

In deep acknowledgment

Land acknowledgments have become standard practice in many places, but often we still don't know why. When we don't understand the words we are saying, the deep significance of a land acknowledgment is lost. The basis of an acknowledgment is that it is given by a non-Indigenous (settler) person, and addressed to the first people of the land that is now occupied by your group, in acknowledgment of how settlers have benefited from colonization and now occupy the space they are in.

A land acknowledgment is also addressed to the group gathered and intended to be both educational and a symbolic thanksgiving on behalf of everyone present. Assuming a comfortable posture as if for prayer during the acknowledgment is appropriate, treating the moment with the respect of a communal prayer. Each acknowledgment needs to include accurate and properly pronounced names of the nations originally from the area. If possible, naming and describing the treaties of which your people are a part gives the opportunity to build connection and relate our faith and season to the shared history.

The provided example is one used for the area surrounding Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ontario. Feel free to adapt the parts that don't apply and use the parts that do. Another model land acknowledgment can be found in the *Voices Together* worship resources. We encourage each congregation to use the opportunity of writing a land acknowledgment to learn more about the history of the land we occupy and the people who were here before us. A good resource for North America is Native Land (www.native-land.ca). Enter your location to quickly find the First Peoples as well as summaries and key points of the treaties that cover your area.

We acknowledge that we are gathered for worship on the traditional territory of the Anishnaabe, the Haudenosaunee, and the Neutral Peoples. Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church stands in the territory of the Haldimand Tract, and is covered by the covenant of The Dish With One Spoon, which calls us as settlers, newcomers, and first peoples to share the land in peace, recognizing that we all eat from the same dish.

We acknowledge the systems of power and privilege that have led us to live, work, farm, and raise children in this fertile land. We admit our complicity in the colonization of these territories, whether knowingly or not, and we commit ourselves anew to hearing and honoring the realities facing First Nations people in Canada today, in hopes of restoring and rebuilding right relationships between our nations.