

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2022-D033
Title: An Indigenous Pathway to Truth-telling and Healing
Proposer: The Rev. Leon Sampson
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.

D033 An Indigenous Pathway to Truthtelling and Healing

Proposer	The Rev. Leon Sampson
Endorsed by	The Rev. Cathlena Plummer and Ms. GJ Gordy
Supported by	—
HiA / Leg. Cttee	House of Deputies / —
Current Status	—
Version	Original (as filed)
Review Status	Not yet reviewed

RESOLUTION TEXT

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

that the 80th General Convention create a fact-finding commission to conduct research in the Archives of the Episcopal Church, the National Archives, and the Library of Congress, as well as any other repository of historical documents relevant to the role of the Episcopal Church in the Indigenous residential boarding schools of North America; and be it further

Resolved, each Diocese of the Episcopal Church will, before the 81st General Convention, begin an audit of the relationship, financial or otherwise, between the federal government, the diocese and/or its subsidiary entities, its churches, and any Episcopal or non-Episcopal missionary societies with respect to any Indigenous residential boarding school operated within the territorial jurisdiction of that diocese; and be it further

Resolved, each Diocese of the Episcopal Church will, before the 81st General Convention, begin to gather information from boarding school survivors and their descendants about the experiences of Indigenous children and families in Episcopal run and/or supported residential boarding schools within the territorial jurisdiction of that diocese; and be it further

Resolved, each Diocese of the Episcopal Church will, before the 81st General Convention, provide a platform through which the stories of boarding school survivors of any Indigenous residential boarding schools within the territorial jurisdiction of that diocese and their descendants might be preserved and shared; and be it further

Resolved, the Episcopal Church will support federal legislation to create a truth and healing commission on Indian boarding school policy, consistent with the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative of the U.S. Department of the Interior and its efforts to “shed light on the traumas of the past;” and be it further

Resolved, the 80th General Convention appropriate \$2,500,000 between the fact-finding commission created by 80th General Convention and the dioceses of the Episcopal Church, whose funding will be distributed through grants from the Office of Indigenous Ministries, to

support these efforts.

EXPLANATION

Every church in every diocese of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America (“Episcopal Church”) occupies the ancestral and territorial homelands of Indigenous peoples. The Episcopal Church, from its very beginnings, 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.’”

As a partner in the American colonial project, the Episcopal Church helped the U.S. government perpetrate policies of genocide and ethnocide – through government funded and church-run residential boarding schools. With funding from the federal government and land from Indigenous peoples the church took indigenous children from their families and stripped them of language, cultural identity, spirituality, and tradition in order to Christianize and Anglicize them.

The Domestic & Foreign Missionary Society of the Episcopal Church (“DFMS”) established and operated between nine and ten Indigenous residential boarding schools, according to the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (“NABS”).

The list of Episcopal boarding schools compiled by NABS does not include the following: those Indigenous residential boarding schools established and funded by the US government but run by the Episcopal Church under contract with the federal government; those schools run by other Episcopal missionary organizations other than the DFMS, of which there were several; those schools run by other non-Episcopal missionary organizations but were supported financially or otherwise by the Episcopal Church; or, those schools owned and operated by individual Episcopal dioceses. The number of such school in which the Episcopal Church had a vested interest, financial or otherwise, is at least double the number of schools directly established and operated by DFMS.

If all the Indigenous residential boarding schools owned, operated, or otherwise supported by the Episcopal Church and its individual dioceses are accounted for, the accurate number is “at least 18 Native American boarding schools,” according to more than one report.

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”

On July 12, 2021, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and House of Deputies President Gay Jennings have jointly committed to “come to a full understanding of the legacies of these schools.” Presiding Bishop Curry and President 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” and propose, among other things, “earmarking resources for independent research in the archives of The Episcopal Church”

The Department of the Interior and NABS have announced a collaborative effort to share records and information in support of a newly created Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative designed to “gather necessary information and records so that we can unravel the threads of trauma that linger in Indigenous communities,” according to Secretary Deb Haaland, a member of the Pueblo of Laguna peoples.

In 2009, the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church renounced the Doctrine of Discovery (2009-DO35), repudiating the political and theological doctrine that justified the removal of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral and territorial land and placing their children in residential boarding schools. In 2012, 2015, and 2018, the 77th, 78th, and 79th General Conventions of the Episcopal Church variously reaffirmed the church’s renouncement the Doctrine of Discovery (2012-A128; 2015-A024; and 2018-CO64). Despite its repudiation and re-repudiations of the political and theological basis for Indigenous residential boarding schools, the Episcopal Church has not yet clearly and unequivocally renounced its role in establishing, operating, funding, and otherwise supporting as many as 18 such schools.

In 2018 the 79th General Convention required that all anti-racism mandated by Title III will include the history of the “Episcopal Church’s role in taking indigenous children from their families through our participation in the boarding school system” (Resolution 2018-A044), but no such requirements can be satisfied until that history is known, acknowledged, and shared.

The goals for these truth-telling initiatives are to begin a process of healing for boarding school survivors and their families from the generational trauma caused by Indigenous residential boarding schools and to begin a dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities within the Episcopal Church to build trust, build relationship, and journey together. The work of reckoning, repentance, and healing, for the Episcopal Church begins with an honest accounting of the church’s role in Indigenous residential boarding schools. The work of truth-telling and reconciliation around the Episcopal Church’s role in residential boarding schools cannot be fully engaged without accounting for and honoring the stories of survivors of residential boarding schools and their descendants.



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.