

18-05

Southwest California Synod Native Protocols

WHEREAS by action of the Southwest California Synod Assembly in 2015 and subsequent action by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in 2016 (CA16.02.04), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has “explicitly and clearly” repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery, and stated its intention to “acknowledge and repent from this church’s complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas,” and

WHEREAS the ELCA 2016 Churchwide Assembly action provides for ceremonies “of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders” on both national and synodical levels and wherever appropriate, and also calls on the church to “practice accompaniment with native peoples” and fostering partnerships to “mutually enrich” native communities and the ministries of the ELCA, and

WHEREAS the Los Angeles metropolitan area contains the largest native population in the United States, with a likely representation of more than 50 tribes and numbering somewhere between 150,000 and 250,000 persons; the five counties of the synod are home to several federally and state-recognized tribes; and several partner churches have established protocols to guide their interactions with the native community; therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the Southwest California Synod adopt the following set of initial protocols for its relationship with the native communities within the synod boundaries, and to provide guidance for its conferences and congregations in engaging in respectful, appropriate ways with native communities and people both within and outside the church.

1. Our Native American neighbors, especially those whose ancestral are within the boundaries of the Southwest California Synod, are to be accorded the respect due to them as descendants of the land’s first people, and they and their traditions, history, and culture are to be honored.
2. Recognizing that the number of native members of its congregations is small, the Southwest California Synod will attempt whenever possible to include native people in its activities and programs, especially those relating specifically to ethnic identity or cultural diversity.

3. Whenever possible, formal public gatherings organized and led by the synod or its conferences and congregations shall begin with a recognition of the tribe or tribes on whose ancestral land the synod, conference, or congregation is located. Suggested language for such recognitions and acknowledgements shall be provided by the Office of the Bishop.
4. In public liturgies, particularly baptisms and funerals of Native American members of our church who desire it, consideration is to be given to including native customs that are not incompatible with Christian belief. This inclusion may be made explicit by congregational policy or provided on the basis of pastoral discretion.
5. The synod, conferences, and congregations commit themselves to the respect and protection of native burial sites, and will not purchase them or build on them.
6. Whenever the synod, conferences, or congregations engage in public ceremonies or educational events involving native life or culture, they shall seek to consult with appropriate native resource people to ensure respect and accuracy.