

How To Promote Native American Ministries Sunday

One of our special worship Sundays is Native American Sunday. Traditionally, it is the second Sunday after Easter. This year, Easter is later, thus, that date falls on Mother's Day.

Our committee doesn't want to take anything away from our mothers. Thus, there is great flexibility with the date. We can schedule Native American Ministries Sunday when it works best for your church - any time during the year.

The S.C. United Methodist Native American committee is asking that you place this special Sunday on your church calendar and observe this Sunday. Our committee can assist and we have five committee members who travel and present. However, our calendars fill fast.

The purpose of Native American Ministries Sunday is to provide education about American Indian tradition, culture, spirituality and inclusion in our conference: How many things about American Indians are really myths and stereotypes? What is the history of American Indians? What obstacles do American Indians face? What is the current status of American Indians in this state? How much do you know about American Indian spirituality? What outreach does our conference provide for South Carolina native peoples?

All of these questions and more can be answered during Native American Ministries Sunday.

One of John Wesley's major missions was outreach to American Indians. He went where others would not go. The Native American Ministries Sunday offering nurtures outreach to Native American and provides scholarships for United Methodist Native American seminarians. It provides support for urban outreach ministries and provides connection across the conference. Half of the monies raised stay in this state.

The offering also provides a means to maintain and re-establish cultural traditions, regalia and other needs for the tribes. It provides for worship outreach. It provides for medical needs and services. Thus, the monies are greatly needed.

Many of our native peoples in this state live in substandard conditions. There is a great need within our own state.

With these reasons in mind, we are asking that churches within the conference schedule a Native American Ministries Sunday. The S.C. United Methodist Native American Committee is here to help and assist you with this special worship Sunday. There is no cost for this, but assistance with mileage costs or honorariums are always appreciated. We will come regardless! We are willing to work with a church to schedule this Sunday any time during the year. November is also a good month since it is Native American Heritage month for the United States.

For that first presentation at your church by our committee, our chairperson typically provides the message for the worship service. The message covers myth and stereotypes about American Indian from past to present, Native American spirituality, the role of the Native American Committee and the connection with our conference. We have brochures and a display presentation. We can also provide worship materials. Some speakers do the children's message with a traditional story.

After the message, many congregations have been surprised about what they learned. We also honor our native tradition of gift giving when we come to your church. All churches receive this first core message to ensure all have the same foundation for subsequent visits.

From the second year and on, message options include traditional story-telling, the potter's clay story, the challenge of being Indian and Christian, histories of Catawba, Pee Dee and other South Carolina tribes, and flute and hand drum music. We can work with your desires.



This year, we have a new option. Two different native drum groups can be scheduled to drum at your church for the message. Yet since each drum has a minimum of four drummers and most are not committee members, there is a cost to the church with this one specific request only. The cost is \$125 for the drum plus 24 cents per mile mileage with a maximum of two cars per drum. If the distance is great enough that the drums have an overnight stay, the church would have to make arrangements or cover the overnight cost.

Again, this can only be requested after a church has its official Sunday presented by our committee. We recommend this special request for the third or fourth Native American Ministries Sunday for a church. Priority is given to churches where this is their third or fourth year because of limited availability of the drums.

All speakers arranged by our committee are approved by the conference. However, a church may elect to get its own American Indian speaker. If he or she is not a United Methodist pastor or certified lay speaker by this conference, you must obtain permission from your district superintendent for this person to speak. All offering monies are sent directly to the conference office, attention Gail Com.

Native American Ministries Sunday is important to our conference and denomination. Let's live by open hearts, open minds and open doors. We are asking you to have a Native American Ministries Sunday and provide that outreach and nurture to the native peoples. Our primary mission is "To Make the Invisible, Visible." Please help us with this mission.

-- by Rev. Z. Tracy Pender is chair of Native American Committee. To arrange for a Native American Ministries Sunday, call 803-905-5672.