

Native American Ministries Sunday

S E R M O N S T A R T E R



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church®

Native American Ministries Sunday

SERMON STARTER

HOLY
BIBLE

HANDS WIDE OPEN

Though it may be celebrated any time, congregations are encouraged to celebrate Native American Ministries Sunday with a special offering on April 18. This sermon starter is based on Luke 24:36b-48 which is the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel reading for that week. Preachers may adapt the message for the context of the congregations they serve. Consider distributing the liturgy ahead of time so that your congregation can be reminded of this special day in the life of the church. Tie together the fullness of this special Sunday with a coordinated offering talk along with youth and children's resources.

These past two weeks we have celebrated the joy and the hope that God's creation is saved because of the resurrection of Jesus. But our scripture reading today continues to share the story of that first resurrection Sunday when there was still a sense of shock and confusion.

By Sunday night, the disciples had heard of the resurrection of Jesus but those who had not seen him did not believe it. They questioned their faith.

They are huddled around waiting anxiously. I know that when I am tense, my hands tend to curl into fists. Perhaps the disciples were experiencing this as well in their fear. Maybe they were ready for a fight. Perhaps they were holding on to what little faith they had with clenched hands.

But Jesus, the risen Christ, doesn't knock with a closed hand. He just appears in the room, saying "Peace be with you."



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Into their scary, lonely world, Jesus is a voice, a presence. And what does he do?

He stretches out his arms and shows them his open, pierced hands. The disciples are immediately relieved. They rejoice.

After sharing a meal of broiled fish with them, he “open[s] their minds.” They begin to understand the fullness of why Jesus has come. Perhaps in opening their minds, they also begin to open their hands, releasing fear, anger, and the sense of scarcity.

Speaking into their disbelief, Jesus tells them that he is sending them out into the world, just as God sent him.

He equips them to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations.

Jesus gives them the tools to be the church. And so it is that we are the church today. It is we who share with open hands, with our neighbors, our families, the ministries of this church and United Methodist ministries like those in the Native American community. It's our hands that

work together open to providing comfort. Open to providing healing.

On this Native American Ministries Sunday, we have an opportunity to strengthen the church. Our gifts extend open hands, sharing peace, justice, and hope into Native American communities. Half of our gifts stay with local ministries in this conference and half support the work of Native American United Methodist ministries nationally.

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Where do we see the open hands of Easter people at work?

- Easter is evident in (Check with your annual conference office to find out how the NAMS offering is investing in local ministries. For example, a grant from the West Ohio Annual Conference to provide



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necessary aid to Native American communities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.)

- Easter is evident in the revival of the Maskoke language through an ecovillage that practices intimate relationship with the natural world.
- Easter is evident in the preparation of a long-term strategy to support and protect indigenous spirituality and rights around the world in partnership with the World Council of Churches (WCC).
- Easter is evident in the Native American United Methodists who are responding to God's call to ministry and the scholarships that equip them with theological education.

Easter is a time to feel the peace of Christ. Jesus has given us the power of open hands.

We are called to touch lives, change lives and bring life to people who are feeling broken.

Jesus appeared in an upper room among his followers. He opened their minds. And in doing so, he gave them hope. He gave them peace.

Today on Native American Ministries Sunday we are opening our minds and opening our hands, extending hope and peace through The United Methodist Church.

The Lord has risen indeed! Alleluia!
Amen.



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