

A Deeper Look

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd is located on the original and ancestral homelands of the Cherokee people ("Tsalagi" in Cherokee, pronounced SawLaGee, or C̣WY when written), and we give thanks for their presence here over the centuries. We recognize and honor all of the Indigenous tribal people who have called and continue to call this land their home. We honor those who were the first stewards of this beautiful, diverse and abundant land, and the first to love, celebrate, and live in community here.

The Cherokee were a large and prosperous tribe and called themselves The Principal People (Ani'Yun'wiya). Transylvania County was the hunting and gathering grounds of the Cherokee, who had a symbiotic relationship with the environment and thus enjoyed abundant fruits, grains, and game. They knew the land was a gift, that it was sacred and living, and that all creation was interdependent. The Cherokee were and are a communal, matrilineal and spiritual people.

The Cherokee lived in Transylvania County until 1838, when federal legislation forced most of the Cherokee people to relocate to Oklahoma on the Trail of Tears. Over the course of several years, about 17,000 Cherokee were removed and about 4,000 of them died on the journey. A few hundred Cherokee hid and remained in western North Carolina and became known as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI).

We acknowledge and regret that our privilege of working and living here now is a direct result of the doctrine of discovery, a legal and religious concept that advanced the idea that European peoples, culture and religion were superior to all others, and was used to justify violence, colonization, expulsion, and assimilation of Indigenous peoples, all of which caused intergenerational trauma. The long history of unjust treaty negotiations, land use conflict, and federal administration continues to this day, and Indigenous peoples continue to be negatively impacted.

Indigenous people are part of our communities. They offer invaluable wisdom for the ways we exist, today and into the future, in relationship with creation. This land acknowledgment is a step in our journey of partnership with Living Waters Lutheran Church in Cherokee. We open our minds and hearts to the work of continued learning, healing, and justice for and with our Indigenous siblings and all creation.