



THE MISSIONARY DIOCESE OF NAVAJOLAND

ELECTION OF THE 1ST BISHOP
OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN
NAVAJOLAND, DIOCESAN PROFILE

PO BOX 720 Farmington, NM 87499

2025
<https://ecofnavajoland.org/>



Search Committee **Message**

On behalf of the Bishop Search Committee for the Diocese of Navajoland, we are deeply grateful for your interest in our community and in discerning a call to serve as our first Bishop Diocesan.

This profile has been prayerfully prepared by a diverse and dedicated committee of clergy and laity from across Navajoland. Now, as we continue to grow in strength and vision, we are prepared to call a bishop who will serve half-time as Bishop Diocesan and half-time as Vicar for one of our regions. We are committed to supporting our next ecclesiastical leader with faith and dedication.

As you read this profile, we invite you to keep in mind that Navajoland has recently been recognized as a missionary diocese. With God's help, we look forward to growing into this new identity under faithful episcopal leadership.

If you feel called to apply, you will find instructions on the final page of this profile. Please know that we are already holding you in prayer and eagerly look forward to the possibility of meeting you.

Yours in Christ,
The Bishop Search Committee



About Navajoland

We are one of the largest Native American tribes in the United States. For hundreds of years, we, the Diné people, have lived in the Southwest, on land that holds our stories, our prayers, and our sacred lifeways. Our culture is deeply rooted in the Divine Creator, in the balance and beauty of the earth, and in a tradition of worship that arises from creation itself.

Today, we are renewing what has always been sacred. We have ordained five Navajo priests and two deacons. We are restoring buildings not only for worship but for income, for gathering, for community. We are building Hogans—traditional sacred spaces—for both education and ceremony. As the world begins to listen more deeply to Indigenous voices, we offer our stories, traditions, and prayers.

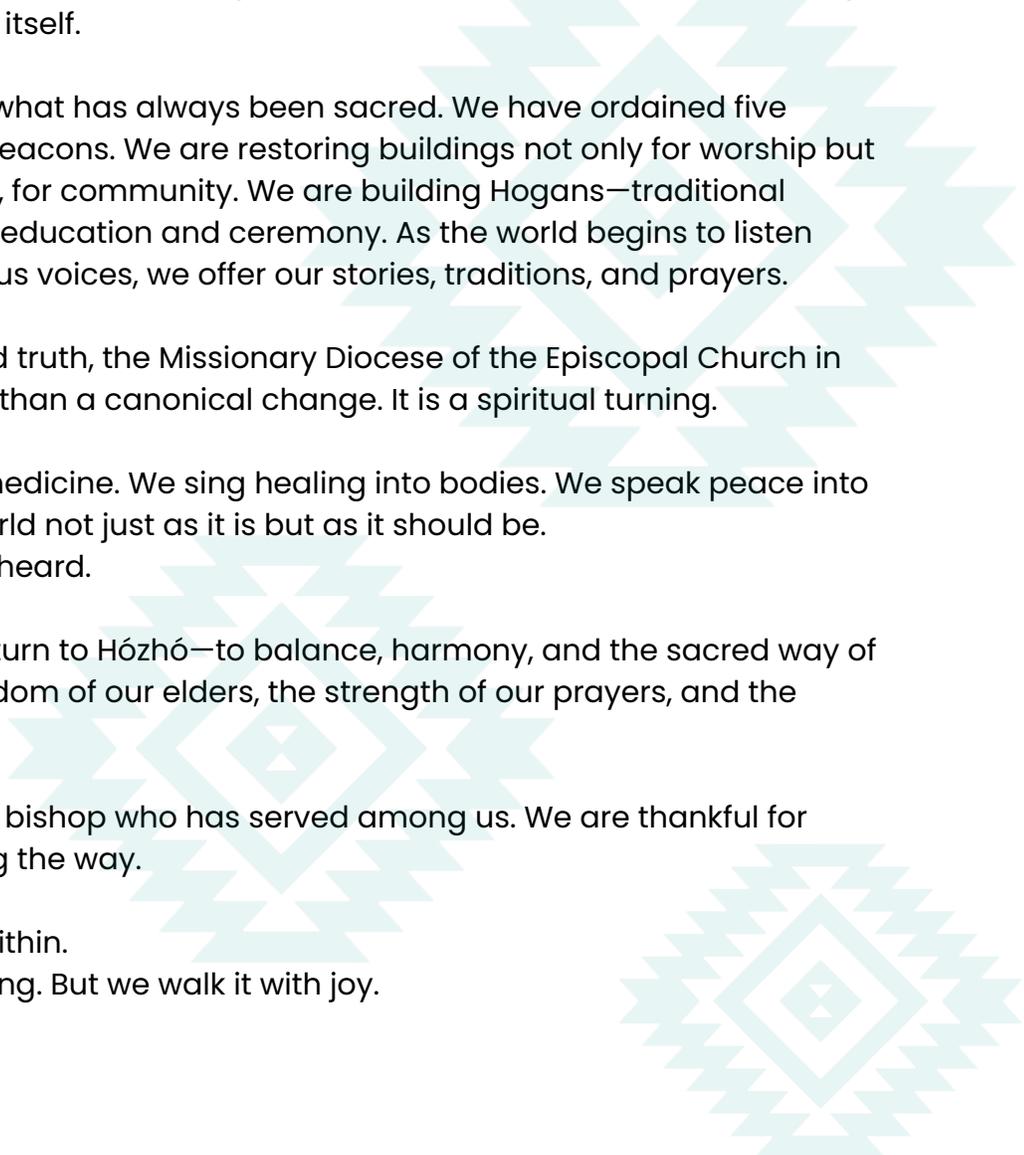
We are now, in name and truth, the Missionary Diocese of the Episcopal Church in Navajoland. This is more than a canonical change. It is a spiritual turning.

In Diné culture, voice is medicine. We sing healing into bodies. We speak peace into homes. We name the world not just as it is but as it should be. Our voice has now been heard.

This moment marks a return to Hózhó—to balance, harmony, and the sacred way of beauty. It honors the wisdom of our elders, the strength of our prayers, and the depth of our calling.

We are grateful for every bishop who has served among us. We are thankful for every seed planted along the way.

But now, we lead from within.
The road ahead is still long. But we walk it with joy.
And we walk it together.



Our Mission Statement



After more than a year of dedicated effort, we're proud to share that our new Mission Statement has been fully approved—first in Navajo on February 22, 2025, and then in English on March 26, 2025. This milestone reflects our deep commitment to honoring our language, culture, and the clarity of our shared purpose.

Diné Bizaad

NihiTaa Jesus Diyin ayoo at'ei biye niliini
ninqajj'
Kodóó hózhó dooleet
Doo yá'áh'da'téehi bits'qajj
Ajooba' dóó áshjínéé
Bee daa k'é'go
Hózhó násháslij dooleet.

English Translation

In the name of Jesus Christ, the Holy One,
We set out to walk in harmony,
Seeking forgiveness and wholeness.
Through compassion and service,
Love binds us in relationship to all creation.
In the Beauty Way all is restored again.



Our History

Our relationship with the United States government has been marked by trauma and survival. In 1863, we were forcibly removed from our homeland and made to walk hundreds of miles, The Long Walk, to a place not our own. Our farmlands were burned, our livestock destroyed, our possessions taken. In the decades that followed, our children were taken from their families and placed in government boarding schools. There, they were punished for speaking our language and for practicing our culture.

That pain echoes still.

Today, we face high rates of addiction, suicide, and poverty. Unemployment and underemployment continue to be significant challenges, particularly in remote areas.

But despite all this, we continue to rise. We continue to serve. Diné people enlist in the U.S. military at rates far higher than the national average. The Navajo Code Talkers of World War II are renowned worldwide for their pivotal role in securing victory in the Pacific.

We are a people who carry both memory and mission.

The Episcopal Church began its ministry among us in the form of medical missions, first in Fort Defiance, Arizona (1894), then in Farmington, New Mexico (1922), and finally in Bluff, Utah (1942). These ministries brought healing to both body and spirit, and gradually evolved into more community-based mission work.

In 1978, the Episcopal Church formally established the Area Mission of Navajoland, encompassing 27,000 square miles of land across Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah—territory that is contiguous with the Navajo Nation.

For many years, our churches were led by non-Navajo clergy. Our buildings were aging, our identity was not fully our own, and our future was unclear.

Bishops of the Navajoland Area Mission/ Missionary Diocese

1. The Right Rev. Frederick Warren Putnam, Jr.

- Tenure: 1979–1983
- First Resident Bishop. Previously served as Suffragan Bishop of Oklahoma

2. The Right Rev. Wesley Frensdorff

- Tenure: 1983–1988
- Previously served as Bishop of Nevada and served concurrently in Arizona and Navajoland until his tragic death.

3. The Right Rev. William H. “Dub” Wolfrum

- Tenure: 1988–1990
- Previously served as Suffragan Bishop of Colorado. Served as Interim Bishop following Bishop Frensdorff’s death.

4. The Right Rev. Steven Tsosie Plummer

- Tenure: 1990–2005
- The first ordained Navajo Bishop of the Episcopal Church.

5. The Right Rev. William C. Wantland

- Tenure: 1993–1994
- Bishop of Eau Clair, of Seminole heritage.

6. The Right Rev. Rustin Ray Kimsey

- Tenure: 2005–2007
- Previously served as Bishop of Eastern Oregon

7. The Right Rev. Mark Lawrence MacDonald

- Tenure: 2007–2009
- Previously served as Bishop of Alaska and served concurrently in Canada as the National Indigenous Bishop for the Anglican Church of Canada and Navajoland.

8. The Right Rev. David Earle Bailey

- Tenure: 2010–2023
- Previously served as Canon to the Ordinary in the Episcopal Diocese of Utah, retired as Bishop of Navajoland in 2022, and served Navajoland until he died in 2023.

9. The Right Rev. Barry Leigh Beisner

- Tenure: 2023–Present
- Previously served as Diocesan Bishop of Northern California until 2019, and currently serves Navajoland as Bishop Provisional.

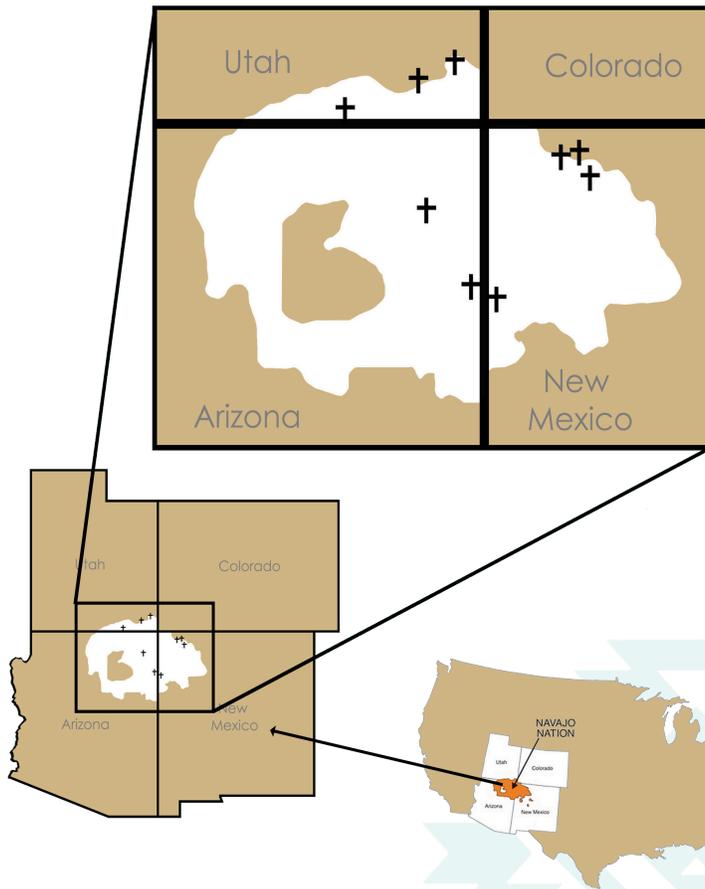


Navajoland **Who We Are**

We are the Missionary Diocese of the Episcopal Church in Navajoland, a community of Diné people rooted in sacred land, spiritual tradition, and Episcopal faith. Our mission grows from the heart of Navajo culture, where healing, harmony, and the presence of the Divine are woven into every aspect of life.

As a diocese shaped by history and called into the future, we are guided by prayer, community, and a deep commitment to self-determination. We are restoring what is sacred, raising up local leadership, and building a Church that reflects both the Gospel and the beauty of Diné lifeways.

Our diocese spans three regions across Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, with nine churches faithfully serving their communities. Each region is led by clergy who minister through pastoral care, cultural knowledge, and spiritual formation.



Continued **Who We Are**

The Three Regions of the Missionary Diocese of Navajoland

San Juan Region

All Saints' Episcopal Church, Farmington, New Mexico; St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Upper Fruitland, New Mexico; St. Luke's in the Desert, Huerfano, New Mexico, with Rev. Michael Sells, Rev. Cornelia Eaton, Rev. Inez Valarde, and Rev. Carol Tookey. Service Times: All Saints' 10 AM, St. Luke's 10 AM, & St. Michael's 10 AM.

Southeast Region

Good Shepherd Mission, Ft. Defiance, Arizona, St. Mark's Church Coal Mine, New Mexico, St. Joseph's House Church, Many Farms, Arizona, with Rev. Cathlena Plummer, and Rev. Leon Sampson. Service Times: St. Mark's Church 8 AM & Good Shepherd Mission 10:15 AM.

Utah Region

St. Christopher's Mission, Bluff, Utah, St. Mary's in the Moonlight, Oljato, Utah, St. John the Baptizer, Montezuma Creek, Utah, with Rev. Jack Chase, and Rev. Paula Henson. Service Times: St. John the Baptizer 10 AM & St. Christopher's 10 AM.

From the mesas of Bluff to the mission grounds of Fort Defiance, the Episcopal Church in Navajoland is a vibrant expression of Indigenous faith and resilience. We invite you to join us in worship, in community, and in the sacred work of walking in beauty.



Navajoland's **San Juan Region**

The San Juan Region of Navajoland covers the New Mexico portion of the Navajo Reservation, centered in San Juan County. Episcopal churches in this region serve both rural reservation communities and the border town of Farmington (Totah). Currently, the New Mexico Region consists of three congregations: All Saints in Farmington, St. Luke's at Carson Post, and St. Michael's in Upper Fruitland. Like many areas across Navajoland, unemployment remains high—especially on the reservation—but the local economy is driven by energy production. A coal mine, power plant, and extensive oil and gas fields provide employment for many Diné workers. Medical services also play a significant economic role, supported by major institutions such as the Northern Navajo Medical Center (IHS) in Shiprock and San Juan Regional Medical Center in Farmington.

Education is a vital resource in this region. Diné College has a campus in Shiprock, and San Juan College, located in Farmington, supports the area with two satellite locations. Several public school districts serve students across reservation and border town communities.

The region sits within a high desert climate, home to piñon and juniper forests, sagebrush, and native desert plants. The San Juan, Animas, and La Plata rivers converge here, making San Juan County the New Mexico county with the most surface water. These rivers support small-scale farming and the large Navajo Agricultural Products Industry (NAPI), a major tribal enterprise.

The population includes Navajo (Diné), Anglo, Hispanic, and a small African American community. Among the Diné are elders who speak only Navajo and never attended formal school, as well as younger generations who include highly educated professionals.



Continued **San Juan Region**

Mission History

The original San Juan Mission began as a hospital, with its cornerstone dated 1922. Mission work, however, began earlier during the Spanish Influenza pandemic under Bishop Howden of the Missionary District of New Mexico and Texas, West of the Pecos River. The hospital served the local Navajo population until the opening of the BIA hospital in Shiprock and the public hospital in Farmington.

Afterward, the mission shifted its focus to children's care and then expanded its work to nearby communities, including St. Luke's (30 miles from Farmington), Upper Fruitland, Kirtland, Fruitland, and Shiprock. Ministries included Christian education in BIA boarding schools, child care, medical care, and release-time education.

In the 1960s, the mission embraced a new model of "ministry by" rather than "ministry to," focusing on raising up Navajo leadership in both lay and ordained roles. This approach aligned with direction from the wider Episcopal Church and remains central to the region's ministry philosophy.

Our Ministry

The San Juan Region continues to welcome mission partners who come to learn, serve, and walk alongside Diné communities. Volunteers support ministries such as Vacation Bible School, youth programs, and infrastructure improvements. Worship and formation efforts honor both the Christian tradition and the spiritual practices of the Diné people. Episcopal churches in the region are dedicated to fostering leadership, offering pastoral care, and preserving cultural heritage through prayer, service, and community engagement.



San Juan Region **Ministries**

The San Juan Region of the Episcopal Church in Navajoland undertakes ministries grounded in faith, service, and tradition. These efforts support the spiritual and physical well-being of the community.

Hozhó Beauty Way Center

The Hozhó Beauty Way Center is a holistic wellness ministry dedicated to fostering balance, harmony, and healing through spirituality, hospitality, and community support. Guided by an advisory board, the Center offers programs focused on recovery from substance abuse and grief, including AA and Wellbriety meetings, talking circles, gardening, and educational workshops. The Center maintains a healing garden, providing fresh produce to elders and community members while serving as a peaceful space for prayer and reflection. Seasonal Winter Stories sessions share Diné ancestral teachings to inspire spiritual growth and connection.

San Juan Region Food Ministry

The San Juan Region Food Ministry operates as the central hub for food distribution across Navajoland, thanks to its location and access to major trucking routes. This enables the efficient delivery and coordination of food supplies across all regions. Each month, the ministry provides non-perishable food boxes to families in need, both on and off the reservation, through a walk-in system. During the winter months, when food and heating costs rise, the ministry expands its outreach with larger distributions.



Navajoland's **Southeast Region**

Our church's journey forward and the search for a bishop in Navajo Land begin; it's our task to venture and explore new leadership. As part of the greater ECN (Episcopal Church of Navajoland), Good Shepherd Mission has its two (2) smaller sister churches: St. Mark's Coal Mine, NM, and St. Joseph in Many Farms, Arizona. We seek to continue the legacy of our traditional upbringing, in our relationships within our walk in faith, with our Diné people; this is what makes ECN unique. We set forward and welcome all with open hearts and minds.

Community

Our congregation comprises elders, older adults, young adults, and children. As we take shape as a Missionary Diocese, we hope to involve more children and get them interested in youth activities, making their experience a memorable one. Later in life, they will grow in faith and spirituality within their own families.

Over the past few years, significant changes have occurred, including shifts in leadership and organizational structure. We continue to seek new visions and programs for our people. A potential area for support includes young families, the elderly, youth groups, and other vulnerable populations. We face challenges during our lives when we feel lost and no one is there to listen without judgment. Support and understand grief, safe church, through k'é (clan, relationship).

As seasons change and years pass, we would like to improve in areas of landscaping, building, mending, and building each other up.

Our visitors feel the warm welcome that a small church offers—the lasting fond memories of the time they spent here in Navajoland.



Continued **Southeast Region**

ECN is unlike any other church, blending the Christian faith with traditional and Native American elements, as the belief is that we pay homage to only one God. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ. Many of us grew up in the church. As children, we saw our grandparents waiting and being picked up by the church van on Sundays to attend church in Fort Defiance, AZ. It was also a social event, as they looked forward to the noon lunch provided by church groups, such as the Sewing ladies, Sunday school, or individual churches like St. Mark's, and paid a small fee to eat and support these ministries.

Church History

Formally a medical mission in the 1800s, established as one of the first hospitals on the Navajo Nation, located in the Four Corners in Arizona. Rich history with buildings dating from the 1930s and GSM's beautiful historic church, built in 1955 by architect John Gaw Meem from Santa Fe, NM. In 1979, ECN was developed, with the three regions honoring the Diné through relations and fellowship with our Creator.

Situated on 50 acres, the landscape features displays of sunsets. Red sand and red rocks offer visitors visual displays. The creation and beauty surround us.

Located 4 miles North of Window Rock, AZ. Where 54.6% speak the Navajo Language and 45.4% speak English, the demographics include: 92.9% Native American, 45% White, 0.3% Asian, and 0.2% Black.



Southeast Region **Ministries**

The Southeast Region of the Episcopal Church in Navajoland undertakes ministries grounded in faith, service, and tradition. These efforts support the spiritual and physical well-being of the community.

Good Samaritan Food Pantry

The Good Samaritan Food Pantry, established during COVID-19 relief efforts, serves 5–10 families each week in the Southeast Region. Located in the Thorne Building and run by volunteers, it provides food, dignity, and hope every Tuesday and Thursday. Plans to relocate to the nearby Power House include adding a greenhouse garden, with future goals for a hot meal program and community gardening to promote health, sustainability, and shared growth.

Episcopal Church Women (ECW)

The ECW group is a space for women to come together in worship, prayer, service, and mutual support. While women's groups like Saani Jooba', the sewing ministry, have long had a strong presence, ECW offers a broader vision for community formation, healing, and spiritual growth. With guidance and shared leadership, the group is working to define its mission and goals as it builds a renewed foundation of faith and fellowship.

R4Thursday Alcoholics Anonymous

The R4Thursday AA group offers regular recovery meetings every Thursday and Saturday, as well as a monthly potluck speaker meeting on the second Friday. Members rotate leadership positions to ensure meetings remain consistent and accessible. They also train to become sponsors, guiding others through the Big Book and Twelve Steps, and support wider AA events, creating a welcoming space for healing and growth.



Southeast Region **Ministries**

Vacation Bible School (VBS)

The Summer VBS program is rooted in the belief that the Gospel can be seen in our households, culture, and daily life. Inspired by the Hooghan Learning Circle, the program weaves Diné core values with biblical teachings, helping children recognize and live out the Gospel in familiar ways. Guided by elders and community members, VBS aims to nurture faith through stories, language, and traditions that reflect the Diné way of life, supporting the vision of a self-determined Missionary Diocese.

Good Shepherd Mission Greenhouse Raised Beds Program

The Greenhouse began as a volunteer-led gardening project supported by grants and was recently revived with help from the Native American Indigenous Council and partners in Cincinnati. Raised beds now grow traditional crops, such as corn, beans, squash, tomatoes, and herbs. The vision is to create a thriving community garden offering education, cooking classes, and fresh produce. A portion of the harvest will support the Good Samaritan Food Pantry, linking gardening with food education and community care. The program also aims to partner with local garden advocates to sustain and grow this living ministry.



Navajoland's **Utah** **Region**

The Utah Region of Navajoland includes three Episcopal churches: St. Mary in the Moonlight in Oljato, St. Christopher's Mission in Bluff, and St. John the Baptizer in Montezuma Creek. Unemployment in this region remains one of the highest across the Navajo Nation, especially in the northern areas. Some communities experience unemployment rates close to 80 percent. The isolation of these communities, along with limited infrastructure and job opportunities, contributes to ongoing economic hardship. Despite this, many Navajos find work in the oil industry around Aneth and Montezuma Creek. The Montezuma Creek Clinic serves the community on weekdays. Still, any medical emergency outside those hours requires travel to hospitals in Blanding, Utah, or Shiprock, New Mexico, with drives ranging from one to two hours each way.

Public education is available through the San Juan School District, with both elementary and high schools located in the region. For higher education, there is a University of Utah satellite campus in Blanding, and Diné College has a location in Aneth.

The land here is rugged and beautiful, made up of red rock canyons, dramatic cliffs, and timeless desert landscapes. This region is part of the Colorado Plateau, carved over millions of years by wind and water. Cottonwood and Russian olive trees grow near rivers, while sagebrush, cactus, and open desert define the broader land. It is a place where silence and spirit meet.

The people who live in this region include Navajo (Diné), Anglo, and Ute communities. Among the Diné are elders who speak only the Navajo language and never attended formal schools, alongside younger generations that include PhD-level educators and professionals.



Continued **Utah Region**

St. Christopher's Mission

St. Christopher's Mission was founded in 1937 by the Reverend H. Baxter Liebler, known affectionately by the Diné as "Long Hair." He was born in 1889 and lived out the final decades of his life in Oljato, where he died in 1982. He also established St. Mary in the Moonlight, which is currently inactive. He is remembered as a pioneer missionary who brought not only Christian teachings but also deep respect for Diné culture. He built a church, a clinic, and a schoolhouse to serve the people. Many Diné baby boomers were born at the clinic at St. Christopher's Mission, and to this day, community members return to access vital birth records stored there.

St. John the Baptizer in Montezuma Creek

In 1946, Father Liebler was invited by Diné elder Whitehorse (Tsííthlagaí) to bring the Word of God to Montezuma Creek. Along the San Juan River, he built a one-room schoolhouse that also served as the church on Sundays. A local trader donated the two-acre parcel on which St. John the Baptizer still stands. Today, the congregation worships in that same building, now a full-time chapel. Though it shows signs of age, the spirit of worship remains strong.

As of 2023, Montezuma Creek has 256 residents across 12 square miles, including an LDS church, a Baptist church, and St. John the Baptizer Episcopal Church, reflecting the community's spiritual diversity.

Our Ministry

We welcome all with open doors and hearts. Our members engage in leadership development, Safeguarding training, and anti-racism education. Morning Prayer, Navajo Bible Study, and bilingual worship deepen our faith and language. We offer baptism and confirmation classes, honor our elders, and practice stewardship grounded in Diné and Christian tradition. Our elders are honored, and our liturgy reflects the life and breath of our people.



Utah Region Ministries

The Utah Region of the Episcopal Church in Navajoland undertakes ministries grounded in faith, service, and tradition. These efforts support the spiritual and physical well-being of the community.

SCM Artisan Water Ministry

St. Christopher's Mission was founded on land with a natural artesian spring that provides clean, life-giving water for daily needs, crops, and livestock. The Mission offers free public access to this water and works with the Bluff community and others to protect the aquifer from pollution and overuse. Committed to water justice, St. Christopher's partners with state, tribal, and environmental groups to ensure clean water access and supports local water projects that sustain the region. *Tó éí ííná át'é* – water is life.

St. Christopher's Tiny Houses

In 2022, St. Christopher's Mission started building seven tiny houses to expand hospitality and retreat space. Each includes a full-size bed, private bathroom, and kitchenette. Volunteers landscaped the area, adding a fire pit with rustic seating for reflection and gathering. Today, these tiny houses provide lodging for visitors seeking rest, retreat, or spiritual renewal at the Mission.

Da'ak'eh (baa) Hózhóonii Community Garden

Gardening at St. Christopher's Mission started early on when Fr. Liebler and his team grew vegetables to support the Mission. In 2020, after soil and water tests and securing a three-year grant, a new community garden was planned with raised beds. By spring 2022, volunteers built the garden, installed a drip system, and prepared the soil, with community members planting vegetables, herbs, Navajo Tea, and pollinator-friendly flowers. In 2023, a traditional row garden for corn, beans, and squash was added, and the Homer Dale Farm will host a fall planting in 2025. The garden grows through community effort, honoring the land and its caretakers.

Where we **Are Now**



The journey of the Episcopal Church in Navajoland has been one of resilience, restoration, and reverence for our people, our traditions, and the sacred call to ministry in the Navajo Way.

In 1979, for the first time, delegates from Navajoland were welcomed at General Convention. This moment affirmed the presence and voice of Diné leadership within the wider Church. A few years later, in 1983, the Rt. Rev. Wes Frensdorff, serving as Interim Bishop, offered a vision that honored and uplifted Navajo ways of being. He encouraged the development of leaders who were locally chosen, culturally grounded, and spiritually equipped to serve their communities. These leaders included presbyters, deacons, and lay pastors who embodied both Christian faith and Diné values.

Over time, the Episcopal Church in Navajoland (ECN) nurtured leadership through ministry formation programs such as Education for Ministry, offerings from Seabury Western Seminary, and participation in programs from the Diocese of the Rio Grande. These efforts led to the ordination of several Diné clergy and the formation of lay pastors who continue to lead worship, provide pastoral care, and walk alongside their communities in prayer and service.

Where we **Are Now**

A major milestone came in 1990 with the consecration of the Rev. Steven Plummer as the first Navajo Bishop. His leadership deepened ECN's commitment to ministry shaped by Diné identity and community values. With the support of the Rev. Jerry Drino, Bishop Plummer helped establish the Hooghan Learning Circle, a space for reflection, formation, and shared learning rooted in Navajo tradition. This became the core philosophy of ECN: a ministry by the people, for the people, living as both Christian and Diné.

Following Bishop Plummer's passing, the Rt. Rev. David Bailey was appointed with the support of ECN leaders. He had worked closely with Bishop Plummer and continued the work of raising up Navajo leaders. Under his guidance, six more Diné clergy were trained, educated, and ordained. He also helped launch initiatives that addressed substance abuse and domestic violence, provided support for veterans, and explored ways to generate income to sustain the mission.

Throughout these decades, the work of ECN has been shaped by guiding principles such as total ministry, shared leadership, culturally grounded pastoral care, and a deep respect for Diné culture and identity. These values continue to support Indigenous leadership, justice, and spiritual autonomy.

The contributions of bishops, clergy, elders, and lay leaders have been vital. In times of transition, their care, wisdom, and commitment to cultural sensitivity helped strengthen Navajoland's foundation. Their leadership ensured that the Church remained a place of healing, belonging, and faithful service.

In 2022, General Convention passed a resolution empowering ECN to form leadership in the Navajo Way. In 2024, ECN was approved to transition from an Area Mission to a Missionary Diocese. Early in 2025, the Executive Council gave its final approval to ECN's new Constitution and Canons.

Today, we stand at a sacred threshold. Rooted in our identity as Diné and followers of Christ, we prepare to call our own Diocesan Bishop. This will be a leader chosen by the people, shaped by the land, and guided by the Spirit. With prayerful hearts, we walk forward in beauty.

Milestones

For decades, our elders, mentors, clergy, and lay leaders dreamed of this moment—when Navajoland would become a diocese in its own right. A Church grounded in the rhythms of our people, our culture, and our sacred land. A Church that reflects both the Gospel and the ways of the Diné.

Many of those elders did not live to see the day. But they carried the dream. They cleared the path. They prepared the way. At the 80th General Convention of

2022

The Episcopal Church, Resolution D080 was brought forward by Navajo leaders. It asked the Church to take a bold step: to trust the people of Navajoland to support the creation of a discernment and election process for bishops that honors Navajo tradition and our ways of listening, praying, deciding, and leading. The Church said yes.

2023

Sacred gatherings followed: listening sessions across all three regions of Navajoland. The Standing Commission on Structure, Governance, Constitution, and Canons walked with us. A petition then emerged: to transition from an Area Mission to a Missionary Diocese. This structure would allow us to elect our own bishop through our own process in alignment with our sacred values.

2024

The people of Navajoland gathered in a Special Convocation and unanimously voted to submit the petition to become a Missionary Diocese. At the 81st General Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, the House of Deputies, and the House of Bishops jointly approved Resolution C009, officially designating the Navajoland Area Mission as the Episcopal Missionary Diocese of Navajoland.

The Standing Committee of Navajoland developed the Three Streams framework to guide the transition, comprising a unified Vision and Mission Statement, a revised Constitution and Canons grounded in Navajo tradition, and a bishop election process rooted in Episcopal polity and Diné values.

2025

Navajoland completed the first two Streams through prayerful collaboration, finalizing a new Mission Statement and submitting a revised Constitution and Canons rooted in Diné tradition. On June 24, 2025, the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church accepted the Constitution by acclamation, officially recognizing Navajoland as a Missionary Diocese. The third Stream is now in progress, with a bishop search committee formed to begin a culturally grounded discernment process to elect our first bishop.



Three Streams Work

In 2024, the Standing Committee of Navajoland created a framework to guide our transition to diocesan status. Known as the Three Streams, it shapes the identity, governance, and leadership of the Missionary Diocese of Navajoland.

First Stream: Vision and Mission Statement

After over a year of prayerful work and collaboration, our Mission Statement was completed—first in Navajo on February 22, 2025, then in English on March 26, 2025. This sacred statement affirms our call as the Diné and guides the Church's presence in our land and communities. It now grounds our worship, gatherings, and daily life.

Second Stream: Constitution and Canons

This stream focused on building a governance structure rooted in Episcopal tradition and Navajo values. Following wide consultation and careful revision, the new Constitution and Canons were accepted by the Executive Council on June 24, 2025, officially recognizing Navajoland as a Missionary Diocese.

Third Stream: The Election of a Bishop

The third stream is now underway. A Bishop Search Committee, appointed in early 2025, is leading a culturally grounded discernment process. A diocesan profile is being prepared, congregations are engaged, and nominations are open. A Special Electing Convention is expected in late 2025 or early 2026.

Together, these Three Streams are more than administrative milestones. They represent a sacred journey toward self-determination, faithful leadership, and a renewed future.



Diocesan-Wide Ministries

The ministries of the Episcopal Church in Navajoland work together to serve God and the community through faith, culture, and healing. Rooted in Diné tradition and the way of Jesus, each ministry brings a unique gift to the shared journey of spiritual growth and service.

Hooghan Learning Circle

Hooghan Learning Circle (HLC) is a spiritual ministry of the Episcopal Church in Navajoland that weaves together the sacred traditions of the Blessing Way and the Jesus Way. Rooted in K'é (kinship) and Hózhó (harmony), HLC offers a sacred space for Diné and Christian communities to seek healing, wisdom, and spiritual growth. Inspired by Bishop Steven Plummer's vision, HLC honors ancestral teachings while embracing the love and teachings of Jesus. Through storytelling, ceremony, and community, HLC nurtures leaders and reclaims sacred truths for a shared future.

Commission on Ministry (COM)

The Commission on Ministry (COM) collaborates with the bishop to identify and support future leaders in Navajoland, helping to discern calls to Holy Orders and strengthening lay ministries. Rooted in the belief that shared leadership is vital to the Church's mission, the COM reflects a broad, collaborative approach to ministry. While the commission is currently undergoing reevaluation and restructuring, its purpose remains the same: to raise up and walk with those called to serve in Christ's name.

Children & Youth Ministry

The Children and Youth Ministry supports the spiritual growth, creativity, and leadership of young people across Navajoland. Key efforts include the annual Giving Tree Project, which has provided Christmas gifts to over 100 children, as well as yearly backpack giveaways. These efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to a future grounded in faith, cultural identity, and opportunity for the next generation.



Diocesan-Wide Ministries

Communications & Cheii

Communications and Cheii is the creative and technical hub of ECN, sharing the stories and ministries of Navajoland through digital, print, and in-person platforms. They publish *The Beauty Way*, manage the ECN website and social media, and produce videos, graphics, and donor communications to keep the Church connected and visible. Cheii also supports Safe Church Training, provides technical help to clergy and lay leaders, and maintains essential communication systems. This ministry is central to our shared voice, presence, and identity.

Buildings & Grounds

The Buildings and Grounds Ministry helps keep ECN's sacred spaces safe, functional, and welcoming for worship, ministry, and community use. Working across all three regions, the team assesses needs, prioritizes repairs, and supports property stewardship. They also aim to enhance tools and training for maintenance staff, ensuring safer and more effective work. As ECN grows into its Missionary Diocese identity, caring for our physical spaces remains essential to sustaining our mission.

The Owen Project

Our immediate goal is to equip each church with a computer lab and reliable, high-speed Wi-Fi. These labs will support students with schoolwork, research, and college applications. Adults can use them for resumes, medical appointments, online learning, and leadership training for ministry. Access to the internet also opens opportunities to support reading and writing in Diné, preserve stories, and share songs, prayers, and cultural traditions.

Navajoland Living

The Episcopal Church in Navajoland is rooted in the Four Corners region, covering parts of the Navajo Reservation in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. While many congregations are located on Reservation land, some are situated nearby on private property, yet remain closely connected to the land and culture.

The region has a high desert climate with wide temperature swings and low yearly rainfall, usually less than 15 inches. Snow falls in winter, and summer monsoons can bring rain and thunderstorms. The land lies south of the San Juan Mountains and is part of the San Juan River watershed.

The natural beauty of this area is a daily presence. Lakes, mountains, badlands, and open desert offer space for prayer, rest, and connection to tradition. Diné arts like weaving and silversmithing continue to thrive.

Farmington, New Mexico, is the largest nearby city, with about 45,000 residents. Most other communities are small and rural. Bluff, Utah, is home to St. Christopher's Mission and serves as the center of the Utah Region. It is a scenic town supported mainly by tourism. Good Shepherd Mission, in the Southeast Region, is just outside Window Rock, the capital of the Navajo Nation.

Economic conditions vary. Tourism and energy support jobs in Utah, but unemployment remains high on the Reservation. The Southeast Region relies primarily on government and healthcare work. The New Mexico Region has a diverse economy, with sectors including oil, farming, education, healthcare, and services.

Our congregations are diverse. Most are primarily Diné, with Anglo and Hispanic members worshiping together. Services often include both English and Navajo, honoring both traditions.

Education is available through public schools and local colleges, which offer Navajo language, culture, and vocational training. Indian Health Service hospitals are located in Fort Defiance and Shiprock, and San Juan Regional Medical Center in Farmington provides trauma and specialty care.

Budget & Finances

Narrative Financial Report on the Episcopal Church in Navajoland (ECN)

The Episcopal Church in Navajoland (ECN) was established in 1977 as an Area Mission of The Episcopal Church.

Our nine congregations are organized around three regional hubs:

- Good Shepherd Mission in Arizona
- St. Christopher's Mission in Utah
- San Juan Mission in New Mexico

At the 81st General Convention in 2024, ECN received unanimous approval to become a Missionary Diocese, marking a significant transition after 47 years as an Area Mission.

Financial Overview

Since its inception in 1977, ECN has received a \$1 million block grant per triennium from The Episcopal Church (TEC). Since 2021, adjustments have been made to account for inflation and rising health insurance costs.

Between 2012 and the present, ECN's operating budget has doubled—from approximately \$500,000 to \$1 million. During this period:

- Five Navajo clergy members completed seminary training and assumed leadership roles in the clergy.
- The ECN Economic Development Corporation, established in 2013, has generated revenue through rental properties and initiatives such as Shima of Navajoland (soap production, now discontinued) and Cheii Web Development.
- These ventures have necessitated staffing growth and other operational activities, including the establishment of a fundraising committee.

Despite receiving over 70% of our budget from TEC grants, ECN is actively pursuing financial sustainability. In 2019, we launched biannual appeals to the broader Church, which now contribute more than \$200,000 annually to the budget.

Budget & Finances

Staffing and Operations

Salaries and benefits account for just over 70% of the budget. ECN currently employs:

- 13 full-time and 6 part-time staff members
- In the Bishop's Office:
 - 1 part-time Provisional Bishop
 - 1 full-time Canon to the Ordinary
 - 1 full-time Administrator/CFO
 - 1 full-time Bookkeeper/Office Manager
 - 1 full-time Communications Director (who also oversees children/youth ministries and food/clothing distribution)
 - 1 full-time Fundraising/Communications/IT Specialist
- In the three regions:
 - 3 Regional Vicars
 - 2 additional full-time clergy
 - 5 full-time Navajo clergy in total
 - 2 retired Navajo clergy
 - 2 retired Anglo clergy
 - Maintenance and part-time cleaning staff in each region

Property and Infrastructure

ECN owns and maintains approximately 50 buildings across the Fort Defiance (AZ), Farmington (NM), and Bluff (UT) areas. While there is significant deferred maintenance, ECN has leveraged grant funding and partner support over the years to address many challenges, thanks to focused effort and resilience.

Funds and Reserves

- Endowment Fund: Established in 2021, current balance is \$280,000
- Sustainability Trust Fund: Also created in 2021 with an initial balance of \$200,000. The full amount was used to offset the 2023–2024 budget deficit. Current interest-only balance is \$28,000

Budget & Finances

Financial Administration

Accounting is centralized in the Bishop's Office in Farmington, New Mexico. Each region maintains a separate bank account under the administration of the Bishop's Office. Individual congregations do not manage their own bank accounts, and as a result, diocesan assessments at the congregation level are not feasible.

2025 budget

Income:

TEC Grants	\$727,542
Contributions	\$218,000
Trusts	\$8,000
Assessments	\$18,000

Total Income:	\$971,542
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Expenses:

Salaries & Benefits	\$795,000
Property & Insurance	\$115,000
Administration/Office	\$54,600
Communications/Fundraising	\$21,000
Meetings/Travel	\$60,000

Total Expenses:	\$1,045,600
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Audited financials and the 2025 Treasurer's report is found [HERE](#).



The Bishop We Seek

The Bishop we seek will be a **faithful pastor and courageous leader**, deeply rooted in both the **Christian faith** and the wisdom of the **Diné tradition**. This person will embody the **Hózhó** model, bringing balance, beauty, and healing into our lives together.

We seek a bishop who is **present and personable**, one who listens deeply, addresses challenges directly, and communicates with empathy, sincerity, and transparency. They will be a **unifier**, protecting the faith of our people—both Christian and Diné—and fostering reconciliation where division has existed.

Our bishop will be a **skilled leader and manager**, able to oversee properties, steward finances with responsibility, and set healthy boundaries. He or she will demonstrate **stability, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution skills**, mediating disputes with gentleness and courage.

We desire a bishop who will walk closely with our congregations and communities—**visiting regularly, standing in solidarity with clergy, supporting lay leaders, and engaging with youth**. They will help raise **Navajo priests, deacons, and lay ministers**, and encourage growth in both **cultural and spiritual continuity**.

The bishop we seek will also bring **practical gifts**: the ability to manage a calendar, keep commitments, engage in fundraising, and share our story with the wider Church. He or she will be resourceful in addressing community needs, financially literate, and willing to advocate boldly on our behalf.

Above all, this bishop will be **welcoming to all, open to learning the Navajo language and culture, and committed to the long term**. They will nurture **healing, hope, and strength**, guiding us faithfully into the future God is calling us to.



How to Apply

TO APPLY, VISIT THIS WEBSITE TO DOWNLOAD THE APPLICATION:

<https://ecofnavajoland.org/bishop-search/>

A Sacred Moment in Our Journey

For the first time in our history, the Episcopal Church in Navajoland is discerning our own Diocesan Bishop, one who will walk with us, pray with us, and lead with a heart grounded in our people, our land, and our way of life.

This is a sacred time of listening, for the Diocese and for those who may feel the Spirit's quiet call to this ministry. If, in your prayers and reflections, you sense that call stirring within you, we invite you to take the next faithful step.

Come and be part of what the Spirit is doing among us.

Complete application and nomination materials must be submitted electronically to NavajolandBishopSearch@gmail.com by **Saturday, September 30th, at 5:00 PM Mountain Daylight Time.**

Incomplete packets will not be considered; the following items must be included:

A completed application must contain the following items:

- Cover Letter
- Official Application Form with essay questions added.
- Resume
- Updated OTM Portfolio
- A recent photo
- 1-3 minute video introduction



To explore further information and resources, please visit our website.

Our **Contact Info**



(505) 327-7549



info@ecofnavajoland.org



<https://ecofnavajoland.org/>



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