

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2022-C072
Title: Land Acknowledgment
Proposer: Navajoland Area Mission
Topic: Racism, Reconciliation

Directly Related: (Attached)

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
2012-A132 Protect Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Sites
2009-D035 Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery

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

2009-A152 Request Study of Burial Sites of Indigenous Peoples

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.

C072 - Land Acknowledgment

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Navajoland Area Mission

Requests New Interim Body: No

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Has Budget Implications: Yes

Cost: 100.000,00 €

HiA: HD

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 09 - Racial Justice & Reconciliation

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the 80th General Convention direct each Diocese of the Episcopal Church, begin an audit of all Indigenous peoples whose ancestral and territorial homelands its churches and buildings now occupy before the 81st General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, that each Diocese of the Episcopal Church will, before the 81st General Convention, begin dialogue with representatives from those Indigenous peoples whose ancestral and territorial homelands its churches and buildings now occupy to collaborate in the development of appropriate land acknowledgement liturgies and prayers; and be it further

Resolved, that each Diocese of the Episcopal Church in North America will, before the 81st General Convention, begin a process of implementing land acknowledgement liturgies and prayers to begin any public meetings or worship and to provide resources to their churches to do the same; and be it further

Resolved, that The Episcopal Church commits to ensuring that all public gatherings and worship of The Episcopal Church, its seminaries, boards, commissions, committees of the same, will, before the 81st General Convention, implement land acknowledgement liturgies and prayers to begin any public meetings or worship held in North America; and be it further

Resolved, that the 80th General Convention appropriate at least \$100,000 to support these efforts.

Explanation

In North America every Episcopal church in every diocese of The Episcopal Church occupies the ancestral and territorial homelands of Indigenous peoples. From its very beginnings the Episcopal Church has partnered with the United States government in its colonizing project. In the words of Dr. Owanah Anderson, a former head of the Episcopal Church's Indigenous Ministries and a member of the Choctaw Nation, the Episcopal Church's task with respect to Indigenous peoples was "to 'civilize' as well as to 'evangelize the Indians.'"* The Episcopal Church was a partner in the American colonial project, often serving as the purveyor and guarantor of one-sided treaties that divested Indigenous peoples of their homelands and facilitated their removal from ancestral and territorial lands to reservations.

The privilege, power, and prestige of the Episcopal Church has been established and preserved with generational wealth built on the backs of stolen bodies working stolen land, the reconciliation of the Episcopal Church to the ancestors of those Indigenous peoples from whom the land was stolen begins with the land, specifically restoring the ruptured relationships between the church, the land, and its original caretakers.

The Episcopal Church's role in Indigenous residential boarding schools is predicated on its role in removing Indigenous peoples from their ancestral and territorial homelands. The Episcopal Church, according to multiple reports report, ran "at least 18 Native American boarding schools."** The Episcopal Church and/or its dioceses accepted monetary funding as well as tribal lands in exchange for helping the federal government "assimilate [Indigenous peoples] into the white settlers' culture," according to Bishop Creighton Robertson – an enrolled member of the Sisseton tribe in South Dakota – which he describes as "the church's sin," and unequivocally declares, "We have to confess that."***

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and House of Deputies President Gay Jennings have committed to "the work of truth and reconciliation with Indigenous communities in our church ... pledg[ing] 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." This important work of truth-telling and reconciliation around the Episcopal Church's role in residential boarding schools cannot be fully engaged without accounting for the Episcopal Church's role in removing Indigenous peoples from their ancestral and territorial lands. The goals for these land acknowledgement initiatives are to begin a process of healing for Indigenous communities from the generational trauma caused by their removal from ancestral and territorial homelands and to begin a dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities within the Episcopal Church to build trust, build relationship, and journey together. Reconciliation between the Episcopal Church, the land it now occupies, and the original caretakers of the land is a process of turning back to relationship – with the land and with its original caretakers.

*Anderson, Owanah. 400 Years, Anglican/Episcopal Mission Among American Indians (Cincinnati, OH: Forward Movement Publications, 1997), 12.

**McDonald, G. Jefferey. "A Shocking History," The Living Church, February 28, 2018. Accessed November 25, 2021. <https://livingchurch.org/2018/02/28/a-shocking-history/> (emphasis added); Chilton, John. "TEC ran 18 Nativepersons boarding schools – where is the apology, the examination?," Episcopal Cafe, June 27, 2021. Accessed January 24,

2022, at https://www.episcopalcafe.com/tec-ran-18-native-persons-boarding-schools-where-is-theapology-the-examination/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=tec-ran-18-native-persons-boardingschools-where-is-the-apology-the-examination; Ferguson, Tom. "We Are Pontius Pilate: The Episcopal Church and Indian Boarding Schools," CrustyOldDean.Blogspot.com, June 25, 2021. Accessed January 25, 2022, at <https://www.blogger.com/blogin.g?blogspotURL=https://crustyoldean.blogspot.com/2021/06/we-are-pontius-pilateepiscopal-church.html>.

***Schjonberg, Mary Frances. "General Convention renounces Doctrine of Discovery: Repudiation of centuries-old theory has modern implications, advocates say," The Episcopal Church, August 26, 2009. Accessed November 25, 2021. <https://episcopalchurch.org/library/article/general-convention-renounces-doctrine-discovery>



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: 2012-A132
Title: Protect Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Sites
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention out of respect for the unique cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples, and as a step toward repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery, calls upon congregations, institutions, dioceses and the corporate offices of The Episcopal Church, particularly in handling church property, expansion and investment, to help protect the sacred sites of Indigenous Peoples, and to encourage compliance in their communities with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, 25 U.S.C. § 3001; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chancellor to the Presiding Bishop be asked to establish a task force, working with volunteers from diocesan chancellors and other attorneys who are Episcopalians, and in consultation with affected Indigenous Peoples, to develop practical written guidance for dioceses and churches, particularly for wardens and others responsible for church properties, construction, and investment.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 2012* (New York: General Convention, 2012), pp. 225-226.



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.