

This week of Thanksgiving, congregations across the United States sing the traditional hymn, “We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing.” You know the words. “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 whole story.

Thanksgiving reminds us that our history lessons were written by Europeans. This is part of our ongoing work that we pay attention to whose voices are missing; whose lives and cultures have been exploited and even 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 food, and watch some football. But friends, we must remember the Indigenous people at whose expense this whole story of Thanksgiving sits.

In the North Carolina Conference, we celebrate our 13 Native American clergy who lead with strength and love. Also, the Committee on Native American Ministries is a beacon of leadership, advocacy, and service, embodying Christ's call to love and uplift one another.

Just last month, the committee organized a retreat for clergy and laity connecting our churches with Indigenous ways of worship. This summer, they hosted a Literacy Program in partnership with The Duke Endowment, supporting children with vital reading skills. During Lumbee Homecoming, a candlelight vigil honored loved ones, those who had been lost to the opioid crisis and they continue to advocate and raise awareness for missing and murdered Indigenous women.

The committee's commitment extends to dismantling racism and serving local communities—feeding elders and children, supporting the homeless, and working for justice. These are powerful acts of faith in action.

May we celebrate and support this vital ministry not just this month but every day as we work together for justice, healing, and hope.

I'm also very aware that some of you right now are experiencing the pain and loss that comes as the holidays approach - loss of relationships through death or loss of relationships because of brokenness. 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.