

## MISSION SUNDAY SERMON

St. James Anglican and the Church of St. Stephen & St. Bede  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Sunday, June 19, 2016

### GUEST SPEAKER:

The Rev. Margaret Mullin, Executive Director, Inner City Missions

### TOPIC:

*We Are One In the Spirit* : in Celebration of the Day of Aboriginal Prayer

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My mother was Ojibway but she was raised by European. Aided by the assimilation policies of earlier Canadian governments my Mum was scooped off her First Nations family at the age of three when her mother died. My Mum was raised in an orphanage in Fort William, which is now a part of Thunder Bay, Ontario. She was in and out of several foster homes and sexually abused in three of them. She was denied any access to her Ojibway identity, culture, or Spiritual traditions. Both of us only began to learn what had been taken away from her when she was 70 years old.

This is some of what I have learned. My indigenous ancestors believed that we are intimately related to each other by virtue of being children of the one God, and that humans are related to the earth itself, to the air, the water, the birds, the animals, the insects, and all the creatures of the waters because we are all part of the one Creation. Creator has weaved us together. Creator has given humans the responsibility of caring for it all. That means that you and I have been given responsibility for this planet we call Earth, God is in charge, and we are all accountable to God in the end.

Indigenous people of the Americas and my European ancestors are really talking the same Spiritual language but they are speaking and understanding in completely different dialects and not understanding each other.

I have discovered that I live, comfortably now, with two completely different world views. My European and my Indigenous ancestors experienced life and learning differently. Different, not better or worse, just different. The two different views of where we came from and what we were meant to be are both basically the same. God created, God commanded that we take care of the planet. We are all responsible directly to God to treat each other, the earth, and all that is on it with tenderness and respect.

My Christian faith and my elders teach me that God has given us all the things that we need to survive, and that Creator has given us sacred teachings that will show us the way to live a good life.

My Christian faith and my elders both teach me that we become sick at heart when we wander away from God or go against Creator's teachings. And, the only way back to a good healthy heart is through God. We talk about "heart" in different ways but we both mean our whole being and the ability to live in a good way.

My Christian Faith and my elders teach me that there is always hope for us because the Sacred Teachings that God has given us will never die and because forgiveness for wandering away from God is always waiting for us. Creator will always keep those two things alive; Goodness and Mercy do not depend on us. But we are intended to live that way.

My Christian Faith and my elders both teach me that the potential for good that lives in each of us will never die because God has planted a strong seed of goodness inside us at the moment of our conception. That seed is able to

survive in the darkness, it is able to survive being dried out for years, and it will always come back to life when it is fed The Living Water.

My Christian Faith and my Elders both teach me that each person is given the freedom to choose their own path in life and that The Great Spirit will always help us when we make good choices. Both teach us that God has given us the gift of willpower or a strong mind and that it is up to us to use it for good, always depending on Creator's help. Both traditions help us understand the choice is ours to do 'good' and to resist 'evil' or not. And, both tell us we cannot do 'good' under our own power.

There is an incredible and ancient symbol my indigenous ancestors used that has helped inform my understanding of the ways of Creator. It is the Medicine Wheel. I firmly believe that if Jesus had been sent to Turtle Island he would have used the medicine wheel teachings, the Sacred Tree teachings, The Turtle teachings, and other First Nations sacred teachings to show us what God sent him to show us. Just because Jesus was born in Israel and used their sacred books as a starting point to teach from, does not mean he would not have used the sacred teachings of our traditional Indigenous Elders in North America to build on also. The Medicine wheel teaches that the four races of people on this earth are all a part of the one human family created by One God. It teaches that Creator has given each Nation the responsible to care for the land where he originally placed them.

There are 4 different races of people each with their own understanding, languages, ability, cultural expression and Spiritual practice. It is for us to live in harmony, work together, and learn together. There are four essential

elements of our world; Earth, Water, Air, and Fire. They must all be respected equally and cared for because without each of them we would not survive. There are four things about every human being that must be kept in balance: Our physical, intellectual, emotional, and Spiritual self. These gifts will help us grow strong and when they are in balance we will have the ability to live a good life even if things are mighty bad around us.

You know, the more I learn the more it mystifies me that my Ojibway Grandparents were forbidden by the assimilation policies of our early Canadian government to be taught what the medicine wheel teachings had to offer the settlers. It mystifies me that my European and Ojibway great grandparents were not encouraged to sit in a circle together and learn from each other so they could walk together on a common path as children of the One God. It humbles me that it is finally coming back together in my lifetime. Seven generations later I am both indigenous and European, both White and Red, both Traditional and Christian. That is who I am created to be.. I do not have my feet in two different worlds. The two halves of me are one. I am complete only when I understand what it means to live a good life in both worlds. Everything the Medicine wheel teaches me and everything that Jesus teaches me are both powerful medicine for me. They are all gifts from the same God meant to help me to reconcile with God, to heal myself, to heal my relationships with others and with Creation, to help others, and to heal the earth before it is too late.

We are all beautiful people because God made us that way. Some of us just need to find more balance in our lives. Jesus and the European and Aboriginal Sacred Teachings can both show me how to do that. As a

follower of Jesus I can be Ojibway and I can be Irish. Just call me OjiIrish. I am Traditional and I am Christian. My constant prayer is that The Great Spirit will blow into my people both Caucasian and Indigenous the courage and determination it will take to learn how to walk together in peace here on Turtle Island. I believe that it is and will continue to happen. I am hopeful because I believe that the power of the Great Spirit will reconcile us with each other and that we will be able to learn together, and grow together in faith.