



## **LETTER TO CHRISTIAN LEADERS re Truth and Reconciliation Rally in Caledonia on Sunday Feb. 27 at 1 p.m.**

Dear Christian Leader:

Your help and spiritual leadership is needed to bring about lasting healing and reconciliation within the communities affected by the violence, hatred, and by the failure of government to uphold the fundamentals of a free and democratic society in Caledonia - which has been documented in Christie Blatchford's shocking book [\*HELPLESS: Caledonia's Nightmare of Fear and Anarchy, And How the Law Failed All of Us\*](#). We believe it is your Christian duty to God and your fellow man to play an active role. After you have had time to read this and prayerfully consider the seriousness of the issues involved, we ask you to call us.

Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan is an example of how people, including religious leaders, can walk by those who are in pain. It was the 'outsider', the Samaritan, who stopped and provided help for the person who was suffering. Simply walking by and adding the person to your prayer list isn't what Jesus wants Christians to do.

As a Christian, I understand the vital need for prayer in all things, but as Jesus and the Apostles demonstrated by their lives, there comes a time when Christians must walk among the people to bring both comfort to those in need while exposing sin and injustice.

Jesus could have conducted his entire ministry by speaking solely within the synagogue. Instead he was compelled to walk among the people, speaking directly to them and sharing in their life experiences. The same is true for the Apostles. There are numerous recorded examples of how the words of Jesus and Apostles offended people and caused near riot conditions - the Apostle Paul was imprisoned for causing a riot.

Many times the Church finds it easier to send missionaries to the four corners of the world and will speak out against injustice elsewhere while failing to deal with the injustice in its own back yard. No further proof is needed than the decades of residential schools existing in Canada where few Churches spoke out - in fact, the Church aided in the injustice.

Martin Luther King Jr., who faced the evils of racism within government policies and the hatred of millions of people, knew he too could spend his ministry speaking within the four walls of the local church. However, God compelled him to walk among the people and speak directly to the people while he shared in their lives the reality of racism.

When he travelled to Birmingham, Alabama to lead a march, he was jailed for not having a parade permit. While there are few church leaders today who would publicly denounce Dr. King. Jr.'s actions,

at the time, several church leaders wrote him a letter calling him an 'outsider'. This letter condemning Dr. King Jr. was signed by five Bishops from different denominations as well as several pastors.

His reply to these church leaders, the inspiring "[Letter from Birmingham Jail](#)" of April 16, 1963, is truly a denouncement of the view that Christian leaders are to be passive bystanders to the injustice in the real world. His reply to these Bishops and pastors is important for you to read:

*I am in Birmingham because injustice is here... Like [Apostle] Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid... I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere... Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea...*

*We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. If today I lived in a Communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's antireligious laws.*

While there can be no comparison in the injustice Dr. King Jr. experienced and that of the residents of Caledonia, the underlining racism within government policies which created victims in Caledonia is just as evil in Ontario as it was in Alabama. The Church, which believes all people are created equal and have inherent value, cannot sit by and allow any government to discriminate against anyone. Guilt because of past wrongs cannot justify sitting back and remaining silent regarding current injustices.

The Church has a duty to speak out against discrimination, hatred and injustice. The Church has a role in bringing about healing and reconciliation as we are told we are "ambassadors of reconciliation". We should not forget Dr. King Jr.'s words that it was the moderates that were the greatest stumbling block to equality and justice in Alabama:

Dr. King's letter also had harsh words for the ministers who refused to get involved:

*In deep disappointment I have wept over the laxity of the church. But be assured that my tears have been tears of love. There can be no deep disappointment where there is not deep love. Yes, I love the church. How could I do otherwise? I am in the rather unique position of being the son, the grandson and the great-grandson of preachers. Yes, I see the church as the body of Christ. But, oh! How we have blemished and scarred that body through social neglect and through fear of being nonconformists.*

King returned to this theme later in 1963 in his '[Eulogy for the Martyred Children](#)' -- given at the service for three of four black girls killed in a KKK bombing:

*When I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery, Alabama, a few years ago, I felt we would be supported by the white church. I felt that the white ministers, priests and rabbis of the South would be among our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom*

*movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows.*

*In spite of my shattered dreams, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership of this community would see the justice of our cause and, with deep moral concern, would serve as the channel through which our just grievances could reach the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed.*

King's disappointment was especially great because he knew what Christians were capable of:

*There was a time when the church was very powerful—in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society. Whenever the early Christians entered a town, the people in power became disturbed and immediately sought to convict the Christians for being "disturbers of the peace" and "outside agitators." But the Christians pressed on, in the conviction that they were "a colony of heaven," called to obey God rather than man. Small in number, they were big in commitment.*

The Church today should not wait 20 years to embrace Dr. King Jr.'s view of direct action to end racism within government policies in Ontario. We can either be the Good Samaritan and aid those injured by injustice or walk by. We invite you and your congregation to join us on Sunday, Feb 27th at 1pm in Caledonia for a 'Truth and Reconciliation' Rally - details available below.

The Church has a choice: reach out to victims of injustice or turn a blind eye to their suffering from the comfort and safety of its stained-glass windows.

**More information:**

- JOINT NEWS RELEASE, Jan 28/11: 'Truth & Reconciliation' Rally in Caledonia Feb 27th [[PDF](#)]
- Queen's Park 'Truth & Reconciliation' news conference [[LINK](#)]

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