

Doctrine of Discovery: The Presbyterians

This week Esther Milnes will lead us as we will take another look at the Doctrines of Discovery and how these doctrines are associated with the Presbyterians. Esther will share with us her research on the Presbyterians in the New Mexico Territory through the Board of Foreign Missions and the Board of Domestic Missions. Then she will update us on the actions of the PC(USA) General Assembly in 2016, 2018, and 2020, and the responses to these actions at the national, synod, and presbytery levels. We will discuss how our congregation might respond.

This class is a direct outcome of our action circle entitled, Asking for Grace. That circle is researching the history of our land, reviewing the actions and statements by the PC(USA), and will propose appropriate responses for our congregation.

Goal

To learn how Presbyterians were associated with the Doctrines of Discovery and what appropriate next actions we might take in addressing the harm done by these doctrines.

Class Assignments

- **Five Hundred Years of Injustice: The Legacy of Fifteenth Century Religious Prejudice.** By Steve Newcomb. A brief overview of the origins of the Doctrine of Discovery and its use in U.S. law. Steven T. Newcomb (Shawnee/Lenape) is the indigenous law research coordinator at the Sycuan education department of the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation in San Diego County, California. http://ili.nativeweb.org/sdrm_art.html
- **Discovered? Or Stolen! Repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery.** United Church of Christ, Oct 14, 2014 (6:15 min). Lakota Nation and UCC member Toni Buffalo describe how the Doctrine of Discovery—used by invaders to claim the lands of indigenous peoples—has impacted indigenous peoples over time, destroying their spirituality and culture. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nU9AtP9yJ8&feature=emb_logo
- **Doctrine of Discovery, Presbyterian Mission, PC(USA).** The 222nd General Assembly (2016) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) called the church to confess its complicity and repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery. Note the resource links on the page. <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/racial-equity-womens-intercultural-ministries/gender-and-racial-justice-ministries/doctrine-of-discovery/>

- **PC(USA) leaders issue apology to Native Americans, Alaska natives, and native Hawaiians.** PC(USA) News, February 0, 2017. Read about it and watch the 15-minute video of the delivery of the apology. <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2017/2/9/pcusa-leaders-issue-apology-native-americans-alask/> To read the words of the apology, go to the third heading “Recommendations” the Assembly action: <https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/6350>.

Other Resources

- **Doctrine of Discovery: A Review of Its Origins and Implications for Congregations in the PC(USA) and Support for Native American Sovereignty.** As Approved by the 223rd General Assembly (2018), Presbyterian Church (USA) https://facing-racism.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/facing_racism/doctrine-of-discovery-report-to-the-223rd-ga-2018-finalized-copy_as-approved.pdf
- **Stated Clerk issues Call to Action on behalf of Indigenous people.** Gail Strange & Rick Jones, Presbyterian News Service, Sep 24, 2020. A Call to Action urging mid councils and congregations to take steps to recognize failure by the U.S. to uphold the rights, traditions and livelihood of Native Americans, including failures by Protestant denominations. <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2020/9/24/stated-clerk-issues-call-action-behalf-indigenous/>
- **Native American COVID-19 Relief Project.** Presbytery of the Grand Canyon, October 23, 2020. A collaborative effort of the Synod of the Southwest and the Presbytery of Grand Canyon to support ministry among the indigenous people of the Southwest. <https://pbygrandcanyon.org/2020/10/23/native-american-covid-19-relief-project/>
- **Race, Trauma, and the Doctrine of Discovery.** (1 hr) By Mark Charles. Presentation given as a part of the Calvin University Series, Jan 19, 2017. Mark R. Charles is a Native American activist, public speaker, consultant, and author on Native American issues, as well as a journalist, blogger, Reformed pastor, and computer programmer. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYZ2rj2Jooc>
- **About PC(USA):**
 - Regarding ruling elders: Presbyterian councils. Alyson Janke - August 15, 2014 <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2014/8/15/regarding-ruling-elders-presbyterian-councils/>
 - Link to the Book of Order <https://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/constitutional-services/constitution/>
 - PCUSA Facebook Group Matthew 25 Initiative <https://www.facebook.com/groups/matthew25pcusa>