

The Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon

Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery & Steps Toward Conciliation

Preamble

As people who freely live and work on the lands of Eastern 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 Church¹ and 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.

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.”² We are most recently reacquainted with the atrocities practiced in the boarding schools (hereafter referred to as assimilation camps³) against the most vulnerable and innocent populations of young children. 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 conciliation. We here begin the process of acknowledgement and apology for our complicity in the cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples.⁴

¹ “The Acts of Convention.” Acts of Convention: Resolution # 2009-D035. Accessed July 22, 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/2pawjkyd>.

² “Statement on the Doctrine of Discovery and Its Enduring Impact on Indigenous Peoples.” World Council of Churches, February 17, 2012. <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/statement-on-the-doctrine-of-discovery-and-its-enduring-impact-on-indigenous-peoples>.

³ “*Cultural genocide*” and *Native American children*. Equal Justice Initiative. (2019, November 11). <https://eji.org/news/history-racial-injustice-cultural-genocide/>.

⁴ Ferguson, Tom. “We Are Pontius Pilate: Episcopal Church and Indian Boarding Schools.” Crusty Old Dean, January 1, 1970. <http://crustyoldean.blogspot.com/>.

Land Acknowledgement

The Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon occupies and works from the traditional, ancestral, and unceded⁵ lands of the Umatilla, Sahaptians, Cayuse, Nez Perce, Walla Walla, Paiute, Shoshone, Klamath, Modoc, Molalla, Hood River, Moses Columbia, Wasco, and Wishram tribes.⁶ Some of these bands were absorbed into federally recognized tribes, while some remain unrecognized. The federally recognized tribes of Eastern Oregon include: Burns Paiute Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Indian Reservation, Fort McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone Tribe, and the Klamath Tribes.

The Native people of this region nurture and harvest first foods⁷, camp as part of their seasonal rounds, and gently care for the eco-systems of this region today, as they have done for thousands of years.⁸

Resolution

Approved by Diocesan Council August 2022

Resolved, that the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon repudiates the Doctrine of Discovery as fundamentally opposed to the concept of *imago dei*,⁹ the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the human dignity given to every person by God.

Resolved, that we, as members of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon, name and confess our historical and present participation in and benefit from the displacement of Indigenous peoples throughout Eastern Oregon and the suppression of culture, language, and traditions and subsequent trauma that still affects Indigenous people

⁵ "A Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgment." Native Governance Center, May 14, 2020. <https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>. We say "traditional" to recognize how the land was traditionally used. We say "ancestral" to recognize that the land is handed down from generation to generation. We say "unceded" to recognize that the land was stolen and not turned over by way of treaty.

⁶ "Native American Tribes of Oregon." Oregon Indian Tribes and Languages. Accessed July 22, 2021. <http://www.native-languages.org/oregon.htm>.

⁷ "Plant Guide." USDA Plants Database. Accessed July 22, 2021. <https://plants.usda.gov/home>. First foods are species that Indigenous peoples have relied on for generations for substance, medicines and cultural and spiritual ceremonies. Some first foods of Eastern Oregon include: *Camassia quamash* (Common Camas), *Sagittaria latifolia* (Wapato or Duck Potato), *Prunus virginiana* (Chokecherry), *Ribes aureum* (Golden Currant), *Vaccinium scoparium* (Huckleberry) and *Sambucus nigra* (Elderberry).

⁸ "A Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgement." Intentionally present tense.

⁹ "The Inclusive Bible." Essay. In *The Inclusive Bible: the First Egalitarian Translation*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2009. *Imago dei*: the image of God, the recognition that each person bears the image of God in themselves by virtue of their creation and birth. *Humankind was created as God's reflection: in the divine image God created them; female and male, God made them.* Genesis 1:27

today. We lament the devastating results of colonial and settler mentality that continue to oppress native peoples.

Resolved, that we continue to dedicate ourselves to the work of reversal, reconciliation, and healing through the support of Indigenous cultural revitalization, tribal sovereignty¹⁰, land and habitat restoration, and racial justice training in our Diocese. We commit to listen and watch for new permutations of racist ideologies. We commit to using a foundational curriculum based particularly around the interaction between and intersection with Indigenous and non-native peoples. We stress the importance of each region developing an individualized augmentation to the curriculum.

Resolved, that we commit to intentional relationships with Indigenous leaders in strengthening and reawakening cultural ways, language, arts and crafts, horsemanship, and first food camps, particularly through our shared resource of Ascension School Camp and Conference Center.¹¹ In response to the horrific traumas inflicted on children and families through assimilation camps, we commit financial resources and assets to assist for culture camps, events, and other revitalization efforts.

Resolved, that we commit to faithfully steward land and habitat with humble response to Indigenous guidance and teaching for the care of Creation.¹²

Resolved, that in order that this resolution not fade, we ask the Bishop and Diocesan Council to create a commission to continue the work of this Resolution.

¹⁰ Discussions around tribal sovereignty are often focused around reservation boundaries. We recognize that treaties preserve the right to maintain cultural lifeways and access to first foods beyond reservation boundaries.

¹¹ "Naknuwithlama Tiichamna." Facebook. Accessed July 22, 2021.

<https://www.facebook.com/naknuwithlamatiichamna>. We are working with Naknuwithlama Tiichamna and local indigenous leaders to enhance and change our relationship with and outlook on land.

¹² *The Inclusive Bible: the First Egalitarian Translation*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. *God blessed [the first male and female] and said, "Bear fruit, increase your numbers, and fill the earth – and be responsible for it!"* Genesis 1:28

Appendix

The Doctrine of Discovery and its Ongoing Impact

The roots of this Doctrine may be found in the 1452 papal bull¹³ *Dum Diversas*, issued by Pope Nicolas to King Alfonso V of Portugal, authorizing him to “capture, vanquish, subdue the Saracens, pagans, and other enemies of Christ”¹⁴, to “put them into perpetual slavery,” and “take all their possessions and property.” This resulted in the initial trafficking of slaves and the acclamation of land along the west coast of the African continent. This also initiated genocidal conquest in the name of Christian discovery.¹⁵

In 1493, Pope Alexander VI issued the *Inter Caetera* bull at the request of King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile, in which he authorized Spain and Portugal to colonize the Americas and convert and enslave the Native peoples as subjects. It also justified the enslavement of Africans. “And we make, appoint, and depute you and your said heirs and successors lords of them with full and free power, authority, and jurisdiction of every kind...”¹⁶ This edict retroactively sanctioned the “discovery” of Guanahani Island (the Bahamas) by Cristoforo Columbus in 1492, and the conquest of its Indigenous peoples, as well as the other islands and peoples of the Caribbean.

The Doctrine of Discovery was embraced by the monarch of England, King Henry VII, in the early 1500s. The philosophy of discovery and dominance was affirmed in his patent to John Cabot and his sons which permitted them to investigate, claim, and possess any new lands as long as they did not intrude on Spanish or Portuguese territories.¹⁷ Although prior to the reformation, this established a direct link between the papal bulls and the English people whose monarch would become the head of the Church of England. No English monarch has repudiated Henry VII’s patent to Cabot. This patent

¹³ Prior to the 1700s, the Pope in Rome would issue an edict, quite formal and solemn, to express its teachings, especially ones considered infallible. After that, the teachings were issued in letters to local bishops in a more informal, pastoral style, even if still in Latin.

¹⁴ “Saracen.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, June 9, 2021. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saracen>. Saracens = Arabs/Muslims

¹⁵ Charles, Mark, and Soong-Chan Rah. *Unsettling Truths: the Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*. IVP, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019.

¹⁶ “The Pope Asserts Rights to Colonize, Convert, and Enslave - Timeline - Native Voices.” U.S. National Library of Medicine. National Institutes of Health. Accessed July 22, 2021. <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/nativevoices/timeline/171.html>.

¹⁷ “Patent Granted by King Henry VII to John Cabot and His SONS, March 1496.” *Patent Granted by King Henry VII to John Cabot*. Accessed July 30, 2021. <https://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/exploration/1496-cabot-patent.php>.

was quoted by Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall to justify ruling in *Johnson vs. McIntosh* in 1823 which denied native inhabitants title rights to land.¹⁸

The Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, 1776. The familiar statement within this foundational document states, “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal” and yet, just a few lines after Native people are referred to as “merciless Indian savages” and have subsequently been denied basic human rights.¹⁹ The Doctrine of Discovery went on to be further expressed in the concept of Manifest Destiny, the idea that expansion to the Pacific was the young nation’s right, where title to the land lay with its discoverer. All along its western border, the U.S. pressed for more land to accommodate the expanding nation. As one of the largest land acquisitions, the Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the United States and rapidly expanded and weaponized the government’s persecution of Native Americans over their right to live on and care for their land. Throughout the nation’s history, the U.S. had used the term *Indian Territory* to talk about land that was still under the control of Native peoples. “Indian Territory” moved farther west as the U.S. frontier pushed westward. Even in the east, the Indigenous peoples were not safe – in 1830 President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, authorizing the Army to force Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole tribes out of Georgia and surrounding states. This set the stage for the Cherokee Trail of Tears and other forced relocation marches.

The massive emigration on The Oregon Trail from the 1840s to 1870s devastated the environment with overgrazing, water pollution, and reduction in wildlife and first food sources. The introduction of diseases greatly reduced Native populations, as well as those of settlers.²⁰ By 1890, Native population fell to an all-time low. The 1890 census records 237,196 Native people—a decrease of approximately 95 percent from a population in 1491 that some historians estimate at more than 100 million.²¹

As the Native Americans were moved from their ancestral lands, their cultures were further attacked by the formation of assimilation camps, often called “Indian Residential Schools”. Established in the United States during the early 19th century, their primary objective was the “civilizing” or assimilation of Native American children and youth into an Anglo culture. This required the children to give up the language and religion of their birth and subjected them to the repeated disparagement of their own culture. By 1898,

¹⁸ “Johnson and Graham’s Lessee v. McIntosh.” Accessed July 30, 2021. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1789-1850/21us543>.

¹⁹ “The Declaration of Independence.” Constitution Facts - Official U.S. Constitution Website. Accessed July 31, 2021. <https://www.constitutionfacts.com/us-declaration-of-independence/read-the-declaration/>.

²⁰ Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation CTUIR. “Brief History of CTUIR.” CTUIR. Accessed July 22, 2021. <https://ctuir.org/about/brief-history-of-ctuir/>.

²¹ U.S. National Library of Medicine. www.nlm.nih.gov/nativevoices/timeline/379.html

epidemics that broke out in the schools made parents afraid to enroll their children. In response, and with perhaps the best intent but the most misguided action, the Board of Indian Affairs acted. “On this account the new education of American Indians as it has been founded in recent years by devoted men and women undertakes to solve the problem of civilizing them by a radical system of education not merely in books, nor merely in religious ceremonies, but in matters of clothing and personal cleanliness, **matters of dietary** and especially in habits of industry.” — Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas Jefferson Morgan.²²

In Oregon, there were at least nine of these assimilation camps: the Chemawa Indian School in Salem²³, the Grand Ronde Agency School in Grand Ronde, the Indian Manual Labor Training School in Willamette, two Klamath Agency Schools in Klamath Falls, the Siletz Agency School in Tillamook, the Umatilla Agency School in Pendleton, and two Warm Springs Agency Schools in Warm Springs.²⁴ Many more were established by Christian churches and remain largely undocumented.

A Note Concerning Reparations

Our understanding of reparations is **walking together in justice**. This does *not* necessarily require money or return of land. The root word of the reparation is “repair”. This means to mend, put back together or in order, return to sound, good or complete condition. We are referring to this true use of the word and not necessarily the historical use inferring compensation.

Biblical Foundation for Repudiation & Restoration

The idea that one nation or race of people has a priority in the affections of God is a false one, for in the Hebrew scriptures we read:

When that time comes, Jerusalem will be called Throne of God. AIP²⁵ the

²² (emphasis added) The introduction of non-Native foods often backfired, as when the Office of Indian Affairs issued rules for food service at off-reservation boarding schools: “good, healthful, and well-cooked food should be supplied in abundance.” Because the prevailing medical opinions emphasized the importance of milk and other dairy products, schools served them to students as a means of preventing tuberculosis. This policy miscarried because many American Indians are lactose intolerant—unable to digest lactose, a sugar in dairy products. National Institutes of Health. (n.d.). “Milk Served to Indian Students to Ward off Tuberculosis - Timeline - Native Voices.” U.S. National Library of Medicine. National Institutes of Health. Accessed July 31, 2021. <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/nativevoices/timeline/651.html>.

²³ The Chemawa Indian School still exists, serving the ninth through twelfth grades in partnership with Willamette University. “CHEMAWA Indian School.” Chemawa Indian School. Accessed August 4, 2021. <https://chemawa.bie.edu/>. Wikimedia Foundation. (2021, August 6). *Chemawa Indian School*. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chemawa_Indian_School.

²⁴ “Indigenous History of Oregon: Boarding Schools.” LibGuides. Accessed July 22, 2021. <https://pacificu.libguides.com/c.php?g=1050460&p=7625226>.

²⁵ Emphasis added.

nations will gather there in the Name of YHWH and they will no longer follow the dictates of their own stubborn hearts. Jeremiah 3:17 The Inclusive Bible

And in the Book of Revelation, our Christian scriptures, we read:

After that, I [John], saw before me an immense crowd without number, from every nation, tribe, people, and language. They stood in front of the throne and the Lamb, dressed in long white robes and holding palm branches. Revelation 7:9 The Inclusive Bible

The concept of restoration is one of the oldest in our Judeo-Christian tradition, for in Leviticus we read:

Count off seven “weeks” of years – seven times seven years – so that the seven Sabbaths of years come to a period of forty-nine years. Then on the tenth day of the seventh month – the Day of Atonement – sound the trumpet throughout all your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim freedom in the land for all its inhabitants. It is your year of Jubilee: each of you is to return to your ancestral land, to your own family... In this year of Jubilee, all of you are to return to your ancestral land... You must not sell land in perpetuity, for the land belongs to me, and you are only foreigners and tenants. Leviticus 25:8-10, 13, 23 The Inclusive Bible

In another text, from the story of Zacchaeus, found in Luke’s Gospel, we hear:

When everyone saw this, they began to grumble, “Jesus has gone to a sinner’s house as a guest.” Zacchaeus stood his ground and said to Jesus, “Here and now I give half my belongings to poor people. If I’ve defrauded anyone in the least, I’ll pay them back fourfold.” Jesus said to the tax collector, “Today salvation has come to this house, for this is what it means to be a descendant of Sarah and Abraham.” Luke 19:7-9 The Inclusive Bible

And finally, God’s words from Joel 2:25-32:

I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you. “You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

The Church's Complicity

On July 12, 2021, in a joint statement, our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and Gay Clark Jennings+, the President of the House of Deputies, had this to say:

In Genesis, God conferred dignity on all people by creating them in God's own image – a belief that is shared by all Abrahamic faiths. We are grieved by recent discoveries of mass graves of Indigenous children on the grounds of former boarding schools, where Indigenous children experienced forced removal from their homes, assimilation and abuse. These acts of cultural genocide sought to erase these children's identities as God's beloved children.

We condemn these practices, and we mourn the intergenerational trauma that cascades from them. We have heard with sorrow stories of how this history has harmed the families of many Indigenous Episcopalians.

While complete records are unavailable, we know that The Episcopal Church was associated with Indigenous schools during the 19th and 20th centuries. We must come to a full understanding of the legacies of these schools.

As chair and vice-chair of Executive Council, and in consultation with our church's Indigenous leaders, we pledge to make right relationships with our Indigenous siblings an important focus of the work of Executive Council and the 80th General Convention.

To that end, we commit to the work of truth and reconciliation with Indigenous communities in our church. We pledge to spend time with our Indigenous siblings, listening to their stories and history, and seeking their wisdom about how we can together come to terms with this part of our history. We call upon Executive Council to deliver a comprehensive proposal for addressing the legacy of Indigenous schools at the 80th General Convention, including earmarking resources for independent research in the archives of The Episcopal Church, options for developing culturally appropriate liturgical materials and plans for educating Episcopalians across the church about this history, among other initiatives.

We also commend Department of the Interior Secretary Deb Haaland on her establishment of the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative and the effort to "shed light on the traumas of the past." The Episcopal Church is also working to support legislation that will establish a truth and healing commission on Indian boarding school policy, which would complement the Department of the Interior's new initiative.

As followers of Jesus, we must pursue truth and reconciliation in every corner of our lives, embracing God's call to recognition of wrongdoing, genuine lamentation, authentic apology, true repentance, amendment of life and the nurture of right relationships. This is the Gospel path to Becoming Beloved Community.²⁶

²⁶ Affairs, Office of Public. "Statement on Indigenous Boarding Schools by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and President of the House of Deputies Gay Clark Jennings." The Episcopal Church, July 13, 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/3p23y2sr>.

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