

June 2015 Alaska Circuit Update

Faith Lutheran, Anchorage

Pastor Chris Ewings

“Your word, O LORD, is eternal; Your faithfulness continues through all generations.” —Psalm 119:89,90

We have numerous reasons to give thanks to our God for His blessings in the year gone by. The psalmist gives us two for which we may especially rejoice: the Lord has spoken His eternal Word among us, His people, over the past year. Secondly, we have great reason to praise our faithful God Who has been at our side to guide us and bless us as we minister to others. We give thanks to the Lord that we have His eternal message and that He promises to remain faithful to His Church now and always!

In the Fall of 2014, Pastor Oldfield underwent back surgery and in February, he was diagnosed with a brain tumor. We thank our God that the Lord continues to bless Pastor Oldfield's recovery. On the Sunday following Pastor Oldfield's surgery, all those who attended worship were the recipients of an unlikely blessing: Pastor's smile as he attended worship with Colleen. Pastor Oldfield continues to preach the Gospel to his flock every time he shows up at church, living his faith as his words and actions testify to the hope that he has in Christ. Faith was also blessed to have the services of Pastor Mark Wendland and Brian Hackmann to assist in the preaching and teaching of God's eternal Word.

Faith began a new ministry called Eat. Sing. Pray. last summer. On Wednesday nights during the summer months, the people of Faith got together to share a meal, sing their favorite hymns and join together in prayers for the church, for the community and for the world. Also, several small group Bible studies took place in the homes of members and our women's group met regularly throughout the year and was a great blessing to all who were involved. Additionally, Faith began offering a program aimed at reaching the young parents of our community called Toddler Time. Many, many people have participated in this program and several enrolled in our preschool.

Our faithful Lord with His eternal Word has worked powerfully among us to accomplish His purpose. Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His love endures forever!

Iglesia Luterana de Fe en Cristo, Anchorage

Pastor Chris Ewings

The Book of Zephaniah describes the work of the prophet as a man who goes to the street with a lamp, seeking out all who will hear God's Word. That has been the task of the good people of Iglesia Luterana de Fe en Cristo throughout the past year as well. It has been our goal to shine the light of

Christ into the lives of as many as the Lord gives us the opportunity. Over the last year we have seen the Gospel of Jesus Christ go into the homes of refugees, assassins, drug lords, male prostitutes—sinners of all sorts—and, thanks to Jesus, all sorts of saints. We have seen the Lord Jesus accomplish the work which He promised through the powerful working of His Word.

We continue to use the homes of our members as outposts for Evangelism. Over the course of the year, we've been able to have small group Bible studies in the homes of several members. These opportunities have allowed me to get to know the friends and relatives of our members and establish relationships with them in a non-confrontational environment. We continued our use of casacultos, or home worship services this year during the season of Advent and Lent. We distributed Advent wreaths to all the homes of our members and prospects together with a devotional book and held a short worship service at each home demonstrating how to use them. We conducted several small scale English as a second language classes in 2014, catering to many immigrants who had recently arrived in Alaska. We also were blessed to host the General Consulate of Peru at our church to offer services for our community. As we sought out many with the Word of God, our parents were most instrumental in aiding us in our efforts to teach their children. Our Catechism class boomed from 4 students in the early part of the year to as many as 14 by the end.

The Lord continues to seek out His people here in Anchorage. He uses us to go to all places of this city, shining the Light of His Word into the homes and hearts of many. He has sought out His people in 2014 and we have the certainty and confidence that He will continue to seek out many to be called His Own. God grant us His grace and mercy now and in the future as we go boldly to the streets, seeking the lost with the lamp of God's Word!

Faith Hmong Lutheran, Anchorage

Pastor Pao Moua

Faith Hmong Lutheran church has had a good year along with some challenges along the way this past year. During this past year we were able to elect a new president along with five other men to help lead in the different area of ministry in the church. Though many of these men are new to the area of ministry they are helping serve. They are very eager to help serve in any way they can. As we continue to reach the Hmong people in the community. We are looking for different ways to reach them through sports and outreach. We will be holding our very first soccer camp at the end of June and a couple more outreach for the rest of the year. Thank you all for keeping Faith Hmong in your prayers and helping this ministry so that the many Hmong who needs it the most is able to hear the sweet message of the Gospel.

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran, Anchorage

Pastor Fred Voss

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran has continued to serve those in outlying areas with the streaming of our services and periodic visits. Pastor Voss has been active as a Police and Fire Chaplain for Anchorage Police and Fire and still makes visit to Kodiak to serve our Coast Guard. The congregation is very close to starting its building project. The loan has been secured and we are hoping to break ground perhaps this month. It will take approximately 8 months to complete the project if all goes well. The project will increase our building by adding more class rooms, a lift to allow access to our entire building for all people and enlarging the narthex area. We thank God for his many blessings

Peace Lutheran Church

Little Lambs of Peace Preschool, Eagle River, Alaska

Pastor Brian Hackmann

Teacher/Director Miss Jennifer Keller

The blessings of the Lord are present and obvious at Peace in Eagle River. As I type we are finishing up the school year for our preschool, a year of transition and excitement for our school. It was the first year of our new program – offering full day and half day options in an effort to better serve our community. We had 16 students this year and are hoping to fill the room at 20 for the coming year. Miss Keller has a year of experience as our teacher and we are excited to have an even better year this coming year. We are planning to offer an extended care program to open our program also to the families where both parents work.

We are beginning to plan for two major events this summer. The first is a Preschool adventure Day Camp and the second is our annual Vacation Bible School. We aren't sure what to expect for our Day Camp, but we are gearing up for a huge turnout for VBS. We have ordered materials for 175 children because that is about as many as our facilities can support. While that will be a huge number of kids, if the up trend in enrollment continues, our 150 from last year will easily swell to that number. It's a great blessing to have to have that discussion – How do we facilitate all this growth?

Worship attendance and membership are down just a bit this year, largely because we haven't had the military transfers that we've grown accustomed to. We are working at growing the family closer to one another through fellowship activities and then we pray for God's help to grow the church numerically, that many more souls might hear the love of Jesus.

We are eagerly looking forward to the plans and blessings that God has in store for our family at Peace!!

Light of the World Lutheran, Fairbanks

Pastor Jason Strong

As we enter the season in Fairbanks where the daylight seems unending, we look back on the previous year and are reminded how the only thing in this life that is truly unending is God's love and mercy and blessings. We have clearly seen that at Light of the World in the past year. This year was the year of a couple of firsts – we had our first student confirmed in over 6 years and our women's group (GLOW) hosted their first AK WELS Women's Retreat in Fairbanks. The retreat was extremely edifying for a majority of the ladies in our congregation.

God's blessings even shine through some of our darker moments. We endured a rough patch while working through an emotional church discipline case, but now our "family" has been strengthened because of it and member involvement is steadily increasing. Our Elders group has also become more active as a result. We also experienced a sharp decrease in average attendance and had to go back to one Sunday service, but now we are routinely filling the church for Sunday worship.

And, in his grace, God continues to let the light of his gospel shine through our church. We are once again hosting our annual VBS, which has been well-received in the past, and we are hoping for 40+ campers again this summer. Our membership continues to turn over on a regular basis with the transient community, but God seems to have a way of replacing one great family moving away with another great family moving in. We continue to look for ways we can support the community around us, and, ultimately, look for opportunities to give witness to people about our Light of the World!

Christ Lutheran, Juneau

Pastor Steve Wall

Over the past 12 months, God has continued to bless us and challenge us at Christ Lutheran, as we work while it is day to proclaim the gospel of Christ and prepare God's people for works of service.

One year ago we became a dual parish with Grace Lutheran in Sitka and they have been helping us financially to improve our online streaming quality. This has been an ongoing struggle, but little by little we have figured out how to implement better equipment. God is good!

Our biggest outreach event of the year is our Live Nativity in December, which went especially well this year due to good weather and a bit of advertising. Over 3 nights we had 270 vehicles drive through our parking lot. God is good!

One big blessing and opportunity that continues to develop: the city of Juneau is looking to develop the land behind our church for housing, and they need to go through our property to access it. We are in the process of a land swap trading unusable marshland for good land. We will also get an

off-highway driveway and free hookup to city sewer. Best of all, within a few years we will have a growing mission field right out our front door as people move into the new neighborhood. God is good!

The biggest struggle we face is the loss of members and the inevitable strain it puts on the already tight church budget when they move away. The church council has also taken a few hits: Out of 5 councilmen, one moved out in January, another passed away in March, and a third is moving away this month. We thank God for those who have stepped in to fill those positions. In the face of these challenges we look to God to provide for his church what it needs and to be good stewards of the resources he provides. God is good! All the time.

Grace Lutheran Church and School, Kenai

Pastor Rob Guenther

Principal Ryan Holper

God continues to shower us with his Grace here in Kenai with blessing upon blessing! Our school year has drawn to a close with enrollment projections for the 2015-16 school year already suggesting that we will have our 7th straight year of increased enrollment. With a tuition discount incentive, school parents continue to fill the BIC with a few more joining here and there.

Our biggest struggle has been members leaving due to moves “outside” (to the “Lower 48”) and some of the financial struggles that can bring. Nevertheless, by God’s grace and the generous support of our members, we continue to make ends meet and pay the bills.

As the weather warms, we look forward to some time in the sun, our Path to Victory Soccer Camp (with 85 campers already signed up as of this writing), to more summer fellowship activities (hiking and camping outings) and to some great fishing!

King of Kings Lutheran, Wasilla

Pastor Robb Robbert

Another year of God’s grace! This past year we had a homeschool group meet in our fellowship room every Monday (a couple of our families are a part of that). We also have a Mary Kay group who comes in every Thursday and it smells really nice in the fellowship room on Friday mornings. I have had the distinct pleasure of watching the Holy Spirit do His amazing work through the Gospel. I have two cases this year that nearly bring me to tears and I thank God for the unusual privilege of being in the public ministry. The matriarch of the congregation went home to be with Jesus last Fall so applications are being accepted through June 30 for that position. God has blessed me to be able to be out in the community and I am the president of the Wasilla-Knik Historical Society; Spiritual

advisor for the board of HeartReach Pregnancy Center; Working with Special Olympics for track and field and for Bocce and on the board for Mat-Su Special Olympics Community (through this Special Olympics connection I am able to start a Jesus Cares Camp at Camp Luther July 5-8).