

Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery Alaska Synod (1A) [2016]

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 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 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 prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; 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 2016 Alaska Synod Assembly explicitly and clearly repudiates the European Christian-derived "doctrine of discovery" with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day, acknowledges and repents of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, and memorializes the 2016 ELCA 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 in doing the same; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Alaska Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join it in offering herewith 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 Alaska 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 Alaska 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.