

Dear Participant

We are so honored to have you as a part of our journey towards Writing a Land Acknowledgement Statement.

We hope that you will read the first few pages of this guidebook which will give you an overview of the 6 session journey.

Please note that we will be gathering material for writing a Land Acknowledgement Statement from the very beginning. However, we will not write one until after Step 5. We feel it is important to explore and experience history, theology and earth care before we put pen to paper. We want to produce responsible, respectful and helpful Land Acknowledgement Statements.

We are not looking to check off a box.

One of the asks we have of you is to watch one of two documentaries about the Doctrine of Discovery. We believe that without an understanding of this background, writing a Land Acknowledgement Statement will not be authentic. We are suggesting either “Unmasking the Doctrine of Discovery” directed by Sheldon Wolfchild (1Hour) \$5 on vimeo or “Doctrine of Discovery: In the Name of Christ” produced by Anabaptists(43 minutes) free on YouTube.

Links are on page 7 of this guidebook.

We have this film scheduled between Steps 1 & 2. However, you might want to watch the documentary before the journey begins. Both can be found on line as described above or may be in your church library.

Thank you for joining us in this journey. We have been enriched and transformed by the creation of it. We hope you will experience something similar.

Hope and Peace,

Rev. Debra Jene Collum  
Cathy Velasquez Eberhart  
Susan Mullin  
Bill Konrardy  
Wally Wadd

# Transformational Journey Towards Land Acknowledgement

A 6-session journey with EarthKeepers and others who desire to learn to walk on this earth with respect, gentleness, and purpose

Learning, reflecting, challenging, journeying together for the purpose of writing a non-performative personal land acknowledgement statement.

Presented by MN Hopeful Earthkeepers

The God who created us now calls us to participate in healing relationships between people and the earth, and between the peoples of the earth.

Minnesota Hopeful EarthKeepers are building a movement and a network of Minnesota United Methodists equipped to respond to ecological degradation, extinction of species, climate change, and environmental racism with ministries of love, healing, transformation, and regeneration.

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this movement

As we gather, we will seek to honor each other and the stories we hear through endeavors to:

**Stay Engaged**

**Experience Discomfort**

**Speak Truth**

**Expect and Accept Non-closure**

*Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools  
by Glenn E. Singleton*



## What is a Land Acknowledgement Statement?

“A Land Acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory you reside on, and a way of honoring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. It is important to understand the long-standing history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history. Land acknowledgements do not exist in a past tense, or historical context: colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation. It is also worth noting that acknowledging the land is Indigenous protocol.” <http://www.lspirg.org/knowtheland>

## The Journey

We will reflect together on:

- The connection between Land Acknowledgement Statements and our identities as Christians who care for the earth
- What has happened historically that makes a Land Acknowledgement Statement necessary.
- What are the theological groundings that inform the writing of a Land Acknowledgement Statement.
- How can a Land Acknowledgement Statement impact our path as disciples of Jesus Christ who are committed to the transformation of the world.
- Who can we become as we take the work of a Land Acknowledgement Statement seriously and transformatively.
- What next steps are important after a Land Acknowledgement Statement is written.

Texts:

On This Spirit Walk by Henrietta Mann & Anita Phillips

The Four Promises by Rev. Dr. Ron Bell

Scriptures from: Priests for Equality. The Inclusive Bible. ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC. 4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706

First Nations Edition: an Indigenous Translation of the New Testament

# Step 1 Our Identity

Land Acknowledgement Statement from  
Rev. Debra Jene Collum, Chatfield MN  
Dakota Land

Chatfield and its surrounding areas is the homeland of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate of the Dakota.

We continue to find relics of their inhabitation as we plow the land, search among the bluffs and paddle along the rivers. As we discover these relics, we can become connected, if we allow our hearts to connect,

with the great people for whom this land is homeland.

The Root River Watershed which feeds our need for water, fed their need for water.

The great forests, rivers, creeks, and bluffs which provide current hunters and fishers with food, provided the sustenance for thousands of years of habitation of the Dakota before Europeans ever set foot in this sacred land.

We have erred in our inability to live peaceability with each other.

We have sinned against our neighbor and our kinfolk in driving the Dakota from their homeland and disrespecting the treaties made in good faith.

The blood of their ancestors continues to cry out from the land we inhabit.

We must hear their cries; we must allow the sorrow of genocide and broken promises to move our hearts to confession and repentance if we are to learn to live as people who are entrusted by God to steward this land into a place that is honoring and abundant for all.

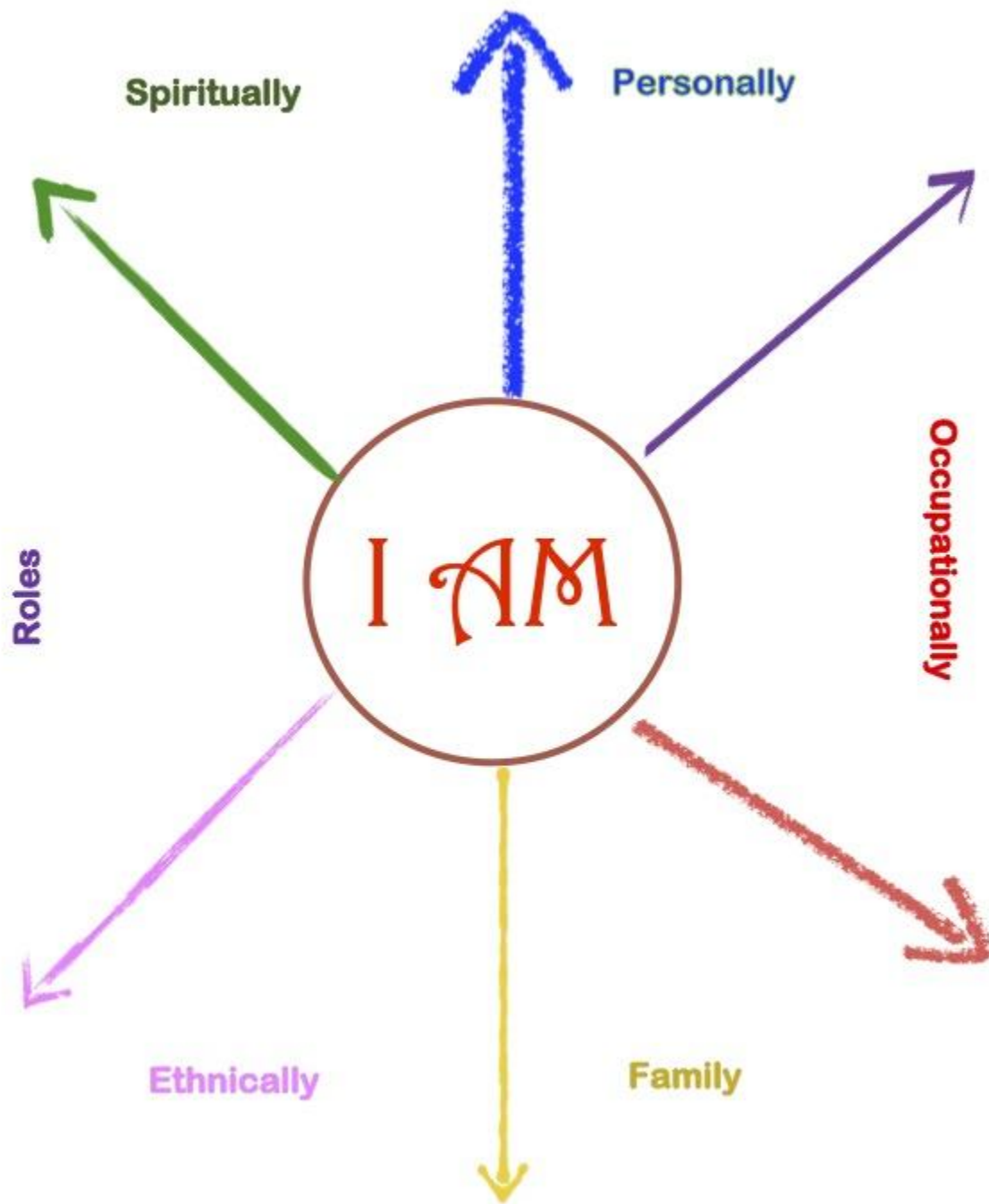
This land is not ours alone, it is a reflection of all our histories.

The stories of the past and the promises of the future rely on our memory.

We are called to protect and honor this history and work for a future that reflects the kingdom of God.

**As you hear this statement, record your feelings, thoughts, and words. You may place them in the chat.**

**Reread the statement yourself. Highlight those words or thoughts in the statement which strike you, challenge you, or make you question.**



Place words or images in each section to describe YOU!

## Small Group Discussion

As you consider how your identity was formed, what part of those who walked before “play in shaping who you are?”

What were the milestones that shaped your spiritual identity?

How do you understand your identity as a person who cares for the earth?  
Where would you put this on your I AM picture?

How does this impact the other identities in your life?

How has the church and/or society helped to affirm or discourage that identity?

## Baptism As Our Identity: Reaffirming Our Baptism

**Leader:** Through the Sacrament of Baptism we are initiated into Christ's holy Church. We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through water and the Spirit. All this is God's gift offered to us without price. Do you reaffirm your own commitment to your baptismal vows to renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sins?

**People:** We do.

**Leader:** Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.

**People:** We do.

**Leader:** Do you affirm Jesus the Christ, put your whole trust in his grace and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?

**People:** We do.

New words to supplement the baptismal covenant: [Covenant to Build BeLoved Community United Methodism is at a crucial inflection point – facing the challenges of a global pandemic](#)

## Small Group Discussion

In the text On This Spirit Walk, on page 4 & 5 Dr. Mann shared from her culture about traditions of welcoming and naming.

What important traditions exist in your tribe, nations, church or family?

How do the words of the baptismal covenant help you form your identity?

How do you think this identity as a baptized Christian will be important in this journey?

## Small Group Reflection

Have someone in your group read the paragraph: “Historical Trauma” on page 6 of On This Spirit Walk

Did you struggle in forming who you are completely? Was there trauma involved in affirming who you are completely?

If not, why do you think that is?

If yes, what was the root of the trauma?

How does your race play into whether or not you experienced trauma when forming your identity?

## Closing Ritual

*By Rev. Anita Phillips, Cherokee, Retired Ordained Elder*

Leader: Our God and Creator asks, “How will you live the life I have given to you?”

***People: Like a still, deep pool in the desert, we will live in a way that reflects your love back onto your world.***

Leader: Our God and Creator asks, “How will you walk this path I have given to you?”

***People: Like the creatures of the forest, we will walk in a way that respects all life created by your hand.***

Leader: Our God and Creator asks, “How will you reach out to the world beyond yourselves?”

***People: Like the branches of a sapling tree, we will strive to reach beyond the safe and the familiar, touching the world in your name.***

**All:** Help us to remember we all are connected through the endless circle of life and creation.

Teach us to trust and to follow the example of Jesus Christ who lived a life of sacrifice, walked a path of goodness and mercy, and reached beyond human differences. Amen.

**Being an American means reckoning with a history fraught with violence and injustice. Ignoring that reality in favor of mythology is not only wrong but also dangerous. The dark chapters of American history have just as much to teach us, if not more, than the glorious ones, and often the two are intertwined.**

**Ken Burns**

## Preparation for Step 2

- ☐ [Watch The Doctrine of Discovery: Unmasking the Domination Code Online](#) rent is \$4.99. The Doctrine of Discovery, Unmasking The Domination Code by [38 plus 2 productions](#) and Steven T. Newcomb.
- ☐ OR/AND watch: [Doctrine of Discovery](#) free 45 minute documentary told from the perspective of Mennonites in Canada
- ☐ Read [Pagans in the Promised Land: a Primer on Religious Freedom](#)
- ☐ Read [Pilgrimage to Sand Creek brings healing](#)
- ☐ Read *On this Spirit Walk: Chapter 6 Worship & Chapter 7 History*

Other reading not required:

[Why Treaties Matter](#)

## Step 2 Our History

“A society that considers your body dispensable will inflict a violence upon you”  
From: *Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth* by  
Sara Smarsh

### Land Acknowledgement Statement

Page 49 Not "A Nation of Immigrants" 2021 Dunbar-Ortiz

Erasure

Anishinabek historian Michael Witgen 398 "A Nation of Settlers" writes:

The United States imagines itself as a nation of immigrants...The United States aspired to be a settler colonial power, but the presence and persistence of Native peoples forced the republic to become a colonizer. The violence of settler colonial ideology is represented not only in the widespread dispossession of indigenous peoples but also in its attempt to affect their political, social, and cultural erasure...To imagine the United States as a nation of immigrants, devoid of an indigenous population, is not only a form of erasure; it is also historically inaccurate. The United States was founded as, and continues to be, a nation of settler immigrants locked into a struggle over the meaning of place and belonging with the Native nations of North America.

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## Centering

“Are we willing to be involved in joining God in turning the world upside down?

This work is not for the faint hearted but those who are willing to be open to receive and accept the transforming power of God’s kingdom.”

*Iris de León-Hartshorn is director of Transformative Peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA*

You have seen the film, Doctrine of Discovery.

What struck you as you watched the documentary?

What emotions surfaced?

Are you willing to receive, accept and work to transform your own understanding of what is historical?

Record your thoughts. You may place them in the chat.

After the session explore this link to discover whose land you now live and the treaties that impacted this land. [Invasion of America](#)



**Trace where your family came from and where it is now**

## Individual Reflection

What were the circumstances in the countries of origin that contributed to your family's placement in the USA?

Read the Land Acknowledgement Statement again and reflect on how you would want to talk about your family's coming to America.

Who inhabited the land(s) that your family settled before your family arrived?

How did your family experience discrimination, homelessness, and/or marginalization in the new setting or as a result of colonization?

Do you know if your family contributed to the displacement of other peoples where they settled? If so, how?

Do you know what pioneer means?

It means one who goes before and entrenches,  
makes the place safe for what might come next.

## Small Group Reflection

We want to remember our family and our ancestors, their stories and their witness as well as their blind spots and failures, even as we may one day be remembered.

Name one or two ancestors to whom you wish to dedicate this time of learning and work around the Doctrine of Discovery, and to share a few words about their story.

## What have been the results of the Doctrine of Discovery?

The Three “E’s” provide a helpful way to summarize the destructive results of the Doctrine of Discovery.

1. **Enslavement/Exploitation** – Because the Doctrine did not consider Indigenous Peoples to be human if they weren’t Christian, conquering nations were allowed to make slaves of the people they encountered. For example of the 1452 Papal Bull *Dum Diversas* says that Christian sovereigns are empowered by the Church to “invade, capture vanquish and subdue... all Saracens (Muslims) and Pagans and all enemies of Christ... to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery... and to take away all their possessions and property.”
2. **Extraction** – In many places around the world, the Doctrine of Discovery has legitimated mining, fracking, logging, water theft, plantation agriculture, and other extraction industries that take resources from Indigenous communities to benefit the wealth of those descended from Europeans and colonial or postcolonial nations.
3. **Extermination/Extinction** – Before Europeans came to North America, there were as many as 18 million Indigenous Peoples living on the continent. By the end of the 19th century, they numbered fewer than 250,000. Millions of people died because they did not have natural immunity to European diseases, nor could they resist the technologies of war the Europeans used to overpower and decimate native populations. So when European settlers arrived on the scene the country often appeared to be nearly empty or devoid of significant human activity <https://dofdmendo.org/fact-sheet/>

For Further Reflection:

This quote from the website associated with the Doctrine of Discovery film we watched is very telling about the way the past is still affecting the way we treat our neighbors today:

“The global scale with which the Doctrine of Discovery expressed itself in the “Age of Discovery”—first in Africa, then the Americas, and beyond—created a unified Christendom, which became the opposing force against the great global plurality of cultures.”

Thinking about this phrase: “A unified Christendom became the opposing force against the great global plurality of cultures”

What are the implications of this mindset?

Where have you seen the implications of this mindset in your own contexts?

3331. Doctrine of Discovery 2016 Book of Resolutions, #3331

Whereas, in 2007 the United Nations passed the “Declaration of Indigenous Peoples” that called into question the validity of the Christian Doctrine of Discovery, which for centuries served as “legal” rationale for stealing land and dehumanizing aboriginal peoples, as well as justification for the establishment of boarding schools throughout North America to “civilize” Indian children; and

Whereas, in 2009 President Obama pledged to the Native people the United States’ support of the “Declaration of Indigenous Peoples”; and

Whereas, “The Declaration of Indigenous Peoples” seeks to right the historical wrongs through the use of the papal bulls of the Roman Catholic Church that are official decrees by the pope sanctioning the seizing of indigenous lands worldwide; and

Whereas, in 1452 the Papal Bull Romanus Pontifex, declaring war against all non-Christians throughout the world and sanctioning and promoting the conquest, colonization, and exploitation of non-Christian nations and their territories; and

Whereas, in 1453 Spain was given rights of conquest and dominion over one side of the globe and Portugal the other; and

Whereas, in 1823 the Christian Doctrine of Discovery was adopted into law by the US Supreme Court (Johnson V. McIntosh). Chief Justice Marshall observed that Christian European nations had assumed dominion over the lands of America—and upon discovery, Indians had lost their rights to complete sovereignty as independent nations and retained a mere right of occupancy in their lands;

Therefore be it resolved, all levels of The United Methodist Church are called to condemn the Doctrine of Discovery as a legal document and basis for the seizing of native lands and abuses of human rights of indigenous peoples; and

Be it further resolved, that The United Methodist Church will work toward eliminating the Doctrine of Discovery as a means to subjugate indigenous peoples of property and land.

ADOPTED 2012  
RESOLUTION #3331, 2012 BOOK OF RESOLUTION

## Closing Ritual

Words taken from A Statement from the Council of Bishops as We Embark on a Journey Toward Healing Relationships with Indigenous Peoples 2012

**From the Statement of Repentance:** It is time to free captive Native and indigenous peoples from institutional church oppression and learn from them spiritual values that will see us through our own current spiritual emergencies, save our embattled earth and enable humankind to live as one with creation and all living creatures within it—including ourselves.

**Our work in healing broken relationships must be specific, actionable and accountable.**

**Morally, it must be part of our denomination's discourse, programming and policies.**

The question is whether the church is strong enough to bring about change in the United States and around the world where indigenous peoples have been decimated, assimilated, abused, and left victims of dominant Western economies and the imposition of oppressive materialistic cultural values.

**Our work in healing broken relationships must be specific, actionable and accountable.**

**Morally, it must be part of our denomination's discourse, programming and policies.**

To our Native and indigenous brothers and sisters we say: We have destroyed your way of life, dehumanized your people and degraded your cultures, along with your dreams, your peace and your great love for the land. We acknowledge the pain of your nation peoples and our sinful behavior in these events. We know that past history has been filled with violence against you. We have confiscated your land. We have recklessly destroyed your cultures.

**Our work in healing broken relationships must be specific, actionable and accountable.**

**Morally, it must be part of our denomination's discourse, programming and policies.**

Today we acknowledge that all this is not in the past. Assaults continue on your cultures, continuing the historic patterns of abuse, the demeaning of your spirituality, the questioning of your leadership, the neglecting of the critical issues of hunger, health, employment, and sovereignty. We must not yield to historical amnesia.

**Our work in healing broken relationships must be specific, actionable and accountable.**

**Morally, it must be part of our denomination's discourse, programming and policies.**

We pray to God to give us a new heart and a new spirit through Jesus Christ, who breaks down the dividing walls of hostility, so that we may truly repent of our grave sins, petition for forgiveness, and work towards healing

**On this day we come, seeking divine forgiveness and holding ourselves accountable to live in faithfulness and reconciliation for the sake of the earth and seven generations**

Assurance of Grace

We believe in the Holy One, Maker of us all, who is faithful to forgive us, cleanse us and free us to walk in wholeness.

Friends, believe and accept the good news of Christ's peace: Justice, healing, joy!

## Preparation For Step 3

- ☐ Bring dirt or a plant from your place with you for Step 3
- ☐ Read: [Sky Woman Falling](#) Chapter 1 of Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer
- ☐ View [Rev. Jim Bear Jacobs sermon on creation](#)
- ☐ Read article by Rev. Randy Wooley: <http://sojo.net/magazine/may-2019/fullness-thereof>
- ☐ Read: On This Spirit Walk: Chapter 5 Creation
- ☐ Videos that will be used during the session:
  - ☐ [Indigenizing Theology](#)
  - ☐ [Episode 5.4: Randy Woodley on Indigenous Theology & the Harmony Way - Western Theological Seminary](#)

## Step 3 Theological Work Around Creation Care Within An Indigenous Worldview

Land Acknowledgement Statement

By Emily Jarrett Hughes <https://www.wisdomdances.com/standing-in-complexity/>

*Before speaking this, I like to invite people to rub their hands together and put them on their hearts. Then I ask people to open their arms and open their hearts to the people in the circle, pausing to look around the circle.*

*We open our hearts to the world surrounding us. We greet the trees, the stones, the water, the birds and animals as our elders.*

*We acknowledge the indigenous people – Dakota, Ojibwe, Ho-Chunk – who have been and continue to be deeply interrelated with this place, Mnisota Makoce. May what we are about to do help us move towards living here in an honorable way.*

*We welcome our family of ancestors and the love, hopes, and dreams they have sent forward to us.*

*We acknowledge our collective debts to black, brown, and immigrant people. May what we are about to do fuel our hunger and courage to come into right relationship.*

*With deep respect, we ask for guidance from our teachers for living in a good way.*

*We express our profound gratitude for all the lives that have contributed to ours. In return we share our love and dedication to healing. May what we are about to do help us be in life-giving, reciprocal exchange with all our ancestors, all our relatives, and with future generations.*

**While the Land Acknowledgment Statement is read, hold the earth or plant and let it inform the words of the Land Acknowledgement Statement: record your feelings, thoughts, and words. You may place them in the chat.**

**Reread the statement yourself. Highlight those words or thoughts in the statement which strike you, challenge you, or make you question.**

## Centering

“She fell like a maple seed pirouetting on the autumn breeze.”  
Robin Kimmerer “Braiding SweetGrass”

How does this story compare and contrast with the biblical creation story?

How does this story inform the biblical story?

How does this story fit in with your own creation care narrative?

At one time in history, Christianity celebrated beauty, compassion, justice and creativity and provided a path of ecstatic connection with all creation. Matthew Fox

Jeremiah 4:23–28

I looked at the earth—it was chaos and emptiness.

I looked to the heavens—their light was gone. I looked to the mountains—they quaked, and the hills swayed back and forth.

I looked—I saw no one. Nothing! All the birds had flown away.

I looked—the fertile land was desert. All its towns laid waste before Yahweh, before God’s fierce wrath.

Thus says YHWH: “The whole land will be desolate, but I will not completely destroy it.

So the earth mourns and the heavens above turn black. For I made known my intentions. I made up my mind. I will not turn back.”

## Indigenizing Theology

We will watch a portion of a video featuring Rev. Dr. Randy Woodley, Distinguished Professor of Faith and Culture and Director of Intercultural and Indigenous Studies at Portland Seminary, talks with Dr. Travis West about indigenous theology and what he calls, the Harmony Way.

## Small Group Discussion

Look at your soil: where did it come from?

What healing things are happening on the soil/place that this earth came from?

How are your ‘people’ living in harmony with Earth?

What damaging things are happening on the soil/place that this earth came from?

What is the disconnect from harmony?

What are you doing to create harmony on the place you are borrowing?

**“To Jesus, as it should be to us, the earth is wholly spiritual, as are our bodies.”**

**--Randy Woodley**

## **Small Group Discussion**

What strikes you about the language we use for creation?

What strikes you about the hierarchy model of Western Theological View?

Where have you seen this model played out in land use?

What strikes you about changing to an Indigenous Theological View?

Have you seen this world view played out anywhere?

What would change if this became our model?

## **Individual/Group Reflection**

*Colosians 1:15-17 “Christ is the reflection of God’s glory, the exact representation of God’s being; all things are sustained by God’s powerful Word. for in Christ were created all things in heaven and on earth: everything visible and invisible, Thrones, Dominations, Sovereignities, Powers—all things were created through Christ and for Christ. Before anything was created, Christ existed, and all things hold together in Christ.”*

*John 1:1-3 IN THE BEGINNING there was the Word; the Word was in God’s presence, and the Word was God. The Word was present to God from the beginning. Through the Word all things came into being, and apart from the Word nothing came into being that has come into being.*

*Hebrews 1:3 “Christ is the reflection of God’s glory, the exact representation of God’s being; all things are sustained by Christ’s powerful Word.”*

*1 Corinthians 8:6 “Before anything was created, Christ existed, and all things hold together in Christ.”*

*2 Corinthians 5:19 “This means that through Christ, the world was fully reconciled again to God, who didn’t hold our transgressions against us, but instead entrusted us with this message of reconciliation.”*

How does Jesus as creator who saves for the purpose of Shalom, instead of for individual salvation, change how we speak of creation and reconciliation of and for the whole earth

Randy Woodley says: “I am living what I believe” What if we really believe that Jesus saves for the purpose of Shalom for all of creation? How would we live?

As we read these scriptures ask yourself these questions and reflect on how this will be reflected in your LAS. Write down the words that come to mind that you might be able to include in your LAS.



## Closing Ritual

"The worst thing we ever did  
was put God in the sky out of reach  
pulling the divinity from the leaf,  
sifting out the holy from our bones,  
insisting God isn't bursting dazzlement  
through everything we've made  
a hard commitment to see as ordinary,  
stripping the sacred from everywhere  
to put in a cloud man elsewhere,  
prying closeness from your heart.

The worst thing we ever did  
was take the dance and the song  
out of prayer  
made it sit up straight  
and cross its legs  
removed it of rejoicing  
wiped clean its hip sway,  
its questions,  
its ecstatic yowl,  
its tears.

The worst thing we ever did is pretend  
God isn't the easiest thing  
in this Universe  
available to every soul  
in every breath"

~ Chelan Harkin, in poetry book 'Susceptible to Light'

Only when the last tree has died & last river has been poisoned & the last  
fish has been caught will we realize that we cannot eat money.

19th Century Cree Indian

## Preparation For Step 4

- ☐ Read: [Don't Just Resist. Return to Who You Are](#)
- ☐ Read: [White Allies, Let's Be Honest About Decolonization - YES! Magazine](#)
- ☐ (And other articles from the [Spring 2018 Decolonize Issue](#) of Yes Magazine)
- ☐ Listen to: [S2 E5: Little War on the Prairie – Scene on Radio](#)
- ☐ Read: Chapter 8 [On This Spirit Walk](#), “Justice”

For Reflection in preparation for Step 4

Are you aware of the Native American communities that were and are in your area?

Use this map to help: <https://native-land.ca/>

What do you think is the attitude of the majority culture towards Native people who live among you?


What do you know about the UMC and Native American Communities?

### Other Reading Material Not required

Anything about Indian boarding schools or Native children adoption practices in the US:

[Lost Lives, Lost Culture: The Forgotten History of Indigenous Boarding Schools](#)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/19/us/us-canada-indigenous-boarding-residential-schools.html>

Or Watch:  [How the US stole thousands of Native American children](#)

Read about decolonizing food:

Harvest Nation: Rematuration, returning seeds to mother earth

<https://www.womenspress.com/turtle-island-stories-women-leading-minnesotas-sustainable-agriculture-movement/>

The Sioux Chef: reclaiming Native Food in a restaurant and community

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/dining/reviews/ct-food-column-owamni-indigenous-native-no-rth-american-indian-20211118-i3mdpglfr5bbhaa7kthfrjrvwy-story.html?>

Or watch this trailer about the food movement in the Apache Nation: <https://gather.film/> or watch the whole film.

Books that speak to Decolonization and seeing the world in a different light:

Between Helpless and the Darkness by Brent Olson

This Tender Land by William Kent Krueger

Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer

[The Serviceberry – Emergence Magazine](#)

The Seed Keeper by Diane Wilson

## Step 4

# Decolonization is Not a Metaphor: Learning DeColonization Language and Actions

Land Acknowledgement Statement From: Native Governance Center

### Minnesota Land Acknowledgement

*Mni Sota Makoce* (Minnesota) is the homeland of the Dakota people. The Dakota have lived here for many thousands of years. Anishinaabe people reside here, too, and reached their current homelands after following the megis shell to the food that grows on water (*manoomin*, or wild rice). Indigenous people from other Tribal nations also reside in Minnesota and have made innumerable contributions to our region.

Tribal nations negotiated government to government, preserving their sovereign land, rights, and privileges through treaties. When land wasn't ceded through good faith efforts, it was often stolen from our Indigenous relatives. In 1851, the Dakota signed the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, ceding land in southern and western Minnesota to the United States government. Dakota leaders faced insurmountable odds during the treaty process. In addition to inflating their unpaid debts, white negotiators from the federal government threatened to push the Dakota to the Rocky Mountains by force with "100,000 men." Dakota leaders had little choice but to sign the treaty to protect their people. In the end, the federal government has never paid the approximately \$3 million promised in the treaty.

Both the State of Minnesota and the United States Government carried out genocide, ethnic cleansing, and forced removal against the Dakota as a way to acquire land. They broke promises. Despite centuries of colonial theft and violence, this is *still* Indigenous land. It will *always* be Indigenous land. Indigenous people are not relics of the past. We are still here, and we continue to demonstrate our talents and gifts amidst a backdrop of ongoing colonialism and oppression. We are worth celebrating.

**While the Land Acknowledgment Statement is read, hold the earth or plant and let it inform the words of the Land Acknowledgement Statement: record your feelings, thoughts, and words. You may place them in the chat.**

**Reread the statement yourself. Highlight those words or thoughts in the statement which strike you, challenge you, or make you question.**

## Definitions

Colonization, at its core, is about creating separation—separation among people and separation from spirit and our connection to the Earth. Humans have been taking more than we need, and we haven't been giving enough back. JOSUÉ RIVAS

Colonization is about negating the stories and lived experiences of the cultures that don't fit into the colonizers agenda.

Colonization is taking resources that don't belong to any one person and thinking you have the right to own them for yourself.

Colonization is disconnection from the land, from ourselves, and from our culture.  
TAIAIAKE ALFRED

## Small Group Discussion

As you have explored this journey toward a Land Acknowledgement, which I hope you are discovering is so much more than writing a statement, discuss in your small group

What have you discovered are the values and truth differences between a colonizing mindset and a creation based mindset?

How do these values and truths inform your practice as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

### Decolonization

To form a different point of reference that  
connects us to the land that nurtures us  
the Creator who created us and  
the integration of the community in which we live.

To form a different point of reference to that which is valuable and true.

## Small Group Discussion

What has colonization done to the land on which you live?

What has colonization done to the people with whom you associate/with whom you love?

What has colonization done to those who had a totally different world view?

What has colonization done to the psyche of the world in which we live and move and have our being?

What would happen if you changed your stories to creation stories rather than colonization stories? How would you do that?

**After all that we have heard and learned so far, how would you reflect this travesty in your LAS for your own place**

“Decolonization: freeing people from control  
by the dominant culture”

Bertha Koweluk, UMWomen, Nome Alaska

## Small Group Discussion

How are you holding the idea that decolonizing work is “uneasy and unsettled...and neither reconciles present grievances nor forecloses future conflict?”

What examples have you seen or read about decolonization in action?

What might it look like for you to be an unsettled, uncomfortable “ally committed to the strength and well-being of Indigenous nations?” to listen to the voices of indigenous peoples and “learn from indigenous culture how to walk differently and love the land as best you can”?

## Optional Individual Reflection

“Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

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Do you hear the **d**ecolonization language in this simple prayer of confession?

What could be added to this prayer to make the language of decolonization stronger? (hint: remember that salvation and redemption is not only for human beings)

Revise the prayer together to reflect the language of decolonization.

What do you think the reaction of your congregation would be if this was a prayer of confession in your worship settings?

How might this language show up in your Land Acknowledgement Statements?

John Wesley said that as we confess our sins we become more and more dead to sin and more and more alive to God.  
(from the Scriptural Way to Salvation)

We pray for a decolonized future every time we say the Jesus Prayer: “Thy kindom come on earth as it is in heaven.” or as it is written in the First Nations Edition of the NT: “Bring your good road to us, where the beauty of your ways in the spirit-world above is reflected in the earth below.” M. Wildman, Terry. First Nations Version (p. 131). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

### For further reflection:

In our Social Creeds as UM's we actually speak about what it means to live in a **decolonized** community. The Social Creeds are meant to be a means by which we can live out our baptismal vows.

#### **The Social Community, ¶162 2016 Book of Discipline, Social Principles ¶162**

"The rights and privileges a society bestows upon or withholds from those who comprise it indicate the relative esteem in which that society holds particular persons and groups of persons. We affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God. We therefore work toward societies in which each person's value is recognized, maintained, and strengthened. We support the basic rights of all persons to equal access to housing, education, communication, employment, medical care, legal redress for grievances, and physical protection. We deplore acts of hate or violence against groups or persons based on race, color, national origin, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, status, economic condition, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religious affiliation. Our respect for the inherent dignity of all persons leads us to call for the recognition, protection, and implementation of the principles of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights so that communities and individuals may claim and enjoy their universal, indivisible, and inalienable rights."

**How does a Land Acknowledgement Statement  
help us fulfill the Social Principles  
and our Baptismal Vow?**

## Closing Ritual

In our day, the earth cries out: "can no one see this destruction?"

In our day, the poor cry out: "can no one see this hunger?"

In our day, the victims of war cry out: "can no one see this violence?"

In our day, the refugees of the climate crisis cry out: "can no one see our struggle to survive?"

In our day, those most vulnerable cry out: "can no one see this fear?"

**We acknowledge our choice to turn away.**

### WORDS OF ASSURANCE

God's love for us is without limit. God's call to us is unending.

**Surrounded by God's grace, we hear the call to help create a new day:**

a day where no one shall hurt or destroy in all this holy creation.

**We will open our eyes to see, our hearts to care, and our lives to shape this vision. Amen.**

*Liturgy from Seasons of the Spirit WOOD LAKE PUBLISHING INC. 485 Beaver Lake Road, Kelowna, BC V4V 1S5 Canada*

## Preparation For Step 5:

- ☐ Read: [A guide to Indigenous land acknowledgment](#)
- ☐ Read: “The Geography of Whiteness” an interview with Willie Jennings included in the supplemental material in the guidebook
- ☐ One church’s process in writing a Land Acknowledgement Statement: [Land – Richfield United Methodist Church](#)
- ☐ Read: <https://theconversation.com/land-acknowledgments-meant-to-honor-indigenous-people-too-of-ten-do-the-opposite-erasing-american-indians-and-sanitizing-history-instead-163787>

In preparation for this step answer and journal these self reflective questions

- ☐ Why am I doing this land acknowledgment? (If you’re hoping to inspire others to take action to support Indigenous communities, you’re on the right track. If you’re delivering a land acknowledgment out of guilt or because *everyone else* is doing it, more self-reflection is in order.)
- ☐ What is my end goal? (What do you hope listeners will do after hearing the acknowledgement?)
- ☐ When will I have the largest impact? (Think about your timing and audience, specifically.)

WE WILL WANT TO BE DISQUIETED BY OUR LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT  
STATEMENT OR IT WON’T BE HELPFUL OR AUTHENTIC

*“Land acknowledgments are not harmful, we believe, if they are done in a way that is respectful of the Indigenous nations who claim the land, accurately tell the story of how the land passed from Indigenous to non-Indigenous control, and chart a path forward for redressing the harm inflicted through the process of land dispossession.”*

## Step 5

### Writing a Land Acknowledgement Statement

*"Our relationship with land cannot heal until we hear its stories."*

*Robin Wall Kimmerer, quote from [Braiding Sweetgrass](#)*

#### **Minnesota Council of Churches Land Acknowledgement**

The Minnesota Council of Churches acknowledges that we are located on the ancestral homeland of the Dakota People. We are in close proximity to the territories of the Anishinabe and Ho-Chunk peoples. This land has been stewarded as a living relative by the Dakota for generations. The United States government effectively stole this land from the Dakota people through a series of unjust treaties and broken promises, followed by targeted efforts of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and forced removal.

The Minnesota Council of Churches, born out of White Protestantism, recognizes our complicity in these matters. The United States government often carried out this injustice in cooperation with institutionalized white churches. The trauma of forced assimilation and the boarding school system is a stain that cannot be washed away. But we can repent of that past and turn towards a more just future.

We look now to the Dakota people and indeed all Native American communities located in the State of Minnesota as examples of resilience, resistance, and strength. We stand resolute in our commitment to oppose any threat to Indigenous culture or tribal sovereignty, be it political, industrial, or religious. We were wrong, we can do better, we will do better.

**While the Land Acknowledgment Statement is read, hold the earth or plant and let it inform the words of the Land Acknowledgement Statement: record your feelings, thoughts, and words. You may place them in the chat.**

**Reread the statement yourself. Highlight those words or thoughts in the statement which strike you, challenge you, or make you question.**

#### Centering–Small Group

Do you have a place, a piece of land that is important to you?

Do you own it?

Is it a place in the past or the present?

Has it stayed the same throughout your life?

What emotions do you feel when you think of that land?

What if someone had just come along and said, that is mine, I want it, give it to me.

Have you ever been a part of a church closure? Or have you ever been a part of selling church property?

What went into that process?

What emotions did you experience, either personally or collectively?



## The Present

"I love developed public lands with amenities, and also the rugged and undeveloped experience other public lands offer. As an Ojibwe man, I do sometimes lament the loss of so much of our ancestral homeland to private ownership. I wonder what it was like for my ancestors, who were able to travel freely up and down the shores of Lake Superior without having to worry about trespassing.



Public lands are here for everyone to enjoy and find their own sense of peace in nature. Nature sustains, connects and inspires all of us. As the original owners of this land, Indigenous people have strong traditions of hospitality and being welcoming. Learn about the history of the land and join me in being a land steward."

Travis Novitsky, Photographer and Land Steward member of the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

"As Anishinaabe (Ojibwe), the outdoors is our natural habitat. It's our way of life. Nature is what makes up our being, and the Anishinaabe are a part of nature. You can't have one without the other. Healing takes place in nature. In order to achieve a level of sacrifice, we fast in nature to seek higher learning, a vision if you will. Nature is the manidoog (spirits) gift to the Anishinaabe to sustain, enhance and preserve life.

I really enjoy spearing fish with my kids. Accepting the life being given is a great honor to the one taking the fish and to the fish themselves. Seeing my boys fulfilling a provider role for our people is very empowering.

Utilizing our public lands is an act of gratitude to our ancestors, who ensured we have access to land to accept the gifts of the manidoog. They knew that in order to maintain our way of life as the United States encapsulated us, they had to be certain that the U.S. agreed that we retain our right to occupy space. We come from the land and eventually will return to the land when our time comes to change worlds.

As Anishinaabe, walking a trail or spending time next to water, being present with trees, water and rocks boosts our spiritual energy, our life force. The trees are manidoog that agreed to take away our sadness and give us life in return. There is a manidoo in every body of water that was placed there to protect the Anishinaabe. Spending time with these beings nourishes our spirits, and the manidoog also appreciates our presence just as much."

Bradley Harrington Tribal Liaison with the Minnesota DNR Commissioner's Office

I love spending time in my public lands because I want to know the place I call home. I want to know the land in the dark, and in the light. I want to know what it's like when I traverse it slow, or fast. I want to know what trails cross rivers and streams in the winter that I can't traverse in the summer. There are trails to places you can't reach in a car!





As an Indigenous person, I view the topic of public lands through a nuanced lens. I struggle, sometimes, understanding that much of the public land we have nowadays came from further dislocation of native peoples — however, I feel extremely fortunate to be a visitor on these lands. I’m grateful we still have places where we can *all* play.

Public lands are for all of us to enjoy and explore and put our bodies in motion. If we go outdoors with friends or family, we can explore together and form deeper personal connections. I believe that all of us who utilize public lands are connected, so the next time you see someone playing in public lands in a way different than you are, I

suggest a smile and a nod. Alexandra Houchin, Ultra-Cycling Champion Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

Stories from the MN DNR November 2021 Trailblazer Newsletter

“When we talk about land, land is part of who we are. It’s a mixture of our blood, our past, our current, and our future. We carry our ancestors in us, and they’re around us. **As you all do.**” Mary Lyons  
(Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe)

#### Small Group

What strikes you as you read these reflections?

Are there new insights you had not thought of before?

What words would you use to describe the present ways Native People’s view land?

**IF A LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT IS DISCOMFORTING AND TRIGGERS UNCOMFORTABLE CONVERSATIONS VERSUS SELF-CONGRATULATION, IT IS LIKELY ON THE RIGHT TRACK.**

#### Small Group

How do you think an honest LAS will be received in your context?

Are there ways you could craft it so that it can be honest but not off putting?

Is ‘not being off putting’ something we should be concerned about?

What other questions and concerns would you like to talk about?

## The Future/The Action

While the call to action in the Land Acknowledgement Statement could be broad it should also be specific enough to encourage and invite reflection so that hearers minds and hearts are open to see evil & injustice in whatever way it presents itself. And when seeing evil and injustice have a willingness to act in some way to bring about God's kin-dom on earth.

### 2021-2024 Quadrennial Vision For Native American Ministries

Regardless of the outcome of the next General Conference, the challenges facing Indigenous communities today will continue. Here are the four areas of focus the Native American Comprehensive Plan will emphasize in the coming quadrennium:

- Preserving Indigenous Language
- Understanding Indigenous Spirituality
- Addressing the epidemic of violence against Indigenous women and children
- Seeking climate justice globally

We respectfully ask for your support in ensuring the continuation of the work of ALL racial ethnic plans in The United Methodist Church.

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## Closing Ritual

*For two voices or call and response*

**One:** I am the circling hawk  
dancing with joy for life.

**Response: God, you invite us to join in the dance!**

**One:** I am the faithful soil  
nourishing each life I touch.

**Response: You invite us to join in the caring.**

**One:** I am the swift stream  
singing my thanks for life.

**Response: You invite us to join in the song.**

**One:** I am the blazing star  
bringing wonder to life.

**Response: You invite us to join in the wonder.**

**One:** I am the voice of Creation  
praising the God who shapes life:

**Response: You invite us to join in the praise.**

Generous God, creation is your song of love.  
May we stop to listen and open our hearts to  
the melody

so that we might join in the singing. Amen.

*Two voices or call and response*

**One:** For times when we have viewed  
Planet Earth as a source of endless  
resources,

**Response: forgive.**

**One:** Earth's waters are polluted with  
toxins,

**Response: forgive.**

**One:** For times when we have cared more  
about progress than Planet Earth,

**Together: forgive.**

**One:** Planet Earth is our sanctuary home.

**Response: We celebrate Earth as our  
home and live in the goodness of God's  
forgiveness.**

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Seasons of the Spirit™

## Some help as you begin to write your statements

### Land acknowledgement statements can be a spiritual practice

#### IF they remind us of

- a past that is full of terror,
- a present that both acknowledges that the land we stand on is stolen; that it cries out with the blood of generations of beloved children of God, and that acknowledges that Native Peoples continue to live, breathe and have their being on this land,
- a future that envisions the kin-dom of God realized on earth as God envisions it: without a separation of humanity, with justice for the land and for the people for whom this land was and is home.
- an action that has meaning for Native American people

The Land [Invasion of America](#) re-examine this map as you reflect on these questions

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#### Questions to ask yourself

Who lived on your land?

Whose blood cries out from your land?

What evidence is there of their existence in your area?

What happened to the Native peoples who lived in your area?

Where are they now?

What words of repentance feel authentic to you?

What do you want to say to them and to those who will hear your statement?

---

### Preparation For Step 6

- ☐ Write a Land Acknowledgement Statement for your own context
- ☐ Read and reflect on **AN OPEN LETTER TO ALL UNITED METHODIST BISHOPS SERVING IN THE UNITED STATES** found in the supplemental materials; particularly the Native American Comprehensive Plan outlined in the letter.
- ☐ [Beyond Land Acknowledgment: A Guide](#) This is an excellent download that will give you many ideas for what is next

## Step 6 Next Steps

### Land Acknowledgement Statements: Reading and Reflection Moving Toward Relationships

#### Small Group : Sharing Land acknowledgement statements

As we have done at the beginning of each step, as the statements are read, write your feelings, reactions, convictions, hopes that surface as the statements are read.

If the reader would like to hear those reactions they may ask for feedback. If they would simply like to read the statement and move on to the next person, give each other that grace.

#### Small Group

Each small group will have scenarios to discuss and explore about current justice situations of the native peoples in the State of Minnesota. In your groups you will reflect on these questions:

Observations of the scenario.

How does this scenario make you feel? What justice issues are being addressed? What are the potential conflicts? What are the potential benefits?

Now what? Lingering questions? What would you want to do or know more about in order to respond to this scenario?

The United Methodist Church must acknowledge and respond to the real and recurring trauma experienced by Native American communities, honoring the continued hope we maintain in our People, in our call and in our Creator.

**Land acknowledgment alone is not enough.** It's merely a starting point. Ask yourself: how do I plan to take action to support Indigenous communities?

#### **At the end of the day, remember:**

**Build real, authentic relationships with Indigenous people.** In addition to normal employment and family obligations, Indigenous people are working to heal their traumas, learn their languages, and support their nations. If you reach out for help, lead the conversation by asking an Indigenous person what you can do for them. Chances are, they're likely overworked and could use *your* help.

Here are some ideas and examples of ways to go beyond Land Acknowledgement Statements

- Example of a church that made a decision to act:  
<https://www.dakotasumc.org/news/canyon-lake-umc-walks-with-native-american-families>
- Explore: Commit to returning land. [Local, state, and federal governments around the world are currently returning land to Indigenous people. Individuals are returning their land, too. Learn more about your options to return your land](#)
- Reflection on the impact of Native American boarding schools by UMC clergy. Listen for what the Revs. Tweedy and Charles ask non native churches to do.  
<https://www.facebook.com/GCORRUMC/videos/646227896404077>
- Remember what UMC Native Americans have asked of us in the Native American Comprehensive Plan

## Closing Ritual

From Kelly Sherman-Conroy's Blog <https://sacredthoughts.blog/about-me/>

Prayers of Intercession: wóčhekiye Written by Native Theologian Kelly Sherman-Conroy

God, our magnificent Teacher, let this sacred time of silence bring forward in our hearts all that hides and keeps us from not being fully present in relationship with you and your Beloved Community.

**No longer will we survive but not live. Move forward, but not grow. Sit in silence, but not hear. Within this quietness, begins growth.**

Creator God, we acknowledge the land with which we reside carries the stories of suffering, courage, and renewal, and continues to hear the cries of your sacred people. Help us Lord to hear and learn the stories of its original stewards.

**No longer forgotten and unseen. May Indigenous People know that they are remembered and seen by you Uniting God.**

God of all nations, you have shown us that the Indigenous People of this land exemplify the diversity of the gifts you instill within the kin of your creation. We give you thanks for the diversity of peoples, culture and blessings of this wonderful family of creation.

**No longer forced into silence. May the Dakota, Anishinaabe, and all ancestral people of this land teach us to honor the gifts of all creation, our Beloved Community.**

God of the healing spirit, we pray that your healing grace may continue to move through our Indigenous siblings and all who live here. Together may we become free from the bonds of suffering.

**No longer will we remain divided. We pray that our minds, our bodies, our spirits, know your healing grace, so that we may live as one family with many beautiful gifts.**

Loving God, you gave us your Son Jesus Christ, the great reconciler who loved us so much that he taught us how to experience your full community with our whole selves. Help us to trust in your unfailing love.

**Challenge us. Broaden our minds and guide us deeper into your sacred wisdom. When we become uncomfortable, quiet our spirit so that we can understand. As we pray, know that we are ready to learn. Help us daily to discover the wonders of your wisdom. Give us your strength to live and grow together in your spirit so that we become teachers of your limitless grace and love. AMEN**

Peacemaking doesn't mean passivity. It is the act of interrupting injustice without mirroring injustice, the act of disarming evil without destroying the evildoer, the act of finding a third way that is neither flight or fight but the careful arduous pursuit of reconciliation and justice.

**It is about a revolution of love that is big enough  
to set both the oppressed and the oppressors free**

--author unknown

## Supplemental Material

Explore the UMC Native American Comprehensive Plan website: <http://www.nacp-umc.org/>

[America ReFramed | Blood Memory | Season 8 | Episode 7](#) This episode is about Native American Adoptions. This may require a membership in PBS.

[S2 E5: Little War on the Prairie](#) Seeing White Podcast: about the hanging of Native Americans in Mankato. If you don't know this story you must listen to this podcast.

[Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization](#) by Elaine Enns and Ched Myers

### **A Statement from the Council of Bishops as We Embark on a Journey Toward Healing Relationships with Indigenous Peoples--2012**

#### **Preamble**

Today, as the Council of Bishops on behalf of The United Methodist Church, we stop to listen to our own hearts and our own voices. History is not only a body of information stored in archives for reference and study waiting to be mined by scholars and researchers. It is a living, breathing phenomenon that resides in us and among us framing our understanding of ourselves and each other. The history we recall in this moment continues to weigh upon all of us. Together we grieve the history which still weighs upon indigenous people around the world and Native Americans in the United States. This is not a romance of discovery and the struggle of pioneer life, settlement and tragedy. This is about the violent history of peoples whose families, communities and sovereign nations were destroyed by aggressive powers lusting for their lands, riches and seeking domination at the expense of their own existence. This is a story about the church's role in cooperating with and entering into collusive relationships with political forces resulting in the killing of Native women, children and men, the removal of Native nations from their homes, forcing them to march long death-defying distances to live on lands unsuitable for habitation, destroying peaceful villages, massacring helpless innocents, stealing tribal lands and resources, breaking sacred treaty agreements, removing children from their homes to imprison them in schools that would steal their heritage to make them "civilized," and in tragic intentional and inadvertent ways, sharing in and implementing the goals of Native extermination resulting in genocidal policies, programs and actions designed to vanquish, forever, whole Native and indigenous nations and peoples, communities and families from the earth.

#### **Scripture**

"For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners." (Matthew 9:13)

"Therefore I will judge you Oh house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!" (Ezekiel 18:30-31)

From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." (Matthew 4:17)



So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister\* has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister,\* and then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23-24)

Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. (Ephesians 2:13-14)

## **Native Quotes**

When one sits in the Hoop of the People, one must be responsible because all of creation is related. And the hurt of one is the hurt of all. And the honor of one is the honor of all. And whatever we do affects everything in the universe.

(Modern version from the Lakota White Buffalo Calf Woman)

"I did not know then how much was ended. When I look back now from this high hill of my old age, I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young. And I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people's dream died there. It was a beautiful dream...the nation's hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead. And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell, and I understood more than I was, for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of things in the spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one being."

(Black Elk, Lakota)

"There are many things to be shared with the Four Colors of humanity in our common destiny as one with our Mother the Earth. It is this sharing that must be considered with great care by the Elders and the medicine people who carry the Sacred Trusts, so that no harm may come to people through ignorance and misuse of these powerful forces."

(Resolution of the Fifth Annual Meetings of the Traditional Elders Circle, 1980)

"How smooth must be the language of the whites, when they can make right look like wrong, and wrong like right."

(Black Hawk, Sauk)

"I live in sorrow imprisoned, You are my Light, Your glory, my support. Behold not with malevolence the sins of man but forgive and cleanse; and so, O Lord, protect us beneath Your wings and let peace be out portion now and forever more. Amen."

(Queen Lili'uokalani, the last monarch of the Kingdom of Hawaii, composed as a prayer, March 22, 1895, while she was under house arrest in her palace in Honolulu.)

## **Statement of Repentance**

As the Council of Bishops, we are here to repent and express remorse for the church's past conduct in its relationships with Native and indigenous peoples in all the places where we have extended the mission of the church for over two hundred years. We are here to commit ourselves to addressing the wrong and asking for the forgiveness of those who have been wronged by failing them so profoundly. We confess to God, acknowledging our guilt, resolving to cease the harm, pledging ourselves to live differently, reversing the damage that has been done through our participation in violence, maltreatment and neglect of Native and indigenous peoples so that we may bring about healing and restoration to all. It is time to free captive Native and indigenous peoples from institutional church

oppression and learn from them spiritual values that will see us through our own current spiritual emergencies, save our embattled earth and enable humankind to live as one with creation and all living creatures within it—including ourselves. The question is whether the church is strong enough to bring about change in the United States and around the world where indigenous peoples have been decimated, assimilated, abused, and left victims of dominant Western economies and the imposition of oppressive materialistic cultural values. Our work in healing broken relationships must be specific, actionable and accountable. Morally, it must be part of our denomination's discourse, programming and policies. To our Native and indigenous brothers and sisters we say: We have destroyed your way of life, dehumanized your people and degraded your cultures, along with your dreams, your peace and your great love for the land. We acknowledge the pain of your nation peoples and our sinful behavior in these events. We know that past history has been filled with violence against you. We have confiscated your land. We have recklessly destroyed your cultures. Today we acknowledge that all this is not in the past. Assaults continue on your cultures, continuing the historic patterns of abuse, the demeaning of your spirituality, the questioning of your leadership, the neglecting of the critical issues of hunger, health, employment, and sovereignty. We must not yield to historical amnesia. We pray to God to give us a new heart and a new spirit through Jesus Christ, who breaks down the dividing walls of hostility, so that we may truly repent of our grave sins, petition for forgiveness, and work towards healing.

## **The Future**

The Council of Bishops will:

- Affirm commitment to empowering the presence of Native and indigenous people in the life of the denomination.
- Support Native American Ministries Sunday in U.S. annual conferences.
- Strengthen Committees on Native American Ministries (CONAM) in the U.S. and Native ministries in the central conferences.
- Support General Advances and church-wide funding for Native ministries.
- Commit ourselves to the development of new Native and indigenous ministries and strengthen our support for existing community entities.
- Create a theological statement that demonstrates a respect for the diversity of theology and ecclesiology that is found in the context of Native and Indigenous ministries.
- Commit to host Acts of Repentance in annual conferences.
- Commit to developing relationships of mutuality with Native peoples in local contexts.
- Initiate programs of education for non-Native people about why the Act of Repentance is important.

In partnership with Native ministry leaders and resource people throughout the Connection, the Council of Bishops will support:

- Developing new Native and indigenous leaders across the Connection including an increased number of people nurtured for service in congregational, annual conference, jurisdictional and central conference, and general church ministries, including the episcopacy.
- Initiating a plan of advocacy related to land and treaty rights, support for tribal sovereignty and cultural preservation; better health care and education for Native people and the safety of Native and indigenous women.

**June 1, 2014**

**AN OPEN LETTER TO ALL UNITED METHODIST BISHOPS SERVING IN THE UNITED STATES**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Greetings, grace, and peace in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! For several years it has been my honor to serve as the representative from the Council of Bishops to the Native American Comprehensive Plan (NACP). The NACP is one of three groups within our United Methodist structure that monitor and oversee the work of ministry among Native Americans and other indigenous people. The other two entities are the Native American International Caucus and the office of Native American and Indigenous Ministries of the General Board of Global Ministries. All three organizations provide valuable insights and information regarding the First Americans.

In 2012 at our General Conference in Tampa, Florida, our denomination entered into a four-year process of intentionally nurturing relationships and engaging in genuine healing work with Native Americans and indigenous people. A first step was when we participated at that conference in “An Act of Repentance Toward Healing Relationships with Indigenous People.” Also, we approved Resolution No. 3324, “Trail of Repentance and Healing.” Since that time some of our annual conferences have taken action to recognize the harm inflicted by the Church and to celebrate the contributions of Native people; others have not.

For United Methodists in the United States to acknowledge the plight of those who have suffered at the hands of our government and Church, we are required to do more than have one worship service. We can and should do more to develop reconciling connections.

Enclosed with this letter is a document that has been crafted by leaders of the three groups named above. I commend it to you. This extremely important correspondence beckons our United Methodist Church to action regarding Native people. This is a “wake-up call” that deserves your attention and response.

In just a few months, the Council of Bishops will journey to Oklahoma to continue this Council’s engagement in repentance and reconciliation, building upon our time last November in Cherokee, North Carolina. It is my prayer that we will come with a resolve that allows us to move beyond rhetoric to display genuine compassion and concern.

Sincerely, Robert E. Hayes Jr. Oklahoma Area,  
The United Methodist Church  
May 22, 2014  
The United Methodist Church of the  
Five U.S. Jurisdictions United States of America

Dear Sisters and Brothers of the United Methodist Church:

It is with the greatest urgency that we, the Executive Director of the Native American Comprehensive Plan, the Chairperson of the Native American International Caucus and the Executive Secretary of Native American and Indigenous Ministries of the General Board of Global Ministries, write this open letter to our denomination, to share with you our critical concern for the life of Native American and Indigenous ministries of the United Methodist Church (UMC) in the United States.

We testify to you the wonderful and gifted presence of our many Native American tribal communities, each unique in culture and language, many with a historic Methodist presence and witness spanning over 200 years. Many of these Native nations brought Methodism with them as they made their tragic death marches during the "Trails of Tears" and other historic Native removals. We have watched them faithfully serve the call of Christ Jesus, often times in the face of great obstacles as they sought recovery from historical trauma.

Over the course of our service to the church, we have labored diligently to listen, enact, encourage and fulfill our calling to our Native community, celebrating both our indigenous and Christian identities. In recent years we have witnessed demanding and destructive burdens placed upon Native American churches, fellowships and ministries which threaten the survival of a Native American presence within the UMC.

Ministry with poor people in the U.S. most assuredly includes the ministry of Native American disciples and ministry with Native American communities. In some cases, clergy and lay ministers have devotedly served pulpits while receiving only love offerings that would not provide even a tank of gas. This happened not only in the past, but continues today. We walk in the footsteps of our grandmothers and grandfathers who served and continue to serve as Sunday school teachers, lay leaders and vacation Bible school leaders, giving every penny and every ounce of strength to their churches and ministries. They do so as a way of honoring the Creator and ensuring that their ministry survives into future generations. More directly put, our ancestors lived sacrificial lives for the sake of the Gospel, and for the survival of the Native American presence in this denomination.

At the same time we have witnessed faithful leaders coming forth to serve, only to be disillusioned by the systemic pressures of the institutional church. These pressures are rooted in the dynamics of what constitutes being "church" in United Methodism. The church institution often seems to define who is worthy of being part of the UMC as measured against financial reports, apportionment figures and year-end reports. Our presence in the UMC is in danger of being extinguished because we cannot meet certain criteria and vital definitions required by our denomination. Additionally, Christianity, as missionized to indigenous peoples across the centuries, continues to exist in a historical vacuum without acknowledgement of the cultural backdrop documenting its evolution and relevance to most Native Americans today. These burdens have squeezed Native Ministries to the point of erosion and have destabilized the effectiveness of the UMC to witness to the power of the Gospel.

We write this letter now with hope of awakening our church from its slumber. Today, environmental, cultural and economic injustice threaten the ongoing survival of indigenous peoples throughout the world and clearly represent a threat to Native peoples in the U.S., and the presence of Native peoples in the UMC. We are the peoples to which our Creator saw fit to entrust this sacred land. We are the nations John Wesley believed were worthy sons and daughters of God when he began his ministry in Georgia. While we are concerned with our continued presence in this country, we are also concerned about our long term presence in United Methodism.

This is a crucial time in the life of The United Methodist Church. We have now recognized that sometimes slowly, and sometimes by leaps and bounds, our numbers in the U.S. have dwindled. We, as Native Christians, also know how it feels to see our people in decline. We believe this is a time when our UMC can make a vital difference in the lives of our families, communities and nations; and we, your

indigenous brothers and sisters, can offer our wisdom and gifts to the UMC, if we cultivate and tend our partnership.

As you are aware, our denomination has entered a time of working toward healing relationships with Native American and indigenous peoples through an Act of Repentance (AOR) at the 2012 General Conference. It is our denomination's attempt at correcting the harms and trauma that have been and continue to be inflicted upon indigenous communities. We have had conversations and questions from some of our brothers and sisters in annual conferences who are earnestly working on their own journeys toward services of repentance. We have also heard of unreasonable pressures related to AOR activities being placed upon some of our annual conference Committees on Native American Ministries (CONAM's), Native American clergy and laity, and Native American Ministries in general. Because we feel this is an urgent matter, we are sharing these recommendations with the UMC for its work surrounding AOR activities and the work related to Native American Ministries:

- An AOR Service of Repentance is only a starting point for Annual Conferences, not the end. Bishops, Cabinets and annual conferences must realize that there can be no timeline to “complete” this work. This will be an ongoing task of the United Methodist Church.
- Any AOR actions must be conducted in communication with Native American peoples within each annual conference. This can be done with CONAM's, Native American churches and fellowships, Native American organizations and/or local tribal communities. (It is inaccurate and insufficient to say, "we have no Native Americans in our conference"). Annual conference commissions on archives and history should provide leadership in this effort as well.
- It is inappropriate and even sinful to insist that the Native American community plan this work for the annual conferences. Any actions of repentance must be led by the non-Native American leadership of the annual conference, including the provision of financial support for meetings, trainings, publications, etc. that the conference deems necessary.
- The structures and organizations of the church must recognize it is inappropriate to telescope Native American Ministries under the broader umbrella of “Racial-Ethnic Ministries”, assigning this crucial ministry to a single person who in many cases is not a Native American. It is the purpose of conference CONAM's to "... determine the distribution of the Native American Ministries Sunday offering, coordinate the promotion of Native American Ministries Sunday, and monitor Native American ministries within the annual conference." (§1654) If the work of the CONAM is relegated to a single person under the umbrella of "Racial Ethnic Ministries" or "Connectional Table" structures, how can the Disciplinary directive be appropriately carried out? It is particularly important that Native American United Methodist persons be engaged in this work or we find ourselves back in all-too-familiar situations where non-Natives make decisions for Native people related to the creation and conduct of Native ministries.

Additionally, it is outside the letter and intent of The Book of Discipline to combine gifts given through the Native American Ministries Sunday Offering with the wider field of Racial Ethnic Ministries or Connectional Table funding decisions, or to insist that these funds be used for AOR work in annual conferences. In many conferences this offering constitutes the entire budget for ministry with Native Americans. Annual conference participation in the promotion of Native American Ministries Sunday is essential for both the actual realized funding that it provides, but also symbolically for the sense of affirmation offered to Native Americans inside and outside of the UMC.

- Engaging in repentance for historic and contemporary actions against indigenous peoples must include a plan for restoration of right relationship with Native Americans in each conference. Examples of what might be included in such a plan are:
  - to work toward fully implementing ¶654 including the identification of a representative to advocate for Native American awareness within the local church/charge;
  - encouraging churches to give to Native American Ministries Sunday; in this way, there are funds within the conference to strengthen and initiate new Native ministries;
  - investing in resources related to Native Americans which may enrich the conference's "lending library" for local churches;
  - including Native American representation on conference boards and committees;
  - and, when a local church is closed by the conference, explore all the ways the physical property may be used to benefit Native Americans such as leasing properties to CONAMs or other Native groups, designating proceeds of property sales for new or existing Native churches/ministries, and/or deeding property back to indigenous nations, etc. Conference Native Americans must participate in these critical discussions and decisions.
- Annual Conferences must develop a process for the education of local churches regarding Native Americans and the related history within their conference boundaries. Annual conference commissions on archives and history should provide leadership in this effort. Archivists and historians found in universities and colleges and resource persons from Departments of Native American Studies can also provide valuable information.
- The United Methodist Church must acknowledge and respond to the real and recurring trauma experienced by Native American communities, honoring the continued hope we maintain in our People, in our call and in our Creator.

We pray that our letter and our recommendations are received in the same Spirit with which they are offered -- the Spirit of Hope.

It is our greatest fear that this repentance movement will be only token in nature, not producing any tangible change and resulting in the continued erosion of our presence, even until our light as part of the United Methodist Church is extinguished.

A more detailed document related to many of the issues raised in this letter, *The Study on Native American Evangelism and Discipleship*, is planned for publication in the fall of 2014, written by Rev. Anita Phillips. Ms. Cynthia Kent is available for consultation related to advocacy and organization of CONAM's within conferences and jurisdictions.

Additionally, Rev. Chebon Kernell has the specific responsibility to work with Bishops and annual conferences in the work of AOR and is available for consultation.

A Tool Kit for AOR is available through his office.

With the sincerest blessings for the work at hand,

Anita Phillips                      Cynthia Kent                      Chebon Kernell

## The Geography of Whiteness

Matthew Vega interviews Willie James Jennings

October 26, 2021

*Willie Jennings teaches systematic theology and Africana studies at Yale Divinity School. His most recent book is *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging*.*

### ***Let's start with your understanding of this thing we call race. What is it?***

Race is a distorted way of seeing the world within Christian thought. We might want to say that race is a distorted view of creation, a distorted view of the order of the body and of the relationship between the body and land, and a distorted view of the relations that should exist because of those views of body and land.

There was a time on this planet when no one would have imagined themselves encased in something called race. That's not to say that there were not always elements that later on would coalesce into the racial imagination—people identifying others differently from themselves or springing off things like phenotype and bodily description. But race is not part of the created order. It is a particular historical emergence of a way of perceiving oneself and the world. While inexplicable in its forming, it became self-explanatory while also explaining the world.

### ***You say that race was formed within Christian thought. What does it have to do with theology?***

The modern vision of race would not be possible without Christianity. This is a complicated statement, but I want people to think about this.

Inside the modern racial consciousness there is a Christian architecture, and also there is a racial architecture inside of modern Christian existence. There are three things we have to put on the table in order to understand how deeply race is tied to Christianity. The first brings us back to the very heart of Christianity, the very heart of the story that makes Christian life intelligible.

That story is simply this: through a particular people called Israel, God brought the redemption of the world. That people's story becomes the means through which we understand who God is and what God has done. Christianity is inside Israel's story. At a certain point in time, the people who began to believe that story were more than just the people of Israel, more than just Jews. And at some point in time, those new believers, the gentiles, got tired of being told that they were strangers brought into someone else's story—that this was not their story. They began—very early and very clearly—to push Israel out from its own story. They narrated their Christian existence as if Israel were not crucial to it.

The fact that Christians came to identify themselves as the chosen people is already a profound distortion of the story. But this is where they are when we come to the colonial moment. They believe that they are at the very center of what God wants to do in the world. This belief is in everything they do and say: the way they read the Bible, the way they form their theology, the way they teach, the way they carry out their Christian lives.

As they begin to realize their power, they also realize the power to shape the perceptions of themselves and others. That is, they begin to understand that not only do they have the power to transform the landscape and the built environment, but they also have the power to force people into a different perception of the world and of themselves.

This is what we came to call European: the power to transform the land and the perception of the people. A racial vision started to emerge. It floated around in many places with many differences in body type, skin color, and so forth. It didn't come out of nowhere. But now, inside this matrix, it starts to harden. It starts to become a way of perception, not simply of a conjecture. This is where Whiteness begins.

So unless you know that this is a Christian operation, you cannot grasp the absolute power of race to define existence right now, even when people move beyond that Christian matrix and say they don't confess it or agree with it. They are still inside it. That's my definition of Whiteness: it is a way of perceiving the world and organizing and ordering the world by the perception of one's distorted place within it. But it is also more than a perception: Whiteness includes the power to place that perception on other people and to sustain it.

### ***How does this understanding shape the American landscape?***

The challenge for these colonists when they came to the new world was twofold. One was trying to make sense of the vastness. They were seeing a world that they had only imagined existed, and it was utterly breathtaking—not only in terms of the landscapes and the flora and the fauna and the mountains and the oceans and so forth, but also the vast variety of peoples, all speaking different languages and with different ways of life. The colonists were overwhelmed by that reality.

And they had the desire to make sense of that. Why am I here? What does this mean? This combined with the reality of having absolute power. In a very short time, they came to understand that they could take everything they wanted, and this began to have a further distorting effect on their faith.

In the old world, you've lived your whole life in, say, a 150-mile radius, or even a 60-mile radius. Then you come to the new world. The royalty of the old world gives you 80,000 acres of land and everything that's in it, because of your faithful service or whatever. Whatever vision of life you have with God is now shaped inside this unbelievable reality of power and greed. You hear the royalty of the old world say, This is all yours. And you hear the spirit of God saying to you, This is all yours, my son. This is your—let's use this phrase—private property.

Now, the first thing you have to do to maintain your private property is to dispel any notion that the people who live on your land live anywhere else than on your land. Many of them had an idea that they were profoundly connected to the land, that their identities were tied to the land, water, mountains, and animals. When you would ask them who they were, many indigenous people would tell stories about the land.



For the missionary colonialist, this was nonsense. They even saw it as demonically derived nonsense: the devil was working on these people and engaging them in some kind of nature worship. So they needed to dispel this idea. This is another way that we can see—and it is really important to understand—that the modern racial vision and the modern vision of private property are two sides of the same coin.

The newly White people had to extract people from the land and extract the land from people. They needed everyone to believe that one piece of land is just as good as any other. They introduced the idea of possession—specifically, possession as private property owned by an individual who can then sell that land to someone else. For the indigenous people, this idea was utterly foreign and profoundly destructive.

Now let's add one more layer. The colonial Europeans also brought with them commodities called slaves. Many indigenous people also became slaves as the colonies were forming. Both indigenous people and the newly arrived slaves were forced into service of the White body. They cared for its needs and attended to its moods, its forms of desire, its ways of loving, its ways of reaching out and touching God, its ways of thinking about God.

And so Christianity and the Western world form inside this ongoing, convoluted negotiation of White subjectivity, the inner life of Whiteness. For so many people, their Christianity is caught up yet inside those realities. And many people have fought against it.

Christianity itself continues to face the unfinished work of pulling itself out from inside the reality of White intimacy and out of a spiritual life that remains so caught up in what is true, what is good, what is beautiful, what is noble, what is honorable, and therefore what is desirable—from a White point of view. All of us have to go through the fiery brook of the redefinition of our desires away from Whiteness, and for so many people that fiery brook is too deep and too long to traverse. They are still caught in the midst of it.

***Is it possible to move beyond race? Or do we have to go through race?***

The way that the dilemma is often articulated to us is still a part of the dilemma. One of the difficulties is to get people who are White, who have made themselves White, to see that they're actually inside something that's been created. It's like those old black-and-white movies, where White people are always, always in the center of the screen, and every once in a while you see a non-White person show up at the very edge.

First we have to narrate the story of those folks who enter stage left and exit. We have to put them in the center and notice how White people are pushing themselves onto a stage where they don't belong.

But to be shaped inside of Whiteness in the West is to be shaped inside a sense of comfort and safety. Things revolve around you, and it seems to require some kind of Herculean or religiously heroic effort for you to decenter yourself.

This is what has to be challenged now. And it's not just an idea; it's a reality of a sense of comfort, a sense of what's normal and what's safe. Those realities are not just in the head. They are registered socially, economically, intellectually, academically, and especially geographically—especially in the way communities are shaped in Whiteness.

***This idea of place is a major theme in your work. How are we trained to relate to place, and what are the implications for race and theology?***

This is one of the most difficult things for some people to get their minds around. We have a distorted sense of what it means to inhabit place. We have been deeply habituated into what I call an unrelenting reality of displacement. This has implications for how we understand ourselves, our connectivity, our relationality, and the ethics of that relationality.

For most of us, trained in this distorted view, one place is just as good as another. You could pick us up and drop us off anywhere in the world. If we have a Starbucks and a McDonald's, we're good. This is not a historical accident. This is part of the trajectory of displacing people from land and turning all land into private property.

The implications are immense. Once we understand this displacement, we can see the racial configuration of place: we are inside a racial geography in which the flows of goods and services and opportunities flow around White bodies first. Then they might extend out from that to others, or they do a circuit around a few others and then back to their main source of energy.

The difficulty is to get people to understand the placement reality of White supremacy, of racial antagonism. It's not a matter of people's personal behaviors and certainly not of their beliefs. It is structured into the very ground itself.

We can look at this in terms of policing. All policing practice follows zoning policy. You will not change policing practice until you change zoning policy, because in the case of Black and Brown bodies, most of those killed by police either were in some place they were not supposed to be, according to the racial geography, or the police found themselves in a place they considered hostile territory. The very place itself drew their bodies into the pedagogy of violence.

We have to understand that all of our efforts at changing the social fabric of this country must begin with changing the geographic fabric. That's where the real fight is. People will not fight you at all when you say we need to learn to love each other. But if you say that the configuration of real estate must show how we love one another, they will fight you tooth and nail.

***What is your vision for wholeness in America?***

I believe wholeness begins with being able to inhabit the whole story of America and the story of the West. Those of us in education mourn because so many people in this country have been given harmless history. They have been shaped inside it. People haven't been given a full, rich sense of the glory and the horror of the Western world and of this country. They are operating in very small slices of the reality of their own lives.

Wholeness begins by starting to see the full picture. Do students see how they are born into the long story of land takeover and land seizure that continues with the configuration of neighborhoods that keep certain people in and push other people out? Are they taught the history and reality of redlining? If you've been to school in most parts of this country, whether private or public, you aren't taught any of that. People arrive at college with a very thin sense of the long history of racial struggle—not just the struggle for civil rights but the struggle that takes place because we live in Whiteness. This is the struggle that comes with a particular kind of formation and conformity to a way of being.

Wholeness begins with knowing that story, because without that full story we really don't know what to do. We're just hoping and wishing, and for so many people it comes down to this: I just wish we could like each other, could be friends with each other.

OK, but do you understand where you are? That's the problem for so many people in this country. They're not even able to see the fabric. They cannot see the reality of America on their bodies.

We don't need people saying it would be great if White and non-White people could learn to live together. That's a useless statement. Here's a better statement: it'd be great if we could reconfigure neighborhoods, cities, suburbs, rural areas. Then the next step is that there has to be a new intentionality about how we configure habitation and city.

One thing we have to do for wholeness is to ban all gated communities. There should not be any gated communities—they should be illegal.

***What do you think that restructuring would look like in the short term, perhaps five to ten years time?***

The first step is the great unveiling. For the first time in history for most cases, the decisions about real estate, development, how much houses will cost, where apartments will be—these decisions will be not only democratized but completely opened to everyone to see. In a process of shared governance, ordinary people will say, "Oh, hold on. I don't think it's a good idea to build this subdivision of homes that start at \$700,000."

Now for this to take place, there will have to be an incredible struggle—because there are people with vested interests all around us. The kind of open process I am describing is the last thing they want. Huge sectors of this planet's land are controlled by a just few people. There are people who don't live anywhere near where we live making decisions about what happens in our neighborhoods.

I'm not trying to evoke a new kind of nativism or provincial control. But in the short term, what has to happen is that all the decisions about place need to be made public—and slowed down so that decisions are not made without the involvement of those they affect.

Longer term, we need to create a set of standards, a moral compass, for the creation of habitation that does not exist in this world anywhere. What drives habitation is capitalism, pure and simple. So we need a moral compass to drive capitalism.

For example, we would say that no city, no town, no community may have people without homes. Homelessness is illegal: not for the person experiencing it but for the community. You have to house people; no one is to be on the street. That requires the fundamental reconfiguration of space.

We also have to think not only about property and land but about transportation of goods and services and about how bodies flow through space. We have to challenge all of that. We have to challenge the way in which municipalities structure themselves in ways that are always detrimental to those who are poor and without voice.

### ***How do we start that restructuring?***

It starts by educating yourself about who the people are who are making those decisions in your community, in your neighborhood. You say, “We want to know what’s going on. We want to understand.” Oftentimes city planning meetings are poorly attended. A few activists try to get more people to come, but folks are so busy. But that’s where decisions get made and where this moral compass is needed. It helps a lot to educate yourself about the place where you live, its history, and how it came to be configured as it is.

### ***What would you ask the church to do?***

The reality is that so many Christians in the West don’t know their own story—that is to say, that we were gentiles brought into another people’s story. What’s supposed to come with that is a sense of humility, a sense of having been brought inside by grace through love.

Our job is not to take the story over. It’s like being invited to somebody’s house, someone whom you love, and being introduced to the family. You hope they will accept you, but you’re there in vulnerability because this is not yours. You are there hoping to be a part.

Most Christians in the West are formed without any of that feeling—the sense of vulnerability, the sense of gratefulness for having been brought inside. They have no sense of what it means to be an outsider. What if we had all been inculcated with this deep sense of humility, of what it means to enter into another people? And what if we had cultivated over the centuries the ability to enter into the lives of other peoples without either trying to take their lives over or losing ourselves?

Where we should begin, individually and collectively, is reintroducing the church to the story of what it means to be a Christian: the constant entering into and becoming a part of other peoples for the sake of love. Too many Christians talk about reconciliation while imagining themselves as centered hosts.

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## **Trail of Repentance and Healing 2016 Book of Resolutions, #3324**

Whereas, The United Methodist Church and its predecessors have acknowledged a historic desire to spread the good news of the gospel yet in many cases have caused indignities, cultural genocide and atrocities against tribal persons; and

Whereas, God has been present with all persons since creation, and through prevenient grace has been a living and moving Spirit among the world's diverse cultures; and in many parts of the world, to become a Christian may mean one is expected to abandon one's culture and traditional religion, resulting in tension and division within families and tribes, and the loss of the unique identity associated with family and clan, including in some places: the requirement to stop speaking one's own language, to change one's clothing and hair, to discontinue participation in native prayer ceremonies and many cultural activities such as music and dance; and

Whereas, The United Methodist Church adopted Resolution 3322 **1** [Confession to Native Americans] in 1992 and readopted the same in 2004 and 2008 recognizing the worth and dignity of all persons and our church's participation in the destruction of Native American people, culture, and religious practices; and

Whereas, The United Methodist Church adopted Resolution 135 **2** [Support Restitution to the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma for the Sand Creek Massacre] in 1996 acknowledging the genocide of almost 200 persons, mostly women and children, at a US peace camp in an attack led by a Methodist preacher, Col. John Chivington; and

Whereas, The United Methodist Church adopted Petition 80158 **3** [Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site Support] in 2008 to contribute \$50,000 toward the development of the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site Research and Learning Center for promoting awareness of the site and for its use for Native American services of remembrance and commemoration; and

Whereas, The United Methodist Church adopted Resolution 121 **4** [Healing Relationships with Indigenous Persons] in 2000, readopted as Resolution 133 **5** in 2004, and revised and readopted as Resolution 3323 **6** in 2008 that recognized that the history of Christianity's spread across the world was often accompanied by actions that damaged the culture, life ways, and spirituality of indigenous persons; and

Whereas, Resolution 3323 **7** (BOR 2008) directs the 2012 General Conference of The United Methodist Church to hold an Act of Repentance Service for the Healing of Relationships with Indigenous Persons, which would launch study, dialogue, and acts of repentance in all conferences over the following quadrennium; and Whereas, an Act of Repentance service is a first step in launching a process of healing relationships with indigenous persons throughout the world in order to be the living and resurrected body of Christ in the world; and

Whereas, a call to repentance is followed by confession, and confession is followed by a call for a change for the better as a result of remorse or contrition for one's sins; and

Whereas, the Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships (OCUIR) was charged in Resolution 3323 **8** with the responsibility of planning the 2012 General Conference event; the necessary study; development of resources, models, and guidelines for building relationships with indigenous persons in preparation for a process of listening, repentance, and healing; and making such resources available to conferences and local congregations;

Therefore, be it resolved, that The United Methodist Church begin a process of healing relationships with indigenous persons to continue throughout the quadrennium and beyond that necessarily includes such activities as using study guides and resources; self-examination, discovering the ongoing impact of historic traumas; confessing our own participation in the continuing effects of that trauma; building relationships with indigenous persons wherever we, the church, are; building those relationships through listening and being present with indigenous persons; working beside indigenous persons to seek solutions to current problems; advocating and resourcing programs that are self-determined by native and indigenous persons to be part of the healing process; and holding an Act of Repentance Service for the Healing of Relationships with Indigenous Persons in each conference; and

Be it further resolved, that every conference, and every local congregation of The United Methodist Church develop and nurture relationships with the indigenous persons of the place where that conference resides through a process of deep listening and learning; and

**Be it further resolved, that every conference, and every local congregation of The United Methodist Church is encouraged to implement specific actions to demonstrate a genuine attitude of repentance such as 1) encourage and resource the education and training of indigenous leadership including laity and pastors, by providing culturally sensitive learning environments, 2) wherever the church is holding land and/or property in trust, consider transferring a portion of that land and/or property or its income to indigenous persons' projects, and 3) in conjunction with ¶ 2548.2 (BOD 2012), whenever a conference entity is closing a charge or holds excess land, consider transferring any land and property to an indigenous community; and**

Be it further resolved, that full implementation of the recommendations in this resolution be proposed to the Council of Bishops for consideration; and

Be it further resolved, that bishops of The United Methodist Church shall provide spiritual leadership and pastoral guidance for the fulfillment of this essential work to heal the soul of our church, our people, and the land.

## Suggested Reading Materials for Future Steps on the Journey

We are so pleased that so many of these authors and resources are based in Minnesota

Robin Wall Kimmerer: Braiding Sweet Grass

[The Serviceberry – Emergence Magazine](#)

[Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization](#) by Elaine Enns and Ched Myers

Article about Alaska from the UMW [History and Hope in Alaska](#)

Follow this blog: Kelly Sherman-Conroy [About Me – sacredthoughts](#)

Items from the Ministry Lab: [Spencer Library: Racism: Young Adults & Adults: Indigenous Voices](#)

A Minnesota Food resource: [The Sioux Chef – Revitalizing Native American Cuisine / Re-Identifying North American Cuisine](#)

Anton Treuer: “Everything You Wanted to Know about Indians But Were Afraid to Ask” there is an adult and a youth version. And a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the book.

Here is an NPR program with Anton Treuer: [Everything You Wanted To Know About 'Indians'](#)

Bookstore that specializes in Native literature and books: <https://birchbarkbooks.com/>

To explore more the theology of creation as the center of our theology: *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire* by Rebecca Ann Parker and Rita Nakashima Brock

Authors to Explore:

MN Authors:

Louise Erdrich

Jim Northrup

Kent Nurburn

Brent Olson: *Between Helpless and the Darkness*, a reimagining of the interactions between native and european cultures

William Kent Kreger: *This Tender Land*

Native American Icons: <https://jbgicon.com/john-b-giuliani/>

These are by an American Priest, Fr John Giuliani, who wanted to honor Native cultures after he recognized the destruction caused by the Doctrine of Discovery

An article to read about cultural/sociological appropriation and worship:

[1862 Sioux uprising – Sociological Confessions](#)