

June 2016 Alaska Circuit Update

Faith Lutheran, Anchorage

Iglesia Luterana de Fe en Cristo, Anchorage

Pastor Chris Ewings

Principal Bryan Schneck

While the eternal Lord has remained the same over the past year, Faith Lutheran Church and School have seen countless changes. Our God has been our constant, guiding us through the times with His steady hand and tender love. The road He has led us down has brought some unexpected twists and turns, but the Lord has shown His grace and glory at every turn.

Last year, Pastor Jim Oldfield learned that he had a brain tumor. With time, he and his family came to realize that he would no longer be able to continue his duties as a shepherd at Faith. The Lord used Jim for 23 years to preach His Word with power and passion at Faith but now he preaches the Gospel in his work behind the scenes, giving words of encouragement and sharing his wisdom with the younger generations. In July, Faith called Pastor Christopher Ewings to serve both the English speaking and Spanish speaking congregations.

Likewise, there have been several changes at Faith Lutheran School. Rachel Wendland accepted a Call to serve in Minnesota and Melissa Mittelstadt, a graduate from MLC, was called to be our new preschool director. At the end of the school year, Bryan and Deanna Schneck accepted Calls to serve in Michigan. We thank the good Lord that He blessed Faith Lutheran School with these gifted workers in the time they served among us.

With school enrollment lower than anticipated, the congregation voted to consolidate the upper grades and place one Call for a kindergarten teacher. In the coming year, Tom Zarnstorff will teach grades 5-8 and serve as the interim principal. Cindy Zarnstorff will teach grades 1-4. The Lord saw fit to send us Leah Snyder from MLC to be our Kindergarten teacher.

The Lord is blessing our efforts to build our school from the bottom up. Our preschool ministry continues to flourish, reaching our capacity. We have a large influx of kindergarten students enrolled for next year. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless this ministry and we hope to Call another teacher next year.

Our building is seeing even more change. The municipality of Anchorage required our church and school to install a sprinkler system by the end of 2017. While the installation cost is quite hefty, it gives us the opportunity to remodel our classrooms as well as parts of our church.

It's not only faces and buildings that have changed over the last year; the eternal Word of the Living God is changing hearts and lives among us at Faith. Our church has taken an aggressive approach with outreach, always seeking more, new and different ways to hold out the Gospel. Through

canvassing and door hanging, soccer camp and science camp, service projects for the homeless and the helpless, ministry for the young and old, small group Bible studies in members' homes and opportunities at strangers' doorsteps, the Lord is putting His powerful Word to work. Rarely does a week go by that we don't have a first time visitor in worship. In 2016, we have had 2 adult baptisms, 3 adult confirmations as well as 11 teens confirmed. The Lord is blessing these efforts as well.

We are blessed and thankful to know that the Lord has kept His Word and continues to give ever more reasons for the people of Faith to be a people of faith. To Him be the glory now and forever!

Faith Hmong Lutheran, Anchorage

Pastor Pao Moua

Greetings Brothers of the PNW!

Faith Hmong Lutheran is glad to share with you another year of God's blessings to this ministry. This past year has been a year where Faith Hmong has worked very hard in reaching out to the Hmong community through our outreach events. Though we haven't seen the results we would like to see, we are happy to say that we have had many contacts with the community and many have heard the Gospel message with our efforts. As we prepare for this summer to reach to many more, we pray that the Lord will lead many more people to our path to share with them the love of our Savior.

We give thanks to the DMB and Home missions for funding this ministry for another two years. We also give thanks to the brothers and sisters in faith for their generous offering to make this ministry possible. Faith Hmong and I would also like to thank the DMB for the help in securing a parsonage for my family to do ministry here in Alaska. Ministry to the Hmong community would not be possible without all support and we give thanks!

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 is active as a Police and Fire Chaplain for Anchorage Police and Fire Departments and still makes visits to Kodiak to serve our Coast Guard and scattered saints on the Island.

During this past year Shepherd of the Hills has been blessed with the renovation and addition to our worship facility. Construction began last August and is currently wrapping up. The congregation was unable to use our facility for approximately 4.5 months from November through most of March.

During this time our sister congregation, Faith Lutheran, graciously allowed us to use their sanctuary on Saturday afternoons for worship. The first Sunday we were back in our sanctuary was on Easter.

Renovations included expanding the narthex area, new entryway to the church, additional ADA compliant bathrooms, sprinkler system for the entire building, added landscaping and bringing the entire building up to code. The new addition to the building includes office and library/conference room space in the upper level, classroom and bathrooms in the lower level. We also added an elevator so that the entire building could be accessed by all. Final items to be finished soon include completion of the landscaping, new parking lot with striping, staining/painting the entire outside of the church and going through the final inspections so we can receive a permanent use permit.

During the course of the renovations we became aware of the fact that this congregation Never had a permanent use permit for anything including the well. Not a good thing! However, we are thankful that we have jumped through the hoops to take care of those things and make it right! Currently we are planning on making use of the Kingdom Worker team arriving in Alaska for the summer. Plans include outreach for a Vacation Bible School. Plans are pending for a rededication ceremony and neighborhood block party celebration.

Peace Lutheran Church

Little Lambs of Peace Preschool, Eagle River, Alaska

Pastor Brian Hackmann

Teacher/Director Jennifer Keller

God's blessings are clear and evident in the ministry at Peace. Plans for summer events and programs are in the works. Vacation Bible School was early this year, so it has been completed as you are reading this. We are expecting 150 kids to attend this year. You can find me and ask if we hit that goal.

This Fall marks our 40th anniversary as a congregation. We will likely have a special themed Sunday morning service this Fall to mark that occasion. It's awe-inspiring to look back and see the kingdom work that God has enabled the clay pots that were and are pastors and members of this church over the last 40 years. We pray for God's continued blessings over the next 40 years and beyond.

Some plans are being made for some outdoor improvements to the property, moving some dirt around, planting some grass and running some electrical wires to our outdoor sheds. We have plans to redo the the entryway of our church with a new ADA ramp and possibly even a covered entryway.

Miss Jennifer Keller is doing amazing things in our preschool. This year we had 14 kids in the preschool and we are on pace to pass that number in enrollment next year. We are hoping to have to

implement our waiting list procedures this year - that would mean 20 kids enrolled. The opportunity to face that challenge would be welcomed.

Light of the World Lutheran, Fairbanks

Pastor Jason Strong

Here in Fairbanks, we're entering into the time of year when the sun never seems to go down. Here at Light of the World, we're seeing more and more how the light of God's blessings never goes down on us, either! This past year has been no different. Opportunities remain constant for our members to grow spiritually through worship and Bible study and to put their faith into practice with numerous volunteer and outreach opportunities. Our membership numbers have remained steady throughout the past year. That number is a bit deceptive, though, as our Elders have been faithfully working through a list of delinquents, so we had quite a few releases in that time. New families still continue to trickle in, and in the last couple of months, we've seen an uptick in WELS military families moving into the area. Our local Air Force base (Eielson AFB) is planning on an increase of 2500 families moving in within the next couple of years as well, so we are looking at building on our military outreach.

Another great form of God's blessings are found in our leadership group. At the beginning of this year, our Council experienced a bit of a shift in leadership with three new members voted in, and along with that, an infusion of excitement and new ideas for our ministries here at Light of the World. Over the last year, those men have been working through a SWOT analysis of both our Council and our congregation to see how we can build on our strengths and work on improving in areas where we perceive weakness. One of our Council members is currently working on resurrecting/reinventing an every member stewardship program (one of our perceived weaknesses), and the plan is to have that program ready to go by fall and run it twice a year. Another Council member has formed an informal group (made up of a diverse cross-section of the congregation) to discuss what potential projects we could do to give the church and our property a face-lift. Finally, we're working at avoiding complacency in the congregation and in our ministries and are looking to hone our focus and our ministry goals around what we want our congregation's identity to be. Besides being a church that preaches the Word of God in its truth and purity, we want to build on our other greatest strength, being the friendly church where people can meet their greatest Friend.

Of course, our other ministries at Light of the World are a blessing as well. Our women's group (G.L.O.W.) are finding new ways to serve the community (this summer, they're hosting a rummage sale at the parsonage, with proceeds going to a local women's shelter and Christian Life Resources' *New Beginnings*). Our VBS continues to be a great outreach tool to the community and a great service opportunity for members. We're looking at numbers in the high 50's this year. And this summer, we'll be having a sermon series focused on enriching worship for the people, helping them to understand why we do what we do in our liturgy.

Now, in a couple of months, the daylight will decrease; the darkness will return. We thank God, however, that his Light and his blessings will remain!

Christ Lutheran, Juneau

Pastor Steve Wall

The past 12 months have been a time of change and transition in Juneau. We continue to feel the effects of being a transient community with several core families moving out of town. We also went through a stressful fall with two councilmen choosing to leave the church.

But in spite of the spiritual struggle our gracious Lord continues to provide for his people and his church. We have worked to regroup as a congregation, to focus on our core ministry of preaching and teaching God's word in all it's truth and purity, and we are beginning to refocus on outreach and evangelism. Currently we are in the process of revising our constitution and bylaws in order to ensure that the congregation is involved in major ministry decisions.

We continue to stream our worship services to serve Grace Lutheran in Sitka as well as members in Ketchikan and other places. Our midweek men's and women's Bible Studies continue to be a blessing to those who attend.

Last fall we also had an opportunity to rent out our fellowship hall to a co-op preschool group. The experience was well received by both the church and the preschool and we look forward to continuing that relationship.

Last year we completed a land swap agreement with the city of Juneau so that they would be able to access and develop city property behind the church for new housing. Currently they expect to begin construction on the access road in the spring of 2017. The new construction will provide the church with an off-highway driveway as well as city sewer hookup and a bit more visibility to the community. Eventually we look forward to having a growing evangelism opportunity right outside our front door.

We thank our God of love and grace that he has seen us through these past few difficult months and pray for his continued blessings as we work to regroup and to proclaim his saving name in Juneau and throughout Southeast Alaska.

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 2016-17 school year already suggesting that we will have our 8th straight year of increased enrollment.

The increased enrollment, as well as several new members (parents joining through the BIC), we've been financially stable and have been able to invest some of those dollars in a number of smaller projects to improve our property and grounds.

We've been blessed to have some stability on our staff in spite of our 3 full time called workers receiving 7 calls in the past 12 months! Our team is working well with each other and no one's eager to break it up!

Finally, as the weather warms, we look forward to some time in the sun, our Path to Victory Soccer Camp (with 83 campers already signed up as of this writing), to more summer fellowship activities (hiking and camping outings) and to some great fishing!

We rejoice in God's abundant grace to us at Grace and on the Kenai Peninsula!

King of Kings Lutheran, Wasilla

Pastor Robb Robbert

This past year at King of Kings Lutheran was another year of God's grace. We said goodbye to some good friends who moved outside. We welcomed other families into our fellowship. We have been busy beautifying our 35 year-old campus. Our CEF loan was reduced significantly under the theme "Debt Free by 23". A committee from our church is working with me in putting together a book that will be ready by next year's convention to commemorate 50 years of gospel work by the Wisconsin Synod here in Alaska. Our hope for an Early Childhood Center is moving ahead slowly but surely and we thank God for that. We are looking into different ideas for Sunday School, so if anyone has suggestions of things that have worked to increase attendance please talk to me. Next year Jerusalem!