

October 24, 2021

8. The Need for Spiritual Renewal

Revelation 3:1–6, 14–20 NRSV

On September 30, 2021, Canada observed its first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, labeled by Canadian Catholics “a day of hope and repentance.”¹ A National Public Radio article explains:

[The day] commemorates the victims and survivors of Indigenous residential schools. . . . The government separated some 150,000 Indigenous children from their families and forced them to attend the Christian boarding schools in an effort to assimilate them into Canadian society. Thousands of children died of disease and other causes, and the Canadian government has acknowledged that physical and sexual abuse was rampant at these schools.²

Likewise, in the United States, the government this year established Juneteenth as a celebration of Black independence,³ and many are calling for monetary reparations for the descendants of slaves. A presidential proclamation of Indigenous Peoples Day on the second Monday of October was announced a few weeks ago.⁴

Some people ask: “Why should we repent for things our ancestors did? We’re not to blame!” Perhaps the answer lies in Romans 5:12–21 and 1 Corinthians 15:21–22. It’s pretty clear God considers at least the original sin to have a corporate effect. We are all one body with Christians through the centuries (see *Salt & Light*, session 6). We can’t separate ourselves from them when we deem it convenient.

It’s interesting that secular institutions are now recognizing the need to repent of former wrongs. In church, we often call for individual repentance, but I don’t ever remember a service devoted to corporate forgiveness for, let’s say, the Crusades or other specific, horrible things done—then and now—in the name of Christ.⁵

If I were teaching this study, I’d ask why self-evaluation is necessary for both individuals and the church.

- How do times of intense self-reflection lead to positive change?
- Why are current inclinations toward repentance in our culture good?
- To what type of revival could they lead?

—Helen Tellez, helentellez@comcast.net

1. Michael Swan, “[National Day for Truth and Reconciliation: A Day of Hope and Repentance, says Cardinal Collins](#),” *The Catholic Register*, September 30, 2021.

2. Rachel Treisman, “[This New Canadian Holiday Reflects on the Legacy of Indigenous Residential Schools](#),” NPR, September 30, 2021.

3. “[Juneteenth](#),” *Wikipedia*.

4. “[A Proclamation of Indigenous Peoples’ Day, 2021](#),” The White House, October 8, 2021.

5. Saskya Vandoorne, Simon Bouvier, & Sam Bradpiece, “[More than 200,000 Children Sexually Abused by French Catholic Clergy, Damning Report Finds](#),” CNN, October 5, 2021.



Helen Tellez has been a writer, editor, and copy editor for church and secular organizations for more than four decades. Formerly from northern Indiana, she now resides in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, with her husband, José, where they run a clothing alterations business. Being married to José for 18 years has opened her eyes to the world beyond rural, white America, and she is grateful for the changes in her Christian perspective.

Resources for this session

Salt & Light Videos

These teaching videos are great for leader preparation or introducing each session. They are available on [MennoMedia's YouTube channel](#). **Naomi Yoder** is the presenter for unit 2, Church Means Assembly. She serves on the pastoral team of East Goshen Mennonite Church in Indiana.