

RESOLUTION

MONTANA SYNOD ASSEMBLY

May 31-June 2, 2019

Title: “Standing for Racial Justice and Cultural Competency in the Montana Synod”

Whereas: section 6.04.01 of the Montana Synod constitution states, “It is the goal of this synod that 10 percent of the membership of synod assemblies, councils, committees, boards and/or other organizational units be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English”; and

Whereas: the ELCA’s social statement, “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture” (1993), includes statements such as: “When we speak of racism as though it were a matter of personal attitudes only, we underestimate it”; and “We have only begun to realize the complexity of sin, which spreads like an infection through the entire social system”; and “What has been the case is *still* the case: skin color makes a difference and white people benefit from a privileged position”; and

Whereas: in June of 2010, the Montana Synod adopted an *Apology to the Tribes* of Montana that reads, “We ask for forgiveness, forgiveness for what we have done, and what we have failed to do. As a sign of our repentance and a desire to be reconciled, we pledge to walk with our brothers and sisters of the Tribal Nations”; and

Whereas: in June of 2016, the Montana Synod passed a memorial asking the Churchwide Assembly to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, a 15th-century papal bull declaring that any lands that were not populated by Christians were subject to being conquered. This doctrine, embedded into US law in the 19th century, continues to justify the treatment of indigenous people as less than fully human; and

Whereas: in August of 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly passed a resolution repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery, pledging to “practice accompaniment with Native Peoples” into the future, and

Whereas: sections 5.01.A16 and 5.01.B16 declare that the ELCA has committed itself to being ethnically and racially diverse, mandating that each synod submit its goals, strategies, and progress toward its goals to the Church Council and appropriate church offices; and

Whereas: 26 years after “Freed in Christ” was approved, 9 years after the Montana Synod adopted the Apology to the Tribes, and 3 years after the Doctrine of Discovery was repudiated, racial injustice and violence still persist and our congregations remain intertwined in a network of racial disparity; and

Whereas: Scripture calls us, as part of our Christian response, to walk in solidarity with people of color because continuing in silence enables injustice and violence in our communities, our country, and our world; and

Whereas: congregations can be empowered to be a catalyst for addressing issues of racial injustice within their larger communities by engaging in such conversations about racism, racial disparities, and further commitments to racial justice and cultural competency; therefore be it

Resolved: that the 2019 Montana Synod Assembly form a Racial Justice and Cultural Competency Taskforce that will assemble and provide resources, materials, and educational means for teaching cultural competency and the practice of racial accompaniment throughout our synod, meanwhile quantifying the amount of funds needed and the means for raising said funds as ideas are generated; and be it further

Resolved: that each congregation and individual be encouraged to live out their baptismal covenant, finding ways to advocate for racial justice through word and deed; and be it finally

Resolved: that each congregation be invited to forward the name of a congregational liaison to the Racial Justice and Cultural Competency Taskforce by December 31, 2019.

Submitted by: Rev. Stacey Siebrasse and Rev. John Lund

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