



## The Alaska United Methodist Conference

### ERBELE ETCHINGS

#### Advent 2012

Hello Friends,

Advent—the beginning of a new church year and a time of preparation. As you anticipate the arrival of Christmas may you know the ever present reality of Christ who has come and will come again.

#### FOOD ITEMS

Whenever we think of the holidays this time of year we count food as one of the blessings we enjoy. The following are some of the food related experiences we have had this fall:

On the first Friday of each month it is the United Methodists' turn to prepare the meal at The Salvation Army. When Evelyn made the announcement in church that it was that time again, there happened to be three crew members of a fishing boat in the congregation. Where else but in Alaska could enough fresh fish be donated for us to serve 53 people all the baked salmon they could eat along with rice and salad? Later, several of the long term patrons told us it was the best meal ever served.

The Salvation Army serves lunch Monday through Friday. The "Lord's Table" is a Sunday afternoon soup kitchen at the Episcopal Church, where various church groups participate in serving a meal. As the tourist season was winding down, Evelyn contacted the owners of a small adventure cruise ship. Ketchikan was to be their last port of call for the season and she wanted to know what they were going to do with their leftover food stuffs. As a result, before they headed south for the winter they donated a pick-up truck load of gourmet food (prime rib, duck and chicken breasts, ham, frozen vegetables and various spices). This gift has enabled us to serve many delicious hot meals to the hungry.

To ensure that the hungry have access to meals 7 days a week, the Day Shelter has instituted a Saturday Brown Bag lunch program. Each week, community organizations come for a half hour to help assemble 60 lunches of PBJ or meat sandwiches, a dessert and chips. As much as these volunteers are appreciated, the program's structure is based upon the participation of those who will receive the lunches. The brown bags are prepared by volunteer homeless individuals. In this way, the recipients can give direction to a program that addresses what they know better than most: hunger in our community.

Because of high winds and seas in September, the last two days of the cruise season were canceled. And yes, Evelyn hit up the restaurants for their remaining foods. Chowder, salads and breads filled the larder.

#### MINISTRY WITH THE POOR

At the General Conference which was held in Tampa, Florida last spring the United Methodist Church adopted 4 areas of focus:

1. Global Health Initiative
2. Ministry with the Poor
3. Leadership development
4. Church growth and development.

In the spirit of intentionality ministry *with* the poor has been happening at the Ketchikan United Methodist Church

First City Homeless Services – Day Shelter is housed in the social hall of our church. Last spring the Day Shelter made some infrastructure changes which necessitated a change in staff. One homeless man, who lives on a small boat anchored in the middle of a cove, was employed by Evelyn to be the temporary caretaker. Phoenix (we have his permission to use his name) rows a skiff to shore and then hitchhikes or takes the bus into town each morning. Throughout the summer he demonstrated a determination and interpersonal skills with the clients that, as we were told; "only one of them can understand". Admittedly, some of the FCHS board members were skeptical about hiring him because he is well known by law enforcement. We have been pleased with his sense of responsibility and eagerness to work with the clients. He comes early every morning, makes the coffee and gets the place ready. 20 – 25 people sign in every day and have responded positively to having "one of their own" in a position of advocacy.

Thanksgiving Day the Day Shelter would normally have been closed, but Phoenix said he wanted to open because the guys wouldn't have any place to hang out and nothing to eat. When asked about a meal, Phoenix (and co.) were adamant that they wanted to prepare their own dinner. Two turkeys and a ham were donated and Thanksgiving morning found the guys thoroughly enjoying themselves with the opportunity to work in the kitchen. Evelyn and Misty helped serve dinner and with stealth escaped before it was time to wash dishes.

On our first weekend of freezing weather, 4 homeless people died. While in the past we would have felt sad for a while and then moved on with life, this time, we found ourselves grieving because they had become friends with names and history.



Phoenix mixing up the gravy and Chris ready to carve the turkey.

We will especially miss Mark who frequently showed up with a black eye and in tatters. Sixty people came to his memorial service, including lawyers and business people.

#### KETCHIKAN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Several new people have been coming to the church. This is always a blessing. They bring new energy and new ideas which is welcomed.

The congregation has been intentional with brainstorming events that bring people together for fun and fellowship. We have come to recognize that our busy lives outside of the church are causing us to worship as strangers more than friends; so the Hospitality Team organized 3 fall gatherings.

Kid's Night at the Movies had videos and all the junk food they could eat.



One of the members of the church suggested that we have a pumpkin cook off. So the Sunday before All Saints Eve (also known as Halloween) we held a pumpkin-themed Harvest Party. There were 31 pumpkin-based dishes to sample: salad, stew, lasagna and casserole, breads, cookies, and sorbet. Though Teri liked the pumpkin fudge the best, the winner was pumpkin curry. Interestingly enough, no one brought pumpkin pie.

Ladies Lupper (lunch/supper) was a late afternoon social event for the women of the church and their friends. Sixteen ladies came to the parsonage and left knowing each other a bit better.

The church's annual October food drive for Love, INC brought in nearly 600 pounds of dry goods and canned food.



Evelyn (of her own volition) has been washing 5 loads of towels per week for the day shelter. The hostel hosted more people this summer which meant more sheets to be washed. The trustees have decided it is time to install a washer and dryer – yippee ☺

### PIGS on a MISSION

Our pigs have been on four mission trips this year.

1. One Great Hour of Sharing
2. Clean Water for Haiti
3. Nokero solar lights for Guatemala
4. Christmas gifts for Pilviskiai and Kybartai, Lithuania

This story from Tio Rancho, Bolivia has confirmed the impact the Pigs on a Mission ministry has had on the lives of this village people. Ardell and Gordon Graner were commissioned missionaries with us in 1989. They are working alongside the Cotani people. In 2010 the Pigs on a Mission purchased 80 female and 5 male guinea pigs – one for each family in the village. Guinea pigs are an excellent source of protein and reproduce faster than rabbits. Here is the letter Ardell sent:

Dear Teri & Ev,

I hope this note finds you well. I want to write a note this morning to share with you that Cotani had a dedication for their new church: Luz del Pueblo, Light of the People. It's just beautiful. We were there for the three day service and at one point Elisa, the nurse and

the president of the congregation told me, "Oh, by the way we were able to buy chairs for the sanctuary by each family selling some of their guinea pigs and donating the money." She said it in a way, that this is life for us, not really a big thing but I couldn't stop smiling.

I want to send a couple of pictures for you to see. Thank you for your gifts and prayers for this congregation. And we just found out yesterday that they are about to begin a mission church. Blessings, Ardell



### ALASKA CONFERENCE

Like so many places, Alaska has been affected by the economic downturn. In the past, the conference received significant support through grants from the General Board of Global Ministries. Those days are almost over, and as a result the conference has had to reduce staff. We used to fly three times each year to Anchorage and twice each year to Juneau for meetings. Now we fly twice a year to Anchorage the rest of the meetings are by internet.

In most United Methodist Churches the Superintendent comes each year for the annual business meeting. This year the Ketchikan church conference will be conducted by the Superintendent from Anchorage via Skype.

In October Evelyn and Carlo provided 2 days of orientation to new pastors appointed to serve the Alaska UMC. It certainly is a blessing and a sacred trust to be invited into the lives and ministry of these new to Alaska clergy.

We thank you for your prayers and support.

**Teri and Evelyn Erbele**  
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**Advance Numbers for your financial gifts:**  
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