Update from Native American Ministries
August 2020

You are receiving this update because you have an interest in or support one of the Native American Ministries congregations within the Reformed Church in America. This combined update will share quarterly updates from the six congregations to share with you the work God is doing through your support. Know that each letter may not include updates from every church. Thank you for your partnership in mission!

Apache Reformed Church

Because of COVID-19, Apache Reformed has not had an in-person church service since early this year. Even though we’ve not had church in the church building, we are still taking care of the church. Their Deacon, Kenneth, and his family have been mowing all spring and summer and last week they even trimmed the trees! They have had help occasionally from a few members.

We also missed having the Mescalero Church youth come to do VBS with us this year. Hopefully next year we can start up VBS again with them!
We miss physically being together but we have been having church through Zoom on Sunday mornings. It's more like a Bible study and each person, who wants, will read scripture and talk about what that scripture means to them. Then others will expand on it. Our small town has had several COVID-19 cases and some who have passed away from it. We are remaining hopeful that we can have our Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations this year.

The Lord will let us know when we can start having church in the church! We will keep praying for protection from the virus for our church family and others of our Native churches, and also the churches of the denomination. Thank You Lord for Your love for us all and thank You for keeping us healthy! Amen!

Jicarilla Apache Reformed Church

The Jicarilla Apache Reformed Church is continuing its mission work in Dulce, New Mexico, throughout the pandemic. Pastor Brad is recording his sermon and publishing a worship service on YouTube each week. We tried a live streaming service, but the internet service on the reservation is not reliable enough to depend upon. The tribal council has forbidden in-person church services on the reservation for the time being, so we will continue as we are for now.

We have also served the Jicarilla children and youth with a VBS-to-go with the help of Connections Church in the Denver, Colorado, area. We provided devotional books, crafts, snacks, and VBS lessons for more than 60 local kids just in time for a two-week tribal COVID-19 lockdown. In addition, Second Reformed Church in Pella, Iowa, along with Connections Church, has provided hundreds of cloth masks, which we have disbursed to tribal members.

The Jicarilla Apache Reformed Church continues to provide a Christian burial for any community member, and Pastor Brad has done fourteen funerals already in 2020. The yearly high previously was sixteen. Many are COVID-related, but not all. Alcohol, drugs, murder, and suicide contribute to the death count as well. Please pray for Pastor Brad as he continues to do many funerals, for the community as the families grieve, and for God’s grace to touch each person who struggles with addiction and depression.

Mescalero Reformed Church

It is with mixed emotions that we share with you that RCA missionary Rev. Mark Vellinga has officially retired from mission service. Through your financial support and your prayers of Mark’s ministry, God
used you to impact the Native American community at Mescalero Reformed Church. We want to recognize that you and your congregation’s faithful support helped make Mark and Miriam’s ministry possible.

Here is a reflection from Mark and Miriam on their time in Mescalero that they shared in a letter sent earlier this year:

“Miriam and I have been blessed with the opportunity to be here in Mescalero at this time. There are many challenges such as family dysfunction, alcohol and drug abuse, poverty with seemingly very little hope of escape, and a strong sense of anonymity. But there’s also evidence of God working powerfully in this place. We have seen more men attending church and have a community men’s gathering every month. We have seen people win the battle against drugs and alcohol and become a mighty witness for God being the only solution in such a battle. And we have seen young people come to realize the need for God in their lives. God has been good! We have loved our time here and I’m finding that I cannot talk about this without having tears well up within me, but we feel confident that God will provide.”

The consistory of Mescalero Reformed Church, supervised by the Southwest Classis, is undergoing a search process to call a new pastor to lead this important ministry. I request that you continue to give your support as the process unfolds. While in the interim, the church’s consistory members will guide the church.

**Winnebago Reformed Church**

The congregation of Winnebego Reformed continues in their search for a pastor. In the meantime, ministry continues through consistory members. Due to COVID-19, many activities have been on hold since the end of March. The Atlas Program, which is operated out of the church basement, continues to provide food and other necessities to the needy of their community, and the Men’s and Women’s Shelters are still in service. Pray for the consistory and their Classis as they navigate their next steps.