

Reparations and Land Return Memorial to the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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, 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 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

Whereas, 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, returning land to its original peoples is one significant and meaningful way for our church to demonstrate repentance, helping to move together toward collective healing and the restoration of Native sovereignty, opening the possibility for new life to come out of death, 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, etc.

Therefore be it RESOLVED, that the Oregon Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical 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 Oregon Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical 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 the Oregon Synod Reparations Task Force (Alys Allwardt, Mandy Ellertson, Rev. David Eppelsheimer, Rev. Matta Ghaly, Rev. Sara Gross Samuelson, Gerry Grover, Karen Haines, Stephanie Kistler, Jan Mallory, Rev. Solveig Nilsen-Goodin, Shirley Peterson, Gary Schulstad, Gerry Stolp, Heidi Stolp, Debi Stromberg) Debra Hibbs, Paul Potter