

(Sense-of-the-Assembly)

**RECOGNITION OF A TRUTH AND HEALING COUNCIL TO HONOR OUR
COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND TO DISCERN
WAYS OF REPARATIONS FOR A PATH TO RECONCILIATION**

WHEREAS, as justice is an essential part of God's nature, manifesting itself as a method of restoration and healing¹; and

WHEREAS, as people of faith we recognize reconciliation as a biblical principle and a tenet of our faith tradition, understanding that reconciliation is based upon relationships that are reciprocal and respectful, where all parties in the relationship are valued as equal and beloved by God; and

WHEREAS, the history of white Euro-Americans and Indigenous peoples of the Americas has not been a relationship based upon reciprocity, mutual respect and honoring covenantal relationships but sadly has been a settler colonial history of a relationship of power given to white people by U.S. and Canadian nations to hold over Indigenous peoples that has used Christianity and the Church as tools of social control and oppression; and

WHEREAS, the appalling reality of the history of the Canadian residential schools and U.S. boarding schools that sought to assimilate Indigenous children into white society demonstrates

¹ Adapted from Richard Rohr, *Dancing Standing Still: Healing the World from a Place of Prayer* (New York: Paulist Press, 2014), 38–40, 87–88.

the need for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as nearly 1,000 unmarked children graves were discovered at former residential schools in British Columbia and Saskatchewan, Canada and over 500 deaths at 19 schools in the United States (though the Interior Department said that number could climb to the thousands or even tens of thousands) of children buried in unmarked or poorly maintained burial sites far from their Indian, Inuit, Métis, Native, Alaskan, Hawaiian, Indigenous homes and families, often hundreds, or even thousands, of miles away;² and

WHEREAS, the consequences of federal Indian boarding school policies including intergenerational historical trauma caused by the family separation and cultural eradication of language, traditions, and religion inflicted upon generations of young are undeniable; and

WHEREAS, the idea of boarding schools to provide a basic Western education and Christian indoctrination originated from Christian missionaries of various denominations and were approved by government agents before the Bureau of Indian Affairs also founded additional off-reservation boarding schools based on the assimilation model in the U.S., it is fitting that as Christians reflect on their institutional structures, historically, they soon learn to recognize instances where these institutions participated in the system of colonization of the Canadian and U.S. landscape; and

² NPR, “U.S. report identifies burial sites linked to boarding schools for Native Americans,” May 11, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/05/11/1098276649/u-s-report-details-burial-sites-linked-to-boarding-schools-for-native-americans>.

WHEREAS, understanding Christian complicity in the destruction of Indigenous familial and community structure gives Christians the moral authority to compel Church and Government(s) to become accountable for acts of colonization, an obligation is inherent and relevant for Christian institutions who have recognized their complicity by repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery, like Disciples did by affirming the resolution GA-1722 at the 2017 General Assembly and who proclaim themselves as a “movement for wholeness in a fragmented world,” and

WHEREAS, becoming institutionally accountable to the Indigenous landscape allows Christians to move beyond statements of apology, confession, or solidarity to become more accountable to the landscape shifting Christianity theology to include a hermeneutic of Indigeneity where Indigenous well-being is valued over agendas and outcomes, where Christian institutions publicly name their participation in the evil of colonization, and where the Indigenous landscape is known as family;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting July 29-August 1, 2023, in Louisville, Kentucky, offers its support of the work by the Center for Indigenous Ministries (DOC) who believes such justice work is possible by collaborating with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to support a Truth and Healing Council who will: 1) openly listen to Indigenous voices; 2) hear how the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)’s work impacted Indigenous lives, the lives of their ancestors, and the lives of their children; 3) gather historical and current Christian Church (DOC) institutional documents authenticating Disciples colonial-settler relationship with the Indigenous landscape and her People(s); 4) document and record the haunting stories and

histories arising from colonial-settler relationship; and 5) create a generational restorative and reparative path toward harmony; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that local, regional, and national manifestations of the Church discern paths toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in the U.S. and Canada by recognizing there are stages between truth telling and reconciliation: 1) reparative work must be done to prepare mindsets and institutional governance for change; 2) once reparative work is well along in changing minds (but before completed), institutional reparations—substantial institutional changes in governance, restitution, and finances—begin; 3) when reparative work and reparations have occurred for some time, then the work of restoration begins and restorative work brings about right relationship to that which was once natural and created; and 4) after years, if not generations, of reparative work, reparations, and restorative work, reconciliation can then begin; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that working collaboratively to advance reconciliation in North American society would include, but not be limited to, acts of reparation that might include: 1) all Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Affiliates, e.g., Disciples Church Extension Fund, Christian Church Foundation, National Benevolent Association, Christian Board of Publication, Pension Fund who have accumulated financial sustainability working within a U.S. national construct that has also provided wealth to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall begin a formal process of review of that history to begin reordering wealth and power towards Indigenous healing within and without the church; 2) all Disciple related colleges and seminaries who have benefited from the generational wealth they acquired from Indigenous removal and the

land on which their institutions reside, and from the wealth of their constituents and alum who also benefited from the generational wealth accrued from Indigenous removal should review their financial legacies in light of generational Indigenous injustice and to reallocate annual funds and/or a percentage of the annual budget to Indigenous work under the management of Indigenous guidance who are not accountable to their institutional structure; 3) regions and individual congregations should begin to examine their historical context of complicity in settler colonialism and find avenues to support issues of social justice for Indigenous peoples; and 4) the Office of General Minister and President shall work with the Center for Indigenous Ministries to have the General Board recommend the Center for Indigenous Ministries as a General Ministry to a future General Assembly; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, as people of an Indigenous landscape who have witnessed false promises, we work toward becoming a reconciled and reconciling people who honor our covenantal relationships.

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