

Native American Believers Gather To Forgive 'White Man' of Injustices

Indian intercessors chose historic Plymouth Rock, Mass., as the site to repent of unforgiveness toward white Americans

Believing that hardness of heart among Native Americans has stopped the gospel from moving through Indian nations, Native believers gathered at historic Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts in September to repent for their peoples' unforgiveness of white Americans for hundreds of years of oppression against them.

The Native American Reconciliation and Thanksgiving service on Sept. 27 brought representatives from more than 20 Indian tribes as well as 39 countries to the spot where Pilgrims seeking religious freedom landed in 1620 and established the first permanent colony in New England.

"I repent!" cried Jay Swallow, a Southern Cheyenne. "I repent for my every turning our back on Your Son, Jesus Christ. Our people turned our backs on the gospel that the white man brought to America. We have used broken treaties and broken promises and so many other excuses. Today, we have come to repent, to start the healing today."

Swallow huddled under the famous Plymouth Rock monument with several other Indians as he prayed. The reconciliation pilgrimage came about because of a dream God gave to Swallow. The gathering has been called the first repentance initiative of this magnitude by Native American Christian leaders.

"These Native leaders have witnessed the resistance of the gospel on their reservations," Swallow said. "They came to stand in the gap for their people, to begin to heal the wounds of things done in the name of Christianity that have wounded their people and caused them to resist the gospel."

Swallow understands the pain his people have endured.

"I have had to deal with 'Indian country,' where suicide is taking our next generation out at a rate that is not acceptable in a country like ours," he said. "I feel that as we submit and humble ourselves to the Creator and repent for building a resistance to the humbly ask Jesus to forgive us, visit our tribes for our children's sake, a major move of God will happen for our tribes that will affect all of America."

Days before the trip, the Native leadership team met for concerted prayer at the Church on the Rock in Oklahoma City, Okla.

"You could really feel the Lord honoring what this team [did] to restore covenant back to this nation. Once covenant is restored, Psalm 91 becomes a reality," national intercessory-prayer leader Chuck Pierce said.

Although the delegates were predominately Indian, the non-Natives among them shared a desire for ministering to Native peoples. U.S. churches do comparatively little missionary work among American Indians. Though more than 90 percent of all Christian mission funds are earmarked for overseas, the 10 percent left for domestic work is given largely to inner-city works.

Moreover, living conditions on many U.S. Indian reservations are at about the same level as those in developing countries. The average life expectancy on reservations is only 43, and more than 75 percent of all reservation families are affected by alcoholism. In some areas, unemployment is close to 80 percent.

“Our Native American leaders not only want to be included in what God is doing in this season but are willing to take their place of authority and responsibility to see America turn back to God,” Swallow continued. After the prayer at Plymouth Rock, the Native leaders took their seats at a historic colonial inn for a Thanksgiving meal with white Christians who were part of the initiative.

Mary Hutchinson at Plymouth Rock, Mass.

For more information, contact the Native American Resource Network, P.O. Box 2097, Elizabeth, CO 80107.