

Norton Family Newsletter-Serving in God's Mission in Navajo, NM

Dear Friends in Christ,

Well it has been quite a few months for all of us. As you may have heard the COVID-19 pandemic hit the Navajo Nation particularly hard. At one point in time the Navajo Nation had more per capita infections than New York. Although 527 people have died of COVID here on the Reservation since March, none of them were members of our congregation. We did however, have 2 people infected with the virus, but they recovered after hospitalization, and are doing well now by God's grace.

Just as elsewhere the virus has disrupted life here. Originally we had a very full summer planned, with lots of volunteer groups and two college interns slated to stay. But, as the time approached everything was cancelled. There was really no other choice since the tribal government issued curfews, and people were not allowed out of the house from 8:00 pm on Friday evenings until 5:00 am on Monday mornings from April-August. The tribal government also discouraged (and still does) visitors to the Reservation.

Again, as elsewhere this meant that we couldn't meet face-to-face for worship, so we conducted worship through Facebook live. Finally on the 22nd of August we had our first face-to-face worship service pictured above. As you can see we met outdoors and had people socially distance. It was a hardship on everyone not to be able to meet for those months, but the joy of gathering together again was underscored by a baptism that took place that day. A week afterward we held the first wedding ceremony since I have arrived here 7 years ago. I have met many young couples on the Reservation that chose to live together without marriage. So it was a nice turn of events to see this couple make promises to each other with the help of God for the benefit of each other, their children, and their community.

Although the past months have been very challenging, it has been amazing to see the help and support we have received from friends both near and far. We received donations of masks, clothing, food, and gift cards from congregations and LWML groups. On more than one occasion I was able through those gifts to help people who had nowhere else to go. It was a great demonstration of God's mercy toward people in need.

One other benefit of the changes due to the pandemic is that I was able to produce Bible Studies with Rev. David Sternbeck of Lutheran Indian Ministries on a weekly basis. You can access these through our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/Members-and-Friends-of-Shepherd-of-the-Valley-LCMS-Navajo-NM-45689232813899>

They go back to the 21st of April, so we have covered quite a bit of material. It has been a joy to spend time in the Word of God with a great teacher in our Ministry Organization.

Thank the Lord with us for:

- The wedding on 8/29/20 and ask God to bless their marriage
- God's provision for people in need through the many gifts we have received
- The opportunities to dig deep into God's Word
- The baptism that took place on 8/22/20



Gifts to support this ministry can be sent to:
Lutheran Indian Ministries
15400 W Capitol Dr. Suite 201
Brookfield, WI 53005 a note: "for the support of Navajo" in the memo line