

## Resolution to Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery

**Resolved**, that the 135<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Episcopal Church in Western Oregon affirms the General Convention Resolution [2009-D035](#) in repudiating and renouncing the Doctrine of Discovery as fundamentally opposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and our understanding of the inherent rights that individuals and peoples have received from God. This doctrine, which originated with 1452 papal bull *Dum Diversas*, issued by Pope Nicolas to King Alfonso V of Portugal and was later embraced by King Henry VII in 1496, held that Christian sovereigns and their representative explorers could assert dominion and title over non-Christian lands with the full blessing and sanction of the Church. It continues to be invoked, in only slightly modified form, in court cases and in the many destructive policies of governments and other institutions of the modern nation-state that lead to the colonizing dispossession of the lands of Indigenous peoples and the disruption of their way of life; and be it further

**Resolved**, that the 135<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Episcopal Church in Western Oregon repudiates the Doctrine of Discovery as fundamentally opposed to the concept of each person bearing the image of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the human dignity given to every person by God; and be it further

**Resolved**, that we, as members of the Episcopal Church in Western Oregon, name and confess our historical and present participation in and benefit from the displacement of Indigenous peoples throughout Western Oregon and the suppression and erasure of indigenous culture, language, and traditions and subsequent trauma that still affects Indigenous people today. We lament the devastating results of colonial and settler mentality that continue to oppress Indigenous peoples; and be further resolved,

**Resolved**, that we continue to dedicate ourselves to the work of reparation, reconciliation, and healing through the support of Indigenous cultural revitalization, tribal sovereignty, land and habitat restoration, and dismantling racism training and formation in our Diocese. We commit to listen and watch for new permutations of racist ideologies; and be it further

**Resolved**, that as part of our commitment and intentional relationships with the Indigenous peoples, the 135<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Episcopal Church in Western Oregon affirms General Convention Resolution [2022-C072](#) in urging all congregations and Diocesan institutions to implement Land Acknowledgment liturgies and prayers to begin any public meetings or worship and to utilize the [resource](#) offered by the Indigenous Ministries of The Episcopal Church that outlines the followings to be reflected in the Land Acknowledgment:

- Truth-telling about what happened in the indigenous homeland years ago and how it affects the way they live today.
- A recognition of the Indigenous tribal people whose home was the land we now occupy. By doing so we remember them and begin to ask questions about what happened to them and why.
- A confession of how our church contributed to, or was complicit in, the process of colonization of the Indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere. An admission that while we are not responsible for what our ancestors did in the past, we are responsible for what we

do today, knowing that the colonization process is still in place, and the effects of it are still felt by Indigenous people.

- An invitation to right relationship with Indigenous tribal people, particularly if the people still reside in the region. A recognition that Indigenous people currently live in all areas of this country, even if we do not see them. They are still here.
- A call to stand with Indigenous people in their myriad struggles to recover from the effects of genocide and enforced assimilation into the dominant society.
- An honoring of Indigenous people for their resilience, faithfulness, wisdom, and respect for the Earth and all of creation. A call to us to learn from their example.

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**Endorsed by:**

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**Explanation:**

As people who freely live and work on the lands of Western Oregon, whose original inhabitants were deprived of those all-encompassing benefits nearly 200 years ago, we, as Episcopalians, are compelled to respond. We are mindful of many different Christian denominational responses to the Doctrine of Discovery and subsequent edicts resulting from its adoption and must now look at the work we have begun to do and expand our vision.

We are called by the wider Episcopal Church to work for the full inclusion of Indigenous people in the life, work, and leadership of the Church and we must acknowledge and work to repair the long-term damage done to our Indigenous siblings. The violence and damage through the centuries were sanctioned by the Christian Doctrine of Discovery and the institutions fostered by its adoption.<sup>1</sup>

The Doctrine of Discovery is defined as “the idea that Christians enjoy the moral and legal right based solely on their religious identity to invade and seize Indigenous lands and to dominate Indigenous peoples.”<sup>2</sup> We are most recently reacquainted with the atrocities practiced in the boarding schools (hereafter referred to as assimilation camps) against the most vulnerable and innocent populations of young children.<sup>3</sup> We therefore propose a resolution to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery. In this resolution, we propose to educate ourselves, our churches, and our communities and provide leadership in efforts of reconciliation.<sup>4</sup> We hereby begin the process of, as a Diocese of Acknowledgment and apology for our complicity in the cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples.<sup>5</sup>

1. "Statement on the Doctrine of Discovery and Its Enduring Impact on Indigenous Peoples." <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/statement-on-the-doctrine-ofdiscovery>
2. "Cultural genocide" and Native American children. Equal Justice Initiative. (2019, November 11). <https://eji.org/news/history-racial-injustice-cultural-genocide/>.
3. Ferguson, Tom. "We Are Pontius Pilate: Council of Churches, February 17, 2012." <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/statement-on-the-doctrine-ofdiscovery>
4. "Cultural genocide" and Native American children. Equal Justice Initiative. (2019, November 11). <https://eji.org/news/history-racial-injustice-cultural-genocide/>.
5. Ferguson, Tom. "We Are Pontius Pilate: Episcopal Church and Indian Boarding Schools." Crusty Old Dean, January, 1970. <http://crustyoldean.blogspot.com/>.