

HOLDING ON TO HOPE

KAREN PONCHO, ZCMS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANT/ZUNI LANGUAGE TEACHER

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11



Keshi! My name is Karen Poncho I am from the Pueblo of Zuni. My clans are Dogwood and the Child of the Frog clan. I attended school at Zuni Public. I am currently the Educational Assistant (grades 1-4) and the Zuni Language teacher (grades K-8th) at Zuni Christian Mission School. I have two sons – Kiedis (class of 2022) and Liam, who is in 2nd grade.

As a child I knew there was a God, but I did not know Him yet. I grew up in a traditional family that followed the Zuni religion. As I got older, I found out that a few of my family members had turned to God while dealing with illness, loneliness and brokenness. My aunt found God through friends while she stayed at a hospital where she was getting treatments. My grandfather, Dan, would leave the house in the middle of breakfast on Sunday mornings to attend church then come back at noon with cookies and a church bulletin. My curiosity grew, and I asked if I could attend church with him. When I attended church for the first time I felt uplifted by the message. I felt hope.

After a few years, I went back and found out that they had childcare. I saw that the church was like a family that took care of each other. My mother and I were not on good terms, and as I attended church and women's Bible studies I asked for prayers for my mother and I to reconnect. God answered those prayers in His time, and my mom now attends church regularly.

My older brother dealt with addiction and I feared I would lose him to alcohol or drugs. Again, I asked for prayers for my brother to find help. I felt it was impossible, and there was no way this stubborn man would become sober. Again, God answered. Today my brother is getting help and has been sober for almost a year, and attends church regularly.

Over the years I've learned that God doesn't always answer our prayers in the ways we want, but He always answers with love. It is still a great battle choosing to follow Christ each day here in Zuni. I see and feel the enemy at work. I get tired and discouraged. But I hold on to the hope that God's plans for me and my family are greater than the plans of the enemy. Please continue to pray for us, and with us.



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PLANTED IN BIBLICAL TRUTH, SURROUNDED BY GOD'S GRACE



SPRING 2023



"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that

2022-2023 SCHOOL THEME: FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS

far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." 2 Corinthians.4:16-18





"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: The old has gone, the new has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." 2 Corinthians 5:17-18

It was not a great situation—there was no denying it. Two of our students had a physical altercation at school, and their actions toward each other were caught on our school's security video. When confronted, neither one denied their involvement in the situation. In this particular case, there was both history between them and plenty of blame to go around. When the consequences were decided and parents were notified, there was one more thing to do—talk to each of the students. I decided it would be best to talk to them separately, primarily because I didn't want to have them in the same physical space together for fear that the situation might go from bad to worse.

The conversation with the first student went pretty much how I thought it would, but something happened at the end of the conversation with the second student that surprised me. "Mr. Becksvoort, would you be willing to invite her to talk with us? I want to apologize to her." I knew that this was the eventual goal, but I did not expect it in this moment. My mind still considered the different ways that this encounter could go wrong. I told her that I would ask the other student if she was in a place to receive an apology or if it would have to wait. I left the room still skeptical of the idea, but after a brief conversation with the first student, she said that she was open to receiving an apology.

Albeit tentatively, I brought the students together in a separate room, and before I could say anything, one girl said to the other, "I am so sorry I treated you that way. I was wrong. I also miss you, and I feel hurt when I think you are ignoring me." The two girls cried, hugged, laughed, and forgave each other. It was amazing as well as a beautiful picture of the power of forgiveness and the freedom that it gives. It was also a reminder to me of the power of God's Spirit at work in our lives, and that the Spirit's movement does not conform to what I think should happen. Yes, the students still served their consequences, but that seemed a distant second to the reconciliation that was winning the day.

The bottom line is this: God is still at work softening hearts, changing lives, and brining reconciliation, often in the ways we least expect.



World Renew Walkathon

By Mrs. Betsy Meester, MS Social Studies

In late in January, middle school students participated in three mini lessons about compassion. They learned about the compassion that God has for people and how Jesus showed compassion. They talked about who they have compassion for personally, and why it's sometimes hard to have compassion. Just as they were turning their attention to the world around them, a series of earthquakes rocked Turkey and Syria.

The 7.8 magnitude earthquake destroyed thousands of buildings, and took tens of thousands of lives. In civil-war torn Syria, many people found themselves without shelter, food and medical supplies. Middle school students began to brainstorm ways that they could raise money to help these people.

Compassion grew in this context, and the Walkathon became the vehicle to demonstrate compassion. Students prepared for the Walkathon by participating in a Zoom meeting with Mrs. Carol Bremer-Bennett, director of World Renew-US. In this meeting, students learned about the specific needs of the Syrian people. They also received encouragement! Then students gathered sponsors and donations of food and drinks for the event.

On Thursday March 9, 80 students, 10 staff members, and 18 ZCMS community members walked, danced, and played their way to a successful fundraiser. The grand total was nearly \$9,000, with some monies still to be collected. Students felt grateful to have their needs supplied for each day, and were moved to share with others across the world. ZCMS felt blessed by the generosity of the Zuni community as well as by the joy we experienced together in the act of sharing.



CURRENT NEEDS

OUR CURRENT 2022-23 ANNUAL FUND NEED IS \$150,537.05

We are almost there! We have now raised \$422,427.85 out of our total need of \$572,964.90! We are so humbled by God's provision, and grateful to have friends who follow the leading of His Spirit in their giving. We rejoice as we come to the end of another year full of learning and growth! If you have not yet given, please consider helping us to reach our final goal. Thank you!

SPECIAL NEEDS

MS Science Teacher: We are in urgent need of a full-time MS Science teacher who can join our middle school team in the fall! If you or someone you know would like to apply, please contact principal Tim Becksvoort.

Security Access System: In light of recent tragic events, we are once again reminded of the importance of doing all we can to ensure the safety of our students and staff. Currently the front entrance of our school has to be locked and unlocked manually throughout the day. This can be difficult as students transition between the school and gym/worship center. We hope to install an electronic system that allows us to better control who comes in and out of the building. The estimated cost for this project is \$1,500-\$2,000.

Exterior Door Lock Replacement: Anyone who has been to New Mexico is acquainted with the high winds that blow sand into every nook and cranny. This causes damage to our exterior locks and gradually causes them to malfunction. To have our exterior door locks replaced and re-keyed will cost around \$5,000.

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ZUNI CRC MISSION STATEMENT:

"Forgiven by God through Jesus, we are growing together to be a people of grace, truth, love, and light."



One of the things I like most about pastoring is how God surprises us through the Word. Since Christmas, we've been shaping our worship around the book of Matthew. Jesus surprises us constantly - with His words and actions, His parables and preaching, and ultimately with His resurrection.

By the time you read this, we'll have joyfully proclaimed in the church sanctuary, "Christ Bilakkya! Christ Is Risen!" We're making a special effort to invite the community to celebrate the Resurrection. The families of GEMS girls are invited to join the service as their girls dance to "This Is Our God." The Passion portion of the Jesus Film will be aired on the radio, with an invitation to call or visit the church with questions. Children will hear the Resurrection Egg message by Michelle Becksvoort and join in an egg hunt on the playground. We hope that people will be surprised by the grace of the Risen One, Jesus Christ. Pray that the seeds planted in Zuni will grow and bear fruit. When we let Jesus surprise us, change comes. Grace bursts forth. Christ Bilakkya! He is risen indeed!

MINISTRY UPDATE

Storytellers of Creator - Tyrell Natewa: This summer, Tyrell Natewa will be leading a series of Christian running camps in Zuni, Rehoboth, Albuquerque Chinese Church and Shiprock, NM. Last year, these camps were successful at sharing the Good News of Jesus with those of swift feet. Running is deeply rooted in Zuni culture - from the long-distance messengers between neighboring pueblos to the 25-mile barefoot stick race through the high desert. This year, Tyrell is raising more funding, recruiting volunteers, and training them in evangelism and discipleship.



Tyrell is studying at Calvin Theological Seminary in the Distance Learning Program. He plans to graduate with a Masters of Divinity in the summer of 2024. Please pray for him as he makes plans for a summer internship with Zuni CRC, with emphasis on preaching, community engagement, discipleship, and pastoral care. Pray that

God will guide him and his wife Kimberly as she completes a 3-year medical residency at the University of New Mexico hospital in Albuquerque.

