

August 28, 2022

### 13. The Cost of Unity — **Ephesians 2:11–22, NRSV**

While we know that warfare is normally the most expensive and destructive of human activities, the cost of peace and unity is far from cheap. The Old Testament prophets favored ancient Israel and Judah making peace with their more powerful neighbors by paying tribute (“protection money”) to Assyria, Babylon, and other powers. This was especially true when the Hebrew kings in question were not in high favor with the Lord. Thus, King Menahem of Israel gave the king of Assyria a thousand talents of silver “that he might help him confirm his hold on the royal power” (2 Kings 15:19b).

Reparations can be punitive damages imposed by the victors on defeated states. After World War I, Germany was forced by the Allies (France, Britain, and the United States) to pay for many of the costs of the war on an annual basis. When the depression hit Germany in the 1930s, these reparations fed into Hitler’s campaign for revenge.

Following World War II, the Allies pressured Germany to pay annual reparations to victims of the holocaust and their families. Recently, these reparations have been extended to spouses of victims, and plans are under way to extend reparations to children and perhaps grandchildren of victims. Thus far, the amount paid is over 80 billion dollars. This raises questions concerning how long such programs should last and whether the original benefits should be extended to others previously not included in the compensation.

In North America, the calls for reparations take a different focus. Dominant-culture governments and systems are being held accountable to make reparations to the descendants of enslaved Africans forcibly brought to this continent and for the suffering that subsequent generations have endured. In Canada, the focus has been on Indigenous people and issues such as land rights, residential schools, and cultural genocide. In the United States, Japanese Americans who were forced into internment camps during World War II are also recommended for reparations.

In recent decades, Indigenous peoples in Canada have received regular payments totaling \$10 billion annually, paid to Band Councils on the reserves. Our current prime minister has taken the cap off these payments and removed requirements of financial accountability by Native organizations. During the 2021 election, he promised an additional \$18 billion for health care, child services, and clean water. This year, the government agreed to pay \$40 billion to address inequities in childcare programs. The possibilities for making reparations for historical and current injustices and inequities are many.

- We can estimate the financial cost of wars. What figures into estimations of the financial costs of ethnical discrimination, especially when considering its multi-generational effects?

- What biblical texts would you consider useful for clarifying these issues? Does Anabaptist history and theology provide any help with these matters? Would you support Anabaptist claims against governments that persecuted peace churches?

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## Resources for this session

**Salt & Light Videos** are great for leader preparation or introducing each weekly session. **Elizabeth Soto Albrecht and Dave Elkins** are the presenters for unit 3. The videos are closed captioned, free, and available on [MennoMedia's YouTube channel](#).

## Live URLs recommended in the leader guide

- ["I Need You to Survive"](#) by Hezekiah Walker,
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#)
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa](#),
- [Colombia's Truth Commission](#)
- Andrew Gardner, ["Ideas for Churches Studying the Need for Reparations,"](#) *Baptist News Global*, August 5, 2020, (reparations in the US context)
- ["How I Discovered I Was a White Settler,"](#) The Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Podcast, August 23, 2021, An exploration of the Hochstetler Indian massacre.