Christine Holler-Dinsmore

There is a video of a bald eagle attempting to steal a rabbit from a young fox <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTKMpxEAzXw>. That fox hangs on tenaciously to its bunny. The time leading up to becoming a pastor and being a pastor for the Fort Peck Reservation, at times has felt like that fox’s fierce determination. Holding on to the core of the Gospel in the face of pressures from the *perceived* expectations of Church-culture, the ever present sense of the legacy of racism and cultural triumphalism in the context of the First Nation people, and the devastation that has been visited upon these people which has resulted in poverty, violence, and addictions. *But,* that ***Gospel core***, which is so womanly, is what makes one *more* than a survivor. It makes a *warrior*. It is the womanly heart that cares down to the marrow about people and their flourishing. Is that not the core of the Gospel, that the Creator of the universe became flesh to set the children free, so they may flourish? Is it not the way of women to nourish, not to admonish, or punish, or blame, *and* is that not the way of the Creator in Jesus Christ?

Early after my ordination, I fasted on a hill overlooking the Missouri River. As I sat there, tears streamed, I could not understand why I had so much grief in my heart. I related this

to an elder, she told me that the women had sat up there crying at the loss of so many to smallpox. We cry today, at the loss of so many to Meth and other chemical addictions. The connecting of old and new threads and cloth forms the quilt of community. **We** make the quilt.

It is the caring not about the exactness of worship ritual, but the hearts touched by it; not numbers, but individuals, not success or failures, but faithfulness. Each brother and sister carefully *with love* stitched into a beautiful quilt of a community. This is the heart of Spirit of Life ministry. This is Gospel. This is what we tenaciously hold onto.