

DISMANTLING THE DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY



A JOURNEY TOWARD TRANSFORMATION
ROCKY MOUNTAIN SYNOD TOOLKIT

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PHOTO CREDIT

Photos were taken by Dale Horkey, Photoprose PhotoGraphics

BACKGROUND

The Doctrine of Discovery was a set of royal and papal declarations from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that created the rationale for European Christians to seize the lands of the Western hemisphere and displace the peoples who had inhabited them for millennia. These actions that were set in motion by the Doctrine of Discovery led to the deaths of millions of people who had called these lands "home" long before Europeans set foot on them.

This toolkit is to support the commitments made by the 2016 Rocky Mountain Synod and Churchwide Assemblies, and to continue work of the 2018 Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly to deepen our repudiation of this doctrine and work toward greater justice and conciliation.



OVERVIEW

The resources in this toolkit are intended to be customized by your community to fit your context. There are suggestions for which modules may connect well with one another, but you are encouraged to pick and choose the sessions your community is most interested in, after you have shown or made available the opening video.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Creating a common starting point will be helpful in engaging this conversation. The introductory video (www.vimeo.com/rmselca) gives an overview of the Doctrine as well as the history of this work in the Rocky Mountain Synod. We encourage this video as a primer before engaging any of the modules in this toolkit.

NEXT STEPS

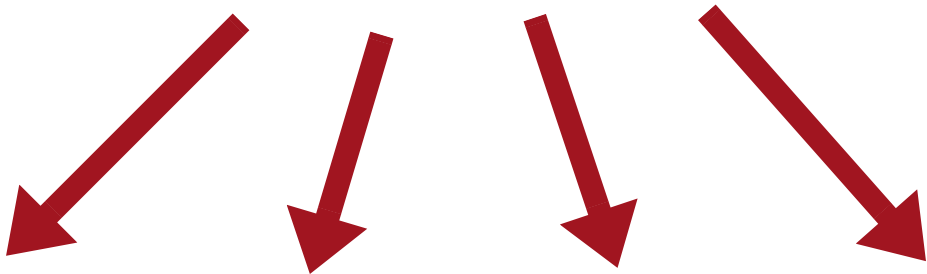
A summary of each module is included in this toolkit. The full curriculum is available on the RMS Website.

- Module 1: Looking at the Land: A Toolkit for Exploration
- Module 2: Sacred Stories: Community Panel
- Module 3: Exploring our Sacred Space
- Module 4: Advent Study: The four directions and the Magnificat

DESIGN OF THE TOOLKIT

Introduction to The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery (video and discussion)

Begin here and then proceed to any of the four options below



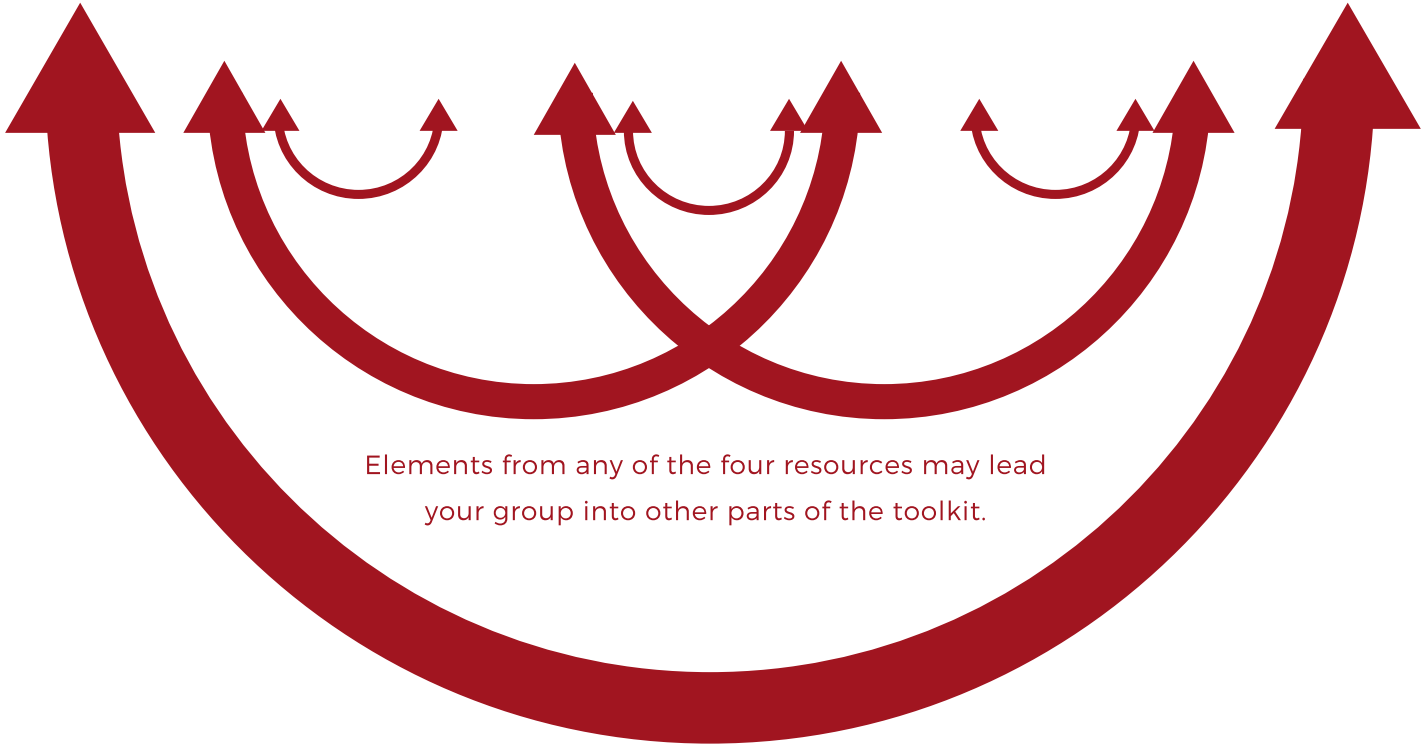
Looking at the Land
Introductory video
Voices of the People:
Land

Follow-up with four
optional studies
A. What can we learn
from Abraham?
B. A map of my life
C. Holy places in my
personal landscape
D. The kingdom
within

Community Panel
Host a community
panel with Native
Americans from your
area, followed by a
discussion and
optional viewing and
discussion of video
Voices of the People:
Identity.

Our Sacred Space
Carry out a project to
discover the history of
the land upon which
your congregation's
property now stands
and how it relates to
the indigenous
peoples who once
lived there.

Advent Study
Four sessions
designed for the
weeks of Advent invite
you to hear Mary's
song of hope, The
Magnificat, as a design
for a new way to seek
justice with our Native
American sisters and
brothers.



Elements from any of the four resources may lead
your group into other parts of the toolkit.

MODULE 1

LOOKING AT THE LAND: A TOOLKIT FOR EXPLORATION

INTRODUCTORY SESSION

View the video [Voices of the People: Land](https://www.vimeo.com/rmselca) (www.vimeo.com/rmselca). This short documentary was one of two videos featured at the 2018 RMS Synod Assembly. The video features three individuals' stories: A. Paul Ortega and Katrina Ortega (Mescalero Apache) and Dr. Lee Francis (Pueblo of Laguna). We hear their thoughts on the way Native Americans view and understand land. Discussion questions are provided to guide conversation following the video.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

There are four additional resources in this section of the toolkit. These could serve as additional sessions for this study. Your group can decide which of the sessions they want to explore, and what order they want to consider these topics.

[What Can We Learn from Abraham?](#)

By surveying passages from Genesis 12–25, we will compare and contrast the Abrahamic epic as a radical alternative to the convictions that created and shaped the Doctrine of Discovery. We will discuss how this different style of relationship to the land might open contemporary Christians to think in new ways about their stewardship of land and their relationship to Native Americans who were violated by the Doctrine of Discovery.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (CONT.)

A Map of My Life

This is an exercise for converting your personal biography into a “map.” With this life map you will be invited to explore and consider your relationship to the geography—lands and places—where your story has taken place. How has the land shaped your life story?

Holy places in my personal landscape

In this project, you will be invited to explore places and landscapes that have had special meaning in your life. You will be asked to consider what makes a place “different,” “special,” or “holy”; discussion in the group may help you see how people differ in their understanding and relationship to land. Your group will be invited to discuss quotes from a variety of Native Americans expressing their understanding of land. Finally, you will be asked to think about how your experiences are similar and different from those of Native Americans.

The Kingdom Within

Much of Jesus’ ministry centered on his proclamation of “the kingdom of God.” We will explore the concept of a kingdom, how it shaped Israel’s history, and how it relates both to the Doctrine of Discovery and our modern understandings about property. Then, we will reflect on Jesus’ insistence that “the kingdom of God is within/among you,” and consider how Jesus’ teaching stands in deep contrast with the kingdom politics that led to Jesus’ crucifixion. What does it mean to “internalize” concepts of “territory”? We will use the Sermon on the Mount as an example of what this “interior kingdom” might look like. And finally, we will consider how these biblical insights might offer Christians a new and better place from which we can discuss matters of justice with Native American sisters and brothers.

MODULE 2

SACRED STORIES: COMMUNITY PANEL

GOAL

To offer guidelines for congregations to set-up a listening panel to hear and hold the stories of Native neighbors within their community sacredly. Additionally, to weave tenets of Group Spiritual Direction into the panel discussion. The panel discussion will be a timed experience, with a moderator and moments for silence and prayer (ex. 1 minute). More detailed guidance on process and planning can be found on the Rocky Mountain Synod website.

PROCESS

- Confirm panel's guiding questions
- Recruit participants for the panel (3-5 persons)
- Select a moderator
- Create the sacred space in which to receive participant's stories
- Closing reflection

FOLLOW-UP (OPTIONAL)

View the video, *Voices of the People: Identity* (www.vimeo.org/rmselca). Discussion questions are provided to guide the conversation.

MODULE 3

EXPLORING OUR SACRED SPACES

BACKGROUND

The spaces and places we gather as congregations and ministries are often referred to as “sacred spaces.” These spaces are set apart as places we gather to be in communion with God and with one another. Our sacred spaces often hold deep meaning because of the significant life events, memories created, relationships built, and faith formed within those walls. Our buildings and surrounding property hold our memories and stories, and the stories of those saints who have gone before us. However, our land was sacred and has histories and stories from long before it was designated to be a worshipping community.

We as the Rocky Mountain Synod have committed to continue learning about and deepening our repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery. One tool to encourage our reflection is to learn the history and stories of the peoples who lived on this land throughout the centuries.

CREATING A VISUAL HISTORY OF YOUR LAND

1. Learning the beginning story
2. Development and white settlement
3. The story of the congregation
4. Putting it all together

MODULE 4

ADVENT STUDY: THE FOUR DIRECTIONS AND THE MAGNIFICAT

BACKGROUND

This curriculum was created by the Episcopal Church following their repudiation of the Doctrine in 2009. While any session can be used on its own, the four sessions are designed for the weeks of Advent to invite you to hear Mary's song of hope, The Magnificat, as a design for a new way to seek justice with our Native American neighbors.

"As many people may have not known that Hannah's Lament and Thanksgiving are stories and prayers behind the Magnificat, Mary's Thanksgiving, many people are also unaware of the first stories and ways of the First Peoples of North America. For this reason, we are invited to take a brief journey during Advent with four Holy Women: White Buffalo Calf Woman; The Virgin of Guadalupe; Hannah, the Mother of Samuel; Mary, the Mother of Jesus. We bring these women into our reflections on Four Directions and Magnificat, so that we might learn from all of them in order to see more fully how God is 'God of all people and every tribe, through whom all people are related; Call[ing] us to the kinship of all [God's] people.' "

-from Four Directions and The Magnificat, Background

www.episcopalchurch.org

SESSIONS

Session 1: Holy Woman: White Buffalo Calf Woman, Lakota

Summary: We all use stories to orient ourselves as to who and where we are in the world.

Text: Revelation 12: 1-6

Activity: Label the Advent Wreath

Session 2: Holy Woman: Virgin of Guadalupe, "Mother of the Americas"

Summary: Loss of connection to stories and images = loss of direction and identity

Text: Isaiah 40

Activity: Identify our stories of orientation

Session 3: Holy Woman: Hannah, Mother of Samuel

Summary: Relationship with God and others requires awareness of our own hungers & desires offered in hope and trust to God

Text: 1 Sam 1:9-20 & 2:1-10

Activity: Being hungry

Session 4: Holy Woman: Mary, Mother of Jesus

Summary: Looking at Conquest through the lens of Magnificat

Text: Luke 1:46-55

Activity: Giving ourselves away



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 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,

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.

2016 Rocky Mountain Synod Memorial to the Churchwide Assembly



Rocky Mountain Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.