

**Episcopal Address, Bishop Elaine JW Stanovsky**  
**Rocky Mountain Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church**  
**June 19-22, 2014**

Last year we said that the mission of the Church is like cultivating the Tree of Life. You remember the Tree of Life –that we find at the beginning and end of the Bible. In the center of the Garden of Eden and at the fulfillment of the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation. A tree whose fruit is good to eat and plenty. And a tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

We are living with this image for these four years of our life together, exploring what it means for the Church to focus on cultivating life: abundant life, full life for all God’s creatures, all God’s children. In the Bible we also find the image of the Stump of Jesse. Do you remember who Jesse was? David’s Father. And when Israel was struck down and sent into exile, the prophet Isaiah described it as a tree cut down to a stump. But he also looked forward to a time when a fresh green shoot would grow again from the stump. And so we will experience harm done to the Tree of Life at Sand Creek.

While we’re here, we’ll do a vital signs check-up on a number of ways that we work together to cultivate abundant life:

- Last year we focused our abundant life cultivating efforts on Imagine No Malaria. We’ll hear an update on the campaign to raise \$75 million United Methodist dollars to end death by Malaria in sub-Saharan Africa. It’s going to be a happy report. . .<sup>a</sup> [More than \$60 million raised and pledged so far -- \$1.4 million in Rocky Mountain Conference and more to come!]
- We’ll do another round of hellos and good-byes
  - We’ll hear reports about a new church chartered, and a pastor appointed to start another new church. We’ll also close some churches after long and full lives of vital ministry. All part of cultivating life.
  - We’ll honor clergy and spouses who have died during the year, and we’ll welcome new clergy who are being ordained, or appointed in RMC for the first time from other places or other denominations.
  - We’ll welcome Jeremy Scott from the Yellowstone Conference, who will begin a new appointment as the Director of Vital Congregations for the Mountain Sky Area, serving both the Yellowstone and Rocky Mountain Conferences – all 4

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<sup>a</sup> Gifts and pledges of more than \$60 million to date -- \$1.4 in the Rocky Mountain Conference and more to come!

states. 1800 miles from corner to corner.

- We'll shift again the way district superintendents are assigned to supervise churches, always looking for new and better ways to match the gifts and responsibilities of our leaders.
- We'll hear about the Imagine Team, that's been working to try to re-focus the Conference on the core purpose of the Annual Conference.
- And we will welcome many guests:
  - Cheyenne and Arapaho descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre as we commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that devastating event in 1864
  - Native American Leaders from across the United Methodist Church
  - Representatives of the General Agencies of our church
  - And others, many others.

All that we are and all that we offer come from a generous God, who offers us abundant life, with the expectation and opportunity to share it with the whole creation. And we, with every breath we take, every word we speak, every thought we think, serve as agents of God's grace, or obstructers of God's grace. And so, as we gather, we ask, once again, *Great God in heaven, Creator of the universe, giver of every good gift, be with us now, to make us be the faithful sons and daughters you would have us be and that we want to be. Put the tools of life in our hands, so that the fruits of our labors might be peace and plenty for your whole living household. Amen.*

My reflections this morning will focus on two matters of urgency and importance.

1. The Unity of the Church
2. Healing the historic cultural wounds left by the Sand Creek Massacre

## **THE UNITY OF THE *UNITED* METHODIST CHURCH**

Jesus prayed that his followers would all be one so that the world might believe.

Last year Brian McLaren<sup>b</sup> was our Conference speaker. Over lunch with Brian I asked him: "What do you see that we should be paying attention to?" He responded, "I want to know who is planning to keep The United Methodist Church from splitting." This is Brian McLaren – he's not United Methodist. But he values our church, and senses the tensions within it, and sees the powers at work to split it – and wonders, who is working to preserve the unity of the church?

His question caught my attention. Last year I didn't think the church was likely to split.

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<sup>b</sup> For more about Brian, go to <http://www.brianmclaren.net/archives/about-brian/>

But clearly he did. Today I can say that I have never seen our United Methodist Church as close to schism as it is today. Oh, division within the Church is whispered, and even shouted, whenever someone is really unhappy with something. ‘Schism and rumors of schism.’ But, my friends, there are now leaders in the United Methodist Church *planning* to divide the church. How will property be divided? How will clergy affiliations be separated? And there are leaders in the church who don’t want division, but are unwilling to speak and lead for unity. The issue, depending on which side you are on, is framed as: BROKEN COVENANT or BIBLICAL OBEDIENCE. You see, when a clergy person blesses a relationship between two people of the same sex, some consider the action obedience to the biblical mandate to love and life. Others consider the action broken covenant. You can see how deep the divide goes...

Within the Rocky Mountain Conference, you have not for 40 years been of one mind about how sexual minorities fit in the life the Church and the community. So it is no surprise that today, as legal prohibitions to same-gender marriage are falling like dominoes across the United States, United Methodist clergy and laity in the Rocky Mountain Conference are not of one mind. You were never of one mind. But you found a way to live together without insisting that every pastor conform to a single standard. You lived and let live. You allowed churches and clergy to minister in their context in pastorally appropriate ways. But the tensions are intensifying. The neutral zone isn’t holding as it once did. Questions are arising again about covenant and obedience. Can we stay together – we who disagree?

I want to say, as loudly and clearly as I can, that the issues before us in the church right now are not worth splitting the Church over. We will accomplish nothing by dividing our Church, other than relieving the tension of living in community with one another. And I want to invite you to become my allies in advocating and teaching and working for the Unity of the United Methodist Church.

In a leisurely conversation in a booth at the Village Inn earlier this week, I asked several clergy colleagues to make to the case of schism, “separation” it is being called by some. You know that there are books written about “Just War Theory,” delineating the criteria that would justify engaging in armed combat. If we think of church schism as a small war – what would the criteria be for a “Just Separation” within the Church? Where would you look in scripture, tradition, reason or experience to construct an argument for schism?

I haven’t been able to find one. Instead I found this, in John Wesley’s sermon on “Catholic Spirit” (excerpts):

*I ask not, therefore, of him with whom I would unite in love, Are you of my church, of my congregation? Do you receive the same form of church government, and allow the same church officers, with me? Do you join in the same form of prayer*

*wherein I worship God? I inquire not, Do you receive the supper of the Lord in the same posture and manner that I do nor whether, in the administration of baptism, you agree with me in the manner of administering it. Nay, I ask not of you, whether you allow baptism and the Lord's supper at all. Let all these things stand by: we will talk of them, if need be, at a more convenient season, my only question at present is this, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?"*

- *Is your heart right with God?*
- *Do you believe in Jesus Christ, does he dwell in you?*
- *Is your faith filled with the energy of love?*
- *Are you employed in doing "not thy own will, but the will of him that sent thee?"*
- *Is thy heart right toward thy neighbor? Dost thou love as thyself, all mankind, without exception?*
- *Do you show your love by your works? Do you in fact "do good to all men," neighbours or strangers, friends or enemies, good or bad?*

*If thou art thus minded, may every Christian say, yea, if thou but sincerely desirous of it, and following on till thou attain, then "thy heart is right, as my heart is with thy heart." "If it be, give me thy hand."*

Or this from Dietrich Bonhoeffer on *Life Together*,<sup>1</sup>

*If we do not give thanks daily for the Christian fellowship in which we have been placed, even where there is no great experience, no discoverable riches, but much weakness, small faith, and difficulty; if on the contrary, we only keep complaining to God that everything is so paltry and petty, so far from what we expected, then we hinder God from letting our fellowship grow according to the measure and riches which are there for us all in Jesus Christ. . . .*

We forget that the Church is given to us for our formation. That we – with all our differences – are given to each other so that as we struggle with one another we will find our way to Christ. We forget to thank Christ for being present with those we are not sure are worthy to be in the same church with us.

And, while the Church should not simply blow with the winds of popular opinion, or even of legal opinion – the Church should always keep its eyes and ears open to ways in which the world is changing, ways in which new scientific knowledge or new awareness might shed new light on our understanding of scripture and even changes in our church practice and

traditions.

I first attended a General Conference of the Church in 1972, when I was 19 years old. My Annual Conference sent me as a young adult observer. This was the first time the word “homosexuality” was included in our *Book of Discipline*. I heard the debate in a small sub-committee, and the debate of 1,000 delegates on the plenary floor. In 1972, none of the voices for exclusion of gay and lesbian people could imagine that in 2014 two men or two women would come to their pastor asking for the Church’s blessing on their life-long monogamous relationship. That was inconceivable in 1972. I ask you, how has our Church taken account of the new witness of reason and experience of the last 40 years? What light does scripture, tradition, reason through scientific learning and experience of the real lives of people in our communities, our churches and our families shed on how the Church can cultivate fullness of life for people who know themselves to have a sexual orientation or gender identity that does not conform to inherited expectations.

I will be working with leadership of the Conference in the weeks and months ahead to convene holy conversations among people of differing opinions and perspectives. The question I am posing is “How do we live together with our differences?” If we recognize each other as genuine servants of God in Jesus Christ, how can we even consider schism? It is a borrowing from secular culture for us to insist that we can only tolerate one opinion. Faith teaches us that more than one opinion can co-exist.

What do you suppose Jesus meant when he said, “In my Father’s house are many rooms?” Or, in another translation, “My Father’s house has room to spare.” Might he have meant that there is room for differing perspectives? That everyone can stay in the same house, even if they can’t share a bedroom or a bunk bed.

I sat at table with an African bishop last month who holds very conservative views on homosexuality. He said that in his area there is deep concern about polygamy. The Church is clear in its teaching against a man having more than one wife. But, he asks, if a polygamous man is baptized and joins the church, should we insist that he reject all but one of his wives? Leave them and their children without financial support and a home? Of course not. We have to adapt the gospel teaching to the reality of peoples’ lives. God would not have wives and children left destitute. So we encourage them to be faithful to their commitments, but not to continue the practice. He makes the point that the leaders of the church in Africa should be free to determine what faithful teaching and practice is in an African context. Leaders of the church in others’ places should determine what faithful teaching and practice are in their contexts. *In my Father’s house are many rooms. Room enough for different applications and expressions of Christian faith and life.*

## SAND CREEK MASSACRE AND ACTS OF REPENTANCE.

Listen to the words of the prophet Habakkuk, from the Bible. The Bible knows us better than we know ourselves.

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### **Habakkuk 2, selections (NRSV)**

*I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint.*

*Then the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith. Moreover, wealth is treacherous; the arrogant do not endure. They open their throats wide as Sheol; like Death they never have enough. They gather all nations for themselves, and collect all peoples as their own.*

*Shall not everyone taunt such people and, with mocking riddles, say about them, “Alas for you who heap up what is not your own!” How long will you load yourselves with goods taken in pledge? Will not your own creditors suddenly rise, and those who make you tremble wake up? Then you will be booty for them. Because you have plundered many nations, all that survive of the peoples shall plunder you— because of human bloodshed, and violence to the earth, to cities and all who live in them.*

*“Alas for you who get evil gain for your house, setting your nest on high to be safe from the reach of harm!” You have devised shame for your house by cutting off many peoples; you have forfeited your life. The very stones will cry out from the wall, and the tree branch will respond.*

*“Alas for you who build a town by bloodshed, and found a city on iniquity!” Is it not from the Lord of hosts that peoples labor only to feed the flames, and nations weary themselves for nothing? But the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*

*For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you; the destruction of the animals – shall we say the destruction of the buffalo? – will terrify you— because of human bloodshed and violence to the earth, to cities and all who live in them.*

*Alas for you who say to the tree, “Wake up!” to silent stone, “Rouse yourself!” Can it teach? See, it is gold and silver plated, and there is no breath in it at all.*

[And then comes this very familiar affirmation, that in this context sounds a haunting ring...]

***But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him!***

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## History

Our guest, David Halaas,<sup>c</sup> who you will meet later is fond of reminding us that William Faulkner said “The past isn’t dead, it isn’t even past.” What he’s getting at is that the past shapes and forms the present.

We can’t know who we are if we don’t know where we came from and how we got here. This is fundamental to living lives of faith. Life is a journey and this particular moment and pace only have meaning if we know the path that brought us here, and the end toward which we are moving. The significance of my life – and yours – is all about what we make of the past and what we do in our lives, during our days on earth, to shape the future for ourselves and others. And so, when I became bishop of the Mountain Sky Area, 400 churches in four states, in order to know who United Methodists are, and who I am now, I needed to learn our history. Many of you helped educate me. I can’t tell you how many times I took Alton Templin’s history of the Rocky Mountain Conference home before I was scheduled to preach at a church in a community I had never visited before. And I read about Brother Van, who travelled to Montana from Pennsylvania, got off a river steamer at Fort Benton in 1872, and lived to found 100 churches, a University, 6 hospitals and a children’s home before he died in 1919. United Methodists in Montana can’t know who they are if we don’t know something of the story of where we came from.

As part of my education, in the fall of 2009 JuDee Anderson, a member of the Sheridan, Wyoming church, invited me and several other church leaders to have lunch with Steve Brady and Otto Braided Hair at Montana Jack’s in Billings, Montana. That is where my education about the Sand Creek Massacre began.

Then in 2010 I was invited to join 50 other United Methodists and three descendants of the Massacre on a bus that travelled from Denver to the Site in preparation for Acts of Repentance by the Church for harm done to Native Peoples around the world during colonial expansion. That day I knew that we would need to learn this history together in the Yellowstone and Rocky Mountain Conferences. Because we are heirs of a wounded and wounding past and we can’t be whole and healthy and healing if we don’t know



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<sup>c</sup>David Fridtjob Halaas, co-author of *Halfbreed: The Remarkable True Story of George Bent*, is a historian, formerly at the Library of Congress, the Colorado Historical Society and the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.

our own past. I knew that we needed to begin then to plan for 2014, when we would commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Massacre. We commemorate the Sand Creek Massacre because it is here in our territory and we are heirs to the legacy of those Methodists who were so central to the story. At the same time, we know, and we will hear again, how this event is only one of a long pattern of similar events that occurred in many places over many years to shape our nation and other nations and that left deep scars in the human family



## Pilgrimage

So, I invite you to come on a pilgrimage into history. A pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place and time. A time that shapes who we are today, and the way life is for people in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and Utah. The place is called Sand Creek. The time is November 29, 1864. I'm going to tell you what I know of the Methodist part in the tragedy that unfolded.

Tomorrow we will go to the actual place, 150 years later, and then tomorrow evening we will share a solemn and honoring dinner with descendants of Cheyenne and Arapaho survivors of that day and we will hear their stories as they have been passed down for 150 years.

We can't know who we are, we can't understand the world we live in and the social relationships we are part of, we can't contribute to fullness of life of the people we live with as neighbors and strangers if we don't know this history.

So, come with me, humbly, to walk this path. To listen. To learn. Walk gently on the land.



## History

When you board your bus tomorrow, you will receive a bag for the trip. In the bag will be a booklet. In the booklet are resources to help you learn about the Sand Creek Massacre and the Church's role both in the Massacre, and the Church's attempts to take responsibility for its role in a long history of European conquest and subjugation of Indigenous Peoples.

Included in the packet is a graphic first-hand account of the Massacre by Captain Silas Soule, who didn't let his troops participate. Also in the packet are several resolutions adopted by The United Methodist Church that set the stage for our observation today, and our commitment to living into new relationships. One of these petitions is specifically about the Methodist Church's role in the Sand Creek Massacre. It was developed in consultation with official tribal descendants representatives and submitted by JuDee Anderson of the Yellowstone Conference and adopted at the 2012 General Conference.

So here's the deal. In the middle of the 1800s European settlers were moving West across the American continent. This movement continued a long established pattern of displacing Native Peoples who were in the land before they survived.

In 1851 many Native American tribes who lived across the lands of the western plains signed the Treaty of Fort Laramie with the US Government, aimed at a peaceful resolution to the tensions over land created by westward pioneer expansion into traditional Native American land. The treaty basically provided government protections to Native Americans and to European settlers. Native Americans were granted protection for much of what would become western Kansas and Nebraska and eastern Colorado and Wyoming; and European settlers were guaranteed safe passage on their westward migration as long as they didn't settle in the treaty territory. The US government built forts along the Oregon Trail to protect settlers from attack and to protect the land from settlement.

In 1858, as part of the Larimer Party that discovered gold in what is now Denver, came George Fisher, a carpenter and wagon-maker. He was also a Methodist lay preacher. And he followed the wave of claims to the mountains and new gold discoveries that led him to Central City.

Within four months of the discovery of gold in Idaho Springs, the Methodist Episcopal Conference of Nebraska and Kansas authorized a mission to "gold country" in Colorado in 1859. Two years before Colorado was established as a territory; 17 years before Colorado became a state, people gathered in Central City for church and class meeting and Sunday school, the beginnings of what is still St. James United Methodist Church today.

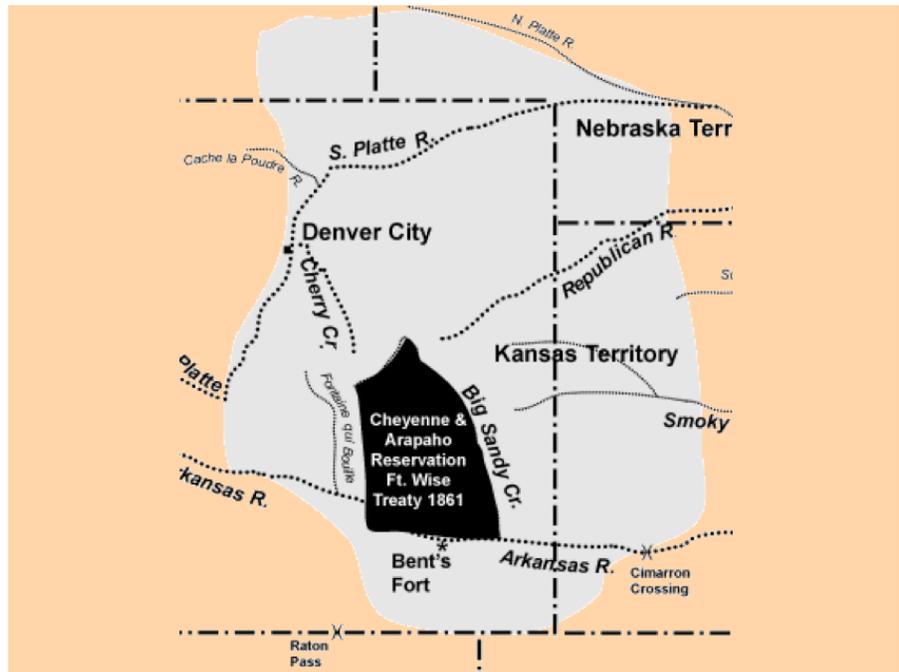
Think with me about this. What did the Treaty of Ft. Laramie guarantee? No settlers. What was the Methodist Episcopal Church doing? It was part of the settlement of land that was

supposedly being protected by the US Government from protection. It was not empty land. It was owner-occupied land and the settlements, the churches, were a violation of the treaty. Without reliable treaty protections, hostilities inevitably developed.

In 1860 the Kansas Nebraska Conference appointed Rev. John Chivington Presiding Elder to start and organize churches in the new mission field of Colorado.

In 1861, the Treaty of Ft. Laramie was not being honored, so a new treaty was negotiated, shrinking the land guaranteed to Indians to 1/13<sup>th</sup> the size it had been, located in southeastern Colorado. Only some tribal leaders signed the Treaty. Others refused.

In 1862 President Abraham Lincoln appointed John Evans the second territorial governor of Colorado. John Evans was a prominent, wealthy Methodist lay man from Illinois. He had founded Northwestern University in what became Evans-ton in 1851. Together Evans and Chivington started the first school in Colorado Territory, which later became the University of Denver. In 1862, Chivington left active ministry to pursue a military career, becoming something of a Civil War hero at the Battle of Glorietta Pass in New Mexico.

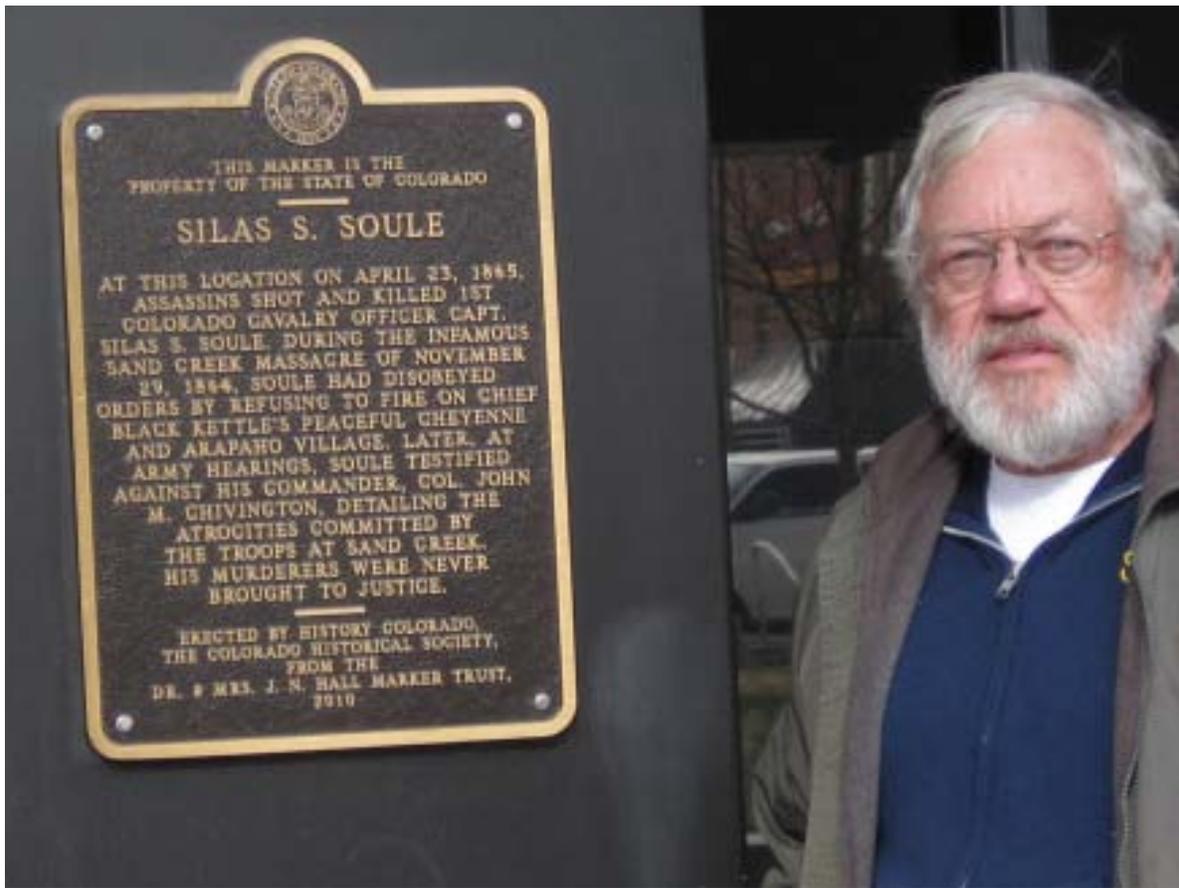


- 1864 Prelude to Massacre**
- June 11 – Hungate Murder
  - June 24 – Governor Evans sends Indians to “places of safety”
  - August 11 – Governor Evans authorizes citizens “to kill and destroy. . . hostile Indians”
  - September 28 – Indian leaders meet with Governor Evans
  - October – Indians report to Ft. Lyon, set up camp at Sand Creek as instructed

In 1864, hostilities continued. Governor Evans ordered Indians to report to Fort Lyon and authorized citizens to kill all Indians who did not do so. Peace chiefs took their people to Fort Lyons and were sent from there to camp at Sand Creek. It was there that Colonel John Chivington led the attack. More than 200 died. Indians encamped where the government had sent them. Peaceful Indians.

Soldiers desecrated the bodies, taking body parts as trophies that were displayed in a Denver theater.

Two Cavalry officers refused to let their troops participate. You need to know their names: Silas Soule and Joseph Cramer. They sent reports of the atrocities they observed to their superiors. You can read their letters in the packet you received. Two Congressional and one military inquiry found it to have been an unjustified massacre of peaceful Indians.



Descendant of Silas Soule at dedication of a memorial at the corner of 15<sup>th</sup> and Arapaho Streets, Denver, 2010.

After the attack, many peace chiefs were dead. Those that survived had no credibility. Indians fled Colorado, and unleashed vengeance along the way. 25 years of war followed, all across the plains.

Today no tribes reside in eastern Colorado. Rather, descendants of the massacre are Northern Cheyenne, in Montana, Northern Arapaho in Wyoming, and Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma.

How are Methodists known to descendants of the Massacre? How do we want to be known? For 150 years we have had very little relationship with the survivors of this tragic history, or other tribal people who have their own stories to tell.

## How Do We Respond?

The Bible knows the bad news of people of faith who turn away from the path of life, and do unspeakable harm to others for their own gain. We heard that in the voice of the prophet, Habakkuk. But the bible also offers Good News that we can turn and live in harmony with one another and creation. Hear the words of Paul, writing to the Christians in Ephesus.

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### **Ephesians 2 (NRSV)**

*You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, ... the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—....and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—.... For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.*

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The past isn't dead, it isn't even past. But the past does not own us, either. Ours is to receive the past, and find a way forward that offers hope, healing, and blessing.

### **Listening to Guests/Hosts**

The history of westward expansion across America is a history of forcible displacement, relocation and extermination of Native Peoples, their languages, their traditional practices. For the relationship to be different in the future we have to enter the relationships in a different posture. None of us United Methodists in this room personally participated in this history. And yet, we are who we are, where we are, because of this history. Certainly this is true of the United Methodist Church in Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, and Montana. And we participate in patterns of privilege and poverty that are shaped by this history. And so, we are called to repentance for the deep, historic ways that society takes and gives that are not just.

Tomorrow we will rise early – John Wesley, the founder of Methodism rose at 4 am every morning for prayer *and for listening*. We will rise early for prayer. We will travel by bus to the Site of the Massacre outside Eads, Colorado. We will view videos on the bus. Each bus will have either a descendant, or a historian, or a Native American United Methodist leader to share parts of this story, to answer questions, to engage in conversation. We have more guests than everyone will have a chance to hear, so some of you will be on a bus with some guests, and others of you will be on a bus with others. Many of us will find it difficult to believe what we hear. Or to think it is important. Our job is to trust that God is at work among us – teaching us

new things, showing us new things. Putting us in new relationships. Our job is to listen and to pray. Pay attention to your heart, and to the hearts of those whose voices you will hear. But we are not invited into dialogue so much as into listening. After 150 years, we are going to try to hear voices that were systematically silenced and removed from this land.

When we arrive at the Site – it will be in three waves of buses. We won't all be there at the same time. Your bus will stop in a parking lot. As you leave your bus, your bus captain will offer to put ashes on your forehead or on the back of your hand. This is a sign we most often use at Ash Wednesday as a mark of repentance. But in the Bible “putting on sack cloth and ashes” is a general sign of sorrow and grief. And so we will use this ancient sign to mark our sorrow for the lives taken in this Massacre, but more broadly for the wound that has lasted these 150 years and more and that contributes to the hardness of life that Native Americans experience today. You will also be given a prayer card as you leave the bus. There are many different prayer cards. You will be given one. As you experience the site, read your prayer card. Pray your card. Reflect on what you are experiencing in the films, from the speakers, at the site itself. We invite you to maintain the solemnness of the site while you are there. But, as you meet other Pilgrims, you might offer to trade prayers cards, so that each person might carry several different prayer cards during our time together at the site.

Tomorrow evening when we return to Pueblo, we will have an opportunity to share a meal with guests, who will be our hosts this evening. We will hear their stories. Our job is to come humbly, and to listen. Not to re-tell a version of history that we think we know, but to let ourselves be in relationship with people we do not know and to hear their stories and their experiences of how this history shaped their families and their communities.

Repentance involves turning from an old and unhealthy way of life, to live a new and healing way of life. God promises that this is possible, and shows us the way.

Repent and be saved. Turn and Live.

I invite you to exchange signs of peace. And I invite you to do so a little differently.

Miroslav Volf is a Christian ethicist from former Yugoslavia, who, when the peoples of his homeland were at war and participating in ethnic cleansing, turned his focus to trying to understand how people come together despite differences in language, religion and culture. In his marvelous, but difficult book, *Exclusion and Embrace*, Miroslav Volf<sup>2</sup> describes Embrace as the symbolic act of reconciliation and welcome. He says it could be a handshake, which is just a small embrace, after all. He outlines four elemental acts in the drama of embrace:

1. **Opening** the arms. “Open arms are a gesture of the body reaching for the other.

They are a sign of discontent with my own self-enclosed identity, a code of *desire* for

- the other. I do not want to be myself only; I want the other to be part of who I am and I want to be part of the other.”
2. **Waiting.** “After creating space in itself and coming out of itself, the self has “postponed” desire and halted at the boundary of the other. Before it can proceed, to must wait for desire to arise in the other and for the arms of the other to open.”
  3. **Closing** the arms in engagement. “In an embrace a host is a guest and a guest is a host. Though one self may receive or give more than the other, each must enter the space of the other, feel the presence of the other in the self, and make its own presence felt. Without such reciprocity, there is no embrace.”
  4. **Opening** them again to release and return to self. “As the final act of embrace, the opening of the arms underlines that, though the other may be inscribed into the self, . . . the other must be let go so that her . . . genuine dynamic identity – may be preserved; and the self must take itself back into itself so that its own identity, enriched by the traces that the presence of the other has left, may be preserved.

Opening. Waiting. Embrace. Release.

I invite you to share the peace of Christ in a careful, measured, intentional, invitation, unimposed, practice of mutuality, using Volf’s four movements. We will use the “small embrace” a handshake to practice. Find a partner. When you have found a partner, wait quietly for instruction. First Act: one of you may want to extend an opened hand in offering. Second Act: wait. Third act: the second person may want to respond by clasping the offered hand. Hold in the small embrace of hand clasp for a moment. As you clasp hands you may want to change a word of blessing: “Peace be with you.” And response, “Peace between us.” Fourth act: release. Let go of one another’s hand, return to your whole personhood.

Let us offer each other signs of peace.

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<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, translated by John W, Doberstein, *Life Together*. Harper and Row, 1954.

<sup>2</sup> Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Abingdon Press, 1996.