

Native American Ministries Sunday

OFFERING TALK



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church®

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Though congregations may observe Native American Ministries Sunday at any time, they are encouraged to celebrate with a special offering on the Third Sunday of Easter, April 18, 2021. This script may be used to introduce the offering. Feel free to adapt it to fit the context of your congregation. Consider including the liturgy in a printed bulletin or handout to remind your congregation of this special day in the life of the church. Tie the fullness of this special Sunday with a coordinated sermon starter along with children's resources.

According to the 2016 *Book of Resolutions* (#3321), "as a result of the ongoing support for Native American Ministry Sunday, well over 100 Native people have been seminary trained and ordained as elders and deacons. They are serving in local churches, annual conferences, and general agency leadership positions."

I was moved to hear the story of Rev. Dr. Justine Wilson, of Cherokee and Ojibwe descent. She was a single mom of a six-year-old and an infant living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, when she connected with a Native pastor who encouraged her to respond to God's call on her life.

In the second week of classes at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois, she found herself questioning theology class because she felt the textbooks did not speak to her experience with God. And when her older son was hit by a car and left in a coma, she questioned her faith even more.

The seminary set up 24-hour care for the infant and brought him to her around the clock to nurse. Many of her seminary classmates provided strong support and pastoral care for her. Thanks to open helping hands and those who breathed peace into her situation as her son recovered, Wilson's faith journey began to take shape and her



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theological clarity deepened in alignment with her Native identity.

Wilson is now senior pastor at Norman First American United Methodist Church in Norman, Oklahoma. She is working with the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference to create a Native American course-of-study program. The unique course includes Native theology and explores ways to bring tradition, culture and religion together in United Methodist ministry.

“When you give generously on Native American Ministries Sunday, you equip seminary students who honor and celebrate Native American culture in their ministries.”

I want “to make sure every person gets through the course-of-study program because someone helped me get through,” she said.

With open hands, Wilson is breathing peace into Native people who no longer have to choose between culture and Christianity in their response to God’s call on their lives.

When you give generously on Native American Ministries Sunday, you equip seminary students who honor and celebrate Native American culture in their ministries. You empower congregations to find fresh and culturally appropriate ways to minister to their communities with Christ’s love. Please make your gift today through UMCgiving.org/giveNAMS.

Please pray with me this prayer adapted from The Act of Repentance Communion Service at General Conference 2012:

As the rivers flow, let us hear Christ’s song.
As the winds blow, let us hear his whispers.
As the grasses sway, let us see them dance.
As the eagle soars, calm our minds.
Christ’s love is always there.
Open our hands to share his love.
Holy Creator, bless these contributions to
strengthen United Methodist Native American
Ministries and bring your healing power into
every broken place.
Amen.



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