



Mountain Sky Outlook

January 15, 2014

Embarking on a Journey of Healing Blog

Post #1

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Come walk with me on a Journey of Healing.

At the beginning of each new year people look for hope, prosperity and healing during the year ahead. The TREE OF LIFE symbolizes God's promise that the whole creation and all God's children and creatures will one day live full and fulfilled lives. This year the Rocky Mountain and Yellowstone Annual Conferences of the UMC will focus on healing relationships within God's TREE OF ABUNDANT LIFE.

The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sand Creek Massacre falls in 2014. On November 29, 1864 Methodist leaders, committed to living in faithful obedience to Jesus Christ, wielding government and military power, planned and led the slaughter of nearly 200 Cheyenne and Arapaho people peacefully encamped where they were promised they would be safe. Many of the victims were women, children and the elderly. For some descendants of the massacre the word “Methodist” means only massacre of innocents. This year we have an opportunity to change that and to enter into a relationship of honor and respect with people who know us only as the source of their scars.

This is a history of atrocity; a history that has been hotly debated for 150 years, despite definitive findings by congressional and military investigations; a history that has been largely untaught in our schools, lost from the consciousness of the church, and distorted in its telling. It is a history in which respected Christian leaders failed utterly to uphold God’s love for creation and Jesus’ promise of abundant life. It is a history that casts a long shadow of doubt that people who bear the name “Christian” or “Methodist” can be trusted to cherish and protect life at all.

So where’s the hope?

Hope resides in the possibility of forming new relationships between United Methodists and the descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre. As your bishop, I’m convinced that God has set me on my own Sand Creek journey of healing that began in 2009 and has led me along a way of *awakening, listening, acknowledging, repenting and honoring*. During 2014 I invite you to join me on this Journey of Healing. We begin in earnest with this letter and the blog that will follow, where I will

- share an account of my personal journey of healing
- suggest ways for you to begin your own journey of healing
- explain the context for this journey in the history of the Christian Church and of our nation, and
- offer ways you and your church can make this important healing work your own.

Each time I post a new entry on the blog, you will receive a link to the post. There will also be opportunity for you to post comments and questions.

The journey will intensify in June 2014 when both Annual Conferences will commemorate the anniversary of the Massacre. In the Rocky Mountain Conference on Friday, June 20 members, guests and friends will take a spiritual pilgrimage to the Sand Creek Massacre

National Historic Site near Eads Colorado in the company of Cheyenne and Arapaho descendants. I hope you will prepare yourself for this sacred journey to holy ground by learning about the history so that you are ready to hear the voices of descendants. I am committed to ensuring that the Methodists who travel to this site in 2014 will bring a healing presence.

The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary is November 29, 2014. During the week prior I invite you to join me at the 16<sup>th</sup> annual Spiritual Healing Run from the Massacre Site to the Colorado State Capitol. Plan now to dedicate your Thanksgiving week to this powerful part of the journey. You don't have to run to promote healing during this event. More details will follow.

I know in the core of my being that God is inviting us to participate in this healing work, to develop new relationships with descendants of the Massacre, and to cultivate abundant life where it was cut down.

*I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.* Deuteronomy 30: 19b

Working for Healing,  
Elaine JWS