

A RESPONSE AND REPUDIATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY

The ongoing journey to more fully understand our country's history, the actions and beliefs that went into its establishment as a dominion, requires actionable steps that we as the Free Methodist Church in Canada want to honour.

As follow up to the 2008 General Conference where we publicly confessed, "a role in the oppression of First Nations people, whether by action or passive inaction, past or present," and in response to the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action #49, we realize the necessity of addressing the roots of the colonizing system that has resulted in an overwhelming dispossession of land, dignity and wellbeing.

The very origins of Canadian society, as well as our government structure and legal system, finds its historical footing in the Doctrine of Discovery, and its preceding principle of *terra nullius (unoccupied land)*, a concept constructed by the Christian Church as far back as the 11th Century, which we as the Free Methodist Church in Canada repudiate and recognize as false doctrine.

The Doctrine of Discovery, a mandated belief, proclaimed by medieval Christians, gained momentum in the late 15th century and empowered European voyages of conquest, creating a self-protecting system of dependency, dehumanization, and ongoing consequences that include systemic structures of oppression and domination.

"One of the oldest principles of modern international law...the *doctrine* traces back at least to the late 15th century when Pope Alexander VI issued a two-part papal bull (a formal public letter) called *Inter Caetera*. Essentially, the *doctrine* has been the way in which Europeans and their descendants have claimed sovereign rights over Indigenous peoples' lands since 1492."

Yours, Mine, Ours: Unravelling the Doctrine of Discovery, p.14

While many settlers that came to Canada were themselves sent or escaping similar situations of occupation or oppression, they and their descendants did not, or have not, fully acknowledged the social construct and colonizing system they arrived into and consequently, participated in.

Therefore, as citizens of this country, and more importantly, as followers of Jesus Christ, our desire is to be a part of the process of reconciliation and decolonization, coming to terms with events of the past in a manner that overcomes conflict, repudiates evil, and establishes a respectful, healthy, and God-honouring relationship with indigenous peoples moving forward.

This work is not new, for reconciliation and the journey it requires of us is at the heart of Christ's kingdom come, and the witness of the Holy Spirit; inviting us all to participate in the reign of Jubilee (Lk 4; Isa 61; Lev 25). And so, as the Free Methodist Church in Canada, we publicly declare that we are committed to continue, in solidarity with our Indigenous brothers

and sisters, to take steps towards both the interior and relational work of healing, holistic renewal, and the rooting of right-relationship for this land and its people.

RESOURCES WE HAVE CITED AND RECOMMEND TO YOU

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada – Executive Summary and Calls to Action](#)

Yours, Mine, Ours: Unravelling the Doctrine of Discovery, 2016, Intotemak a publication of the Mennonite Church of Canada

Unsettling the Word: Biblical Experiments in Decolonization, 2019, Orbis Books, Heinrichs.

Discovering Indigenous Lands: The Doctrine of Discovery in the English Colonies, 2012, Miller, Behrendt, and Lindberg.

Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery, 2019, Charles and Rah.

A SETTLER’S PRAYER – A LITURGY FOR CONGREGATIONS

TOGETHER:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day, our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever.
Amen.

READER 1:

You, O LORD, are our common Creator, all people are united in ancestry and origin in Your name. Our differences and distinctions reflect the wonder of Your love.

READER 2:

Your Way, Your truth, and Your life has come, it has been revealed and moves like a mighty river. We desire to flow with Your streams and be washed by Your waves, but we confess, we have tried to control the current. We have constructed barriers, claimed ownership, and brought destruction and death to Your garden and Your people.

READER 3:

You have given us the bread of life and the land to share, but we have planted sin in Your soil and spilled poison in Your water. Please forgive us. Please teach us to confess and to receive forgiveness from others. Teach us to be reconciled.

READER 4:

Lead us, O LORD, in Your ways of covenant and treaty, stewardship and sacred union. Deliver us from the evil of ignorance and indifference.

For You are the Way, You are the truth, and You are the life for the here and now, and for all of eternity.

TOGETHER:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name,

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day, our daily bread,

and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever.

Amen.