

Today we are gathered in holy company on land that has been the ancestral home for many who came before us. In the time before forced removal, the Osage, Caddo, Quapaw, and Kickapoo traversed this land and called it home. They hunted here, had children, held sacred ceremonies, and experienced the fullness of life on this soil. This was disrupted by the darkness of many of our ancestors who chose the sins of exclusion, greed, and hatred to forcibly take what was not theirs and treat our indigenous ancestors with extreme violence. Millions of lives – who were of sacred worth – died and much of their rich culture and traditions with them.

In 1831, the US Government forcibly removed the Muscogee Creek people from their homelands in Alabama and Georgia to where we stand today. The Muscogee are resilient and forged a new life for their people here, tending to this land and rebuilding their lives after the horrors they had endured. Still, it was not enough for the sinful greed of many White settlers. The land was stolen again and used for the prosperity of many of our ancestors. We must acknowledge the great harm that was done, and how the descendants have benefited from the violence against our Indigenous siblings. It was evil in the eyes of God and the Methodists involved violated our first General Rule to ‘do no harm.’ It is with deep sorrow we confess the sins of those who came before us and pledge for it to end with us.

Therefore, we commit ourselves to reconciliation with our Indigenous siblings, working towards rebuilding trust and community with all of God’s children and to help restore to this generation what has been stolen. In following our second General Rule of ‘doing good’, we recognize the power God gives us to support the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference in their mission and work and come alongside their ministries as partners. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to advocate and stand with our Native and Indigenous communities when further harm is threatened against them. By God’s grace, we can continue to learn and grow. In all these ways, may we be further perfected in Love.

Those who truly understand know that land cannot be owned. It is entrusted to those who would care for it with the dignity the Creator first gave it. This land has witnessed many sacred moments throughout the generations. We share this sacred space so that as we conference together, we follow our third General Rule of growing in our love of God. May this, too, be one born of God's grace and us a people who carry forward the care of this land.