

Emmanuel and Rosebud Lakota Reservation

History:

Our Senior High groups traveled to Mission, South Dakota in 1991, 1994 and 1998.

Starting in 2000 and continuously from 2005-2020, Adult Missioners, including partners/ parishioners from Christ Lutheran Church, traveled for both weekly Mission trips in June and mini extended weekend trips in August.

During those Adult Mission Trips, we worked with, and at the direction of, clergy at the Jubilee Center at Bishop Hare Center (Diocese of South Dakota) as well as with Habitat for Humanity affiliate, Sicangu Tikaga Okiciyapi also based on Bishop Hare grounds.

When HFH folded, and as Covid disrupted our in person trips, we continued our relationship through Episcopal clergy on the reservation and by supporting the Firewood for the Elders program which provides employment for local men who reclaim dead wood from tribal lands, cut it into 'stove sized pieces'. The wood is then distributed and delivered to those in need during harsh South Dakota winters.

Funds have also been collected for propane for those without wood stoves.

Adult parishioners constructed a soft ball field in 2000 which is still being used by the community today.

Emmanuel has funded a new roof, a stove and storm windows for the Bishop Hare Center, as well as financing for a Children's Summer Bible Camp.

Retiring clergy from Emmanuel contributed a large portion of a retirement 'purse' to the construction of the Bishop Jones Building which, for years, was the largest building on the reservation and was and is still used for many large community gatherings and wakes.

Toiletries have been collected and delivered to White Buffalo Calf Woman Shelter, the oldest domestic violence center for indigenous women and children in the country.

Over 250 coats have been donated to the elementary schools on the reservation and homemade bears and various knit items provided to tribal Emergency Services frontline providers for distribution to trauma victims.

Emmanuel also sponsored 'fabric drives' in which St Louis quilters/craftswomen donated fabric, sewing machines, threads etc for Harvest Winds, a sewing ministry based in Parmelee, SD. This ministry provided employment and job training skills to 10-15 people in the surrounding community. Emmanuel also donated a computer to Harvest Winds which was a resource for domestic violence victims in the area who could search for resources without their partners checking personal computers for a search history.

Sadly, this ministry was also burned by arson (in 2023) and has not been restarted, nor will it be.

Emmanuel was once commonly known and referred to as "the church that comes back". More than 50 people have participated in the Adult Mission trips over the years.



The original historic wooden church, built in 1890, was destroyed by arson in October 2023.

The small insert picture on the left is a painting of the original structure.

(The original church interior is located directly below.)

Emmanuel missionaries worshipped frequently with this congregation during our trips to the reservation.



Obviously, the history and original building could not be reproduced and the decision was made to construct a metal 'pole barn' structure connected to a Guild Hall. The Church is to the right - the red and white paint reflecting the original churches color way and the Guild Hall (blue) on the left.





The new interior of Holy Innocents below

The altar with Lakota Star Quilt as backdrop

Emmanuel was invited back to Rosebud last week to participate in the consecration of Holy Innocents Church in Parmelee, SD.

Reclaimed pieces from the fire were displayed as tangible reminders that we believe in a Source of power stronger than apparent destruction.

Last Tuesday, 09/23/25, The Bishop of South Dakota and clergy from throughout their Diocese gathered with representatives from Holy Innocents congregation (Atlanta, GA), Holy Innocents congregation (Lahaina, HI) and Emmanuel (Diocese of MO) to consecrate the new building of Holy Innocents in Parmelee, SD. Representatives and recognized Native spiritual leaders of the Sicangu tribe were also honored and participated in the celebration.

In a beautiful service conducted in Lakota as well as in English, we celebrated new beginnings and the enduring power of God's presence and grace. We also recognized the strength that comes through relationships and the bonds that have united us emotionally over decades even though separated geographically.

Reflection:

At first, I thought it was a metaphor so perfect for the reservation -

the building was incomplete,
work continuing up until 20 minutes before the service started.
No insulation on the walls or ceiling,
a close look revealing walls not meeting the foundation,
no permanent electrical source,
extension cords running to a source in another building;
white sheets stapled over bare walls,
twinkle lights strung overhead, providing enough magic to distract from the reality of all that remained unfinished
An overall sense of what needed to be accomplished
but no concise, clear plan of how to get it done -
everyone doing their small part of
both the celebration and the feast that followed.

That's when I realized the metaphor was perfect for all of us -
for the church -
we are ALL unfinished -
all works in progress -
with our own versions of 'twinkle lights' to distract from all the ways in which we're incomplete.

Thanks be to God, we don't have to wait for 'completion' before we gather
to celebrate relationship with the Holy
and feast with beloved friends as community.

Emmanuel, please know we felt your presence -
all those who have supported this community and upheld them, whether financially, in prayer or
in person, over the decades.

I also couldn't help but remember this prayer written by Bishop Oscar Romero

*It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view.
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision.*

*We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of
the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying
that the kingdom always lies beyond us.*

*No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness
No program accomplishes the church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.*

*This is what we're about:
We plant seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities.*

*We cannot do everything
and there is a sense of liberation in that.
This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.
It may be incomplete, but it's a beginning, a step along the way,
an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest.*

*We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder
and the worker.*

*We are workers, not master builders;
ministers, not messiahs.*

We are prophets of a future not our own.

Bishop Oscar Romero

Two sights which are familiar to all Adult Missioners:

Sunrise as seen from the backdoor of the dorm
and the curve of the Little White River on BIA 5 in the heart of Grass Mountain.



