

Resolution on the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery

Whereas,

We confess with our Native sisters and brothers that the whole of Creation is God's work, that God declares it all as good, and that God's Spirit dwells within it, and whereas

We confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate in human form to show God's love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth, and whereas

We acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas and to their sacred lands and resources by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called a "new world," but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples, and whereas

We recognize that Christian churches were and often remain complicit in that conquest, migration and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate racial prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants, and whereas

The Montana Synod voted in 2010 to adopt an Apology to the Tribes and to present it to the tribes within the territory that we serve, and whereas

We deplore and reject the so-called "doctrine of discovery": the legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect. This principle promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy, and possess simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization.

Therefore, be it resolved:

That the Montana Synod memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, The United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and The Moravian Church,

the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America explicitly and clearly to repudiate the European Christian-derived “doctrine of discovery,” its inherent racism, and its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day, and to acknowledge and repent of its complicity in the evils of racism and colonialism in the Americas, and

That the 2016 Montana Assembly reaffirms its 2010 Apology to the Tribes, and commits to continue our presentation to the 7 tribal communities in the territory of the Montana Synod, and memorializes the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to do the same for all tribal communities in our nation, and requests the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate, and

That the ELCA, with the guidance and advice of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources, in the next triennium, to educate its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in North America, and

That the ELCA Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit, in solidarity with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside, bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, and for increasing partnerships with Native people by congregations and synods in the ELCA.