

The Right Rev. Jordan Cantwell

Moderator Welcomes Prime Minister Trudeau

4 November 2015



Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

On behalf of The United Church of Canada, I congratulate you on your election victory and on becoming the Prime Minister of Canada.

The United Church understands that seeking to follow Christ today calls us to work for a just and inclusive society nationally and internationally with Canadian and global partners, civil society, and ecumenical and interfaith partners. We share with you a hope-filled vision for Canada where political action is a positive force, diversity is a blessing, and equity and inclusion are lived out.

We look forward to increased collaboration between civil society and government, and we are heartened by the steps already taken to make this real. The United Church of Canada is grateful for the possibility of the new direction afforded us by the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. You have committed Canada to full implementation of the commission's Calls to Action, starting with implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We hope a national plan for implementation will be an immediate priority for your government. We look forward to continuing to support your work in this area through the collaborative table of parties to the settlement agreement.

You have also committed to a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous peoples. We believe this is the way forward in addressing the inequities Indigenous peoples face in housing, access to clean drinking water, infrastructure, health care, child welfare, and education.

You have pledged to "immediately launch a national public inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada." We welcome this commitment and will support you in making it one of your first acts of government.

You have committed Canada to a stronger role at the UN Climate Change negotiations. We are encouraged by the steps you have taken to make this real through including many premiers, the leader of the Green Party, and representatives of civil society organizations in the official delegation. We ask you to hold a first ministers' meeting before the COP21 Climate Change Conference in Paris begins at the end of November. We look forward to your government developing an ambitious Canadian greenhouse gas emission reduction target, and we support a binding international climate agreement with fair and clear targets to keep global average temperature well below a 2°C increase from pre-industrial levels. As Christians who believe in the sacredness and integrity of creation, we too seek to fulfill our role in creation's mending. Among other things, the United Church is sending a delegation to the United Nations Climate Change Negotiations to support Canada resuming a leadership role in the area of climate justice.

We welcome the opportunity for Canada to reclaim a constructive role in the international arena. As Christians who seek to build a commonwealth of peace, justice, and reconciliation, we lift up particular areas of global concern for the United Church and encourage your government to exercise leadership for peace with justice in Israel/Palestine by supporting efforts toward negotiations and an end to the occupation; in the Philippines by pressing for respect for human

rights and an end to extrajudicial killings; and in Colombia by supporting the peace process and ensuring that the annual human rights assessment results in a better situation.

Thank you for your commitment to welcome 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada. Many United Church congregations are preparing to or have expressed interest in welcoming Syrian refugees from other countries. We encourage your government to restore the Interim Federal Health coverage for these and other refugees and to reduce the processing time at all visa posts to facilitate refugees' safe and timely arrival in Canada. We ask you to re-examine the policy of imposing caps on the number of refugees Sponsorship Agreement Holders can sponsor.

We affirm your commitment to ensure low-income Canadians are able to improve their lives. Canada's needs would be well served through a national plan to reduce poverty, cooperating and coordinating with the plans that already exist in every province but one. We share your concern for children and seniors living in poverty. Community and Social Justice Ministries of the United Church work daily to provide much-needed programs and to lift up the voices of those who are impoverished, while the United Church Women's Child Well-Being Initiative seeks to change the policies that bring about child poverty. We look forward to increases in the Canada Child Benefit and the Guaranteed Income Supplement for low-income seniors by 10 percent.

We welcome your commitment to corporate social responsibility through establishing an independent extractive-sector ombudsperson's office. We encourage the government to strengthen this commitment by creating a comprehensive corporate accountability framework that requires Canadian mining companies operating abroad to respect human rights, including Indigenous people's rights, labour rights, and the right of all people to a healthy environment. This framework would also facilitate access to Canadian courts by those alleging harm by Canadian companies.

We also realize that your government will be drafting a law on the sensitive issue of physician-assisted dying. The United Church seeks to deepen our theological understanding of physician-assisted dying and strengthen our pastoral capacities to assist those who are facing end-of-life decisions. We support a greater number of options for these individuals, affirming their moral reasoning and their right and capability to engage with all of the issues with their loved ones, community, and physicians.

We await opportunities to engage you and your government on these issues and others, such as Canada's International Development Assistance, the rights of transgender people, and amending Bill C-51 in the coming days and months. We will also follow up this letter with the appropriate correspondence with your cabinet in the months ahead.

Once again, I offer my congratulations. Members and ministries of the United Church across the country contribute in many ways to making Canada a more compassionate and just place every day. The United Church of Canada looks forward to working collaboratively with your government to do the same. May God bless and strengthen you in the coming days as you offer leadership and hope to the people of Canada.

Sincerely,

The Right Reverend Jordan Cantwell
Moderator
The United Church of Canada