

Doctrine of Discovery: Taking A Hard Look At Our History and Theology

This fall, Cherokee Park United Church is taking a hard look at difficult historical and theological truths about the tragic treatment of Dakota, Ojibwe and other Indigenous people by our state, nation and religious institutions. In cooperation with the St. Paul Interfaith Network (SPIN), we are seeking to come to terms with the significant role churches and faith communities played in genocide, crushing Native languages, cultures and religious practices. Cherokee Park United Church is one of four metro sites working with SPIN to host these conversations.

The starting point for our dialogue is the Doctrine of Discovery—the catchall phrase for 15th Century papal edicts that gave explorers the legal and religious justifications to seize lands occupied by non-baptized “heathens.” It set the course for slavery and the forced conversions of Native peoples and for the genocide of Indigenous people. Discovery was the forerunner to the concept of “Manifest

Destiny,” the belief that European settlers were divinely ordained to take possession of this land. The impact of these beliefs is not ancient history. By many measures—such as poverty, income and health—the historical trauma suffered by Native American peoples under the guise of the Doctrine of Discovery and Manifest Destiny is still very present today. This history calls for a greater understanding and response from people of faith.

Father Hennepin “discovers” St. Anthony Falls



We will host two dialogue events at our church, 371 West Baker St. on St. Paul’s West Side:

- Monday, Oct. 13, Indigenous People’s Day, a public screening of the **documentary film *Doctrine of Discovery***, presented by filmmaker Sheldon Wolfchild of the Lower Sioux Indian Community, followed by small group dialogues. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., event is from 7-9:15 p.m. (Film is appropriate for junior high school aged youth and up.)
- Tuesday, Oct. 28, 7– 9:15 p.m., a deeper exploration of issues of history, theology, and trauma raised by the film. Details to be determined.

Co-sponsors are: SPIN/Healing Minnesota Stories, the Mendota Mdewakanton Community, Macalester Plymouth United Church Peacemakers, Clouds and Water Zen Center. Cherokee Park is seeking other faith communities and community institutions to help sponsor and promote these events and to join us in the conversation. If you are interested or want more information, contact: Pastor Tim Johnson at cpuc@usfamily.net or 651-227-4275. For more information on other east metro sites, contact Kim Olstad at kim.olstad@gmail.com or see: <http://spinterfaith.org/healing-minnesota-stories/doctrine-of-discovery/doctrine-film-showing.html>