

01-GS-42 VOTED with abstentions: The Twenty-third General Synod adopts the resolution “Preservation of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arickara Languages of the Three Affiliated Tribes.”

### **PRESERVATION OF THE MANDAN, HIDATSA, AND ARICKARA LANGUAGES OF THE THREE AFFILIATED TRIBES**

WHEREAS the Fort Berthold Council of Congregational Churches has been aware of the steady erosion of our mother languages and recognizes that the loss of our languages has negatively impacted our children, ourselves, and has destabilized our communities;

WHEREAS the history of how this came about is intertwined with the history of the church’s deliberate actions of Christianizing by eliminating Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arickara religious beliefs and practices, languages, and culture in their totality;

WHEREAS the federal government policy of deliberately eliminating our cultural ways and languages enlisted the support of the church through its Christianizing efforts among our people which, over time, has succeeded in bringing our languages to the brink of extinction;

WHEREAS the schools created and operated by the church taught our children that speaking Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arickara was savage and wrong, consequently contributing to an internalized self-hatred that has literally destroyed countless lives through levels of depression and substance abuse and dependency;

WHEREAS in 1991 the United Church of Christ apologized to all American Indians, acknowledging its role in accepting responsibility for the assault on all American Indian Tribes, but has not addressed how it can rebuild trust and make reparation; and

WHEREAS our children deserve a life that is filled with the richness and beauty of our culture, conveyed through our mother languages, and deserve to speak the language of their ancestors which reflects a positive self-image leading to self-assurance in life;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the United Church of Christ in all its settings examines and acknowledges its role in the destruction of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arickara languages and the dismantling of these same cultures and explores how it can be supportive of preserving and reversing the loss of these languages;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that since time is of the essence, a pilot program at Fort Berthold Reservation be established to begin recording the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arickara languages immediately (there is one fluent Mandan speaker remaining) and to assure the use of language retention strategies at the following levels:

Individual. Native speakers must be supported to help latent speakers and nonspeakers learn the native languages by utilizing existing language materials and creating new materials;

Family. Language immersion activities are to be organized along with church and family-

based activities—recording hymns, prayers, and so forth, in the three languages for use throughout the church;

Community. Connecting fluent speakers with nonspeakers, for example, in senior centers, linking an elder with a child or clan relative interested in learning to speak the language or promoting community meetings and conferences about native languages and making the languages accessible in the community; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod of the United Church of Christ requests that Justice and Witness Ministries and Local Church Ministries work with the Council for American Indian Ministry to address the concerns raised in this resolution.

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