

The Business Committee of the Thirty-Fourth General Synod has recommended this proposed resolution be sent to a Committee of the General Synod.

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

**Submitted by the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches
of the Hawaii Conference of the United Church of Christ**

SUMMARY

This resolution calls on the United Church of Christ to do a new study on the United Church of Christ’s relationship with Indian boarding schools and boarding schools in Hawaii. On May 11, 2022, the Department of the Interior held a press conference to reveal a “Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report.”¹ The report showed that between 1819 and 1969, the United States operated or supported 408 boarding schools including 7 schools in Hawaii. Although the Executive Summary mentioned 7 schools in Hawaii, within the report 11 schools are named.²

In the section on Hawai`i, the report reads, “Between 1819 and 1847, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), which received Federal support through the Indian Civilization Fund Act of 1819, sent 12 missionary companies to Hawai`i to promote Calvinism and claimed civilized practices.”³ In a June 22, 2021 Memorandum from the U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland—a tribal member of the Pueblo of Laguna—to the Assistant Secretaries, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretaries, Heads of Bureaus, and Officers, under the subject “Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative” she writes:

“Beginning with the Indian Civilization Act of 1819 and running through the 1960s, the United States enacted laws and implemented policies establishing and supporting Indian boarding schools across the Nation. During that time, the purpose of Indian boarding schools was to culturally assimilate Indigenous children by forcibly relocating them from their families and communities to distant residential facilities where their American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian identities, languages, and beliefs were to be forcibly suppressed.”⁴

With this information alleging that the ABCFM received federal funds from the Indian Civilization Fund Act of 1819 and these funds went toward the schools in Hawai`i listed in the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report, questions are raised concerning the purpose of the schools being to culturally assimilate the Native Hawaiian students by forcibly suppressing their identities, languages, and beliefs.

A study investigating this history between the Federal civilization act of 1819, the ABCFM, and the identity altering education programs upon American Indians, Alaska natives and native Hawaiians needs to be completed.

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BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND ETHICAL RATIONALE

In the beginning humans were created in the image of God and were called “good”. Thus, all humans were created equal. The call to justice by the prophets is God’s commandment to treat everyone justly by acting righteously.

God’s moral law, enshrined in the Ten Commandments, is eternal and unchanging. Our Bible is built on it. These laws are God’s stated will, the way God wants his kingdom and his universe to operate. In order for justice to prevail, human laws must mirror God’s law. Justice is to prescribe the right way, to do things in an appropriate way. Moses demonstrated this concept when he said, “You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God’s.” (Deuteronomy 1:17). Justice has to do with equity in judgment without regard for a person’s status. It is an equitable application of God’s moral law to all people without partiality. (Numbers 15:16). When we do not operate according to biblical standards, we have abandoned God’s moral law, so every man does what is right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25).

Jesus came to proclaim liberty and freedom to announce God’s justice being satisfied through what he called, “the favorable year of the Lord”, the Old Testament Year of Jubilee. It was when God set society back in order. According to Leviticus 25:8-9, Israel could not have Jubilee until the people first observed the Day of Atonement. They could not have true justice on the human level until they got right with God on the vertical level. Social justice will not be complete until the people in a society, even the Church, get right with God. It is bringing the presence, precepts, and power of God to bear on society, pulling society back in an upright position.

HISTORICAL GROUNDING

The history of genocide on natives began with the first arrival of missionaries to Turtle Island from England in 1492. Since then 20 million Native Indians have been exterminated through a policy of genocide (American Genocide). The Federal government passed the 1819 Civilization Act to “kill the Indian and save the man” with identity altering education programs through the Indian Boarding School System that was created. Shirley E. Buchanan, in her “Indigenous Destinies: Native Hawaiian and Native American Crossroads,” in 2011 wrote, “The ABCFM, funded in part by the federally legislated Civilization Fund of 1819, initiated missionary efforts among the so-called Five Civilized Tribes (particularly, the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Creek) and the Native Hawaiians concurrently in the 1820s.”⁵ With this information alleging that the ABCFM received federal funds from the Indian Civilization Fund Act of 1819 and that these funds went toward the schools in Hawai`i listed in the “Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report,” questions are raised concerning the purpose of the schools to culturally assimilate the Native Hawaiian students by forcibly suppressing their identities, languages, and beliefs. On May 11, 2022, the Department of the Interior held a press conference to reveal a “Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report.” The report showed that between 1819 and 1969, the United States operated or supported 408 boarding schools including 7 schools in Hawaii. Although the Executive Summary mentioned 7 schools in Hawaii, within the report 11 schools are named:

- 82 1. Hilo Boarding School
- 83 2. Industrial and Reformatory School (Kawailou)
- 84 3. Industrial and Reformatory School (Keoneula, Kapalama)
- 85 4. Industrial and Reformatory School (Waialeale, Waialua)
- 86 5. Industrial and Reformatory School for Girls (Keoneula, Kapalama)
- 87 6. Industrial and Reformatory School for Girls (Maunawili, Ko`olaupoko)
- 88 7. Industrial and Reformatory School for Girls (Mo`ili`ili, Honolulu)
- 89 8. Kamehameha Schools
- 90 9. Lahainaluna Seminary
- 91 10. Mauna Loa Forestry Camp School
- 92 11. Molokai Forestry Camp School

93 The number discrepancy may be due to changing of the names of the school and/or the location.
94 In the section on Hawai`i, the report reads, “Between 1819 and 1847, the American Board of
95 Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), which received Federal support through the
96 Indian Civilization Fund Act of 1819, sent 12 missionary companies to Hawai`i to promote
97 Calvinism and claimed civilized practices.”

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99 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

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101 **WHEREAS**, an estimated 15 million Native American Indians have been exterminated in what
102 is known today as the United States of America through policies defined as genocide⁶, and
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104 **WHEREAS**, among the policies of genocide Native American Indians became victims of
105 identity altering education programs, and
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107 **WHEREAS**, the Civilization Fund Act of 1819’s intention was to introduce to Native
108 Americans “the habits and arts of civilization”⁷ (to force native American Indians to assimilate
109 to White American culture), and
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111 **WHEREAS**, in the decade following 1869 the Christian denominations began to establish
112 boarding schools with the underlying policy to “kill the Indian and save the man,”⁸ and
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114 **WHEREAS**, one such boarding school was the Hampton Institute, founded by General Samuel
115 Chapman Armstrong, son of A.B.C.F.M. missionaries to Hawai`i Rev. Richard and Clarissa
116 Chapman Armstrong, which opened its doors to Indian students in 1878; and
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118 **WHEREAS**, boarding schools were of paramount significance in the attempted cultural
119 genocide of an entire people, and
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121 **WHEREAS**, the mandatory placement of Indian children in the boarding schools resulted in
122 the loss of hundreds of languages, spiritual beliefs, traditional practices, and the destruction of
123 healthy family life;⁹ and
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125 **WHEREAS**, in 2003 the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM), the American Indian
126 organization that is part of the United Church of Christ, submitted a resolution “American

127 Indian Boarding Schools” that was passed by the General Synod¹⁰ but did not result in
128 reparations, and

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130 **WHEREAS**, on September 30, 2021, a “Statement Supporting the Establishment of a Truth
131 and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies” was signed by the following
132 church groups¹¹: The Episcopal Church; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Franciscan
133 Action Network; Friends Committee on National Legislation; Jesuit Conference Office of
134 Justice and Ecology; Office of Race Relations, Christian Reformed Church of North America;
135 The United Methodist Church—General Board of Church and Society,

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137 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Thirty-fourth General Synod of the United Church
138 of Christ directs the UCC to conduct a thorough survey of its history beginning with the
139 American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (A.B.C.F.M.) on its work done both
140 with Native American nations and the Hawaiian Kingdom and evaluate the results of this survey
141 in terms of whether actions need to be taken by the United Church of Christ to make amends of
142 moral, and legal (both under U.S. laws and under international humanitarian laws) violations that
143 have occurred, and requests that the UCC Board ask for the cooperation of the Association of
144 Hawaiian Evangelical Churches (AHEC) and the Council for American Indian Ministries
145 (CAIM) in so doing.

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147 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that if the A.B.C.F.M. did receive funds from the Indian
148 Civilization Fund Act of 1819, an act of the U.S. government, the survey shall reveal what
149 effects this had upon the mission of the church, and

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151 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, if the survey reveals clear violations, that the United Church
152 of Christ begin its reparation process by formally apologizing for the harm done to the Native
153 American nations connected to the A.B.C.F.M. and to the Native Hawaiians; and

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155 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, if the survey reveals violations, that the United Church of
156 Christ Board propose specific steps in the reparation process, and begin the reparation process by
157 formally apologizing for the harm done to the Native American nations connected to the
158 A.B.C.F.M. and to the Native Hawaiians.

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

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

¹ https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/bsi_investigative_report_may_2022_508.pdf.

² Ibid., p. 78.

³ Ibid., p. 71.

⁴ <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/secint-memo-esb46-01914-federal-indian-boarding-school-truth-initiative-2021-06-22-final508-1.pdf>. P. 1.

⁵ <https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/downloads/gf06g7266>, p. 13.

⁶ 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.

⁷ Act of March 3, 1819, Ch. 85, 3 Stat. 516, codified at 25 U.S.C. at 271 (2020).

⁸ <https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/gs24minutes.pdf>, p. 41.

⁹ Ibid. p. 41.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 41f.

¹¹ <https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Statement%20Supporting%20the%20Establishment%20of%20a%20Truth%20and%20Healing%20Commission.pdf>.