

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2022-A127
Title: Resolution for Telling the Truth about The Episcopal Church's History with Indigenous Boarding Schools
Proposer: Presiding Officers' Working Group on Truth Telling, Reckoning, and Healing
Topic: Racism, Reconciliation

Directly Related: (Attached)

2018-A044 Set Essential Components of Anti-Racism or Racial Reconciliation Training
2015-A024 Direct Dioceses to Examine the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery
2012-A128 Examine Impact of Doctrine of Discovery
2012-A131 Express Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples
2009-D035 Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

2015-A182 Address Systemic Racial Injustice

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1973 through 2018, selecting "direct" resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The "direct" resolutions are attached and "indirect" resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives through the [Research Request Form](#) or call 800-525-9329.

A127 - Resolution for Telling the Truth about The Episcopal Church's History with Indigenous Boarding Schools

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Presiding Officers' Working Group on Truth Telling, Reckoning, and Healing

Requests New Interim Body: No

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Has Budget Implications: Yes

Cost: \$125,000.00

HiA: HD

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 09 - Racial Justice & Reconciliation

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: Yes

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That this 80th General Convention direct the Executive Council to conduct a comprehensive and complete investigation of the church's ownership and operation of Episcopal-run Indigenous boarding schools; and be it further

Resolved, That the Archives of The Episcopal Church be encouraged to hire one or more research fellows to work with dioceses where Episcopal-run boarding schools were located to find and share records from those schools; and be it further

Resolved, That the Archives be directed to share all relevant records with the Indigenous Ministries of The Episcopal Church and the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition for inclusion in their growing resource database; and be it further

Resolved, That the Archives be directed to work with the Office of Indigenous Ministries to support the production of an educational video that can be used across the church to share the history of Indigenous boarding schools in the US and the history of The Episcopal Church-run boarding schools.

Resolved, That the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance allocate \$125,000 for this work.

Explanation

From the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition:

“Beginning with the Indian Civilization Act Fund of March 3, 1819 and the Peace Policy of 1869 the United States, in concert with and at the urging of several denominations of the Christian Church, adopted an Indian Boarding School Policy expressly intended to implement cultural genocide through the removal and reprogramming of American Indian and Alaska Native children to accomplish the systematic destruction of Native cultures and communities. The stated purpose of this policy was to “Kill the Indian, Save the Man.”

Between 1869 and the 1960s, hundreds of thousands of Native American children were removed from their homes and families and placed in boarding schools operated by the federal government and the churches. Though we don't know how many children were taken in total, by 1900 there were 20,000 children in Indian boarding schools, and by 1925 that number had more than tripled. The U.S. Native children that were voluntarily or forcibly removed from their homes, families, and communities during this time were taken to schools far away where they were punished for speaking their native language, banned from acting in any way that might be seen to represent traditional or cultural practices, stripped of traditional clothing, hair and personal belongings and behaviors reflective of their native culture. They suffered physical, sexual, cultural and spiritual abuse and neglect, and experienced treatment that in many cases constituted torture for speaking their Native languages. Many children never returned home and their fates have yet to be accounted for by the U.S. government.”[5]

In October 2021, Episcopal News Service reported:

“The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, a nonprofit based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, has identified at least 373 schools that were part of that system, many of them run by Christian denominations. At least nine were thought to have Episcopal Church connections, though the dearth of churchwide records has made it difficult to fully account for the church’s role in the schools.”[6]

In July 2021, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and President of the House of Deputies Rev. Gay Clark Jennings issued a statement [7] committing to making right relationships with our Indigenous siblings an important focus of the work of Executive Council and 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.

[5] US Indian Boarding School History” <https://boardingschoolhealing.org/education/us-indian-boarding-school-history/>

[6] “Indigenous leaders lament intergenerational trauma inflicted by boarding schools, some with Episcopal ties” by David Paulsen, posted Oct 12, 2021, <https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2021/10/12/indigenous-leaders-lament-intergenerational-trauma-inflicted-by-boarding-schools-some-tied-to-episcopal-church/>

[7] "Statement on Indigenous boarding schools by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and President of the House of Deputies Gay Clark Jennings," July 12, 2021, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/publicaffairs/statement-on-indigenous-boarding-schools-by-presiding-bishop-michael-curry-and-president-of-the-house-of-deputies-gay-clark-jennings/>



Resolution Number: 2018-A044
Title: Set Essential Components of Anti-Racism or Racial Reconciliation Training
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention recognizes that widely different criteria have been used across the Church to determine if the completion of anti-racism training required in Title III and resolution 2000-B049 has been satisfied; and be it further
Resolved, that The Episcopal Church recognizes that in order to maintain a common theological framework in our commitment to dismantle the sin of racism that these specific components are essential to include in any Episcopal Anti-racism or Racial Reconciliation training:

- 1) Liturgy, preferably a celebration of Eucharist when possible or other corporate worship, grounding the work in scripture and spiritual formation
(Proclaiming the Dream of Beloved Community)
- 2) An Historical Component—including but not limited to (and, as appropriate to the context where the training is offered): The Episcopal Church's role in slavery, its history with segregation and discrimination of people of color, the Doctrine of Discovery, The Episcopal Church's role in taking indigenous children from their families through our participation in the boarding school system, and the Church's responses to racism through the years.
(Telling the Truth about the Church and Race)
- 3) An Information or Didactic Component—including, but not limited to: the Baptismal Covenant, power, class, race, racism, internalized racial privilege, internalized racial oppression, implicit racial bias, intercultural awareness and communication, becoming co-conspirators in dismantling racism, and envisioning racial reconciliation.
(Repairing the Breach)
- 4) Engagement—including, but not limited to: establishing respectful communication guidelines, discussion, Bible Study, and other activities as indicated to accomplish learning objectives for these components.
(Practicing the Way of Love);

And be it further

Resolved, that the Executive Council Committee on Anti-Racism continue to collect and develop, in collaboration with the staff, Christian Formation professionals, and The Absalom Jones Episcopal Center for Racial Healing, resources and best practices for dismantling racism that can be shared online to aide in the consistent fulfillment of the requirement for anti-racism training for lay and ordained leaders across the Church.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), p. 668.



Resolution Number: 2015-A024

Title: Direct Dioceses to Examine the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church, in accordance with our Baptismal Covenant and in the spirit of being inclusive, reaffirm and renew the directive to all dioceses, made by the 76th and 77th General Conventions, to examine the impact, including acts of racial discrimination, racial profiling, and other race-based acts of oppression, that the repudiated Doctrine of Discovery, as well as the related Doctrine of Manifest Destiny, has had on all people, especially on people of color and indigenous peoples.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), p. 412.



Resolution Number: 2012-A128
Title: Examine Impact of Doctrine of Discovery
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention of The Episcopal Church, in the spirit of our Baptismal Covenant and in being inclusive, direct all dioceses to examine the impact the Doctrine of Discovery, as repudiated at the 76th General Convention, has had on all people, especially on persons of color, including racial discrimination, racial profiling and other acts of oppression; and be it further

Resolved, That the Historical Society of the Episcopal Church, the National Episcopal Historians and Archivists, and the Episcopal Women's History Project, in consultation with the Standing Commission on Lifelong Christian Formation as well as diocesan historiographers and archivists, be requested to assist dioceses in documenting and explaining the effects of the Doctrine of Discovery, especially in the life of the church; and be it further

Resolved, That the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the President of the House of Deputies, be asked to seek volunteer dioceses to develop appropriate written guidance about how a diocese may effectively document and explain the church's historical role, negative and positive, in connection with the treatment of people of color, including African Americans and Native American people, as a result of the now-repudiated Doctrine of Discovery.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 2012* (New York: General Convention, 2012), pp. 183-184.



Resolution Number: 2012-A131
Title: Express Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention expresses its solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples of the world and supports the rights of Indigenous Peoples to live in and retain their traditional lands and territories, to maintain their languages and enrich their cultures, and to ensure that their traditions are strengthened and passed on for generations to come; and be it further

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention ask the Presiding Bishop and other representatives of The Episcopal Church to make protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples a priority in joint work with other Provinces of the Anglican Communion, in ecumenical work with other Christian denominations, and in interfaith work with other faith communities; and be it further

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention reaffirm the 76th General Convention's repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery, a misguided, unfair, and harmful legal doctrine which the Church helped promote in earlier centuries, a legal doctrine which has been used in English, Continental, and American law to justify the unfair treatment and exploitation of Indigenous Peoples; and be it further

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention urges the United States government and governments in other countries in which the Episcopal Church has dioceses to review their laws and policies, in consultation with Indigenous Peoples, and to identify and correct those which treat Indigenous Peoples unfairly or which, although neutral in content, result in invidious discrimination against Indigenous Peoples; and be it further

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention direct the Office of Government Relations, in consultation with Indigenous Peoples, to make protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples a high priority in its advocacy about United States foreign policy, including advocacy about trade agreements, human rights advocacy, and international environmental protection; and be it further

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention calls on congregations, institutions, dioceses, and corporate offices of The Episcopal Church, with the aid of resources such as "Exposing the Doctrine of Discovery," to reflect upon their history and to encourage them to support Indigenous Peoples in their ongoing efforts to exercise their inherent sovereignty and fundamental human rights, to continue to raise awareness about the issues facing Indigenous Peoples, and to develop advocacy campaigns to support the rights, aspirations, and needs of Indigenous Peoples; and be it further

Resolved, That in consultation with Indigenous Peoples within their dioceses or Provinces that congregations and dioceses be urged to take tangible steps to help Indigenous Peoples, including:

- *Action to preserve Indigenous Peoples' language, history and culture, such as by supporting appropriate linguistic, historic, Bible (and authorized liturgical resources) translation work for language groups into which the Bible and authorized liturgical resources have not yet been fully translated,*

- Action to obtain fairer and better treatment of Indigenous Peoples, such as seeking the repeal of unfair laws and policies,
- Formation of partnerships with congregations whose members consist primarily of Indigenous Peoples; and be it further

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention calls on congregations, institutions, dioceses, and corporate offices of The Episcopal Church to support continued use and development of theological reflections by Indigenous Peoples, with guidance from the Office of Indigenous Ministries, Indigenous Theological Training Institute, local Schools for Ministry and seminaries, which promote Indigenous visions of full, good, and abundant life and which strengthen their own spiritual and theological reflections.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 2012* (New York: General Convention, 2012), pp. 149-150.



Resolution Number: 2009-D035
Title: Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention repudiates and renounces 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, and that this declaration be proclaimed among our churches and shared with the United Nations and all the nations and peoples located within The Episcopal Church's boundaries. This doctrine, which originated with 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 Episcopal Church review its policies and programs with a view to exposing the historical reality and impact of the Doctrine of Discovery and eliminating its presence in its contemporary policies, program and structures and, further, that this body directs the appropriate representatives of the House of Bishops and House of Deputies, to inform all relevant governmental bodies in the United States of its action and suggest similar and equivalent review of historical and contemporary policies that contribute to the continuing colonization of Indigenous Peoples and, further, to write to Queen Elizabeth II, the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, requesting that her Majesty disavow, and repudiate publicly, the claimed validity of the Christian Doctrine of Discovery; and be it further

Resolved, That each diocese within The Episcopal Church be encouraged to reflect upon its own history, in light of these actions and encourage all Episcopalians to seek a greater understanding of the Indigenous Peoples within the geo-political boundaries claimed by the United States and other nation states located within The Episcopal Church's boundaries, and to support those peoples in their ongoing efforts for their inherent sovereignty and fundamental human rights as peoples to be respected; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention direct the Office of Government Relations to advocate for the U.S. government's endorsement of the "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," which the United States has refused to endorse (only the U.S., Canada, New Zealand and Australia have failed to sign on).

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), pp. 371-372.