

03-GS-28 VOTED: The Twenty-fourth General Synod adopts the resolution, “American Indian Boarding Schools” as amended by the Committee.

### **AMERICAN INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS**

WHEREAS, United States President Grant in 1869 awarded separate divisions of Indian Territory to the church denominations for missionization of the Indians in order to facilitate westward expansion and settlement of this country; and

WHEREAS, the American Missionary Association and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions commissioned missionaries who were zealous in their beliefs that the Indians had no religion and no souls and were therefore ripe for conversion to Christianity; 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,” and one such boarding school was the Hampton Institute, which opened its doors to Indian students in 1878; and

WHEREAS, the boarding school was of paramount significance in the attempted genocide of an entire people, and 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; and

WHEREAS, the American Indian people have not fully recovered from the devastating boarding school era; however, the Indian nations in the United States are beginning to find their way back to their cultural life ways and are beginning to heal the wounds of the past; and

WHEREAS, the consideration of reparations is required due to the extent of the harm perpetrated against the children of the Indian nations.

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the United Church of Christ be the first church denomination to acknowledge, confess and accept its historic participation and accountability for the harm done through the establishment of boarding schools in the United States and that the United Church of Christ work with the Council for American Indian Ministry to repair the harm that has been done to indigenous people and the community and soul of the United Church of Christ; and

LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that the United Church of Christ begin its reparation process by formally apologizing for the harm done to the indigenous peoples; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the United Church of Christ implement a process for educating the membership of the United Church of Christ about the

boarding school issue and its impact on the languages, cultures, and families of indigenous peoples; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the United Church of Christ demonstrates its commitment to the indigenous peoples by calling together an ecumenical forum to discuss the historic and ongoing boarding school issues and appropriate reparation responses; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the United Church of Christ call on President Bush and the United States Congress to reform or repeal the legislation and policies that support, create, or continue the dehumanizing, abusive, and culturally insensitive programs offered by boarding schools; and

LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that the United Church of Christ call on the Bureau of Indian Affairs and other federal, state, and local agencies to investigate the policies, practices, and systems that contribute to ongoing cases of abuse and neglect, and that steps be taken to investigate the average nine thousand annual cases of abuse and neglect and to ensure the safety of all boarding school students, and

LET IT BE FINALLY RESOLVED, that Conferences and Associations of the United Church of Christ, Local Church Ministries, Justice and Witness Ministries, and the Office of General Ministries work in cooperation with the Council for American Indian Ministry to address the issues raised in this resolution.

Funding for the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.