

**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**

**(Sense-of-the-Assembly)**

**WHEREAS**, as justice is an essential part of God’s nature, manifesting itself as a method of restoration and healing;<sup>1</sup> 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 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;<sup>2</sup> 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

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

<sup>2</sup> 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-nativeamericans>.

42 and were approved by government agents before the Bureau of Indian Affairs also  
43 founded additional off reservation boarding schools based on the assimilation model in  
44 the U.S., it is fitting that as Christians reflect on their institutional structures, historically,  
45 they soon learn to recognize instances where these institutions participated in the  
46 system of colonization of the Canadian and U.S. landscape; and  
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48 **WHEREAS**, understanding Christian complicity in the destruction of Indigenous familial  
49 and community structure gives Christians the moral authority to compel Church and  
50 Government(s) to become accountable for acts of colonization, an obligation is inherent  
51 and relevant for Christian institutions who have recognized their complicity by  
52 repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery, like Disciples did by affirming the resolution GA-  
53 1722 at the 2017 General Assembly and who proclaim themselves as a “movement for  
54 wholeness in a fragmented world,” and  
55

56 **WHEREAS**, becoming institutionally accountable to the Indigenous landscape allows  
57 Christians to move beyond statements of apology, confession, or solidarity to become  
58 more accountable to the landscape shifting Christianity theology to include a  
59 hermeneutic of Indigeneity where Indigenous well-being is valued over agendas and  
60 outcomes, where Christian institutions publicly name their participation in the evil of  
61 colonization, and where the Indigenous landscape is known as family; and  
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63 **WHEREAS**, by recognizing there are stages between truth telling and reconciliation: 1)  
64 reparative work must be done to prepare mindsets and institutional governance for  
65 change; 2) once reparative work is well along in changing minds (but before completed),  
66 institutional reparations—substantial institutional changes in governance, restitution,  
67 and finances—begin; 3) when reparative work and reparations have occurred for some  
68 time, then the work of restoration begins and restorative work brings about right  
69 relationship to that which was once natural and created; and 4) after  
70 years, if not generations, of reparative work, reparations, and restorative work,  
71 reconciliation can then begin;  
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73 **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** the General Assembly of the Christian Church  
74 (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting July 29-August 1, 2023,  
75 in Louisville, Kentucky, offers its support of the work by the Center for Indigenous  
76 Ministries (DOC) who believes such justice work is possible by collaborating with the  
77 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to support the Truth and Healing Council who will:  
78 1) openly listen to Indigenous voices; 2) hear how the Christian Church (Disciples of  
79 Christ)’s work impacted Indigenous lives, the lives of their ancestors, and the lives of  
80 their children; 3) gather historical and current Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
81 institutional documents authenticating Disciples colonial-settler relationship with the  
82 Indigenous landscape and her People(s); 4) document and record the haunting stories  
83 and histories arising from colonial-settler relationship; and 5) create a generational  
84 restorative and reparative path toward harmony; and  
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86 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that local, regional, and General expressions of the  
87 Church discern paths toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in the United States  
88 and Canada; and

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90 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that working collaboratively to advance reconciliation in  
91 North American society might include acts of reparation such as: 1) the Christian  
92 Church (Disciples of Christ) in all its expressions which have accumulated financial  
93 sustainability working within a North American construct that has also provided wealth  
94 to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), are encouraged to begin a formal process  
95 of review of that history to begin reordering wealth and power towards Indigenous  
96 healing within and without the church; 2) all Disciples related colleges and seminaries  
97 who have benefited from the generational wealth acquired from Indigenous removal and  
98 the land on which their institutions reside, and from the wealth of their constituents and  
99 alumni who also benefited from the generational wealth accrued from Indigenous  
100 removal, are encouraged to review their financial legacies in light of generational  
101 Indigenous injustice and to consider reallocating annual funds and/or a percentage of  
102 the annual budget to Indigenous work under the management of Indigenous guidance  
103 who are not accountable to their institutional structure; 3) regions and individual  
104 congregations are encouraged to begin to examine their historical context of complicity  
105 in settler colonialism and find avenues to support issues of social justice for Indigenous  
106 peoples; and

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108 **FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Office of General Minister and President shall  
109 work with the Center for Indigenous Ministries to discern and propose the most faithful  
110 and effective way to recognize their ministry in the life of the church.

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113 Yakama Christian Mission, White Swan, Washington  
114 Englewood Christian Church, Yakima, Washington  
115 Bethany Christian Church of Farmington, New Mexico

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**The General Board recommends that the General Assembly REFER GA-2337 to  
the Office of General Minister and President for further study.  
(Discussion Time: 12 minutes)**