



ISSUE 16 SPRING 2026

THE MISSIONARY DIOCESE OF NAVAJOLAND

THE BEAUTY WAY

“Hózhó Nahasdlii’ – Restoring Balance Together”



New Dawn in the Beauty Way

By The Rev. Cornelia Eaton

When we receive God’s healing through Jesus’ gift of hope and renewal, God is inviting us into the state of hózhó náhasdlii’.

As I reflect on Holy Week and Easter, as a Diné Christian, I am reminded to be still, to walk with Jesus on the final pilgrimage with attention and reverence, and to reflect on what it means to walk the Way of the Cross. Recently, I came upon a pocket-sized ragged black book in my book collection, titled “Saint Augustine’s Prayer Book”, and in it are descriptions of the stations of the cross.

In the second station, it says, “a heavy cross is laid upon the bruised shoulders of Jesus. He receives it with humility, nay with a secret joy; it is an instrument to redeem the world.” This vision of the cross invites us to look for a new dawn, even in the moments of darkness, sorrow, and fear of these times. There is hope in the Way of the Cross.

As Diné, part of our spirituality is to observe every morning as a renewal and

hope, even in times of suffering. This daily turning toward the dawn is what I see in Holy Week. We Diné have made many of our own pilgrimages. Our ancestors offered corn pollen prayers continuously during the Long Walk’s exile. When the Diné returned to the Four Sacred Mountains after being captive in Fort Sumner, their prayers led them to freedom.

Their Way of reverence reminds us today of hope and renewal that invite us into a pilgrimage. It is when the Holy One, divine Chanter, sings us into wholeness, we move in rhythm with the sun, moon, stars, the birds of the air, and female gentle winds and rains, our livestock, and sacred vegetation we use for medicine—the universe makes herself known to us in humility.

When we receive God’s wholeness in the sacredness of the new dawn, that dawn is what we find on Easter morning at the end of the walk of Holy Week.

Peace and blessings of God be with you along the Way.

Navajoland Events:

- March 27** *Friends of Navajoland Zoom 2 PM MST*
- March 31** *Chrism Mass w/ Diocese of the Rio Grande*
- April 11** *ECN Council Meeting- Zoom 10 AM - 12 PM*
- May 29** *Friends of Navajoland Zoom 2 PM MST*
- June 12** *Day of Discernment- St. Christopher’s Mission*
- June 13** *Election Convention- St. Christopher’s Mission*
- First Weds.** *Learn About General Convention- Zoom 6 PM MST*
- Every-Thursday** *“R” for Thursday Recovery Meetings at Good Shepherd*
- 1st & 3rd Fridays** *Wellbriety Book Study & Reflection at the Hozho*
- Dec. 5** *Consecration of the first Bishop Diocesan of Navajoland*

A Letter from the Bishop

Becoming the Church We Are Called to Be



Dear Friends in Christ:
Grace and peace to you.

When I last wrote to you, we were expecting our delegates to gather in Gallup at the very start of 2026 to elect a new bishop. That gathering will now take place June 12–13 at St. Christopher’s in Bluff, in place of the Convocation we had planned for those days.

Our plans changed suddenly in December, not because of any problem with the process. The Search Committee had worked diligently and faithfully to prepare for a January election, and all was in readiness. Nor did we have second thoughts about the excellent candidates placed before us. Rather, it was brought to our attention that some within ECN felt unready to embrace such a major change in the life of their Church and were asking for more time to prepare.

It was not an easy decision, and it did not come without cost. Yet our Standing Committee, entrusted with overseeing the entire election, chose to make this change, affecting us all, out of deep respect and loving regard for those who had asked for it.

What I witnessed in that moment of discernment and significant change was a beautiful example of what it means to live together as the Beloved Community, as the Body of Christ, as the Church we are called to be. I saw God’s grace at work among us.

This September, as I mark the 20th anniversary of my ordination and consecration as a bishop, and as I conclude my time as Bishop Provisional of the Episcopal Church in Navajoland, I will give thanks for the many moments of grace I have experienced since 2006. This will be one of them. It reminds us that our hope of becoming a strong and faithful new diocese must be deeply rooted in both the Diné value of relationship and the Christian truth of the essential unity that Christ commands—and gives—to all who choose to follow him.

He is, as he says, the Good Shepherd—our Good Shepherd—leading, guiding, and watching over us here and now, even in the midst of profound and sometimes sudden change.

Hózhoh’ náhásdlíí. It is restored in Beauty. It is fulfilled in Christ.

Yours in Him,
+Barry



Meet the Chancellor of Navajoland

By Karen Aubry, Chancellor

It is a great honor to be asked to follow Steve Hutchinson as Chancellor of the Missionary Diocese of the Episcopal Church in Navajoland (ECN). I was born in Utah, raised in Arizona, and have lived in New Mexico for many years. The Southwest is my home.

I received my law degree in 1974 from the University of Arizona and served as a Deputy County Attorney in Tucson until 1976. I then moved to Santa Fe, where I practiced law in the areas of real estate, oil and gas, and estate planning until retiring from active practice in 2022.

I have served as Chancellor of the Diocese of the Rio Grande since 2012 and have also served as Vice-Dean and Dean of the Northeast Deanery and on Diocesan Council. In 2006, I was appointed as a delegate from the Anglican Consultative Council to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. I have been a member of St. Bede’s Episcopal Church in Santa Fe since 1986, serving on the Altar Guild, as an usher, and as a Eucharistic Minister.

Chancellors offer advice on questions of state law and canon law to help ensure legal and canonical compliance, good governance, trust, and transparency. ECN Canon 8.4 states that the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellors serve as legal advisors to the Diocese, providing counsel to the Bishop, Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, and congregations.

Because ECN includes congregations in three states whose laws may differ, the Bishop has appointed Vice-Chancellor Frances Sjoberg, admitted to practice in Arizona and the Navajo Nation, and Vice-Chancellor Rick Knuth, admitted to practice in Utah.

The Vice-Chancellors and I are blessed to walk alongside the people of ECN, especially as we prepare for the election of the next Bishop.



Hózhó Naasha – Walking in the Beauty Way

A reflection on restoring balance together

By The Rev. Leon Sampson

I will walk in the balance of the Beauty Way; therefore, all will be returned to beauty around me. These two covenants are what the Holy Spirit revealed to our ancestors as a way forward during the Long Walk, before they returned from Fort Sumner, NM, on June 18th, 1864. They entrusted us as a covenant for the future generations, a commitment to live in our faith as individuals and as a community of Navajo people, never to be taken captive again, but to remain resilient, strong in mind, body, and spirit. Today, the Holy Spirit continues to guide us back into balance

with our Creator God. Many older traditional Navajo families have held tightly to these teachings, applying their principles within their homes and communities.

Today, as a Missionary Diocese of the Episcopal Church in Navajoland, we have discerned and developed a mission statement that also guides us toward restoration, healing, and reconnection with the beauty way covenant. “In the name of Jesus Christ, the Holy One, we set out to walk in harmony. Seeking forgiveness and wholeness.”

Our transition into a missionary diocese is not only an institutional change within our denomination, but also an invitation to discern more deeply who we are as Diné Episcopalians. This discernment asks us, as faith communities across the Navajo Reservation, to sit with the hard truth of how harmful evangelism affected an already traumatized people. Many visiting mission groups would not recognize that a community of faith already existed, one historically disrupted and reshaped by colonial European influence.

We believe that a contextual God can bridge us through the core principles of the Navajo “Dine” way and the teaching of the Gospel, bringing us back together to live into the Beauty Way covenant. The Hogan learning circle is a diocesan teaching platform that nurtures our disrupted identity, shaped by unbalanced pasts. Through family, love, prayer, and traditional meditation, we are learning to sit more deeply and listen for God’s call within our community.

“Through compassion and service, love binds us in relationship to all creation. In the Beauty way, all is restored again.” The renewal of our covenant, passed down from our ancestors, brings us back to “K’é” relationship. In this day and age, compassion expressed through action and unconditional love towards our neighbors and ourselves is how we are called to walk a balanced path in the Beauty Way.

Almighty Creator God, grant us grace to do your will through your example of love. Bless us with the vision to see you on our mission of healing and renewal. Illuminate our steps on the Beauty Pathway, so that we may walk in the examples of your path. All this we ask through our Savior’s name, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Walk in the Beauty Way

When planning your legacy, please remember the Episcopal Church in Navajoland and help carry the work of the Church forward for future generations.

HELP SUPPORT THE MISSIONARY DIOCESE OF NAVAJOLAND
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Regional Updates



Utah Region

Growing Through Partnership, Service, and Community Life

By The. Rev. Jack Chase

The Utah Region had a very good year last year. We hosted 12 Mission Partner groups, making full use of the monks' cells, the tiny houses, and Liebler Hall, while learning, building, and sharing together. All of the groups we hosted are working to build long-term relationships with the people and communities in the area. One particularly promising project is a youth partnership with St. Mark's Episcopal Church on Capitol Hill. Two years ago, they sponsored Diné youth from St. Christopher's for a visit to Washington, D.C. Last year, members of St. Mark's youth group visited St. Christopher's. This coming year, we are planning for youth from across ECN to visit them in D.C.

The people of St. John the Baptist continued their fundraising by making and selling necklaces, which allowed them to install new flooring in

the parish hall. They also established reliable internet access through a Starlink system supplied by the Owen Project of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Seguin, Texas.

“Learning, building, and sharing together.”

The Community Garden project is also thriving, serving a growing number of local community members. This year, there are plans to expand from the raised beds on the north side of St. Christopher's campus to row gardens to the east, in an area known as Homer Dale Farm, thanks to a generous grant

from Christ Church Cathedral in Cincinnati. The garden is also expanding its partnership with the local elementary school in Bluff, inviting students to learn how to grow their own food.

Meanwhile, the missions of the Utah Region continue to provide spiritual and physical care to the local worshiping community and beyond. In addition to weekly Sunday worship at St. Christopher's and St. John's, we maintain a weekday morning food pantry and make ECN-sponsored food deliveries around major holidays. St. Christopher's Mission also hosts special programs led by Walter Shorty for Memorial Day and Veterans Day, drawing wide participation from the surrounding community. Lay leadership in worship, service, and planning for the future remains key to the strength and growth of the Church in the Utah Region.

Regional Updates

Southeast Region

Carrying the Legacy Forward

By The Rev. Cathlena Plummer

As I sit beside my mother following the funeral of our late pioneer, Thomas A. Jackson, I am moved to reflect on the legacy of the Southeast region and the remarkable journey of the Good Shepherd community. Their steadfast commitment has ensured that the doors of their beloved church remain open, a testament to enduring faith and determination.

Among those who shaped this legacy is Margaret Hardy, whose ministry stands as a beacon of unwavering devotion. She spent much of her time living and sleeping in the Parish Hall, becoming a constant and reliable presence at the Mission. Her ability to provide support and resources made a lasting difference in the lives of many within the community.

Her apprentice, Pauline Dick, carried this work forward by leading prayers, organizing hymn sings, and of-



fering steady support as both companion and chauffeur to Margaret Hardy. Together, their partnership embodied the spirit of service and fellowship that continues to shape the Mission's life.

At the center of this story is Thomas A. Jackson, a trailblazer whose visionary leadership helped keep the doors of Good Shepherd open. His strong sense of initiative led him to establish what we now know as the Navajo Transit System (NTS), a vital bus route connecting communities across the Navajo Nation.

Thomas's ministry within the Episcopal Church in Navajoland inspired many who followed, including the late Rt. Rev. Steven T. Plummer Sr., Margaret Hardy, Pauline Dick, the late Rev. Rosella Jim, the late Rev. Yazzie Mason, the late Rev. Buddy Arthur, Paul Mason, Howard McKinley, Joe Arnold, Lloyd House, David Yanito, Fernandez Begay, Johnny Stash, and many others. Their leadership reminds us, as Diné Episcopalians, that our voices matter in the wider Church and that our contributions are seen and valued.

San Juan Region

Rooted in Faith, Growing in Community

By The Rev. Michael Sells

As spring breathes new life into the world around us, our region enters a season of growth and renewal. We share our stories of transformation and hope, grounded in the Gospel and Diné values that guide our ministry. Together, we see God's Spirit moving in our leadership, community, and faith journeys. We invite you to reflect and celebrate with us as we grow closer to one

another and to Christ.

Across our region, renewal is taking shape in meaningful ways. Newly elected committee members have stepped into new opportunities, welcoming neighbors and nurturing faith. Our churches continue to gather for prayer, fellowship, and service, strengthening our shared vision and encouraging one another.

Our mission is rooted in the teachings of Jesus and the wisdom of Diné values: respect, harmony, community, and stewardship. These values guide how we serve and live together,

reminding us to honor each person and nurture the sacredness of creation.

At San Juan Mission, this spirit of renewal is seen in growing participation and intergenerational connection. Young families have joined gatherings, enriching worship and community life, while elders mentor new committee leaders and share their wisdom. The relaunch of bishop's committees has also been an important step, bringing people together for prayer, service, and shared responsibility.

From prayer walks to shared meals, everyday acts of kindness continue to strengthen our community and remind us that growth often begins with faithful presence.

As we enter this Easter season, we pray for discernment in leadership and continued balance in our shared journey.

Lord, renew our hearts and bless our journey together. Amen.





Nominees visiting congregations across Navajoland during the discernment process in December 2025. We give thanks for all who entered this time of prayer and discernment.

Standing Committee Update

Walking Together in Discernment

By The. Rev. Jack Chase

This has been a busy season for the Standing Committee.

At the beginning of the bishop election process, the Rev. Canon Cornelia Eaton and the Rev. Leon Sampson requested leaves of absence after being recommended as candidates for Bishop Diocesan. The Committee accepted their requests. We also approved their candidacies, along with that of the Rev. Alyssa Stebbing of the Diocese of Texas. The Rev. Jack Chase was elected President Pro Tem.

After the candidates completed their diocesan visits, the Standing Committee decided to extend the election timeline. This will allow the candidates time to complete preparatory work recommended by our consultant and give members of the Diocese additional time for discernment.

We accepted, with regret and appreciation, the resignation of the Rev. Alyssa Stebbing, who determined that the extended timeline would place too great a strain on the congregation she serves.

The election convention will now be held June 13, 2026, with a day of discernment on June 12th at St. Christopher's Mission in Bluff.

In addition to election-related work, the Standing Committee has fulfilled its responsibilities to the wider Church by consenting to episcopal elections in other dioceses. We also continue supporting leadership development in Navajoland through Lay Ministry Zoom classes and other formation opportunities.

We ask your prayers as we continue this work together.

Walking Together in Mission

Local partnership and wider Church connection

By GJ Gordy

In this season of Hózhó Nahasdlií' — restoring balance together, we are called to walk in relationship both within Navajoland and with the wider Church. Whether through partnerships like Friends of Navajoland or through our shared work in General Convention, we are learning to move forward with intention, listening, and care. These moments of connection invite us into deeper understanding, renewed commitment, and a more faithful way of being together as the Body of Christ.

Friends of Navajoland

Friends of Navajoland continues to walk in relationship with the people of Navajoland through seasons of change, growth, and renewal.

Friends of Navajoland is made up of individuals, churches, dioceses, and organizations beyond Navajoland who have committed to walk alongside in a good way. Over time, these relationships have been built through presence, trust, and shared work, and they continue to grow in understanding and care.

At our November 2025 gathering, we turned our attention toward the ministries carrying the greatest need: the Food Ministry and Fuel the Warmth. Food and firewood are daily necessities. As costs rise, many families face difficult decisions between feeding their children and keeping warm through winter nights. Food insecurity has long been present, and in recent years it has deepened.

The Food Ministry of the Episcopal Church in Navajoland serves without discrimination, offering non-perishable food to any who come. Financial gifts allow for fresh produce and meat, providing nourishment that sustains body and spirit. Continued support remains essential for ECN as a whole. Scan the QR Code on the right, to Donate.

In this season of diocesan election and formation, Friends is also deepening its commitment to relationship. Through upcoming Zoom conversations, we will reflect on partnership in a Navajo context, including K'é, Hózhó, our shared history, the legacy of boarding schools, the Blessing Way, and the Jesus Way.

General Convention

The General Convention, more than 240 years old, is the governing body of The Episcopal Church. Meeting every three years, it is where the Church discerns mission, shapes worship, and makes decisions that guide our common life. While it carries legislative responsibility, it is also grounded in prayer, relationship, and listening for the Holy Spirit.

Each diocese sends clergy and lay deputies to represent their people. Deputies listen, speak, and vote on resolutions that shape the life of the wider Church. Grounded in the Baptismal Covenant, it calls us to discern together how we live out our promises as the Body of Christ.

As a Missionary Diocese, our preparation is part of a larger movement toward hózhó — restoring balance together. We come to this work grounded in who we are as Navajo Episcopalians, shaped by culture, language, and relationship with Creator and creation.

Beginning in February 2026, we will meet monthly via Zoom to prepare as a deputation. We are building a shared foundation in the life of the Church, learning how General Convention works, engaging in resolutions, and strengthening how we listen, speak, and act together with care and responsibility.

This formation is an act of faith, renewal, and shared responsibility. We are becoming a deputation that reflects our people and participates in the wider Church with intention. We invite your prayers as we continue this work together in a spirit of hózhó.



2025 Giving Tree Project Supporters

With your help

118

Children, birth through high school, received gifts last Christmas season.

If you or your church are interested in partnering this Christmas, please contact GJ

Help Support the Navajoland Food Ministry



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Navajoland Easter Schedule:

6 AM	<i>Sunrise Service, Bluff, UT BLM Land by the River</i>	10 AM	<i>St. John the Baptizer, Montezuma Creek, UT</i>
8 AM	<i>St. Mark's Church, Coal Mine, NM</i>	10 AM	<i>All Saints' Church, Farmington, NM</i>
10 AM	<i>Good Shepherd Mission, Ft. Defiance, AZ</i>	10 AM	<i>St. Michael's Church, Upper Fruitland, NM</i>
10 AM	<i>St. Christopher's Mis- sion, Bluff, UT</i>	10 AM	<i>St. Luke's Church, Huerfano, NM</i>

