



The Alaska United Methodist Conference

ERBELE ETCHINGS

Spring 2015

Dear Friends,

It seems strange to say that Alaska was a lot warmer than much of the United States this past winter. As we heard news of blizzards and sub-zero temperatures we were basking in balmy Southeast Alaska. While others were buried in snow we nearly set a record for rain with over 30 inches in January.

As we write the city is again sprucing up for the next million tourists. The rush is on after the April 28th storm that brought with it 110 mph winds. The storm caused lots of property damage and school was canceled for the first time in 40 years.

The first cruise ship arrived on May 1.

During Lent the church used the theme of "Up". We borrowed the idea from Imagine No Malaria which developed resources around the themes of give up, take up, lift up and look up. The Alaska United Methodist Conference has a goal of raising \$150,000 for the Imagine No Malaria Campaign. It is likely that the goal will be reached for this important program.

We went a step further using many words frequently associated with the word up. For example: confession is time to 'fess' up or commitment is time to sign up.



Easter morning's theme was, Rise UP from spiritual slumber, Open UP your hearts and Lift UP your voice in acclimation.



2 children and 4 adult baptisms, 4 professions of faith and 6 new members made Easter Sunday worship truly a time of celebration.



Emmaline wasn't so sure she wanted to give up her bag of treasures before being baptized.

First City Homeless Services – Day Shelter

WW says: "I come here because it is the only place in town where I can be safe. I mean safe from the rain and safe from the bars. That means safe from the cops too. Being here means I won't get in trouble."

WW is speaking directly to the mission of the day shelter, which is to offer the homeless a safe non-judgmental shelter and referrals to local resources. Often times being 'safe' means shelter from our own predilections. There isn't a 'dry tank' at the police station so the officers have been bringing non-combative intoxicated people to the shelter to dry out. Chris gives them a pillow and a corner on the floor to sleep.

We continue to be amazed at the growing support for the day shelter. Churches from across the UMC give through the Advance. Most recently Newton, MA and the women of Olivet, SD sent generous gifts – thank you.

The State of Alaska DHSS, the Borough and the City of Ketchikan have each provided grants for 2015. Individual contributions come in all year long and seem to come just at the right minute.

The Ketchikan Gymnastics Club delivered \$1,000 worth of peanut butter and jelly. The First Bank of Ketchikan has a granting program with a project incentive attached. It works like this: the Gymnastics Club needs new floor matting. They applied to First Bank for a \$1,000.00 grant and chose as their project to collect p-b-j and then make lunches for 4 Saturdays at the Day Shelter's Brown Bag lunch program.

Beginning September the day shelter would like expand its daily hours of operation and be open 7 days a week. Both the congregation and FCHS recognize the need and are negotiating ways to provide shelter on Sundays and at the same time not lock the church out of use of the social hall.

Empty Bowls for hunger is the Day Shelter's largest fundraiser.

This year the bowls were 'thrown' on the wheels at the high school. Through Facebook a call went out to



anyone who wanted to help make the bowls. As the event has gained notoriety the tickets are easier to sell. 14

restaurants supplied the soup, the soup bowls were beautiful, the Free Radicals blue grass band played and the people stayed to visit. Next year we will have to find a larger venue.

People choose their own bowl.



268 tickets
14 variety of soup
\$6,500.



Agnes, the newest board member, served soup for 3 hours.

Sharing our bounty with other agencies who feed hungry people. We received a call from Food Service of America asking if the day shelter would collect and distribute the remaining food at the end of the Hospitality Food Exhibit.



Four car and 2 truck loads later we sorted and divided food to share with Park Avenue Temporary Home, the Salvation Army, Women in Safe Homes, Senior Services and Ketchikan Indian Community Senior Services.



UNALASKA UMC

Unalaska is located in the heart of the Aleutian chain islands. The Methodist Church has had a presence here since the early 1900's and operated the Jessie Lee Home for orphaned Unangan (also known as Aleut) children.

Evelyn is serving as the interim pastor at the Unalaska UMC April 12 - June 1, 2015. The pastor left April 6th and the congregation will be meeting without an onsite pastor for the next year. The plan is for the congregation to meet 6 weeks by itself and have a clergy person or certified lay person fly in for 2-3 weeks. Evelyn hopes to return in October to encourage the group and teaching. Throughout this next year the team will seek out ways the church can be in transformational ministry to itself and the community. A challenge it will be but it is a challenge they readily accept.

There are fourteen members of this congregation (a family will leave June 1 making us 14). Three of them are 50+. The others are young adults. All are professionals who have come to work for the city, school department, medical and the fishing industry.

We read so much about Gen X and Millennials leaving the church in droves because they're tired of the traditional church. Yet, here we have 17 men and women who have been worshipping together for 2-7 years. When asked why they would go to a church with pastor problems, financial problems and a broken furnace Heather has the answer, "I come here because my family is welcome here. If I didn't come to the UMC I wouldn't be going to church at all." Amber says, "These are my friends. I know everyone. I like service here. I'm not comfortable with charismatic worship."

The Unalaska UMC is a mission within the Alaska Mission. This connotation means they are unable to cover their expenses. Prior to this last clergy appointment the pastor actively raised support for his salary and the operating budget of the church. That did not happen this last year and the bills attest to it.

The congregation is a reflection of the ebb and flow of the general population. People tenure here for 3-7 years. This reality makes long term planning difficult and finances precarious.

The treeless and barren landscape gives the clue as to what the weather is like. The people say there are 3 certainties: people come, people go and the wind always blows.

During her tenure Evelyn has been addressing the 'now what'. She is preaching and orienting the group to a variety of resources for worship and Bible study. She is also taking inventory of the church and parsonage property. We already know that the parsonage hot water heater and furnace are not working.

We are inviting you to help the Unalaska Church this next year. 14 people cannot cover all the expenses of maintaining a church and parsonage. Would you please consider a financial gift to the **Unalaska church – Advance #931855** - thank you.

As always we thank you for your commitment to living out God's mission at home and in Alaska.

Here are 4 Advance Specials which we suggest you consider entering into ministry with:

- Unalaska UMC # 931855**
- Evelyn's Salary Support # 108322**
- Teri's Salary Support # 108312**
- Downtown Ministry – Day Shelter #3020487**

Our hearts are filled with gratitude for what Christ has done and for friends new and old. As the apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians: "We thank God for every remembrance of you."

Teri and Ev

Teri and Evelyn Erbele
erbele@gmail.com everbele@yahoo.com
www.ktnumc.org

PO Box 8515 / 400 Main Street
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

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