

GA-1722
(Sense-of-the-Assembly)

**REPUDIATION OF THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY:
A CALL TO EDUCATION AND ACTION, AND SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS
VOICES IN THE WITNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)**

WHEREAS, Luke 4:16-21(NRSV) testifies to the 5-fold mission of Jesus Christ to “bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and let the oppressed go free, and proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” thereby calling Jesus’ disciples to oppose genocide, oppression, dehumanization, and the removal of Peoples from ancestral lands; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Doctrine of Discovery (CDoD) is a body of work beginning in the 15th century with a series of papal bulls and theological statements justifying the Age of Discovery and the colonization, conquest, subjugation of lands and peoples around the world^[i]; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Doctrine of Discovery continues to facilitate genocide, oppression, dehumanization, and the removal of Peoples from ancestral lands in the United States, Canada and globally; and

WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court legally adopted the Doctrine of Discovery in the 1823 landmark decision of *Johnson V. McIntosh*^[i]; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (DOC) has historically and consistently claimed an identity of a westward movement church on the North American Landscape; and

WHEREAS, the DOC recognizes its identity, polity, congregations, and theology have benefited from the CDoD and its legal/theological support of seizing indigenous lands and human rights abuses of indigenous peoples and further recognizes North American DOC congregations reside on land immorally acquired from Indigenous North American Tribes and Bands; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) under the guise of civilization and Christianization, engaged in programmatic assimilation, discrimination, subjugation, and desecration of Indigenous American Tribes and Bands (e.g., American Tepee Christian Mission—*also known as Yakama Christian Mission*); and

WHEREAS, cultural, communal, and individual damage experienced by American Indians, Alaska Natives and First Nations people are disproportionate in the United States and Canada^[ii]; and

WHEREAS, governmental and economic institutions lack the will to dismantle the CDoD, and the Church is the one institution who can clearly speak against this unjust CDoD system, as it has in the past against slavery and apartheid; and

WHEREAS, the DOC has recognized disproportionate hurt inflicted upon People of Color and oppressed Creation with Sense of the Assembly Resolutions[iiii]; and

WHEREAS, many of our ecumenical partners have already repudiated and renounced the CDOD [iv]; and

WHEREAS, Robert Brock, Northwest Regional Minister, began a process of relational change between the DOC, American Indians, and First Nation peoples in 1987 by signing *A Public Declaration* of formal apology for the Northwest Christian Church's participation in the destruction of Native American spiritual practices;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting July 8-12, 2017, in Indianapolis, Indiana, condemns and repudiates the Christian Doctrine of Discovery; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly encourages the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to expose and remove denominational structure which benefits from the Doctrine of Discovery; work toward eliminating the CDoD as a means to subjugate peoples, property, and land; develop resources for study; enter into self-examination; seek to recognize and understand the historical trauma of indigenous people and to recognize DOC's participation in the continuing effects of that trauma; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly urges the Office of General Minister and President, National Convocation, Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries, North American Pacific/Asian Disciples, Global Ministries and Disciples Home Missions:[v], in consultation with Yakama Christian Mission's Advocate for Indigenous Justice, Reconciliation Ministry, and the Moderator(s) of ad hoc Landscape Mending Council to learn where their organization/entity/structure have benefited from the CDoD *and* assist Regions and Congregations in documenting and explaining the effects of the CDoD in the life of the Church; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly encourage the leaders of the church's racial/ethnic constituencies to insist on an indigenous voice in all General Church and Office of General Minister and President meetings/conferences/etc., where leaders of the ethnic constituencies are invited; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly encourages the church's educational affiliates (e.g., Colleges, Universities, Seminaries) to educate students on the Christian Doctrine of Discovery, how the CDoD influenced past and current DOC polity and theology, support instructors to research and write on how the

Christian Doctrine of Discovery has benefited and/or damaged their area of expertise and recruit and provide scholarships to Native people; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly urges all Regions and congregations to develop and nurture relationships with the American Indian, Alaska Natives, or First Nation people of the place where they reside; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly encourages congregations to act and urge their State to offer a free curriculum about the history, culture, and government of federally recognized Indian Tribes within State boundaries to State school districts, and require districts to incorporate the curricula of their nearest Tribe(s) into their schools' curriculum [vi].

Notes:

[i] Find educational information on the Doctrine of Discovery at Yakama Christian Mission, <http://wp.me/P6DjFC-2j>.

[ii] US incarceration rates for American Indians (<https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/aic.pdf> and https://www.prisonpolicy.org/graphs/2010percent/US_American_Indian_2010.html), suicide among American Indian/Alaska Native adolescents and young adults ages 15 to 34 is 1.5 times higher than the national average (<https://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/Suicide-DataSheet-a.pdf>), American Indian students are disproportionately disciplined (https://archive.uneews.utah.edu/news_releases/american-indians-disproportionately-disciplined-at-school-compared-to-white-students-new-university-of-utah-research-shows/)

[iii] GA 1323: Incarceration, Justice and Restoration in the United States; GA 1324: Reflection on Christian Theology and Polity, the Christian Doctrine of Discovery, and the Indigenous Voice; GA 1518: Black Lives Matter: A Movement for All; GA 1519: Commemorating 100 Years Since the Armenian Genocide; GA 1520: Concerning Environmental Racism; 0313 Ending Violence Against Women—an essay on Native Human Trafficking can be found at: <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/politics/trafficking-in-native-communities/>.

[iv] Episcopal Church, Unitarian Universalist Association, United Church of Christ, New England Yearly Meeting-of Friends-Quakers, United Methodist Church, Anglican Church, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), World Council of Churches.

[v] Refugee & Immigration Ministries, Green Chalice, Disciples Women, and Disciples Men, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Week of Compassion, National Benevolent Association, Pension Fund, Hope Partnership, Higher Education and Leadership Ministries, Disciples Church Extension Fund, Council on Christian Unity, Christian Church Foundation, Christian Board of Publication, College of Regional Ministers,

Disciples Center for Public Witness, Disciples Peace Fellowship, European Evangelistic Society, National City Christian Church Foundation, and the United Christian Missionary Society.

[vi] Washington State adopted such an amendment, RCW 28A.320.170, which, can be found at <http://app.leg.wa.gov/Rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.320.170>.

Yakama Christian Mission, White Swan, Washington
Marshall Avenue Christian Church, Mattoon, Illinois
Westlake Christian Church, Westlake, Ohio
Illiopolis Christian Church, Illiopolis, Illinois
Heights Christian Church, Shaker Heights, Ohio
Disciples Christian Church, Owasso, Oklahoma
Christian Church in Ohio (Regional)
United Christian Church, Levittown, Pennsylvania
Firestone Park Christian Church, Akron, Ohio
First Christian in Bowling Green, Ohio
First Christian/Presbyterian Church, Pryor, Oklahoma
First Christian Church, Concord, California
First Christian Church, Clarkston, Washington
First Christian Church, Vallejo, California
First Christian Church, Puyallup, WA
Canoe Camp Church of Christ, Mansfield, Pennsylvania
University Christian Church (DOC), San Diego, California
First Christian Church of Eugene, Oregon
Downtown Disciples, Des Moines, Iowa
University Christian Church, Fort Worth, Texas
First Christian Church (DOC), Minneapolis, Minnesota
University Christian Church, Seattle, Washington
Pine Valley Christian Church (DOC), Wichita, Kansas
Rock Bridge Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri
First Christian Church, Redding, California
Nixa Christian Church, Nixa, Missouri

Supporters and Advocates:

Christian Church in Illinois & Wisconsin Regional Council
Christian Church in Illinois & Wisconsin Pro-Reconciliation & Anti-Racism Team
GLAD Alliance
Ohio Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation Commission
Disciples Justice Action Network
Blue Eagle Wellbriety Ministry

**The General Board recommends that the General Assembly
ADOPT GA-1722. (Discussion time: 24 minutes)**