

1 **Resolution 2021-01**

2 **Regarding Acknowledgment, Apology, and Reparations**

3 **ADOPTED AT A CONGREGATIONAL MEETING HELD AUGUST 29, 2021**

4
5 *A resolution of the Northern Light United Church (NLUC) congregation of Juneau, Alaska,*
6 *recommended by the NLUC Council, authorizing the use of church resources to acknowledge,*
7 *apologize, and make reparations for the wrongful and forcible closure in 1963 of the Memorial*
8 *Presbyterian Church of Juneau by the Alaska Presbytery with concurrence of the Presbyterian*
9 *Board of National Missions.*

10 **Whereas** the forced closure of Memorial Presbyterian Church was an egregious act of spiritual
11 abuse committed in alignment with nationwide explicit and implicit racism toward Alaska
12 Natives, Native Americans, and other people of color; and

13 **Whereas** the closure caused direct harm and pain to the members of Memorial Presbyterian
14 Church, to the Reverend Dr. Walter Soboleff, and to Alaska Natives and American Indians
15 throughout Southeast Alaska; and

16 **Whereas** the consequences of the closure of the thriving, multicultural Memorial Presbyterian
17 Church reverberate to this day; and

18 **Whereas** Northern Light United Church is calling upon the Presbytery of the Northwest Coast,
19 the successor to the Alaska Presbytery, to overture the 225th General Assembly (2022) to
20 acknowledge, apologize, and make reparations for the egregious actions of the Presbyterian
21 Church (U.S.A.) that led to the unwarranted closure of the Memorial Presbyterian Church; and

22 **Whereas** Northern Light United Church, as the successor to the Northern Light Presbyterian
23 Church, has benefited from the closure of Memorial Presbyterian Church; and

24 **Whereas** our youth have called upon us to “let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as
25 a mighty stream” (Amos 5:24) by recognizing that we continue to benefit from the land and soil
26 on which we worship, and by surrendering ill-gotten gains; and

27 **Whereas** we acknowledge our conscious and unconscious biases, and our participation in the
28 systems that maintain pervasive racism and institutionalized white supremacy, we commit to
29 taking action to unlearn these destructive attitudes and behaviors and to raise awareness within
30 our community to eliminate racism; and

31 **Whereas** we believe, as disciples of Jesus Christ, that the call of discipleship means shifting
32 from a scarcity mindset to one of abundance. The miracles of the loaves and fishes described in
33 each of the Gospels stir our hearts and souls to be generous and to believe that in Christ there is
34 always enough; and

35 **Whereas** we believe that Jesus Christ calls us, as a church and as individuals, to mend the
36 wrongs we have done to others and to strive for justice, reconciliation, and renewal; and

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1 **Whereas** we believe that Jesus Christ calls us to strive against racism and any form of injustice
2 within our congregation, our church denominations, and our community;

3 **Now therefore be it RESOLVED** that

- 4 1. We confess and repent for the harm caused and will offer a formal apology according to
5 traditional Tlingit custom and practice within 90 days of the adoption of this resolution or
6 another date recommended by the Native Ministries Committee.
- 7 2. We will rename the church to include a Tlingit name and an English name to honor the
8 Alaska Native people on whose traditional lands the church stands, the members and
9 families who experienced pain and loss as a result of the historic and institutional racism
10 in our denominations, and the vibrant ministry and faith of the Memorial Presbyterian
11 Church. The Council will invite (1) the Native Ministries Committee to identify a Tlingit
12 name to recommend and (2) all congregation members to consider and comment on the
13 combination of the recommended Tlingit name and one or more options for the English
14 name proposed by Council. The comment period will be no shorter than two weeks after
15 which Council will review all options and select the new name for our church. We will
16 conclude this process at the earliest reasonable time.
- 17 3. We will begin all worship services and other events at the church with a formal
18 acknowledgment recognizing the traditional and historic stewards of the land on which
19 the church stands, as recommended by the Native Ministries Committee.
- 20 4. We will celebrate the ministry and contributions of the Reverend Dr. Walter Soboleff on
21 the second Sunday of November of each year to commemorate the birthday of Dr.
22 Soboleff on November 14.
- 23 5. We will dedicate the fellowship hall as the Reverend Dr. Walter Soboleff Memorial Hall
24 at the January 2022 Annual Congregational Meeting.
- 25 6. We will expand the use of Tlingit-language prayers, hymns, music, and other resources
26 during weekly worship services, and invite Alaska Native ministers and lay leaders to
27 preach when possible.
- 28 7. We will invest in efforts, including the Vital Congregations Revitalization Initiative, that
29 support meaningful invitation and welcome to Alaska Native people to worship with our
30 church, serve in leadership roles, and minister to our church and community and make
31 efforts to further expand to be the kind of welcoming multicultural and intercultural
32 church that Dr. Soboleff pastored.
- 33 8. We will commission, within 90 days of the adoption of this resolution, story boards for
34 permanent display in the church that tell
 - 35 a. the joyful history of the Memorial Presbyterian Church and Dr. Soboleff's
36 ministry;
 - 37 b. the racism and pain of its closure; and
 - 38 c. the renewal these actions are intended to help us all achieve.

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- 1 9. We will commission, within 180 days of the adoption of this resolution, screens, house
2 posts or a totem pole, or other significant art or sculpture created by Alaska Native artists
3 or others, as approved by the Native Ministries Committee, to commemorate the
4 contributions of Memorial Presbyterian Church and Alaska Native members of our
5 community of faith, to be installed in the church or on church grounds.
- 6 10. We will establish a curriculum development committee comprised of NLUC clergy and
7 members experienced in Christian Education to lead development, in collaboration with
8 the Native Ministries Committee, of curriculum for adults, youth and children, regarding
9 the events described in the Overture to teach the history of the Memorial Presbyterian
10 Church and its closure, to be delivered at least once each calendar year.
- 11 11. We will collect, preserve, and share the oral histories from people affected by the closure
12 of Memorial Presbyterian Church, as well as Tlingit elders in the church and community,
13 to increase our understanding of the consequences of the closure and to inform our
14 communal journey of faith.
- 15 12. We will provide scholarships or grants, directly or through appropriate organizations
16 approved by Council,
 - 17 a. to Alaska Native children and youth who seek to participate in
 - 18 i. traditional art, dance, and culture programs sponsored by Tlingit tribal and
19 heritage organizations;
 - 20 ii. Tlingit language programs; and/or
 - 21 iii. church-affiliated camps, retreats, mission trips, and other activities.
 - 22 b. for Alaska Native students from Juneau and other Southeast Alaska communities
23 who seek to attend:
 - 24 i. college or seminary to study for Christian ministry, or
 - 25 ii. other post-secondary education programs identified by the Native
26 Ministries Committee.
- 27 13. We will provide sponsorships
 - 28 a. annually of Tlingit-language programs offered by the Juneau School District, and
 - 29 b. of early childhood Tlingit language and culture resources for community
30 childcare, preschool, and Head Start programs.
- 31 14. We will request, and provide financial support for, the City and Borough of Juneau to
32 install an acknowledgment at the historic site of Memorial Presbyterian Church.
- 33 15. We will provide financial and volunteer resources to Central Council of Tlingit & Haida
34 Indian Tribes of Alaska re-entry programs focused on supporting people returning to the
35 community after incarceration.

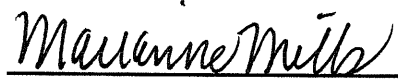
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- 1 16. We will work closely with Sealaska Heritage Institute, as applicable, with regard to
2 certain of the reparations described in this resolution.
- 3 17. We will engage, if invited, with other historically Alaska Native churches in Southeast
4 Alaska, to honor and amplify their ministries.
- 5 18. We will continue to seek and listen to the wisdom of our Alaska Native members to guide
6 our ongoing reconciliation and reparations efforts.
- 7 19. We will reserve, within 90 days of the adoption of this resolution, not less than
8 \$350,000.00, which may be allocated in an amount of no less than \$50,000 per year, from
9 the General Fund Investments as restricted funds to be used for reparations. Any
10 donations made specifically to support the church's reparations efforts will be added to
11 these restricted funds. The restricted funds for reparations may be used over a period of
12 years, as needed, to implement the reparations described in this resolution, and others as
13 may be determined in the future.
- 14 20. We will commit ourselves to sharing with the community, within our denominations, and
15 with other churches the story of the closure of the Memorial Presbyterian Church and the
16 efforts we are making to acknowledge the closure, apologize, and make reparations.
- 17 21. We will review and revise, as appropriate, this Resolution to ensure that the monetary
18 reparations of the Northern Light United Church are supplementary to, and not
19 duplicative of commitments, if any, that may be made by the Presbytery of the Northwest
20 Coast and PC(USA) General Assembly.
- 21 22. Deadlines in this resolution may be extended by formal action of the Council upon
22 request of the Native Ministries Committee or after consultation with the Native
23 Ministries Committee. In the event the COVID-19 pandemic prevents in-person
24 gatherings, any dates for events most appropriately held in person may be delayed.

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26 **Recommended by the Council of Northern Light United Church on August 12, 2021.**

27 **Approved by a majority of the congregation present in person or virtually at a specially**
28 **called meeting on August 29, 2021.**

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32 Marianne Mills, Moderator

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April Rezendes, Clerk