

## Resolution A: Reparations and Land Return

Whereas, in 2016 the Churchwide Assembly [repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery](#), “acknowledging and repenting from this church’s complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, which continue to harm tribal governments and individual tribal members,” and,

Whereas, such evils of colonialism include land theft and forced removal of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral homelands, silencing their stories and ancestral practices rooted in their sacred land, and

Whereas, in September of 2021, the Church Council of the ELCA approved the [Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People](#), which includes a commitment to “encourage and support wherever possible the buyback and return of tribal land, and further commit to support creative programs resulting in reparations for stolen lands,” and,

Whereas, every building owned by an ELCA congregation and organization, except those on reservations, is built on stolen tribal land, which continues to rob each generation of Indigenous people sustenance, wealth, life ways, and the experience of familial relationships with the land itself, thus perpetuating historical inequity, and,

Whereas, Indigenous peoples are calling for restoration, restitution and reparation, and, there is a growing reparations and Land Back movement in which families, churches, denominations, camps, universities, and other land-holding organizations are returning land or providing compensation for the use of land to Indigenous tribes and nations, and,

Whereas, there are a variety of ways that ELCA congregations, ministries and associated organizations can participate in reparations and land return, including transferring land and closed ministry sites to tribal nations, or inviting tribal nations into conversations about land use when congregations are consolidated, or participating in “Real Rent” programs, such as the one currently available through the [Duwamish Tribe](#).

**Therefore, be it resolved**, that the Northwest Washington Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage all ELCA members (congregations, synods, ministries, colleges, seminaries, camps, associated organizations and partners) to become educated about the Indigenous peoples who thrived, prior to European contact, on the land they currently inhabit; and to learn about, and learn from, the Indigenous peoples who currently live within at least 100 miles of that land; and be it further

**Resolved**, that the Northwest Washington Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage all ELCA members (congregations, synods, ministries, colleges, seminaries, camps, associated organizations and partners) to “support creative programs resulting in reparations for stolen lands” in partnership with Indigenous peoples, including returning land (and any structures built on it) to Native tribes, and when direct return is not feasible or desirable by the tribes, to return the proceeds from the sale of land to the Native American Ministry Fund or other local Native-led ministries or organizations.

**Submitted by:** Rev. Erik Kindem; Rev. Darla DeFrance; Rev. Terry Kylo; Rev. Charis Weathers; Rev. Chelsea Globe; Rev. Priscilla Paris-Austin

**1. What is the financial impact of this resolution on the synod budget? If expenditures are required, what are the sources of income anticipated to accomplish the purpose of the resolution?**

None.

**2. What are the personnel implications within our synod (or churchwide)?**

Synod staff and others who work with congregations, ministries and other institutions of the church considering land sale and/or closure may need to devote extra time to the process, as they invite those entities to consider relationships with and impacts upon Tribal communities as they discern the implications and opportunities of sharing accumulated assets or property.

**3. Who will be responsible for implementation of the resolution?**

If the 2022 Churchwide Assembly chooses to respond to this memorial and similar memorials from other synods, Churchwide staff will implement plans to encourage all ELCA members, congregations, synods, ministries, colleges, seminaries, camps, associated organizations and partners to work with local tribal leaders in order to build relationships and potentially facilitate reparations. Within the territory of the NW Washington Synod, the synod council could appoint an implementation task force that would help establish guidelines for implementing the resolution. Other means could also be considered.

**4. How does this resolution enhance and forward the mission of the church and our synod?**

In the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly mandate on “Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (ELCA Social Policy Resolution CA16.02.04), we committed “To repudiate explicitly and clearly the European-derived doctrine of discovery as an example of the ‘improper mixing of the power of the church and the power of the sword’ (Augsburg Confession Article XXVIII, Latin text), and to acknowledge and repent from this church’s complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, which continue to harm tribal governments and individual tribal members.” As we seek to live into meaningful actions that demonstrate the commitments expressed in the “*Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People*,” approved in September of 2021 by the Church Council of the ELCA, this resolution outlines practical steps that may be taken by ELCA members, congregations, synods, ministries, colleges, seminaries, camps, associated organizations, and partners.