



# PRESBYTERY OF ALASKA

Lew Rooker  
Stated Clerk

Box 20186, Juneau, Alaska 99802

October 21, 1991

Dear Friends:

At its recent meeting in Auke Bay the Presbytery of Alaska passed the following resolution, and instructed me to inform you of our action. If you have any questions or comments concerning the resolution feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Lew Rooker,  
Stated Clerk

## NATIVE CULTURE RESOLUTION OF THE ALASKA PRESBYTERY

WHEREAS, some Presbyterian missionaries, with best intentions in bringing the Gospel to Alaska, were among those who misunderstood the nature and purpose of native culture, art and artifacts, (for example, mistakenly teaching that totem poles were idols), and

WHEREAS, this misconception still exists among some Christians in Southeast Alaska, and native culture is still held in suspicion by some native and immigrant Christians as a result of these teachings, and

WHEREAS, both the early destruction of native art, the continuing denigration of native culture, and the desecration and pillage of native gravesites did not, and do not, promote the Kingdom of God, but rather represent a kind of violence against some of God's children and a loss for us all,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Presbytery of Alaska, meeting this day October 19, 1991, believes that the Lord our God is One, and has created all peoples, and declared that creation good. We further believe that the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ was and is meant for all of God's children. This faith transcends human culture, and is the criterion by which all cultures may be correctly judged. Neither the native cultures of America, nor the cultures which migrated to this continent were or are inherently evil, nor perfect.

In saying this we disavow those teachings which led people to believe that abandoning native culture was a prerequisite for being Christian. We deeply regret the church's part in the destruction of native artifacts and the church's part in the loss of native languages.

We further call upon all members of our churches to pray and work for reconciliation between the peoples and cultures of our region and to bring to an end the misunderstandings, especially of native cultures, mentioned above.

May God grant us grace to value all cultures and all peoples, and courage to transcend culture and cultural differences as together we seek to be obedient to God's will.