



This Religion column is a regular feature written for the Gallup Independent by Gallup area residents, representing different faith communities, who share their ideas about bringing a spiritual perspective into our daily lives and community issues. For information about contributing a guest column, contact Elizabeth Hardin-Burrola at The Independent: (505) 863-6811 ext. 218 or lizreligion01@yahoo.com.

Ron Polinder is the executive director of Rehoboth Christian School. He can be contacted at rpolinder@rcsnm.org or (505) 863-4412

Good News, Good Education, Good Medicine

The name Rehoboth came on the scene in the southwest a century ago. Rehoboth is a biblical name, used in Genesis 26:22, “Now the Lord has given us room, and we will flourish in the land.” Throughout the school year, we have been reflecting on this 100 years of history. It is quite a story!

When one looks at the big picture, it is worth noting that those early Christian Reformed missionaries, in spite of some miscalculations, did an enormous amount of good work. The endurance of the name Rehoboth in this community testifies to that and tells a story of vision, grit and faithfulness. Who of us can stand in the footsteps of those pioneers?

The motive of the Christian Reformed Church back in the 1890’s was simple and pure—they wanted to live out the Great Commission of the Christian church. Part of the response of becoming a disciple of Jesus is to share the good news that God visited this planet in the form of his Son, who offered himself to reconcile us with the Father, to make salvation and abundant living available to all who follow Him.

The story of Jesus has been circulating the globe for 2,000 years. It is a compelling story, one that cannot be easily dismissed, as much as we may try. It is a story that has changed lives, transformed cultures and shaped the course of history. In spite of it coming to the Navajo and Zuni people via flawed messengers, the fact is that here too it has had significant influence on individuals, families and communities. This divine conspiracy, if faced honestly and joined, demands “my soul, my life, my all,” as the old hymn says.

A lot of people are intrigued by religion. They sometimes dabble, even get romantic about it. But they get nervous when they realize its implications. That it would affect my politics, how I do business, where my kids go to school—well, that is getting carried away.

But Christianity, properly understood, is comprehensive. It was a comprehensive gospel that prompted those early Christian Reformed pioneers to recognize that a spoken word was not enough: a Christian understanding of life has implications for how we live. The need for education for Native people in the early 1900’s was obvious, with so much economic and political change underway. And not just any education would do—it would need to be an education informed by the life and teaching of Christ.

Thus the start of Rehoboth Mission School in 1903, just seven years after the decision was made by the Christian Reformed Church to send out missionaries. The name was



This Religion column is a regular feature written for the Gallup Independent by Gallup area residents, representing different faith communities, who share their ideas about bringing a spiritual perspective into our daily lives and community issues. For information about contributing a guest column, contact Elizabeth Hardin-Burrola at The Independent: (505) 863-6811 ext. 218 or lizreligion01@yahoo.com.

Ron Polinder is the executive director of Rehoboth Christian School. He can be contacted at rpolinder@rcsnm.org or (505) 863-4412

changed in the early 70's to Rehoboth Christian School when a majority Native school board and local parents themselves took over the day-to-day operation of the school. So now for 100 years, what started as good news has led to good education as Rehoboth lives out its reputation in this community to deliver the goods, academically, morally, spiritually.

Another seven years would produce yet another institution that marks the landscape of our community. Again, it was obvious in those early years that the health needs of students and families were enormous. In 1910, a health clinic was opened which soon became a functioning Rehoboth Mission Hospital. It became Rehoboth Christian Hospital in the 60's, and in 1983 became Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services. An awful lot of good medicine has poured out of those institutions, delivered by doctors and nurses working on behalf of the Great Physician.

Those old-timers understood the good news holistically. The Christian faith needed to take broad strokes and speak through education and health care as well as in the church.

Further, they did not give up easily. The challenges and setbacks would likely make us moderns shrink back. They did not have mere opinions—for you do not build churches and schools and hospitals with opinions. No, these were people of conviction! And their convictions have blessed thousands in the greater Gallup and reservation communities for a century with good news, good education and good medicine.

It is a great story, the story of a people and a church that was called by God, that prayed and gave and served. And God gave them room and caused them to flourish in the land. And the Gallup community, and far beyond, have embraced this legacy and made it their own. That is what heeding good news will do!

Ron Polinder
Executive Director
Rehoboth Christian School

Rehoboth Christian School will be observing its 100th anniversary with a community celebration on June 20-22. All former students, graduates, supporters and friends are invited to participate in the schedule of events, which will be publicized in the local media.