

How To Write A Land Acknowledgement For Your Parish

Begin by thinking about the land that your church sits upon...

<https://www.anglicanjournal.com/do-you-know-whose-land-youre-on/>

Church history has too often tried to forget about the original inhabitants. History is whitewashed to forget about the native or indigenous tribes who were the stewards of the lands and lived in the lands churches now occupy. If the church is to be reconciled not only with its history but with the tribal nations throughout our country, many of whom are members of the church, the church must begin by acknowledging the ancestors who lived on the land before the first settlers came.

Whose land am I on? Visit this Native Land Map.

<https://native-land.ca/>

The Native Governance Center reminds us to put in the time necessary to research the following topics:

- The Indigenous people to whom the land belongs.
- The history of the land and any related treaties.
- Names of living Indigenous people from these communities.
- Indigenous place names and language.
- Correct pronunciation for the names of the Tribes, places, and individuals that you're including.

Next, the churches can think about how to make this acknowledgement liturgically.

“As we gather on the unceded ancestral lands of the Coast Salish people, the traditional territory of the shíshálh First Nation, let us pray that Christ's grace and peace will be with us...”
(St. Hilda's, Vancouver, BC – Anglican Church of Canada)

<https://www.vancouver.anglican.ca/diocesan-ministries/indigenous-justice/pages/acknowledging-traditional-territory-in-the-liturgy>

Churches can go a step beyond an opening statement, to a prayer that is an acknowledgement and thanksgiving for the land.

Creator, you made all people of every land. It is our responsibility to give thanks and respect to those who first occupied this land we are upon. We give thanks to _____, the first people of this land. We offer our respect to those ancestors who may be interred in this land. We are also thankful for the gifts of the People of the land. Creator let us be of Good Mind to reconcile the mistreatment of this land and to those who have been displaced. With thankful and respectful hearts we pray in Your name, Your son the Peacemaker and the Sacred Spirit. Amen. *(from All Saint's Church, Minneapolis, MN)*

Other examples for an acknowledgement in the liturgy or placed in the bulletin:

We acknowledge the _____ people, the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting (or worshipping) today. We acknowledge that they have occupied and cared for this land over countless generations and we celebrate their continuing contributions to the life of this region. *(from the Episcopal Diocese of Arizona)*

Acknowledging the people of the land, the _____, and other indigenous people as the original stewards of this land, we give thanks for our ancestors, our elders, and for all indigenous people who pray for unity and peace today. *(from the Episcopal Diocese of Arizona)*

We gratefully acknowledge the Native Peoples on whose ancestral homelands we gather, the _____, as well as the diverse and vibrant Native communities who make their home here today. *(from the Episcopal Diocese of Arizona)*

Examples of website land acknowledgments:

- <https://saintmarks.org/land-acknowledgment/>
- <https://nativegov.org/our-story/the-land-we-are-on/>
- <https://onbeing.org/land-acknowledgment/>
- <https://saintsalive.net/muwekma-ohlone-land-acknowledgement/>

“Acknowledging the land is also Indigenous protocol: It is a formal “thank you” to the host nation when making a presentation or announcement or holding a meeting, whether or not Indigenous individuals are present. Publicly acknowledging the original stewards of the land you are on can be a meaningful way to honor indigenous peoples and resist erasure of their histories. The power of an acknowledgement lies in learning as much as you can about local treaties and practices, while working to build accountable relationships.”

(Episcopal Camp & Conference Centers)

Further reading:

- <https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>
- <https://usdac.us/nativeland>
- <https://ecww.org/land-acknowledgement/>
- <https://folklife.si.edu/magazine/this-land-is-whose-land-indian-country-settler-protest>
- https://www.megaphonemagazine.com/unceded_territory
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bexvE4IZRGo> (Why Treaties Matter – YouTube)
- <http://www.lspirg.org/knowtheland>
- <https://www.praytelligblog.com/index.php/2021/05/10/ritual-land-acknowledgements-inculturated-justice-or-ritual-overload/>

Jesus Christ, our leader, you are the Son of the Creator. Today we became your children, today we became your grandchildren. We will live as you have taught us. We will follow your commandments. Watch over us. Speak to us from the trees, from the grass and herbs, from the breeze, from the passing rain, from the passing thunder and the deep waters. Before us there is beauty, behind us there is beauty. Allow us to walk a long life in happiness completed in beauty. Amen.

(From the Liturgy of St. John's, Red Lake, MN)

Great Spirit! You did reveal your loving concern to our forefathers so that they called you the great, Holy, and Mysterious One – Wakantanka, the Creator and Sustainer of all.

In your Love, you gave us Mother Earth; the wonders of Heaven and the beauty of Nature for our enjoyment, where all men could live in Peace, as brother of your creation!

For centuries our people walked in beauty before you! For this rich Heritage, help us to be externally grateful! Because you are a great, Eternal, and Living Spirit, in due time, you chose to send your son among us that all people might know your continued love and concern.

Guide us in our days, help each of us as your Children to be proud of our great heritage, to know and to be who we are, and to share with others, becoming one humanity within your Everlasting Love, as the many colors come together to form the rainbow in the sky.

Finally, gracious Father, give us new visions of your Will and help each one of us to have a share in each other's accomplishments. All this, we ask through Him who came not to destroy, but to make all things new, Your Son, our Lord. Amen.

(The Rt. Rev. Harold S. Jones (Santee), Suffragan Bishop of the Diocese of South Dakota from 1972 to 1976. The first Native American Bishop in the Episcopal Church)