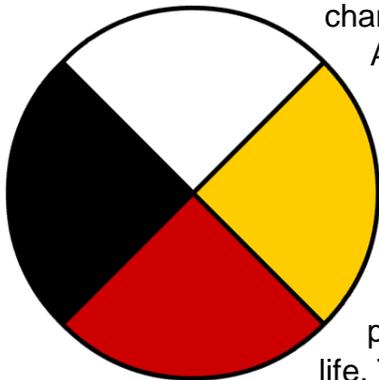


## THAT ALL MAY BE ONE

In the United Church of Canada crest, in the lower left margin, there is a Latin phrase “Ut Omnes Unum Sint.” It translates as “that all may be one” and is a quote from John 17:21, reminding us that the United Church of Canada is both an united and an uniting church. After all, the three symbols inside the red Saint Andrew’s cross represent the three founding denominations: The open Bible (the Congregational Churches and their desire to seek truth), the descending dove (Methodism and the primary place of the Holy Spirit in lives of faith) and the burning bush (the two thirds of the Presbyterian congregations in Canada and their understanding of the indestructability of the church). In 1980 the French translation of “The United Church of Canada” was added to encompass our French language congregations.



In 2012 the United Church of Canada acknowledged the presence and spirituality of Aboriginal peoples in the United Church by revising the church's crest. The crest



changes include incorporating the colours often associated with the Aboriginal Medicine Wheel. The Medicine Wheel, which reflects respect for diversity and interdependence, is often represented in the four traditional colours of yellow, red, black, and white, which incorporate important teachings from the four directions, the four stages of life, and the four seasons. The placement of these colours will vary according to the traditions of the nation. The Medicine Wheel teaches us to seek balance in the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the circle of life. The crest changes also include the addition of the Mohawk

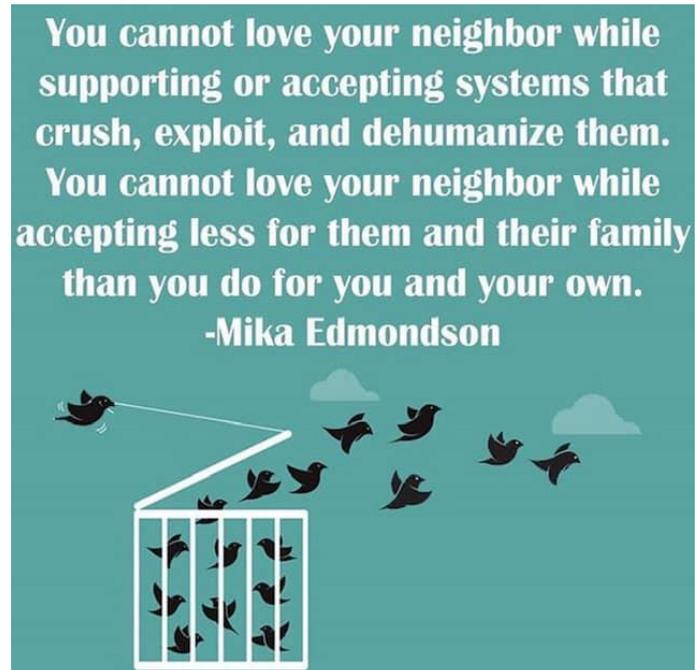
phrase "Akwé Nia'Tetewá:neren" [aw gway-- nyah day day waw-- nay renh], which means "All my relations" and is an appropriate substitute for John 17:21.

This Sunday is the beginning of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Considering our self-identification as an united and uniting church, it would seem that such an observance matches our church identity. Indeed, the United Church of Canada is a founding member of both the Canadian Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches, groups of denominations collaborating together for common cause and in witness to the



In the minutes, should I record this as a “vigorous theological discussion” or a “serious ecclesiastical debate?”

life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. The challenge is that we have so many denominations because of differences of opinion, of practice and of structure in their various understandings of discipleship. It's easy to begin to demonize others who are different in order to feel justified or "right." The far harder path is to lean into working together, despite our differences, celebrating the life-giving elements of the good news we hold in common. Hence the title "the Week of **Prayer** for Christian Unity." We bear the scars of conflict, yet we continue to work to that goal of common cause.



The key to working together "that all may be one," is recognizing and affirming that we should treat others as we wish to be treated (Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31). That is why I love the phrase from our Indigenous neighbours included in our crest, "all my relations." There is an intimacy implied and a familial bond named which encompasses more than just our blood relations. The phrase means all peoples and all of Creation – including the flora and the fauna, the rocks and the dirt, the water and the air – all of life itself. What a powerful and faithful challenge!

I have often said that I learn more from those with whom I disagree than from those who agree with me. Such disagreement challenges me to seek the common aspects of our differing perspectives. At the same time, it forces me to articulate clearly and deeply how and why I have come to my own perspective. It beckons me to consider the context of both my perspective and that of the other person. Indeed, I must be ready to have my mind and opinion changed by the other, just as I hope they are similarly open. It is not an easy journey, for it requires active listening and faithful contemplation. Consider the short story to the right as an example.

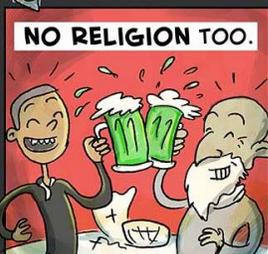
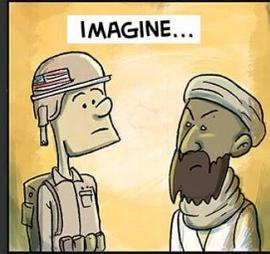
**"Imagine you are walking in the woods and you see a small dog sitting by a tree. As you approach it, it suddenly lunges at you, teeth bared. You are frightened and angry. But then you notice that one of its legs is caught in a trap. Immediately your mood shifts from anger to concern: You see that the dog's aggression is coming from a place of vulnerability and pain. This applies to all of us. When we behave in hurtful ways, it is because we are caught in some kind of trap. The more we look through the eyes of wisdom at ourselves and one another, the more we cultivate a compassionate heart."**



~ TARA BRACH

One of my favourite songs is John Lennon's "Imagine." It has been my favourite since a memorable episode of "WKRP in Cincinnati" I watched in the 1980s. I know that, as it is with any poetry, there are multiple interpretations. However, considering the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, considering the needless tragedy of Ukraine Flight 752 shot down over Iran, considering the too-easy polarization of people across the political spectrum, considering the world's brokenness and considering the hope of healing and of loving kindness Jesus proclaimed, I offer you this cartoon version of John Lennon's lyrics. After all, the gospel can be found in many places with many faces.





IMAGINE ALL THE PEOPLE



LIVING LIFE IN PEACE...



YOO  
HOO  
OOH  
OOH  
OOH



YOU MAY SAY



I'M A DREAMER



BUT



I'M



NOT



THE



ONLY



ONE.



I HOPE SOME DAY YOU'LL JOIN US.



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