

2021 Michigan Annual Conference
Statement of Repentance, Peace and Thanksgiving
Rev. David Eardley
Friday, June 4, 2021

I am Rev. David Eardley, Chair of the Commission on the Annual Conference Session, Clergy, Rochester: St. Paul's.

As we begin our time together, singing the Lord's song, I encourage us to celebrate the incredibly diverse pathways and legacies of the people of the Michigan Conference. These beautiful peninsulas have sustained, inspired, and nurtured us, they have given us the resources to live, work, and play. We are grateful that time and place has put us here to live into God's call for justice, welcome, and mercy.

In our commitment to live into the Acts of Repentance to Native and Indigenous Peoples, I would like to take the time to honor the First Peoples of this area for caring for this abundant place. As early as 796 AD, the Council of the Three Fires has been coming together at Michilimackinac. The Anishinaabe member nations are the Ojibwe; the Keepers of Faith, the Odawa; the Keepers of Trade and the Potawatomi; Keepers of the Fire. These First Peoples have worked to overcome colonization in order to sustain this land for our future together.

The harvest of these Great Lakes and their fertile lands would go on to nourish expanding cultures. Immigrants would come to these shores fleeing famine and poverty. This place would become the final passage of an Underground Railroad to freedom for the African slaves and the cities would become the peace-filled homes to Vietnamese, Guatemalan and Middle Eastern refugees of violence. Residents of our State advocated all the way to the Supreme Court to protect transgender people from employment discrimination and recognize same gender marriage.

As the people of Michigan struggle to find equity together, so to this conference struggles to understand how it's privilege has impacted it's call from God. We continue to find the ways to honor one another and serve God's call in this place.

Even when injustice stripped away the wealth of soul and land of the Anishinaabe peoples they persevered and never lost dignity. They never lost their respect to the Creator and all that was endowed to them.

The slaves that found freedom in this place, stood firm for their rights even when they were beaten and treated unjustly. The refugees who left the violence of war to seek the peace of acceptance, continue to strive to conquer barriers of hate. Members of Michigan's LGBTQ community who continue their struggle for recognition and rights.

At this time as we come together as the Michigan Annual Conference, we humbly ask forgiveness. The United Methodist Church has too often been silent and complicit in these harms. To all of our siblings, on behalf of Michigan United Methodists, we recognize the past atrocities that were inflicted upon you out of racism, injustice, and doctrinal abuse. We honor you.

I ask for a moment of silence for you, members of the Michigan Annual Conference, to lift to the Creator your words of repentance, peace and thanksgiving.

Silence with flute from Greensky Hill Indian UMC

Amen.