

# Lutherans in Indian Communities

**LINC** is a newsletter by the Montana District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod for Native communities and the Lutherans living in and/or serving those communities.

Fall 2012

## VBS at North American Indian Days

**“Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Columbia Falls--  
your friends across the mountains.”,**

read the new sign on our tent in Browning, Montana as we welcomed children to our open-house style Vacation Bible School. Members of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church have had a VBS presence at the North American Indian Days since 2004. During this time we have established relationships with many children, in fact, most of our contacts with the Blackfeet people have been with those under the age of 16.

This summer I arrived early on the Blackfeet Reservation to work out some administrative details pertaining to our tent at the **NAID**. I needed to find a tribal administrator so I headed for the Arbor. The large open-air structure was crowded with people, which was expected, but the large police presence was not. Tribal police, some from other reservations, were posted at all of the entrances to the Arbor and lingered among the crowd. The crowd was respectful but tense; there were protest signs scattered among the stands and an occasional voice could be heard shouting from among the crowd. The speakers were elected tribal officials and a number of these men and women spoke about tribal unity. They spoke well and some of them were especially inspirational, but it was clear I was uninformed about many of the issues. I knew our friends on the Blackfeet Reservation had gone through some tough times recently; I had read about that in the newspaper.

After seeking help from many people who graciously tried to help me, I did find the tribal administrative staffer. She was understandably intent on the speeches but she patiently listened to my concerns and agreed to meet me at her office after the meeting. The Tribal offices were closed but she was still willing to help.

That evening other volunteers arrived and we raised our tent and set up for VBS. For three and a half days the kids came from all over the event grounds and spent time with us. Volunteers from Our Redeemer worked among the tables helping the children with projects, reading stories to them, and quietly talking with them about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was another great year, and I'm particularly pleased with some of the adult contacts that we made on the Blackfeet Reservation. Things got off to a strange start this year, but it's clear that the **LORD** of the Harvest was at work throughout. It was good for me to sit and listen to those speeches, to spend time in the Blackfeet Tribal offices, and to meet some Tribal officials because it helps us gain a better understanding of the issues on the reservation.

**The real joy in Blackfeet VBS hasn't changed over the years – it's the kids and the smiles, the sharing and the Gospel.**

*Pastor Matt Nelson*

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## Staying Put

By most American standards, 28 years is a long time to stay put *anywhere*. Vicarage was 1984-85 and Ordination and Installation as missionary-at-large to the Crow Indian Reservation was in June 1986. In Indian ministry staying put is important. It can take a long time for Christ to find some of His lost sheep, or to heal their brokenness, or to prepare one to be a pastor. Three short scenarios follow:

Today Peanut is a good sized teenager. At birth he was tiny and grew little over his first months. This led an Indian Health Service doctor to class Peanut as a failure-to-thrive child and blamed his parents for neglect and perhaps abuse. Enter the Department of Family Services (DFS).

I had been involved with this family for several years before Peanut was born and knew the accusations of neglect/abuse were groundless. The parents could not keep DFS out of their house and I could not keep DFS from taking Peanut from my arms.

Months of battles and supervised visits followed and finally it came to the couple and their pastor versus DFS and a doctor's report before a judge. The Lord knew the truth and Peanut went home with his parents.

Peanut grew and came to Sunday School where he heard the kids talking about their faith in Jesus and how much they loved Him. I asked Peanut as he was coloring a picture, "Do you believe in Jesus?" He looked up at me and said, "Well, I believe in you."

As the years passed, Peanut has come to believe in Jesus. He likes listening to His Word.

Mary, her brothers and sister were kids when they moved in across the street. Mary was somewhat involved with Sunday school and later Bible study. Most of her encouragement in faith was the result of neighborly visits with my wife, Lonnie.

As with many girls on reservations, Mary's life included dropping out of school, involvement with drugs and pregnancy at a young age. There was a lot of brokenness which led to serious doubts about Christ.

Yet we stayed connected and I baptized her children. (Lonnie and I are godparents for one child.) Mary went through treatment for addictions and received her GED.

Today Mary has a good husband, a job and has taken in one of her sister's children. She comes to church when she can and her third child is in Catechism. The two oldest are confirmed, the fourth is in Sunday school and the youngest was baptized Thanksgiving Day in 2009.

Eugene was a nominal Roman Catholic, a bit on the wild side, when I met him on vicarage in 1984. Some years ago he moved away and we lost contact. When his marriage and other parts of his life fell apart, he began seeking the Lord more earnestly.

Eugene became involved with Pentecostalism and began reading the Bible. As it is for all of us, faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ. Jesus got a stronghold on Eugene and he is studying and growing.

He lives in the middle of the Crow Reservation and was asked to pastor a church starting in that area. After much prayer he accepted and we met again at a clergy meeting. Eugene was finding conflict between some Pentecostal doctrines, practices and Scripture. We visited about these concerns for several hours in his old pick-up. Now we meet a couple of times a month and discuss ministry and Scripture. I have shared devotionals, Luther's *Small Catechism* and recordings of our worship services. These sessions have helped him with his understanding of confession and absolution as well as encouraged him in his call. Recently he mentioned that the service tapes help him prepare to preach and that he circulates the devotional materials among his flock to further nurture them.

Day by day it can be hard to see if the Lord is doing anything here at Crow Agency. However by *staying put*, at least some of His work becomes obvious. Part of that work is the honor and privilege to be a tool of the Good Shepherd's labors.

*Pastor Dan Jacobs*

## Prayers

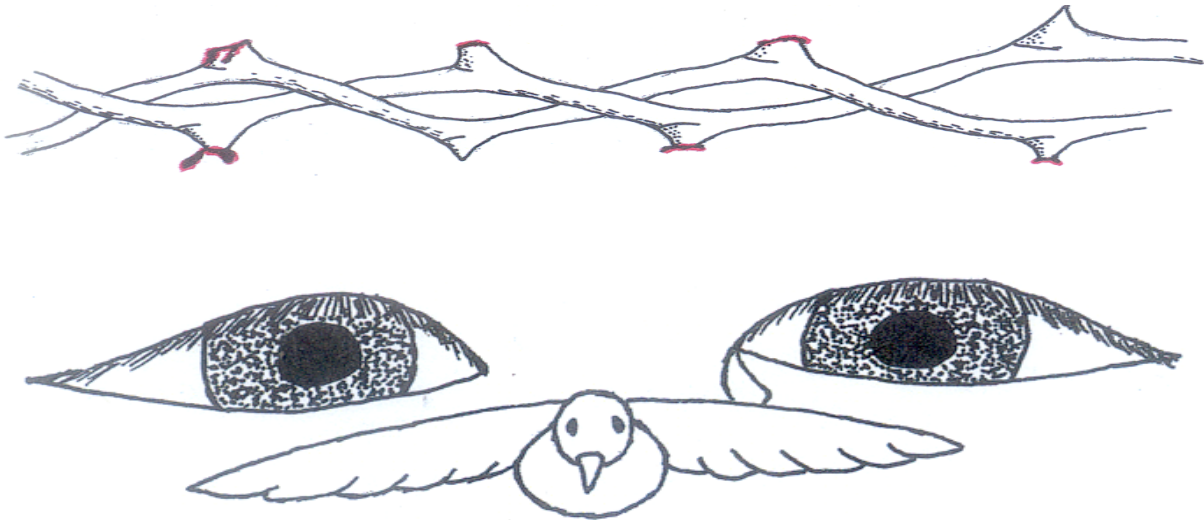
Dear Lord Jesus, we ask that You surround our service men with Your loving care as they defend our country and protect our freedom. We ask for guidance and wisdom for the leaders of our country.

Thank You Lord for the response of the Lame Deer Community to the **Everything Beautiful** Thrift Store that was opened on May 15th by the Northern Cheyenne Ministerial Association.

We thank You Lord for the two girls and one young man, at Crow Agency, who confirmed their baptismal vows and received The Lord's Supper this past spring and summer. Often it was a challenge, but by Your grace they made it through the three year study of Luther's *Small Catechism*.

We praise You Lord, for the finances provided to continue The Gospel Minute morning radio devotion in the Northeastern corner of Montana. We pray that hearts are opened to the Gospel message delivered by Rev. John Vallie.

Our thanks to You, Lord Jesus, for opening Suzette Cain's heart to serving her people on the Cheyenne Reservation. Guide her as she works with the pastors and helps with the youth program. Give her Your wisdom as she witnesses, prays, and counsels those who come to the **Everything Beautiful** Thrift Store.



"Be still." That's what they say.  
In a world that's crazy, how can that be?  
My mind is a swirl; I trip and I stumble.  
My spirit's so troubled, I don't know who's me.  
Be still? There's just no way.

"Be still and know that I am God."  
How can I know whom I can't touch, smell, or see?  
It seems so impossible; yet no need to grumble.  
He forgets my sin; He forgives. Pure is how I be.  
In this I know Him, my God.

Oh, it's not His mind that I need know.  
It's His heart; so I need not fear. Here is the courage that I be.  
Yes, life is chaotic, confusing, a jumble,  
But the Lord saves and rejoices over me.  
He rests in His love; thus in His joy I go.

## LCMS churches on or near reservations in Montana.

### **Crow**

Crow Lutheran Ministry  
Rev. Dan Jacobs  
Box 335  
Crow Agency 59022  
crowlutheranministry@yahoo.com

Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Rev. James Koss  
323 N. Crawford  
Hardin 59034

### **Fort Peck**

Trinity Lutheran Church  
Rev. John Vallie  
103 Benton St  
Wolf Point 59201

### **Northern Cheyenne**

Circle of Life Lutheran Church  
Rev. Dennis Bauer and  
Rev. Park Timber  
Box 1214  
Lame Deer 59043  
circleoflife@rangeweb.net

Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church  
Rev. John Sias  
430 Olive Dr  
Colstrip 59323  
pastor@mtcalvary-colstrip.org

### **Blackfeet**

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Rev. Matthew Nelson  
640 7th St W  
Columbia Falls, 59912  
orlc@ourredeemerlc.org

### **Rocky Boy's**

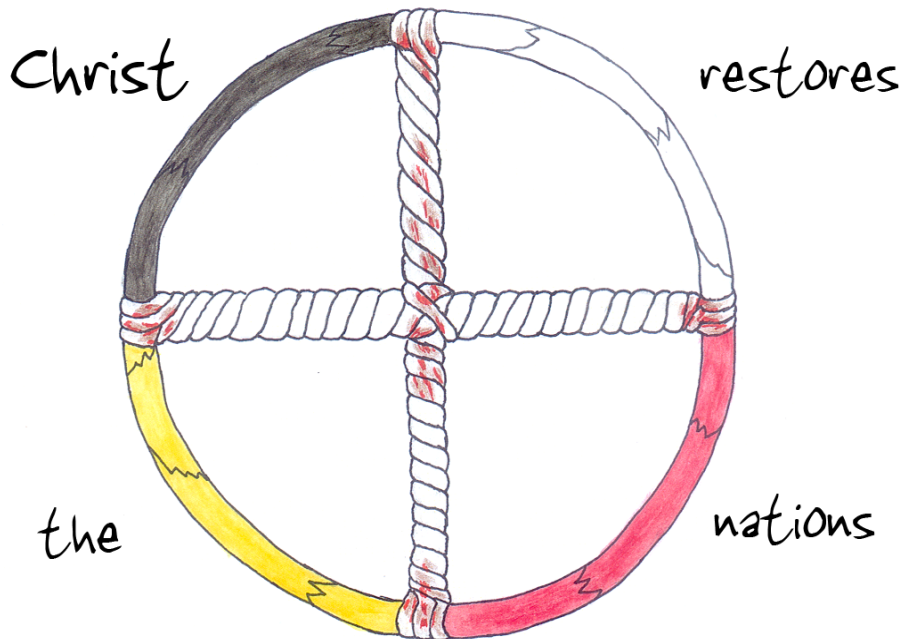
St Paul Lutheran Church  
Rev. Mark Schultz  
1100 11th St  
Havre 59501  
stpaul@itstriangle.com

### **Flathead**

Mt Calvary Lutheran Church  
Rev. Kyle Whaley  
1609 Second St W  
Polson 59860

Zion Lutheran Church  
Rev. Kyle Whaley  
306 2nd Ave N  
St. Ignatius 59865

St. Paul Lutheran Church  
Rev. Timothy Gordish  
35681 Terrace Lake Rd  
Ronan 59864  
stpaulchurch@ronan.net



**How can we help you in your ministry?**

**If you have specific prayer requests, or a ministry you would like to share, contact a pastor near you or contact Rev. Dan Jacobs, the chairman of the Montana District Indian Ministry Committee. If you would like other people to receive a copy of this mailing please send us their address.**

The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod has been involved in ministry with the Indian community since 1968. We have had a missionary in Muddy Cluster on the Cheyenne Reservation since 1982. In August of 2011 Park Timber, a member of the Cheyenne Tribe was ordained as the Associate Pastor of Circle of Life Lutheran Church at Muddy Cluster.