



This week, congregations across the United States sang the traditional Thanksgiving hymn, “We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing; he chastens and hastens his will to make known. The wicked oppressing now cease from distressing. Sing praises to his name, he forgets not his own.”

God forgets not God's own. And as the church, it's important that we not forget...the inaccuracies of the old old story that's been told about Thanksgiving. Pilgrims and native people, sitting down to share a meal. That's really not the story at all.

Smithsonian writer Claire Bugos points to David Silverman's book *This Land Is Their Land: The Wampanoag Indians, Plymouth Colony, and the Troubled History of Thanksgiving*. Silverman says much of that story is a myth riddled with historical inaccuracies and the telling and retelling of these falsehoods is deeply harmful to the Wampanoag Indians whose lives and society were forever damaged after the English arrived in Plymouth. Silverman's book focuses on the Wampanoags. When the pilgrims landed at Plymouth in 1620, the chief Ousamequin offered the new arrivals an informal alliance, primarily as a way to protect the Wampanoags against their rivals. For 50 years, the alliance was tested by colonial land expansion, the spread of disease, and the exploitation of resources on Wampanoag land. Then, tensions ignited into war. Known as King Philip's War, the conflict devastated the Wampanoags and forever shifted the balance of power in favor of European arrivals. Wampanoags today remember the Pilgrims' entry to their homeland as a day of deep mourning, rather than a moment of giving thanks.

Silverman, a historian at George Washington University, writes, “I've had a great many conversations with Wampanoag people, They felt like their people's history as they understood it was being misrepresented... making light of historical trauma which weighs around their neck like a millstone.” Silverman goes on to say, “The Thanksgiving myth is that friendly Indians, unidentified by tribe, welcome the Pilgrims to America, teach them how to live in this new place, sit down to dinner with them, and then disappear. They hand off America to white people so they can create a great nation dedicated to liberty, opportunity, and Christianity for the rest of the world to profit... People had been in the Americas for at least 12,000 years ... And having history start with the English is a way of dismissing all that.”

This Thanksgiving, take time to honor the indigenous people in North Carolina and around the world. People began living in the area now known as North Carolina at least 12,000 years ago as well.

Europeans started to settle here in the area in the mid-1600s bringing with them European Diseases, deceitful trade practices, land seizures, war, enslavement, trails of tears, and death to countless indigenous peoples.

Thanksgiving reminds us that our history lessons were written by Europeans - white people. This is part of our ongoing work of anti-racism we are called to engage. Whose voices are missing? Whose lives and cultures were exploited and decimated?



It matters that we remember. The complexity for me personally is knowing this horrific story AND loving Thanksgiving. I LOVE the “pace” of Thanksgiving with my family. We try very hard to relax and enjoy one another’s presence, practice gratitude, feast on the food, and watch some football. But we must remember the indigenous people at whose expense this whole story of Thanksgiving sits. We also are aware of the pain and loss we experience when holidays come - loss of relationships through death or loss of relationships because of brokenness. So take care of yourself. God is near. God forgets not God’s own. And that includes you. God remembers. God sees. God knows. Blessed Thanksgiving to you, North Carolina United Methodists.