



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Indigenous Peoples' Day 2021

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton Weekly Video Message

Oct. 11, 2021

On this Indigenous Peoples' Day, we as a church want to address Indigenous members of our church, non-Indigenous members of our church, and American Indians and Alaska Natives in the wider society. Indigenous Peoples' Day is a time to reflect on the people for whom Turtle Island, as this land is called by Indigenous people, has been home since the beginning of time.

To American Indians and Alaska Natives in the ELCA, we confess that we have not listened to your stories or taken seriously your experiences. We pledge to listen more, [to] work together more cooperatively, and to work to undo the wrongs that we have participated in. To non-Indigenous ELCA Lutherans, we confess that we have benefited from the broken treaties that have favored Europeans over Indigenous people. We pledge to honor our Indigenous neighbors and to work for justice as a church. To American Indian and Alaska Native peoples not in the ELCA, we confess our failure to address the racism that has so damaged Indigenous people. We commit to using our governmental advocacy to promote justice for Indigenous people.

When Europeans came to the Western Hemisphere, there were already people here. In some ways, European-descent people, with the help of the Doctrine of Discovery, have been trying to undermine the rights, legitimacy and humanity of the original inhabitants ever since. The church has benefited over the years from the dehumanizing of Native Americans, from the broken treaties and unkept promises. Therefore, this church is reaching out in confession and in promise.

Every congregation in the ELCA is on land that once belonged to someone else. American Indian and Alaska Native peoples are an important part of our church and of our country. We celebrate their heritage and gifts. Together, we are all children of God, redeemed by Jesus, sustained by the Spirit.

Be well, dear church.