

The following resolution was approved by the delegates at a plenary of the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, held in Indianapolis June 30-July 4, 2023.

**A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A NEW STUDY BY OUR CHURCH ON OUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS AND THE BOARDING
SCHOOLS IN HAWAII**

A Resolution of Witness

TEXT OF THE MOTION

WHEREAS, an estimated 15 million Native American Indians have been exterminated in what is known today as the United States of America through policies defined as genocide¹, and

WHEREAS, among the policies of genocide Native American Indians became victims of identity altering education programs, and

WHEREAS, the Civilization Fund Act of 1819’s intention was to introduce to Native Americans “the habits and arts of civilization”² (to force native American Indians to assimilate to White American culture), and

WHEREAS, in the decade following 1869 the Christian denominations began to establish boarding schools with the underlying policy to “kill the Indian and save the man,”³ and

WHEREAS, one such boarding school was the Hampton Institute, founded by General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, son of A.B.C.F.M. missionaries to Hawai`i Rev. Richard and Clarissa Chapman Armstrong, which opened its doors to Indian students in 1878; and

WHEREAS, boarding schools were of paramount significance in the attempted cultural genocide of an entire people, and

WHEREAS, the mandatory placement of Indian children in the boarding schools resulted in the loss of hundreds of languages, spiritual beliefs, traditional practices, and the destruction of healthy family life;⁴ and

WHEREAS, in 2003 the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM), the American Indian organization that is part of the United Church of Christ, submitted a resolution “American Indian Boarding Schools” that was passed by the General Synod⁵ but did not result in reparations, and

WHEREAS, on September 30, 2021, a “Statement Supporting the Establishment of a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies” was signed by the following church groups⁶: The Episcopal Church; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Franciscan Action Network; Friends Committee on National Legislation; Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology; Office of Race Relations, Christian Reformed Church of North America; The United Methodist Church—General Board of Church and Society,

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THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Thirty-fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ directs the UCC to thoroughly investigate and disclose its history beginning with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (ABCFM) ⁷on its work done both with Native American nations and the Hawaiian Kingdom and evaluate what actions will be taken by the United Church of Christ to make amends of moral and legal (both under U.S. laws and under international humanitarian laws) violations that have occurred, and requests that the UCC Board ask for the cooperation of the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches (AHEC) and the Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM) in so doing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (ABCFM) did receive funds from the Indian Civilization Fund Act of 1819, an act of the U.S. government, the investigation shall reveal what effects this had upon the mission of the church, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, if the investigation reveals moral and legal violations, that the United Church of Christ begin its reparation process by formally apologizing for the harm done to the Native Hawaiians and to the Native American nations connected to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (ABCFM); and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, if the investigation reveals moral and legal violations, that the United Church of Christ Board propose specific steps in the reparation process, and begin the reparation process by formally apologizing for the harm done to the Native Hawaiians and to the Native American nations connected to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (ABCFM).

FUNDING: The funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

IMPLEMENTATION: The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries of other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementation body.

¹ Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 10.

See also, David Michael Smith, "Counting the Dead: Estimating the Loss of Life in the Indigenous Holocaust, 1492-Present, 2017.

² Act of March 3, 1819, Ch. 85, 3 Stat. 516, codified at 25 U.S.C. at 271 (2020).

³ <https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/gs24minutes.pdf>, p. 41.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 41.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 41f.

⁶ <https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Statement%20Supporting%20the%20Establishment%20of%20a%20Truth%20and%20Healing%20Commission.pdf>.

⁷ American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions merged with United Church Board for World Missions in 1961 evolving into Wider Church Ministries of the UCC in 2000.