Elder gkisedtanamoogk (it; thing), Wampanoag, resident of Esgenoôpetitj (Burnt Church First Nation). The Wabanaki (translated roughly as "People of the First Light") confederacy stretched in colonial times from the eastern edge of the provinces of Canada and the American States south to the Carolinas and west as far as the Great Lakes. This alliance consisted of at least fifty nations. Member nations of the Wabanaki Confederacy engaged in what the Canadian Government calls "Peace and Friendship Treaties" <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/peace-and-friendship-treaties>. The Government of Canada's own explanation of treaty subject terminology is available at <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100028589/1539608999656>. In 2013 the "Wabanaki Confederacy" was recognized as consisting of Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, Abenaki, and Penobscot nations. In this same year, 2013, the Confederacy grandmothers (kokums) alliance was stretching geographically from the mid-continent

Algonquin territories to the Atlantic coast—as did the alliance in the time of the Great Peace of Montreal, 1701. This 2013 resurgence of the ancient alliance was in response to fracking in New Brunswick, and the moving forward by industry without the Free Prior and Informed Consent of the Peoples of the Land (which would not have been granted). The grandmother ceremonies had previously been banned by the Government and so both the rituals being done, and the reporting thereof, were pre-TRC Report acts of resistance, see <https://www.kairoscanada.org/letter-from-algonquin-grandmothers-attending-wabanaki-confederacy-conference>

³ “People” in the Wabanaki spirituality and worldview includes the land, the trees, the animals, the rocks—as all things are related. “We’re everything. We’re not just a species standing apart from everything else,” gkisedtanamoogk, see <http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/fr/story/rebuilding-wabanaki-confederacy/12494>. This Acknowledgement is also informed by the presentation of Lunenburg County–born Mi’kmaq Elder Billy Lewis to the ELCIC Atlantic Ministry Area Spring Conference meeting in Lunenburg County, June 7, 2015, attended by Karen Kuhnert, and her Archivist visit to the Mi’kmaq Native Friendship Centre June 6, 2015, Halifax, Nova Scotia. The use of “Peoples” is also an Acknowledgement of the Collective Rights of First Peoples and their right to assert their resistance to Western culture’s preferred Individual “Rights and Freedoms.” KIRC work on The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was significantly directed towards the goal of having Church and Society turn away from asserting an exclusive Individual Rights/Western worldview as an act of solidarity to pressure the Canadian Government to act on UNDRIP. This included advocacy work to prepare presentations for the World Council of Churches meeting in Busan, Korea, and the summoning of a UN Special Rapporteur to Canada which resulted in the visit of James Anaya.

⁴ This understanding was informed by the presentation on the Great Peace of Montreal (1701) by Brooks and Akagi on the occasion noted above. This understanding was informed by presentations from the staff of the Anishinabek Nation, November 8, 2011, North Bay, Ontario. This understanding was also informed by presentations by Elders Albert Dumont and Barabara Hill-Dumont, Algonquin Anishinabeg from Kitigan Zibi (Quebec), during the KAIROS “Time for Reconciliation” Inter-generational Event May 29–June 3, 2015. This understanding was also Informed by an Archivist visit to the Chippewas of Rama Cultural and Research Centre, October 3, 2016. Finally, this understanding was informed by Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Elders Frank and Julie Ozawagosh, from teachings at the Nord500North “Rebels With A Cause?” Conference to Commemorate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation Movement, Sudbury, Ontario, September 21–22, 2017.

⁵ This understanding was informed by multiple presentations from Deborah Tagornak, KIRC Member from Naujaat/Repulse Bay (Kivalliq Region, Nunavut) and Ottawa, Ontario. The link between Lutherans and Tagornak’s ancestors was referenced at multiple events, including by Tagornak at the Installation of Karen Kuhnert in St. Jacobs, Ontario, with Stephen Larson preaching, January 11, 2017. Munck’s encounters with Inuit in the Hudson Strait and in the Hudson’s Bay is described in Carl R. Cronmiller, *A History of the Lutheran Church in Canada*, Ontario: Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Canada, 1961, 11–21.

⁶ This understanding is informed by numerous presentations by Priscilla Solomon, CSJ, Ojibway, Member of KIRC from North Bay, Ontario. Sister Solomon is a daughter of Elders Dr. Arthur Solomon and Eva (Pelletier) Solomon. The community of North Bay and the Offices of the Anishinibek Nation are on land covered by the Robinson Huron Treaty of 1850, and the Office hosted the KIRC Circle on November 8, 2011. When referring to Treaties it is always important to remember that descriptions are perspectival. A good overview of the *government of Canada’s organizational understanding of Treaties* is available at <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100028574/1529354437231#chp3>. This site is very helpful for identifying the “Numbered Treaties and the “Named Treaties” that came into existence between the time of the “Peace and Friendship Treaties” (cited above) and our contemporary era. Readers are reminded that information on the Government website is not value neutral fact—it is the Government of Canada’s perspective for its own citizenry on the matters of the Nation to Nation relationships. See also, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1360948213124/1544620003549> and also <https://www.canadashistory.ca/explore/settlement-immigration/the-numbered-treaties>. The Nations with which the Government of Canada has Treaty relationships have their own understandings which are not value neutral fact. The Parties to these agreements, and their beneficiaries who carry responsibilities for the truth of the agreements and the sustaining of relationships, have perspectives. There is nowhere in Canada

where the land was “empty” before European contact. The entire geography of Canada was covered by Treaties from the beginning of contact, and so all Canadians are “Treaty People” and all lands are Treaty Lands. *Every* Canadian is responsible for *every* Treaty made to the benefit of the people of the Canadian Nation, and not just the specific Treaty that covers the land where their own home or church property exists. This is what is meant by referencing the “Privilege” of Canadians as noted in Hanne Kuhnert’s Acknowledgement. The Canadian Government system is to the benefit of its citizens of the past right up to the newest Canadian to be born or granted Citizenship Status—each is a Treaty person with Rights and also Responsibilities.

⁷ This understanding is informed by presentations by the Staff of the Edmonton Native Healing Centre, October 29, 2016, KIRC “Fall Meeting—2016.” Informed by presentations by KIRC Member and former Chief of the Cree Nation of Chisasibi (1995–1998), Charles Bobbish, one of the negotiators of the modern treaty known as the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement of 1975. This understanding is informed by presentations from the staff of the Anishinabek Nation, November 8, 2011, North Bay, Ontario.

⁸ This understanding is informed by teachings from Kainai Elders Winston Wadsworth and Lance Scout, during the KAIROS Blanket Exercise Facilitators and Elders Gathering Ottawa, June 3, 2017, as well as the Archivist trip to the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec, with Wadsworth and Scout, June 4, 2017. The Metis understandings in this Acknowledgement are informed by presentations by Senator Reta Gordon of Ottawa, Ontario, and of the Metis Nation of Ontario to KAIROS “Time for Reconciliation” May 31, 2015. This entire Acknowledgement is informed by multiple presentations by Gabrielle Fayant-Lewis (Fishing Lake Metis Settlement, AB), co-founder of the Assembly of Seven Generations. The Assembly of Seven Generations was one of the hosts of the KAIROS Covenant Chain Link VII events at the Wabano Centre (Ottawa, Ontario), attended by the Archivist accompanying people involved in the Ottawa Ministry Area Youth group, Ottawa, October 14–15, 2016. In September of 2016 Kuhnert and participants in the Ancient Voices: Contemporary Contexts Two Circle Gathering literally polished the Covenant Chain with the Haudenosaunee Faith-keepers and Clan Mothers.

⁹ This understanding is informed by teachings from Chief Bill Williams of the Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh (Squamish Nation) at the KIRC “Fall Meeting—2013,” October 22, 2013, and multiple presentations by KIRC Member Ray Jones, Hereditary Chief of the Gitksan First Nation, Hazelton, British Columbia.

¹⁰ This understanding was Informed by relationships with Gwitch’In and Inuvialuit neighbours in Inuvik, NWT from 1993 to 2000. Inuvik is located at the meeting place of the 1992 Gwich’in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement and the 1984 Inuvialuit Final Agreement.

¹¹ See also, “A Decolonial Vision of God: Relationships Between Indigenous Peoples and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada by Danika Jorgensen-Skakum with Introduction by Gordon A. Jensen” in this Issue.

¹² For the words of President Harrison and Principal Dean Lund see “Insights from LTS and MLUC” and also “Insights from MLUC and LTS” in this Issue. The presentation by Rev. Dr. Gordon Jensen and his Introduction by Rev. Dr. Stephen Larson is available in this Issue at “Living Out Confessional Lutheranism: Past Experiences and Current Questions by Rev. Dr. Gordon Jensen, with Introduction by Rev. Dr. Stephen Larson Webinar II.”

¹³ ELCIC National Bishop Susan C. Johnson’s presentation to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada can be found at https://wayback.archive-it.org/5744/20190621214745/http://elcic.ca/From-the-Bishop/documents/2014TRCALbertaEvent_BishopSpeech.pdf

¹⁴ For more on the ELCIC preparations for the March 2014 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Hearings in Edmonton, see <https://elcic.ca/2014/03/21/elcic-national-bishop-invites-prayers-for-truth-and-reconciliation-commission/>. For more on the ELCIC Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #48, see the News Release of MARCH 22, 2016. <https://elcic.ca/2016/03/22/elcic-responds-to-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-call-to-action-48/>

¹⁵ For more on the Campus Ministry presentation being referred to, see “Remembering Lutheran Campus Ministry” in this Issue.

¹⁶ Lutheran worship follows a pattern called the Ordo, which features four general movements: Gathering, Word, Meal, and Sending, as witnessed in the worship book *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Meetings begin and end, as Bishop Sjoberg reminds, with a protocol of respectful recognition and thanks to God our Creator.