# Prayer for the Students of Kamloops Residential School

*by Moderator Richard Bott, The United Church of Canada*

O God, we are grieving.
O God, we are shocked.
O God, we are horrified.

But, God, if we truly listened, we can’t be surprised.
The Elders and the Communities had already told
the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,
told the governments and the world,
the stories of the children, dead and buried,
unnoted by the settler systems,
but never ever forgotten by their siblings, their parents,
their communities.

We grieve for the Indigenous children,
taken from their homes and parents by the government,
handed over to the responsibility of the Christian church,
the children who died under its care,
never to be held by their families,
never to be returned to their communities―
not only the 215 children of the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc
and other Indigenous communities along the west coast and interior
whose bodies have now been found
on the grounds of the Kamloops Indian Residential School grounds,
but all of those children
whose bodies have not yet been found
who died in any of Indian Residential Schools.

We grieve for the survivors of the Indian Residential Schools,
the children who did come home,
but were changed by their experience,
the children who grew up,
and have the trauma of remembering, again,
what happened to them.

Even as we give thanks for their families and communities,
who hold the stories of the children,
who have kept searching,
who keep searching,
we grieve that that search is even necessary,
that even one child was taken,
that even one child died,
that even one child’s death went unnoted by the system.

Help us to stop, to sit in silence,
to remember the names we do not know.
May their spirits have peace,
and their bodies be brought home to their lands.

And God?
Help us to take this grief,
this shock,
this horror,
and turn it into right action―
action that works for right relations―
action that works for healing and justice and hope.

And, please,
don’t let those of us who are settlers
and descendants of settlers,
newcomers to this land,
let the horror, the shock, and the grief
just be an outpouring of words,
or tears,
or ineffectual hand-wringing.

Let this be a moment that changes,
a moment that transforms the brokenness,
that we might walk in right relations,
for the good of your children,
for the good of your world.

Please, God.

These things we pray,
in the name of the one who brought Creation into being,
in the name of Jesus, our teacher and friend,
in the name of the Holy Spirit,
whose wings spread across the sky.

Amen and amen.