

**Canadian Churches Forum for Global Ministries
2009 International Visitor**

55th Annual Canadian Theological Student's Conference Keynotes

**Triologue:
“Mission and Power: Memory, Journey, Vision”**

**Rev. Dr. Elizabeth S. Tapia
Bishop Mark L. MacDonald
Rev. Dr. Russell Daye**



The Canadian Churches Forum for Global Ministries annually hosts an “International Visitor” providing Majority World voices to the Canadian Church. In 2009 there were three “visitors” representing voices from the Global South, Canadian First Nations, and Canada. At the 2009 Canadian Theological Students Conference these three entered into a series of ‘trialogues’. The visitors were the Rev. Dr. Elizabeth S. Tapia, a Filipina Theologian, Bishop Mark L. MacDonald, the Anglican Church of Canada’s first National Indigenous Bishop, and Rev. Dr. Russell Daye, a Canadian theologian and United Church of Canada Minister who has also served as UCC International Personnel in Fiji. Their biographies are at the end of this document/

Over the course of the conference, in February of 2009, each of the three keynotes was a combination of a short lecture by one of the International Visitors, conversation between all three, and dialogue with the audience. The transcript of these three “keynotes” follows.

**Monday February 16, 2009: Triologue Session 1
Keynote**

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

The prayer I want to share is called the body prayer. It was shared by a Roman Catholic priest, Father Pelong Pelong and it's called a prayer for openness. And we will raise our hands. It's alright to pray with open eyes. Would you like to pray with me? You can sit but then we will use our hands.

This is a prayer for openness. You may repeat after me.

Oh God,

open my heart
like a flower
opening its petals to you.
Give me the gift of openness
and from the best of my being
I reach out to you
so that all that I am
and all that I do
will bring greater glory and praise to you
'til the end.

BISHOP MARK MACDONALD:

Good morning. Bonjour. neem kanook ick pitsh Inuit for "What's happening?" I want to begin by giving honour, first of all, to God; God who made me and God who saved me. And one of the first things a person says to you when they say God saves me, they usually mean literally. They don't mean just save me from a wrong way of thinking or save me from hypothetical sins hidden somewhere in my heart. It usually means that we would be dead if God hadn't saved us.

And so there's a very immediate sense of the presence of God, in indigenous life and in the world that I live in.

I second want to give honour to my grandmothers. I still serve as also the Bishop of Navajo land, the Navajo Nation in the four corners. The people there are Athabascan like many people in northern Canada. Athabascan's are arguably the most adaptable people in the world living from the Arctic all the way down into Mexico.

Navajos are most familiar. They're, I think, the most picturesque, but they've also held onto their culture. Up until the late 1970s, they refused to be the most missionary least responsive people in the world. They took their donuts and ran so to speak. And it's been a great privilege and honour to be, not only to serve there, but to be discipled in their way of life.

The Navajo conception of the sun is the sun is a young man who carries across the sky a turquoise disk and that disc is lit with the fire of grandmother fire. And the teaching that is derived from this fact is that a young person will be successful to the extent that they carry aloft high the teaching of their grandmothers and their elders. And I believe that's really true.

Over the course of time that I've been able to spend in the aboriginal world, the fourth world of aboriginal life, I have learned a great deal from my grandmothers. And the non-aboriginal people I work with are always wondering how many grandmothers I have because I'm always going to a funeral and they don't--I don't think they understand that aspect of the life that we do.

It was interesting to me that one of the areas that was describing the devastation of being colonized said that one of the worst things that happened to us is that we began to adopt patriarchal modes of governance. Most of governance that are not shaped by the matrilineal, matriarchal governance that most tribes, not all by any means but most, and that is a painful loss for many people and one that I would say is trying to be injected as we move towards the future.

I will begin by talking a little bit about the situation today. This is one of the most precious things in my life. It's an Ojibway prayer book and I've been using them since I was a child. It also has the Ojibway hymnal which actually has been more a part of my life since I was a boy. And it's so precious to me but it is a reminder of the preciousness of the Church. In this prayer book there is all the services of the normal prayer book except for ordination. That was omitted.

Now, I know and believe that this is because it was never thought that there would be a time that someone would be ordained without being absolutely fluent in English and without having a full recognition and awareness of the Western classical tradition, enough so that they would be assimilated into what was thought to be a Christian culture. And so this prayer book is part of a mission strategy. It was given to people never thinking that by the year 2009 somebody would still be using it.

The amazing thing is that you can find the statements of this, is that the mission strategy of our ancestors in the Church was to make Aboriginal people disappear; have them melt into a larger conglomerate. They never imagined a day like today where you have literally millions, many of whom still speak their language, still practice their subsistence way of life, hundreds of years after first contact. The reality is that it was predicted for a long time that First Nations would just disappear either through disease or through assimilation or through recognizing the superior way of life that was being offered to them.

Success was measured in their capacity to mimic the ideas, institutions and sound of European Christianity and that mimicking was really what people

wanted. That was the real style. And to this day many of our training programs serve as nothing more than the capacity to mimic certain ways of God.

Often the people who participate in them are bright elders who provide great spiritual leadership in the community but their incapacity to Westernize is a huge deficit as they go through the systems. Now, the Church is not, by any means, the only group that's guilty of this. In fact, Canadian society, North American society, in general is more at fault. Again, success is measured by the capacity to mimic Western institutions, business, legal, corporate. And in fact we know that those who have been successful are those who have been entrepreneurial in adapting these institutions and making them work in an indigenous way.

We now know that around the world that those indigenous societies that have been able to take Western forms and then innovate with them according to their cultural way, according to their clan systems, according to their way of doing things, they do the best. They do the best. And we're now beginning to enter into a realm of life where people in the Church are about to do the same thing.

The Church has been a very, very slow. The Church has been very, very quick to advocate for aboriginal people relative to the rest of society. In fact, the churches were there at the signing of many of the treaties and the Church said to the native peoples, "We'll walk with you. We will stand with you and we will ensure that these treaties are followed."

Now, the Church has had a mixed record of doing that. What the Church has been good at is calling the government to responsibility in regard to those treaties and those agreements, in regard to the acknowledgements that are made in those treaties which are absolutely and completely important to First Nations people around the world because those treaties, those acknowledgements, say that they are people and nations and not just another ethnic group waiting to be melted into a multi-cultural society.

It is no mistake that all of the White supremacist groups that focus on First Nations in North America use some phrase recalling equal rights in their names. All of them are arguing that First Nations existed some kind of, like they're the aboriginal equivalent of the Sons of Norway, you know, a place where you get together and eat lutefisk and say "oofa" and things like that.

The hope is that that's what will happen but it happens. Instead, what's happened is very, very clear. In the mid 1990s, the UN did a study and said that Canadian First Nations people had the highest rate of death by violence and accident of any ethnic group in the world. I heard that figure and I went to the register of funerals in the parish that I was serving at the time. The figure with them was 35 percent by death that they offer and I looked at my register and it was over 50 percent died by death by violence and accident. That's an incredible figure.

So that in North American and especially in Canada, in many First Nations communities, you have a harder time making it than you would in many war zones across the world. It is that and the overwhelming poverty that has existed for centuries, poverty that Canadians don't tolerate in other countries but have a way of looking the other way in this country that describes the situation as it is today.

Now, what happens is that...as right before Ronald Regan left as President of the United States, he was over in Russia. Somebody said, "Well, what about the Indians? How do you treat them over there?" And he said, "Well, they all have casinos and oil wells." And that myth persists and is pointed to today.

Now, that's not to say, however, that life in my world and in the world that I serve in sleeps or without hope. It has a great deal of hope which I hope to describe. The apology as you heard from our elders yesterday was an amazing in the lives of people, yet people are wondering and hoping that these words are real in terms of behaviour.

But in fact, it was an incredible experience and that experience, I think, for most First Nations people, certainly not all, but for most was a profound freeing of a burden of the past and a way to go forward. I know being there was a great thing and having that was a privilege.

You may be familiar with the statement by Martin Luther King Junior that the long arc of history tends towards justice. I think that's close to it: The long arc of history tends towards justice. I believe that in our theological heritage there is something that describes that sort of thing.

Mary-Anne O'Donovan recently wrote a book called, "One Like Reading." It's been, I think, in the last 10 years, in which she dealt with one of the first systematicians, you might say, of the Church, Irenaeus. And she said that it was amazing after all these centuries that the Church still had not grasped the radicality of the theology of the incarnation that Irenaeus laid out. And those of you who are familiar with the synthesis that Maximus the Confessor gives a few hundred years later will know that a major part of this was that Theology of the Word.

And the Theology of the Word traced the trajectory of the Word's progress in the world, in the cosmos, and it says that every people, every person, and again this is an insight that goes back to the Gospel of John, the first chapter of John. That every people has a kind of trajectory of the Word of God going through their history. Maximus, I think, said this in the most bold way. The word of God who at all times and in all places desires to become flesh.

And the plot of this idea is that the Word constantly, relentlessly, throughout history has tried to become living and real in the life of the people and that you

can see traces of that Word. And the reason I began with Martin Luther King is that in a sense he also understood that reality it's called ponjon or peace or beauty in the Navajo way of life. It's called other things in other cultures and in other ways but the idea is that something of God is seeking embodiment in our life and in our culture always.

Jesus appears as a unique and unrepeatable instance of the reality of that. \He appears in such a way that he unveils his history, rips open history, shows the reality of history in such a way that from the moment that he has come, lived among us, died among us, and was raised again...From that moment on we enter what are called the last days, the days that live in the light of that revelation.

Now, I say that believing and knowing that among the First Nations people, there has been a vibrant presence of the Word, from long before any Europeans came here certainly. But also that Word received and echoed the Word that was given from the missionaries in ways that surprised. Louis Riel, for instance, the way the Word affected him was not exactly what people had in mind, right?

Many of you don't know but the Batoche stand that led to that last battle so to speak--by the way, the Ojibway fought one about 10 years later but they like to say the last battle of everybody, but us The last battle of the so-called Indian wars, that last battle had to do with Big Foot and his band of Lakota believing that Jesus would come back with a cloud of their ancestors and throw these White devil back into the sea, believing that that was so and that they didn't have to pick up a gun or fire a bullet. But that if they just stand before the creator of the universe, that Jesus would come back and save them.

When they were massacred at Wounded Knee, with that vision in their eyes and in their minds when they died. How did they receive the gospel not in the way that their Episcopalian missionaries thought they would; not in the way that people had predicted they would. It was as it is today for many First Nations people, a way of resistance.

Alfred Tritt, the great prophet, the great Anglican prophet of the Wichin people who have led a war of resistance against the oil companies for decades. He said, "The way of the White man lead to death but the way of Jesus Christ leads to life." He knew very, very well that there was a big difference between the Gospel of Jesus Christ and between the way of life that they were being called to mimic. And it is that hope that is still inspiring First Nations people across the land.

What we would like to say is that the Gospel and its' preaching, is a prophetic unveiling of the presence of the Word of God in creation and history over time. That that is the central task, not only of the Church, but of people, of pointing to that Gospel that we have received, is the heartbeat of God in the universe.

And I'd like to say that at this point in time the First Nation's people, the indigenous peoples of the world, if you look at them around the world, you will find if you're--by the way, in Alaska I was called an eco-terrorist by the senator. But if you look around the world, First Nations people are leading the battle in some of the most difficult environmental issues.

They're on the front line of those issues when it comes to water, the privatization of water, the commodification of life. First Nations people are on the front line of those. In other words, they are again trying, not consciously but by their very being, unveiling the prophetic presence of God's words in history, I would say, by the way that they live their lives and by the way that they are displaying in their lives.

Not completely of course. I mean, I'm well aware because, you know, people will say well, you know, "First Nations people? How can call you environmentalists? I go by and I see the rolled up diaper on the side of the road and I see a beer bottle here and there." And, you know, I try to say yes that nobody's completely consistent, but look at the smoke stacks, you know. Look at all the things that are surrounding us that we don't say are indications of hypocrisy. We don't experience them that way.

Now, Thomas Burton wrote a book before he died called, "Wisdom from the Desert," and in that introduction, he made a very important observation. He described the people of the desert as people who realized that systemic evil had so overcome the life of the Church, that credible witness to the Word of Jesus Christ was not possible within it, within the structure of the society as it was living out and within the structure of the relationship that the Church had developed with society.

These were people who said if I wish to be a credible witness to the purity and truth of God's word in Jesus, I must separate myself from this economy and this way of life and first of all begin to understand what it is. We have had, since the time of Constantine, such a thorough misinterpretation, systemic misinterpretation, of the word of God that it's very difficult to apprehend in its pristine purity.

This is really what the people in the desert...now they weren't condemning the Church, although their lifestyle was an extreme challenge to it of course. But what they were trying to do is a very important, I think, idea for us to try to deal with as people.

And by the way, I'm nearing the end here. I usually say that halfway through but I actually am nearing the end.

He said, "Now what some of you will ask: Where do we find this in our society today?" And he said maybe if you go to the Navajo Nation or the Hopi Nation you will find it somewhere there where the resistance to the way of life is credible, communal and long lived.

What an amazing insight, what an amazing insight. Many people look at the Navajo and say they're just dumb, they just can't do it. They just can't mimic our way of life and what miserable creatures they must be. Many of you would say that when you look at First Nations people on the streets here. Many of you say that when you look at the state of the reserves and their difficulties.

The reality is this is one of the most sustained forms of resistance that the world has known to an overwhelming way of life, the shape-shifting of the modern economic cultural mix that we call the West. The shape-shifting of it has meant that it's been difficult for First Nations people but they've managed to mount a credible resistance for a long time.

Today across Canada there are consultations for First Nations people to develop what we might call the first indigenous expression of Christianity in North America. I wrote a paper called, "The Gospel is Coming to North America," I think is how I phrased it. At the time I was assured that everyone was thinking "Well that's a historical document long ago," but in fact I believe we are now witnessing it happening because most of what Christianity has been in North America is a Christianity of a Diaspora, a Diaspora that indigenized in certain respects but for the most part wanted to mimic life in Europe in ways that sometimes don't fit.

For instance, the times of Lent don't work too well in Inuchuwak or Yellowknife. So we all have been gathering in consultation. There are about five or six areas in Canada where we are gathering. We come together, we read the Gospel, we say what do we hear in this Gospel. We read it again; we say what is God saying to us in the Gospel. We read it again, and we say what is God calling us to do.

That sets the flavour for these consultations in which we then begin to talk about how we take responsibility for our life in community in Christ in the places where we live. These are very exciting. They are times of feeling, they are times of joy, they are times of singing. And they're also business meetings where we talk about money and other things and how we're going to deal.

This is a spiritual movement that's sweeping across Canada and you will be seeing it, I think, in many, many ways in the weeks, the months and the years to come. I want to close with a thought. We are, I think, beginning to witness the power of God through the Word of God. And I think that that Word is really what makes the mission of God powerful. That Word uttered in the power of the spirit is really what mission is all about.

And whenever we provide our human power on human organizations, it tends to go bad. No, I'm not speaking against human organization. What I'm saying is it's absolutely important that we know right off, that we learn not to be ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God under salvation, that we learn to be proud of what the Gospel can do and has done in our community.

Non-aboriginal Canadians often say, well—I get this all the time by the way, its so rude--"What do they want now? What do they want now?"And if you'll just tell us what you want we'll give it to you." And other things and the sense in which I know non-aboriginal Canadians want this all to be over. They want to stop being reminded of what happened. "I didn't do it; my ancestors did." And I understand that.

But Phil Fontaine said something important in response to the apology. He said, "Canadians do now know that we have always been a part of Canadian identity and always will be."

For the Church...If the Church gets this right, it will be a part of the Church's identity. Now, you look at that and I know that sounds weird, but when John Newton realized who he was, that he had done such horrible evil--even as a Christian he had done such horrible evil--he didn't sing, "I'm glad that this is all over. Now, I can get back to life."

He realized that his wretchedness was now a part of a redeemed identity in the Gospel. And if we get this right, that we were once the colonial church but now we're not, will be our greatest glory. When John Newton died, he had chiseled in stone, "A servant of slaves". He wore the term proudly, not because of what he did or because he was such a great person, but because the glory and power of God is greater than any human nation or the power of any human nation.

It can save to the uttermost as the scripture says. And that's what we are witnessing today. If we get it, a part of our identity, will be a redeemed identity from what we were to what we will be, from what we were, both as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, from what we will be in the living the Word of God.

Monday February 16, 2009: Triologue Session 1
Triologue Conversation

(Silence & ringing of a bell)

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

(Singing)

This chant is from the Bontoc area in the northern part of the Philippines, one of areas of, I would also say, "First Nations"

I would like to thank you Bishop Mark for your presence here, for your passion, for your embodiment fully of the First Nations. I read about a briefing in Canada a little bit. I want to learn more. And yesterday meeting the elders, I thought to myself we don't do this enough, we don't quite often sit in circles. It would be good work for other indigenous people in the Philippines.

It was only in recent years through our organization called Ecumenical Applicational Global Theologians that we realized that the theology that we are making is either European theology or American theology. And we have excluded the wisdom and experience of indigenous people in churches. I grew up in a Methodist Church, and it combined experience; it connected ways, the folk religion in the Philippines and it is only recently that we are trying to, first of all, we acknowledge our guilt, mea culpa. And to say how are we going to be able to understand them, the people, to understand what they are going through.

So we started to, instead of inviting them come to our theological home, we decided that if we to invite it, we will want to visit their villages up in the north or in the south. And it was hard at first because we had to take away layers and layers of baggage, mental and spiritual baggage and what I remember is that one of the quotes of an Australian aboriginal. It said, "If you come here to help us, you are wasting your time. But if you come here believing that your struggle is bound up with ours, then we can work together."

So I really, passionately believe that as a Filipina Christian, I need to listen more instead of prescribe. So in the theological seminary where I once taught in the Philippines, I wondered why of all 200 students, only two come from indigenous communities. Why? And then when they come to our classes, why we do we ask them to cover all the rules, you know, it doesn't jive with their communal way of life. So I said to the faculty we need to not change the indigenous person. We need to learn from them.

"Oh, Elizabeth, we will be out of work if we do that. We are here to teach". I think we are a little bit arrogant. So that was the struggle mainly because the two indigenous peoples are resisting the way we teach them. It's because we thought

it was the only way of knowing. So it is tremendous to hear you and have information, but I will not go back to New Jersey or to Manila thinking I've **learned** enough about the First Nations. No. This will be a kind of big inspiration for me to not only to learn more but to be open to receive the wisdom and the radical vision of your people. Thank you.

Silence

May I ask a question? I'm asking this question because I want to understand. You mentioned about the reading the Gospel from the First Nations perspective. How might this relate to rewriting of history in general?

BISHOP MARK MACDONALD:

That's a very good question and I don't know if I have a real good answer. I think that there is a sense in which First Nation theology and teaching...it appears to be right now that it is a self-consciously oral and passed on from Christian to Christian. And I think that there's a live debate, and we hear that from some of the elderly, about whether it will ever be written down or whether it's appropriate to write it down given the First Nation understanding of how true is the nature of truth, the character of truth, number one; and number two, the nature of the transmission.

So there's a sense in which I don't know the answer to that except that there are people who have, and I believe are continuing, to interact as a kind of bridge people. Vine Deloria Jr. is a Lakota man, who was one of those bridge people who kind of left his people in order to do that. What we're finding is there's a hunger for theological education but right now a lot of people are saying it must happen on our land. It must happen among our people and then after someone who's gone through that process, then they can move out and go to a seminary after they've been grounded in our tradition and our way of discipleship. Then they can go out.

Now, the first of these people are now appearing on the scene and they're going to be trailblazers, I think, into how this happens in the future. Whether or not that will involve critical engagement, you know, with other theologies, other disciplines; it's too early to tell, I think. So it's a very good question and the answer is: I don't know.

I see, again, a new trajectory happening is that we're just beginning to see it have a profile, and that is the engagement with the Western theology after you've been grounded in your own theology in the land. Two of the brightest aspirants for ministry among the Navajo said to me, "We cannot learn theology apart from this land that we live in. And so we want to learn theology but it has to happen here. We won't go anywhere else and if you ask us to we won't go."

(Silence)

REV. DR. RUSSELL DAYE:

There is a Fijian theologian who has written a book trying to walk that line I think you're describing. And much of the conversation becomes grounded in the Fijian concept of "*Vanua*". The indigenous people of the South Pacific, the Polynesian part of the South Pacific, all seem to have a word similar to "*Vanua*". In one nation it's "*Sinua*". The Maori have a similar word...and this word means, "The people."...and this word means, "The land,"...and this word means, the coastal ecosystems...the same word.

And the book tells about a ritual to try to help readers who don't come from a Polynesian society to understand this word. And that is that it's a ritual that's common at the time of the birth of a person to cut the umbilical, to take it out and to make a hole and put the umbilical cord in the hole and to plant a tree on top of it and to let it grow.

I taught at a place called the Pacific Theological College in Fiji and there were students there from all over the South Pacific and the North Pacific and the Federation of Micronesia. It was an interesting experience, I guess because of the vestiges of colonialism or the norms. For the first six months or so I was there it was a very hard time having students challenge me or teach me things in class. We were doing contextual theology about the Pacific, and here I was from North America, and so finally I had to coerce them and I made big class marks based on class participation and I gave everybody a bonus for challenging me and being critical of theologies and methods that I brought.

So then the norms changed a little bit and we had these wonderful discussions and then we would retire in the evening to sitting in a circle and drinking Kava. Anybody ever have Kava? Anybody familiar with it? It's a mild barbiturate that is made from the yaqona plant, the pepper plant. It had long roots. You take the roots and you dry them out and you pound them into dust and you mix the dust with water and you drink something that looks and tastes very much like muddy water.

And it has a very calming effect. I always wondered why the Pacific islanders needed to be more calm because relative to folks where I came from, they are pretty calm already, at least from the outside, as far as I could tell. But it allows you to sit in circle for a long time. We would have these wonderful theological discussions and in class we would have these wonderful theological discussions. And then we would have chapel every morning and the sermons were always personal pietistic sermons that were very much in the form of the colonial religion that had been brought by the London missionary society and the congregational overseas mission in the US and various other organizations.

And I used to get so mad, and I really challenged the students and my fellow faculty members, most of who were from the Pacific, to embody a different kind of homiletics in the chapel. And, you know, it took me about three years to figure out that that was my neurosis. Homiletics was the umbilical planted under the tree. The homiletic was the Kava bowl.

Having chapel in that way provided some kind of structure and historical continuity that meant something that I still don't understand, but who am I to have to understand? And in the meantime, there was a homiletic alive all over the place and around.

BISHOP MARK MACDONALD:

This is very true. I had an assistant who worked for me and was a very compassionate, very aware, very sensitive Anglo woman who...she said, "Why do they keep talking about Jesus so much." And I finally, after she said that, I said, "Did it ever occur to you that they might mean more when they say that word than you do when you say it?" That it has depths of meaning that you haven't plumbed yet.

That of course is an idea that is absolutely foreign to Westerners. I mean, after all, they've studied the historical Jesus, they've done all this kind of reflection and it certainly had never occurred to her that someone without any education who says Jesus all the time had a deeper portal to God than she did, you know. But the amazing thing about her was that she took that to heart, believed it and lived it and is still living it today much to her joy and much to her credit.

So it is true. There are Westerners who will see forms that they associate with simplistic faith. If you go a little bit deeper, it becomes very complex, very, very surprising to people when they deal with it.

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

Thank you. I want to talk about the umbilical cord being buried. I think that is also related to the original cultures of men in the Philippines: One, because there used to be a question for people to understand a person in the Philippines. It would be asked, "Where are you from," but actually behind that question is, "Where was your umbilical cord buried? Is it in Kabankalan or is it in Banaue?" Which gives the people a concept of identity. Like for myself, I come from the Pagalo Region which Pagalo means people of the river.

The dress I am wearing is from the people of the mountain but I walk in the people along the river and you cannot plant the umbilical cord by the river, yes?

So my mother and my grandmother would say, "We have to walk many, many kilometres to find the place where we would bury the umbilical cord." We have 10 siblings and all home births in a small village where there's no hospital, only a midwife. So I asked my mother, "Where did you bury my umbilical cord? Could you show me that place?"

So she showed me the route and that was when I was eight years old so I knew that the place was still there. So when I was 18 there was a kind of development in my village, my town, to build some factories and they had to bulldoze. And I said, "Oh my God, my umbilical cord will go." Where is my identify now, you know? Because, correct me if I'm wrong, Bishop Mark, the land and people are so connected and then the people will think we do not own land, the land owns us, yeah?

And so when a big mining corporation like to build the Chico river dam in the late '70s and '80s in the northern part of the Philippines, you know who resisted? The indigenous people there. And they resisted, literally with their bodies. You know, they put their bodies on line before the trucks and all the machines and they say, "No, you cannot do this because if you build a dam, it will drown the entire villages. And it's not only our umbilical cord that was buried here. Our ancestors umbilical cords are here. This land is sacred.

But then the lowland Christians and the corporate business could not comprehend that. We are doing this for your development. It will supply electricity for you. Then the indigenous people said, "We don't need electricity. We have lived this way, before but we have a suspicion you want profit". So from the indigenous people, even before I learned about hermeneutics of suspicion from Schuessler Fiorenza I already learned it from my indigenous friends.

And then when I was doing research for my thesis on Asian Women Theology, and I thought to myself, "Why am I interviewing only those who are prominent women theologians? Why can't I include the indigenous theology of indigenous women?" But I could not do that in Claremont Library. Nothing like that. Nothing. And you know, I could not write my thesis. Why? Because there was no light. I can do that research but it doesn't...I just stopped. After awhile I couldn't write.

So I asked the advice of a famous Chinese theologian at that time. Please Dr. Wong, I really want to finish my doctorate but I cannot finish this thesis. I don't know if I am just burnt out? Does that ring a bell or what? And then he said, "Elizabeth, you showed me your prospectus. With this you can become a theological administrator but you want to be a theologian." I said, "Yes, to be a theologian." "Then you must listen to the voices of the people whose voices are not heard." And that put a big responsibility on my shoulders.

To make the long story short, I decided even without so much money, I would return to the Philippines and do my research. Not to objectify the women or other

people there but, because yes oral history is very important, the Filipino culture is basically oral. I mean, we love words, we love words. But there was a time when we realized that if we don't write our own histories or stories the conquerors will write for us.

So that's when our first narrative came, without the indigenous people.

I asked permission; "Do you mind? I have this little thing like a tape recorder. Can you give me permission to record your voice?" And they said, "Not yet." You have to wait." Okay, I wait. I already wait six days and they're still not ready for me to record. And I have this angst.

You know, I only have, so it really might take a while, and it takes so much time. And then it dawned on me, "Elizabeth, You're in another world. You are not in Vermont, you are not in Manila; you are not in Toronto. You are in Baguio." So I have to change. It's hard. It's hard to change one's perspective. Its hard to peel off layer and layer.

So they taught me to look at the moment and not the problem. They prompted me that I don't have to produce knowledge but to be open to the reason. To make a long story short, I was able to pick up new with the story. I realized it's really a gift, a privilege, just to be able just to meet them, because when they tell stories it indicates that they are now beginning to trust you, because if they don't trust you, they will not tell their stories.

BISHOP MARK MACDONALD:

What you said I think would be very familiar here. Quite a number of tribes here bury the umbilical cord and I've heard elders said to parents, "You didn't bury that one's umbilical cord, did you?" And the parents were kind of shame-faced, agreeing, because they say if you don't bury someone's umbilical cord they're always looking for it the rest of their lives. You know, getting into things. So that's very true.

But I think too that in North America, there have been a few tribes that have said, "we will not accept any agreement, treaty or any other point of negotiation that involves the individual ownership of land".

And those tribes that have done that, in the US-- Red Lake Ojibway, Yakama and the Navajo Nations-- they refused to sign any agreements that included individual ownership of land. All three of those tribes have more land now than they did before the Europeans came. They have high rates of poverty but lower rates of the other measures of misery that are so common in First Nations.

And it's very true, to this day the very idea of ownership of land is...the initial reaction to it was, "well if you want to buy the land, do you want to buy the sky too? I'll sell you that". You know, it was humour. I mean, they just thought it was so absurd, that it was a joke at first. And when they realized when they weren't kidding that was when the horror began to set in.

But that's really why there's so much upset about the commodification of land, of water, and of life itself. Indigenous people are very concerned and upset about that. So thank you. I hear a lot of familiar stuff in that.

Monday February 16, 2009: Triologue Session 1
Audience Questions

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Bishop Mark, yesterday, one of the elders said that understanding is power--being able to understand other people. So do you have any comments on or what's your idea of what Christian power is?

BISHOP MARK MACDONALD:

I think that power is...I think most elders would say something like this... We were talking about what produced efficient administration in First Nations communities. And one of the elders said, "It's very important for us to understand that spirit animates matter. And so that the most important thing you can do be a good administrator is to pray, play, dance...whatever animates the spirit. And so I think often times that power is seen as a product of a truthful life. The first leader of the Navajo people...the Navajo people were brought on a 300 mile forced march to a concentration camp in Fort Sumner. Over half of them died. About halfway through their captivity, a chief named Mandolito showed. He just showed up. He's been out by himself for years. And they asked him why he wasn't caught. And he said, "I know a lot of good songs."

His power, his ability to cloak himself, to stay free was in the songs that he could sing. And oftentimes today even the elders will say, "wealth is related to how many songs you know". So I don't think that that's just like I know about songs, I can really kick butt at a Karaoke bar. But I think it's more a question of each song is a portal...each song has meaning to it in the same way that I think each psalm is a portal and has a meaning to it.

We have the hymnal that's in the Kuch'in language. It's still used very much and the elders would always say to me, "Albert Tripp used to sing that one a lot", or "Isaac Tripp sang that one when he was about to die". And so prayers, songs, dances, these are the things that produce power, but it's really, I think, their ability to capture a truth and I think that for many native people, there's a sense in which power as defined by the West is at odds with the traditional types of what power is all about and that has a lot to do with the so-called Indian wars.

Thank you for the question. I hope that was a good stab at an answer.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I'm Father Terry Gallagher of the Scarboro Missions, I'm a Catholic priest, missionary for 42 years. I'm not saying that to be something. What I'm saying

comes out of the lived experience. I recently in December went with a bus load of young people who were Hindu, Buddhist, Sikhs, Christians and Muslims to the Six Nations Brantford museum. And we watched and looked at the display, the art of Gary Miller and learned of the story of the residential schools. It was the first time I felt uncomfortable in this whole question because it was Anglican.

Because I saw and was hearing about, my people and our story. But something came to me when I was looking at the picture of the Anglican rector and listening to Gary's tape. And it's bigger than just Catholic; it's bigger than just Protestant. It's bigger than just White. And bring it out, I want to say, about 20 years ago, a classmate of mine who I loved more than any of our other classmates, when I came back from the Philippines I went to watch him say mass and I watched him, I loved him.

He's since deceased but he was a vocations director for the diocese here and before leaving his work at the office of Catholic education, he fired three women, two women and two others quit in solidarity. I was deeply disturbed by what my classmate did and I wrote a letter to the Cardinal. But showed it to my classmate first and I gave a list of six different stories of how we priests have abused our power in relationship to those working with us in theological circles or parishes. And I said to the Cardinal in the letter, after doing this, we need to take a look at power as priests and he answered--he was always quick at answering. He's good that way. And he said in his note to me, "Father Gallagher, we have enough real problems in the Church without you fabricating new ones." We are not willing to look at this. It's male but it's also female. It's human, and I really welcome and am thrilled to be here to hear your reflections on these powerful things that we need to deal with.

BISHOP MARK MACDONALD:

Thank you Father. I find that very moving. I was at a conference once and they asked me, it was a very evangelical conference, and they said, "Well, where do you see this in the bible?" And I said, "Revelations Chapter 12." And Revelations Chapter 12, as you may know, the beast makes war upon a woman and a child in the wilderness. And I said, to me what's happened to First Nations and other people is a revelation of what happens when the idolatry...when we love the wealth and the power of nations more than we love God.

And the end result of that, which the church as an institution has often been involved in, is really quite unsavoury. And I think the reason at the beginning of revelations that we find the Church so weak and decrepit, you know. It's a sense that the historical reality as its witness to Christ that the Church is, is often very weak because of it's involvement in the systems that hypnotized us and, we were just talking about this a little bit ago, the sorcery of the nations, the way in which

they hypnotize us into thinking things that are really quite stupid and at odds with our identity and as Christian people.

But you're absolutely right that none of us is immune and all of us, I think, would have to say that to save our souls, the most important thing is we must be ruthless in our attempt to embody and live the truth. And that's very, very difficult. It isn't easy at all. And as theological students, some of you are starting out, some of you have been around for a while. I think you realize that being true to God, and putting God before all things else in your life is every bit as hard in the Church as it is some place else.

REV. DR. RUSSELL DAYE:

Can I make a comment? I had the very good fortune of being a theological student during the years that Walter Wink was writing his trilogy on 'powers'. And published the third one not long after I was ordained. One of the unfortunate things about the publishing world of theology is that newer books are thought to be sexier. But don't lose Wink. If you want to sort out through some deep study, an understanding of how the folks who produced the New Testament understood power, and powers and principalities, I don't know a better resource, printed resource, than his three volume study of the powers.

It starts off with "Naming the Powers, which is the first step. The second one is "Unmasking the Powers", and the third one is "Engaging the Powers". And if you only have time to read one, read the third one. Because he reviews what he teaches you in the first two but it's also the most helpful in terms of how you apply it to understanding, and living with an understanding today.

In a nutshell, what Wink says is that Christians, in the near east 2,000 years ago like other people in the near east, had a capacity, through prayer and ritual and communal life oriented towards justice, to see into the depths of a person or a congregation or a community or even a large institution like the Roman Legions. And what they saw they projected out as angelic or demonic personalities.

And we have a tendency to write off all these writings, both biblical and non-biblical, about demons and evil because we don't believe in them anymore. So what Wink says is you have to understand these are projected out intuitive understandings of inferiorities that drive and control the human collective. And it is to our great impoverishment, and to our great weakening, what people in the West including Christian, non-indigenous people in the West, have lost the capacity to look deeply into the inferiorities, the spirit of a community organization and to project out the power personality that's embedded within them.

Let me tell you one little story and then move on. Mission has to take place in congregational life too. Most of you who are in the ordination stage will spend most of your ministry in congregational life, or much of your ministry.

Now I've had many church board meetings when the question's been asked, "how are we going to administer efficiently." We never have anyone say, respond to that by saying, "Matter is animated by spirit". But they should, right? And if we do our job right, they will. When I went to the congregation I currently serve -- The congregation is filled with powerful people. The leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada, Alexis McDonough was in that congregation, Vice President of Dalhousie University, Presidents of business, and banks.

And they were completely disempowered in terms of how to run that congregation and how to lead that congregation because they were spinning their wheels into exhaustion focusing on numbers of dollars, and numbers of bums in the pews and numbers of kids on the Sunday Schools and things like personnel qualities.

And the way they were empowered was they were convinced to stop doing all of those things for a year and to have a jubilee that did three things: They had a lot of parties, they had deep dialogues about fears and hopes and feelings and sentiments and those soft things. And we engaged in dialogue with anybody not like us who comes to us or allows us to go to them. So the Shambala Buddhists, and the synagogues and folks working in street ministries and folks from the Native Friendship Centre.

And it was amazing to watch all these people be empowering by a different kind of power and the angel of our congregation underwent a personality transformation, to use Wink's language. Our angel was healed of his neurosis. Financial crisis kind of brought that neurosis back a little but, we've learned how to heal her once. Maybe we can again.

MALE AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:

I have a really short question. Can you establish, according to your understanding, the difference between power and authority.

BISHOP MARK MACDONALD:

I'm trying to anticipate what the elders would say. I think that in First Nations communities, all power comes from authority, meaning that an authority is established by integrity, wholeness and balance. And that any power that claims authority is false. In other words, I have authority because I have the power to do things. That would be considered false and people who have authority because

of power are—[there's a term in Athabascan that translates] *it comes around*. If you grab it power, you are destined to fall because all power comes from authority. It springs from that. That's my interpretation.

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

I stand because I'm not so tall. So I can see. So I can authority over you. I want to welcome some guests. Welcome Ray and Rhea Whitehead who have been constant mission partners with us in the Philippines a former student of mine and her child who came here to see me after we haven't seen each other for six or seven years.

Power and Authority... I will illustrate it by saying I witnessed the martial law in the Philippines under Marcos, Dictator Marcos. And he tried to use all the power under his tentacles to exert absolute authority over our people. And so we lived under martial law for almost 20 years. Many shed blood, died, and were incarcerated because of their political convictions. There came a time when Marcos absolutely had no authority at all. He had no moral authority to lead our nation.

So power for them is just the capacity to do something. It could be to do something good or not so good. Power can be used or abused.

In ordination, when I'm invited to be present in ordination liturgy, I reflect on what sense when they bishop would put the hand on the ordinand and say, "by the power invested in me by the Church" etc, etc, etc, and the power of the word, you know, to consecrate you as a bishop or to ordain you. And I thought that's meaning of power and authority there.

And how about the classroom. Who wields the power? Do students have power? Yes? Why? Because without students, as a professor, I would not be there at all. But if I am not enlightened I will maybe use my power to denigrate my students. Do I use education to domesticate my students or liberate my students? But I guess that's the meaning of power and authority. For some they overlap. If I go here I think you don't have authority to boycott my opinion, then I will speak forwardly.

I mean, I want also authority. In a good part of society like the Philippines when the woman had been so subdued and treated as a second class citizen. During the early years when we were trying to have the women's movement, we needed to believe in ourselves, that no one has the right to subdue us. No one has the right to speak for us. No one has the right to treat us as second class citizens.

We conducted seminars where abused women, victims of domestic violence, would come and say, "We need your help". So we tried and we started with

psychological healing because it's not only their bodies that have been beaten. It's their countenance that had been so beaten. We would provide psychological counselling. The most radical thing in the Philippines was that in one hour was to help them see that they are not to blame for this. That here are the many responses that led to that. That you are not to be blamed.

I was with one woman who had been abused in the home and she said, "Wow? Now I go home and I say to my husband I am not to blame. Now I can stand up. I am the one thinking and my husband says enough. So now I would like to tell him, 'From now on you do not have the right to inflict any harm on me. You are a human being, I am a human being. I respect you and you must respect me'". And then the husband said, "What did you do? What did those women do to you? I am the sole authority here in the house". They became suspicious, "They make the women strong". But we women say, "Once your eyes have been opened, there's no turning back."

It's also like what Father Terry said, sometimes it's easier to solve problems out there but not easy to look at the problems in here, in our staff, in our seminary, in our church, yeah? And so sometimes we may have good intentions over there but it's like...If I am hoping for justice for the people in South Africa, then I have to examine if I'm a middle class woman hiring a nanny. How do I treat my nanny? Do I pay her well? Do I confiscate your passport and so she cannot go anywhere.

The personal is political. The political is personal. Economics is power. Power needs to be collectively economical and humanitarian.

REV. DR. RUSSELL DAYE:

One of the things you'll find out in your ministries of various kinds is that when you really are putting your finger on issues of power, you're going to cause a little explosion. And if you're not doing that, if you can go through years in the pastoral relationship, for example, without any of those little explosions, you're probably avoiding that.

And to go back to the story I was telling earlier about our Jubilee year, one of the things that I sometimes have been too cowardly to follow through on, is having had all of these folks who have power in the various institutions of society go through an experience of a different kind of power, is asking them how have they carried their learning into the banks and into Dalhousie university and into the parliament or into the medical system.

They basically find a variety of ways to tell me to piss off after I do that. And there was a time, and this is an interesting power dynamic too, when clergy were of high enough status that you wouldn't feel as though you wouldn't have to back down. There was authority. There was power within the role such that, there is a

famous story in my congregation about when the minister stood and scolded the premier of Nova Scotia from the pulpit.

Well, I'm happy that the church has been humiliated in such that we don't have that kind of imposed authority and power but I think we need to respond to the loss of that, to the humiliation of the Church, with some real courage so that when the bank president or the vice president of a university is saying, "you don't have any right to ask me these questions or to force me to reflect on these questions", that we hold our ground.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

[Not clear on audio tape: a question about putting scripture ahead of tradition and other influences. Cites a Korean example in which the moment when Christian faith made more important than Korean tradition as being an important moment in Korea becoming Christian. Concerned that the First Nations Elders they met yesterday put First Nations tradition ahead of scripture. He heard Native people not seeing scripture as the primary source for understanding God, but that they were viewing their own traditions as superior. Not that tradition be abandoned, but that there be a dialogue with Christian theology as long as Scripture and Christian doctrine be central.]

BISHOP MARK MACDONALD:

I don't know if I have enough time to answer that question. But I would say this...I think that you have seriously misread what the import of what they said was and what they were saying. I think that if you went to most communities that you would find that they are very biblical.

John Veniaminov, who is known as Saint Innocent of the Russian Orthodox Church, said that a Native Alaskan, before they become Christian, live in a world closer to the New Testament than does a Russian Christian of that time.

And I think that what happened however is that the United States government and the Canadian government outlawed so much of what those practices were for centuries that... Someone started using sweet grass and sage for incense at the church that I pastured at in Red Lake and we had a number of Pentecostals come there and say, "You are using native things and that's bad". I pointed out that Malachi 1:11 says that one of the signs of the end time is that people from all over the world would offer incense to God and that we were in fact fulfilling biblical prophesy by what were doing and not trying to be rebellious at all. But they saw it initially as being rebellious. That we didn't care what scripture said.

In fact what we were concerned about was reading scripture through our own eyes and not having other people tell us what it means. Because we found out that are many lies that have been introduced into that telling. And some of it isn't lies, some of it is has just gotten so far philosophically from its beginning.

I have a friend, Ray Aldred, teaches in Calgary. He says we are offered two things; from the fundamentalists they say, buy all of these propositions that have nothing to do with scripture. Buy all of these propositions and then you'll know Jesus. And the liberals say you don't have to do anything. You're fine the way you are. And as he says, we know that isn't true. So he says the best that we can do is listen to the story and judge for ourselves. And we'll have to judge for ourselves.

It would be remiss to say that scripture isn't important. The elders come to me all the time and say, this is how I interpreted that passage and I will go, "wow!" I see insights there that my training in the west has educated out of me because what we've offered to First Nations people, the critique of their religion that it wasn't scientific, not that it wasn't Christian. The critique of the mission was, "you're not western.

So what we are having to do is start, and I would say my friend who is both traditional healer and a Christian, he said that what we are engaging in is the essence of one meeting the essence of the other, believing that the Word of God was truly present among the people, distorted by sin, distorted by misunderstanding. But also believing that the truth is deposited in the Scripture in a unique way and that we might try to find the essence of that, obscured by the sin of the culture that brought it.

So I would say that your perception, and I think that you find if you spent time with native communities you would find that they believe that they have a lot to learn from Scripture and you would find that you have a lot to learn from them.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I am wondering from a Native point of view whether it is ok for non-natives to practice sweet grass ceremonies?

BISHOP MARK MACDONALD:

I think that from the native community they would say, "Why do you import incense from the holy land when you've got it on your tree here?" I think people from Alaska are always wondering why the science class imports frozen cats from San Francisco when the elder down the street is cut butchering a moose.

It's fine to use those things in your own way, but also to understand that for many elders what they see happening with European people when they appropriate native symbols would be kind of like let's say you brought a Eucharist, an Anglican Eucharist, to China and you did it once and people said, "Oh, gosh the heart of that is when you pass the brass plate around". And then they start a brass plate ceremony to celebrate western spirituality. Often what happens is that people will latch on to one symbol that captures their imagination and use it out of context.

Although using the things are, on some level ok, what the elders seem to say is, understand the reason we like sage is because we have a relationship with it, we have lived with it, it is a part of our lives, it is a part of who we are. So the reason we like to use sweet grass it is because it has a meaning to us. Make sure that what you use has a meaning to you that isn't just exoticism. Most elders would say, "that's cool, that's great, that's wonderful", but make sure you do it with integrity to your own tradition, as well as trying to honour and respect the traditions and the ways it is used in theirs. There might be elders here who could share with you about that more. Very good question. Thank you. It's a beautiful question.

Tuesday February 17, 2009: Trialogue Session 2
Keynote

REV. DR. RUSSELL DAYE:

I want to say how pleased I am to be back at the CTSC. I attended the CTSC in 1987 at Huron College in London that Lois made reference to. I think she said “The women took their place and the men ended up in a heap”. I think I was just on the edge of that heap. I was already studying in the Theological College, UTC at McGill that was pretty influenced by feminism so I think I didn’t end up at the bottom. And then I stayed on the next year to be on the National Planning Team, and then the following year, I was 50% of the Continuity Person. As I was flying here from Halifax on Saturday, I’m thinking “It’s going to be really strange to be at the CTSC without Lois. And then I walked in, and there was Lois! And she hasn’t changed, I have to tell you. In our first conversation, she started to plant things I was supposed to say in my theme presentation, which has been one of her subversive techniques for as long as I’ve known her. And usually, it is wise to listen.

I’m going to begin my presentation this morning by reading a parable. It’s the one that I normally refer to as ‘The Parable of the Wise and the Foolish Bridesmaid’ or ‘The Wise and the Foolish Virgin’. Here, it’s referred to as ‘maiden’. Now, I’m reading from a translation from which I’ve never read before, RSV Catholic Edition.

‘Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, “Behold the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.” Then all those maidens rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, “Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.” But the wise replied, “Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.” And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. Afterward the other maidens came also, saying, “Lord, lord, open to us.” But he replied, “Truly I say to you, I do not know you.” Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. [Matthew 25:1-13]

I think that one of the things we miss when we read this parable--but its key—is the setting. This is all oriented towards a wedding feast. Another thing that we miss when we read the parable, too often, is that the parables were meant to provoke through various literary techniques or speaking techniques, and it’s a breaking open of normal perceptions so another realm could be experienced. Now, that realm has for a long time, in our culture, been referred to by the phrase ‘The Kingdom of Heaven’ – ‘The Kingdom of Heaven’ – which many of us have

replaced with the phrase 'The Reign of Heaven'. But recently, some biblical scholars have asserted that the Greek word '*basileah*' which has been translated as 'Kingdom' or more recently as 'Reign' can be better translated as 'Empire'. Bernard Brandon Scott, for example, championed the translation of the word '*basileah*' – the Greek word '*basileah*' – as 'Empire'. He ended up, "By using the phrase 'The Empire of Heaven', Jesus was setting up a contrast between the Empire of Heaven, and the Empire that was grinding his people into the dust with its legions and its brutal, brutal economics ... the Empire of Rome". One kind of empire runs on force; the other runs on humble service. One kind of empire declares 'might is right'; the other declares 'the meek shall inherit the earth'. One kind of empire sucks up riches, giving more to those who already have much; and the other empties itself with special care for the poor. One kind of empire generates hierarchy, a few climbing to the pinnacle, the masses suffering below; the other kind of empire generates deep community.

Now, normally when I'm preaching in my congregation, and I have to say "I don't really identify you with one empire and you with the other", although already, they look a little more happy over here.

I want to tell you a story. It was a true story in which I was given a stark view of two kinds of empire. In January of 2002, my family and I moved to the Pacific Theological College, which is nestled on the edge of Fiji's capital, Suva, about 75 metres from the sea. Soon after our arrival at the college, the community was called to an emergency meeting in the chapel. Now, scattered among the Fijians, the Papua New Guineans, the Tuvaluans and Tahitians and Solomon Islanders and Micronesians were a few Palagis. Does anybody know what a Palagi is? Most of you are Palagis. At least, you look like Palagis. I'm a Palagi. Palagi is the word commonly used in the South Pacific, with respect, to refer to people of European descent. So, scattered throughout the chapel were a few Palagis, like me.

The principal informed us that a huge storm was developing in the warm waters between Fiji and New Zealand and that the storm surge could send waves between seven and eight meters high in our direction. Now, big waves aren't usually a problem in Fiji or on other Pacific islands because there are these reefs around the island, and the waves just break on the reefs. And the area between the reef and the shore is relatively calm except that there's a phenomenon that happens every once in awhile where a wave has become so big – perhaps 8 metres – that it just rolls over the reef and ignores it. So, when that wave hits shore, it hit two stories high. The first one: '[bam]!' Well, our emergency situation lasted for 48 hours, as the waves grew from 4 metres, to 5, to 6, to 7, 7 ½, 7 ¾ ...

At the community meeting, it was decided to evacuate the women and children from the college to another part of the city, on higher ground. The men would stay behind to keep a vigil. Now, to the small cluster of Palagi men – myself, an

Australian, a German, an Irishman – it was not entirely clear what we were supposed to do on this vigil if we were confronted with a two-story wall of water; but it was explained to us that in the South Pacific, men were charged with watching over their communities in times of danger. So we watched, all through the first day and the first night. Most of the night was spent in the community circle, singing songs, telling stories, and ingesting cup after cup of kava, the mild barbiturate that is ever present in the South Pacific where men gather. We watched all through the second day, and on the second evening great tubs of kava were being swilled again. Unable to keep the pace, the Palagi men decided that we would take shifts among ourselves so that we could get some sleep. At 2 a.m., I rose from my bed and walked across campus to find every single man fast asleep. Most were still huddled around the kava bowl. A few were at waters' edge where they had been looking out for 'the big wave'.

Now, at this moment, despite my sensitivity training for overseas service (where is Bob Faris, because he did it?), despite knowing the ugliness and stupidity of attitudes of cultural superiority, just such an attitude rose within me and took over completely. It was better to take shifts and set alarms; it was better to *be organized*, even if we had to miss out on the fun of the kava circle. I thought of Jesus' parable of the wise and the foolish bridesmaids and felt certain that we Palagis were the wise ones, and the sleeping Pacific Islanders ... well, their place was obvious.

Now, I'll come back to this moment of smugness in a minute or two, but first I want to tell you of some other things I learned and witnessed during my 3 years in Fiji. The first thing I discovered was that people in that part of the world party! Any excuse for a feast, any excuse to welcome guests, to give guests gifts, any excuse to sing and dance will do – even the offset of a two-story wave! Another thing I learned is that people share. I mean, people **share**. People share food. When fish are caught, when coconuts are knocked down, when a pig is killed, when a garden is harvested, the fruits are shared at a feast and carried door to door. In the same way, cloth and skills and even money is shared. Another thing I learned is that people worshipped. People go to church in great numbers with great regularity. Families pray and read scripture in their homes. Youth go to church and church rallies en masse. It is not uncommon for the church to be more than half full of people under the age of twenty-five. When was the last time you experienced that?

Eventually, I came to see that these things added up to a quality of community that is rarely, if ever, experienced in the land of the Palagis. This deep community, with its economics of sharing, its joy in feasting, shone with powerful marks of the Empire of Heaven. Let me say that again because I want you to hear this: the deep community that I was invited into and witnessed and very slowly came to understand somewhat in the South Pacific, with its economics of sharing and its joy in feasting, shone with the marks of the Empire of Heaven.

But I saw some things more troublesome. I saw a great tide of lowest-common-denominator television programs coming from our continent, television programs that pulled young people away from the feast and into the idiot box. I saw the great engine of western capitalism **destroying** the very economics of sharing that made that society so powerful. I saw foreign fishing and forestry and agriculture companies wiping out traditional sources of wealth. And when you don't have traditional sources of wealth, you don't have- you can't have traditional economics, and by default, you have to surrender to the economics of global capitalism. Eventually I came to understand that I was sitting in Fiji, watching the onslaught of the Palagi Empire.

Looking back at that moment of smugness by the water's edge, I now know how the Palagi Empire advances. It uses good people like me and my German and Australian and Irish counterparts – well-meaning westerners working in Fiji. It was apt that the parable of the wise and the foolish bridesmaids had come to mind at the water's edge. You see, I had completely failed to understand that the Pacific men had read the waters and realized, "We're not gonna get hit by a destructive wave". I don't know how they read the waters in the South Pacific. How could I? But they had it read. And they had two options: to say "business as usual" or "Let's use this interruption as a moment where we can celebrate, where we can enter into deep community. And the men entered into deep community around the kava circle for about two days. And we had men time. And the women were out on the hill, also knowing that the danger had passed, and they didn't have to worry about their men and were very happy to live in community in our absence for two or three days. And they were feasting and singing and celebrating. And the Palagis with me had failed to read the cultural cues and by fault had fallen into an attitude of cultural superiority.

What I hadn't understood was that my Pacific Island hosts were seeking a glimpse of the Empire of Heaven. Jesus' parable of the wise and the foolish bridesmaids is better called 'The parable of the Wedding Feast'. In it, Jesus is asserting that the Empire of Heaven is like a wedding feast. The Empire of Heaven is like the biggest party of the year. The Reign of Heaven is like the time when **everyone** gets to eat enough food. Everyone gets the same food and lots of it. The Reign of Heaven is like the day when the community sets aside its troubles. They come together in joy and hope.

Now, Mediterranean peasants, Palestinian peasants, who are existing on an average of 750 calories a day. I go down to 2,000 when I'm trying to lose weight. So, think about what that day means, when there's nothing to worry about, only celebration; when there is no end of food, and everybody eats the same. My hosts had found a way to live like this. And we Palagi men had been invited and had turned away. We had chosen isolation instead of community; we had chosen to take our own chances instead of sharing the common fate. I consider that moment a gift. For reflecting on it, I came to understand how I carry the Palagi Empire in me. You and I, we carry the Palagi Empire in us. And I'm speaking to a

culturally-mixed group, I understand. But I don't know how you can live your life, no matter what your cultural background, in this place and not have **some** of the Palagi empire planted in you. But I will speak only for myself and my cultural group. The spread of empire, in my experience, is largely achieved through the actions of nice people, **good** people – people like you and me. And we have to be careful about our actions and our words.

And I'd just like to add a little reflection on some things I think we need to be careful about this week. There's a lot of 'Lord' language in our worship and time together. I have not heard reference to Mother God. There's something imperial in that. Yesterday, when we were at 6 Nations and asking questions of our tour guide and of the man who led us in chapel – I forget his name ... Lee – we had questions we had probably not a right to ask. If you go into somebody else's community to make assumptions about what standards their held views in terms of the cars they buy and how they physically render their community. Who gave us the right to structure our questions in that way? Language is one of the ways in which we choose which empire we dwell, which realm we are oriented to. Language is power. One of the things I was saying- yeah, say, for example, there are some among us who are aboriginal, have a life after the questions that Palagis don't. And, we have to meditate on that difference.

Let me finish by saying "Don't feel guilty, and don't despair about this stuff". Yeah, we are agents of empire. All- every choice we make in terms of what we buy makes us agents of empire. It's **very** hard to avoid. But, we are also agents of the empire that...in our worship, in our service, in our building of community, in our struggle for justice, we are agents of the Reign of Heaven. We will never be sure, we will never be washed clean in the blood of the lamb – holy or anything else – such that we are untainted by empire. But in every choice we make about how we choose to speak, buy, move, live, work, we get to choose in some measure whether we orient ourselves to the empire of the Palagis, to the American empire, the capitalist empire – whatever the heck we call it – or the reign of heaven. And let me commend to you the Buddhist practice of mindfulness which many Christians, including the desert fathers and mothers practiced, and that is just being mindful of each of those traits. Breathing into it and thinking about it.

Tuesday February 17, 2009: Trialogue Session 2
Triologue Conversation

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

I invite you to take a moment to reflect, individually, to do some journaling and digest the piece in which we have been privileged to participate.

Bell Ringing

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

Let's breathe in the fruits of the spirit. Let's breathe out anxiety, fear, apathy. Let's imagine a world full of sharing ... sharing of joy as well as sharing of sorrow. Let's imagine a world one with waves of courage and visions of a just participative and sustainable world. Let us watch and pray.

Silence

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

Thank you so much, Russ, for sharing. I am reminded of both my career back home in the Philippines where it is more communal than individualistic. I admire your courage and also your sense of humility, admitting that in your short stay in the Pacific, you learned from the people. And that is a big sign of hope for me, of a kind of a post-colonial mission ... because that sometimes it's kind of rare for Palagis to admit that they do not know all the solutions to all of the problems. And some earlier missionaries fall short of that. They thought that, you know, in our case in the Philippines in 1898, that's after the Filipino-American war, there must be a, so-called, pacification. And along with the American soldiers protestant missionaries were sent. And I admire their time there and their courage; yet, when we review some of the history, it was a painful experience because, like what I heard from the indigenous peoples here, their language has been systematically erased.

And I remember also one time that we went up- I was also part of the boarding school – it's called Harrington Royal College – where our young women were schooled in Christian education, but it was all operated by American women missionaries. I remember now, it clicked in my mind yesterday, about that we saw the residential school, even though we could not enter. But the architecture reminded me of the boarding school I went to, and we were regimented: there's a time to get up, there's a time to eat. And we were not allowed to sit in groups and talk together. And I said, "We are a communal people. It's natural for us to get together and always talking together. But what has also struck me in your

stories, that when the waves are broken through by the reef, as I've heard, in the Pacific Region, the reefs are being destroyed and being extinct. And so, also because of the carbon emissions mostly by western nations, there is global climate change. And the temperature of the sea is rising, and so some parts of Pacific are sinking.

And so, in many ecumenical regions, we would try to listen very hard to a few of the sentiments from Vanuatu, from Micronesia. And then they would say, 'Look, you are discussing about theological language here. We in the Pacific are drowning, are being killed. What will you do now? How do we have conversion, not for conversion of soul but conversion of your conscience?' And so that, as this climate change, is not only the problem of the Pacific or the ocean people but **all** of the people because the species are being extinct and there's also climate change and all these things. And then they say 'It's like we are almost at the midnight in the annihilation clock, in the destruction clock'. And so, I don't know how this empire – the other kind of empire – is really very strong, at least from the Philippines. I cannot speak for people in Asia, but the Philippines, as one who has been there and been all my life there. I don't think we do... in me also, I carry a part of empire. I am now a public privileged brown woman, now that I have emigrated to the belly of the empire, the US empire. And so if I need to do something, I try to do it quickly. So I also need to remind myself. So, thank you.

BISHOP MARK MACDONALD

Well, Russ thanks for that. I just have a couple of comments and observations. I think it's important to know that, although it is true as I travel around First Nation communities, that the west – the western culture – is often criticized for being too individualistic. It is actually more often criticized for not being individualistic enough and not having enough diversity. And I think that's important to understand. I remember, when this first dawned on me, is that I realized that after quite a number of years of interacting with people in Navajoland that their most **common** critique of the dominant culture of the west is that it has no individuality at all and doesn't tolerate diversity from their point of view. And I think that what that says is that there's a correlation between a strong community and strong individuality and that those two things exist in the same way.

Some of you may be familiar with the film about First Nations life – 'Pow Wow Highway' and a couple of others. Go rent them. One of the things that you'll see in them is that there's an extreme amount of individuality; there's an enormous amount of tolerance for eccentric behaviour, and always has been. Usually- it's often- eccentric behaviour is often called 'holy', or in Lakota language, *wakan*. You know, the ones who rode into battle backwards, you know. They were- they had a special gift. And so, I think that it's important that that observation be made. Many of the views of native people having to do with the disintegration of modern life have to do with the lack of diversity. And that lack of diversity and

that lack of individuality is also one of the things blamed for the loss of language. So that, on that side of the fence, the problem doesn't seem like much community but more like not enough individuality...not enough accepted and embraced and tolerated.

I think that you have outlined very, very, very clearly, the problem with the church's identification with western culture. And it's not just that the church in the west has been a part of the west; it's been **such** a part of the west that it has seen western culture as having a privileged place in God's revelation of the Christian gospel. And so, that privileged place means that, on some level, I think, many western Christians are waiting to get back to some stable time of yore when things were nicer and better and greater. I think that what's really called for is a moving forward to a place where we acknowledge that all peoples, all cultures have a history with the Word of God that is ancient and that, just as Plato was able to speak to the early church on many levels, there are other people in other cultures that speak to the church on many levels.

So, I guess I would make that observation. And **then** say, since God is always speaking in every culture...but where is God speaking in the dominant culture today? Where is that word being spoken? And in what communities and in what fashion? I do believe that 'empire' exists, but it's about as elusive as 'church'. It's episodic. You know, to say that the empire elected Barack Obama is an interesting problem. If I were Barack Obama, I'd be thinking about it a lot. I think that there is some- there are hopeful moments in there. The word does seem to pop out in strange ways every once in awhile, but I do think that you're right in identifying the idolatrous nature of western culture in that it claims for itself a place that only God can hold in the human mind and heart. And I think that that's absolutely true, that there is a character of evil about it that we don't find in a lot of other places.

But I **do** think that we find that in every culture, the hypnotism of greed and other things that seems to be systemic. So that always the Word and the Living Word of God that we see incarnate most clearly in Jesus, it presents itself in cultures that oftentimes with a kind of a counter word, a false word. And I think that we see that in every culture. So, I don't know if that's a question or comment or observation or whatever, but I do think that for me, in a very powerful way, your presentation outlined what that's at stake... because every culture is flirting with this larger entity and overwhelmed by this larger entity, without exception. And so, I think for many people, particularly indigenous people, there's a lot of soul searching going on about what I can't accept and what I can accept, you know, 'How do I live in now?' Thank you very much.

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

A couple of words ... it reminded me ... when you were talking about the empire

of heaven and empire of this capitalistic global dominant power, it reminded me, who was it that said that 'We as human beings are guaranteed to be sinners and saints'. And I need to- you know, when am I a sinner and when am I a saint. When am I an agent of real change and hope, and when am I a complete sinner, detrimental, completely to -to greed? Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer wrote a book, "Saving Christianity From Empire". He says that down through the centuries, Christianity has been co-opted by this empire of greed. It needs to go back to the radical non violence of people that is not using the dominant power, to exercise power. There's a saying, "accepted guilt and accepted anger dismisses one's humanity".

REV. DR. RUSSELL DAYE:

I think for people who live in our culture, we have to become very, very careful stewards of our neural networks. I think we're totally ignoring them. There's a cultural phenomenon that empire invokes. Our days are so... [*rapidly snaps fingers*]. And we're flooded with information, and we're flooded with opinion, and we're flooded with experience. And no other people in the history of the world have lived that experience. So, the spaces between the experience and the decisions we're forced to make are much smaller, and it is **very** hard to be mindful about which experience we choose to have and which choices might make in relationships. And if we're not mindful and intentional about that, something else will be. And so, I think that we have to say, even though- especially because our lives are so busy- we have to have intentional plans each day, each week, each season, each year where what we do is the thing that not only make us mindful but orient us to that to which we choose to be oriented.

So for me, I start by getting up in the morning and meditating, doing some yoga and meditating every day for at least an hour. And that works to slow everything down. But then I realized, I also have to- when I have that openness and that clarity that comes with meditation, I'm still not oriented. So, I've got a little handful of books and quotes and I read from it each day. I do it on either side of the meditative period. Now that's what I need. For some people, they need to be in community. I need to do that weekly, too. For some people, they need to be doing action in solidarity with people who are being pushed into the margins of oppression. I need to do that, too. And some people, it's the reverse, right? And if they can tap into that action every day, the meditation can be a retreat once a year or something, Everybody has to work it out for himself and herself. For those of you who will be in professional ministry, you have a blessed opportunity. You can choose to spend your entire workday in solidarity with the people who most need solidarity... as you write sermons, as you give pastoral care, as you do administration. If you're mindful enough, to pick up on something Mark said, every one of those actions can be oriented towards the art of acceptance that Martin Luther King Jr. pointed to. And let's not underestimate how the folks with whom we work will want to orient us differently, and sometimes we will want to

orient ourselves differently. I guess that reinforces the point I am making about intentionality.

I'm waiting for, I don't know, the new equivalent of Dave Fowler or Gregory Jones or somebody to start doing mind mapping in relation to this stuff, right? Like, I think just growing our neural networks, and our body networks, is part of growing into the Reign of God.

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

Mindfulness... I was very privileged to hear Tich Nhat Hanh when I was a very new graduate student. Just to be in his presence was already a very spiritual experience. What I remembered when he said 'mindfulness' is being present in the moment. The most important is you are attuned to the present moment. If you are drinking tea, be one with the tea. If you are reading, be one with your reading. I think the problem now is we are doing too much. When I go and ride the subway, everyone has these IPODs and always this and this and.... I don't know. I don't know how they concentrate. When they hear the bell and they maybe- what if they don't say "hit the the bell", even though works, as you said, very gentle. You know, we invite the bell to ring all the time. So, if I am sitting in a lecture where I really listen to the lecturer or I'm already planning for the next conference ... pah-pah-pah, pah-pah-pah, pah-pah-pah, pah-pah-pah, pah. And we are bombarded, as you say, with all of this technology information. So, sometimes- I am also comfortable with that. You know, I said, "Oh, my goodness. I need to check my e-mail a little bit. Take a few breaths, and don't have a date with your computer one hour before you sleep because we cannot sleep because it changes something in your brain, and you will not be able to sleep. But when you do your bell or you do the breathing and meditating, it helps you, yeah.

There is now, in my place, in the Philippines, the term 'McDonalds-ization' and McDonalds' fast food everywhere, fast food. It used to be that all the meals are made at home. And we were eating yesterday at 6 Nations and tasted a little better than the fast food because the church women take time to prepare the food and the and they know hungry people from CTSC come, and they prepare it with love and smiles ... and so, even though you have eaten spaghetti a hundred times a month, that spaghetti we ate yesterday tastes so good to me because these it was made with love. But everything comes packaged. Everything now is fast, fast, fast. No other people work like that. But people's food should be slow, right, because every morning they hike, they walk, they breathe the air, they go to dig their own vegetables. It's organic. It sounds like Paradise, no?

But not everyplace can be like that. In Bangladesh, they don't have any more place to grow as they face drought, yeah? So, what is my contribution there? I cannot save the people in Bangladesh, but maybe in New Jersey. How am I aware of these illegal, so called, undocumented workers who are in New Jersey,

around the big and wealthy university where I work? And even on our campus are the people who do the gardens, the cooking and all that. And for me to stop and say 'Good morning' or 'Buenos Dias' to them, it's a little thing. And there are Americans who walk fast. I used to walk slow; in my village, we walked slow. Then, when I get to another place, I walk fast. And then I feel I hurt my feet, and my feet remind me, 'Elizabeth, walk slow, so that you can see more'.

BISHOP MARK MACDONALD

Thank you. I want to take this opportunity to introduce my dear friend, one of the elders of the growing vital Christian community in North America is here. Teri LeBlanc would you stand up? Teri, stand up. He's so shy ... [applause]. I'd like to recognize him. I think he may be known to some of you, but has been part of a revolution in First Nations communities across... that has been prophetic and challenging in that he and a number of people who come out of the evangelical tradition have been valuing **in** that evangelical tradition the role of First Nations culture. I've been around to see they've experienced some intense persecution for that particular stand, but I just want to acknowledge him, acknowledge his strong commitment to the people, a strong commitment to his tribal traditions and his strong commitment to pride Christ. And so, he's been a good friend of mine since Adam was a boy, and we've known each other for – I can't even speak – for too long to remember how long it has been. And I wanted to acknowledge him as one of our elders and leaders in the native Christian community.

So, he's also the head of- he just finished his doctorate at Asbury, where he and four other native people did. They call themselves 'The Four Skins', and they...a little joke. [*Laughing.*] But anyway, he's also the head of NAIITS that's the North American Institute for – I always get it messed up, but ... what's the rest of it, Teri?

Teri LeBlanc:

...Indigenous Theological Studies

BISHOP MARK MACDONALD

Yeah. And he's the leader of that group, and we're very privileged- **I'm** very privileged to have him here, and I think we're very privileged to have him with us today.

I want to say just a little bit about language, to give you an idea of how it affects people. In Navajo, the word for priest is a'oshone, and it means 'the one who wears the shirt that drags on the ground' because they experienced clergy as wearing these long robes that dragged on the ground. So, oftentimes when you need an elder and you say, 'I'm an a'oshone', they say, "Where is it? But in the

church, when the Palagis – or the belladonnas that they were called – asked the Navajo, 'What's the word for a 'bishop', they said, 'bohomini a'oshone'. Now, bohomini is the word for 'Lord', that they used to translate the concept of the word 'lord'. It's not really a word that was used very often in their culture. You often hear ta'she bohimihi, 'It's up to me to decide'. You know, in other words, 'I have the authority to decide that. And it was after the first Navajo bishop died that I found out that he always referred to himself casa dah adahi which means 'the one who sits at a slightly elevated place in the circle'. In other words, they knew the concept that the western church was after, which was 'somebody who was in charge'. But in their own internal working, they had come up with a different word that indicated a much more circular model of leadership.

And so, it's interesting that even when the native language is used, the concepts from outside are corrupted and distorted. And so now, in Navajoland, they're using, you know, the one- for someone who's an elder or a leader or a bishop, they say 'someone who sits in a slightly elevated place in the circle'. So, I just thought I'd make that observation.

REV. DR. RUSSELL DAYE:

I really like your- the two things you put together about being mindful in drinking tea and food. And I think that, not to correct Tich Nhat Hanh because he doesn't need any correcting, and I think that he would agree that basically when you are drinking tea you are having some experience with the people who grew it, picked it, packaged... And it's accepting an opportunity to say 'With whom am I in solidarity?' or 'Who am I exploiting?' And the faculty of the imagination can work along with the fact that we have hate and the fact that we feel, that's a full human experience.

Tuesday February 17, 2009: Triologue Session 2
Audience Questions

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

.... a year ago, and by happenstance met some pacific island women ... I guess that's the aftermath of what you would describe the kingdom of rather than the empire of heaven. And I've never met people who have gone through such an experience, except perhaps women from El Salvador...who were mourning all their kids who got murdered. And these women have lost their children through the dominant culture. They've been completely demolished.... weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth. And my question is: how do we live in the culture but not of it? We have to live in that culture ... My second is more a comment. I appreciate both Mark and Russell in your admiration of the necessity for affirming individuality. When I hear speaking about meditation, I get madder and madder because I don't like the way it is done, I mean, if I do a labyrinth I don't follow the lines. I wouldn't sit through Taizé if they paid me; it's like water torture... But, I mean, I have my own methods of meditation. And I think we women are also asked to multi task.... How many women here are? [Laughter] Yes, so we don't focus on one thing alone. And I find it more useful to be on two than one. So, I appreciate affirmation of individuality, particularly in the area of meditation where I think we're in danger, and I find we are being forced into a role. And, I mean, I can do justice when I'm not meditating.

BISHOP MARK MACDONALD

Okay, just a couple of comments. I think that oftentimes people look at First Nations people who became Christian as people who sold out and as people- you know, they always say, 'Once a native person becomes Christian, the anthropologists aren't interested in him anymore'. But what we see, broadly speaking, across Turtle Island, about 10% stay rigidly traditional; and 10% became completely assimilated and very, very, very, very oriented towards their Christian identity; and 80% remained kind of half and half. But nobody was interested in them, so nobody talked to them. Nobody cared about them. And for the most part the churches said, 'Well, you just can't get them to do anything'. But we're beginning to see that a lot of those people were creatively responding to the things about the Christian faith that they really liked and tried to incorporate it into a lifestyle. And so, we're finding that the translation of the hymns and all sorts of things contain all sorts of important ideas and values that came from native life. In other words, the culture didn't die; it just went underground into the church and in most cases accepted fully the message of the Gospel and also accepted the testimony of scripture, but trying to translate it very creatively. We're now learning that the very first people were very creative and very original theologians, very bright, very smart. But nobody's ever bothered to study them. Many of them are nameless because they do their work in kind of a heroic,

dedicated, committed obscurity.

And so, I think that the truth is that people are a lot better at responding than you might imagine. Now, two very quick stories: I was really worried about the effect of TV on Navajoland. When I was living there twenty years ago, there was no electricity so you didn't have to worry about, you know, even DVDs back then – , back in the cassette days – but nobody had a VHS. So kids really didn't see it. And I was really worried when people got electricity they'd get their satellite dishes, and I was saying, "Oh, God, this is awful. Here it comes! Oh, no, no! Oh, my, oh my, oh my". And I was driving down the road, and then I looked over. And then there, someone had taken the satellite dish and had painted a Navajo wedding basket design in the middle of the dish. Now, the wedding basket represents the way that the human mind aided by culture, tradition and the Holy Spirit of God still turns out bad things. And so, they were putting that there to say, 'Well, we're watching this stuff, but we're doing it in a Deni or Navajo way'. And I think that's good.

Now, the other thing is, I brought an elder with me to Minneapolis, Minnesota, and I brought him up on the hill that overlooks St. Paul where you can see where the two rivers come together. And there were all sorts of cars going and noise and pollution, and I showed it to him, and I was expecting him to give an ecological critique of over-development. And he said, 'It's very beautiful!' And I said, "Oh?" And he said, 'Yeah'. He said, 'You know, look, there's two rivers that come together, and whenever two rivers come together, that's where life is produced: one's male, one's female. And this is a very sacred place. Look at all these people who are making living here, going back to and forth'. And he said, 'I understand there's a great big store here. One of the biggest in the world. What do they call it: The Mall of America?' He said, 'This must be a very sacred place'.

Now, what I'm trying to say is that we've been very good at showing how we have messed up stuff. It's up to us on the other side to take a page out of the book of First Nations people and begin to understand how Toronto is a sacred place, how we should honour it as sacred ground. And if we could begin to honour our sacred ground, I think that our culture – our wider western culture – would not be in peril. Okay?

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Actually, now that we've studied what we've done in the past and brought lessons forth to mission that should have taken place or that did take place. But we **are** missionary in our own land. We are – I don't know if this is the proper way to use this term – but we are living in the colonies nowadays. We are our own mission in our own land, which is getting more and more circular. Well, at least in Montreal. And so I wonder what kind of lessons, if you can make explicit, as to how we should act, given the experience where we've been drawing here

on this missionary work.

REV. DR. RUSSELL DAYE:

I think the only thing I can say in response to that is that the lessons we're learning about mission encounters apply everywhere and that some kind of incarnation happens where certain deep dialogue between peoples who are grounded in sacred tradition or even the pursuit of the sacred. So, in my experience, one of these dialogues happens on a regular basis with my atheist brother-in-law who lives in Reykjavik. And one of the things that happens every time he returns to Canada is that the family is- we'll find an evening where we stay up late, drinking beer. He has a profound sense of the transcendent in two worlds. One is in the world of artificial intelligence, and the other one is in nature. In Iceland he kayaks and he climbs the ice fields. And I am not- and as the evening goes on, I always find it easier to move into the, you know, space of open possibilities at night time and under the moonlight. So, as the night descends and the moon arises and the light changes and our dialogue deepens, there is almost always a moment that we both recognize as having some kind of transcendence and being sacred. Vicki Obedkoff in her preaching at Trinity St. Paul last Sunday, was talking about levelling ... you probably remember; this was in the 70s, 60s – human potential movement, there was lots of talk about "levels". Just, whomever you're encountering, you both just try to come to a plateau where you can both be. And I think if you do that in the cause of openness to the possibility of human and spiritual encounter, the language you need for that dialogue will appear in the moment.

So, for me, that's a model of mission, whether it be on the Boulevard Rene Levesque or in Fiji.

BISHOP MARK MACDONALD:

I would like to say, if you look at all the world and you identify, and think it's good, the observation is good and important, what's different between the missiology of North America and Europe as opposed to the missiologies that are employed in the rest of the world? The fundamental issue in the rest of the world is- the fundamental missiological issue of the rest of the world is idolatry, is God. But in the west, missiology is dominated by the issue of belief, so that idolatry is something that is dealt with after you've been on the church committee for a couple of years, you know, and you might say 'Watch out for this, that or the other thing'. The reason it is belief is because we still believe in the idea of Christendom. We believe – and using the term 'secularity' which I've used for many, many years but I've stopped using– because that implies that we once were religious and now we're not.

My problem is not with secularity; my problem is with idolatry. I'm upset with the kingdom of money. And I'm upset with the worship of power and technology. I'm upset with those things, and I think that we have to get our missiology back on track, not on how do we get people to believe, but how do we get people to know the true and living God, because they have abandoned – this culture has abandoned – the true and living God for that which cannot satisfy and only enslave the soul. So, we are in a position, I think, where we really have to do some soul searching as a church. And part of what obscures that soul searching is the assumption that western culture and Christianity are the same thing. We have the lingering ethos that Christendom – I think it was Douglas who said that – and we still think that if we could just get these people to believe. The problem is to get all of us to stop worshipping foreign gods, from my point of view. And that's something that's driving threatening the whole of the nation.

The other thing that I would say is that secularity provides the perfect cover for idolatry. You know-- "We dealt with that issue a long time ago: worshipping idols". We use the term 'idols' very quickly: 'American Idol', 'Canadian Idol', those sorts of things – "It's beyond us now; we don't have to worry about it" – when I think it's arguable that the kingdom of money which is dominating the west is the most idolatrous culture that's ever existed.

REV. DR. RUSSELL DAYE:

If I could just pick up on something Mark said ... I think in some ways the lingering ethos of Christendom is embedded in capitalism and that- and Marx has said the church is the dominant institution in society, and it's a totalizing institution or corruptive institution in the way that Christendom was a totalizing institution. And any place where you find somebody who's wrestling against the same idolatry, you've got solidarity. And any place you can engage somebody in that conversation about resisting the powers of this ethos, you are in a mission context.

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

Firstly, I will share a little bit about how we use and extend mission. Just a quote, a priest from Sri Lanka, Michael Amalados. He said that 'In Asia, mission is three activities: 1) inculturation; 2) liberation; 3) interreligious dialogue'. In a very pluralistic continent such as Asia, Christians who make up only a small percentage of the population cannot help but be engaged in their understanding, really, of people of other faiths. Instead of converting them to become Christian it is how to humbly try to understand their beliefs and equate- that is the thing about individuality, as a Christian I need at least to be rooted in my Christian faith and tradition and understanding to be able to feel secure enough to enter into a religious dialogue and what I say so that I would not need to defend my own

Christian tradition, and take it as the absolute religion. And I think some – not all, but some – fundamentalist Christians are too obsessed in hanging on to their beliefs that ‘We have the absolute belief, and therefore I cannot entertain any more’. But if I save myself from that obsession, then perhaps I will be open to receive wisdom and spirituality of people different than I am.

I would need to differentiate the ‘individual’ and ‘individualistic’. To me, that is not synonymous because in a post-modern era like this one, individual differences are, yes, are valuable. And this individuality composes the richness of diversity. So, inculturation; how the Christian faith would find a home again in Asia, because Christianity was born in Asia, but it’s evaporated somewhere, and now it’s coming back; how Christ is sufficient as an Asian Christ and not the picture of Christ that is European with long nose and blond hair and all these things. So, now what is happening even in the seminary where I used to teach, one of the students who has a fine art degree from a university decided to become a pastor. But then, when he was taking theological courses, he felt so alienated and he was thinking, ‘How can I put my art into theology and theology into my art?’ So, he decided to be a visual artist. Two of his paintings – Emmanuel Garibay-- I will show you one of his paintings on Thursday afternoon – two of his paintings communicate- he was able to depict a Filipino Christ. And do you know how he depicts a Filipino Christ? A very simple brown skinned man, possibly a worker with a simple t-shirt – drinking beer with- not cava, but beer in ... And he has a hammer; he’s a worker. His hand is pierced, yeah? And another depiction of Jesus – the Christ – is drinking with a family and there is a mother there and with children. So I thought, “Well, that’s a very inclusive way of having the Eucharist”

Now, an Australian artist – I think her name is Margaret – depicted Jesus in her own context, depicted Jesus. And in that picture, its inclusive, there’s, men, women, children, a nursing mother and a person in the middle. And the person is not- you don’t see his face; but what is shown is his back and a bald head. But everyone’s eyes are focussed on this bald-headed man. So, it’s up to you to interpret who is this bald-headed man. Is it Jesus? Is it the Iman, you know, like that?

Yeah! So, because for many, many years, the picture of Christ sent to us is the DaVinci Christ. You know, the last supper is the DaVinci. I know it’s also language: how we use the indigenous metaphors and words and language. Like, you may remember Kosuke Koyama: who wrote the book “Water Buffalo Theology” in the seventies. He got tired of studying Barth and Brueggemann and then he suddenly said, ‘How to communicate the Gospel?’ You know, we speak from a communion; we speak from many, many different schools. I’m not debunking all these prestigious schools, but his problem was how to communicate theology and the Gospel to the ordinary people. So, what he did was to observe first the farmer. And what he observed is that, before working, the farmers took good care of their water buffalo. The water buffalo would be immersed in the mud. That gave him an insight: I need to be immersed in the

world of the water buffalo in order to be able to understand the world of the people to work with the land and the water buffalo.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

My name's Diane. I'm from the Catholic tradition. Can we talk maybe a little bit about the issue of 'Lord' language you brought up this morning. I was the one who chose the morning prayer which was 'Lord, open our lips'. It's a traditional opening prayer for the Catholic morning service. But I wanted to suggest another interpretation. It's my understanding that God is infinitely greater, infinitely wiser, infinitely more powerful than us. She is not like us at all. And so, 'Lord' is an ancient way, based on a society that describes a vertical understanding of the distinction between creator and worshipper. And I'm wondering what sort of language might be more appropriate now to express that God is not just a nice man. That God created all of us; God created all that is. 'She' is not our equal. How do you express that, moving away from language that we used to use like 'Lord'?

REV. DR. RUSSELL DAYE:

I would say, "Please feel free to use the language of 'Lord'". There are hymns and other worship resources that are powerful written as they are. It's just then, be intentional about the use of that and balancing it with other language. So there reference to God as Mother God . Use of goddess as imagery. One of the wonderful things in Christian tradition is the black Madonna tradition. Actually, it goes beyond Christian tradition. Worship is becoming more and more individual, so we had a service at our church- a group of us organized a piece to use black Madonna imagery. Now, that **really** angered some of the more conservative men in the congregation, and I had a **very** interesting coffee hour. But, if you keep balance, these are opportunities for growth. So, please don't hear me saying "Don't use the Lord language" Just use a lot of other stuff and contemplate 'Lord' being one option.

BISHOP MARK MACDONALD:

In regard to language – as I was taught by the elders – when you were created, the wind came into you from 'The Wind', the Great Spirit, and left all sorts of marks of wind erosion on your fingerprints and in your ear, you know. So that when you were created, you were holy, and because you were holy, you talked like the holy people [*singing, chanting*]: "Ang, ain, ang, ang, ahhhh". And if you live long enough, as you get closer and closer to going back to that holiness, you begin talking like that again, as you get elderly and like, in our culture, would call

'feeble'. And you'll find in almost all of First Nation music – especially the religious ones – a lot of that what they call a vocal. Their language like *[singing]* "Wam bah, baloomba wam, bam, boom". It's like that, an acknowledgement that all human speech about that which is divine is inadequate. And it's an acknowledgement because it's used in secular songs as well, that all human speech – even silly love songs – is infused with the language of the divine. But that human beings' understanding of it is always insufficient. And, as Calvin said, "All theological language is like baby talk": goo-goo, gah-gah. And you shouldn't be too hung up on the words of it'. But the First Nations have a way of expressing that unintelligibility of that which is the most intelligible thing by using those words constantly in music and in expression. So, this is a myth that we have come to believe that our language actually is an adequate reflection of reality and can be perfected to the point that it is just and right. I think First Nations people would say, 'It's always just "goo-goo, gah-gah"'. And, by the way, that's another way of looking at speaking in tongues, by the way because indigenous people have been speaking in tongues for centuries.

**Thursday February 19, 2009: Trialogue Session 3
Keynote**

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

I just “Go with the flow!” Ako’y nagagalak at karangalan ko ang makasama kayo. In Filipino, that’s my way of saying “ I am so happy and honoured to be here with you”. And I’ve come here, not to give a straight forward lecture. You already know a lot. I am not an expert in mission, nor am I the voice for the global majority south. What I will do is to share with you my understanding of mission as it’s related to power and in the beautiful theme of the theological student’s conference on “Memory, Journey and Vision”. In my language, it is Pag-aalala, Paglalakbay, at Pangitain. And in French, Dan would probably say it better, yeah? How do you pronounce it?

VOICE:

Mission et pouvoir: memoire, voyage, vision

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

Ah, okay. And if it is still there [refers to power point slide], the little rectangle there is supposed to show the Korean version. Somehow, it didn’t go like that. So, I know this is what some people would call ‘the benefit hour’ because it is sleepy time. It is siesta time, right? And if you ate rice or pasta, you get sleepy, right? So, if you’re feeling sleepy, that’s okay; I will not be offended. You may press your nose like this until you wake up! That is okay. Sometimes in the church, we might have some sleepy congregants, and that’s okay because the church must cure insomnia [laughter]. So, that’s okay with me.

So, allow me to share with you briefly what I understand ‘mission’ to be and what might be the challenges and vision, from my experience. And then after that, I would invite you in your tables to take twenty minutes to share what is your hope and dream or vision for mission in Canada in the 21st Century.

You see, in our last three days, we have had a chance to review the past, the ecumenical memories, the memories that are positive and negative; the memory that has joy as well as sorrow. In the last day, we had a personal and collective dream. Isn’t that important, Madam Lois Wilson? Yes. And you have embodied all through this decade the vision for unity of Christians, the vision for a just, participatory and sustainable society. It is a holistic vision. But before I go to my powerpoint presentation which I credit my student in helping me, I tell you the simple parable of the finger... [source unknown].

One time, the fingers debated, 'Who is the most powerful and who is the most important among us? The thumb said, 'I am the most important among you because, without me, you cannot have the thumb print; you cannot have personal identity'. This one said, 'Hmmm, I am the most powerful and most important finger. Why? Because I point. And if I do like this, the congregation will sit down; if I do like this, the congregation will stand up. So, I have power.' This one, 'Oh, I'm the most important and the most powerful among you. Why? Because I have the advantage of seeing everything because I'm the tallest'. And this one, 'Oh, wait a minute. You think you are the most important? Look at me. I wear the ring and the richest among you. What can you say? So, I must be the most powerful and important among you'. Then the fifth one didn't say a word at first. In a humble gesture, this little finger invited all the fingers to come together in a prayer form. And the finger said, 'Each one of us is important. Each one of us has power. Each one of us has responsibilities because we have power. And what happens to me, it affects the rest of you; what happens to the rest of you would affect me. So, can we come together?'

Now, I would like to present for about fifteen to twenty minutes, this presentation. Are you with me?

VOICES:

Yes.

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

Yes? You're not sleepy?

VOICES:

No.

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

No? Okay. Oh, a little bit about my background, my social location. I was born and raised and lived almost all my life in the Philippines. Many of you have travelled to the Philippines, I'm sure, and many of your churches have been faithful mission partners with the National Church of Christ of the Philippines, with the National Council of Churches in the Philippines and others. And for that, we are grateful.

My ministry has been as a part-time rural pastor, and most of my ministry has been in teaching ... teaching ministry. So, for ten years, I had the privilege to teach in a deaconess training college in Manila; and then the last ten years as a faculty member in Union Theological Seminary, not in New York but in Cavite, a rural province outside Manila. And then the last four years, I taught missiology at Bossey Ecumenical Institute, the ecumenical teaching arm of World Council of

Churches in Geneva. Eventually, when I moved in the US with my husband, I became an unemployed theologian. So, I was concerned where God was leading me next, in my ministry, in my journey... because sometimes, when you don't have the title, some people treat you differently. When you don't have big job, some people see you differently.

Yet, it gave me a time to think and re-think about who I am; where is God leading me; how do I do mission in a strange land because two years ago, for family reasons, my husband and I moved to United States, New Jersey. My husband happened to be a – what is your term – a 'Palagi' of European descent from Maine that has Native American roots of Iroquois and Mi'kmaq tribe. So from him, I learned a little bit about Native American spirituality. And one time we tried to do the moon dance in the campus, in Cavite, and people thought we'd gone out of our minds. I felt I have much to learn from the indigenous peoples, to learn from their spirituality.

My social location ... I was born in a very economically poor family in a fishing village of a working class. But then because of education and church position, I became a lower middle class Protestant woman theologian. But in my heart and I hope in my praxis my first option is to work with the poor and be in journey and in accompaniment with them.

It is said that theology should start with questions, not with answers. So, I offer to you this question: "What is mission? What is power? How might our understanding of mission and power influence the healing of memories and ecumenical journeys and ecclesial vision? How do we participate in God's mission in an era of heightened globalization?" And I want to add there, "What does mission mean in a majority world context?"



(Edinburgh 1910 Conference)

Edinburgh 2010 invites us to discern how mission is practised in today's world. A world shaped by values formed by power; spiritual, political, military, financial and

international. Raising issues of culture change, human rights, ecological sustainability and inequalities in the production, distribution and consumption of resources.

The Edinburgh Conference on Mission, and our guests that drove here from Canadian Theological Education, are inviting us to think and prepare. Some of you know more than I do about this Edinburgh conference on mission. I was not born within that era – 1910 – but from my readings, I understand that it is regarded as the birth place of the ecumenical movement, primarily because of two factors: on worldwide evangelism and a call for unity. But at the same time, I beg to differ from the notion that this was really and truly ecumenical. It was not, in my opinion. It's all Protestant. Not gender inclusive. The theme was, as you know, 'evangelization of the world in this generation'.

But, we cannot fault them. I think we can just receive the gift, this gift, and the challenge is how we move forward. Of course, the global context and local context have changed so much in a hundred years, and in the map on your tables, it is showing that the context has really changed. In 1900, about 80% of Christians lived in Europe and North America; now, in 2000+, Christians – only about 30% – live in Europe and the north. And there now exists a shift of Christianity's gravity to the south. But, what does that mean? What does that mean? Was it Phillip Jensen who wrote, "Today, a typical Christian might be an African woman living in the village or a Brazilian woman living in a Favela". What does that mean? ...How do we concretize a vision of God's reign in a pluralistic society?

It's not only that Christianity's growth is in the south. Another aspect is that, due to wars and conflict and economic injustices and other factors, many people from the south migrate to the north. In my family, I know, is an example. I have a sister, Anna, who works in Kuwait as a nurse. I have a sister in Detroit, also working as a nurse because family is there. And recently, our youngest sister, Ezra and family, have migrated here to Toronto. And they feel, they are so welcome here. Can you imagine? Five-thousand people leave Manila every day for overseas work?

So, my good Filipina friend Elizabeth Padillo Olesen, married to a Danish, now working in Denmark, uses her art to theologize. And for her, this one – the one in the circle, in the middle – represents the five continents of the world. And to her, the continents can be seen as a whole, not separate like that. And at the centre, you can see ... what can you see at the centre?



VOICE:
A heart?

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:
Yes.

VOICE:
A little heart?

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:
A little heart! What do you think that may mean?

VOICE:
Feel, feel!
Well, that we should be united by heart, people from every continent.

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

Thank you, mm-huh. And, if I may add to that, there's compassion, the core of our mission to be based in God's compassion and love which Jesus Christ has taught us: and is also present in other religions. Compassion is a big, big - not only a word - but a value for our Muslim friends and the same with Buddhism and other faiths.

How does the church exercise power in the context of multiple dimensions of globalization – unified global market, global violence and peace, Diasporas of peoples, increasing diversity and tension, ecological challenge, global health, and religious pluralism?

Bella Lashiva, an environmental activist from India reminds us “a new politics of hatred and intolerance is arising from the growing economic insecurity and a sense of shrinking space for survival”.

I do not have the answers, but I share with you my conviction. That, in an era of globalization, of neo-imperial powers and of worldwide recession, we need a radical alignment of moral values, political will, prophetic stance and spiritual reawakening in local, national and global levels.

In 1910, I believe, the very focus of mission was how to communicate the Christian Gospel to all the world. In the 21st century, I think the challenge is how to see mission in different dimensions.

Look at the multiple dimensions of mission. It is grounded in Missio Dei, God's mission. “What does ‘mission’ mean?” According to Elizabeth Joy of Council for World Mission speaking in a conference on mission, “Mission is God's self revelation and God's involvement in the world. And missions are the specific and complex forms of ministries and expression of participation through God's mission.

I had the privilege to attend the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism that happened in Athens in 2005. I was on the WCC Staff planning committee of that conference. There we took notice of the multiple dimensions of mission: Mission is witness. It has evangelism dimension, which is very important. The Word is heard in the explicit form. Mission is Liturgy, prayer, and contemplation. This is the gift to you of the Orthodox who have enriched my spirituality. The five times prayer of my Muslim friends has encouraged me to really take prayer seriously.

Mission is also about Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation; Interreligious Dialogue; Inculturation; Reconciliation; and Health and Healing.

And in my days of journey with you here what became prominent to me is mission as reconciliation. The letter from Athens Mission Conference said that ‘Mission as reconciliation means there is a need for reconciliation of people speaking of love and of power between the north and the south, between east and west, between the government system and other people, especially the Indigenous people’.

Even if the people speak of liberation, what does it mean? Liberation from and liberation to inculturation. We have the brown Madonna. We have heard of black Nazarene. Yet Christianity is a minor religion in all of Asia. How can we be so arrogant to say that we are the only ones who have the revelation of God? We have many different incognitos around us.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye ... you know her? She's a powerful voice from Ghana and aware of the spiritual concerns in Africa. She said, "Liberation must be viewed as men and women walking together on a journey home, with the church as the umbrella of faith, hope, and love". Hmmmmm, I wonder ... what can you ask about that? When was the last time the church was the umbrella of hope, faith and love? Or the umbrella of despair? Of very good news? Or, is the church too much of an institution rather than a movement?

Healing of Memories ... "to talk about peace in the Third World to highlight the situation of exploitation in the South that has been the result of Western Europe's colonial expansion; it is to talk about stolen land, stolen dignity, stolen humanity; it is to talk about imposed religions and enforced cultural hegemony; it is to talk of exploited labour and of racism". [Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands*]

In the 1910 conference in front of the 1200 participants, a very young delegate from India named V.S. Azariah made a challenge to the conference because he noted the unequal and master-servant relationship between the missionaries and Indian nationals. "You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for love. Give us friends."

Mutuality in mission is present when it is authentic, with feeling and vision. Authentic mission includes mutual respect and responsibility.

Sometimes we need to think about hope because – oh, my goodness – the world's problems: too much. But, I don't think that hope will solve all the world's problems. Lighten up! [Laughter.] Just do what you can do. Paulo Freire says, "Hopelessness is a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it". And who are we who say, "I can't remember"? A saying goes...."What weighs you down is not the mountain ahead but the grain in your shoe. "

But all week, we talked about mission ('sending') and how it is related to promoting the reign of God here and now, as exemplified by Jesus in Luke 4: 18-21. In the Philippines we call it the Jesus manifesto. But, in my hometown, you are never to pronounce the word 'manifesto' because that sounds Communist, you know, and it would be bad if you do that.

But speaking as an evangelical and radical, progressive, eco-feminist Christian, I think God's great compassion has a word to each and every one of us. As followers of Jesus, our mission is to opt for the poor, the lost, the least and the marginalized. And really, we learned it not only from the liberation theologies in Latin America.

I mean, I learnt it from my dear mother who bore ten children. Our family. Yes, ten. What is the average number of children here in the family? Three?

VOICE:

Three.

VOICE:

Two and a half.

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

Two and a half!! Oh, my goodness! One family has six and the other has 10. Why? Because my very good father read the Bible and it said, "Go and multiply"! [Laughter.] So, we multiplied! And I love my dear father, in blessed memory. But he took the Bible quite literally, and I took the Bible quite metaphorically. But I would say also he was a Christian who was an evangelist. I know that our mother and father loved us all. But when one gets sick, the person who's been sick will be the one to get the vegetables first, would be the one to get an orange. You know, we don't grow orange and we don't grow apple because it was imported at that time. Now, you can see it anywhere. But at that time, I think I'm sick so I said "I am sick" so that I can have an orange and nice food. But my mother would take good care to really comfort this one who was sick.

Preferential option for the weak, for the poor, the marginalized. Liberation theologians pointed to "God's preferential option for the poor." I see God's preferential option for the First Nation. Yes? God's preferential option for the indigenous people. God's preferential option for the members of L'Arche communities. And so on and so forth. Sorry, do I sound like I'm preaching?

This is a quote from the Athens conference ... would someone read it?

VOICE:

"We are in Mission, all of us, because we participate in the Mission of God who has sent us into a fragmented and broken world. We are united in the belief that we are 'called together in Christ' to be reconciling and healing communities."
[From the CWME Conference in Athens, 2005]

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

Thank you. Do you believe in that ... that we are all in Mission?

VOICE:

No, we're not all in Mission.

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

We are not.

VOICE:

That's why we're having this conference! [Laughter]

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

K.C. Abraham in his article about Perspectives on Mission ... could you read?

VOICE:

“Mission is participation in the transforming and liberative work of God in God’s creation. If we accept that perspective, then the fundamental question is ‘How can theological education help the church’s participation in God’s mission’.”

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

Do you really feel theological education has a role in Mission?

VOICE:

I have no idea.

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

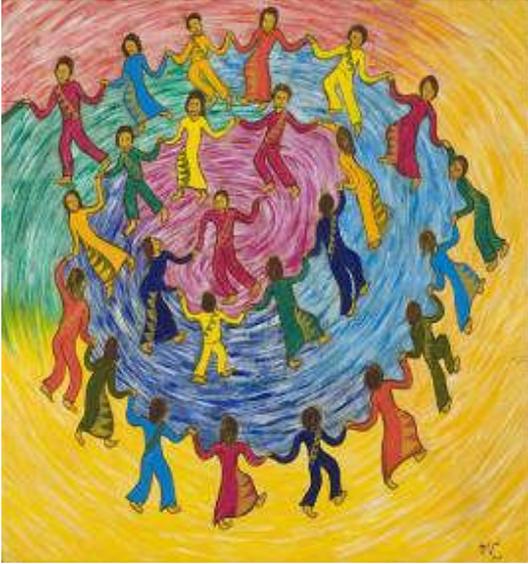
We can struggle constantly. I think I want to commend you, especially for the organizers of the conference. I think it is a very good contribution, very good one.

“We recognize that an important part of our mission is to discern the spirit, to discern the Spirit in the world and to participate in the life of the Spirit as witnesses to God’s justice and love.” [Ecumenical Mission Roundtable in Hong Kong, Asia “The People of God Among All God’s Peoples” Nov. 1999]

And, you remember when Bishop Mark MacDonald in the first Triologue, he reminded us (correct me if I’m wrong, Bishop) “Our power in mission must be anchored in the power of the Spirit of God.” And this Spirit of God is embodied in many, many ways and in the lives of many and different peoples.

“It is the Triune God who sends us out in mission, to work as God’s partners in mission to the world.” [Ecumenical Mission Roundtable in Hong Kong, Asia “The People of God Among All God’s Peoples” Nov. 1999]

And I am reminded of when Russ was sharing with us on the second day – what we learned from South Pacific Fijian people: mutuality in mission, an economy of sharing, a spirituality of respect, and joyful celebration.

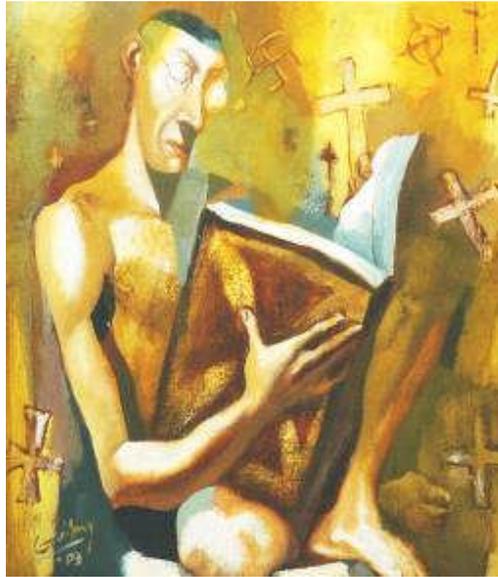
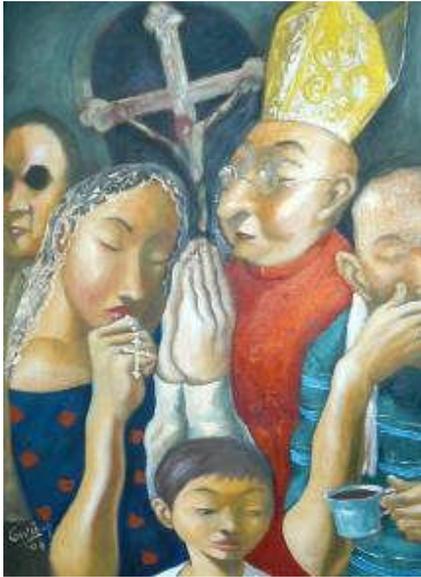


I like this image because it reminds me of the dance of life. It reminds me of the rainbow.

Now, I will move to quickly, I want to quote some others. And this one, Christoph Stückelberger, author of *Global Trade Ethics*. He wrote that there are “Twelve Types of Power and Responsibility”. And these types of powers are positive, but they can also be negative when they are misused or abused: competence, capital, communication, innovation, experience, power, credibility, conviction, decision-making, monopoly, cooperation and time.

How much power do you have as an individual, as a church, as a nation, as a theological students conference? You know, the World Council of Churches sees power as representing humanity’s ability to participate in God’s creation. But then, we are also reminded of how Max Weber defines power: “It is the capacity to enforce one’s own will”.

We need a new vision of the church, of the church. Why? Sr. Mary John Mananzan – of which I had the opportunity to work with in the Philippines – wrote: “The institutional church is not only patriarchal, hierarchical and clerical but also colonialist, capitalistic, feudal and fundamentalist at its core. It produces a ministry that is dualistic, power-oriented, ritual-centred and discriminatory to women”. Here is the problem that we have in church in the Philippines. I don’t know what it is or how it is here in Canada.



This is some art work of a former student of mine in seminary, Emmanuel Garibay. I think he's a modern prophet who teaches that church as an institution that is varied in tradition, but some people make some tradition absolute. And so, instead of being freed, they become imprisoned by this tradition.

Sr. Mananzan says "There is a need for a new ekklesia, an oikos of God, an inclusive community which encompasses all human beings".

"All people should participate in God's mission and the mission should be directed to all people as well as the environment." [Elizabeth Joy, Council for World Mission]

And that's why eco-feminists all over the world, I think, have a lot to contribute to our theology and tactic of mission.

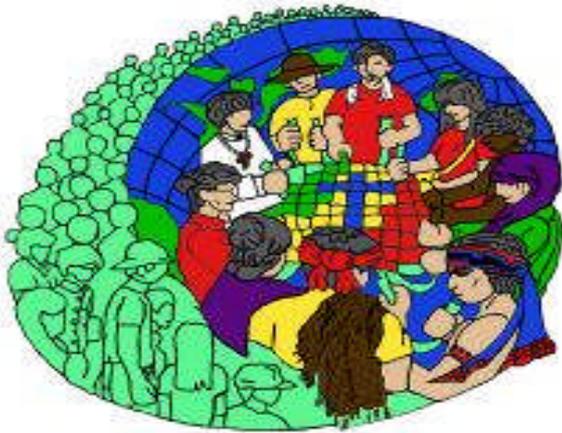
The Filipino Political Detainees have this word to say: "Those who would give light must endure burning". And we know in Sermon of the Mount, "You are the light of the world", Jesus says, and "A city built on a hill cannot be hid". You have the power to let your light shine, whether you are in Manitoba or in Saskatchewan or in British Columbia.

We need a spirituality of a new heart. "A new heart I will give you, a new heart I will put within you, and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances." [Ezekiel 36:26-27]

We need a spirituality of solidarity. This is how I understand solidarity. It is the process, the action of being united with a cause, a political project of a person or a group. To be in solidarity means to share publicly the other person's struggle

for justice, peace and harmony. It must be built on mutual respect and trust, sustained by accountability and strengthened by one's spirituality. I believe solidarity is also necessary to a process of reconciliation.

"The cry of the poor", says Leonardo Boff, "and the cry of the earth are real offenses for any theology which struggles to bring about more justice." [Speech at the World Social Forum for Threat to Liberation, Porto Alegre, Brazil, January 2005]



And so, from the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, I got this theme of the conference four years ago: "Weaving the Patchwork of Justice and Peace in a Broken World".

We had the whole month of January to honour Martin Luther King Jr. And what is his particular challenge? "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

"The church mission in the power of the spirit is to work for reconciliation and healing in the context of brokenness." [Mission and Evangelism Today, WCC Document]



At the world conference in Athens, what helped me is over and over people sang. Any of you remember the theme song from the Athens conference?

Sings, "Come Holy Spirit, here reconcile. Come Holy Spirit, here reconcile. Come Holy Spirit. Come Holy Spirit, here reconcile.

You think we could do it?

VOICE:

Yes.

EVERYONE SINGS:

"Come Holy Spirit, here reconcile. Come Holy Spirit, here reconcile. Come Holy Spirit. Come Holy Spirit, here reconcile.

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

We can learn from our African brothers and sisters the concept of Ubuntu which means, in my understanding, "I am because you are. I am a person, a human being because you are a human being. I am a person of love and compassion because you are a person of love and compassion and dignity. I say to you 'Ubuntu' and can you say that?

EVERYONE:

Ubuntu!

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

And the last one ... so, I would invite you in your tables, the round tables, for some conversation: What commitment you and I are ready to make? What is your vision for mission in the 21st Century of Canada, as a young Canada? What actions are called for? If you are working in a local church in a rural area, what commitments can you make? What actions are called for?

There are papers on the table. And we may not have much time, but we will take a few minutes. First, some of us may speak and some of us are good writers. So, I would invite that you write any learning insight, or 'ah-ha moment' for you at this conference or maybe in the dialogue sessions that you heard.

At that point, there's an exclamation point. And at the back of the paper there is a question mark. Write any question you have in your heart. I may not be able to

answer all of them, but we'd like to hear any questions or concerns you might have.

A learning, insight, exclamation point or a question mark. After you have written something, please be prepared to share in your group. We will take a fifteen-minute break and when we come back, we will listen to your questions and feedback. Ubuntu!

Everyone Ubuntu!

Thank you.

Thursday February 19, 2009: Trialogue Session 3
Audience Responses and Questions

AUDIENCE SMALL GROUP REPORT:

There are three points that we together we came up with that we felt we want to share. In the very beginning, before we could even reflect, this came out from the presentation: If you want to be a light, if you want to be part of the global fire, you need to be ready to burn. There were several real stories of people at this table who have witnessed lovingly, just wanting to exude the hope and were critiqued, condemned and suffered. But that's all part of life.

The second was the question of 6 Nations, the statement was made, the residential school question has been solved, now we are into helping with the land rights of the indigenous peoples. Then it was said, "no, no, wait, the residential school question is not finished because the majority of people in Canada have not really understood, and we need some kind of a program where we can do circles in dioceses and parishes and own this particular painful period and a different understanding of mission before we begin to help in other areas.

The last was: China, post-denominational Christianity. Something that was said 20 years ago, but we are still living in a period we call here "beyond survival to doing the mission of god which is church". And in China, 20 years ago, they realized that we have to work together while rooted in our traditions. And are we going to be about maintaining the present situation of denominational effort, or are we going to learn more and more, as we are here, and students as well, to come together and learn from each other and work together from our different churches.

AUDIENCE SMALL GROUP REPORT:

We had a couple of questions and one insight. There might be other insights here as well.

One question is, "how do you establish the kingdom of God on earth without bringing hell up instead". The question was around in any process of transformation or change there is always the possibility of instituting some other form of oppression.

We talked about "What is a distinct Canadian Theology?" If we were beginning theological study in Canada without all of the European tradition that shaped it, what would it look like?

Some discussion on the insight side between the Berlin School or the rational scientific understanding of theological study versus the Hebraic or oral or

narrative approach to theological education and the tension that exists there and what we should be in the world today.

AUDIENCE SMALL GROUP REPORT:

Not a response to that, but this came up suddenly, a comment, "You can't live by the kingdom without raising hell".

Some of our other questions that came up: What would the values expressed in Elizabeth's missional theology looked like if they happened within an hours drive of where we are now, or where theological institutions are.

Other discussion happened around solidarity and the question of what are the limits of solidarity.

Finally, one of us, sort of a statement/questions. One of the most beautiful aspects of native culture is the honour and respect given to ancestors. This person, being of European descent, has said he or she has not heard much that would give honour or respect to their ancestors. Asking Bishop Mark, if he could speak to some of the good things that resulted from European contact.

AUDIENCE SMALL GROUP REPORT:

One of the questions that really came, a question of for lack of a better term, being authentically Christian, however one wants to define that. If the future of mission is a relational one that requires mutuality, mutual vulnerability and reciprocity where all parties are changed, how does one then do that and remain in some way authentically Christian, and what does that mean.

Another question that came up was, "what is the Christian context in mission or what out of our tradition forms mission". What are the religious, traditional, or ethical limits. What are the things we can't compromise anymore, and what does it mean to engage rather than agree to disagree.

AUDIENCE SMALL GROUP REPORT:

A simple point, the point of listening, intentionally listening, being open to the learning.

As well there needs to be renewed interest in what mission is. Not necessarily a resurgence of mission per say, but especially in terms of the schools we come from, a renewed interest in it and a pedagogy of mission, how is mission taught, how mission is addressed.

Also, there was an interesting perspective of where does mission come from, maybe it can start within and that living the Christian life is mission in itself. Maybe turns that concept on its head.

A couple questions: one—how do we engage our communities, theological and otherwise. How do we bring our message home and actively.

The other is one also related to that, for all of our diversity we have a lot of commonalities at this conference, and for me especially continuing from the other dialogue to where we are now, the sense not in the room is issues of soul saving, how do we take all of our renewed interest in what mission is, what it should be, what it has been, and engage with other understandings of mission.

AUDIENCE SMALL GROUP REPORT:

We seemed to all be feeling a sense of trying to sort through it, so some of our reflections are reflect that we are feeling a little muddled ourselves in trying to sort through that. We struggled to articulate what our questions are. We could articulate our “ah-ha” moments quicker than we could articulate our questions.

How do we carry forwards the passion that we have here, the passion that was ignited by this conference, how do we take it forward? And not two months down the road, be like, “that was a great conference, so”? and what do I do with that?

How can we move forward with the understanding of mission we are starting to unpack here and do more benefit and not do more harm?

And some of the “ah-ha” moments that we had were: “we are made the image of God” and I quote, “Ecumenical dialogue makes my soul happy”. Delivering good news to the people in my community, and a sense of call to continue to keep this dialogue open and share more about the residential school experience because that seems to be a conversation starter and a way to keep this dialogue moving forward.

AUDIENCE SMALL GROUP REPORT:

We have a lot of prophets so we had a really good conversation. Our dream from the conference is it is necessary to have an incarnated belief that our structures our institutions, our actions, should reflect the deepest of our beliefs. And we thought this could apply to ecumenism, to mission. We don't know what we do, but we do it together.

A question that we came up, what does the ecumenism look like in mission work.

The idea mission should be about restoring relationship, not about fixing, but about listening and journeying.

Thursday February 19, 2009: Trialogue Session 3
Triialogue Responses

REV. DR. RUSSELL DAYE:

I'll offer a response that I hope speaks to a number of different things. I really – having been to three of the theological student conferences – I know what it feels like to go away with some 'aha' moments, some passion, with some confusion, with some spiritual fatigue and with no small amount of dissonance, interior kind of stuff rubbin' up against each other. And I can hear from the comments that some of you are feeling that. I also really appreciate the comments, the question about salvation and the issues raised around being authentically Christian and what does that mean.

And I'd like to respond to it by picking on something Elizabeth made reference to, which is Abuntu. And, as she said, an Abuntu is an African word, it's a Bantu word. Other languages have their equivalent. And it's been translated a lot of different ways, but, as you were making mention, one of the translations is 'Our humanity is mutually generated'. I cannot become human, let alone fully human, in isolation even if in my mind I have the correct precepts about God or about Jesus. Our humanity is generated in relation to each other. And Archbishop Desmond Tutu carried this concept into what he called Abuntu theology, and he talks about how the spirit is present, Christ is present, God the Creator is present in the web of relationships as Abuntu is mutually created.

And I want to say to the students, "You are in the web of relationships, and you will **always** be in the web of relationships and **God** will always be in the web of relationships, and you are just fine, even when you're confused and dissonant and tired". And that one of the things I've had to learn slowly as I move through theological education and through my ministry is that there's no 'arriving point' on this side of Eternity. There will not come a day where you just have it 'right' and stay right in the same way forever. It's the quality of care and faith with which you live in the web of relationships, which you live out 'ubuntu', that is going to make your mission, make your ministry, make your life, make your friendships, make your marriage and make your relationships. And embracing confusion and chaos is part of that quality. So, as somebody once wrote on the wall adjacent to the United Theological College, 'When it is chaotic, it is excellent'. If you can live in the chaos with faith, that even in the midst of it, the Holy Spirit is shaping you in the web of relationships in which you're planted.

I can't offer a definitive statement about salvation, but I believe deeply that salvation of the individual and of the web of relationships and of this planet, that is an organic web of biospheres, is deeply connected to each of those levels. And that there's no salvation for one without the other if there's no isolation of one salvation from the salvation of the others.

I want to say 'thank you' to somebody because she took me aside in between sessions and she said, 'Something that you said in your own presentation embarrassed me and was hateful'. That was an Abunto moment. She didn't write me off; she didn't go away angry; she didn't need for me to agree with what she was saying to me. But she said, 'I want to live in relationship with you, even with some distance'. That was a beautiful moment for me.

BISHOP MARK MACDONALD:

I had a question directed to me and, you know, 'What good came out of contact?' Well, the Beatles [*laughter*], Canada, my grandma. You know, I mean, a lot of good things. I mean, you know, life is never, you know, it's never I think as clear as we want it, but thanks be to God, you know? It's really been good for me to be here. I've been encouraged and challenged. Encouraged because I feel a lot better about you than I felt about my fellow students when I was here, and would have been here a number of years ago, a number of **decades** ago. But I'm also challenged because we still inhabit the same geography but live in different worlds. And the challenge of that has, I don't think, ever been more clear to me. I really enjoy people, and I really feel strongly about you and your possibilities. And every one of you goes with my love, prayers and blessing.

But I'm also very challenged by the fact that so many of you are just beginning to have a **perception** of a reality that is so much a part of what it is to be a Canadian. And that, to me, is what systemic evil is all about. And I think that when I see people responding to residential schools, they seem to be wanting to do some kind of equation, like 'Was everybody bad' or 'Was somebody bad'? You know, when Paul uses that language of principalities and powers, he's really describing the way people of back then described systematic evil. In other words, you could have very good people participate in a very, very bad system. And so, when you talk about saving souls, you really are talking – I think – about both saving the individual and also, as Paul put it in Colossians, **disabling** the principalities and powers. And I believe that we, as Christian people, need to be people with **extreme confidence** that the cross and resurrection of Christ disables those powers. And we operate in that kind of conviction and that kind of confidence.

But the **character** of that is really important because I think the **biggest** problem, as I see it, is that western theology began to believe that it owned that word, and that that word was their possession. And even worse – and I hear some of that language echoed here – that it was a **product** of the west and the Enlightenment and other things. Now, I believe that the Enlightenment was a great thing, and we should make sure that everybody gets its benefits, you know? That's the real problem with it: not that it went too far, but it hadn't gone far enough. So, I'm not speaking **against** the Enlightenment; I'm just saying that it is not just the west. And for me, the Word of God is something that has a kind of sovereignty in life

that cannot be predicted and cannot be controlled and cannot be thought of as somebody's possession.

When I was converted, I scared the **hell** out of Baptist preachers *[laughter]*! And God, in God's loving compassion and humour, I lived to see Baptist preachers scare the hell out of **me**! And as we live in this world, we, I think, have given **way** too much credit to humanity. Although humanity is a lovely thing, we are really a product of the unfolding power and love of God in the Universe. And we are **never** more than that.

Now, I worked among cranberry growers for awhile, and I was- I **marvelled**. They took **such care** of those vines because a simple hailstorm could wipe them out for three years. And so, they had to watch it; they watch it like a hawk. And, you know, they would often skip church because they'd be up all night making sure that they wouldn't get frozen or the deer wouldn't eat 'em up. And so, I was driving one night on the bog with a couple of cranberry growers, and we're driving down the road, and then I looked over and I saw what looked like cranberry vines growing in the wild! And I said, "Wow! That looks like cranberries!" And the guy said, 'Yeah', and he laughed and he said, 'You know, when they jump the bog, you can't kill the suckers!' *[Laughter]*. And I tell you that story because I think the Word of God is like that, too. Sometimes the Word jumps the bog, and it resides in people and in sayings and in movements that **surprise**. And I think that any quick reading of the prophetic tradition would tell you that there are times when the Word **has to leave** us because we have chained it too much. And it becomes- God **reminds** us that it isn't our possession. It isn't that.

Here in North America, we have had a lot of battles about whether the Word of God is true or not. Ever since the Scopes trial, we've been fighting that battle, and it was echoed in some of our conversations here. I think that the **real question**- you know, Hebrews 4:12 says that it's true but it says it is 'living and active'. And in the community that I serve, the question of its truth is never really brought up, but the belief that it's living and active is something that's part of peoples' lives, and we see it. And so, I think that we are given in scripture places to look when we're unsure about **our** grasp of where the Word is. We're told to look to Jesus; we're told to look to the scriptures; but we're also told to look to the floor. We're also told to look to those who are on the margins, to the outcasts. And I think that to have a holistic understanding of that unfolding Word in Creation, we need to look outward. And in our world, to look in the non-human parts of Creation as well. I think you will see the judgment of God if you look very carefully at what's going on in the rest of Creation. You'll see how that Word is not only a Word of grace, but it's also a Word of judgment if we do not respond to it.

So, I'm very happy and encouraged, but I would say also challenged and would like to challenge back by saying if we aren't prophets, who is, you know, and if

we don't start doin' it, who is? I think we're gonna find God will certainly choose someone to do it, but it may surprise and confound rather than be liked where it goes. So, if we're the bog, right, I think that we must attend to it very carefully; otherwise, we'll see it jump the bog and find someone else to speak it.

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

This has been a very meaningful conference for me, and I want to thank all the theological students and staff who made this possible. Before coming here, I was asking myself, "What am I to say to them? Will they listen? Will my message come across?"

And I just said to myself, "Well, Elizabeth, just relax and just don't be anxious" because sometimes we become too anxious. And I just remind myself, "I say what I will think I need to say, and it's up to them how they receive". But from the letter invitation of the Canadian Forum, it said that 'We would like to hear voices, three voices. And now, the three of us heard **your** voices, and some of your voices are explicitly heard, and others are not. In the Philippines during the dictatorship of Marcos, we had a saying: 'Listen to what people have to say, and listen also to what other people are **not** allowed to say', yeah? But in a democratic state, I think we are privileged to say what we need to say.

For instance, in terms of- your questions are very profound. And even if I cannot answer all the questions, as I mentioned to Jonathan, let's just bring them to the front. But because of the economy of time, we were not able to listen to **all** the questions. We would be welcome, perhaps, to be able to dialogue with each other. But I want to make two or three points. One is. I think it was Paul Tillich who said, "doubt can be an element of faith". **Doubt** can be an element of faith, because sometimes we say, 'Where is God? I don't believe in God anymore'. And then some people say, 'What kind of Christian you are? You are doubting the existence of God? Oh, my goodness! You should not be here'. But that's where prejudices come. Prejudice simply means you doubt before you know a person or you judge before you read a book or you judge before you know something about this culture? So, your question – it's so profound – 'How do we take home this action for mission?' Well, two things. I learned here that you have a renewed passion for mission. Wow! I can go back to do and I will say, "Do you see? I have been with a group of students and faith leaders who are not anaemic to mission nor allergic to mission but **passionate** about mission", yeah? Now, we have different expressions of our love, yes? Yes?

VOICE:

Yes.

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

And so, we also have different expressions about passion. Could it be that these

multi dimensions of mission? If one of you is very strong in justice, peace and the creation of worth, you are doing mission, even if you don't attend church constantly. If you are into anti-racism work, you are doing mission, even if your church does not recognize it as such. If you are using careful, sensitive forms of liturgy so that all people will feel included and inspired, then you are doing mission. You don't have to go to Nigeria or Philippines to do mission. We're, I think, in- Canada is so huge a country, isn't it, but in your local places ... mission is not just worldwide. Mission is in the subway; mission is the marketplace; mission is in theological cafeteria; missions is your study desk. Who was it who said 'Let your study desk be your author'? Really, for me, while you are doing your theological education, regardless your part, you're doing it, yeah?

How is mission taught? It can be taught pedagogically, but most of all, religion is taught with your mentors, with your church leaders when they offer hope, what you say, confidence, you will inspire the confidence, yeah? And don't say, 'I will wait until I graduate; that might be better' **because** the people – think of the migrant workers – those who are living with HIV/AIDS -- they cannot wait two more years until you graduate to do something. In other words, mission is here and now. What ... you're laughing! It's true! It's true! *[Laughter]* 'What do I do now': that is a very good question. And I don't know; I cannot tell you. What I can just say is I can- I would like to encourage you, **encourage**, put it in your heart. I want to put in your heart 'the heart of mission'. And for me, the heart of mission is either collective and individual ways obtaining the peace. 'For God so loved the **world**' ... it doesn't say 'For God so loved Canada'. It doesn't say 'For God so loved the Philippines' ... 'For God so loved the world' and it includes Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan and First Nations and indigenous people from the Philippines. 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son'. Now, as a Christian ... I claim that. But, as a Christian, also I cannot put limits on the vast mystery of God's revelation. This is why I think theological education needs to be multicultural, cross-cultural, and interdisciplinary.

So, maybe when you go home, do something very, very- put very practical. Maybe you have a list of all the student participants here. If you want to contact each other through email ... I mean, sometimes, when you go back, it's just lonely, isn't it, you know? But, connect. I mean, the web is there! Connect with each other. If you find some information about this type of mission, share with each other: 'Hey, I found this one!' 'Hey, I found!' **And, dream!** You are- if you dream of perhaps 'How is your contribution to the 2010', you may not be able to get there. But maybe through your local studies, you can make a contribution. Or to say, like my good friend Joanne, she's already helping make her budget how to go to Edinburgh Conference. Why? Because women have to be represented there; indigenous people have to be there; theological students and other groups have to be there.

I used to be very anaemic about mission. I used to be very allergic to missionaries, but at the same time ... *[laughter]* ... at the same time, you know, I

was inspired by one of my missionary sisters, May Patrick. Mrs. Patrick was from Oregon, and she used to be a missionary to – I forget which part of Alaska – and she's the type of missionary that tries to understand the Filipino culture. So, I was surprised when she said to me, 'Elizabeth, where is your village? Where is your home?' I said, "It's three hours away from Manila". 'I will come with you. Can I visit with you?' I said, "Excuse me, but, you know, we don't even have a proper toilet for you there. How would you visit my home?" And then she said, 'I'm visiting **your** family, not your toilet' [*laughter*], you know? And she was the one who encouraged me, 'Elizabeth, you study- you keep on studying well', yeah. She **encouraged** me, and she **believed** in me! So, I said, "Oh, I know, I know I should- I have a prejudice to other people, to other wise people". I don't have to, you know, even if I had a painful experience, I should not generalize that all are like that. So, that was a moment, a very holy moment for me, also. And she was the one who was inspirational for me and had to say, 'Elizabeth, if you want to go on further studies, let me know' because at that point, I could not get scholarship. They only give scholarships to males. Then they asked me to wait ten years. My goodness, I already die before they give me scholarship. So, I took her offer to facilitate collective-- that's the reason why I ended up in California. And when I got to California, I said, "Oh, my God! Do IU spend my time here studying in books? Or do I take this opportunity to learn from other people that I meet here". And I had to take away my prejudices: "Oh, my God! Americans are like this?" And I said, "Elizabeth, you will not have friends if you have prejudice like this".

So, in fact, in California, I think, that's when I overcame my phobia, you know. Because my church had taught me bad theology, you know: 'This kind of people are, you know, cannot be saved' or 'This kind of people are...' Mea Culpa. And I used to be very sad. But because [*Laughter*] I think "I cannot be stand in front of the people who are in my church" ... But I hang on to – even that Sunday School song that I learned – Jesus loves all the children, all colours, and I'm brown, so I must be a favourite of Jesus. And you are white, and you are black, you must be a favourite of Jesus, you know? So, all children of the world. And in the words of Martin Luther, 'We are all God's children'. So, before I preach one more sermon, I just want to say "Ubunto, and thank you; merci beaucoup".

REV. JONATHAN SCHMIDT:

Within this whole week, I don't know if you've noticed the number of times that First Nations people have said 'I've been told'. And if I come away with one thing from this is that when I speak, I speak by first declaring by saying "I've been told". From my experience, I am shaped by community. I have been told – Russ, Elizabeth, Mark – I have been told that you make people angry. And I have been told ...

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

That's all right.

REV. JONATHAN SCHMIDT:

that you make people uncomfortable.

REV. DR. ELIZABETH TAPIA:

That's all right, too.

REV. JONATHAN SCHMIDT:

And I have been told that you muddled some people. [Laughter] And I have been told that some people were not that interested. But I've also been that you've given people clarity, and I have been told that you have inspired. And **all** of those things are good. They're from God; they are good. I want to thank you for the gifts of God that you all have, and some of them that you have shared. First of all, your love of people; you genuinely have shown that you want to be here with these people. Another gift I see in all of you is your gift of being able to sit and listen. I thank you also for sharing the gift that God has given every one of you: your ability to think, to reflect. And I thank God also that you have shared your ability to do truth telling, that you're so articulate, to speak. In the circle that I move in, I rarely find people who have all of those gifts in the ways that you were able to share them. And there's a fifth gift, and that is a gift of humility, even with all those gifts. So, thank you very much for sharing those gifts of God with all of us. *[Applause]*

Elizabeth is going to lead us in a closing worship. But I want to do one thing first, and that is I want the three speakers to stand up and face me. I've taken a number of pictures, and none of them look right. None of them have included the cloud of witnesses that are gathered here that have been part of this conversation. ... That was good! Thank you all for your part in this.

CLOSING PRAYER (MUTLIPLE VOICES):

It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view.
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision,
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying
that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

Continuing the words of Oscar Romero:

No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

Continuing the words of Oscar Romero, a person who has been important for me:

This is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future that is not our own.
Amen.

Singing:

Come Holy Spirit, here reconcile.
Come Holy Spirit, here reconcile.
Come Holy Spirit.
Come Holy Spirit, here reconcile.

BIOGRAPHIES

Rev. Dr. Elizabeth S. Tapia

The Rev. Elizabeth S. Tapia, Ph.D. is a Filipina theologian, educator and pastor. She grew up in a Methodist home in a fishing village of Bulacan, near Manila, Philippines.

Trained as a deaconess, theologian and pastor both in the Philippines and the United States, Elizabeth has been active in promoting ecumenism, Asian women's theologies, and human rights advocacy. From 2002-2005, Dr. Tapia was on the Staff of the World Council of Churches as Fulltime Lecturer in Missiology at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey in Switzerland. Prior to that, she taught Systematic Theology for ten years at Union Theological Seminary, Philippines. In June 2007, she started her work at Drew University and Theological School as Director of the Center for Christianities in Global Contexts.

She earned her Master of Arts and Ph.D. in Religion and Theology from Claremont Graduate University. Master of Divinity from Pacific School of Religion. BA from Harris Memorial College in Manila. Her fields of research interest include cross-cultural reflection, mission and immigration.

Her spouse, Alan Cogswell, is also an ordained pastor, a counselor and healer.

Bishop Mark L. MacDonald

In 2007 The Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald assumed office as the Anglican Church of Canada's first National Indigenous Bishop after serving about 10 years as Bishop of the U.S. Episcopal Diocese of Alaska where he was consecrated bishop on Sept. 13, 1997.

His formal education includes a B.A. in religious studies and psychology at the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, an MA in Divinity from Wycliffe College in Toronto, and post-graduate work at Luther-Northwestern Theological Seminary in Minneapolis.

Bishop MacDonald has had a long and varied ministry, holding positions in Mississauga, ON, Duluth, Tomah, and Mauston, Portland, Oregon; and the Southeast Regional mission of the diocese of Navajoland. Immediately prior to his ordination to the episcopate, Bishop MacDonald was Canon Missioner for Training in the Diocese of Minnesota and vicar of St. Antipas' Church, Redby, and St. John-in-the-Wilderness Church, Red Lake, Red Lake Nation. He has served on the board of The Indigenous Theological Training Institute; the faculty of Leadership Academy for New Directions (Land XXVIII); and, a trustee of the Charles Cook Theological School in Tempe, and is the Board Chair for Church Innovations, Inc., member of the Episcopal Council of Indian Ministries, Member of the Governor's Council on Suicide Prevention (AK), President of Alaska Christian Conference. He is also a Third Order Franciscan.

Among his published works are "Native American Youth Ministries," co-authored with Dr. Carol Hampton and published in Resource Book for Ministries with Youth and Young Adults, the Episcopal Church Center, New York, NY, 1995; "It's in the Font: Sacramental Connections between faith and environment," Soundings, July 6, 1994, Vol. 16, No. 5; and A Strategy for Growth for the Episcopal Church: Joining Multiculturalism and Evangelism, Inter-Cultural Ministry Development, San Jose, CA, 1994. He co-edited Liturgical Studies IV, just released by the Church Publishing Company.

Married to Virginia Sha Lynn, they have three children: daughters Rose May Li (17), Brenna Li (15), and one son, Adrian Blake (8).

Rev. Dr. Russell Daye

Through his Pastoral work, academic studies, writing, workshop leadership, and lecturing Rev. Dr. Russell Daye has engaged both local and global Christianity in social ethics, theology, world religions, and reconciliation.

Since 2005 Rev. Dr. Russell Daye has been the Minister at St. Andrews United Church in Halifax Nova Scotia. Previously he served Pastoral charges in the Quebec Eastern Townships and Northeast Newfoundland.

In 2002 he received his Ph.D. from the Department of Religion, Concordia University, Montreal where he studied in the Comparative Ethics stream. For his dissertation he studied the reconciliation process in South Africa. He also received an M.Div at United Theological College at McGill University in Montreal.

Dr. Daye served as United Church of Canada International Personnel in Fiji where he participated in Fiji's national Reconciliation process. He was an advisor to the Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education, and Advocacy (ECEA) in Suva Fiji as well as an advisor to Fiji's Ministry of National Unity and Reconciliation.

Dr. Daye is the author of "Political Forgiveness: Lessons from South Africa" (Orbis Books) as well as a large number of publications on topics including Reconciliation, Non-violence, and Globalization and Christianity. Dr. Daye has been a member of a number of agencies and committees working on issues such as social justice, education, advocacy and theological education, including the Aboriginal Rights Coalition Atlantic Observer Project at Burnt Church, New Brunswick. He is currently co-chair of the Living into Right Relations Task Group (right relations with First Nations) of the United Church of Canada, the chair of the Task for Aboriginal Relations and Concerns of Maritime Conference of the United Church of Canada and the chair of Halifax Presbytery's Gospel, Ecumenism and Theology Committee.

He describes the passions of his life as including: time with his partner Fiona and sons Sam (seven) and Will (five); messing about with preaching and homiletics; and time in nature.