



Greetings from the Oaks Indian Mission, Or, as you will often hear in this community, Osiyo, which is a very warm hello in Cherokee, a word that conveys the hospitality the folks here are known for. It is part of why those first missionaries from beyond the great waters were treated so respectfully once they arrived in the land of the Cherokee and welcomed into their midst. Why eventually Springplace Mission was established there in Georgia for the purpose of nurturing Cherokee children, a partnership between the church and the tribe that has survived and, indeed, thrived to the present day, well over two centuries, a rather unique history, in many ways. There may be older missions in these United States, but few of those are still fulfilling their original mandate, their calling, continuing to minister out of that same partnership created so long ago.

So it is we get excited about sharing such a story as is the Oaks, and not just because we celebrate the past and these pioneers of faith, but there is also much to give thanks for when it comes to the present moment, the state of the Oaks today. Which is what we'd like to share with you here.

First of all, though, we'd like to say thanks to the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod for the partnership we have shared over the years, stronger than ever. Not only for the various means of support, including financial, we generously receive from the Synod, itself, but also the many gifts received from congregations and individuals within this Synod. Over the past twenty years these gifts have increased significantly, for which we are most grateful, the fact our support has become more local, so to speak, closer to home. And, in addition to all of that, the prayerful support that helps sustain us in our calling to serve Native children and youth, from numerous tribes. We'd like to extend a special thanks to Bishop Girlinghouse and his faithful membership on the Oaks Indian Mission Board of Directors. He has been such a valuable presence at our quarterly meetings, serving not just in his ex-officio role, but as a deeply committed, engaged Board member, giving generously of his time and talents in order to improve the quality of this ministry.



You will notice the barn being constructed on campus in the accompanying photo, the result of money and labor generated by one congregation, for which we give great thanks. The barn now houses goats and chickens, with more animals on the way, all of which the kids are charged with tending. We are excited about this program and its potential to build a sense of responsibility that will serve the kids well in life.

Three other projects that we are particularly excited about here at the Oaks: the continued shaping of the vision and plans toward a new, state of the art cottage that will house children with special needs; restoration of the oldest structure on campus, very early twentieth century vintage, into a museum and cultural center; and the conversion of Chickasaw into a Student Life Center, equipped with laptops, a smart board, and other educational, recreational and musical resources. This latter project made possible by a grant from the Immanuel Vision Foundation, Omaha, which has been a wondrous benefactor these past few years, resulting in new vehicles to transport our children and greatly upgraded kitchen and dining facilities here on campus. We treasure our on-going partnership with the Foundation.

Finally we celebrate the fact that five Oaks Indian Mission kids will be headed for Houston this summer to the Multicultural Youth Leadership Event, first, followed by the National Youth Gathering. What a week that's going to be for these young lives! Thank you, Joy Lutheran, Tulsa, for the gift that makes this life-transforming experience possible.