UTO AND NAVAJOLAND – PARTNERS IN MINISTRY

In 1918, Miss MC Peters, Miss EF Ireland, and Miss EW Thackara arrived to serve as nurses through the missionary program funded by the United Thank Offering (UTO) at San Juan Mission Hospital in Farmington, New Mexico and at the Hospital of the Good Shepherd in Fort Defiance, Arizona. The next year, UTO sent $5,000 (equal to $75,000 today when adjusted for inflation) to support the building of San Juan Hospital. These women began the long friendship between UTO and Navajoland, and we are proud to sustain and fortify the links of our ancestors whose stories are woven so closely together.

Since its founding, UTO has funded innovative mission and ministry throughout the Church. In The Episcopal Church of Navajoland, UTO has funded numerous projects that are like no others we’ve seen before or since. Each time we visit Navajoland, we are blessed by the opportunity to be in this beautiful place, walk the paths of our foremothers, and journey with the Dine. After visiting several times, moving the distribution center for UTO materials to Fort Defiance, and building the new Blue Box app with Cheii’s, the UTO Board and Staff realized that we needed to share this experience and story with others. So, it is with a grateful heart that the UTO Board and Staff, along with the people of Navajoland, launch our first journey together. We invite you to join us here in this remarkable place, to hear the stories of the people, to see sacred sites, to eat amazing food, and to be part of the beauty and hózhó of this place.

– The Staff and Board of the United Thank Offering

JOURNEY TOGETHER: APRIL 3-8, 2019

Beginning in 2019, UTO and The Episcopal Church in Navajoland will host the first journey for 10 individuals to come together with the people of the three missions in Navajoland. We will spend one day in each region, learning about the traditions and cultures of the people of the area. We will enjoy a variety of experiences: learning how to make Navajo fry bread, hiking to see the stars in the immense night sky, and hearing stories that have been handed down through generations. We’ll connect with local artisans and chefs. Also, we will engage with UTO-funded projects to see the beauty of gratitude and innovation woven together in the context of the high desert. On the last day, we’ll visit Canyon de Chelly to learn more about how the landscape has shaped the Navajo people.
WE CALL OURSELVES “THE DINE” – THE PEOPLE

We call ourselves “The Dine” – The People – and we are one of the largest Native American Indian tribes in the United States. We have lived in the Southwest for hundreds of years, with a culture embedded in the Divine Creator and a tradition of worship with roots deep in the earth. Our relationship with the United States government has been difficult: We were forcibly removed from our land in 1863 and, on The Long Walk, were marched hundreds of miles away. Our possessions were taken, our farmlands destroyed, and our livestock killed. Later, our children were taken from us, placed in boarding schools, and punished for speaking our language and practicing our culture. We have internalized much of this sorrow, and today, we experience high rates of addiction and suicide. Given our geography, unemployment and underemployment are high. Despite this, we continue to serve proudly in the United States military. Navajo military enlistment is much higher than the national average.

The Episcopal Church began a medical mission in Fort Defiance, Arizona in 1894; in Farmington, New Mexico in 1922; and in Bluff, Utah in 1942. In 1978, The Episcopal Church founded the Area Mission on 27,000 square miles in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah that are contiguous to the Navajo Nation. Until recently, our buildings were falling into disrepair and leadership and vision came from non-native clergy. Today, there is a new spirit and new energy in our land! We have reopened some churches and planted new ones. We have ordained four Navajo priests and three deacons. We have reached out to the many Navajo military veterans. We have repaired beautiful but aging buildings for rental income and program use. We are expanding retreat opportunities and building hogans for educational and ceremonial purposes.

As time passes, the world is looking to indigenous peoples and communities to teach, uphold, and engage in our history and traditions. We, in The Episcopal Church in Navajoland, have developed projects that protect Mother Earth and put us on the road to self-sufficiency: the Blue Corn Project, the Bee and Honey Project, and Shima’ of Navajoland handcrafted soaps. As we continue to teach and share our culture, we have needed to adapt to technology, so we established Cheii’s Web Development Shop. These efforts derive from our visioning together as we work to achieve our potential. Ultimately, these new beginnings will lead to a fully indigenous clergy, economic sustainability, and a deeper appreciation of the unique gifts we bring to the wider Church.

We invite you to come and see the amazing things God is doing in the midst of us in Navajoland, and we look forward to seeing you here soon in the great Navajo Nation.

– The Episcopal Church in Navajoland

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WANT TO LEARN MORE...

To find out more about how you can join the journey, please fill out this form and send it by either email or mail to UTO.

Name ____________________________________________
Address __________________________________________
City, State, Zip ____________________________
Phone Number ____________________________
(we will only call if we have questions regarding your form)
Diocese ____________________________
Parish ____________________________
Title/Role in your parish/diocese _______________ 

I AM INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT:
☐ The United Thank Offering
☐ The Episcopal Church in Navajoland
☐ Joining the Friends of Navajoland
☐ Becoming a Prayer Partner for Navajoland
☐ Bringing a mission group from my community to Navajoland
☐ Inviting a group from Navajoland to my community to teach us about their culture and traditions
☐ Attending the Journey Together, April 2019
☐ Employing Cheii’s Web Development to help with our parish website
☐ Selling Shima’ products at our church gift shop