

A plea from Pastor Larry Thiele

Pastor Thiele serves the Dakotah Oyate Lutheran Church in Tokio, North Dakota and St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Fort Totten, North Dakota. On Indigenous Peoples' Day, 202, he offers this plea for reconciliation and healing, and his reason for offering this prayer.

He says, “As I’ve been telling people in the church, we need to have acknowledgement and confession. There can be no healing without the forgiveness of sin, and there can be no forgiveness without confession. And there can be no confession without first acknowledgement.”

Pastor Larry encourages people of churches and all denominations “to acknowledge their complicity in the atrocities committed against the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas and the world through the Doctrine of Discovery, which gave permissions to take land, to take what was not theirs, to take and do whatever they wanted with the resources of God’s creation.”

“The Church– the whole Church, is complicit in all of that. And so, I encourage people to acknowledge their complicity in those sins and those atrocities that were committed against Indigenous People throughout the world: The taking of land, the taking of things that was not theirs, the taking of resources without permission, disregarding people’s rights.”

“There are atrocities committed here in America of cultural genocide– of genocide itself, of biological and chemical warfare, inflicted upon people. The stealing of land and children and humans– enslaving people.”

“All these things the church is part of. All these things the church committed against people, in the name of God, but this is not who God is, this is not what God wants. God calls all to love our neighbor as ourselves, and this is not loving our neighbor.”

“This was loving ourselves enough to take what did not belong to us, to enslave others, to put ourselves above others. These are the sins of the Church, that need to be acknowledged, confessed, and asked forgiveness for. Before there can be any healing, these things need to be acknowledged, and it doesn’t matter if you’re descendants of people who did or did not do it. It matters that you, as a member of the body of Christ, confess these things to God, and let them go.”

“We don’t need to have a whole confession to the people who it was committed against. The Church needs forgiveness before it can move forward.”

“With that I encourage you to think about the true history of this country, the expansion of the western institutional church, and how that expansion hurt the Indigenous Peoples of this land. For those things, I encourage you to think– to educate yourselves

on what the true narrative, the true historical narrative is, not these things that we were taught in school about Columbus and the discovery of America, but what happened after Columbus was lost and found this land. What happened to the Indigenous Peoples of this land, and not only here in the Americas, but throughout the world. Amen.”