



It was the first week Eagle spent at the Oaks Indian Mission. And he wasn't exactly happy about it. In fact, he'd rather have been about anywhere else at that moment, preferably with family. But, under the circumstances, that simply wasn't an option, unfortunately.

And, when Sunday rolled around, Eagle absolutely refused to set foot in the sanctuary of Eben Ezer Lutheran Church! Such a foreign-looking place and though Pastor Meredith invited him in, more than once, as did others that morning, Eagle preferred his distance, spending the hour looking in, wondering about it all.

That was then, six months ago, today Eagle can't wait to get to church on Sunday morning, sometimes the very first to arrive. It's about the most welcomed place in his young life. There, he gets to do things, important things, sacred things, in the company of his peers, as well as his elders. For instance, helping set the Lord's table, where he will then serve during the Great Thanksgiving. Or, on other occasions, he will be a greeter or an usher. At the Synod Thanksgiving service last fall, Eagle served as an acolyte, comfortable in a strange setting, in front of a packed church. Because, as he told Pastor Meredith that night when he happily volunteered, he "had this," seasoned veteran at worship that he'd become.

It's not the only story of spiritual growth and formation we have to tell here at the Oaks Indian Mission, but it's one of our favorites. Tree had been here on campus much longer than Eagle, his growth slower, more incremental, but now, as a sophomore, he serves on the Eben Ezer Church Council, respected by his elders seated around the table.

We are excited that in a few months both of these budding disciples will be boarding our large van and, along with Pastor Meredith, a couple cottage-parents and a handful of kids, headed for Montana and the American Indian and Alaska Native Lutheran Association summer camp on the Rocky Boy Reservation. Along the way, they will stop at Lutheran congregations, as well as Indian communities, including a stopover at Pine Ridge, South Dakota.

One can only imagine the things God is up to in these young lives. But we here at the Mission can't wait to witness what's next. Indeed, it's why the Oaks!

