

2018 District Convention

Alaska Circuit Update

Faith Lutheran, Anchorage

Iglesia Luterana de Fe en Cristo, Anchorage

Pastor Chris Ewings

Principal Tom Zarnstorff

As we celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation this past year, I often wondered if a monk named Martin ever dreamed that his 95 Theses would affect saints of God in Alaska five centuries later. But at Faith *Lutheran* Church in Anchorage, we gave thanks to God for the changes He brought about through Martin Luther to restore the pure teaching of the Gospel. Both in English and in Spanish, we rejoiced in the message of freedom and peace that has been passed down to us through the centuries all the way to the Last Frontier. The ministries that we have conducted throughout the year as a church and school are a testament to the grace of our God.

We saw the powerful Word of God at work among us over the last 12 months. A big highlight is our catechism class. We had 8 students attend class in Spanish on Monday nights, 28 individuals attend class for public school students on Tuesday evenings and 14 students from Faith Lutheran School on Tuesday and Thursday mornings for a total of 50 students. The great majority of these kids do not have spiritual support or guidance from their parents. Attendance each week is hit or miss but, by God's grace, His Word is finding a home in new hearts and lives. Making Life Better classes have reached more and more people as well with 10 adult confirmations. All said and done, our congregation grew by about 15 percent this year.

We continue to cast a big net in Anchorage, looking for ways to reach the souls of our community. A weekly Toddler Time, bi-monthly children's activities, and quarterly outreach events brought many hundreds of people to our own doorstep. Our summer offerings of soccer camp, flag football camp, STEM camp and outdoor adventure camp are finding success in reaching the many unchurched people of Anchorage with the Gospel of Jesus. Likewise, we have seen a large number of first time visitors joining us in worship—we had at least one in 46 of 52 weeks.

Another notable highlight was the formation of a Strategic Planning Committee. Consisting of a representative group from within our church of 7 laypersons and 1 pastor, we met dozens of times throughout the year to work on a road map for our congregation. We divided our ministry into 5 categories: preaching, teaching, inreach, outreach, and school, and conducted a thorough evaluation of each. The final result after is a living document with prioritized outcomes and objectives for our ministry and guide to help us achieve them. It's my prayer that the whole congregation at Faith, from our leadership to our laypeople, would be motivated by the Gospel and filled with zeal to go about the work of our Lord as we lay out some exciting plans for our present and future ministry: alive in Christ to share life in Christ.

At the recommendation of the Strategic Planning Committee and the urging of our District leadership, we applied for a Board for Home Missions grant for financial assistance to Call a second pastor and our proposal was accepted. The Board for Home Missions approved grant for three years to subsidize our ministry and authorized us to Call a bilingual minister of the Gospel to further our efforts at Iglesia Luterana de Fe en Cristo and Faith Lutheran Church. We thank our God for this wonderful news and blessing.

We continue to ask our God to fan our faith into flame as He uses us to live what we believe and share the Word He's entrusted to us this year and until Christ comes again. Or, as we joyfully proclaim using the words of hymn 293, "God's Word is our great heritage and shall be ours forever; to spread its light from age to age shall be our chief endeavor." To God alone be the glory!

Faith Hmong Lutheran, Anchorage

Pastor Pao Moua

Another year has gone by and another year of being blessed! Faith Hmong continue to give thanks for the support and prayers for this ministry. Though we don't always see the results we would like to see as we serve the Hmong community. We are happy to share that this year we double in membership since June 2017.

What a blessing it is to have on average 30 people in worship service to averaging 75-80 this past 5 months. We were blessed to have 15 new families joined us since early November 2017.

With this blessing in such a short time we had to scramble to re-evaluate how to serve members of Faith Hmong. What a good problem to have indeed! We pray that the Lord will continue to use Faith Hmong to share the Gospel message to the many Hmong still that is unchurch.

We continue to look for opportunity to share the gospel to others. The end of June we will be hosting our sport camp. We pray that this will be an event that will give us the opportunity to meet new Hmong families in the community. We look forward to the summer time events to invite and also share.

It sure has been a good year sharing and seeing God's answer prayer for the Church. Please continue to keep Faith Hmong in your prayers. We give thanks for your continued support and prayers.

In Christ,

Pao Moua

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran, Anchorage

Pastor Fred Voss

Remembering the blessings of our God! During the past year our congregation finally received its first ever certificate of occupancy. Our remodel/addition to our church building is finished and we are enjoying the new changes inside which include an enlarged narthex, a lift so that all people can access all parts of the building, extra classroom, meeting room, pastor's office, sprinkler system and etc. One side benefit we have seen of the project is that members have taken it upon themselves to improve our landscape around the church. The congregation hosted ACPaT last Fall, has conducted Christmas and Easter outreach, Hunter Education classes, added "Tithley" an online option for giving and is currently updating our streaming/archival system with new cameras and audio. We are planning a summer block party for our neighbors. Shepherd of the Hills continues to support work on Kodiak Island with regular visits to serve Coast Guard families and non-military around the island.

Peace Lutheran Church Little Lambs of Peace Preschool, Eagle River

***Pastor Brian Hackmann
Teacher/Director Jennifer Keller***

God's blessings are clear and abundant on our ministry in Eagle River. Another successful preschool year has recently come to a close. We are looking forward to another busy summer of reaching out to our community with the gospel of Jesus.

We are gearing up to host the second annual Path to Victory Soccer Camp. Last year we were blessed to have 50 kids enrolled in our soccer camp and we are praying for even more opportunities to teach the youth of our community some soccer skills, but more importantly to share with them their far bigger need in Jesus.

We have our Vacation Bible School planned for the last week of June and are expecting to surpass our record attendance of 150 kids. It's been a joy to step back and watch God bless these efforts and watch the Spirit work in the hearts of the kids and the lives of their families as we are privileged to serve him and his people.

We have two groups coming up this summer. The Mueller family are coming again to host their Path to Victory Soccer Camp. We also have a group of 7 kids and 2 chaperones from Wisconsin Lutheran High School travelling to Alaska to help with our camps. In addition we have our summer vicar and his wife, so we are blessed to have a lot of "hands on deck" to carry out this work that the Lord has laid before us.

The enrollments are coming in a good clip for our preschool year beginning in the Fall. We pray that our summer outreach will garner some more support and interest in our preschool that we might maximize the potential for our school.

The congregations in Alaska are planning a WELS Weekend at Camp Luther from July 20-22 (You are all invited!) where we will get together for fellowship and then a Sunday morning outdoor worship service. This has been in the planning stages for sometime but we were finally able to put some dates on the calendar.

We have a record breaking number of kids in our confirmation class coming in the Fall. The biggest class (at least in recent history) is 4 students. We have 8 kids joining to learn the truths of God's Word from Luther's Catechism this Fall. That's an exciting thing for our small family!!

We are blessed to walk together as a circuit, a district and a church body!! Thank you for the support that you might not even know that you offer. Join us in praying for opportunity and blessing on our efforts in Jesus' name to reach the lost!

Light of the World Lutheran, Fairbanks

Pastor Jason Strong

The Light of the World's abundant grace and mercy continue to shine over his people here in Fairbanks, the furthest north WELS church in North America. We continue to enjoy improving the ministries we currently carry out while eagerly exploring new areas where we can both reach out to the community and build up our members at Light of the World.

Our VBS continues to be our most popular event in the summer, where we can get the most exposure to the community and also where we have the largest percentage of members volunteering in some way to host this program. This year, we had about 45 children attend during the week (a little down from the last couple of years), but we continue to hear from nonmember parents how much their kids enjoy our VBS and look forward to it each year.

A new program we started last year was a 'Mornings with Mommy' group, where we invite moms with toddler-aged kids to come, connect with other moms in the community, and have a safe and educational environment for their kids to explore and play in. We've had various levels of success, as some months we only had a couple of kids, while others we had almost 20 kids. We'll continue to iron out the wrinkles and hopefully build on our experiences in year 2.

One of the most important steps that the congregation as a whole is taking, as of the beginning of the year, is moving from a "reactionary maintenance" sort of mindset to thinking more about our future and what kind of ministry we want to leave for future generations. We've put together a steering/long-range planning committee to start exploring different ministry opportunities and to lead the congregation towards a new vision. The goal for the summer is for the group to have conversations with members, asking them to dream about what we could be at Light of the World, and then in the fall, we'll begin work on creating a vision for our future.

Our Member Ministry Team has deemed this the year where we throw a bunch of different member outing ideas at the wall and see what sticks. They're hoping to provide enough variety for members that everyone will find at least one event that they like. Our events include game nights, a women's paint night, a murder mystery, a gun range outing, floating down the river, a BBQ cook-off, bowling, etc. So far, a good number of those outings have been quite popular with members.

We do have our struggles as well. Fairbanks has always been a transient community, and our congregation makeup has always followed that trend. This year, we've had and are having some active families moving away, including some of our strong leaders. While these losses can be tough on a smaller congregation like ours, it also provides other opportunities for members to step up into leadership roles, and it gives us encouragement to go to our loving Father in prayer that he continues to provide for our church family.

As always, we at Light of the World thank you for your partnership in the gospel, as well as the prayers you pray on our behalf, both in our successes and in our struggles. You are in ours as well!

Christ Lutheran, Juneau & Grace Lutheran, Sitka

Pastor Ted Lambert (Vacancy Pastor)

Christ has been blessed to have Pastors Andrew Martens and Ted Lambert fill the greater part of the vacancy (with other Alaska pastors also filling in before and after) until such time as their new resident pastor, CRM Cale Mead arrives. Cale's installation will take place Thursday, July 12th. Praise God for the blessings he's given to Christ, Juneau!

Grace Lutheran Church and School, Kenai

Pastor Rob Guenther Principal Ryan Holper

It is a time of transition at Grace Lutheran Church and school. With $\frac{2}{3}$ of our staff turning over, there will be some changes ahead. Our two preschool teachers have retired and we've called two new teachers from within the congregation. I've accepted the Call to serve as associate pastor of St. John's Lutheran, New Ulm. That's left not only a pastoral vacancy, but also a vacancy for our half-day kindergarten that my wife taught. We praise God that he has already provided the next resident pastor of Grace in CRM Ben Phelps as well as our next kindergarten teacher in his wife, Molly. Ben's ordination and installation is scheduled for July 15th at 5pm. Everyone is excited to meet the Phelps and are working hard on some repairs, updates, and maintenance on the parsonage before he arrives. Please continue to keep Grace in your prayers during this time of transition!

King of Kings Lutheran, Wasilla

Pastor Robb Robbert

God has blessed us at King of kings with another year of His grace.

Our major debt to CEF is now under \$100,000. "Debt Free by '23" is going well!!

God has blessed us with an increase in attendance and members.

We are planning on partnering with Evergreen Lutheran High School to start a distance learning high school experience that will culminate in an actual high school diploma for the student. We are so thankful to Evergreen for undertaking this adventure.

We now have heads for our Stewardship and Evangelism programs and they are really active.

God has sent some different cultures through our doors. I am using the 360Now curriculum that I am given to use to teach Chinese children English for my local Chinese students. I also have a German Family that has been attending. We had Prof. Sorum come up with a Ukrainian seminarian to see if the group that we had been reaching out to had potential. It became apparent that there was a group within this group that were associated with Pentecostal beliefs that were influencing the entire group. We are starting over with a smaller group of families that desire to continue our study in Luther's Small Catechism. Similarly, we have had to break off work with another group of people who were renting out our fellowship hall because instead of being an independent group that wanted to work with our congregation in working through BIC and the Small Catechism. They decided they were more on the side of the Westminster Catechism. In talking with our new mission counselor, Rev. Matt Vogt, he shared with me how his former parish did work with other cultures in the Las Vegas area that will be helpful in our future outreach efforts.

We have been doing upkeep projects that are beautifying our campus (interior painting, new outdoor carpet, stained glass).

God is good!! Next year Jerusalem!!

In Christ, Robbin Robbert, King of Kings , Wasilla

