Yá'át'ééh
(Traditional Navajo Greeting for Hello)!

Today we start our newsletter with a typical blessing of the Diné (Navajo, meaning "the people"): May you walk in beauty—beauty behind you, beauty in front of you, beauty above and beneath you, and beauty all around you.

To the Diné, to "walk in beauty" simply means to be happy and to have peace of mind and peace with oneself; to be happy and at peace with others; to be happy and at peace with the environment and the world; and to be happy and at peace with the Great Spirit.

For us this semester, we hope that we can better understand what it means for each of us to walk in beauty and to be reconciled with God, with creation and each other. During this semester this will take on added importance as we strive to understand how God is at work in the intersection of culture and faith in the American Southwest.

One of the ways that we hope you will be able to engage the culture of the Diné as well as explore your own vocation is through your service-learning placement. Some of the possible placements will be:

• Tutoring at Rehoboth Christian School or at an area public school;
• Interning at an area medical center;
• Interning at a local non-profit (e.g. youth serving agency);
• Working with an area or tribal business.

“Service-learning” is a particular form of volunteer service that is integrated into the academic coursework. The two work in tandem. The coursework provides general resources and case studies that strengthen your ability to contribute fully in your particular role and to put the work that you do in a broader perspective. Similarly, the people, situations, and puzzles you encounter in your placement can elicit rich questions for the class to discuss.

Housekeeping

Many of you have contacted us about how to pay the deposit, thank you for following up with us. At this point we are still working with financial services to see exactly how the deposit will work. Thanks for your patience, we promise to be in touch soon.
Connecting to life back at Calvin

In our last newsletter we talked through a number of different ways the group can connect back to Calvin’s campus during the semester. This included interactions with other first year experience classes, connecting to worship opportunities, and finding ways to connect with students and faculty on campus. In addition, you will have the opportunity to register early (before other first year students) for spring semester classes through the registrar’s office.

There is also the opportunity to participate in the activities of the Calvin Telescope at Rehoboth. One of your instructors Mike De Young, who will be teaching the geology class, is also in charge of Calvin’s remote telescope at Rehoboth. As a result you will have the opportunity to use the telescope and maybe even connect back with some of the astronomy classes being taught at Calvin.

Cool Stuff

The CRC and the Navajo Nation by John Huyser

This “stuff” is from the Banner, a publication of the Christian Reformed Church, that is devoted to enjoying some of the rich diversity God has blessed us with in the CRC. This month we’ll meet John Huyser, a college student who grew up in the Navajo Nation in Window Rock, Arizona.

Tell us about yourself and how you relate to the CRC.

I am 20 years old and I grew up in Window Rock, Ariz.—the capital of the Navajo Nation. My mom is Navajo and my dad is a Dutchman from Iowa. Throughout my time on the reservation I have been part of Window Rock CRC.

How are Navajo churches different from those you’ve experienced in the Midwest?

I grew up on the reservation where life is pretty laid back. No one really rushed anywhere except to make the tip-off in basketball. So church was pretty much that way too. Family is a big part of Navajo culture and church, and every family in our church had responsibilities such as cleaning the church, singing special numbers, and hosting an evening service at home. Here’s one example of how Navajo culture views family differently: a lady named Ellouise would introduce me as her “grandson,” and people who didn’t know the Navajo clan system would be surprised and say, “I didn’t know Mary (my mom) was your daughter.”

What could the larger CRC learn from Window Rock CRC?

The larger CRC can learn better collaboration with other believers in the community. In Window Rock there are several different denominations, but for major celebrations we join together. For example, the Easter sunrise service was a joint effort among all the Christian churches in the area. Every other month we had evening church service together, taking turns visiting each other’s churches.

How has growing up on the reservation affected your view of the church?

When talking about diversity people often say we are all “one in Christ” (Gal. 3:28). Though this is true, it often feels like it is used lazily as a way to ignore learning about another culture. In fact, being “one in Christ” should spur us to the complete opposite. We need to recognize that each different tradition, like that of the Navajo, has a home in Christ’s kingdom. We need to learn about and appreciate each other.

How do young people on the reservation view the church?

I have noticed that one of the church’s main strategies for appealing to contemporary culture is spending money on the latest technology and equipment. This amuses me because this is precisely what many of my peers look down upon. As one of my friends said, “Those church people are helping themselves more than helping others.” I think this is a general feeling among many young Navajos today.

What type of worship style do you enjoy most?

A common assumption is that all young people enjoy contemporary style. Not me. In fact, I didn’t even know any of the praise songs when I arrived at Biola. Give me gospel hymns in English and Navajo that tell rich and complex stories relating to God’s mercies in everyday troubles.