

Turning Away from Judas's Silver

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/turning-away-from-judass-silver>

A call for Christians - and all people living off the ill-gotten gains of mining abuses - to examine their understanding of the “good life “

Reverend Emilie Teresa Smith, of the Anglican Church of Canada, wrote this moving and challenging article for The Living Church, a journal of the U.S. Episcopal Church. It is published in their "Lambeth Conference" issue, and will join the conversations at the large gathering of Bishops in England in August 2022.

Emilie also contributed an article for: **TESTIMONIO: Canadian Mining in the Aftermath of Genocides in Guatemala**. More information: see below.

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By Emilie Teresa Smith, [August 3, 2022](#)

<https://livingchurch.org/2022/08/03/turning-away-from-judass-silver/>



The Rev. Emilie Teresa Smith with community leaders in Azacualpa.

Doña Diadora and Our Christian Duty

*They put their hand to the flinty rock,
And overturn mountains by the roots.
They cut out channels in the rocks,
And their eyes see every precious thing.
But where shall wisdom be found?*

— Job 28:9-12a

I clamp my teeth down to keep them from shaking. If Doña Diadora feels the cold, she says nothing. She pulls her cardigan closer over her worn huipil, the blouse that Guatemalan women weave, then cherish for years. The jump-out colors and vivid patterns record history, cosmology, defiance.

I try not to stare at her damaged — now healed — face. A smudged scar smears over her empty eye socket leading to a closed flap instead of an ear, marking where the bullet went in and out again.

We warm ourselves with sweet coffee that Doña Diadora's daughter has brought in yellow plastic cups. Small wooden chairs cling to the flanks of this bare mountain in San Marcos, western Guatemala. We sit and pray together.

“Lord, look down upon your servants. Give us endurance. Give us victory over those who taunt us, saying, where now is your God?”

A skinny cow nods, then wraps her tongue around a scrap of grass. The air carries a brush of wood smoke from somewhere, though Doña Diadora's house stands lonely in the shaved hills.

No one can make her move: All her neighbors, defeated, have slipped away during the past five years. Doña Diadora alone holds onto her land and her cow. No one can make her move. Not the want-to-be murderers who shot her in the face one midnight, posing as needy travelers. Not the Canadian mining company with all the money in the world.

Across the rocky road, less than a mile away, the great hell pit groans with activity. I have teetered on the edge here, looking down. Men, invisible except as fluorescent yellow dots, their diggers and trucks so small they look like toys in a sandbox, have scraped down in concentric circles, ripping up this dusty earth, spinning it with water and cyanide, extracting its hidden gold, silver, copper, carting these so-called precious things away.

For over 15 years they grind up homes and corn fields, trees and streams. Then they — the employees of Goldcorp Inc. — head home. Nothing is left but contaminated earth, disease, community division, and lost, desperate hopes.

Look — the company declares to those who ask — we built a beautiful clinic! Never mind that no staff are employed there. No medicine or bandages stock the shelves.

I visit San Miguel Ixtahuacán and its neighboring village, Sipacapa, many times. I build lasting friendships. I listen to the community members. I watch as the empty Goldcorp-funded clinic turns to ghostly dust. I observe the poisoned pools of wastewater glowing green. I document the great heaps of tailings that leak acid runoff. I write the thesis for my master's degree in theology (gold mining and the sacredness of land). Goldcorp's Marlin Mine commanded such a massive chunk of earth, I once spotted its recognizable gouge from the air as my plane, heading north, tilted over the volcanoes that form the ridge of Guatemala's back.

Vancouver, home to one especially generous corporate donor

Meanwhile, in my hometown of Vancouver we go to the opera, aquarium, and the summer Shakespeare festival. We seek mental healthcare at a special center for children. We attend vigorous conferences in beautifully appointed facilities.

One name strings through it all, one especially generous corporate donor: Goldcorp Inc.

If we catch that name on a program, or on a wall plaque — if we notice it at all — we certainly don't think of Doña Diadora. We know nothing about her. She is the very least of us.

Gold Fever

Diodora is profiled in this award-winning documentary.

Trailer/Where to view:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruRuRKwpSck>

Goldcorp uses this purchase of community and artistic space to secure our compliance. We respond by naming Goldcorp a good citizen. After all, it supports culture and health.

Also, mining enterprises are the source of secure money. Our pensions, investments, mutual funds, are tangled in its business. We lean on these easy profits, and ignore the cost. Our comfort and our future depends on Goldcorp — we think.

Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you.

Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten.

*Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you,
and it will eat your flesh like fire.*

— Letter of James 5:1-3a

By Easter, 2011, I am living in the highlands of Guatemala. Once I was a student, a friend of various struggles for justice, and now I am a “partner in mission” with the Guatemalan Episcopal Church. I live at ground zero of the genocide perpetrated between 1960 and 1996 against Mayan Indigenous communities — a horror mostly forgotten by the world where, according to the United Nations Human Rights Report, around 250,000 people were murdered by government forces.

Together with my beloved colleague, the Rev. Pascuala Ventura, we create Peace House, a place of encounter and healing. Visitors come from north and south.

United Church of Canada: “We cannot override our fiduciary responsibility”

This Easter we have some special guests: the Rev. Kathryn Anderson, of the United Church of Canada — traveling with the head of that church’s pension fund. Before coming to Peace House, they went up to the mine site in San Marcos. They visited with Doña Diadora, and with Aniceto, Javier, and other leaders of the mining resistance.

Kathryn is working hard to overturn her churches’ pension fund investment in Goldcorp. Hot debate burns back in Canada. Finally Kathryn writes to me: we failed. The church is wedded, inexorably, to its money. “We cannot override our fiduciary responsibility” is its public statement.

Lest we look at the speck in our neighbor’s eye, we — the Anglican Church of Canada — should know that we too are in deep. I ask: is our pension fund banking on this misery? Not in Goldcorp, I am told. I ask about three other Canadian companies engaged in rip and steal in Guatemala. The first and second, no. But the third — Hudbay Minerals Inc. — yes.

A civil court case in Canada seeks damages from Hudbay because of violence at its nickel mine in eastern Guatemala that includes the killing of a community leader and teacher, Adolfo Ich; the maiming of a youth, German Chub Choc; and the gang rape of 11 women by company security officials and state agents.

My pension is tainted with this brush.

*Miserable, with their hopes set on dead things,
are those who give the name ‘gods’
to the works of human hands,
gold and silver . . .
—Wisdom of Solomon 13:10a*

In 2013 the Anglican Church of Canada adopted a new line in our baptismal vow: “Will you safeguard the integrity of God’s creation, and respect, sustain, and renew the life of the Earth?”

To hold to our baptismal vows — to be a follower of the Lord of Life — the time has long come to turn away from half-hidden acts of cruelty and violence in the hopes of securing our own comfort. The fear of scarcity perverts our faith. To act with perfect love is to put Doña Diadora before all things.

The ultimate invitation is to allow our hearts to be radically transformed, to be converted into a way of true love for the world. Doña Diadora in San Marcos; Angelica Choc, widow of Adolfo Ich; and others can show us the way.

Their steadfast stewardship of land and communities are an invitation to those stymied by wealth and so-called privilege to throw off the shackles of fear. To challenge the monsters. To fall into the true everlasting arms of love. To fight everywhere for the preservation of sacred land.

Herein lies our hope for the world.

(The Rev. Emilie Teresa Smith is rector of St. Barnabas' Anglican Church, New Westminster, British Columbia, and co-president of the historic Oscar Romero International Solidarity Network (SICAL-OAR).)

TESTIMONIO

Canadian Mining in the Aftermath of Genocides in Guatemala

Speaking Tour, British Columbia - September 2022

Testimonio has been selected a finalist for the "Jim Deva Prize for Writing That Provokes", one of the annual BC and YUKON Book Prizes. The Book Prize Gala takes place September 24, 2022, in Vancouver. In build-up to the Gala, we announce this speaking tour before and possibly after September 24. Depending on interest and timing, Catherine and Grahame would be co-speakers at public events, or participate separately.

- Interested in hosting events: <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/testimonio-speaking-tour>

Educational Fact-Finding Delegation To Guatemala

Saturday, November 5 – Sunday, November 13, 2022

If you are an educator / writer / journalist, and interested in learning more about the range of issues addressed in TESTIMONIO, please consider joining this trip led by Grahame Russell (Rights Action) and Professor Catherine Nolin (UNBC), editors of the book.

- More information: <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/announcingeducational-fact-finding-delegation-to-guatemala>

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To support land and environmental defender groups and human rights and justice struggles in Honduras and Guatemala – including the community defenders profiled in Emiliee Smith’s article - and to provide emergency (COVID, hurricanes, political repression, etc.) relief funds, make check to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- U.S.: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
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