**Mission Project 2020:Water for the Navajo Nation**

Billie K. Fidlin
Director of Outreach & Justice

As we continue in this time of trial with the COVID-19 virus, things continue to decline on the Navajo Reservation. While many tribes throughout the country are facing similar challenges including here in the West, none have experienced an equivalent depth of despair. As of May 5th, the Navajo Nation was behind only New York and New Jersey in rates of per-capita infection.\* As of May 2nd, there had been 73 confirmed deaths and 2,373 positive cases of COVID-19. In general, Native Americans make up 5% of the United States population, but make up 20% of COVID cases testing positive. \*\* Updated statistics can be found at <https://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19> .

Thankfully much needed help is coming into the reservation. The Desert Southwest Conference will be part of that ongoing response with our efforts to provide much needed funds to purchase water for hygiene and feed purposes. We are so blessed to have such generosity among our Conference constituency. I have been in contact with the Navajo Command Center and they are beyond grateful for our help.

As mentioned in an earlier article our own Rev. Tweedy Sombrero has accepted an appointment to the Four Corners Ministry and will soon be moving there. Before Tweedy left, I wanted to hear her perspective on a couple of things. I am so grateful that she took the time away from packing to share with us some of her thoughts.

**BF:**  *Tweedy, what would you like the Conference to know about your history with the Four Corners Ministry? This isn’t your first work with Four Corners.*

**TS:** The first time ever for me to work in a church was with Shiprock First UMC as their Christian Education Director and because I didn’t know what that was or entailed, the pastor at the time hired me as church secretary so I could learn about the church. I did and then continued not only as secretary but also as the Christian Ed Director. This was in the late 70’s. Four Corners Ministry was just beginning. Now I return as the Director of Four Corners and as the pastor of Shiprock First UMC.

**BF:**  *What are some of the challenges, and we might call those opportunities, that you’ll be addressing there?*

**TS:** The Navajo people are hurting and need a new way to see Christianity/Spirituality. As native people begin to recognize the pain, I want the ministry to be able to help them assess it, and work through it. A lot of the issues native people face are through the traumatic history they have had to endure. Now is the time to begin a healing process. Now is ‘for such a time as this’ to provide as much as we can for the people.

**BF:** *The COVID – 19 virus is devastating the Navajo Nation. What are your early thoughts about how you want to address this with your church and community?*

**TS:** Once the move is complete, the ministry will have to assess the community and then we will see what needs to be done for short term and long term goals.

**BF:** *What can we as your Conference be praying for?*

**TS:** Pray for the Navajo people as they go through this time of COVID-19 and then once that is over to pray for the people as they deal with the trauma of pain. Pray for the leadership team of the church and the ministry that we may lead them to a better place through Christianity and spirituality.

Thank you for your support of this year’s mission project for the Navajo Nation and the life giving gift of water. Donations can be made through either online giving or via mail.

Online Giving (**please note your church name and that it is for the Mission Project**)  [Online Giving](https://dscumc.org/secure/payments/)

Through the mail  (**please note your church name and that it is for the Mission Project**):

The Desert Southwest Conference / Mission Project  PO Box 32830  Phoenix, AZ 85064

Thank you. Be safe, be healthy, be blessed.

[Navajo Nation covid outbreak deaths](https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2020/05/navajo-nation-covid-outbreak-deaths/)        [Battling covid-19 with limited supplies](https://www.wbrz.com/news/navajo-nation-sees-alarming-rates-of-infection-while-battling-covid-19-with-limited-supplies/)

*Note: Our Conference is honored to be working with the Navajo COVID-19 Command Center, Window Rock, in the distribution of water humanitarian aide regarding all Conference donations for the Navajo Nation. Questions? Please contact Billie Fidlin at**bfidlin@dscumc.org*