

Land Acknowledgement for MVP Meeting September 9, 2025

As the Presbytery of the Miami Valley gathers here at Covenant Presbyterian Church, in Springfield Ohio on this day, let us remember that the churches and nearby homes and businesses all occupy land that once was home to many indigenous peoples through three millennia. These people were not savages, they were just people who, like us, were trying to survive with the resources available. These people are known today by their Anglican names as the Adena, Hopewell, Fort Ancient, Shawnee, and Iroquois. This area has had a tumultuous but colorful history and can be traced back as far as 1000 B.C. The Adena first made an appearance in this area during the Early Woodland Period and have left traces of their civilization around Springfield in the form of mounds, most notably one in Enon (the second largest in Ohio) and three around Cedarville. Archaeological investigations of these mounds revealed that their purpose was for burial, ritual, and other gathering activities. The Adena engaged in agricultural activities but relied heavily on hunting and gathering as well as trading with other cultures near and as far as the Gulf of Mexico. This was known as the Early Woodland Period. By 100 A.D. the Adena were replaced by the Hopewell culture, the circumstances of this are not known but it is speculated that the Hopewell culture assimilated the Adena. The Hopewell continued Adena traditions and customs and were known for an extensive trading network that covered western New York down through the Texas Gulf Coast and the big bend of Florida's Gulf Coast. They flourished in this area until 500 A.D. when they were replaced by the Fort Ancient people group. The Fort Ancient people had a long and successful habitation in this area until the middle 1600s when they experienced a rapid decline in population and culture which has been attributed to the spread of diseases (such as small pox) through trade with people who were infected by Europeans (though they did not have direct contact).

The Shawnee, an Algonquin tribe, may have arrived in the area around the early 1600s. They were spread throughout the mid-Atlantic states as east as Delaware and as far west as Illinois. It is thought by some that the Shawnee are the descendants of the Fort Ancient culture. During the 1660s, they were forced to leave their traditional lands, including the Ohio River Valley, by the marauding Iroquois during the Beaver Wars. In the 1730s, they once again began to call the Ohio River Valley their home, settled initially along the Ohio River where conflict with white settlers became a routine occurrence. By 1763, the British gained control over this area after their defeat of the French during the French-Indian War. During the American Revolutionary War, the Shawnee allied themselves with the British and conducted many raids on pioneers moving into the area. The major Shawnee village (estimated population of 3,000) of Piqua (Piquea), which was located four

miles southwest of Springfield, Ohio, was attacked by American soldiers under the command of General George Rogers Clark on August 8, 1780. It was a battle that ended with the total destruction of Piqua, and the abandonment of two smaller villages along Buck Creek.

The loss of Piqua resulted in a split in the Shawnee tribe that caused many of them to move west beyond the Mississippi River. Those that stayed in Ohio were led by Tecumseh, the Shawnee chief who established another village in the area, on the east side of the Great Miami River, on a site that is now occupied by the city of Piqua. The Shawnee named this second village lower Piqua. They had lived in the Piqua area for two years when, in 1782, General Clark and 1,000 Kentuckians moved north into Ohio again to retaliate for Shawnee attacks on settlers in Kentucky. The Shawnee decided to abandon their Piqua villages without a fight and moved to a location on the Auglaize River. The final battle of the Northwest Indian War concluded in 1794 with the Battle of Fallen Timbers near Maumee. This resulted in the destruction of the Western Indian Confederacy (led by Blue Jacket) and withdrawal of British army garrisons in the lower Great Lakes area. As a result, the Treaty of Greenville was signed in 1795, the Shawnee ceded their ancestral homelands in the Ohio River Valley including Springfield (which became established as a city in 1801). The Shawnee settled in villages in Wapakoneta, north of the new treaty line, Hog Creek (southwest part of Lima) and Lewistown. Tecumseh continued to lead raids on white settlers in Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana until the 1811 Tippecanoe defeat at the hands of General William Henry Harrison in the Indiana Territory and his death in Canada during the War of 1812 at the Battle of Moraviantown in 1813.

The U.S. federal government forcibly removed the Shawnee under the 1830 Indian Removal Act, which gave President Andrew Jackson negotiating power to exchange land east of the Mississippi River for areas west of the Mississippi River; these lands would eventually become the states of Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. This exchange was not supposed to be a forced eviction, but the US government used military coercion, threats, and bribery to forcefully displace tribes to Indian Territory. In 1832, the Shawnee ceded the last of their ancestral Ohio lands to the United States government. Finally, they were removed to Indian Territory, which became the state of Oklahoma in the early 20th century. The impact of the Shawnee and those who have gone before is seen in the many place names that still exist today, their expert river navigation skills which showed just how important the rivers are to commerce and communication, the importance of alliances, and how they were able to slow westward expansion in the face of a growing nation.

Today, the Shawnee tribe is recognized as three distinct entities (the Shawnee Tribe, Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, and the Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma),

mostly live in Oklahoma where their tribal headquarters in Miami, OK (population < 13,000 of whom most live in poverty) in the northeast corner of the state, just 29 miles southwest of Joplin, MO.

Today I invite all to join me in prayer as we remember the people on whose sacred ancestral lands we now live. So, we make this Land Acknowledgement:

“As we gather today, we acknowledge that we are on the traditional lands of indigenous peoples. Here in our state of Ohio, those people include the Adena, the Hopewell, the Fort Ancient, the Iroquois, and the Shawnee. We remember that we share this land with other parts of God’s good creation: plants, birds, and animals. May we be good neighbors. We have come here seeking to worship and serve the God of all Creation in this meeting. We have come to stand on holy ground!

We have come to sing God’s praises, as the trees and plants sing God’s praise.

We have come to sing praises to our Creator and Redeemer!

We have come to experience the mighty rush of the Spirit like our surrounding flowing waters, including the five great rivers that bring life to our region.

We have come to open ourselves to the Holy Spirit! We have come to experience the God of Creation in this sacred space. Thanks be to God! Amen

References:

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<https://gcnativeamericancoalition.com/land-acknowledgement>