

## Our Saviour's Lutheran Church

*A congregation of the ELCA on the Rocky Boy's Reservation*

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### **Amazon Smile**

Donating to Our Saviour's through the Amazon Smile Foundation is easy. Every time you make a purchase at Amazon.com, login through **Smile.Amazon.com** instead!

Designate Our Saviour's as your charity of choice. Every quarter we will receive a donation that is a percentage of each purchase price. Thank you!



### **Donate On-line on Our Website or on FaceBook**

Donations may be made securely through PayPal on our website or on our FaceBook page. It is as easy as clicking on the donate button and following the directions. You can now set up regular weekly, monthly or yearly giving!



### **Our Wish List**

Our wishlist is constantly being updated and we don't have one full of physical things at the moment. We do, however, always have needs to update our buildings, especially the roof of the log chapel and the deck/walkways of the big church.

We ask that you prayerfully consider becoming a regular donor to help us meet these needs, which you can do through a variety of ways, including through PayPal and FaceBook. Please consider a legacy gift to Our Saviour's in your estate planning. The Region 1 ELCA Foundation gift planner, can assist you in this.

### **Thrivent Choice and Dividend Giving**

Thrivent Choice giving is important to us. If you are a Thrivent member, please consider designating Our Saviour's for your Thrivent Choice gift.



## A note from Pastor Tom

Greetings, one and all, and Tansi! It is a joy and honor to be greeting you all as the called, ordained, and installed pastor serving Our Savior's Lutheran Church on the Rocky Boy Reservation! A lot has happened in the 8 months I've been out here so I'll do my best to keep this introduction brief!

First things first, my name is Tom Gehring! I graduated from Luther Seminary in May of 2020. During the Summer of 2020, I served as an interfaith street chaplain in the Twin Cities during the George Floyd uprising, as well as pursuing the interview process with Our Saviour's.



Graduating during the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic was a strange way to end my 4 years of Seminary, and it still doesn't feel entirely like it happened. To that end, moving across the country and starting my first call as a pastor has also looked far different than how I anticipated! But, as has

been the case over the course of the past year, flexibility and adaptability have been the driving forces of ministry at Our Saviour's, and it has been a blessing to be met with the trust and support of the congregation here.

When people ask me "so, where are you from," I usually hesitate before answering "the upper Midwest." Growing up as the child of a pastor, I lived in Canton, South Dakota; Wahpeton, North Dakota; and Ames, Iowa before attending Augustana University in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in Religion and minoring in German, I spent a year of service on the Rosebud Native Reservation in South Dakota where I assisted in the ministry of 8 different Episcopalian congregations. I then attended seminary, and spent my internship year serving Luther House Chapel in the greater Kuala Lumpur region of peninsular Malaysia.

But, that's enough about my personal life, I'm sure you all are yearning for an update of how things have been going out here at Our Saviour's! Here are just a few of the ministry projects that we have been up to.

## Food Supply

Our Saviour's has continued to provide food at the end of each month to families and individuals who need it. Every month, we deliver around 40 bags full of 3 meals worth of food, a breakfast lunch and dinner. The idea is to bring food to people who have run out of

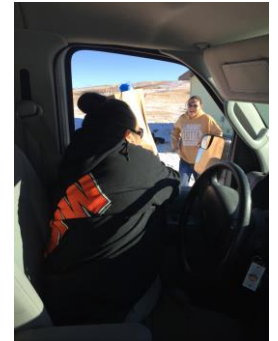
EBT or SNAP money and hopefully get them by until the next month. We fund this partially through an



ELCA hunger grant, as well as donations from congregations and individuals nationwide. A local grocer partners with us by providing a discount on food. A few months back, we were able to provide deer steaks and

ground venison that were donated to the church by a local tribal member who had enjoyed a particularly successful hunting season! Last month, we had a worker from the commodity warehouse come along with us and direct us to homes that he knew could use the food.

Due to Covid, I have had limited opportunities to get out and meet people. That's shifting these days with vaccines being available and administered. This food supply ministry has been a fantastic way for to get out and about into the community.



## Quarantine Housing

One of the ways Our Saviour's stepped up to do ministry during the onset of Covid-19 was to make the four cabins on our church campus available as housing for tribal members who had tested positive for Covid, and needed a place to isolate and quarantine.

The church partnered with the tribal office of incident command as well as the health center. The Health center also generously put forth funding and brought in workers to update the insulation and flooring in the cabins so that they could be used throughout the winter.

In a time where all of us were forced to reconsider and reimagine how ministry happens, I think that offering up the cabins for those in need was an incredibly faithful way to rise to the occasion as well as meeting the needs of our neighbors in Christian love.

## Worship

Though the year has brought many challenges, one thing remains true, we are still a worshipping community here at Our Saviour's! It was a challenge figuring out how to worship with one another in my early months as Covid was a far more severe threat than it is now. I eventually came up with something I dubbed "Worship on the Go."

Often accompanied by Council President, Loni Taylor, I drove to people's homes and gathered on their porches and front steps. We remained distanced and masked, while praying for friends, family members, the community, healing worldwide, and then celebrated communion



(served in individually wrapped "happy meals").

For Christmas Eve, I wanted to gather in person, but had to get creative about how to do so safely. We eventually landed on doing a service of lessons and carols outdoors in front of the big church. We sat socially distanced around two large fire pits that kept us warm, while others joined in from their cars in the parking lot. We sang and told the Christmas story with one another set to the backdrop of a gorgeous sunset. It may not have been the most conventional of Christmas services, but it was certainly an unforgettable one! Afterwards we handed out hats, gloves, t-shirts, blankets and other items that were generously donated.



We continued doing Worship on the Go as well as live-streamed services on our facebook page through the season of Lent before testing the waters of gathering in person for midweek services. These went well enough to plan out a fully in-person Holy Week! We gathered in the Big Church for Maundy Thursday,



which included communion and foot/handwashing, as well as a Good Friday service that incorporated a time of open prayer at several stations. We lit candles and smudge, wrote our prayers as an offering, and marked ourselves with water from the font in remembrance of our baptism.

Easter morning was truly special in that it included two services, one outdoors in the early sunrise at the outdoor chapel, and one in the big church. Those who showed up early were even treated to a hearty Easter breakfast thanks to the loving labor of a few members!



Currently, thanks to an incredibly high rate of vaccinations here on the Rocky Boy Reservation, and overall low Covid numbers in our county, we worship in person on Sunday mornings in our historic log chapel. After so many months of being creative and finding ways to keep ministry going through a pandemic, it is an absolute joy to be worshipping in person regularly again. We will



continue to monitor the Covid situation, but for now we give thanks for the fact that we can gather safely with one another and join our voices in praise, prayer, and thanksgiving.

## **A Note from John Mitchell**

Greetings;

My name is John L. Mitchell, Jr. and I am a congregation member here at Our Saviour's. I hope this finds you and yours well and safe. We were recently blessed with a new call to our church with our new Pastor – Tom Gehring. We are excited here and look forward with hope to his ministry here at Our Saviour's. Our community, like much of the world, is still dealing with the pandemic and have been working to keep each other safe. Pastor Tom has been called to our congregation during very trying times and has responded to the challenge most excellently. Myself, I am looking for that old saw, the "normal" setting on a dryer.

What is normal? "Normal is a setting on an old dryer." It seems a bit odd to look forward to normal and I am struck by the thought that those who live through challenging times must also be hoping for a return to normal. That is me. Not only for the world, the nation, the community; but also for our congregation. Watching Pastor Tom start his ministry in the age of social distancing, masks, stay-at-home recommendations, so much that is adjusted, and Pastor Tom not only rising to the challenge but able to

reach out to the community in creative ways is admirable and encouraging. Pastor has been using technology for streaming services, shows up at our homes with blessings, the word and sacrament. When he and Loni arrive at the house, we share fellowship and news, much like the announcements at the beginning of Service. It is a joy. I know you and your congregation have responded to these times similarly. Our community has had its share of heartbreak during these times and we pray that we all get through this together.

Please stay safe and well, there is light and hope all about us, our Lord and Savior watches over us and guides us all. Many, many blessings to you and yours. Thank you.

### What's Next?

As the world continues to open up more, and we look to what's next, I know there is a lot of interest and eagerness for what's to come.

First off: Servant Groups. I understand that this is a storied and longstanding ministry of Our Saviour's and I'm hoping to get it up and running again. This Summer, we don't have groups scheduled just to make sure we're remaining as safe as possible. To that end, I plan to have several meetings with the congregation as well as community members so that we can collectively discern how best to start that ministry up again. I hope to update the curriculum, activities, and relationship building that occurs during these trips so that we are faithfully ministering to both the community of Rocky Boy as well as the groups who travel here.

Second: a centennial celebration! I know that this has been on many of your radars for a number of years now, but has been stalled out due to Covid. Now that my feet are mostly underneath me, I'll start looking into how we can go about planning to celebrate this momentous anniversary!

### A Few Reminders

Please make donations out to "Our Saviour's Lutheran Church." Our bank will no longer accept checks for us to deposit that are not made out in this way.

Our mailing address is 499 Mission Taylor Road, Box Elder, MT 59521. If you have not updated your address book or your mailing list, please do so.

Please make sure to include your name and return address inside a box or package when you send it. Often things are sent from a mail store and do not include this information. Sadly, we have no idea who sent those donations and, therefore, no one to thank.

Thank you for your kind attention to these details!

### Thank You!

Thus ends the myriad of updates from what's been happening here at Our Saviour's over the last 8

months. I want to personally thank each and every one of you who supported our ministry through your prayers, partnership, and donations.

I firmly believe that the work of ministry is both gift and responsibility, and I am in awe of just how many congregations, individuals, and community members step up to sustain the work of the Holy Spirit in this time and place.

