

<p><b>METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD ASSEMBLY</b></p> <p><b>Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Gaithersburg, Maryland</b></p> <p><b>June 18, 2016</b></p>
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 7 **Reference & Counsel Number: 2016 - 05** **Secretary’s Number:**

8 **Title: Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery**

9 **Submitted by: Rev. Michael D. Wilker, the District of Columbia Conference**

10 **Received: May 6, 2016**

11 **WHEREAS,** the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) confesses with our Native  
 12 sisters and brothers that the whole of Creation is God’s work, that God declares it  
 13 all as good, and that God’s Spirit dwells within it, and

14 **WHEREAS,** we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate in human form to show God’s  
 15 love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on  
 16 every continent of the earth, and

17 **WHEREAS,** we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous  
 18 inhabitants of the Americas by the European conquest and migration to what  
 19 Europeans called a “new world,” but which was in reality already the homeland of  
 20 many peoples, and

21 **WHEREAS,** we recognize that Christian churches were and remain complicit in that conquest,  
 22 migration and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop  
 23 conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that  
 24 continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their  
 25 descendants, and

26 **WHEREAS,** we deplore and reject the so-called “doctrine of discovery” originated with Pope  
 27 Alexander VI in 1493 and entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh*  
 28 (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which  
 29 colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect. This  
 30 principle promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that  
 31 European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy, and possess  
 32 simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization.

33 **WHEREAS,** the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) and the ELCA’s full  
 34 communion partners--the Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, the  
 35 United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church--have publicly repudiated the  
 36 “doctrine of discovery;” therefore, be it

37 **RESOLVED,** that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly offers herewith a  
 38 statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for  
 39 damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization,” and memorialize the

40 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to repudiate the “doctrine of discovery,”  
41 repent of the damage done in the name of the European Christian-derived  
42 “doctrine of discovery” and of complicity in the evils of colonialism in the  
43 Americas, seeking reconciliation with Native nations in this country by:

44 • directing the ELCA Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate  
45 ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders,  
46 and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances  
47 with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and

48 ▪ directing the ELCA Church Council, with the help of Native communities, to  
49 commit the ELCA to the development of resources, in the next triennium, to  
50 help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative  
51 impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people  
52 in North America; and

53 ▪ directing the ELCA Domestic Mission Unit to bring forward to the 2019  
54 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in  
55 the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities in  
56 general, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA  
57 American Indian and Alaskan Native ministries, increasing partnerships with  
58 congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native  
59 communities within which our congregations and synods reside.