



June 12, 2019

COUNCIL FIRE

A lot has happened since I last wrote. God has been answering prayer! I as well as many of you continue to ask God to raise up workers for the harvest, particularly, North American Indian laborers. This past week I was out at Sacred Road Ministries in White Swan, Washington to be a part of the ordination of Joshua Tsavatewa. Joshua, being of Hopi descent was in Hopi regalia for the big day as you can see below. The church was packed to capacity with children, summer interns, Teaching Elders from the Pacific Northwest Presbytery and many of Joshua's friends and family. The service concluded with Joshua giving the benediction. As soon as the service was over, the gathering space was cleared out and set up for a big Sunday meal. The women had come to work early and made fry bread for everyone. We ate Indian tacos for lunch which are always a huge

hit. Moving forward Joshua will be taking on more responsibility at Hope Fellowship (which is the name of the church there at Sacred Road) in preaching and the administration of the Sacraments. I wish you could have been there to experience the excitement of the day. All the children and staff gave a loud cheer and a standing ovation for Joshua's accomplishment.



Just a little history, Joshua Tsavatewa is our third Native American Teaching Elder in the PCA. Our first Teaching Elder was Jimmy Lyons, (who is now with the Lord) who was one of the founders of the

Presbyterian Church in America. Jimmy Lyons was an ordained Evangelist and pastored churches in Alabama, Tennessee and North Carolina. He was of Choctaw descent. Our second, and for a long time our only other Teaching Elder of Native descent was Josh Charette. Josh is the founding Pastor of Great Plains Gathering in Billings, Montana and he is of Turtle Mountain Chippewa heritage. Our fourth Teaching Elder is Greg Baney, who along with his wife Trisha were just approved for Church Planting having completed their Assessment in April. Greg lives in Hixson, Tennessee and will be planting a church with the name Woodlands Gathering in Soddy Daisy, TN. Greg is of Cherokee and Choctaw descent. Just writing this out for you is exciting for me and I pray will be of use to you. We also have an ordained Native American Deacon at Trinity PCA in Bozeman, Montana. His name is Nick Ross who is of Yakama heritage. Nick works full time as the Program Manager of American Indian/Alaska Native Student Success at Montana State University in Bozeman. Nick is also very active with CRU campus ministries. Now, we have another Native American who graduated from Westminster Theological Seminary on May 28th. Jonas Kaleookalani Patterson, a Native Hawaiian, is now living out in Billings, Montana and doing His Internship with Josh at Great Plains Gathering. As you may recall, Great Plains Gathering had purchased 2 small homes adjacent to the church building to be



used for their growing ministry. By faith, they saw the opportunity to buy these homes priced below the market value and fix them up for use to house future Interns. The Lord provided the funding to purchase and repair the homes. The first one is now complete. Jonas and Melissa and their family will be living there for the next 2 years. During that time, Jonas will develop his pastoral skills under Josh's direction and take an active part in reaching the native community for Christ in Billings. Pictured to the right are Jonas and Melissa and 2 of their 6 children. I had the pleasure to be at the commencement ceremony in Souderton, PA to see Jonas receive his Master of Divinity degree. Jonas' family sent to him all the traditional Hawaiian flowers and ropes. He was just covered in Orchid leis, Kukui nut leis and tea leaf rope. It was beautiful to watch Melissa put all these fresh symbols of his Polynesian heritage around his neck as his parents honored him from his home in Hawaii. I also received a Kukui nut lei for myself. During Jonas' internship at Great Plains Gathering he will be working on getting ready for his ordination. Jonas will become our fifth Native American ordained Teaching Elder. Jonas' graduation was a great day for Native American Ministries. God is truly calling Native Americans to plant churches in Native communities.



SMOKE SIGNALS

- I will be at General Assembly in Dallas, Texas June 24th through the 28th. Pray for many opportunities to promote Native American Ministries. I usually spend a lot of time at my booth but there are also many required meetings for me to attend while I'm there. Please pray.
- July 8-10 I will be in Chattanooga for meetings at Tennessee Valley Presbytery. On the 9th Greg Baney will present his vision for church planting to the Presbytery looking for their blessing and hopefully some funding. Please pray.
- July 23rd through August 9th I will drive out to Billings, Sacred Road and then up to Bellingham, Washington to visit a work among the Lummi Indians there. This is a big trip with a lot of time spent on the road. Pray for traveling mercies.
- Some family news: Our daughters Leah and Sarah are well. The twins Lucy and Lydia are 8 years old this summer. They are enjoying their new family dog, a Great Dane named Digory. Leah's 2 children are Jack who is 7 and Emma who is 5. They live in Downingtown, PA and continue to attend Proclamation PCA in Bryn Mawr. Gail has part time employment at Joy's House which is an Adult Day Care Home for seniors with dementia. Gail is a tremendous caregiver and really enjoys working there. Gail and I continue to attend Midtown, PCA in Indy. I was asked to serve as a provisional Elder on Session. This means I serve on Session, at Sessions invitation with the provision that I can't vote. (We want to keep our membership at our home church back in Westminster PCA, Lancaster, PA.) Since moving to Indianapolis March 2018, my sister and my Mother also have both moved here to Indy from Lebanon, PA.
- While we have added some new support from individuals and from churches however we are still on average about 3,500.00 short per month. We are not taking our full salary and we have to be careful with the amount of travel we can do. The summer months are always hard because there is a dip in our support each year at this time. The supporters we have are very faithful for which we are deeply grateful. Your support of giving and prayer sustains us. Please pray for us and if you can please give financially to our work.

So far in Him,

Jeb and Gail Bland