



Church Family

*“That I may gain Christ
and be found in Him”*

~ Philippians 3:8,9 ~

I can find no other words

in Scripture that better describe the heart of our church here in Oglala. For us, we are learning that there is no better place to be but in that place of Abiding, Abiding in Him and He in us. To abide in Him means to not only make our time alone with Him in Word, prayer and worship sacred and daily, but also to keep our mind and heart fixed on Him and our ears attentive to His Voice throughout the entire day. It takes work, dedication, persistence, intentionality, and—most importantly—His Grace. Oh, but when we are in that place, we find only Love, Joy and Peace in His Wonderful Presence. This has been our pursuit and purpose as a church for a number of years, intensifying in the last twelve months or so.

Now that may sound like we are just sitting around, locked in a quiet room somewhere with worship music on, praying, reading our Bibles and getting Holy Ghost goosebumps, while the world on the outside is falling away into darkness. But what about the work of the ministry, the preaching of the Gospel, the making of disciples, building of His Church (and so on), you may ask? Well, please be assured that we are still very much about the Work of the Kingdom here among the Lakota people! It just looks very different from what it did a year ago. As I said in our last newsletter, we are still under a “shelter in place” ordinance here on the Pine Ridge Reservation, which has limited us greatly in regard to what we are allowed to do in Oglala and at the Rec. But even with those ongoing restrictions, Jesus has been Faithful and the Holy Spirit very active.

I heard an analogy in a sermon a few weeks back that has really helped sharpen my focus and change my perspective on the idea of ministry and serving our Father in Heaven. A preacher was sharing out of Matthew 9, where Jesus told us to pray for laborers for the great harvest. She likened those hired workers to “Day Laborers.” The idea of her message was that we are to not only pray for those laborers but that we also are to *be* those laborers, doing the work of the ministry.

As I was listening and later on, as I meditated on this idea of being “day laborers,” something clicked in my spirit. It really put together the truth of Abiding in Jesus with the work of the ministry. The concept of day laborers is very simple and hasn’t changed much in thousands of years. A man or woman goes out in the morning to find work. They go to a designated place at a specific time where they know the master or boss will be. When the master/boss shows up, they hire who is there to do whatever job they have for them that day. In Jesus’ time, for the most part it would be agricultural work; today, depending on where you live, it can be anything from construction, agriculture, livestock, etc. (In Oglala, for those that are interested, it is mostly picking up trash in the ditches.) Whatever work the master/boss had, you would go with them and do it. At the end of the day, you get paid. The next day, you start all over again—hence the term, “day laborer.” There are only two real requirements to being a successful day laborer: 1. Be at the appointed place and time, the place you know the master/boss will be, and 2. When He shows, do the work he has for you for that day.

At this moment, that is how I view ministry here in Oglala. It’s simple, we want to be a “Day Laborers” for King Jesus. All we have to do is get to that place in the morning, that place of abiding where we know the Master will be. It’s a designated place and time, a sacred time where we wait on Him in Word, Worship, and Prayer. And when He shows up, we are willing to do whatever task He has for us that day, the good works that He has already prepared for us to walk in (Ephesians 2:10). And the very cool part is that He goes with us! The abiding in Him does not stop in our prayer closet but continues on throughout the day as He leads, guides and empowers us to do the work He has set aside for us to do that day. The next morning, we get up and do the same.

I will admit, it’s not easy as it sounds. To keep that time sacred, to stay focused on Him throughout the day, is a fight sometimes. Plus, it’s hard not being able to plan and look ahead when it comes to ministry and life in general. We do like consistency as people; we like routines and schedules. But remember, Jesus is King. He knows best. And without Him, we can do nothing. So we get up tomorrow, go to that place, wait on Him and see what He has for us that day.

We love you and appreciate you all. Please continue to pray for the Lakota people, especially the believers. They are under constant attack, but the Lord is doing wonderful things in their lives. Thank you for standing with us. Jesus is King!

Pastor Eric & Ela Sutton



Youth Ministry

If I had been praying and heard a word from God like, “I want you to do church online,” I would’ve thought I was crazy. Yet that’s exactly what happened—us doing church online, I mean. It’s been a year now, and no, I am not crazy when I say that it has actually been good! Holding services through zoom has given confidence to many in our church family to speak up and participate more in our Bible discussions. It also dispelled some of the other religious notions we might have carried into church on Sunday mornings. In fact, it has been such a blessing that I’d like to ask you to keep us in prayer as we slowly transition back into the church building, now that health restrictions are easing up a bit. We need wisdom and grace to keep that momentum going, and to continue growing in faith and understanding.

By the way, not much youth ministry has been going on over the last year. We have barely seen any of our regular Rec kids and teens as we have not been able to have open gym or any other programs. The only way we kept in touch with our local youth is through the daily lunches we were able to serve from the Rec property. Pray for guidance and wisdom in regard to if, how, and when to return to any other forms of outreach and ministry. However, my wife and I are thankfully back to teaching in-person at the Christian school in Oglala and are grateful for the opportunity to reach at least these few precious students with Christ’s love!

Leon & Mary Schwartz



Women’s Ministry / Outreach

Ela and I started women’s group back up in November. We have between 10 to 12 ladies every Wednesday night. We start with dinner, fellowship, and then discuss our Bible study, Truthfilled. The presence of God has been so sweet and the Lord has been so faithful to meet us every week. It is so encouraging to dig into the word together, ask questions, share our struggles and victories and grow in the Lord together. We are so thankful for what God is doing in our midst!

Elliot & Crystal Morales, Outreach

Heidi's Notes

The following is a story of love, generosity, and community; a glimpse into the heart of the Lakota people. And for me, it is a lesson in selflessness.

On a very cold day in February, I attended the funeral of a young grandmother. Cars were lined up all along the driveway leading to her house, and there was a tipi set up outside that served as a viewing area for the casket and the star quilts made in her honor. An open fire burned nearby, and people stood around warming their hands as a big pot of soup was cooking. Inside the house, the wood stove was blazing, and elders kept warm beside it while women were cooking in the adjacent kitchen. I went to use the only restroom available and there was a child taking a bath in the tub. "It's ok, you can go ahead and use it," I was told. Tables were set up on the snow, and laden with food prepared by friends and family. The air temperature was no more than 30 degrees, but we ate outside at tables and chairs. The service commenced with everyone sitting or standing beside the tipi, as we paid our last respects. The burial spot had already been dug close by, and after her body was laid to rest, the pall bearers and other mourners shoveled dirt in the grave, pants covered with mud, until it was filled in and mounded up, flowers laid on top. Afterward a giveaway of quilts, blankets, and food was held to say thank you to all those that had come.

On this day, the problems that plague the reservation were put on hold, and the life of this mother, unci, and friend was celebrated in selflessness. How much more will they model this as they come to know the one that was wholly sacrificial? How do I as a believer model selflessness through Christ? ... a subject worthy of my reflection.

Heidi Martin



BULLETIN BOARD

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

In the cold and snowy first week of March 2001, a car with a fateful load arrived on the rez: Pastor Tim Harris, two young men named Eric and Leon, and a colicky pitbull named Leland. Of these four, two are still here, and this March, we celebrated their 20-years anniversary in Oglala! We have every reason to be grateful and to remember God's Faithfulness in their lives. Thanks to modern technology, we were able to have Tim and Elaine join in the festivities along with many others who were crucial to the RecCenter and God's Kingdom ministry in Oglala.

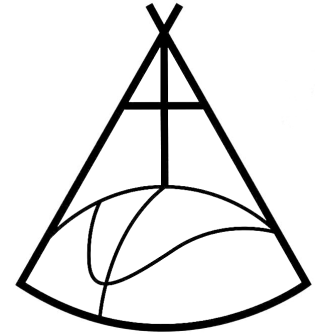


Yepp, we are all getting old here.. But our sanctuary got a new look! As said before, "doing" church differently over the last year, we do not just want to go back to the old ways. With that in mind, the remodeled sanctuary has become more livingroom-ish and family-oriented, a place for God to feel welcome and for us to enjoy His presence as well as fellowship with each other. Our church family got together to clean & paint; we added some new furniture, and soon we'll even have the floor redone. Looks awesome!

Please check out our website for more recent pictures, including a great slide show about the last 20 years of our pastors' hairstyles. ☺

PRAYER REQUESTS

- ♥ Thank God for the gift of church family, and for the new ways we get to live and share it
- ♥ Thank Jesus for keeping us all safe over the last year, both health-wise and mentally
- ♥ Pray for wisdom and guidance in regard to re-opening plans for the RecCenter
- ♥ Pray for the Oglala community that Jesus would break the power of darkness
- ♥ Pray for creative summer outreach ideas



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



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