

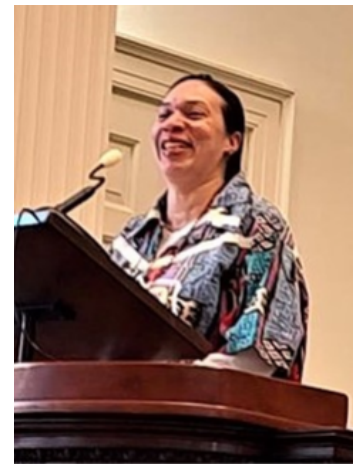


## A New Journey of Learning and Relationship with Indigenous Peoples

**The Social Justice Ministry** began exploring a Land Acknowledgement in 2022. A Land Acknowledgement is a formal statement about the Indigenous Peoples who cared for the land we now occupy. It thanks them for their stewardship and acknowledges their continuing relationship to that land. It opens the door for us to learn about the history of the Native American Tribes and American colonialism. Our Land Acknowledgement was adopted by the congregation at our Annual Meeting on May 21, 2023.

One of the important outcomes of this process is that we are establishing a meaningful and engaged relationship with a local Indigenous tribe. We are honored that Clan Mother Shoran Waupatuquay Piper of the Golden Hill Paugussett Nation has worked with us in developing our church's land acknowledgment process.

The Golden Hill Paugussett nation is a recognized tribe by the State of Connecticut. Their reservation land is in Trumbull and Colchester. We are happy to get to know these gracious neighbors.



Future proposed plans with the tribe include visits to their reservations, interaction of our youth group with the tribe, possible church support of state legislation beneficial to the tribe, inclusion of tribal members in church services, attendance at tribal events, recognition of Indigenous People's Day and Month, and our Social Justice Ministry's continued involvement. We also plan learning opportunities such as book and movie discussions, lectures, and field trips. We are building up our adult and children's library collection around Indigenous Peoples.



This is a new area of learning for the church generally, especially the history of Connecticut tribes. We have had a relationship with the Cheyenne River Lakota reservation in South Dakota through the Hawkwing project since about 2008. The church's Connections Team organizes support of Hawkwing with soup packet preparation, decoration and donation of onesies and tee shirts for newborns and infants, knitting of scarfs, mittens, hats, and blankets, collection of winter coats, boots, mittens, Christmas toys, and volunteering for week-long work trips on the reservation. That has been a significant service project, but we have not looked so much at the history and the abuses that the tribe has endured or even their current conditions beyond their poverty.



## Land Acknowledgement of the Universalist Church of West Hartford

*Adopted by the congregation on May 21, 2023*

Long before the Town of West Hartford or the Universalist Church were established, the land on which the church now stands at 433 Fern Street, was the traditional homeland of the Siacogs, Poquonocks and Tunxis Nations. Connecticut was also homeland to numerous other Indigenous peoples, including the Golden Hill Paugussett, Mashantucket Pequot, Eastern Pequot, Mohegan, Nipmuc, Lenape, Pocumtuc, Schaghticoke and Wangunk Nations.

The lands served as hunting grounds, as well as sites for trade exchange and agriculture. For generations, the Indigenous peoples cared for the land as stewards and guardians. To them it was, and still is, sacred. The land beneath and surrounding the Universalist Church of West Hartford was acquired from native peoples.

We, the members of this church, recognize the historical connection our church has with the Indigenous community and we acknowledge, honor and respect the diverse peoples connected to this land. We fully recognize, support and advocate for the sovereign rights of Connecticut's tribal nations. This acknowledgement is aligned with our church's core values of creating a diverse and inclusive community.

We acknowledge that it is the responsibility of our church to recognize the people, cultures and history that connect us to its original inhabitants. We thank them for their sacred care of the land, and for their strength and resilience in protecting it. We promise to uphold our responsibilities in continuing the stewardship of this land for future generations.