

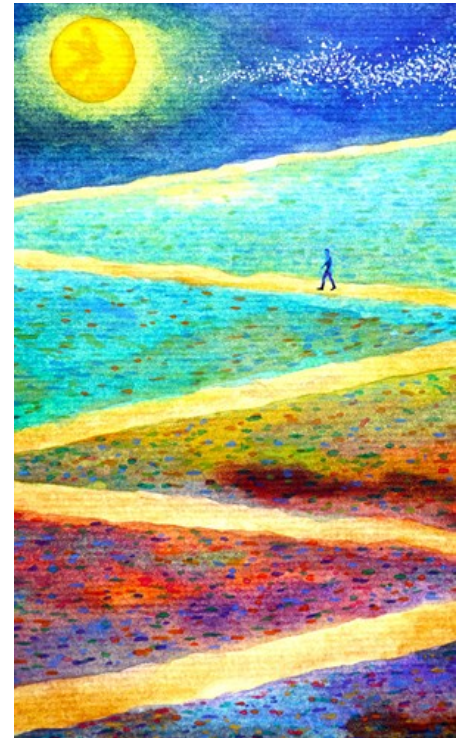
Transformational Journey Towards Land Acknowledgement

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

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Transformational Journey Towards Land Acknowledgement: A New/Old Way of Being persons who care for the earth

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Transformational Journey Towards Land Acknowledgement: A New/Old Way of Being persons who care for the earth.

Written by Rev. Debra Jene Collum, Cathy Velasquez Eberhart, Bill Konrardy, Wally Wadd

who care for the earth and want to honor the history and continued presence of Native People in the United States of America.

Any non commercial use of this material is encouraged. Please note that changing this material in any way that disrespects humans and the more than human world ~~non-humans~~ is prohibited.

Please attribute the use of this material to the Minnesota Hopeful EarthKeepers of the United Methodist Church minnesotaumc.org/hopefulearth. We want people to see that there are people in the institutional church who are relearning the colonized ways of the institutional church, who are lamenting our part in the attempted genocide of Native Peoples, who will strive to learn what it means to live as John Wesley taught, in harmony with all things, and who endeavor to understand what true reparations entail.

A Transformational Journey Towards Land Acknowledgements Course Curriculum

Overview

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.

Participants will reflect together on

- The connection between land acknowledgement statements and our identities as Christians.
- How a land acknowledgement statement can impact our path as disciples of Jesus Christ who are committed to the transformation of the world.
- Who we can become as we take the work of land acknowledgement seriously.
- Why it is important to write such statements.
- What steps beyond Land Acknowledgement Statements we might take

We hope this will impact the way you walk on this sacred land. And your relationship with all of creation, both human and non-human.

This journey is specific to United Methodist theology and practice but is applicable to other Christian faith traditions.

The journey is made up of 6 two hour sessions. Each session is best done after the preparation for the session is completed. During each session there will be time for small group reflection and somatic check-ins. As well as theological, justice, environmental and historical instruction. A map for each session will look something like this:

- An example of a Land Acknowledgement
- Opening with centering moments
- Reflecting on Homework
- Teaching Presentation
- Trauma body check ins + reminders of grace and our essential goodness
- Small group sharing
- Closing with ceremony/liturgy/prayer
- Homework reminder

For Facilitators:

- ☐ The curriculum is written in a narrative format because that is how the first facilitator teaches material. Adapt it to your own style but **honor the intent of the material. Particularly if you are a white bodied person. Speaking truth to power is part of the intent, speaking it in such a way so people can be more comfortable with the hard truths would not be honoring the material.** In other words, we expect participants will be uncomfortable at times as they work through these materials.
- ☐ There is a slide deck for the curriculum. The placement of the slides are noted in the curriculum in red.
- ☐ Links for all the videos needed for the journey are included in these materials. Edited videos are embedded in the slide deck. These videos have been edited for time to best fit the course.
- ☐ Each participant will want to secure a copy of *On This Spirit Walk* by Henrietta Mann & Anita Phillips; Land Acknowledgement Journey Guidebook which is supplemental to the course material. The Guidebook is best sent as a PDF to each participant to facilitate easy access to recommended links and to copy out as they would like.
- ☐ Link to [Slides](#)
- ☐ Link to [Land Acknowledgement Guidebook](#)

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>

Step 1: Our Identity: What path have you been called on to walk?

Gathering Slide 1

Logistical details:

- Invite people to put name, role, affiliation, land on which they live if they know it in chat
- Change their Zoom name if needed, in Chat Share Name, Church and Role in Chat
- Have at hand the work book, On the Spirit Walk, something to write with
- Logistics - we are recording, materials in DropBox, homework linked in workbook pdf
- Zoom tips - gallery view, muted when not talking, Video on to say Hi and during small group conversations, then understand if need to be off from time to time

Introduction: Purpose for promotional material and in the workbook.

This is not just an exercise in producing Land Acknowledgement Statements (LAS). We see these 6 sessions as a transformative journey. Yes, we will learn to write a meaningful Land Acknowledgement Statement. But even more than words on paper; we will also reflect together on [Slide 2](#)

- The connection between LA statements and our identities as persons who care for the earth and as Christians.
- Why it is important to write such a statement.
- How a LA statement can impact our path as disciples of Jesus Christ who are committed to the transformation of the world.
- Who we can become as we take the work of LA seriously and transformatively.

Land Acknowledgement Statements are not some fad that proves we are 'woke' people. We believe the work of writing and sharing LAS addresses the deep need we all have to confess our collective failings as human beings who have not acknowledged our painful history and the reality of our current interdependence.

As persons who care for the earths, we believe that LAS can provide us with a rootedness in the land on which we live.

It is our hope that the work of this journey will lead to a more authentic and nuanced Christian walk, a deeper understanding of our responsibility to live out our baptismal covenants, and to deeper relationships with land, people, history.

And please note, the place or organization for which you are attempting to write a LAS may not be appropriate for a LAS. So don't assume you will write one for a particular place and a particular time. This is a discernment process that may go in all sorts of directions you don't even know right now. That is why it is called a journey and not a destination.

That is a lot to hope for in a six session course. We hope that by taking this journey together we can, as a body of The Christ, gain wisdom to know what is next for our journey as people committed to care of the Earth for all people.

Beginning of the Journey & Step One

Narration Slide 3

I want to look at the Steps of Our Journey so that we can get a sense of the Map we are on. This session we are going to talk about our identity as a way of getting to know one another and maybe even ourselves better, and

what it means according to Mann and Phillips to be known as indigenous. We want to center ourselves in this journey as people who are committed to our baptism vows and our call as people who care for the earth.

The second step on this journey will be reflecting together on a difficult part of Christianity: why people who called themselves Christian felt it was ok to come and 'conquer' the people who lived on the North American continent. This will be a difficult step but an important step. To know our history is to know for what we must repent and what we can do to heal the wounds created by historical events.

Our third step will center around Indigenous World views as theological belief.. We will hear from Robin Kimmerer, Randy Woodley, Jim Bear Jacobs. This will be a rich time for those of us who call ourselves EarthKeepers. We will learn or have reinforced language around earthkeeping that will open up new possibilities for us.

Once we have started to explore indigenous worldviews, we will delve into the ongoing work of decolonizing our words, actions and organizations, starting by working with language we use in public worship, particularly. How can we be careful of our words so that we do not perpetuate ideas of colonization and white dominance. This will have implications, not only for this journey, but also for your entire Christian language.

Then, our 5th step of the journey, we will work together to discover how we can write LAS that reflect all that we have learned, grown into and hope to articulate so that with our words we can speak to a transformation of relationships and motivate actions that can bring healing into our broken communities. Which will be the focus of our 6th and final step.

During our wrap up we will share our statements and expand our journeys into action that can go beyond this map and into places that can transform the world.

Narration/the Logistics for taking the Journey

- Please to the best of your ability, do the assignments between classes. Particularly, watching one of the documentaries about the Doctrine of Discovery. This will be foundational to our work together.
- Have the guidebook available so that you can see the discussion questions for the small groups. Let us know if you still need materials sent out.
- We will use the textbook: OTSW in almost every session.
- ~~Dropbox will be the place the recorded session links will be posted. There is also an electronic version of the guidebook in the drop box so that you can access live links. put the link for the drop box in the comments:~~ <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pjluv4sb0amj6jm/AADSfILaJaldjE-X0fIIIOfAa?dl=0>

Each week we will begin the session by reading a LAS from various resources. As we read the LAS, pay attention to how you react in all ways, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, to what you hear. Don't evaluate, just pay attention. You might want to write down words that catch your attention or cause a particular reaction. Write your feelings, reactions, convictions, hopes that surface as the statements are read.

You may hear things that make you want to shut down or run away. We hope that you won't. We hope that you will stick with us to see where this trauma response comes from and where it might take you. We will be working together on how this material can be very uncomfortable for white Christians to encounter. And we will have time together for repentance, affirmation and actions related to these feelings.

We will also have time in each session to do body work which we will now describe and illustrate.

[Introduce Body check in](#) - - Slide 4

Invite participants to share a word or two in the chat about how their body is feeling at the moment.

We are doing hard anti racism work together. Please walk with us and stay with us.

The guiding words we would like to remember each time we do this work together are on the front of your guide book. Let's explore these: **Slide 5**

We hope each one who goes on this journey with us will **stay engaged**. ~~We know that doing this work via ZOOM is more difficult than in person because distractions are many in our spaces.~~ We know that two hours is a long time to pay attention. That is why there will be opportunities for individual and group reflection and work. We hope it will help us all **stay engaged**.

Please know that you will **experience discomfort**. There is really no way to do anti-racism and historical truth telling without discomfort. Please let yourself experience discomfort so that you can have an authentic experience.

We really want to hear your truth so we invite you to **Speak your truth**. We will be looking at material that may be new to you and exploring ideas that may invoke confusion and even suspicion; please ask your questions and speak the words that will help you understand. None of us in this room are experts. We will all benefit from everyone's honesty.

Expect and Accept non-closure. What this means is that each session and even at the end of the 6 sessions there will not be a neatly tied up conclusion. Even after you have written your LAS, especially after you have written your LAS, questions will linger, anger will linger, shame and guilt will linger. Ched Myers and Elaine Enns call this a haunting. Which we will live with for the rest of our lives.

When this work gets hard, please review these guiding words to help you understand the scope of what we are doing and why you might feel the need to escape.

We believe this work will be worthwhile. And we believe it will be transformative for not only yourself but also for the communities where you interact.

Moments for reflection

Slide 6 (and in workbook) So let's hear our first LAS, it is on page 3 of the guidebook. Each time we read a LAS we will ask ourselves to reflect. Record your feelings, thoughts, words that seem meaningful or that you question. If you feel inclined you can place them in the chat.

After the first reading we will take some time for you to read the statement silently. Continue to reflect on words or thoughts in the statement which strike you, challenge you, or make you question.

Turn to page 3 and follow along as Cathy, one of the team members who helped form this journey reads

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 peoples 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.

We aren't going to share our reactions today. We want you to sit with them and ponder them.
While you ponder these words I invite you to get a small bowl of water that will be used in the next part of our
journey together.

10 minute BREAK - Get up to get bowl of water - Slide 7 up during Break *[create small groups of 3-4 each]*

Centering Moment: Narration

From the text we are using: OTSW, Boe Harris writes about identity. Boe Harris is a Turtle Mountain Chippewa/Spirit Lake Dakota woman. You can read about her on page 6. (*"On this Spirit Walk" page 9* beginning with: Genesis 1:27 and following "when thinking about identity")
She writes: "Who Am I? Why Am I Here? *Ask someone to read this?*

She then tells about a complicated relationship with Christianity when she learned her father had been placed into an Indian boarding school operated by Christians whose purpose seemed to be to make the children into good, white Christian boys and girls. This resulted in Boe's childhood being influenced by a father whose parenting skills came from those he had learned in boarding school. As long as the basics were met, food, clothing, shelter, devotion to church, skills to survive, nothing else was needed.

It wasn't until much later when she did her own exploring that she came to understand some of the relationship between Church and Native People.

Boe did decide to continue in her calling to be a Christian because she saw Jesus as a man who was respected by other religious traditions. And came to realize that he, too, came from a tribe with a culture, traditions, and family that was reflected in his ministry.

This journey into her identity helped Boe ground herself both as a Christian and a Native Person.

Knowing who we are can help us ground ourselves and we can get to know each other as we walk this journey together. *Slide 8*

Let's explore our own identities. Using the worksheet 'I Am'. Take some time to fill in as much as you can about YOU. (8 minutes?)

Fill in worksheet which will help us understand all the different identities we carry within us

Small Groups (15 minutes)--these questions are in your guidebook & will be put in the chat - Slide 9

Now we will break into small groups so we can share with each other who we are. After you have shared just a few of the basics about yourself please reflect on these questions: If you don't have your guidebook in front of you, take a photo of the questions so you have them during the 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 ID?

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 ID?

Narrative:

We are going to be focusing on two shared aspects of our ID throughout this journey; **our rootedness in baptism as Christians and our desire to be persons who care for the earth.** Both of these ids urge us to think carefully about the role Land Acknowledgement Statements play in our lives.

Our baptismal vows which root us as Christians are repeated whenever a baptism happens within a mainline church.

- What is it we are promising when we speak these vows?
- How should these vows impact our daily walk as Christian and as persons who care for the earth?
- How radical are these vows when taken seriously

Recently, the North Central Jurisdictional Conference of which MN is a part, affirmed the use of our baptismal covenant as a way to call us to the work of anti-racism and inclusion of all persons in the work of the UMC.

In a few moments I will invite all who would like to reaffirm their baptism vows to respond in the ritual using the bowl of water as a reminder of the cleansing power of baptism.

I have asked members of MN Hopeful Earthkeepers to elaborate on these vows using the words of the NCJ which aspirationally call us to the work of anti-racism and inclusion, which we believe is part of the work of baptism in our lives.

The expanded vows are in the link in your guidebook on page 5. **put in chat**

<https://www.ncjumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NCJ-Covenant-to-Build-BeLoved-Community-1.pdf>

This added work is aspirational in the same way much of what we affirm in the church is aspirational. It will be up to members of UMC's to make these aspirations reality in the work we do together as people who take our vows of baptism seriously.

So let us know with humility, love and aspiration renew our vows of baptism. **Slide 10**

Debra 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.

Susan: We do. We confess our need for God's grace as we struggle to renounce and reject the spiritual forces and evil powers of colonialism, racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism. We apologize for the ways the NCJ has and continues to harm people who live in other parts of the world, Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC), people who live in poverty, and LGBTQIA+ people.

Debra: 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.

VOICE 1 We pray for God's freedom and power to resist colonialism and racism in all the forms they present themselves. We stand in solidarity with ongoing efforts of many, who have worked tirelessly to end racism. We recognize this is a journey; that the work of ending racism is ongoing. All of our work as a Church should be done in an anti-racist manner.

VOICE 2 According to the grace given to you, will you remain faithful members of Christ's holy Church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world?

People: We will

VOICE 1 We who will remain and continue to be faithful members of The United Methodist Church, commit to leading our churches through this difficult moment. We remain committed to our continuing call to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and by sharing and living the Gospel.

VOICE 2 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.

VOICE 1 We also affirm Christ has opened the Church to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. All people are of sacred worth. LGBTQIA+ clergy and laity are a gift to the Church. We implore all in the NCJ to do no harm and to create a culture in which abundance and diversity can be celebrated and lived.

Slide 11

All: With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround each other with a community of love and forgiveness, that we may grow in our trust of God, and be found faithful in our service to others. We will pray for each other, that we may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.

Small Groups (15 minutes)- small group discussion in two parts

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

She writes: Cheyennes have a welcoming ceremony in which an...as a people.

We just participated together in a tradition/ritual that forms our identity and our naming as Christians. Now in small groups we invite you to further reflect on your identity within your own context. Asking together:

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?

After you spent some time reflecting on these questions move on to read *Read Historical Trauma* on page 6 OTSW and reflect on these questions:

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?

These are on page 5 & 6 of your guidebook.

Narrative

This last section might have triggered something in you whether you experienced trauma or not. We are going to use work by Rev. Dr. Ron Bell, a UMC elder in the MN Annual Conference. Rev Bell developed this work as a result of the turmoil after the George Floyd murder. He saw a need to respond in helpful ways around the trauma that resulted in his community in St. Paul. He serves Camphor UMC.

We will do this work throughout our time together because we want to approach this all with as much emotional awareness as possible so we can do this work well.

Return to Body Check In - Slide 13

Check in exercise. I will ask you 3 questions. Answer them as best you can as honestly as you can. This is for YOU so do with it what is best for YOU.

- What is your body telling you right now about how you are situated and engaged in the world around you? (example, my shoulders feel tense, my hands are clenched, my heart is beating fast) Remember this question is about your actual body.
- How do you feel right now in this moment? (I feel nervous, unsettled, relieved, excited) This is the one about emotions)
- How would you describe the state of your mind right now? Is it like a peaceful, quiet lake, or a powerful unrelenting waterfall. (It is hard for me to focus right now, I have a case of jumpy brain)
- As you have taken time to center on YOU we hope that you can see that this will be a stretching, maybe challenging journey but also one that can help you understand more about yourself and your own ways of doing anti racism work.

Questions, concerns, comments?

Narrative

When you begin to write a LAS you will begin with who you are. Grounding yourself as a baptized Christian who is concerned about the earth and her inhabitants will be the center from which you will write your statement. Continue to focus on your role as a Christian persons who care for the earth as we take further steps on the journey.

Logistics: Assignments: page 7 of your guidebook

- Doctrine of Discovery film! Live links are in the dropbox
- short articles
- there will always be supplemental/other material that you can choose to read as you wish.

Closing ritual Slide 14

By Rev. Anita Phillips, Cherokee, Retired Ordained Elder

Our God and Creator asks, "How will you live the life I have given to you?"

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

Our God and Creator asks, "How will you walk this path I have given to you?"

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

Our God and Creator asks, "How will you reach out to the world beyond yourselves?"

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.

Preparation for Step 2

View the film Doctrine of Discovery.

<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/ dominationcode> 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 Chapter 6 Worship & 7 History "On this Spirit Walk"

Other reading not required:

[Why Treaties Matter](#)

[The US-Dakota War of 1862](#) This is an excellent resource from the MN Historical Society about treaties and the places we live.

Step 2: Discovering the Church's role in Native American history of displacement

"A society that considers your body dispensable will inflict a violence upon you." *Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth*, Sarah Smarsh **Slide 15**

Land Acknowledgement Statement **Slide 16**

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.

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.

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

Centering

The Doctrine of Discovery is a philosophical and legal framework dating back to the 15th century that gives "Christian governments" legal rights over indigenous lands and domination of indigenous people. Yet, it is not just a papal document from the 1400's.

Europeans used the DoD as the rights on which to colonize the Americas

It was the basis for the Monroe Doctrine

The DoD was put into the federal law of the US in 1823, cementing its place in the colonization of the USA.

It was cited as recently as 2005, in *City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York*. Writing for the majority, Ruth Bader Ginsburg stated that "Under the 'doctrine of discovery...' fee title [ownership] to the lands occupied by Indians when the colonists arrived became vested in the sovereign—first the discovering European nation and later the original states and the United States." In other words, the Oneida Indians lost...

The DoD continues to be used in places like Suriname to exploit the natural resources and poison the water that is still home to native peoples. **Put these dates in chat 1924 and 1950's** two significant dates in American history:

It wasn't until 1924 that all Native Americans were allowed to become US citizens by virtue of their birth on US soil. And it wasn't until the 1950's before they had the right to vote.

Small Group Conversation 1 Slide 17 (15 minutes)

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?

"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

Narrative:

Slide 18

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 the 1492 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 post colonial 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://dofdmennon.org/fact-sheet/>

As Jim Northrup, an Anishinaabe from MN, wrote: It feels like a library burns down every time an elder dies. Think of all the libraries that have burnt down over the centuries, sometimes literally.

Through this journey, we are going to challenge what Western culture has perpetuated about Native American history in the US.

In the Papal documents and other sources, words are used that are breathtakingly damaging to both the oppressor and the oppressed. In the footnotes of the article we read in preparation, Pagans in the Promised Land, pagans and infidels are defined: **Slide 19**

I want us to look again at those words because we often don't hear them used out loud but their implications are often behind our attitudes.

The Oxford English Dictionary, (Second ed., Vol. VII, 1989, p. 75) defines "heathen" as a term of "*Christian origin*." It said, to be applied to those whose religion is neither Christian, Jewish or Moslem. The legal sourcebook *Words and Phrases*, 1960, p. 593, defines "infidel" as being "*any person or people that does not believe in the God of the Bible*" and "*that does not believe that Jesus Christ was the true Messiah*."

One of the questions in OTSW that keeps convicting and motivating me to do this work is on page: 18. Rev. Carol Eastin was asked how she could reconcile her Native American beliefs with being a Christian? This question assumes the Doctrine of Discovery premise that Native American beliefs are 'heathen and pagan' and therefore, not compatible with Christianity.

Does this resonate with you? When you think of how Indigenous belief systems are portrayed, would the words pagan and heathen come to mind, if we are really honest? Where has that come from?

Carol's response is convicting : "I smiled and remarked that I would like to hear him talk about how he reconciles being a 21st century citizen of the United States with being a Christian."

Think about what, originally, being a Christian meant. One who followed the teachings of Christ. Right? Who loves God and neighbor and self. Right? And we often quote from Micah 6:8 to define our purpose. What is good and right: to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God.

And think of the ways early Christianity was structured: everyone contributed to the household of faith as was their ability. It was communal, community based. Reliant on each other.

So we need to ask ourselves:

What happened between the time of the New Testament and the establishment of the church that owning property, accumulation of wealth and societal status became the way of being Christian? So that when Christians encountered other cultures whose values were more in line with the Gospels and the early church, they were seen as pagans and infidels? Let me repeat that. So that when Christians encountered other cultures whose values were more in line with the Gospels and the early church, they were seen as pagans and infidels?

In chapter 6 of OTSW, Steve Barse, Kiowa from Oklahoma writes: " The Europeans arrived...they set about taking away the most precious things in our lives. Our homelands, our languages, our children and our adherence to the forms of worship the Creator gave us."

I am struck by this phrase: 'The Creator gave us.' Do you think of your worship as Creator given or is it institutionally based? Does your worship reflect what the Creator gave you? We will explore this more when we start talking about decolonizing our language in worship

Steve goes on to say: "The intent was to crush our spirits along with our will to resist. We learned the word "heathen", and if we did not change we would be cast into a horrible place to burn forever. And many Indian people were left with the notion their belief system was evil."

Think about the impact that would have on the psyche of both the Native American and the White Europeans. What does it do to a person to feel superior? Spiritually superior? How does feeling spiritually superior even work when one is a baptized Christian following in the footsteps of Jesus who is said to have humbled himself? Contrast the superiority that comes from the Doctrine of Discovery with this **SLIDE 20** quote from Chief Te/cum/seh “So live your life that the fear of death can never enter your heart. Trouble no one about their religion; respect others in their view, and Demand that they respect yours. Love your life, perfect your life, Beautify all things in your life. Seek to make your life long and its purpose in the service of your people.”

Leave the slide up for a bit for time of reflection

As Steve in our text writes with no humor: “It is a wonder that American Indians are not all raging alcoholics...” Such is the trauma that was visited upon the 1 million to 5.6 million Native peoples who lived on this land before 1492. So that by 1890 their numbers had diminished to 250,000.

And I would say is it any wonder that white bodied Christians are so confused about their place in God’s realm?

This is a hard discussion because it is so tied into our identity as both Christian and US citizens.

Learning about the impact of the DoD on the land on which you dwell is incredibly important to writing a LAS. You are endeavoring to write a statement that will embody history, present reality and atonement. So you need to know what exactly it is you are atoning for.

Knowing the history of your piece of land is important.

That is what the next part is about.

First we want to look at the historical arc of the invasion of European settlers' impact on native lands. Watch this and ask yourselves these questions:

Slide 21 VIDEO <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJxrTzfG2bo>


What strikes you as you see the land masses change?

Where are Native lands centered, now?

Slide 22 (take time to show all the little details that the various icons reveal, like the timeline and the layers and the search function)

You can dig deeper into the details of this invasion, including tribal names, the date land was ceded, and the actual treaty documents through this interactive map

(Put link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJxrTzfG2bo> - in the chat)

[Invasion of America](#)  The Invasion of America show how the map works.

Narrative

Knowing the history and the background of this history will help us unpack the ways we can be people who live alongside, and in solidarity with our Native neighbors.

So let’s take a moment to think about what happened in our own families who were all newly arrived people, unless you are 100% Native American.

Individual Work **slide 23** (15 minutes)

Using the map of the world in your workbook trace where your family came from as you understand it from your family’s history. Reflect on the questions on the next page:

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?

Narration

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.

Small Group Conversation 2 slide 24 (15 minutes)

Reflect together on your journey to being a resident of the USA

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.

For Further Reflection in Guidebook:

This quote from the website associated with one of the DoD 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 DoD 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" discuss:

What are the implications of this mindset?

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

Body Check in Slide 25

Body Check In: How is your body and spirit doing right now? (using Rev. Dr. Bell's guidance)

What are 2 things that are pushing you/challenging you emotionally right now?

What are 2 things you are grateful about for these same challenges?

Narration:

These exercises help you process what might be traumatic thoughts and emotions around new material. Recognizing both the challenge and the gratefulness associated with the challenges can move us into a sense of peacefulness rather than anxiety.

What is your body telling you right now about how you are situated and engaged in the world around you?

How do you feel right now in this moment?

How would you describe the state of your mind right now? Is it like a peaceful, quiet lake, or like a powerful unrelenting waterfall.

Narrative:

Some of the important work we will be doing as we go forward is changing our language. This is called the decolonization of our language. We will start here by no longer referring to our ancestors as immigrants but as

settlers. Let's think about the difference between an immigrant and a settler. What is one thing people will typically say about immigrants? What is the one thing they have to do as soon as possible? (learn English) They have to learn to fit into the culture. An immigrant comes into a place and changes so that they fit into the mores and cultures of their new home.

Now think about settlers, Those families who came into Native territories. Did they learn Native language? Native religious practices? Native norms? Quite the opposite. They came and expected Native people to take on their culture and norms and language. Settlers come and impose their cultures and mores onto the original inhabitants.

You see how even our language assumes privilege and devalues the full humanness of the whole.

Even calling our ancestors pioneers is demeaning to them. Because a pioneer, which comes from the French, is used to name those who go before a conquering army to entrench the area so that it becomes safe for development. Which is what many of our ancestors did. They went before the people with the money for industry and commerce to establish the land so that it was easier and safer for the mining, railroad, lumber barons to come in behind them and make their millions.

We are all used in a system of white privilege. It should make us all ill.

So where do the UMC and other mainline churches stand on the DoD **Slide 26**

I am going to use the UMC example but all main line denominations have formal statements repudiating the DoD

The UMC's is found in the 2016 Book of Resolutions, para #3331

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.

What do you feel about your role as a baptized Christian in repudiating the DoD? resist evil and injustice in whatever ways they promote themselves....

Considering most UMC people do not know about the DoD or its impact, what would you want others to know? How would you try to spread the message?

Why do you think it is important to spread the message?

How is this Gospel?

As persons who care for the earths we believe that all God created is good. Very Good. So it is very difficult to hear how the God we love and worship and serve has been used to perpetuate this horror. But we must also realize, like any type of systematic racism, it is part of the culture we have been steeped in. And, just as we do with other systematic racist systems we have to acknowledge its presence and repudiate its message and work hard at eliminating the consequences that have perpetuated harm.

I am so thankful that you all have agreed to go on this journey with us. Part of what our Native siblings ask is that white people take on the task of learning and repenting. That we do not expect our Native siblings to do the work for us. Or even organize the work for us. So thank you for being willing to do the work.

If there is time: talk about how this will change the way you walk on the earth

Learning about the DoD and how indigenous cultures have been impacted worldwide, how they have been treated and how they have been disdained, wiped out and often unseen; motivates me to see the places I am in through new eyes.

While I was in Baja Mexico recently, I experienced the disconnect between the attitude of a conqueror and one of solidarity with indigenous history. Both young men, both guides provided by companies to show us the beauties of the Baja. Both born and raised in the Baja. One told about the glories of the Spanish conquest. How they had come into the country and routed out the indigenous tribes who lived and thrived in the mountains surrounding Loreto. According to him they were drug-using, violent people who needed civilization. In contrast, our other guide who took us into those mountains and showed us both the wonders of the desert and spoke about the dangers of foreign economics on his beloved homeland, was very sympathetic and saddened by the ways the indigenous cultures of the Baja had been brutalized and wiped out by the west.

In the Baja there is no living evidence of the original indigenous peoples who lived as nomads in that part of the world. So that when I went to the missions I saw places that usurped entire cultures and stole people's souls. I didn't see salvation.

This is the impact of learning about white supremacy, the DoD, the truth of Manifest Destiny, and the superiority of Western cultures. Understanding history, we see today in a new way.

Traveling will be a lot more complicated.

Every piece of land we walk on in the United States is stolen land. How do we reconcile our identity as Christians with the history of this land? How do we listen to the blood that is crying out from under our feet?

Land Acknowledgement is a healing process to re-member and re-connect to the land we borrow. The fact that the church, for over five centuries, condoned, and in some places continues to condone, the "Doctrine of Discovery" to permit an unlimited extortion of the land, resources, and the sacred territory of a very diverse indigenous community, creates the essential obligation for the moral future of our children's lived memory. As we speak LA statements into our context, we speak words of healing for our people to hear and our children to live into.

How does this experience *change the way you want to walk on this earth?* page 6 of guidebook

Ken Burns, the historian, has said: Being an American means reckoning with a history fraught with violence and injustice, ignoring that reality in favor of mythology is not only wrong, it is 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.

Before Closing Ritual look at preparation for the next step:

Closing ritual - Ask people to read this paragraph by paragraph with everyone speaking the bold print
Remind people that we will mute everyone except the speaker so that the unison part isn't so muddled and we can concentrate on the words we are speaking

For our closing ritual we are going to use words from a statement made by the council of bishops in 2012 The entire statement is at the back of your guide book.

Slide 27

Healing Relationships with Indigenous Peoples

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.

slide 28

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.

slide 29

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.

slide 30

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.

slide 31

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 **Slide 32**

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 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

Further Reading Suggestions

Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire
Book by Rebecca Ann Parker and Rita Nakashima Brock

Step 3: Indigenous Worldview and Creation Care Theology

Slide 33 & 34

Land Acknowledgement Statement Invocation for Coming Back Into Reciprocal Relationship By Emily Jarrett Hughes

Emily is a friend of mine who is doing some amazing work connecting people with European heritage to their indigenous roots and to a deeper relationship to the earth through traditional ritual dances and Qigong (chee gong) practice. She also has worked closely with Indigenous elder Ojibwe water walker Sharon Day which has inspired her to lead workshops on water, embodied spirituality, and decolonization. I commend her website and her resources to you. Emily says about this statement I'm going to read to you: *"Speaking this invocation every week is a touchstone for me, reminding me of my highest goal for every moment. It is shaped by my work largely with groups of white people who are interested in dismantling whiteness and it might take a different form in more diverse groups. It is a work in progress. In solidarity with the messiness of these times, I'm sharing it with you mid-evolution."*

<https://www.wisdomdances.com/standing-in-complexity/>

As you hold your soil think about where this soil came from as the LAS is read

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: [Slide 35 i.e. picture of Sky Woman Falling](#)

From: Kimmerer, Robin Wall. Braiding Sweetgrass Milkweed Editions. Kindle Edition.

Read the story below that tells the Skywoman's story. As you read, invite participants to answer the questions as they look at the picture by Bruce King that in the slide

In the beginning there was the Skywoman. She fell like a maple seed, pirouetting on an autumn breeze.* A column of light streamed from a hole in the Skyworld, marking her path where only darkness had been before. It took her a long time to fall.

In fear, or maybe hope, she clutched a bundle tightly in her hand.

Hurling downward, she saw only dark water below. But in that emptiness there were many eyes gazing up at the sudden shaft of light.

They saw there a small object, a mere dust mote in the beam. As it grew closer, they could see that it was a woman, arms outstretched, long black hair billowing behind as she spiraled toward them.

The geese nodded at one another and rose together from the water in a wave of goose music. She felt the beat of their wings as they flew beneath to break her fall.

Far from the only home she'd ever known, she caught her breath at the warm embrace of soft feathers as they gently carried her downward. And so it began.

The geese could not hold the woman above the water for much longer, so they called a council to decide what to do. Resting on their wings, she saw them all gather: loons, otters, swans, beavers, fish of all kinds.

A great turtle floated in their midst and offered his back for her to rest upon. Gratefully, she stepped from the goose wings onto the dome of his shell. The others understood that she needed land for her home and discussed how they might serve her need. The deep divers among them had heard of mud at the bottom of the water and agreed to go find some. Loon dove first, but the distance was too far and after a long while he surfaced with nothing to show for his efforts.

One by one, the other animals offered to help—Otter, Beaver, Sturgeon—but the depth, the darkness, and the pressures were too great for even the strongest of swimmers. They returned gasping for air with their heads ringing. Some did not return at all.

Soon only little Muskrat was left, the weakest diver of all. He volunteered to go while the others looked on doubtfully. His small legs flailed as he worked his way downward and he was gone a very long time.

They waited and waited for him to return, fearing the worst for their relative, and, before long, a stream of bubbles rose with the small, limp body of the muskrat. He had given his life to aid this helpless human. But then the others noticed that his paw was tightly clenched and, when they opened it, there was a small handful of mud. Turtle said, "Here, put it on my back and I will hold it." Skywoman bent and spread the mud with her hands across the shell of the turtle. Moved by the extraordinary gifts of the animals, she sang in thanksgiving and then began to dance, her feet caressing the earth.

The land grew and grew as she danced her thanks, from the dab of mud on Turtle's back until the whole earth was made. Not by Skywoman alone, but from the alchemy of all the animals' gifts coupled with her deep gratitude. Together they formed what we know today as Turtle Island, our home.

Like any good guest, Skywoman had not come empty-handed. The bundle was still clutched in her hand. When she toppled from the hole in the Skyworld she had reached out to grab onto the Tree of Life that grew there. In

her grasp were branches—fruits and seeds of all kinds of plants. These she scattered onto the new ground and carefully tended each one until the world turned from brown to green. Sunlight streamed through the hole from the Skyworld, allowing the seeds to flourish. Wild grasses, flowers, trees, and medicines spread everywhere. And now that the animals, too, had plenty to eat, many came to live with her on Turtle Island.

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

Narrative:

We love this creation story because it speaks of harmony and joy and interdependence. But our creation story has a dark side. The harmony of Eden was shattered by what we call sin.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, understood this disharmony as human beings usurping their place in creation.

He imagined the creation story, the garden of Eden, as the place of harmony. All of creation, all of the cosmos interacted as it should. All the pieces of the chain, as was understood in Wesley’s day, functioned in perfect harmony. He wrote: “As long as no being usurped its station and attempted to climb higher on the scale of being, then all would remain in perfect harmony and order”

Slide 36

But sadly, humans disrupted this harmony when they tried to usurp their place in the harmony of creation. Disorder, disharmony became the norm. Or as Wesley named it de-creation became the way of the world.

[From the Beginning to the End: John Wesley’s Doctrine of Creation](#)

De Creation. I think this is a powerful way of identifying the disharmony we are experiencing in our global ecological crisis.

We are going to be reminded in this session that indigenous people worldwide view themselves in relationship with creation and the creator in ways that speak of harmony.. Just as John Wesley did.

Seeing the entire creation as a holy interdependence that reflects the holy relationship we and all creation has with the creator.

I want us to consider something as we listen to Rev Woodley. Unless you are from the center of power of the Greco Roman church/philosophy, you have in your past indigenous belief and practices at the root of your family. At the risk of simplifying history, those who are from northern Europe had nordic beliefs and practices, celtic beliefs and practices, Anglo-Saxon beliefs and practices, and even Germanic beliefs and practices. Which were all named as pagan by so called Christian conquerors. So as Randy talks about indigenizing our theology, he is asking us to shed the Western belief system that is rooted in rooting out any pagan, in that system’s definition, form of worship. Worship that might take its cues from the rhythms of nature or the care of earth rather than the supremacy of humans.

It is very hard for Western Christians to relearn the theological underpinnings that have formed the way we live and breathe our faith. That somehow, humans are at the top of the food chain and must be the priority in all decisions. That we control and have the right to control the way the chain works.

But we must. And we must see that a non-western way of thinking and believing and living is rooted in our own scriptures.

Shalom is living on the earth well, in harmony with all...The Harmony Way—a vision for all of humanity and non persons living on the earth

Which Randy Woodley will explain some in the next video

Native American Theological Reflection

Introduce the video: 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.

Video - Slide 37 13 minutes Using the last half of the video [Episode 5.4: Randy Woodley on Indigenous Theology & the Harmony Way - Western Theological Seminary](#) [Don't use this link. Use the slide link which is an edited version of this video]

1st Small Group Discussion - Slide 38 15-20 minutes

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?

Body Check in - Slide 39

Body Check In: How is your body and spirit doing right now? (using Rev. Dr. Bell's guidance)

What are 2 things that are pushing you/challenging you right now?

What are 2 things you are grateful about for these same challenges?

What is your body telling you right now about how you are situated and engaged in the world around you?

How would you describe the state of your mind right now? Is it like a peaceful, quiet lake, or like a powerful unrelenting waterfall?

10 minute BREAK - If time is short, have folks do this check in as they take time for a break

Narrative

In the reflections you listened to and read from Native elders: The Revs. Jim Bear Jacobs and Randy Woodley, you heard of modern people who still spoke to and interacted with created beings as if they were persons.

Non-human persons as Robin Kimmerer will speak of.

Can we reclaim harmony or strive to reclaim harmony?

What changes in your mind and spirit when you speak of the beings of creation as non-human persons?

Randy Woodley writes: " In Jesus' worldview, he laid to waste the fallacies ~~(of Platonic dualism that exist in our modern era and)~~ that presume the earth or the body or anything earthly is less spiritual than the mind, the spirit, or things more abstract. To Jesus, as it should be to us, the earth is wholly spiritual, as are our bodies."

Jim Bear Jacobs, like Robin Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, encourages us to speak of Earth as a 'she'. How would this change of language change your own mindset? What if we thought of creation as a birth narrative? God giving birth to Earth? Holding her up in the midst of the cosmos like Mufasa did with little Simba in the *Lion King*:

Take a moment to hold your earth or plant in your hands and think of what it would be like to be God holding this earth for the first time. Marveling at its complexity. Seeing all the microorganisms and molecules, the roots, the creatures in this one bit of earth. Holding it up, proudly like a parent, wanting to share its wonder with anyone who will marvel with you, humans and non human beings. Look, look what I birthed! Isn't She beautiful? I will call her Earth.

Think of how biblical, non hierarchical this image is/feels....feel what it is like to do decolonizing theology...

In this next video Randy, who has done some amazing work in decolonizing and centering Christianity in a non Western Indigenous Worldview, is interviewed by Erna Hackett, a student of Randy's. We will show this video in two parts. In this first part, as you listen, hear the language of hierarchy and how this has been superimposed on Western Thought and theology to the detriment of Creation Care.

Video **Show the beginning of this Randy Woodley video:**  Indigenizing Theology (13 minutes)

[Don't use this link. Use the slide with the embedded link which is an edited version of this video] **Slide 40 VIDEO**

2nd Small Group Discussion 15 minutes - Slide 41

1. What strikes you about the language we use for creation?
2. What strikes you about the hierarchy model of Western Theological View?
 - a. Where have you seen this model played out in land use?
3. What strikes you about changing to an Indigenous Theological View?
 - a. Have you seen this world view played out anywhere?
 - b. What would change if this became our model?
 - c. How would we be able to accomplish this?
4. How can we influence people to learn to listen to the story?

8:35 - Narration

In this next section of the video Randy and Erna reflect on how we speak about Jesus as creator and what his redemptive work is about for the whole of creation. You might never have thought of this concept before so take it slow and listen carefully. We will reflect on some of the scripture used in the video and how to apply this thinking to our own LA journey.

-Video  **Indigenizing Theology part about Jesus being the creator (16 Minutes) - Slide 42 VIDEO**

[Don't use this link. Use the slide with the embedded link which is an edited version of this video.]

Narration

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?

How will we weave this theology into our own LAS? Recognizing that the land we live on is indigenous land? Recognizing that the land we live on is sacred land? That it is included in the creative and salvific work of Jesus?

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 **Slide 43**

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.

Slide 43-47 Scriptures are page 15 of guidebook

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.”

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

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.

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

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.”

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?

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

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

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, for the good of the whole, instead of for individual salvation, change how we speak of creation and reconciliation of and for the whole earth?

[1] Wesley Study Bible, Abingdon Press, Jeremiah notes page 898

Slide 48 Closing

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'



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)

Read: Chapter 8 On This Spirit Walk, "Justice"

Listen to: [S2 E5: Little War on the Prairie – Scene on Radio](#)

Reflect on these questions

- Are you aware of the Native American communities that were and are in your area?
- What evidence do you see?
- 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 Material Not required

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-north-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.

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

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

Slide 49

Land Acknowledgement Statement From: Native Governance Center
Minnesota Land Acknowledgement

Note that the Hopeful Earthkeepers have given a donation to the Native Governance Center as a sponsoring organization

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.

write your feelings, reactions, convictions, hopes that surface as the statements are read.

Centering:

I hope you were able to look at some of the materials on Indian Boarding Schools. Yes, there were boarding schools in MN. No, you may not have ever heard about them. They have been, until very recently, a well kept and shameful secret. Thankfully people like Willian Kent Krueger and recent documentaries are shedding light on this horrible history. I want you to realize that there are people still alive that remember Indian Boarding Schools. People like Norman Lopez aged 78

slide 51



As a way to center our time together I invite you to hear this heartbreaking yet hope filled memory: This is a photo of Norman Lopez playing a flute he made outside of his home. I read about his story in the New York Times

Norman's grandfather taught him how to carve a flute out of the branch of a cedar. Norman was very proud of his grandfather's legacy and his flute playing. When he was a boy, Norman proudly brought his flute to school. I would imagine for a show and tell type of activity.

His teacher took his beloved flute and smashed it and threw it into the trash. Remember, one of the goals of Indian boarding schools was to take the 'Indian out of the Indian'

Norman grasped even then how special the cedar flute and his native music were. "That's what God is. God speaks through air," he said, of the music his grandfather taught him.

He said the lesson was clear, both in the need to comply and the need to resist.

"I had to keep quiet. There's plenty where it came from. Tree's not going to give up," he said of the cedar. "I'm not going to give up."

Decades later, Mr. Lopez has returned to the flute. He carves them and records in a homemade studio, set up in his home on the Ute Mountain reservation in Towaoc, Colo.

I am so struck by this story not only for the shameful past it tells us; but also for the resilience of Mr. Lopez and other Native Americans and First Nations peoples of Canada like him. People who have been able to overcome the horrors of colonization. Who have been able to reclaim their culture, identity and purpose. It is humbling.

What is it about Christianity that allows this (boarding schools, erasure of cultures, forced baptisms, abuse, torture of children, sacrilegious burial of abused children, current blindness to the language and images used to depict Native cultures and people) to happen? Why did Christians think this was OK?

Slide 52

And the Lord said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. Genesis 4:10 This is from the story of Cain and Abel. Cain, if you remember, killed his brother, Abel, in a jealous rage.

I find this verse to be so applicable to both that story and our current historical context. Blood that has seeped into the ground around murdered bodies cries out for justice. The very earth we treasure is violated and will not stay silent. I believe God is crying out to us: What have you done? To your siblings whom I love.

What we are going to explore today is what it can look like to change our Western mindset from colonialism as the way to live on this earth to de-colonialism. Or Decolonization.

Decolonization is the act of remembering and holding in tension the entirety of the tragedy and history that had happened on United States soil. And determining how we stay in our lane while also making reparations for the past. It is tricky.

With this in mind let's talk about what colonization means and how we see decolonization happening or imagined in our world today. We are going to be listening to Indigenous voices as guides to this conversation. Much of this conversation comes from Yes! Magazine cited in your preparation material.

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 disconnection from the land, from ourselves, and from our culture. TAIAlAKE ALFRED
- Colonization is about negating the stories and lived experiences of the cultures that don't fit into the settlers agenda.

Remember the ridiculous question from OTSW: how do you live as a Native American and a Christian? As if being indigenous precludes holiness? Remember there are still those who lived and remember the horrors of Indian Boarding Schools. Think about this: it is only generations ago that more than 90 percent of Native people experienced genocide. We all live in a culture and economy that was founded on violence and disrespect for God's beloved humans and non humans. To look at some good examples of this, I encourage you to read these articles: Put Links in Chat

<https://www.americananthro.org/StayInformed/NewsDetail.aspx?ItemNumber=28239>
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/anthropology-association-apologizes-to-native-americans-for-the-fields-legacy-of-harm/>

- Colonization is taking resources that don't belong to any one person but owning them for yourself.

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 still happening. it is not something from the past. We are all still products of colonization and if we keep doing what we continue to keep doing, it will destroy us. While we may not call ourselves colonizers, we are acting like colonizers unless we consciously act differently. Everytime we purchase something, everytime we vote, everytime we make decisions. We decide if we are going to be colonizers or people who live the harmony way. To decolonize we need to pay attention and give space to our native siblings. And learn from them as they reclaim their own heritage. As both allies and pro-activists.

This can be both exhausting and exhilarating work.

But if we can think of it as Christian discipleship that has both temporal and eternal ramifications we might be able to form ourselves into who it is our Creator meant us to be.

So then what is decolonization?

To form a different point of reference that connects us to the land that nurtures us and 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 15 minutes

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?

Narration

slide #55

Visions of Decolonization: For both Native and Settlers

- Reconnecting with the lands and waters, reclaiming sacred spaces of traditional territories
 - Both indigenous and settlers need to do this. Because colonization has separated indigenous (and settler) folk from their own connection to their roots, values and stories.
 - Settlers need to learn new stories that are rooted in creation narratives rather than colonizer stories. This is our task.
- Cultural restoration, returning to healing practices, rebuilding community
 - Let's think about our stories. How do we tell our stories?
 - Until I came to MN I never talked about who my ancestors were. My family wasn't very interested in that sort of thing. And none of the people I associated with were either. It wasn't until I went to a church and seminary that was rooted in Scandinavian heritage that I realized people in MN are really invested in their Scandinavian roots. Now my family's heritage is a bit dubious at best. Nonetheless we identified as American first and foremost and definitely acted and told our stories from the standpoint of those who deserved to be home owners and occupiers in our little towns in Iowa. Our stories were the stories of Willa Cather, Laura Ingalls Wilder, John Wayne, Louis L'Amour. Pioneer Seed, Monsanto, Home ownership, and Progress were our economic ideals. And these stories and values were the truths that were going to bring us to that American Dream that we all believed in as our God given right and responsibility to achieve.
 - Does this sound familiar, even to those of you whose stories may not originate in Northern Europe?
 - What about those of you who are true immigrants? Or who have Native American as a part of your heritage?
 - This is what we mean by telling our stories from the standpoint of colonization. as opposed to the next point on the slide:
- Saving and uplifting the wisdom, beauty and intelligence of traditional indigenous ways and indigenous ancestors' belief systems

Randy Woodley in his newest book: *Becoming Rooted* affirms that We are all indigenous to some place. We are all from somewhere. We can all become rooted in the land that sustains us. (Woodley, Randy. *Becoming Rooted* (p. 7). Broadleaf Books. Kindle Edition.) Colonization is **disconnection from the land, from ourselves, and from our culture.**

TAIAIAKE ALFRED

When we talk about colonization, we tend to think of brutally stolen land, racism, broken treaties, boarding schools. Those things happened. Those well-known things shaped the relationship between Indigenous people and the settler society on this continent. But what was the deeper and lasting impact of those things on nations of Indigenous people? Alienation, separation, disconnection.

And if we are totally honest, if we are truly awake, those of us who are white bodied people, feel deep within ourselves the same alienation, separation and disconnection.

From each other, from our neighbors, from God and from ourselves. Because for everyone:

Colonization is disconnection from the land, from ourselves, and from our culture. I am more and more convinced that we have, through institutional Christianity, been separated from our own creation centered spirituality that celebrated and lived into the rhythms of nature. While we called other nature based religions pagan we were also condemning our own roots in indigenous belief that created bonds of mutual respect with humans and non humans.

The felt manifestation of this disconnection is the alienation that we feel as a result of being caught between two worlds, not being able to live authentic lives. That is why it's absolutely necessary to continually remind ourselves: It is all about the land.

For white bodied allies, land means stolen land that was often settled by people who were being used by the government to build national wealth and/or worked by enslaved people. This is why we feel, in the words of Elaine Enns and Chet Meyers, haunted. In order for us to heal we need to learn along with our native siblings how to live within this haunting.

- Decolonization is uneasy, reserved, unsettled - never really done **Slide 56**

Reflect for a moment on this statement as it relates to your own stories: **(on slide 57)**

"Indigenous peoples are those who have creation stories, not colonization stories, about how we/they came to be in a particular place" -Eve Tuck, State University of New York at New Paltz K. Wayne Yang University of California, San Diego, Tuck is Unangax̂ and is an enrolled member of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island, Alaska. [Decolonization is not a metaphor](#)

As persons who care for the earths doesn't it make sense to start telling our stories as creation and redemptive stories rather than colonization stories? For example, in Psalm 104 the human's life is tied closely with the rhythms of creation: "You made the moon to tell the seasons, and the sun knows when to set: you bring darkness on, night falls, and all the forest animals come out— savage lions roaring for their prey, claiming their food from God. The sun rises, they retire, going back to lie down in their lairs, and people go out to work, to labor again until evening." This is our true story, even though we now live with electric lights and 12 hour work days.

Telling our stories from a creation perspective is not easy work. It means reconstructing our whole understanding of what it means to be Christian and American citizens. The American ideal is no longer the norm or even the purpose of our existence. And we can no longer call the American ideal or norm Christian. For example: Just because we have a deed to our land, doesn't mean we can do what we want to the land we have entrusted to us. We can't just look out for our own interests. We can't just hope that our own children get the 'prize'; the secure future.

For those of us who are UM's I'm finding it fascinating that one of the driving forces of the division in our churches is who owns the property. If we really believed in what Jesus taught, and what decolonization means, wouldn't those who truly love all their neighbors say to others who are less inclusive in their love: take your property. It isn't ours anyway.

Just like Jesus and the prophets taught, we are called to community, to Love of neighbor as much as love of self.

Decolonization is not just about societal improvement, it is a total reframing of how we live together. From being an American christian who thought it was ok to destroy a whole culture and people to a Jesus-following Christian who desires to make atonement for the past. Knowing that there is no easy solution.

What would that look like to be people of creation centered stories instead of colonization stories? How would that change the way we talk about who we are? And who our neighbors are?

Small Group #2 - 10-15 minutes - Slide 58

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

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

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

What has colonization/settler culture 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 the LAS for your own setting?

Take some moments for reflection/respond in chat

10 minute BREAK

Body Check In -Slide 61

Once again a moment for us to check in with our bodies, to get out of our heads alone and notice what is happening in our hearts and in our bodies - our own physical manifestation of God's embodied Creation, right here with us always.

I expect that most of us feel disquieted, which is something we don't want to shy away from as we do this work together. When we get to actually writing LAS we will want to look carefully at the way they make us feel. We will want to be disquieted by a LAS or it won't be helpful. I want to walk us through a brief meditative exercise inspired by a mentor of mine Kaia Svien. I invite you to close your eyes or look softly into the distance.

Take a deep breath and notice where energy is flowing in you. Is it like rapid sparklers lighting up in your head or around you? Is it like heaviness in your throat or your chest? Is it moving quickly or slowly? What color is it? Just notice, no need to change it. Just honor its existence by noticing it.

Take another deep breath and gently, with deep love, invite that energy wherever it is, to slow down a bit, to sink into your body, lower and lower. If the heaviness needs to soften into tears, let them flow. Whatever sensation you are experiencing, welcome it with love.

Take a final deep breath and allow that love to wash over your whole body like a warm golden light. Let it sink deep into you from the top of your head through your heart, and belly, down through your legs and through your feet into the ground below the building you are in. Feel how the earth is holding you, grounding you. Sink your roots deep into the living soil below you. Silently share your gratitude for the love that surrounds you and holds you.

When you are ready, come back into your space, open your eyes. You are all free to take a break until 6:10?

Role for Allies ~10 minutes - Slide 62

Narrative

There is no clear path or recipe or end point for this important difficult work. As Tuck and Yang write in their essay Decolonization is not a metaphor, "Solidarity is an *uneasy*, reserved, and *unsettled* matter that *neither reconciles present grievances nor forecloses future conflict*." -Eve Tuck, State University of New York at New Paltz K. Wayne Yang University of California, San Diego, Tuck is Unangax̂ and is an enrolled member of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island, Alaska. [Decolonization is not a metaphor](#)

In other words, we can't just write our land acknowledgement statements and check a box that we have done our decolonization work. But still we need some ideas of where to start. Yes Magazine did a full issue on Decolonization that I found really helpful in that regard. Here are a few highlights. ([Spring 2018 Decolonize Issue](#)). There are many parallel ideas in Chapter 8 of OTSW.

- 1) First, I found it helpful to understand that there is distinct work for indigenous and non-indigenous peoples to be doing. It is hopeful to read stories of Indigenous Resurgence of indigenous people around the globe reclaiming food cultures and teaching health and spiritual traditions, reconnecting with land, rescuing languages, establishing sovereignty over their lives, building coalitions of indigenous people across the planet. All of this is really important and powerful creative work. There is parallel but **different work for us as settler allies**. Here is how Taiaiake Alfred, Kahnawake Mohawk scholar and writer put it.

"Too, there is a role in Indigenous resurgence for non-Indigenous people. They can play a part in the decolonization of this land simply by disassociating themselves from the privileges that are built into being part of the settler society, softening the stifling grip mainstream society has on Indigenous existences. Forgoing the need to be right, to be in charge, and to possess. Embracing the discomfort of the unsettled existence of an ally committed to the strength and well-being of Indigenous nations. Just as with the Indigenous people who are defining resurgence through their unscripted creative contention and generative acts of love for the land, there is no template or menu for allyship. For all of us, Indigenous and settler alike, there is only self-questioning and embracing this commitment: Listen to the voices of our Indigenous ancestors channeled through the young people of our nations, learn from Indigenous culture how to walk differently, and love the land as best you can." [Don't Just Resist. Return to Who You Are: Let's re-experience our homelands the way our ancestors did and regenerate that culture](#) – BY TAIAlAKE ALFRED, Indigenous scholar and writer. He is from Kahnawake in the Mohawk Nation

There are several important ideas for us there. I'm going to reread a few of those phrases to help them sink in. [reread underlined phrases above]

- 2) Powys Whyte offers a few other thoughts that I found especially helpful for work in environmental and church circles: First, we need to **be careful of romanticizing decolonization**. While it is good to lift up indigenous wisdom and spirituality, it is essential that we also confront ongoing "territorial dispossession" as well as the many current risks that Indigenous people experience to their health, economic vitality, to their psychological well-being, and cultural integrity, the safety of their very lives.

One of the more powerful statements in that article for me was the statement that *"Nobody can claim to be an ally if their agenda is to prevent their own future dystopias through actions that also preserve today's Indigenous dystopias."*

Many Indigenous peoples in North America, are already living in what our ancestors would have understood as dystopian or post-apocalyptic times. In a very short period of time, the capitalist-colonialist partnership has destroyed our relationships with thousands of species and ecosystems. Which is why many indigenous environmental movements and other environmental justice groups focus on fixing injustices now, cleaning up toxic communities, stopping violence, demanding a voice in the lawmaking process, healing intergenerational traumas and inequities.

For those of us rightly concerned about the urgency of problems like the climate crisis, it can be hard to “slow down” in order to address these problems too. We can push them aside as “other important but tangential issues” to be addressed some other day after we’ve solved CO2 emissions. But it is all deeply connected. The same mindset that has brought about the current indigenous dystopias is what is leading us to future dystopias. As Henri writes in ch 8 of OTSW, “Native Americans... serve as the nation’s miners’ canary.”

- 3) We also need to **understand how colonialism impacts indigenous communities in complicated ways**. that can result in diverse, what seems like hypocritical perspectives. The example Powys Whyte gives is of tribal governments supporting pipelines and other extractive industries because of the perverse financial and political incentives of our colonial/capitalist system.

This is true also for our theological perspectives. Marcus Briggs-Cloud whose story is in Chapter 8 of OTSW you read for today is someone I have had the pleasure of meeting. When he was here in Minnesota for the 2018 Creation Care Summit he shared that members of native Churches also struggle to reclaim indigenous spiritual traditions. “There are many who fear of being labeled pagan by those Christians who still operate out of a European missionary mindset.” Marcus is doing some amazing work establishing an indigenous community in a portion of his people’s original homeland in Alabama, teaching the traditions and language to the next generation. The work of decolonizing theology and perspectives continues in native and non-native settings.

Maybe this goes without saying, but I want to say it anyway. We need to be careful not to assume that just because we have written our LAS and are now “woke” with new decolonized language, theology and politics that we can self-righteously judge the actions or words of others on this same decolonizing journey.

- 4) Finally, we need to avoid settler heroism (like Avatar) and recognize that **Conservation movements themselves have been damaging to Indigenous peoples** - causing forced displacement, erasure, economic marginalization, violations of rights. As Randy Woodley referenced, the worldview that separates people from the land, also believes that humans cannot live in harmony with nature but instead need to set aside parks as pristine, untouched areas. Instead, we are learning that careful human interaction with the natural world can be healing and restorative, things like controlled burning, soil regeneration, just to name a few examples of many. In this area, settler culture, science, and environmental movements all have much to learn from indigenous wisdom. A new article from Yes Magazine dated Oct 6 2022: Solving the Climate Crisis Requires Traditional Ecological Knowledge <https://www.yesmagazine.org/climate/2022/10/06/climate-indigenous-ecological-knowledge> *“Environmental problems that took generations to become entrenched cannot be resolved by transient researchers or long-distance government staff. Now is the time for all hands on deck, especially the expert hands (and minds) of Native peoples whose lifeways, cultures, and identities are irrevocably intertwined with their ancestral territories. Enrolling local tribal experts as science advisers, partners,*

and co-managers in addressing biodiversity loss, climate change, legacy pollutants, and other pernicious issues not only makes sense, but is the only way to effectively turn things around.”

We too need to ask, what do we in the church need to learn from our indigenous neighbors?

Small Group Discussion #3 10-15 minutes- [Slide 63 page 20 in guidebook](#)

- 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 of 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”?

Narrative (if time)

I want to suggest another way to both dis-quiet our lives and model the way Native People have taught us to live.

So we all know that Native People ask creation for the gift of life they receive from it. Receiving it as a gift is very different from seeing what is given to them as a sacrifice. We tend to think in sacrifice rather than gift language which is itself a form of colonization. Because in thinking of what we use from the earth as sacrifice we control the attitude of how the resource is procured or even received.

As if we deserve it or the way it is procured has a higher value if it is a sacrifice. Sacrifice implies violence. Gift implies mutuality.

Indigenous people, when practicing rightly, ask and thank the animal, the land, the bird, for permission to take its life or resource for consumption. Which is very different from taking something from the earth as a sacrifice.

So I want to suggest that we start doing this in our daily life to help us connect with what our colonization has done. For example, when you drive your car, thank the land for the fuel you will be using to get from one place to another.

When you turn on your water, thank the aquifer for giving you life giving water.

When you use your electronics, thank the earth and the cosmos for the minerals that are mined so that you can do your work.

What others can you think of, put them in the chat

You might find yourself both grateful and guilt ridden. Which is the point. To feel that true cost of your life.

But not to keep you from living a forgiven life in Christ. To remind you that confession is a part of a balanced life. Because as we feel the guilt and shame of what our lifestyle has brought to this earth, we can also know that we are forgiven. For the scriptures do say: if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. (1 John 1:9) An unconfessed life is an unexamined life

I expect that most of us feel disquieted, which is something we don't want to shy away from as we do this work together.

When we get to actually writing LAS we will want to look carefully at the way they make us feel. We will want to be disquieted by a LAS or it won't be helpful.

For Further Reflection and something to talk about if time.

In our Social Creeds as UM's we actually speak about what it means to live in a **decolonized** community. I believe the Social Creeds are what it means to live out our Baptism Vows in Community.

The Social Community, ¶162 2016 Book of Discipline, Social Principles ¶162 - **Slide 64**

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?

How does this experience *change the way you want to walk on this earth*?

We pray for a decolonized future every time we say the Jesus Prayer: "Thy kingdom 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.

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 nor 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

next session preparation, preparing to write LAS

Our closing ritual is an example of a prayer of confession written from the standpoint of decolonization. It calls us deeply into an alternative way of living with both humans and non humans within our relationship with God.

The prayer is from a curriculum called Seasons of the Spirit which I recommend to anyone who has to prepare weekly worship. in chat: <https://www.seasonsonline.ca/>
please respond with the bold words, muting yourselves.

If anyone has questions or comments, I will stay on for a bit after this session for conversation.

Closing Ritual **Slide 64 &65**

And so we can pray with the confidence of children of God

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:

<https://theconversation.com/land-acknowledgments-meant-to-honor-indigenous-people-too-often-do-the-opposite-erasing-american-indians-and-sanitizing-history-instead-163787>

Read: “The Geography of Whiteness” an interview with Willie Jennings included in the supplemental material in the guidebook

Explore: <http://www.nacp-umc.org/>

One church’s process in writing a Land Acknowledgement Statement: [Land – Richfield United Methodist Church](#)

Review again issues of treaties in the State of MN: [Treaties | The US-Dakota War of 1862](#)

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 acknowledgment?)
- ☐ When will I have the largest impact? (Think about your timing and audience, specifically.)

Step 5: Writing non-performative Land Acknowledgement Statements

Slide 66 (Title Slide)

Minnesota Council of Churches Land Acknowledgement - Slide 67

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.

Remember, pay attention to your reactions and write down words that strike you in some way. If you feel inclined you can place them in the chat. write your feelings, reactions, convictions, hopes that surface as the statements are read.

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

Centering

I, Debra, was at the beginning stages of the time when the camp properties of the MN AC had to be dealt with. I sat on the camping board for the MN AC. I read the financials and listened to the consultants. The camp properties were bleeding money right and left. Every single consultant, every single accountant, that looked at the books, said you have to sell something. You can't keep on going on this way.

I had no history with any of the camp properties. It was an easy decision for me to simply see the bottom line and recommend liquidation of some of the least performing and least kept up properties. I saw it as a stewardship issue at a time when I knew the institution called church was going to be facing deeper financial challenges than we could even imagine at the time. This was over 20 years ago.

But to those who loved the camps, who had encountered rich experiences at some of these camps, it was like asking them to cut off an arm. They could not see their way to selling such an important part of their spiritual heritage.

I saw first hand the sorrow that comes with losing precious land.

As we write LAS, we must recognize that we are playing the role I played on the camping board. My blood did not cry out from any of the ground that needed to be sold.

Just as our blood does not, truly, cry out from the land that we are acknowledging as indigenous lands. We may have ownership, we may have emotional ties, we may even have ancestors buried on the land, but they were buried in peace. In a marked and named grave.

Theologian Willie Jennings in the Christian Century writes:

Slide 68 “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 is 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.” November 3, 2021 “The Geography of Whiteness”

“Our relationship with land cannot heal until we hear its stories.”

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

1st Small Group 15-20 minutes - Slide 69 Have you ever been a part of a church closure? Or have you ever been a part of selling church property?

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

Do you own it?

Has it stayed the same throughout your life?

Is it a place in the past or the present?

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.

What went into that process?

What emotions did you experience, either personally or collectively?

Narrative

In the previous steps of the journey, we have visited the past that created the need for LAS.

We have listened to the Native elders and teachers who remind us that we are part of a connected circle of life and death. Like the teachings of Jesus and the early church, they remind us that there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free, but all are one in the human race. (Gal 3:28)

We have seen the devastation that evil theology can inflict on the lives of God’s beloved ones.

We have listened for cries of our siblings in Christ whose blood continues to cry out from the land. (Genesis 4:10)

We have explored and reflected on our need for continual and conscientious confession of collective sins that continue to visit the transgressions of our ancestors on modern day policies and practices.

We have spoken about how our language perpetuates the harm the church visited on Native peoples and their cultures.

Hopefully we have taken steps to heal our language and revisit the ways we talk about ownership, stewardship and land.

Are we ready, yet, to write LAS? Probably not. But we can do this work with humility, recognizing that this is not a once and done deal. We will continue to listen carefully to the stories of our Native siblings, we will continue to revise and repair our work so that it honors these stories and truth.

We will acknowledge, as our Native siblings acknowledge, that all we do is flawed and imperfect. This is one of the things I admire about native cultures. They do not aim for perfection but for interdependence as the goal in life. We too are not aiming for perfection but a step along the way, seeing where it might lead us, and watching for the landmarks along the way that encourage us to keep moving forward, embracing the challenges, and hoping for a future that doesn't perpetuate the sins of our ancestors.

The group who was tasked with writing this curriculum wrestled with the appropriateness to even do this journey because Christians have, historically, been so disastrously damaging to not only the humanity of our Native siblings but also so naive about the ways we deal with past harms.

As we did research, prayed and debated we came to the conclusion that LAS are going to be written and it would be best to present a curriculum that could help MN folkx who are concerned enough to write a LAS to be able to do it responsibly, respectfully and in a way that is non performative. What we mean by that is that we are not just checking off a box that proves we are 'woke' or liberal or feeling sorry for our past.

Once again from one of the articles we read: (slide 70)

"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."

<https://theconversation.com/land-acknowledgments-meant-to-honor-indigenous-people-too-often-do-the-opposite-erasing-american-indians-and-sanitizing-history-instead-163787>

That part about charting a path forward is going to be the most challenging as we craft and put into place LAS. We will work with that in the next step. But keep your minds and hearts open to what it might mean for you in your context to chart a path forward...

The Land

Our first and central emphasis needs to be on 'land'. What is it about the land we stand on that we are acknowledging? Let us remember that for Native Americans land is an important word that invokes responsibility, rights, sovereignty, and belonging. ...

"Land" is a concept that can weave people together around common understandings and experiences.

I am going to use the LAS I wrote for Chatfield UMC (ask the participants to follow along from their guidebook page 3 as an example as we walk through this step. Not because it is a perfect or even good statement but because it follows some of the requirements of a non performative LAS. Here is how I answered those questions:

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

We continue to find relics of their inhabitation as we plow the land, search among the bluffs and along the rivers. As we discover these relics we become connected; if we allow our hearts to connect, with the people for whom this land is homeland.

I am naming very specifically the area in which I live. I think this is important. To hone in on where you are.

The Root River and its tributaries are an important part of the landscape of my area. I learned this year that the DNR, in collaboration with other agencies, has been mitigating the stream banks of the watershed.

One of my parishioners owns land on which the DNR did some restoration work. Turns out the MN Historical Society takes some of the soil that is removed or disturbed during the mitigation and analyzes it. They found that the land my parishioner owns was used as a temporary home of people prior to European settlements. They found bits of pottery and human bones in the soil. Obviously, their property had been the habitation of native peoples generations ago.

This is why I included the words 'relics'. To remind us that this land was inhabited by the Dakota as their homeland. I want to be able to see in my mind's eye and in listeners minds' eye, a people who built homes, raised families, and, just like us, made their livelihood alongside this land we now inhabit.

And so I also say:

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

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

It is their homeland, the place from which they lived and moved and had their being.

One of my joys each summer is watching the little boys in town on their way to streams to fish. They ride their bikes and in their backpacks you can see their fishing rods poking out the top. It is the most Norman Rockwellian part of living in this small town.

I can imagine generations of people fishing and enjoying these creeks with reverence and honor for all they give them.

I want people to hear this statement and imagine the generations who have called this land home. I want them to realize that they live as a connection to the past and need to honor this land for all that it has been, is and will be.

As one group who worked on a LAS said: **On slide 71**

“It is important to understand the longstanding 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.” [Northwestern University](#)

The Present

And now we come to the present. Acknowledging that Native Peoples still reside with us. And still count this whole place as their home, not just where they currently reside, but the whole of it.

I was struck by the stories we are going to be using in our small groups. These are from the MN States Parks and Trails newsletter from November 2021, which is Native American Month.

I would like you to read these together in your small group and reflect on these stories. They are in your guide book. Page 24 & 25

All of you will do the first Story.

Those in odd numbered groups will do the third story. Those in even number groups will do the 2nd story.

The reflection questions are in your guidebook as well.

2nd Small Group - Slide 72

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?

Story #1 All Groups

“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

Story # 2 Groups 2 & 4

“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

Story #3 Groups 1 & 3 & 5

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

“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)

5-10 minute BREAK

The Truth

Narrative

The most difficult part of the LAS is the reference to the truth of the past. Because this is the part that is going to make everyone uncomfortable; if it is done well.

Slide 73 According to our sources: “If an acknowledgment is discomfoting and triggers uncomfortable conversations versus self-congratulation, it is likely on the right track.”

Don’t sugarcoat the past.

Use terms like *genocide*, *ethnic cleansing*, *stolen land*, and *forced removal* to reflect actions taken by colonizer/settlers.

Whenever I read this part of my own land acknowledgement statement I feel the tension in the room rise and the shuffling of feet.

My people have heard the stories of colonialism, we use decolonizing language in worship almost every Sunday, our language for God and humans are expansive, yet, laying out the actions of our ancestors as if it matters today is a very hard thing to hear.

But it must be done if we are to know what is required of us to live as sanctified people on this land. And that is our goal. To live as holy people on this sacred land.

Here are the words I use to name the truth

“We have erred in our inability to live peaceably 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.”

One of our references said that we shouldn’t be grim in the words we use to write LAS. I’m not sure how to not be grim when talking about genuine genocide. But this is our work so we need to be realistic and honest about what happened in the past.

The Rev. Anita Phillips reflecting on the General Conference of 2020, which was the last GC she attended before her retirement, and which disappointed her greatly, in an open letter to Native and UMChurches wrote: **slide 74**

“My dear sisters and brothers in Christ! My dear Tribal Peoples! Remember who Creator God has made us to be. We have survived the very worst which humanity can hurl. And we still possess the greatest of all treasures: We are made beautifully in the image of our Creator as Native American Peoples,

We have lived through worse than this! We have survived holocaust! We can indeed do all things through Christ who strengthens us!”

If Rev. Phillips can name the truth and still have hope for unity and healing, maybe we need to be open to the reality of how facing up to our past might bring us to a future of hope and healing:

If an acknowledgment is discomforting and triggers uncomfortable conversations versus self-congratulation, it is likely on the right track.

I would like you to talk together about these issues/questions

3rd Small Group - Slide 75 page 25 guidebook

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 that something we should be concerned about?

What other questions and concerns do you have about writing your LAS?

The Future/The Action

Narrative

Within the LAS there needs to be a call to action. Because as people called by God to sanctification, saying words are not enough. Words need to move us to action and transformation.

While the call to action in the LAS 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.

My LAS ends with this summary and call to action.

"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."

In my research I have found that there is a Native American Comprehensive Plan for the UMC.

If you are wondering what your future plans might be as you craft a LAS I commend to you the hopes and dreams of the Native American UMC people who call on all the church to join with them: (in the guidebook)

2021-2024 Quadrennial Vision For Native American Ministries

Regardless of the outcome of the 2020 General Conference, the challenges facing Indigenous communities today will continue. Here are the four areas of focus the NACP 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.

Narrative

Please notice: We are not asking Native American siblings to do our work of writing LAS. This is our work. It is our responsibility to inform the white church of the crimes of our past, the present reality of continued colonization and to vision for a future that is just and equitable for Native peoples.

To that end we are, as Hopeful EarthKeepers, committed to continuing this work.

And we are committed to honoring those who have helped us craft this Journey. While we have not asked Native people to give us their time for this work, we have used the wonderful resources they have provided for us. Like much of what is good in the world: we merely had to be curious, imaginative and convicted enough to avail ourselves of these gifts.

We are truly thankful.

To that end we will be honoring these gifts by our own gift giving. In the spirit of the gift culture of Native peoples as much as we were able.

For example, from the MN Hopeful EarthKeepers fund, money has been and will continue to be donated to Randy Woodley's ministry at Eloheim Farms in thankfulness to all he has shared with us. We will be donating as well as to Sheldon's work and Native American emergent food goods here in MN.

Now your next step is to write your own LAS. Next session much of our time will be used to hear your LAS, in whatever form they are, in small group settings. You will be able to decide if you want feedback or simply a listening ear. As you hear each other's work you will enter into a wonderful covenant community of people who are desiring to walk righteously on this earth. Acknowledging the horror of the past and the hope for the future.

Once again thank you for being on this journey. We will be in prayer for you as you fashion your statements.

8:55 Closing ritual - Slide 76

How does this experience *change the way you want to walk on this earth?*

For two voices or call and response

Debra I am the circling hawk
dancing with joy for life.

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

Debra I am the faithful soil
nourishing each life I touch.

Response: You invite us to join in the caring.

Susan I am the swift stream
singing my thanks for life.

Response: You invite us to join in the song.

Susan I am the blazing star
bringing wonder to life.

Response: You invite us to join in the wonder.

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

Response: You invite us to join in the praise.

Debra: 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

Susan For times when we have viewed Planet Earth as a source of endless resources,

Response: forgive.

Susan: Earth's waters are polluted with toxins,

Response: forgive.

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

Together: forgive.

Debra: 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™

The following will be in the guidebook as helpful summaries of the material for writing the 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.

We have spoken a lot about the past. What is important for the LAS you write for your own context is knowing what the past is within your own context. The maps we used in Step 2 [Invasion of America](#) are important to revisit as you begin writing your statement. Ask yourself these questions:

Who lived on your land?

Whose blood cries out from your land?

What evidence is there of their existence in your area?

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

What Next? Pastors reflect on the impact of Native American boarding schools.

*The Rev. Charles Brower, a retired United Methodist pastor in Alaska

*Dr. Ashley Dreff, general secretary of the General Commission on Archives and History of The United Methodist Church

*The Rev. Tweedy Sombrero Navarrete, executive director of Four Corners Native American Ministry and Pastor of Shiprock First UMC

Listen for what the Revs. Tweedy and Charles ask non native churches to do.

<https://www.facebook.com/GCORRUMC/videos/646227896404077>

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.](#)

Example of a church that made a decision to act:

<https://www.dakotasumc.org/news/canyon-lake-umc-walks-with-native-american-families?fbclid=IwAR3fRMv4MxsxNF68bwA4LN-29RQTquxaip2esB8H2EIDUs-8VDA3H83gTI>

Step 6: Sharing statements & next steps in forming relationships beyond statements

Centering **Slide 77 & 78**

In Braiding SweetGrass, Robin Kimmerer writes about a plant that came to North America with the European colonizers. Native Americans called it White Man's Footprint. The common name is common plantain. (put up a picture) At first Indigenous people were suspicious of the plant. Considering how other invasive plants have wreaked havoc on our environment, that was a wise approach. Soon they learned that it had medicinal properties. As white colonizers moved from east to west, plantain came along with them. Unlike other invasive plants, plantain lived within the areas it grew. It didn't invade, it co-existed. Not like Kudzu or garlic mustard. Robin writes: "This wise and generous plant, faithfully following the people, became an honored member of the plant community. It's a foreigner, an immigrant, but after five hundred years of living as a good neighbor, people forget that kind of thing."

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. Braiding Sweetgrass (p. 214). Milkweed Editions. Kindle Edition. ·

We call that naturalization. Plantain became naturalized. It found itself a useful place in the cycle of life in America.

Is there any hope at all that we could become useful, good neighbors to those we have oppressed? Is there any hope at all that we can decolonize ourselves enough that we could be those who fulfill prophetic calls to be those who repair the broken foundations, who repair the breach, who make the land livable again? Is there any chance that our values and ways of being in the world can repair rather than damage relationships with humans and non humans, both.

In Isaiah chapter 58 God's people are called to just that task: "Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in. Isaiah 58:12"

We are hoping that this journey of writing LAS has brought you all to a place where you see the possibilities of being repairers of the breach, the rebuilders of walls, and the reimagers of a new way of relating to the geography of the land on which you reside.

AND we hope that you will be willing to invite others along on your journey of healing and restoration.

We are going to ask you to share in small groups your 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 30 minutes This will be a longer small group time. Give each person 10 minutes sharing Land acknowledgement statements

Next steps: Narrative

If time and the group would benefit: Share the experience of the small group LAS discussion with the large group

We do not want LAS to be the final step. As we have said, we hope this is just a first step in acknowledging the work there is to do.

Knowing what that work is will be a lifetime of reflection, action and advocacy. There is no one right path for this work. Each person will be asked by Spirit to take their own path forward. And it will always lead you to new ways of being. Ways of being that we believe will transform you into who you were created to be; a co-creator with God. A repairer of the breach, a rebuild of broken walls.

So we want you to imagine right now: what do you believe a just sharing of land would look like today and for the generations to come? What might be the role of the church in this?

What many Indigenous persons want from a land acknowledgment is, first, a clear statement that the land needs to be restored to the Indigenous nation or nations that previously had sovereignty over the land.

This is not unrealistic: There are many creative ways to take restorative measures and even to give land back, such as by returning U.S. national parks to the appropriate tribes. Following from this, land acknowledgments must reveal a sincere commitment to respecting and enhancing Indigenous sovereignty.

From Willie Jennings article read for Step 5: Geography of land

“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.”

So that is one idea. What would be others? How can land be restored? Relationships restored?

Our own denomination has taken on the call to “do something” we will look at a video when we return from a break.

BREAK

VIDEO In 2012 an [Act of Repentance Toward Healing Relationships with Indigenous People service](#) took place at General Conference. Here is a video that explores this act of repentance. As you listen to the video, put in the chat the emotions you are feeling. Thoughts you have.

Slide 79

▶ Act of Repentance at GC2012 (this will go on a slide 79) (4:20 minutes)

As you can hear from the conversation, the Act of Repentance was not received as warmly as people who developed it hoped. To give more clarity to the act of repentance and what Native communities expect of us a letter was written to the Bishops. This letter calls on the Bishops to go beyond an act of repentance. Native leaders name a number of issues which make it difficult to feel included and honored as United Methodist. This letter was written in 2014, two years after the Act of Repentance at General Conference. This is in your supplemental material at the back of your guide book. page 32

[AN OPEN LETTER TO ALL UNITED METHODIST BISHOPS SERVING IN THE UNITED STATES](#)

There is much in this letter to ponder. I will summarize some things that struck me.

In the letter, the writers remind the Bishops that John Wesley, like our Creator God, affirmed the worth of Native Americans as God's people. John Wesley believed the Native peoples of Georgia were worthy sons and daughters of God when he began his ministry there. This should not surprise us. John Wesley was an abolitionist and affirmed the full worth and dignity of all people. **He did not think that Native Americans had to become Christian to be acceptable to God.**

In the letter they also speak to how their ancestors faithfully spread the gospel even while they walked the trail of tears. "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, oftentimes in the face of great obstacles as they sought recovery from historical trauma."

As a clergywoman serving a smallish congregation I am particularly struck by the paragraph that speaks to the size of Native congregations. "... 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. "

And then the final paragraph of the letter which speaks in honest and stark words of what may happen should these recommendations not be heeded:

"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.”

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.

Large Group Reflection/Discussion

Look at the **Trail of Repentance and Healing on page 44** in the guide book.

Read all of the ways the GC has spoken about healing Indigenous relationships. Can you count the number of resolutions that have been passed? 8 at least. And many reaffirmed conference after conference.

What does this tell you about our commitment to this calling by our Native American siblings?

What have you learned that informs you of why this is so?

Look at the paragraph in bold: which is the meat of the resolution.

- **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;**

Who is this directed toward?

What is being asked?

If you were giving our conference a grade on a report card for how well we have implemented this resolution what grade would you give us?

What could you do; to hold our conference and local churches accountable to what we have said we would do?

In our first session we heard from the Bishops of the UMC who stated:

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.

Do you think the church is strong enough?

Where do you see using your Land Acknowledgement Statement in your own context?

What do you feel you need to do to know more so that you can do more?

Body Check In

- What is your body telling you right now about how you are situated and engaged in the world around you? (example, my shoulders feel tense, my hands are clenched, my heart is beating fast) Remember this question is about your actual body.
- How do you feel right now in this moment? (I feel nervous, unsettled, relieved, excited) This is the one about emotions)

- How would you describe the state of your mind right now? Is it like a peaceful, quiet lake, or a powerful unrelenting waterfall. (It is hard for me to focus right now, I have a case of jumpy brain)
- As you have taken time to center on YOU we hope that you can see that this will be a stretching, maybe challenging journey but also one that can help you understand more about yourself and your own ways of doing anti racism work.

Narrative

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?

One of the ways we can do this is by knowing what is going on in our own "backyard" so that we have the tools to know how to advocate in ways that are helpful and not harmful to our Native siblings.

Other Next steps: Chat or share what you have imagined for next steps. Plans in place? Studies in your faith community, activities...

Sacred Sites Tour <http://www.mnchurches.org/what-we-do/healing-minnesota-stories>

Wacipis open to public <https://mendotadakota.com/mn/>

2021-2024 Native American Ministries Sunday

Native American Ministries Sunday celebration is May 1, 2022. This offering is collected the third Sunday of Easter and funds urban ministries with Native Americans, scholarships for Native Americans attending United Methodist seminaries and annual conference Native American ministries. ½ funds stay within the local conference

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/churchwide/umcgiving/special-sundays/native-american-ministries-pastor-and-leader-kit>

Comprehensive list of indigenous resources at the back of Anton Treuer's book Everything You Wanted To Know About Indians But Were Afraid To Ask and it is a good reference book. children's version

As the Native American Comprehensive Plan states: 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.

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.

Like traveling to another land, once you go there, it holds a special place in your heart. Now, hopefully, you will pay attention to news articles about Native peoples, now, hopefully, you will be hurt when you hear of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, now, hopefully, you will not stay silent when others speak untruths about Native people, when people make fun of Native culture, when mascots and team names are not changed and people do things whether on purpose or in ignorance that offend Native ways.

You have taken on a new identity as a helper and keeper of Native honor and pride. It is all part of becoming more and more who God created you to be.

Dr. Kate Beane, Flandreau Santee Dakota and Muskogee Creek says “We need to share in Indigenous peoples’ discomfort. They’ve been uncomfortable for a long time. We have to try. Starting out with good intentions and a good heart is what matters most.”

Closing - Slide 80

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

Supplemental Material

Covenant to Build BeLoved Community: North Central Jurisdictional Aspirational Statement

United Methodism is at a crucial inflection point – facing the challenges of a global pandemic, racial injustice, impacts of climate change, denominational decline, and interdenominational strife. More than ever, we need to lean into the call of Hebrews 10:22- 25 (CEB): “Therefore, let’s draw near with a genuine heart with the certainty that our faith gives us, since our hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies are washed with pure water. Let’s hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, because the one who made the promises is reliable. And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds. Don’t stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near.” As the North Central Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church (NCJ), we covenant to Build BeLoved Community.

Baptism is the foundation of the BeLoved Community, as through it we are called into a covenantal relationship with God, with each other, and with all of God’s creation. It is in the spirit of this covenantal relationship that we affirm our baptismal vows ...

Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?

We do. We confess our need for God’s grace as we struggle to renounce and reject the spiritual forces and evil powers of colonialism, racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism. We apologize for the ways the NCJ has and continues to harm people who live in other parts of the world, Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC), people who live in poverty, and LGBTQIA+ people.

Now is the moment to repent of these sins and turn toward the future to which God is calling the NCJ.

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

We do. We pray for God’s freedom and power to resist colonialism and racism in all the forms they present themselves.

We stand in solidarity with ongoing efforts of many, who have worked tirelessly to end racism. We recognize this is a journey; that the work of ending racism is ongoing because it is a way of being - as the body of Christ. All of our work as a Church should be done in an anti-racist manner.

We request the NCJ Bishops of Color convene all BIPOC delegates to discuss how to begin to address the trauma in communities of color.

We request that the Mission Council, in conjunction with the NCJ College of Bishops, develop an exercise for the NCJ delegates to engage in a conversation during the next session of the NCJ that seeks to understand the impact of white supremacy and Christian nationalism/white nationalism within The United Methodist Church.

We request the Mission Council evaluate their budget and demonstrate, and report at the next Jurisdictional Conference, how the budget incorporates antiracism work and healing institutional trauma.

The Mission Council must designate sufficient NCJ funds for the purpose of convening Conference Commissions on Religion and Race and Annual Conference antiracism task force representatives in 2022 to operationalize and share a report at the next Jurisdictional Conference:

A racial analysis of: We request the Mission Council in conjunction with the NCJ College of Bishops develop an exercise for the NCJ delegates to engage in conversation to understand the impact of homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism within United Methodist Churches during the next meeting of the jurisdiction.

According to the grace given to you, will you remain faithful members of Christ's holy Church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world?

We will. We who will remain and continue to be faithful members of The United Methodist Church, commit to leading the NCJ through this difficult moment. We remain committed to our continuing call to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and by sharing and living the Gospel.

We value episcopal leadership and commit to electing bishops as soon as possible. If and only if the 2020 General Conference, currently scheduled for August 29-September 6, 2022, is postponed or canceled, and the regular session of the jurisdictional conference is subsequently proposed to be postponed or canceled, this special session of the NCJ Conference authorizes the duly elected heads of the conference delegations and the NCJ College of Bishops to work together to call a special session of the jurisdictional conference for November 2-5, 2022, the time currently scheduled for the regular session of the jurisdictional conference, for the purpose of the election of bishops, acting on nominations for jurisdictional committees and general agencies, budgeting and other necessary matters.

We encourage conferences and local churches to strive for reconciliation and understanding. However, some congregations and clergy may feel called to a different future in the faith. We respect our siblings who depart and desire to do no harm as we anticipate cooperative ecumenical efforts in the future. We grieve each

separation. NCJ annual conferences should use existing disciplinary and conference provisions to accommodate local congregations and clergy seeking disaffiliation.

We stand in solidarity with United Methodists around the world who long for a worldwide contextual and regional denominational structure.

We call on the NCJ College of Bishops and Mission Council to immediately begin working with other Jurisdictions, Central Conferences, and the Connectional Table to make regional equity and contextualization a reality. We fully support polity changes, such as the Christmas Covenant or Connectional Table's US Regional Conference proposals, that will lead to regional equity and contextualization.

We recommend Annual Conferences engage in conversations about regional equity and contextualization.

Covenanting to Build the BeLoved Community, we look to 2024 with promise. We pledge ourselves to God's call upon our lives, to each other, and to the future of The United Methodist Church.

- local church's total budgets, clergy salaries, new church starts/revitalizations, church closures, Conference staff, board, task force and committee members, and delegates to GC/JC.
- Alignment of Annual Conference budget with antiracism work, creation of whistleblower policies, on-going training and support for cross racial/cross cultural appointments, prioritization of new church starts and congregational revitalization in communities of color, resources to support the recruitment and development for leaders of color (lay and clergy) and developing programs for youth/young adults of color.

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, 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?

We do. We also affirm Christ has opened the Church to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. All people are of sacred worth.

LGBTQIA+ clergy and laity are a gift to the Church. We implore all in the NCJ to do no harm and to create a culture in which abundance and diversity can be celebrated and lived. Therefore, we urge all members of the NCJ to avoid pursuing charges for LGBTQIA+ clergy and allies, and request our episcopal leaders dismiss charges related to LGBTQIA+ identity or officiating same gender weddings. Because we are all beloved children of God, we, in the NCJ, implore all our conference leaders, boards and agencies, to bring no harm to LGBTQIA+ people. We will not restrict God's calling based solely on a candidate's sexual orientation or gender identity. We commit to doing good by pursuing healing and reconciliation with all who have experienced harm and exclusion related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround each other with a community of love and forgiveness, that we may grow in our trust of God, and be found faithful in our service to others. We will pray for each other, that we may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.

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

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

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 [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 [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 [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 [Healing Relationships with Indigenous Persons] in 2000, readopted as Resolution 133 in 2004, and revised and readopted as Resolution 3323 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 (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 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.

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 probably 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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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

Books to read

- Mni Sota Makoce - The Land of the Dakota by Gwen Westerman & Bruce White, Minnesota Historical Society Press
- An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz
- Over the Earth I Come by Duane Schultz;
- Dakota Dawn by Gregory F. Michno.
 - The last two are about the war of 1862.

An article to read about cultural/sociological appropriation and worship: [1862 Sioux uprising – Sociological Confessions](#)

The following articles are for those who would like to do advanced reading and contemplation. These are centered in who we are as United Methodists.

- <https://turtletalk.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/redskin-tanned-hide-tinker-2014.pdf>
- <https://thenewpoliis.com/2019/01/21/damn-it-hes-an-injun-christian-murder-colonial-wealth-and-tanned-human-skin-tink-tinker-wazhazhe-udsethe/>
- <https://thenewpoliis.com/2022/10/19/a-tainted-trophy-and-the-framing-of-white-supremacy-in-america-part-1-tink-tinker/> (first of 3 underway)
- <https://thenewpoliis.com/2019/12/17/what-are-we-going-to-do-with-white-people-tink-tinker-wazhazhe-o-sage-nation/>