

Reflection on Pine Ridge Trip

Pastoral Prayer

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And that is what we remember and what we take with us into the future from our trip to Pine Ridge Reservation. (slide 1) Those of us who went on the trip, hope that this is not a one-time thing but that we can support this organization called Re-Member and maybe do another mission trip there in the coming years. (slide 2)

The group that organizes these service learning experiences is called Re-Member, playing on that word, they are helping groups that come to them remember the past and what white european settlers of this country did to the native peoples here, no longer to white wash that history, and in learning about them and their history and working with them to address some of their needs we are re-memembering this country into a community of care, no longer separate and isolated from one another but Americans all.

It is a central spiritual practice of our Christian faith, remembering is. We remember the people of Israel and God's covenant with them and we remember the one Jewish holy man in particular who was named Jesus and who was a revelation of God. And in our remembering, we are re-membered through his very present Spirit as a people which is what makes us church. (slide 3)

Remembering Jesus and being re-membered in His Spirit has a very specific element in it though that has become so domesticated and common to us that we hardly see it in front of us and that element is: the cross. Remembering the cross is about remembering an injustice done, a

cruelty done to an innocent man, a scapegoated victim of the powers that be, their violence deemed necessary for their purposes, which is always how empires and powers frame it. We can no longer unsee what violently scapegoating others like so prominent and powerful is the cross in our imagination and in our consciousness. And so what we learned at Pine Ridge and shared here this morning - remembering the native peoples of this land and their traumatic history, but also calling to mind their real, worthy, deep and dignified continued presence in the life of our country, is very much what we are called to as followers of Jesus, as disciples of Christ. (slide 4) We must acknowledge the sins of our fathers and how in many ways we have benefited from those sins even as we look for ways to serve - as Andrew pointed out - one another towards a better more equitable and just day, which is what the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of God looks like and what Jesus Christ asks of us. And what we all came away with is the knowledge that we are the beneficiaries of such an effort as much as anyone else!

So thanks for those of you who spent your time and energy to take this trip to Pine Ridge and to share with our congregation what it meant to you. And thanks to those of you who supported this group to go. May we find ever more faithful ways to serve God's purposes in this world through our going out and through our use of this building and through our individual lives.

Let us pray... (slide 5)

Holy and Loving God, we have heard the stories of your children, felt the weight of history, a history that has not been fully redeemed by You and that is still so rife with harm and injustice that breaks from the past into the present and future and that we still seem to have a hard time learning from.

We too often want to ignore, deny or even erase the past when it puts us in a harsh light, but we know God that you call us to the art and the practice of remembering, remembering our sins and the sins of our ancestors and the harm done by pride and greed... but also remembering Jesus and how his death and resurrection in some mystical and beautiful way has undone our sins and that undoing is working itself out through history, through each of our lives. You are bringing into being a new creation, a Kin-dom of light and life that we want to help to bring about. It is already here in certain instances with many people and in so many ways and yet it is not fully here and there is still a long way to go. Help us to serve the purposes of this kin-dom on earth. May we be willing to give our money and our energies and our life's blood to that purpose. Remind us that we are not a church unless we are working toward that end, that we are not fully who we individually can be unless we are serving others to be fully themselves as well. We pray for the people of Pine Ridge and all the indigenous peoples of this country, that we late-comers and immigrants can be more gracious to those who were here before us and to those who are now coming later than we. It is in Jesus name we pray, amen.