

Resolution 2025-2 Regarding Indian Boarding Schools

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless Indian day schools and over 520 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States, whereby Native children were forcibly taken from their families and communities, prohibited any and all expressions of Native language and culture, and required to perform manual labor, with a intention of "Kill[ing] the Indian in him, and sav[ing] the man"; and

WHEREAS predecessor denominations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) operated Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School in Wittenburg, Wisconsin, as well as other boarding schools, day schools, and related institutions; and

WHEREAS boarding school students (which at one point included over 83% of all Native children) often suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse; and

WHEREAS the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in "The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery" (2016) and the "Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People" (2021); therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church's role in Indian Boarding Schools by:

- a) Actively inviting and equipping all expressions of our church to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
- b) Facilitating awareness at all levels of our church of Christian and Lutheran involvement in Indian boarding schools; and actively working to recognize and understand the continued impact of boarding school and day school historic trauma on Native people, Native families, and within Native communities;
- c) Recognizing and supporting the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian boarding schools in locating records which relate to the ELCA's predecessor bodies' involvement with Indian boarding and day schools;
- d) Encouraging all members and expressions of our church to learn the truth of our shared involvement with Indian boarding schools;
- e) Preserving all information in the ELCA's possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and those students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise, in the awareness that such information may be a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and
- f) Identifying sources of funding to sufficiently support research into and digitization of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.