

The Rev. Mark Tremblay
Interim Moderator
The Rev. Jacob Van Pernis
The Rev. Maren McLean Persaud
The Rev. Christian Persaud

Grace Presbyterian Church Steps Towards Truth, Healing and Reconciliation/Reconcili-action
Rev. Jake Van Pernis, Associate Minister Engagement and Service
November 21st, 2021

The following report shares an overview of the steps Grace has taken towards truth, healing, and reconciliation / reconcili-action as well as provides information about next steps including an update about the red paint on Grace's front doors:

Early on the morning of July 1, two sets of the front doors at Grace were splattered with red paint as an act of protest and expression of grief regarding the recent discoveries of numerous unmarked graves at the sites of former residential schools in Kamloops, Cowessess, Cranbrook, as well as elsewhere in Canada.

The red paint splattered on Grace's doors has elicited many responses and reactions, generating many conversations, both within Grace and in the larger community (Indigenous communities and the Calgary media). The red paint has also caused Grace to begin walking the path of truth, healing, and reconciliation / reconcili-action, trusting in the Spirit's lead as we do so.

On July 8, Grace's Session formed the Ad-Hoc Committee on Truth, Healing, and Reconciliation that has met regularly since its formation, discerning next steps on this path. A regular point of discussion is the sharing of ideas for next steps regarding the painted church doors, because of the responses this paint has generated over the past several months.

The first step taken was to create sandwich boards with a QR code that could easily be scanned with a mobile device by anyone passing by. Information about Grace's responses continues to be available in this way. To date, the 5,242 views to Grace's response to the red paint on the doors is noteworthy. (This number does not include views on social media stories or event stories about Grace being on this timely and significant path.)

The second step taken was to host a public Service of Lament entitled, *Seven Generations: Stories of Our Lament*, held on the afternoon of Sunday, September 26 on the front steps of Grace. The Service of Lament was attended by approximately 100 people. Indigenous leaders and Elders spoke (including Tony Snow, Gloria Snow, and Shirley Shingoose Dufour); Mayor Naheed Nenshi addressed attendees; the Choir from Grace shared inspirational music; and Kyle

The Rev. Mark Tremblay

Interim Moderator

The Rev. Jacob Van Pernis

The Rev. Maren McLean Persaud

The Rev. Christian Persaud

Logan Standingready-Snow drummed and sang. Media were invited and CTV, CBC and Global Calgary all covered the event for several days, with coverage appearing in Calgary and Toronto.

Setting up learning opportunities for people from Grace and the community has been the focus of the next step. As collective peoples, we want to grow in knowledge and understanding about the experiences and stories of Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples. The Ad-Hoc Committee has planned an upcoming Blanket Exercise to be led by KAIROS on November 28, when 35 people are attending most of whom are from the community. A book study series of *These Mountains Are Our Sacred Places: The Story of the Stoney People* will be co-led by Rev. John Snow Jr. and Tony Snow in January, 2022. Currently, there are 48 people signed up to participate this opportunity.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Truth, Healing and Reconciliation has also spent time in discernment, listening for the Spirit's call regarding how to proceed with the red paint on the doors. Whereas many comments are positive and respectful of the multiple responses to the paint, some are quite negative.

There is a strong sense within the Ad Hoc Committee that there is a need for a permanent memorial to serve as a reminder of our commitment to walk on this path towards reconciliation. It is also understood that this plan needs continuing discernment and broader conversations.

After discussions with the Facilities Committee and then the Session, the plan is as follows:

1. The red paint on the sandstone of the building has been removed, with no damage to the sandstone
2. Work will be done to engage the congregation and community on this plan, including the work of listening, acknowledging the many responses to the paint, and seeking God's lead in this work.
3. Grace will work with an Indigenous or Aboriginal artist to incorporate the red paint to create a mural, representative of reconciliation, on the front doors.

A group comprising Janet Hyde and Debbie Roorda (of the Facilities Committee) and Mark Durieux, Mary Jardine, and Rev. Jake Van Pernis (of the Ad Hoc Committee) will connect with Indigenous and Aboriginal Artists about interest in the mural project. This group will collaborate with members of Grace's congregation on various aspects of the project such as setting up a



The Rev. Mark Tremblay

Interim Moderator

The Rev. Jacob Van Pernis

The Rev. Maren McLean Persaud

The Rev. Christian Persaud

contract to use with the selected artist and exploring ideas and proofs of concept. Regular updates will be provided through the Ad-Hoc Truth, Healing, and Reconciliation Committee and the Facilities Committee.

The hope of the work Grace has done and is doing around truth, healing, and reconciliation is that it is meaning-filled and meaningful, undertaken with faith, honesty and intention. It is our prayer that, with the Spirit's guidance, we will work together and, with the grace of God, be transformed.