



Mountain Sky Area

Rocky Mountain Annual Conference
Yellowstone Annual Conference
of The United Methodist Church
Bishop Elaine J. W. Stanovsky

Bishop's Sand Creek Massacre Blog

Entry #8

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Colorado Governor Hickenlooper has appointed a Sand Creek Massacre Commemoration Commission to plan and coordinate 150th Anniversary events. I am honored to serve as a member of this Commission. The Commission has launched a website where important news and events will be posted sandcreekmassacre150.com. At the first Commission meeting last Monday afternoon we learned that Monday morning the Colorado Legislature unanimously passed a Joint Resolution concerning the anniversary. If you have heard varying versions of this history and wonder where the truth lies, this resolution represents a consensus of historians, descendants and legislators. It tells the harsh story of that dreadful day. Read it here or find it on the website.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 14-030 CONCERNING MEMORIALIZING THE CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO PEOPLE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES DURING THE SAND CREEK MASSACRE, HONORING THEIR DESCENDANTS, AND COMMEMORATING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THAT TRAGIC EVENT.

WHEREAS, On November 29, 1864, approximately 675 United States soldiers under the command of Colonel John Chivington killed more than 200 Cheyenne and Arapaho villagers, mostly elderly men, women, and children, approximately 180 miles southeast of Denver near Eads, Colorado; and

WHEREAS, Despite assurance from American negotiators that they would be safe, and despite Cheyenne Chief Black Kettle raising both a United States flag and a white flag as symbols of peace, Colonel Chivington ordered his troops to take no prisoners and to pillage and set the village ablaze, violently forcing the ambushed and outnumbered Cheyenne and Arapaho villagers to flee on foot; and

WHEREAS, Colonel Chivington and his troops paraded mutilated body parts of men, women, and children in downtown Denver, Colorado, in celebration of the massacre; and

WHEREAS, Captain Silas Soule, commander of Company D, 1st Colorado Cavalry, remains a symbol of bravery, as he pleaded with his commander Colonel Chivington not to attack the peaceful villagers, refused to order his soldiers to participate in the massacre,

alerted the United States Congress and the public to the massacre that it might be investigated, testified in Army hearings against his commander, and later was assassinated for his efforts to illuminate the truth; and

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Joseph Cramer, commander of Company K, also stood with Captain Soule, as did at least 100 other soldiers, in refusing to follow orders to participate in the massacre, and Lieutenant Cramer also notified authorities by letter of the atrocities he witnessed that day and testified before an Army commission; and

WHEREAS, The Sand Creek Massacre was a tragedy of worldwide importance and continues to impact the sovereign Tribal nations whose ancestors were massacred that tragic day; and

WHEREAS, Colorado Senate Joint Resolution 99-017 added an interpretive plaque to the Civil War monument outside the State Capitol, explaining the mischaracterization of the Sand Creek Massacre as a battle and the people of Colorado's struggle to interpret and take responsibility for the past; and

WHEREAS, The National Park Service established, by an act of Congress, the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, which opened in April 2007 to preserve and protect the physical and cultural landscape of the massacre and to enhance public awareness and understanding; and

WHEREAS, The Northern Cheyenne Tribe of Montana, the Northern Arapaho Tribe of Wyoming, and the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma organized the annual Sand Creek Spiritual Healing Run in 1999 that begins in Eads, Colorado, and ends on the steps of the State Capitol, to remember what the Cheyenne and Arapaho people endured and to honor those killed; and

WHEREAS, Healing from such tragedy requires, in part, recognition of and redress for the tragedy, and efforts have been made both to help educate the public about the massacre and to teach respect for diverse cultures in order to better understand and learn from the past; and

WHEREAS, Educating the public about the Sand Creek Massacre and people like Captain Silas Soule and Lieutenant Joseph Cramer who stood up for justice encourages people to stand up against injustices now and prevent tragedies such as this in the future; and

WHEREAS, November 29, 2014, is the 150th anniversary of the Sand Creek Massacre, and the State of Colorado recognizes the lives that were lost and that healing from this devastating event must continue; and

WHEREAS, Governor Hickenlooper issued Executive Order B 2014-003 on March 17, 2014, establishing the Sand Creek Massacre Commemoration Commission to plan and prepare events for the 150th anniversary of the massacre that respect and memorialize the Cheyenne and Arapaho people and their ancestors, promote cross-cultural understanding, and educate the public about the massacre and the events surrounding it so such atrocities can be prevented in the future; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the Senate of the Sixty-ninth General Assembly of the State of Colorado, the House of Representatives concurring herein:

That we, the members of the General Assembly, acknowledge the devastation caused by the Sand Creek Massacre and seek to raise public awareness about the tragic event, the Cheyenne and Arapaho people, and events surrounding it.

Be It Further Resolved, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent to Governor Eddie Hamilton of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma; Chairman Darrell O'Neal, Sr., of the Northern Arapaho Business Council; President Llevando Fisher of the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council; Governor John Hickenlooper; Lieutenant Governor Joseph Garcia; and the Sand Creek Massacre Commemoration Commission.