



# NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## How can we say 'Thank You': Wanishita

Native American elders Fritz and Pat Bower led much of the Corn Harvest Festival services this Grandparents' Day weekend at Zion Spies Lutheran Church. But this started months ago, on Earth Day Fritz and Pat Bower met me with the service they had originally crafted for their congregation (initially at Reformation, Reiffton. They are now members of St. Mark's, Birdsboro and have held this service there).

Picture this 4-year-old who sits in the front every week and eagerly reached for the bells... across the aisle, from a woman in her 70's who had never been in the building before. Both danced to the hymn. The Bowers in their full regalia of Lenape and Cherokee traditional dress met the 67-year-old man with Down syndrome exuding his ever-present reverent spirit as he and his cousin, carried to the altar, the abalone shell full of copal incense which bore the sins and burdens of the congregation; to be burnt while confession and forgiveness were proclaimed... "let our prayers rise before you as incense..." (Psalm 141:2).



How can we say 'Thank you' to God for this abundant harvest of produce and community? "Wanishi Kishelëmienk, we thank you, Creator".

(In the Unami language of the Lenape)

Our congregation had practiced in choir, and worship to get accustomed to a service led in English but with phrasing familiar to Native Americans and, using the First Nations Version of Scripture. Worship included families from Scouts and Day Camp. The stew for the Harvest Festival Feast was made in part from 3-sisters-crops (corn, beans, squash) that Day Camp grew.





The rest of the pot-luck was as diverse as the body of Christ: pickled-beet eggs, wild rice, , and ... pop-corn! “You can’t have a Corn Harvest Festival without corn”. Kids made colorful corn cobs from fuzzy-sticks while learning about the varieties of native species. We partnered with Widoktadwen; committed “to promoting the visibility of Native Americans ...through community education, leadership, and activism.” Rev. Bruce Osterhout found Widoktadwen last fall, as we met with the Council to introduce a concept called 6261, as a possible way to re-invigorate our under-used buildings & acres of forest, while serving our

community in need of healing from flooding which closed a school, pandemic and rural/urban strains. Now, a year later we share church building space and programming as we work together to build Community (the literal meaning of Widoktadwen in Bodewadmimwen, the Potawatomi language) and the Way of Jesus. How can we possibly say enough thank you’s & “Wanishita” to God for these abundant gifts? We will keep planting, tending, and caring for God’s growth.



Graphic & translations courtesy of Fritz & Pat Bower

*Na yukwe nē guski kēsiki luwen.* (This now is all I have to say.)

*Kishelēmukonk kēmīlēl wēlānkuntēwakān,* (The Creator bless you and give you peace.)

*XahēliKshikāna* (Fritz Bower)

*Submitted by: Fritz & Pat Bower, Amanda Funk, and Rev. Rebecca Knox*

# CONGREGATION FINANCE WORKSHOP



November 9

9:00am to 12:00pm

Hybrid Workshop: Lutheran Center (2354 Grove Rd, Allentown) & Zoom

The NEPA Synod Finance Committee is organizing a complimentary workshop for congregation finance leaders. Registration details will be available soon through the synod’s weekly e-news and website. The workshop will also be recorded and made accessible afterward.