

CALLING FOR THE NORTHERN PLAINS CONFERENCE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST TO REPUDIATE THE DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY WHICH AUTHORIZED THE GENOCIDE OF INDIAN PEOPLE AND THE THEFT OF INDIAN LANDS

A resolution of witness submitted to the Northern Plains Conference United Church of Christ at their 2014 Annual Meeting

Background Information

The papal bull Terra Nullius issued by Pope Urban II in 1095 and the papal bull Romanus Pontifex issued by Pope Nicholas V in 1452 declared war against all non-Christians throughout the world, treated non-Christians as uncivilized and subhuman and therefore without rights to land or nation, gave Christian leaders the God given right to take control of all lands occupied by non-Christians, and justified wars of conquest, colonization, and slavery. These papal bulls have never been repealed

In 1492, King Henry VII and Pope Alexander VI adopted the Doctrine of Discovery and declared all lands “discovered” by Columbus and other explorers as “The Christian Empire.”

In a unanimous decision, Chief Justice John Marshall of the Supreme Court, wrote that the Christian European Nation had assumed complete control over the lands of American during the “Age of Discovery” and that the United States of American inherited authority over these lands in the War of Independence. This incorporated the logical justification for the Doctrine of Discovery into American federal law. There have been ten US Supreme Court decisions affirming the Doctrine of Discovery.

The Doctrine of Discovery governs US Indian law today and has been cited as recently as 2005.

Theological and Ethical Rationale

This Resolution calls upon the Northern Plains Conference United Church of Christ to move beyond the theology which authorized the Doctrine of Discovery, and follow what Micah 6:8 tells us: “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and walk humbly with your God.”

Our mission as the People of God is about healing, serving, transforming, and justice as love made visible. We choose to believe in the Biblical mandate to love God, neighbor, and self.

The Text of the Motion

Whereas from the Crusades through the 16th century, the Roman Catholic Church promulgated several papal bulls which authorized and justified the destruction, killing, and appropriating lands of indigenous peoples. These papal bulls formulated the theological base for what has become the tragic genocide of American Indians; and

Whereas Protestant churches began as early as 1609 to developed a narrative that brought together a legal rationalization for invading America and debasing American Indians; and

Whereas in 1823, the Supreme Court in Johnson v. McIntosh incorporated into American law the Doctrine of Discovery by claiming the United States inherited the American conquest from the English; and

Whereas since 1845, the phrase Manifest Destiny was used to affirm that the United States of America was called by Providence to dominate the continent for the free development of America's inevitable growth. Manifest Destiny grew out of, and was based on, the Doctrine of Discovery; and

Whereas not only has the Doctrine of Discovery never been repudiated, and court decisions against American Indians have been made within the past several decades based on this doctrine: and

Whereas the United Nations adopted a resolution entitled United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007; and

Whereas when the World Council of Churches requested its members to adopt its Statement on the Doctrine of Discovery Impact on Indigenous Peoples, the UCC, the Episcopal Church, the Council of Bishops of the United Methodists have done so; and

Whereas there is a growing awareness and concern in the Northern Plains Conference United Church of Christ about the Doctrine of Discovery; and

Whereas the 2013 National Synod of the United Church of Christ passed a resolution calling for the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery and the Northern Plains Conference United Church of Christ has not yet responded in a formal and public manner

Therefore be it resolved that the 2014 annual meeting of Northern Plains Conference United Church of Christ repudiates the Doctrine of Discovery and declares the doctrine to be a shameful part of United States history

Be it further resolved that the Northern Plains Conference United Church of Christ joins with its ecumenical partners to explore ways to educate ourselves and the community about ways to reconcile with the American Indians in North

Dakota.

Be it further resolved that the Northern Plains Conference United Church of Christ admonishes all athletic teams of high schools, colleges, and universities in the Northern Plains Conference United Church of Christ area to relinquish any name that uses Native American terminology.

Be it further resolved that the Northern Plains Conference United Church of Christ admonishes national, state, and local governments to honor or revisit all treaties made with any Native American tribe or group concerning land abutting Lake Sakakawea with the result being the restoration of land to the tribes.

Be it further resolved that the Northern Plains Conference United Church of Christ establish a task force and direct it to approach the Native American tribes of North Dakota seeking forgiveness for the harm done by the Doctrine of Discovery, and to ask for reconciliation.