



This Thanksgiving

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This Thanksgiving, our little family did not make our traditional trek to Florida to see grandparents and extended family. We wanted to keep ourselves and everyone else safe in a pandemic, although it was not an easy decision. We have a family member with a grievous disease, and although we don't know if we will get another opportunity for a "healthy" visit with her, we knew that our going could precipitate another grievous illness.

This Thanksgiving, we learned more together about the Indigenous history of the land on which we live here in Cleveland: the land of the Erie and the Mississauga peoples. The Erie are part of the Iroquois group, and the Mississauga peoples are a part of the Ojibwe nation. Both tribes have lived on or near the Great Lakes for thousands of years – long before any of my ancestors participated in settler colonialism on this soil. Members of both the Erie and the Mississauga live here still, although in much smaller numbers than before colonization. (You can find information about the original stewards of the land on which you live by going to the [Native Land](#) website.)

This Thanksgiving, while eating food that has been on this land for thousands of years, we considered how we could be better neighbors to the First Peoples of this land and better allies in the causes they are still fighting. Here in Northeast Ohio, for example, the [Committee of 500 Years of Dignity and Resistance](#) educates and advocates today for changing the name of Cleveland's baseball team. The [Council on American Indian Ministries \(CAIM\)](#) connects at least twenty-two congregations in five conferences, with support and resources of the UCC's Neighbors in Need offering.

This Thanksgiving, I also renewed my commitment to financial support for the [Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women](#). Given the obscenely high rates of abuse and homicide of this population in both the United States and Canada – often by white men – all of us have a stake in raising awareness, taking action to prevent, and supporting survivors of violence against Indigenous women.

This Thanksgiving, lots of things were different. In some ways, we kept to ourselves to keep others safe. Yet in other ways, we reached out beyond ourselves to help shape a safer world for others. I'm reminded that this is not a call for one day out of the year, but part of the ongoing weaving of my life and Christian discipleship. Will you join me in learning more, in acting with humility and solidarity with Indigenous people in your community?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Elizabeth Dilley serves as the Minister and Team Leader for the Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization (MESA) ministry team in the national setting of the United Church of Christ.

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