

EXPLORING...



APOLOGIES AND FORGIVENESS

INTRODUCTION

An apology is not as simple as offering an “I’m sorry.” Forgiveness is not a quick response of “It’s all right.” As a church and as a country, we are being called upon to offer apologies as we are confronted with the truth of the ongoing suffering and pain caused by colonialism, racism, sexism, and anti-2S and LGBTQIA+ attitudes and actions. What does it mean to offer a genuine apology? Individuals who have personally experienced harm may be urged to forgive the one who caused harm, but how can they and what does it mean to do so? This issue will explore apologies and forgiveness, especially within the Christian faith.

Susan Lukey, Editor

APOLOGIES AND CONFESSIONS OFFERED BY THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

- **1984:** The 30th General Council declared and confessed “the church’s complicity in sexism” and committed to addressing sexism in all aspects of church life.
- **1986 Apology to Indigenous Peoples** addressed the United Church’s part in colonization and the failure of the church to value Indigenous traditional spirituality, culture, and language and its attempts to destroy them.
- **1988 Response** from the Indigenous church acknowledging the apology, along with the hope that the United Church would live into the words of the apology.

- **1998 Apology** to Indigenous Peoples for the role of the United Church in residential institutions.
- **2006:** Apology to United Church Deaconesses and Ordained Women Clergy, expressing sincere regret to the women who were forced to relinquish their rights to practise ministry if and when they married, and expressing sorrow for the loss of their leadership (referred to as “disjoining”).
- **2009:** B.C. Conference apology, followed by an apology by the 40th General Council, regarding the treatment of Vancouver Japanese United Church following World War II and the sale of their building.
- **2020 The Adoption Apology** for harm caused by forced adoption practices.
- **2025 A Living Apology** to 2S and LGBTQIA+ communities for homophobia and transphobia.

Apologies in Process

General Council 45 has initiated the way forward on proposals for these apologies:

- to the African diaspora for slavery and the legacies of slavery in Canada
- an updated apology for United Church participation in residential institutions

For More Information About...

- **forced adoptions**, go to www.united-church.ca, under Social Action | Justice Initiatives. Along with the Adoption Apology, you will find the history of United Church involvement in maternity facilities.
- **reconciliation and Indigenous justice**, go to www.united-church.ca, under Community and Faith | Being Community. Along with the apologies, you will find other helpful information.

- **gender, sexuality, and orientation**, go to www.united-church.ca, where you will find many resources affirming that gender and sexuality are gifts of God, along with a downloadable timeline called Gender and Transgender Justice in the United Church.
- **living apologies**, go to www.iridesce.ca, where you will find **Iridesce: The Living Apology Project**, a joint project of Affirm United/S’affirmer Ensemble and The United Church of Canada that collected stories to help the church discern if, and how, it might live into a possible apology to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and Two-Spirit people.
- the **Apology to 2S and LGBTQIA+ Communities**, go to the General Council 45 website (www.generalcouncil.ca/councils/gc45), where, under News, you will find the full apology.
- the **Apology to United Church Deaconesses and Ordained Women Clergy**, go to the Deaconess History of the United Church of Canada website (<https://uccdeaconesshistory.ca>); under the Disjoining tab, you will find an overview and stories of the women affected.
- the **B.C. Conference apology to Vancouver Japanese United Church**, go to the Pacific Mountain Regional Council website (<https://pacificmountain.ca/vancouver-japanese-church-receives-compensation-for-ww-ii-loss/>), the Vancouver Japanese United Archives (<https://vjucarchives.ca/our-story-in-words/recognition-apology-and-redress/>), and CBC British Columbia (www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/vancouver-japanese-congregation-compensated-for-church-lost-during-internment-1.4911012).

DEFINING APOLOGY

What Is a Living Apology?

As exemplified by the Iridesce project (www.iridesce.ca), a living apology is more than a statement. A living apology commits to ongoing action and change, repairing harm and working toward reconciliation. A living apology includes storytelling by those harmed and careful listening

by those offering the apology. It engages an ongoing process of living into a new reality that demonstrates the words of the apology.

What Makes a Good and True Apology?

An apology doesn’t begin with “I am sorry *that you* felt this way...” or “I’m sorry *that you* misunderstood my actions or words.” A true apology doesn’t pretend to apologize while actually placing the blame and burden back on the person or group being apologized to for misinterpreting the actions or words.

A true apology starts with “I am sorry *that I did/said...*” An apology takes ownership and states clearly that the person apologizing understands that their words or actions have hurt another person or group. It shows that the one apologizing has listened carefully to the person or group expressing the harm they have experienced. A good apology specifically names the words and actions that have caused the hurt and takes responsibility for them. It does not offer excuses for the behaviour or appeal to extenuating factors.

An apology specifically names the commitments of the person or group apologizing to change their language and practices to honour the apology.

An apology doesn’t ask for anything in return. It doesn’t ask for forgiveness. If a response is offered by the recipient of the apology, it is offered of their own free will at a time of their choosing.

An apology may end with a statement such as that offered by the Right Rev. Bill Phipps at the conclusion of the 1998 Apology for the United Church’s role in residential institutions: “We pray that you will hear the sincerity of our words today and that you will witness the living out of our apology in our actions in the future.”

Susan Lukey, Editor

Worship Leaders

We ask that you include this statement when using material from **Gathering**.

Written by _____

Gathering, Pentecost 1 2026, page _____.

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Who needs to apologize for the United Church's part in colonialism and the residential institution system?

When writing land acknowledgements that include naming and apologizing for the harm caused by colonialism, we need to be aware of who is in the congregation. For example, Asian and Black Canadians are not in the same position as the generations of White Settlers. Koreans have their own understandings of living under colonial occupation. Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) members of the congregation have a different relationship to such an apology than do White Settlers.

DEFINING FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness, according to the Oxford dictionary, is “to stop feeling angry or resentful toward someone for an offense, flaw, or mistake.” If we look at the biblical roots of forgiveness, it means to “forgo retribution”; that is, to not get even, to not hurt someone because they’ve hurt you, to not return harm for harm. In scripture, we read, “Vengeance is mine! Don’t avenge yourselves.” and “You’ve heard it said, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, but I tell you do not repay evil with evil.” As Christians, we may have been encouraged and even forced to say, “I forgive you” or “That’s all right,” or “It doesn’t matter,” even when we feel no forgiveness in our hearts. But what if forgiveness isn’t about what we say to the other person? What if forgiveness is about what happens within us and the choices we make about how to respond? Forgiveness is not about squashing feelings of anger, betrayal, pain, and devastation. Forgiveness is not saying that what the other person did is okay or doesn’t matter. Forgiveness isn’t about letting ourselves be hurt over and over again. It is not accepting a tearful apology and then having the person abuse us again. Forgiveness is making the decision to not repay evil for evil. Forgiveness is about reaching the point where we will no longer be defined by the other person’s harmful actions. Forgiveness

is what happens inside of us, not words spoken to another person. Forgiveness is our journey of working through the harm caused, the betrayal of trust, the pain, and the grief.

Susan Lukey, Editor

FORGIVENESS IS LIBERATION

Of all the pastoral issues that arise, forgiveness is one of the most frequent. For one thing, the Bible (and especially Jesus) refers to it often. It’s right there in the Lord’s Prayer: “forgive us as we forgive others.” Somewhat hard to avoid! A second factor is that we receive understandings of forgiveness that are at odds with the biblical perspective. Our society teaches us in various ways that the other person is supposed to ask for and deserve forgiveness. We often conflate forgiveness and reconciliation. Those are clearly at odds with the biblical perspective.

In the teachings of Jesus, forgiveness is something that I do. It is an act of will or of determination, stemming from my own resolution. The “other” is not mentioned except as the object or subject of my decision and subsequent action. In a very real sense, I am forgiving them, not for their sake but for my sake.

Forgiveness can be a selfish act—and that’s okay! As long as I do not forgive, I am giving the other person space in my head. They are living there rent free! The lives of people who have not forgiven are often shaped or controlled by the remembered and rehearsed wrong. It impacts—and often taints—other relationships and experiences. A simple example: Someone says something cutting to me or about me. I don’t have a response at the moment, but I lie awake until 3:00 a.m. dreaming up the perfect comeback. Meanwhile, they are enjoying a good night’s sleep while I continue to do their work for them! Until I forgive, I am giving the other, who has wounded me, rent-free space in my life. Simple self-interest suggests a different path.

Continuing from that, if forgiveness is something that I do, the attitude or action of the other ought not to control it. I am declaring that whether they want or deserve or even acknowledge a need for it, I am setting myself

free of the burden of the past. Sure, it would be nice if they vindicated my feelings by being deeply penitent and acknowledging their wrong, but forgiveness is not predicated on that. That means that I can exercise forgiveness at any time, on my schedule of readiness. It is not a transaction. In the words of the prayer that Jesus left us, I am reminded that we cannot receive what we have not experienced giving. Forgiving is not like putting a coin in a candy machine and gathering the results at the bottom. It is more like acknowledging my own need so I am open to receiving the gift that addresses it.

This leads to a third observation: Forgiveness does not equal reconciliation. The state of our relationship is another subject, related but quite separate. In an ideal world, perhaps, reconciliation may follow, but that is a process. Trust betrayed must be regained, and that can take substantial time, if it ever happens. The truth is that we can only love some people (in Jesus' terms) from a distance. Forgiving and *forgetting* can actually be dangerous to our well-being. Some people imagine that forgiving demands an automatic return to the relationship before the event, but that is not a given. Forgiving and reconciliation must be kept distinct to be healthy. Genuine forgiveness cannot be compelled, as is typical of the playground demand to "tell your sister you're sorry!" or "forgive your little brother!" The depths of pain that some people have endured may render it unthinkable to forgive.

Though offered in a straightforward fashion, these observations are not meant to be trite. In the right circumstances, they can give agency to someone who still labours under the burden of another's wrong and is ready to take the next step in their own liberation.

Ross Bartlett, Adjunct Professor, Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax, N.S.

DO I PRAY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE HURT ME?



Hurt breaks relationships, and one interpretation of the word *forgiveness* is "the bridging of a

broken relationship." Forgiveness implies that a relationship has been ruptured. There are three major types of relationship: a relationship between a person and God; a relationship between a person and other people (individuals or a community); and a relationship between a person as God created them to be and how that person is living.

To quote Paul in the letter to the Romans, "The wages of sin [e.g., a broken relationship] is death." We know that living with or in a broken relationship is living with or in the pains of a form of death, which is a form of static existence wherein the free flow of love has been suspended.

Too often when we are hurt by someone, we strike back in some form. This is a normal human response—hurt begets hurt. People quote the biblical text "an eye for an eye" but the Gaels have a saying: "An eye for an eye until all the world is blind." Hurt blinds. Hurt does not solve.

How should we, as Christians, react? Let me reflect on the ideal path to which we aspire based on Jesus' teachings. First of all, we are human and we react to hurt as humans. Either we strike back with the intent to hurt or we internalize the hurt and are quietly and grievously wounded. A wound that remains open festers, poisoning us physically, spiritually, and emotionally. This wound is often imperceptible to others, especially to the one who has inflicted it.

One of the most grievous misinterpretations of scripture is of Jesus' message to "turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:39) (See below.) Jesus knew, as we know, that unaddressed hurt inflicts further hurt on the wounded person. Recognizing and acknowledging hurt, which allows the wounded person to open their soul, name the harm caused, and tell their story, is the beginning of reconciliation; however, it is not the conclusion.

There is also the need for other people to know the story of the harm caused and the pain, to witness the results of the injury, to grasp the depth of the brokenness, and to face up to the reality of the sin that has happened. Confessing the pain to an empty room, to an empty heart, or to an empty conscience is only to inflict further hurt on oneself. Until another person or group, preferably the perpetrator(s), hear, see, understand, or acknowledge the hurt, the wounded person remains wounded.

As Christians, how do we facilitate the storytelling and dialogue? The word *pontiff* comes from the Latin word *pontifex*, which comes from two Latin words, *pons* which means “bridge” (as in the French word *pont*) and the word *facere*, which means “to make or to do” (as in the French word *faire*). The pontiff therefore is one who builds bridges. As followers of the Way of Jesus, we are called upon to be pontiffs, bridge builders. How do we create bridges for broken relationships?

One cannot build a bridge without gathering the necessary materials. Masonry, steel, contracts, and workers must come together for the larger plan to succeed. In the same way, one cannot build or rebuild a relationship without gathering what and who is needed. It begins with listening. We long to bring all sides of the hurt together and listen. The festering wound and the poison that has set into the wounded souls must be lanced. When Jesus expelled a demon from someone, he simply got them to talk. Once the person opened their mouth, the demon came out. This is just the beginning. The empty space left by the “demon” must be filled with recognition and acknowledgement from those called upon to listen and eventually, hopefully, by the inflictor of the harm.

In Christian terms, we must come to the table together and have communion with the “bridge builder” presiding. Personally, I cannot overemphasize the necessity of having communion with each other and with Christ as the way to bridge the brokenness. This does not imply that, instantaneously, all is well. It is just the recognition that Christ is holding both of us and proposing a new relationship.

The beginning of a new relationship comes as the bridge builder prays *with* both and *for* both so that both sides realize that this is happening without bias but out of forgiveness, love, and hope.

Finally, ideally, both sides must pray for each other. This does not imply that all is well and all is forgiven, nor does it mean that we can brush the incident(s) under the carpet and “out of sight, out of mind, and out of history.” Scars remain long after the injury has healed. Praying to God is a dialogue that allows the Spirit to enter us, heal us, and whisper challenging hope into our minds. Praying for those who have deeply hurt us allows

us to heal by knowing that God is witness to our pain and hurt. God hears us, understands us, embraces us, and is seeking to build a bridge. In time, praying for those who have hurt us allows us to turn from that injury and start on a new path with God.

As a Christian, I want to be able to pray for those who have hurt me. But what if they do not acknowledge that harm has been done? What if the trauma and pain in me is so deep that I just cannot pray for the one who has hurt me? What if they want no part in the process? Then I can only do my part, gather with others who are willing to listen and accompany me on my healing journey, and leave the rest in God’s hands. Forgiveness is ultimately God’s business, after all.

Ivan Gregan, Dartmouth, N.S.

TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK

*based on the work of Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler**

“Turn the other cheek.” Someone has hurt us, stolen something from us, cheated us out of something—and the advice we are given is to “turn the other cheek.” It’s supposed to be a Christian thing. But does turning the other cheek mean that Christians are to be wimps, placidly accepting whatever is done to us or thrown our way?

The common practice, in Jesus’ time, was to use the right hand for eating and greeting people. The left hand was only used for unclean purposes, like after defecating. Someone of higher status would give a backhanded slap with the right hand to someone of lower status to assert their authority and dominance over that person. Now, if that lower status person stands with dignity and turns the other cheek, something important happens. Since the higher status person would never use their left hand (unclean hand) for a backhanded slap on the other cheek, they are forced to continue to use their right hand and give an open-handed slap. This does two things. An open-handed slap escalates the violence and makes it very clear that the person giving the slap is acting violently. Also, an open-

handed slap would only be given to someone who is an equal, so if the person of higher status gives an open-handed slap to the person of lower status, they are now accepting them as an equal.

Suddenly, this command of Jesus takes on a whole new meaning. Jesus is not asking Christians to be wimps and accept anything that comes our way. Jesus is showing us how to respond with dignity and self-respect. Jesus is giving ways to turn the whole situation upside down and inside out.

Too often this passage has been used by people abusing their authority against those they are holding power over. No one can demand of us that we should turn the other cheek in response to their behaviour toward us. That is not what Jesus meant. Jesus is asking us to do this out of our own dignity and by our own choice. When we choose to turn the other cheek, we do so out of our own power and our own choice as followers of the Way that Jesus taught. Jesus is offering a way of confronting violence while maintaining our honour and shaming the perpetrator, instead of escalating the violence or losing our dignity. Jesus presents an alternative to becoming like the person who is attacking us. Jesus shows a non-violent way to subvert the power the other person has over us.

Susan Lukey, Editor

*See Levine's YouTube lectures and her book *The Difficult Words of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to His Most Perplexing Teachings* (Abingdon 2021), as well as Levine and Brettler's *The Bible With and Without Jesus* (HarperOne, 2020).

TEACHING CHILDREN TO SAY SORRY

We've all been there—that moment when our child has burst out with angry and hurtful words or, in frustration, has flung out their arm and hit their grandparent or hauled off and kicked another child for taking their toy. The recipient of the angry outburst is hurt. We are feeling embarrassed. We want our child to say sorry because we know they've done something wrong. But there is no sorry in them. They feel absolutely

justified in their anger and frustration, and maybe rightly so. Do we force them to apologize when they have no intention of apologizing?

Sometimes our child just does not feel a "sorry." Pushing them to apologize doesn't bring anything out of them that is heartfelt. We can't make them feel sorry. If we try to force them to express regret, it likely will only leave us feeling embarrassed or frustrated ourselves. So, what is a parent to do?

First of all, let's distinguish between *feeling* sorry and *expressing* an apology. Our child feels what they feel—it's just the way it is. Even if they have hurt someone, they may be so full of frustration at that moment that trying to make them apologize is only going to add to their frustration, and the situation will spiral out of control for you and your child.

Instead of trying to wrestle an apology from our child or justifying their behaviour, first of all, try to understand the situation from your child's perspective and find a softness in your heart for them. Maybe Grandma said something that hurt their feelings (whether intended or not). Maybe the friend took their toy without asking. We know as adults that a sorry is needed in the situation. An injury should be acknowledged. It is what we do for the good of our relationships. But we can't force our child.

In the moment, if an apology is needed, it is okay if you, as the adult, offer the apology. Make sure that you don't embarrass your child. Just keep to the facts. With your child present, if possible, state that you know the other person was hurt, and then offer, "I'm sorry that you were hurt."

Sometimes you can script an apology, if the emotions aren't too intense. For example, "Dakota, I know you hit Jessica because you're frustrated that she took your toy. Sometimes that happens, but then we say we're sorry. Let's go and say sorry to Jessica." If your child says sorry, great! If not, then say, "Jessica, Dakota and I have come to say we're sorry. We know that the hit hurt you."

Later, when things are calm and your child is feeling safe in your love for them, you can talk about what happened, learn from their perspective, and explore together what to do when our frustration has burst out of us in less than helpful ways. Of course, the ideal situation

is when your child apologizes without any coaching or coaxing. That will happen, but not when you try to force it. We do need to learn to say sorry as part of living with other people and forming healthy community, but we have to give our children time to find their way to expressing regret.

Susan Lukey, from Adventures in Faith and Family (UCPH 2021). Used with permission.



APOLOGY TO 2S AND LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITIES: A SERVICE

This service of apology was held at Knox United Church, Calgary, Alta., on August 8, 2025, during the opening of the in-person portion of General Council 45. Some adaptations and alternative suggestions for hymns are included. We invite you to adapt it to your own setting as you mark the first anniversary of this significant living apology. This liturgy was written by the Rev. Dr. Miriam Spies, chair of the GC45 Worship Planning Committee, in consultation with the Rev. Dr. Alydia Smith (staff support) and the Apology Task Group. A French version of the service can be found on GatheringWorship.ca. The full apology can be found at www.generalcouncil.ca/councils/gc45, under News.

Gathering

Land Acknowledgement

Call to Worship

Come, you who have been created, knitted together in the depths of the earth.

Come, you who have been searched and accompanied by God all your days.

Come, you who have been known and loved by God.

All who are fearfully and wonderfully made, come and worship our God.

Lighting of Candles (three)

We light the Christ candle, recognizing Christ is present in and throughout this community.

We light the Affirming candle, celebrating how God delights in our bodies, beautifully made.

And we light a third candle, witnessing to the Spirit's power in this sacramental moment, where God's grace and love meet us.

Water Blessing

Water is a gift of life, a symbol of God's grace in our lives. Water nourishes us. As Christians, we are baptized by water and the Spirit, enfolded into the Christ community. We know there are times and spaces where water is lacking, where water is polluted, where water is commodified, and where water floods. We pray that all of Creation has access to clean, sustaining, abundant water.

God of Life, we ask that you bless this water, a sign of your grace, that continues to sustain us as we journey to truth, confession, and a turning again toward you and each other. God of Life, fill this water, fill us with your reconciling love. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Opening Words

Welcome to this service of worship. We are glad to be in this moment together. As we begin, let your hearts wander around the space.... Notice people here.... Remember the communion of saints who have carried us to this time.... Pay attention to your own body this morning.

We recognize and lament that while we worship together, trans bodies are being broken and denied their beauty by government legislation and acts of violence here in Alberta and around the world. We also acknowledge that we are carrying a multitude of emotions in our hearts and spirits today, and these sit within our bodies. This is challenging heart work, and it is holy work. Take care of yourself. Take care of one another.... We are disciples of Jesus committed to bold, daring, and just actions.

Pay attention to God in this place, to the Spirit bringing gifts, to Jesus inspiring dreams in our hearts. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

The Apology Task Group

As the authors who were tasked with writing this apology, we have held the deep challenges and complexities of speaking on behalf of the church.

We know that each of you carry your own stories and experiences; you have come to understand the United Church through relationships with communities of faith, clergy, staff, and fellow United Church members. We recognize that each person has their unique needs when it comes to healing and that, for some, this apology arrives too late, and that, for others, this apology arrives ahead of healing actions by the church that have been longed for. We offer this apology not because we're convinced we have everything figured out but because we refuse to let fear keep us silent, nor do we wish for perfectionism to overtake the necessary task of publicly and explicitly addressing the legacy of 2S and LGBTQIA+ oppression and discrimination in The United Church of Canada. We hope that where the apology feels inadequate, you may find the resources needed to provide more depth, nuance, and healing as you process this apology.

The Apology Task Group: *the Rev. Michiko Bown-Kai (acting Chair), the Rev. Aaron Miechkota, Christine Dolson, Frederick Monteith, and the Rev. Tricia Gerhard, February 2025*

Hymn

TLUS 31 "Queerly beloved" or "Draw a wider circle," words by Adam Tice; tune: NOEL NOUVELET (French carol, traditional); © 2013 by GIA Publications, Inc.

Prayer

Living Spirit, you call each of us by our name; you call us Loved. Together, you call us by our many names; you call us Wonderfully Diverse! You call us to come together; you call us Community, you call us Church.

You have called us to this time and to this place of sharing and listening, of naming and listening, of healing and listening.... Living Christ, we listen to the very beat of our hearts, an echo of your compassion for those who live on the margins:

because of who they love;
how they love;
how they express themselves;
how they do it or don't do it;
how their bodies are or aren't;
how they have been transformed by the courage of authenticity.

May our hearts beat together with theirs. Like you, we, too, are divinely designed. May we live

our human years on this earth in your Way, as we walk together in your path of love and justice, with God and with each other, where all are invited and welcomed, valued and celebrated!

Living God, you have responded to our cries for justice, with decades of courageous organizers, witnesses, advocates, and allies.

You have responded to uplift the lonely and the broken-hearted, with countless friendships, supportive families members, social communities, and affirming churches.

You have responded to our vision of a colourful and inclusive church, with the pastels, paints, and brushes of courage, faith, and commitment! With song and dance! With music and celebration!

We thank you for your trust in us.

We thank you that we have been called to be part of this moment in your church when people of diverse skin colours and cultures, of diverse incomes and means, of diverse ages and abilities, of diverse lifestyles and commitments, and of diverse sexualities and gender expressions are accepting the call to come together to revive hearts and minds and customs and institutions into living, breathing, dancing, painting, singing, *joyful* celebrations of your people! May it be so! Amen!
A Prayer for a Colourful Inclusive Church by Iridesce: The Living Apology Project, 2017. Find this prayer and more resources at iridesce.ca under Spirituality.

Scripture

Genesis 1:1–2:3 God creates. *Also share in sign language.*

Hymn

TLUS 10 "God calls you good"

Liturgy of Presentation

Scripture: Psalm 139:1–6, 13–15, 17–18

Sung Response: MV 161 "I have called you by your name" *verse 1*

Response: Although we know, deep in our bones, that we are all created in God's utter loveliness, that God delights in our bodies and dreams wonderful things for us, we have erased and distorted dreams in our community. Some have erased and distorted dreams, out of fear and grief. Dreams and visions of ministry fractured...by "do not hire" lists, by being quiet, by leaving the church, by threats of violence, by being harmed and suffering abuse...

**When gifts for ministry go unrecognized,
and when bodies are not honoured as beloved,
we distort God's dream.**

Scripture: Genesis 2:7 The earth-creature is formed. (Suggest using the *Inclusive Bible* version)

Sung response: MV 161 "I have called you by your name" *verse 3*

Response: Although we know, deep in our bones, that all—we and all of Creation—are created in God's utter loveliness, that God delights in our bodies, as a church we have distorted and erased God's dreams for Creation and community, dreams that were forced to be abandoned, given up, buried.

We confess the ways we have permanently damaged these beautiful dreams...damage that has caused separation from God's dreams. We confess that hearts are still broken. We confess that we are only now recognizing our own pain and the pain of one another.

Be with us, O God of Love, turn us toward your dream for all of Creation.

Apology and Action

Sung response: MV 161 "I have called you by your name" *verse 4*

(A time of silence)

Response

We have failed to celebrate and delight in all of your beautiful Creation.

We have wounded people instead of seeking wholeness.

We are sorry.

Reading of the Apology

(found at united-church.ca or generalcouncil.ca)

Assurance of Grace

God forgives. God reconciles. God transforms. This is the wondrous power of God's grace and love for all people. As a forgiven and forgiving Christ community, may this grace continue to transform us through healing and justice, reconciling and love.

Anthem, Hymn, or Special Music

Scripture: Mark 1:9–11 Jesus is baptized. (Suggest changing *son* to *child*.)

Sung response: MV 161 "I have called you by your name" *verse 2*

Affirmation and Commitments

As a church, we affirm that we and all of Creation are created in God's utter loveliness, that God delights in our bodies.

You are my beloved.

We affirm that the call of baptism is the foundation to all calls to discipleship and ministry.

You are my beloved.

We will work to counter harm toward 2S and LGBTQIA+ siblings.

You are my beloved.

We will affirm and support the leadership of all God's people.

You are my beloved.

We will continue to celebrate the beauty and diversity of God's dream for justice and joy.

You are my beloved.

Pastoral Prayer

including **Sung response:** MV 62 "There is room for all"

The Lord's Prayer offered in the language of your heart.

Sung amen: MV 112 "Amen, amen, it shall be so"

Affirmation of Baptismal Faith

Bold disciples of Christ, with this water, remember that you are claimed, gifted, chosen, and beloved by God. Remember that you are a part of God's dream, and we are thankful.

Closing Hymn

TLUS 103 "Bambelela"

During the hymn, the asperges (sprinkling of baptismal water) is offered to the congregation.

Blessing and Sending

Friends, go from here, knowing deeply that you are beloved. Glory to God our Creator, Christ our beloved friend, and the Holy Spirit, our guide. Be with us all, as we work towards healing and the building of God's Dream.

General Council 45, Calgary, Alta.