

Memorial on the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery

Passed at the 2016 Synod Assembly, Loveland, CO

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 as the church 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 the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European migration to what Europeans called the "new world," but which was already the homeland of many peoples, and we recognize that some Christian churches were, and remain, complicit in that dispossession, and that they helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, the historical "doctrine of discovery" is a legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further established 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, and that this principle promoted 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 European civilization; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to explicitly and clearly repudiate the European-derived "doctrine of discovery" with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members, to

acknowledge and repent of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, and 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 in doing the same; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to offer a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and "civilization," requesting 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 be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources in the next triennium, to help 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 be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA Domestic Mission unit 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, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

Memorial Passed at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly, New Orleans, LA

To receive with gratitude memorials from the Alaska, Northwest Washington, Montana, Southwest California, Rocky Mountain, Eastern North Dakota, South Dakota, Minneapolis Area, Saint Paul Area, Arkansas-Oklahoma, Northwest Wisconsin, East-Central Wisconsin, Indiana-Kentucky, Upstate New York, Northwestern Pennsylvania, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., North Carolina and Southeastern synods regarding the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery;

To recommend the ELCA explicitly and clearly repudiate the European-derived doctrine of discovery with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members, acknowledging and repenting of this church's complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas;

To offer a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity;

To encourage the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, providing appropriate worship resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at such times and places as are appropriate;

To direct the Domestic Mission unit, together with the American Indian and Alaska Native community and ecumenical partners, to develop resources to educate members of the ELCA and the wider community about the doctrine of discovery and its consequences for Native peoples;

To direct the Domestic Mission unit to develop a strategy with the American Indian and Alaska Native community during the next triennium to be referred to the Church Council for action, including a mechanism to grow the Native American Ministry Fund of the ELCA; and

To affirm that this church will eliminate the doctrine of discovery from its contemporary rhetoric and programs, electing to practice accompaniment with Native peoples instead of a missionary endeavor to them, allowing these partnerships to mutually enrich indigenous communities and the ministries of the ELCA.