



“Serving one another in love” — Galatians 5:13
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Christmas Program

The Annual Community Christmas Celebration has become a much anticipated gathering to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. This year's gathering took on a much different format with no large indoor gathering of laughing children excitedly dressing in the garb of angels, sheep, and shepherds in anticipation of performing the "Manger to the Cross" play.

Instead, there was an all outdoor drive-thru living Nativity with a horse, lamb, calf, and two chickens providing the back drop for staff members dressed as Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. Dakota language Christmas hymns were broadcast, and "to-go" meals and gift-boxes were distributed. All in all, it was a wonderful and much needed time of coming together as expressed by these notes from community members:



"Thank you Diamond Willow staff for the wonderful gifts for my kids. We are forever grateful. God bless & Merry Christmas." - L.R.

"Thank you DWM for the live nativity, meal, gifts, and mostly for sharing the love of our Lord with our community. Merry Christmas." - D.F.

Beauty in the Midst of the Fire

The body of believers locally DID grow and is continuing to strengthen even through this time of trial. As an example, during the grief of losing a godly, caring, family member, many in one extended family professed their faith and reliance on Jesus and were baptized a day prior to the funeral service. A reminder that true joy and peace passes understanding, amidst heartbreaking grief and loss.

New means were used to connect, strengthen, and bring hope to the communities of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe in lieu of physically meeting indoors together. The joy of meeting outdoors all summer for Sunday worship, with the backdrop of the Missouri River and hills as God's incredible cathedral will be a lasting beautiful memory. The Tribe's radio station was also utilized, and even a special Facebook Group was established to build relationships and keep all connected. It was all very beneficial and there was, and remains, positive feedback almost daily.

"So grateful for the spirit of comfort that you share with the people as they struggle with this pandemic. It's a blessing to hear your devotion every morning." - V.B.M.

"With the pandemic and losing my brother, I've been lost. I was raised and taught about the Good Lord and keeping him alive in me helps with the stress. Thank you for your readings & blessings." - T.V.

COVID-19 Havoc

Romans 12:15 states that one way to show love in action is for each of us to, “Rejoice with those that rejoice; mourn with those that mourn.” Over the past year, there was cause for rejoicing, even in regard to COVID-19, as across the nation as a whole, the level of sickness and death experienced was lower than it had been projected to be. For that we rejoice. Indeed, we are very thankful for those that experienced health and healing in 2020.

Tragically, however that was not the case for our friends and church family here within the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe. We found ourselves, “mourning with those that mourn”, weeping with many families that lost loved ones to COVID-19, as our communities suffered an inordinately high rate of sickness and deaths from the pandemic.

The first COVID death in our community was a dear older lady who was an original member of the Ikce Oyate Christian Center. She was the first of many loved ones that died of COVID, as about 20 people with a close association with the ministry succumbed to the virus. There was a high number of other deaths as well in 2020. Altogether, more than 40 people associated with our Ikce Oyate Christian Center Tiospaye (extended family) perished. It was a year unlike any previously experienced.

It was a challenging year to grieve, with the wakes and funeral services all taking place outdoors in an attempt to socially distance, “Be a Good Relative”, and keep others safe and healthy. These services brought healing and allowed many to begin moving forward in the grieving process.

“Thank you Pastor Vaughn. I’m sure the healing services were very comforting and beautiful, just like the beautiful area and surroundings out there. I’ve always enjoyed listening to your services. I remember when you held a service at my brother-in-law’s wake and you started out with a phrase that sticks within my heart. Just a few simple words had me smiling and I thought, ‘Oh yeah, so true.’ Thank you Rod for everything you and DWM do for our people.” - E.B.M.

When Andrew Thomas joined the ministry in September, no one could have imagined the extent that his musical talents would be put to use in 2020. His singing of comforting lyrics accompanied by guitar soothed many during the services for lost loved ones as expressed here:

“Thank you Rod and Andrew for the beautiful music. Had me in tears. Appreciate everything you continue to do for our community.” - M.W.



Looking Ahead

Looking ahead to 2021, there will be a real and significant need for spiritual, emotional, and mental aftercare in the wake of COVID. In anticipation of this, the staff has already been planning and formulating strategies and programming that meets the unique and critical needs here. We will continue to reach out to individuals on a daily basis; encouraging and counseling as people are going through difficult times. We are definitely seeing that the process of healing and grieving is moving more slowly due to the lingering impact of the pandemic. Your continuing prayers and support are much appreciated. God IS so good through it all.



4x4 Plow Truck

It was an answer to prayer when many stepped forward to assist the ministry in acquiring a used 3/4 ton 4x4 pickup and funds for a snow plow blade. The Ikce Oyate Christian Center is located three miles outside of the community of Fort Thompson and the strong wintry wind sure blows and drifts the snow, blocking roads and limiting access to the Ikce Oyate Christian Center. That won't be an issue going forward thanks to this new addition. Again, "Wopida Tanka" to the churches and individuals that gave toward this need.

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