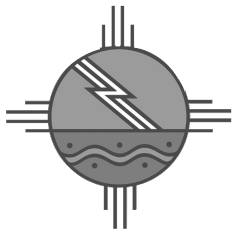


November is National Native American & Alaska Native Heritage Month

Native American/Indigenous Ministries in the Episcopal Church

Part 2 of 2



We propose that the larger church join us in a spiritual movement to realize the Gospel in the life of our communities. This movement will reflect the Indigenous interdependence of theology, ecology, spirituality and morality. It will focus on the Word becoming living and real in all of our communities.

—Excerpt from the White Earth Declaration by ECCIM, May 2009

General Convention 2009 passed several resolutions of major impact for Native American and indigenous ministry through the hard work of the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies. None were more powerful than Resolution D035, “Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery,” and A155, “Program for the Alleviation of Domestic Poverty.” With these bold statements, The Episcopal Church became the first church to repudiate a 15th-century assertion that European nations had a right and duty to subjugate and convert native peoples. The repudiation begins the work of reconciliation and healing from policies in which our church was a core partner in the colonial marginalization of indigenous peoples around the world.

These actions converge with the church’s awareness of the extreme poverty rates on Native American reservations and communities, chronic unemployment, diminishing educational opportunities and family instability, all of which have contributed to high rates of alcoholism, violence, and suicide. Together, these realities sent an urgent call for a new partnership between indigenous peoples and The Episcopal Church.

Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery

Resolution D035, “Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery,” calls The Episcopal Church to repudiate and renounce 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. This doctrine, which originated with King Henry VII of England 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. By way of the resolution the church is called to:

- Renounce the doctrine;
- Urge dioceses to reflect their histories and seek a greater understanding of 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 their efforts to have “their inherent sovereignty and fundamental human rights” respected;
- Eliminate the doctrine’s “presence in its contemporary policies, program, and structures;”
- Advocate for the federal government’s endorsement of the

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the U.S. opposed when the U.N. General Assembly adopted it in 2007; and

- Direct “the appropriate representatives of the House of Bishops and House of Deputies” to ask Queen Elizabeth II in her role as the head of the Church of England to do the same.

Alleviate domestic poverty

Resolution A155, “To Establish a Program for the Alleviation of Domestic Poverty,” calls the church to:

- Recognize the pressing challenges to those living in poverty and the working poor throughout this nation;
- Call for new and innovative strategies to address issues related to nutrition, employment, childcare, education, healthcare, environment and housing, as well as equal protection under law and cultural affirmations;
- Establish a community development initiative in Native Peoples’ communities in the new triennium, recognizing that Native People live in some of the poorest counties in the United States and are experiencing increasing disparities in income, economic security, health and healthcare, and quality of life;
- Ensure this community development initiative emerge from the visions and voices of the local Native Peoples, address community development opportunities using asset-based community development models, identify key federal, state, and local advocacy issues and access the abundant human and financial resources of The Episcopal Church.

Other key resolutions

- A147 “Claiming Our Identity and Promoting Anglican Partnerships;”
- A150 “Endorsement for the Oklahoma Consultation for Leaders in Indigenous Ministry;”
- A151 “In Support of Addition to Lesser Feasts and Fasts of Paul Cuffe and Samson Occum;”
- A152 “Preservation of Burial Sites;”
- A153 “Federal Tribal Recognition.”

For full text of resolutions and more information, visit www.episcopalchurch.org/native_american.htm

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