

Social Policies of The United Church of Canada

Policy Title: Doctrine of Discovery (2012-10-26-018)

GC Number & Year: 41st General Council, 2012

Subcategory	Aboriginal Rights/Land and Resource Rights
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Keywords Indigenous People, Aboriginal Rights, Doctrine of Discovery

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[Doctrine of Discovery]

The Executive of the General Council proposes that:

The 41st General Council 2012:

1) adopt this statement:

That The United Church of Canada:

- i) Expresses solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples of the world and supports the rights of Indigenous Peoples to live in and retain their traditional lands and territories, to maintain and enrich their cultures and to ensure that their traditions are strengthened and passed on for generations to come;
- ii) Joins the World Council of Churches in denouncing the Doctrine of Discovery as fundamentally opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ and as a violation of the inherent human rights that all individuals and peoples have received from God;
- iii) Urges various governments in the world, including the government of Canada, to dismantle all legal structures and policies that are based on, or influenced by, the Doctrine of Discovery, to better empower and enable Indigenous Peoples to determine their own aspirations and issues of concern;
- iv) Affirms its conviction and commitment that Indigenous Peoples be assisted in their struggle to involve themselves fully in creating and implementing solutions that recognize and respect the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples, and to exercise their right to self-determination and self-governance;
- v) Requests the governments and states of the world, including the government of Canada, to ensure that their policies, regulations and laws that affect Indigenous Peoples comply with international conventions and, in particular, conform to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the International Labour Organization's Convention 169;
- vi) Encourages all its member congregations to:
 - a. seek a greater understanding of the issues facing Indigenous Peoples,
 - b. support Indigenous Peoples in their ongoing efforts to exercise their inherent sovereignty and fundamental human rights,
 - c. continue to raise awareness about the issues facing Indigenous Peoples, and
 - d. develop advocacy campaigns to support the rights, aspirations and needs of Indigenous Peoples;
- vii) Supports the continued development of theological reflections by Indigenous Peoples which promote Indigenous visions of full, good and abundant life and which strengthen their own spiritual and theological reflections;

- viii) Recognize the legal precedent of that section of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 titled "the Indian Provisions", wherein the Crown acknowledged for the first time Indigenous title to the land beyond the existing North American Colonies and also affirmed that access to these lands would only be granted by the Crown through negotiations with the First Nations.
- 2) commit the church to a process of discerning how its own values, actions, policies and structures continue to be informed by the Doctrine of Discovery; and
- 3) take steps to repudiate The Doctrine of Discovery in word and action.

Source:

(GC41 – GCE14 – REF GCE60 2012), GC41 2012 ROP pp. 137, 190, 278, 588

[https://commons.united-church.ca/Documents/Governance/General Council Executive/GC41 Executive \(2012-2015\)/Minutes/2012-10-26-29 GCE \(pages 9-30\).pdf](https://commons.united-church.ca/Documents/Governance/General Council Executive/GC41 Executive (2012-2015)/Minutes/2012-10-26-29 GCE (pages 9-30).pdf)

Refer to pp. 23-24