



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

Justice Task Force Comments 5/27/2023

The Justice Task Force (JTF) held a meeting on May 25th to discuss the progress of the Procter Hall purchase by the Waldorf School and respond to the information provided to the congregation on Sunday, May 21st. The Procter Hall Task Force (PHTF) is to be congratulated for the dedicated work that has resulted in this agreement.

The JTF has been working over the past year on our charge as approved by Church Council. An initial charge for the JTF was to work together to create a Land Acknowledgment that would state our church's understanding that the land we now worship on is the ancestral homeland and sacred burial grounds of the Muhheaconneok people. Our early mission church was specifically formed to provide Christian outreach to the Muhheaconneok tribe. Within a few years of their arrival, some colonists began a steady grab of these lands. Within fifty years of the founding of that mission, the tribe had been completely dispossessed of its lands and forced to move west.

We thought it would be helpful to bring you up to date on the work we've done as the congregation considers the sale of the land that we have been researching. In addition to research and education, we have solicited input from the tribe and studied other land acknowledgments. We hope to present a land acknowledgement to the congregation in the fall of 2023. Since the tribe has made clear that a land acknowledgement is meaningless without specific action, we are exploring actions that will be proposed for discussion.

As we move forward with a Land Acknowledgement statement, we are advocating for the following:

- Continue educational experiences for our congregation and community to learn more about the Stockbridge Munsee Mohican tribe
- Develop a working relationship with the tribe and the Preservation Office at Williams College
- Honor the request of the tribe that any digging on land occupied by FCC will require a consultation with the Preservation Office at Williams College. This is so their archaeologist can be present to receive any ancestral remains

The JTF is also proposing the following:

- As funds from the sale of Procter Hall are not projected to be dispersed for 2-3 years, we advocate for the postponement of part 2 of the PHTF that calls for the creation of a Capital Reserve account
- We advocate for the creation of a working group that spends time considering the use of the proceeds of the Procter Hall sale including its relation to Justice work.

For more information about the Stockbridge Munsee Mohican tribe visit <https://mohican.com>