

# South-Central Synod of Wisconsin 2023 Assembly Resolution

## Land Acknowledgement

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Whereas for centuries native peoples were indigenous to the lands now occupied by the congregations of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (ELCA); and

Whereas the church is deeply complicit in the historic displacement and ongoing injustices to Native Americans, particularly as a result of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century Doctrine of Discovery that allowed ownership claims by Christian settlers; and

Whereas the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly issued a Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery, and to “to acknowledge and repent from this church’s complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, which continue to harm tribal governments and individual tribal members;” and

Whereas, as part of implementing the Repudiation, in 2021 the ELCA issued a Declaration to American Indian and Alaskan Native People, saying “We confess that our congregations are built on the original homelands of Indigenous people, that we have continually refused to include the truth about our treatment and exploitation of our Native siblings and their lands as central to American history. We also confess that we have not learned our own church’s history related to Indigenous peoples” and “We commit to strengthening our anti-oppression efforts with a greater focus on realizing justice and equity for Indigenous people...We commit to supporting Tribal nations in their work to preserve their languages, and we commit to begin the practice of land acknowledgments at all expressions of the church”; and

Whereas the ELCA offers resources to assist expressions of the church in developing land acknowledgements as one of the simple ways to begin recognizing and addressing the history of erasure; be it therefore

**RESOLVED** that the Synod Council appoint a Land Acknowledgement Task Force to begin the work of repudiation by developing a land acknowledgement for use in the synod, in conversation with the first nations who historically lived in the area of our synod; and be it finally

**RESOLVED** that the synod encourage the use of that land acknowledgement in our congregations, or for congregations to develop their own land acknowledgement.

Submitted by

the Rev. Heather Hayward, St. Matthew’s New Life, Madison  
the Rev. Peter Heide, St. John’s, Prairie du Sac  
the Rev. Andy Twiton, Trinity, Madison  
the Rev. Nick Utpfall, Advent, Madison

*Reference and Counsel Committee recommends adoption.*