

Announcement to Rostered Ministers (transcript)

Fall Theological Conference, 2022

Bishop Amy Odgren

The Northeastern Minnesota Synod Council, in consultation with our synod's Together Here Ministries, announces the approval of financial reparation to be made through the recent sales of synod-owned properties. This is a step towards our commitment to work at repairing relationships with the Indigenous Peoples on whose original homeland these properties were located. The entire synod geography encompasses homelands of the Ojibwe (Chippewa) Tribal Nations – who lived, worked, and worshipped here for many years prior to anyone whose European ancestors founded Lutheran churches, owned property, or built buildings.

We acknowledge that we continue to live as neighbors and community members with Ojibwe people. We honor that the Ojibwe Tribal Nations, represented by Fond-du-Lac, Grand Portage, Milles Lacs, Leech Lake, and Bois Forte-Nett Lake Bands gave us permission to live, work, build churches, and conduct the business of our life together as the Northeastern Minnesota Synod upon this land through a series of treaties. We also acknowledge that the euro-colonial and colonizer world has pushed and pushed Indigenous people from their land, killed Indigenous peoples, has not adhered to treaty agreements, and destroyed Indigenous cultures and languages through intentional forced assimilation models.

In our admission of these atrocities, we commit ourselves to living well together, here, and now, as neighbors and as communities with deepening relationships. Our Christian identity, and specifically our baptismal identity in Christ, informs us to be people who are guided by God's dream of justice in the world which God has created with love – in all its beautiful diversity. We acknowledge that everything we are and everything that we have is God's, knowing that God calls us to live in harmony with God's good creation as we walk together and *do* justice.

Therefore, as the Northeastern Minnesota Synod benefits from the sale of the assets we have been given through the generosity of many saints of this synod over generations, reparations to Ojibwe Tribal Nations are foremost and just. This is a first step towards acknowledging the unbalanced scales created through the colonization process and re-pairing the broken relationships between us as we strive for reconciliation. Noting the 1854 Treaty of La Pointe (September 30, 1854), the 1855 Treaty of Washington (February 22, 1855), and the 1866 Treaty with the Chippewa-Bois Forte (April 7, 1866), treaties that have important historical significance to Northeastern Minnesota because of enormous land cessation, the Synod Council has pledged to gift a reparation to the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe\* in the sum of \$185,400 + 100 + 100. Underscoring our

understanding of the significance of 1854, 1855, and 1866 treaties is a beginning in the repairing of relationship that we are committed to continue.

We encourage all of our synod congregations - their members and leaders to become educated about the Indigenous peoples who thrived, prior to European contact, on the land they currently inhabit; To learn about, learn from, and be in deepening relationship with Indigenous people and tribal nations here and now; and to support creative programs of restorative justice in partnership with Indigenous people, including, but not limited to, whenever considering a transfer or sale of real property, including returning land (and any structures built on it) after satisfying any financial obligations, to the appropriate Native communities, and when direct return is not feasible or not desired by the Indigenous people, to return proceeds from the sale of the land to local Indigenous led ministries or organizations.

\*The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, comprised of the Bois Forte, Fond du Lac, Grand Portage, Leech Lake, Mille Lacs, and White Earth reservations, is a federally recognized tribal government that, through unified leadership, promotes and protects the member Bands while providing quality services and technical assistance to the reservation governments and tribal people.