

DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY RESOLUTION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Board of Directors has approved bringing forward a possible Resolution of Witness regarding “Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” which was submitted by the Hocak UCC congregation. The Northwest Association Executive Committee and the Racial Justice Working Group, a team of clergy and laity from across the Wisconsin Conference, have offered full support of this resolution.

The motion that delegates voted on at the 2018 Annual Meeting was: *Is this an issue that the Holy Spirit is calling the Wisconsin Conference to engage in the coming year and consider for a possible resolution of witness after a year of study and reflection?*

The Hocak UCC congregation and the Racial Justice Task Force will provide study materials and support congregations as they engage in study and reflection around issues relating to the Doctrine of Discovery and the long-reaching effects of this policy. Congregations are not being asked to take a vote or a position on the proposed resolution. They are asked to study or discuss the issue and submit a completed response sheet indicating they have completed this.

Congregations are encouraged to share feedback and ask questions of the Racial Justice Task Force and/or the Hocak UCC congregation as they engage in this study.

If 30% of the congregations in the Wisconsin Conference UCC study this issue in the coming year, a Resolution of Witness regarding the “Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” will be voted on at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ.

*A Resolution of Witness Repudiation of
the Doctrine of Discovery*

INTRODUCTION

In June of 2013, the 29th General Synod, supported and passed the resolution to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery. This Doctrine authorized the genocide of Native Peoples and the theft of Native Lands. The Indigenous Peoples were told that God has declared that the Pope rules all people, regardless of their law, sect or belief. This includes Christians, Moors, Jews, Gentiles, or any other sect. The Native Americans were to come forward of their own free will to convert to Catholicism or ... with the help of God we shall use force against you, declaring war upon you from all sides and with all possible means, and we shall bind you to the yoke of the Church and Their Highnesses; we shall enslave your persons, wives, and sons, sell you or dispose of you as the King sees fit; we shall seize your possessions and harm you as much as we can as disobedient and resisting vassals.

Furthermore, Natives who resist are to be held guilty of all resulting deaths and injuries from the "just" war waged against them. This was focused to all Indigenous Peoples all over the world.

The Hocak United Church of Christ (Hocak UCC) being the only Native American UCC Church in Wisconsin Conference calls upon the Wisconsin Conference of United Church of Christ to recognize and affirm the adoption of said resolution to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery.

True Christianity came to the Hocak people prior to the building of the Church in 1878. The deliberate response of true faithfulness, we learn in the Gospels, is not violent retribution and revenge: "God has clearly proclaimed to humankind that the killing must stop," Megan McKenna writes, "and any rituals that involve death, violence, humiliation, or the diminishment of human beings must be discarded forever". Anything other than this - is heresy, blasphemy and treasonous towards/against the Gospel.

As stated in 1 Cor. 9: 19-23 – when I come to the Jews I act as a Jew, as to win over as many of them to the true following of Jesus Christ, and when I come to those under the Law I act as one under the Law, as to win as many over for our Lord Jesus Christ. So ... now when I come to the New World, I act as one of the Natives as to win over as many to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The United States in adoption of the Doctrine of Discovery in 1823 as Indian Policy for this country does not exemplify true Christianity and because of the genocide, atrocities and offenses committed against Native Americans and its ongoing transgressions ... we, the Hocak UCC bring forth this resolution to this Conference and help educate and implement this commitment of repudiation the Doctrine of Discovery.

THE TEXT OF THE MOTION

Whereas, Roman Catholic Church promulgated several Papal Bulldums (Bulls) by Pope Nicolas V in 1452 and revised in 1493 after the discovery of America by Pope Alexander VI which authorized and justified the destruction, killing and appropriating lands of Indigenous Peoples. These Papal Bulls formulated the theological base for what became the tragic genocide of American Indians; and

Whereas, Protestant churches beginning as early as 1609 when English clergy in Jamestown developed a coherent narrative that brought together a legal rationalization for the invading America, debasing American Indians and made a Christian commitment to convert Indians – a commitment which they never delivered; and

Whereas, the Supreme Court in 1823 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, 1845 was the first time the phrase Manifest Destiny was used to affirm the United States of America was called to 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, the United Nations adopted a resolution entitled United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007 requesting Nations to affirm, it took the United States four years before it signed it; and

Whereas, the World Council of Churches, called upon its member churches to adopt its Statement on the - Doctrine of Discovery – and its impact on Indigenous Peoples. The Episcopal Church and the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church have done so. The United Church of Christ denomination has done so in the 29th General Synod in 2013; and

Whereas, the Hocak United Church of Christ established in 1878 noting in deep concern, the generational and historical trauma caused by this Doctrine is still ongoing and continues to have a negative impact on Native American lives; and

Whereas, not only has the Doctrine never been repudiated, court decisions against Indians have been made within the past several decades based on the Doctrine.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 2019 Wisconsin Annual Conference of the United Church of Christ upholds and reaffirms in repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ declares and confesses that the doctrine has been and continues to be a shameful part of United States and our Church's history.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ joins with its ecumenical partners to explore ways to compensate American Indians, Alaskan

Natives, and Native Hawaiians for the lands and resources that were stolen and are still being stolen and which are now the United States of America.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ requests that awareness and acknowledgement be made available through educational materials for the Churches, provided by the Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) and the Council of American Indian Ministry. (CAIM)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ encourages the churches to explore educational materials, such as those developed by Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) and the Council of American Ministry (CAIM), and to pursue actions that may arise from their studies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ calls upon the United States government to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery.