

## Church Family

*There is a prevailing question* this moment in our Nation: when will we get back to “normal”? We are ready for the day that this virus is no more and the destruction it is causing becomes a distant memory. With the virus gone, we hope to resume our “normal” lives. Of course we do. We were designed for relationships and purpose. We miss our family and friends. We want to get back to work in order to fulfill our purpose, to feed our families and pay the bills. We want our kids back in school to continue their education and social development. We all miss our routines, we miss our “normal.”

*But what about the Church*—do we really want to get back to “normal”? That is the question I have been asking myself. Don't get me wrong, I miss our gatherings. I miss the hugs, the conversations, the way that one Brother (me) always sings off key but does so with all his heart. I miss the Family of God and being in the same room with you all. But what about all the rest? The way we have been “doing” church? Our motivations and intentions? Our planning and orchestrations? The pressures and expectations? The purposeful anonymity of some, and the reluctant exalting of others?

*In our daily reading* as a church last week, we read Matthew 3. That chapter begins with the ministry of John the Baptist. He is by the river Jordan preaching, “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.” People were responding and being baptized in water as a sign of that repentance (v.1-6). Then one day, Pharisees and Sadducees show up, who we would call the church of the day. I liken the Pharisees to the more religiously motivated sect of the church, and the Sadducees to the more politically motivated. However you see them, John greets them harshly (v.7), knowing by the Spirit that their visit was not genuine but critical in nature. He tells them essentially that they need to repent (v.8) and that they can't rely on the way things were done in the past (v.9), but that God was basically starting new. So their choice was to either repent and begin to do things His Way, or continue with their “normal” and get left behind. What was interesting for me in this story is that the call for repentance to the church wasn't necessarily pointed to a sin per se. John wasn't accusing the church of adultery or corruption, although that was definitely part of the problem as it is today. But I believe that the church of John's day, as it is today, was trying to serve God the best way they knew how. The Pharisees had their laws and sacrifices, the Sadducees their political power and secular connections. They were just following the steps of their ancestors trying to please God in the best way they knew how. But then John shows up, paving the way for the soon to come Messiah, and thus interrupts the whole show. And his Divine message to them all is that the “normal” has changed! His Name is Jesus.

*Church, I believe* this is the message for us today. The “normal” has changed. Or it needs to change. And please hear me, I'm not talking about method or style. I don't believe this is about a new way of “doing” church but more about a new way, or more to truth, a very old way of “being” Church. Our way of “doing” Church has been interrupted, and now we have an opportunity, a chance at repentance. For too long, our Sunday services, Wednesday night Bible studies, conferences and Bible camps etc. have served as crutches and hiding places for us in the church. Now that they are gone, I believe by our Gracious and Jealous God. No longer will He allow us to only worship Him for an hour or two a week and ignore Him the rest of the time. No longer will He let men stand in for Him and take the place that only belongs to Him. No longer will He let us hide from our purpose and calling in Him, letting others fill that place that was only designed for us. And no longer will He share us with the world as if we could have both. Our God is a Jealous God.

*I truly believe* this is our moment, our chance to examine our relationship with Jesus. To check our heart, our motivations and intentions, and repent if necessary. As everything has been shut down and we have this chance to be still, we have a choice: we can fill our time with house projects, netflix and zoom meetings, or we can stop, be still, get on our faces before Jesus and simply say, “Here I am, here is my heart, my life, my everything. I repent. I am done hiding in my busyness, my selfishness and excuses. I need my relationship with You to be more than an hour on Sunday; I need my goal and purpose in life to be more than the American dream, and I need my “normal” to be your Normal: what You have promised in Your Word, paid for at Your Cross, and proven with Your empty tomb.”

*We here at the RecCenter* are seizing that opportunity. We are currently in a 14 day lockdown on the Reservation which has limited our ministry programs to a daily takeout lunch meal for the kids, zoom church services, and a lot of phone calls; trying to love people the best we can during this awful time. With the extra time we have, we are determined to spend it daily on getting quiet before our God, pursuing relationship with Jesus and fellowshiping with His Indwelling Holy Spirit. We will be still and know our God! We hope and pray you do the same.

*Please know* that we appreciate and love each of you. Your kindness and generosity through this whole ordeal has been inspirational. We are all in the same situation, facing the same fears and uncertainties, and yet you are still thinking of and praying for us and the Lakota people. That is an amazing proof of the Love of Jesus moving in your hearts. As of today, there has been only once case of the virus here among the Lakota. Please pray with us that it does not spread here among those we love and that God's Will will be done here in Oglala. Thank you so much!

*We hope to see you all soon.* Pastor Eric & Ela Sutton



## Youth Ministry

*While everything seems on hold...*

God never sleeps! So thankfully, we also don't need to sit around and wait for whatever change may come in this “crisis” situation. Meanwhile, our ministry has taken on new forms. The ones from our Rec team who live in Oglala are able to serve the youth with daily take-out meals, which are appreciated even by our local tribal representatives. Unfortunately our playground as well as the Rec gym are shut down, and we have not been able to interact with many of our regular kids for quite a while now. The youth also missed out on some of our usual spring ministry teams. Please pray for wisdom as we plan for the upcoming summer season with all our mission teams, VBS, etc.

## Outreach

*With the reservation on lockdown and*



us (off-rez pastors) considered nonessential workers, we have been unable to continue our normal outreach ministry for over a month now. While hindered from ministering in the jail and hospital in Pine Ridge, we try to stay connected to our friends and brothers and sisters in Christ on the Rez through phone calls, text, and facebook, but it's definitely not the same as seeing people face to face. We are trying to use the time to draw closer to Jesus in prayer and the Word, as well as with each other. We join the Schwartz family twice a week for prayer meetings, keeping it under 10 people, as well as for a service on Sunday, where we zoom in with our ReCenter church family. I (Elliot) feel a little stir crazy at times, but it hasn't been too bad. Getting a good amount of reading done, that's for sure. Not to mention our daughter Everly is getting to spend a lot more time with dad. She does often ask to get in the car and go to church. Soon, we all hope!

*Elliot & Crystal Morales, Outreach*

## Heidi's Notes

### The Language of the Heart

Just like a sunbeam brightens the sky,  
 A smile on the face of a passerby  
 Can make a drab and crowded street  
 A pleasant place where two smiles meet.

~ Helen Rice ~



The last month has been odd for sure; no kids having fun on the Rec playground, no basketballs bouncing in the gym, no children raising their voices to Jesus in kids' church... Just lots and lots of cooking! Since the shelter in place ordinance was passed almost a month ago, we have been serving takeout meals to the kids ages 0-17 everyday from the front porch of the Rec Center. It not only provides a little bit of extra food during this time, but we also get a chance to say Hi and let the kids know we haven't forgotten them. Some of our comfortable tools of ministry have been stripped away, but as the above poem exemplifies, we can always share a smile and so share the love of Christ, even while social distancing!



We are still allowed to go out and take walks, and one day as I walked I was joined by a girl that I am slightly acquainted with from VBS. She seemed lonely and talked the whole time. She told me she doesn't have any toys, and her brothers are mean to her, so she just sits and looks out her window. These moments are easy to pass by with some good advice or just kind words, but I felt I needed to tell her about Jesus. I told her that when she is looking out her window she can talk to God because He loves her very much and cares about what is on her mind, and He wants to talk back. Thank you, Lord, for giving me this opportunity!

I hope that many of you have had some of these unexpected times of ministry too, as daily life has been turned upside down. We are praying for you as you come to mind and are very grateful for your prayers for us.



Heidi Martin



## BULLETIN BOARD

### CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

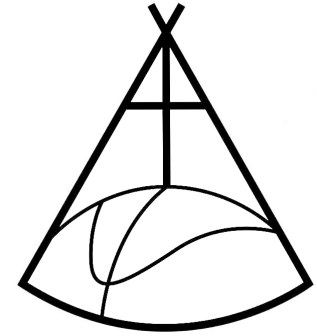
Under the current lock-down, our Church Family has been split in two: the on-rez and the off-rez side. Both "sides" meet in groups of up to ten, and then hold services together via zoom. We miss our friends and family and our fellowship together, but we are also thankful for this rather unique opportunity to intentionally draw closer with God and with each other.



**They do not put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.** ~ Matthew 9:17 ~

### UPDATED PRAYER REQUESTS

- ♥ Please pray for repentance in the church, for a turning from our old ways and a turning to His "new normal" way
- ♥ Pray that we would seize the opportunity of this unique time in history to seek Jesus, and to worship and trust Him more than ever
- ♥ Pray for the Oglala community for God's Will to be done—may this crisis not go by without becoming a stumbling block, or causing a great awakening (we believe for the latter!)
- ♥ Pray for the tribal leadership
- ♥ Pray for Christ's Light to shine brightly as we continue to minister in the ways possible
- ♥ Pray for continued provision of our daily needs; thank God for all who give faithfully
- ♥ Pray for new children's pastors for the Rec
- ♥ Pray for God's direction concerning all our summer ministry / outreach plans



Oglala Re\*Creation  
 and Worship Center  
 - TPI WAKAN -  
 A Light In The Darkness



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