



OutFAST To You



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Alaska Synod of
the ELCA

February 2010

Congregational Highlight—

Alaska Native Lutheran Church

Alaska Native Lutheran Church (ANLC) began as an outreach ministry to Eskimo/Inupiat peoples in the late 1960s. Families and individuals from the Seward Peninsula were moving to Anchorage and facing the challenges of the big city...housing, social services and employment. Native Outreach Ministry was formed. It provided Christian support and fellowship for Lutheran families from the villages. Later this ministry became what is now "Lutheran Social Services."



However, there remained a need for worship and a community setting that incorporated the distinctive and meaningful elements of Inupiaq Lutheranism. In response to this need, Alaska Native Lutheran Church (ANLC) was formed. ANLC strives to nurture the spiritual and communal well-being of all Alaska Natives (and friends) living in Anchorage. In 1993 the community became its own organized ELCA congregation and ANLC moved into full-time ministry thanks to outreach funds from ELCA. Pastors George and Karen Sonray were called here in April 1994 and Karen continues now as their full-time pastor. ANLC meets at 7 p.m. for worship every Sunday at Central Lutheran Church who graciously provides space for the ministry.

ANLC honors the wisdom and practices of Inupiaq Lutherans in previous generations. It remains affiliated with the Lutheran churches in Nome, Brevig, Teller, Wales and Shishmaref. Collectively, the six churches are called the Seward Peninsula Lutheran Ministries (SPLM). ANLC often hosts exciting events like Singspirations and the annual New Year's Eve feast which welcomes the year in with potluck, traditional dancing, games and prayer. Two-hundred people attend this festivity which is one of the few events in town celebrating Native and Christian traditions in an alcohol free context.

Over the past 16 years, this congregation has grown significantly with average worship attendance growing from 25 to almost 95. Annual offerings have grown to \$45,000 with synod benevolence of 15% per annum. Alaska Native Lutheran is a leader in forming a city-wide Native Organizing Ministry with Roman Catholic native congregations. The journey from the villages to Anchorage for family, employment, and services provides continuing opportunities for evangelism. Through the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage ANLC provides pastoral visits to families and keeps the connection to village communities. The congregation also tries to initiate Awareness events about SPLM Endowment work. A strong sense of identity with deep church and community engagement make Alaska Native Lutheran Church a success story of an urban Native congregation in the ELCA. It is also the site for our first Native TEEM candidate, Mark Allred, to gain the theological and ministerial experience needs for ordained ministry.

Despite this success story, there are struggles. Many of the same concerns shared in the villages are manifested here. The transition from village to the city, a cash economy, high costs with under employment, and continuing traumas take their toll. Leaders are often called upon to help extended families and as a consequence may have a difficult time keeping up with the demands of institutional leadership. There is a tremendous need for children and youth ministry but it is challenged by the need for consistent adult leaders, transportation, and limited resources.

ANLC holds a potluck on the 1st and 3rd Sunday of every month at 5:30 p.m. Their worship is held at 7 p.m. and you are warmly welcome.

In This Issue

Congregation Highlights	1
Discipleship	2
Bishop's Message	3
Synod Discernment	4
Bishop's Travel Schedule	7
Congregation Transitions	7
Prayer Partners	8

Discipleship for the Missional Church

Rev. Carol George

Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, *go* and *make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *Teach* these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus made the *mission* of the church clear and simple. If we look at the imperatives in this passage from Matthew known as The Great Commission, we find three straightforward marching orders – *go, make disciples, teach*. So, to quote Dr. Phil, "How's that workin' for ya'?" The challenge of becoming a missional church of the 21st century is to first take seriously our calling to *be* Christ's disciples in order to *live out* that discipleship for the sake of the world.

You've read the statistics. In America 3500-4000 churches close *each year*; that's 10 closings each day! In 1900, there were 27 churches for every 10,000 people. In 1985, there were 12 churches for every 10,000 people. The average size of all churches in America is only 75 people, and 85% of those churches have plateaued or are declining.

Among congregations in the United States...

- 60% of the members seldom attend church
- 70% give 1% or less of their income to the church
- 80% have no ministry within the church
- 80% do not attend Sunday School or a small group study, and
- **90% have not been disciplined or trained**

For me the last statistic informs all the others. It seems as though we, as the Church, are missing the mark in carrying out Christ's "marching orders" to *make disciples*. So what is discipleship? Pastor Mike Foss in his book, Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship for a Changing Church suggests, "Discipleship is about following in the way of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is about individual Christians- and the church as a community of Christians- living in mission. Discipleship is about recognizing that Christ is the center of both personal and public life and then living out the implications of that reality."

Discipleship is a daily way of living that acknowledges Christ as the center of life. It is a life of *doing*, which flows from *being* centered in Christ, not just *knowing* about Christ. The pastor that chooses to focus his/her efforts on making disciples will see him/herself as the spiritual leader, mentor and guide rather than spiritual authority, caregiver, teacher and preacher. The congregation that seeks to make disciples will focus less on "substantive knowing" and more on "substantive doing," identifying and releasing the gifts of its members for the work of mission.

The following resources may be helpful to pastors and congregations who want to grow in discipleship.

George Barna, The Habits of Highly Effective Churches: How to Have a Ministry that Transforms Lives (Ventura, CA: Issachar Resources, 1998).

Eric Burtness, Leading on Purpose: Intentionality and Teaming in Congregational Life (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2004)

Michael Foss, Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship for a Changing Church; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000).

Alan Nelson, Me to We: A Pastor's Discovery of the Power of Partnership (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2007).

Doug Pagitt, Reimagining Spiritual Formation: A Week in the Life of an Experimental Church (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, 2004).

Rick Rouse and Craig Van Gelder, A Field Guide for the Missional Congregation: Embarking of a Journey of Transformation (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008)

J. Oswald Sanders, Spiritual Leadership (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994).

Visitation of Churches: An Old Practice for a New Time

Bishop Michael Keys

The Reformation brought about many changes in the beliefs, practices, and policies of the church. The early days of Luther's Reformation began in confronting the theology ("beliefs about God") and ecclesiology ("church practices") of the late Medieval Church. The question of forgiveness of our sin and the believer's penitence had direct practical implication in the selling and buying of indulgences as a fund raising model. The excommunication of Rev Dr Martin Luther in 1522 led to significant strain in the rule and order of congregations and religious institutions. New questions arose about who was to support the local ministry, who had authority to change worship practices, and where was the teaching authority of the church now if you were a new "evangelical." The plight of clergy and congregations during this time became an ever increasing concern. In 1525, Luther urged Elector John of Saxony to take action on these concerns and the next year was given authority to make specific recommendations about the future ministry of these churches. Luther recommended a visitation process to discover the actual situation, which began in 1527. The territory was to be divided into regions which were to be visited by teams of four visitors: two to examine the economic support issues within the parish and two the religious affairs of the congregation. Instructions for the visitors were formulated and refined, with Luther writing the Preface to the *Instruction for the Visitors of Parish Pastors* which was penned by Melancthon.

The information gathered from the visitation process led to a significant clarification of the evangelical principles and eventually to the foundational documents of the Small and Large Catechism, the Instructions on the Lord's Supper, and the predecessor documents which would formulate the Augsburg Confession. The visitation process continued for over a decade and was a tool for assessment, awareness, and fundamental change in the preaching, teaching, ministry, stewardship and administration of local congregations and national church bodies.

The synod council has proposed that the Alaska Synod ELCA conduct its own process of assessment, awareness and visitation in the Spring and Summer of 2010. This process reflects similar goals to those sought in Luther's visitations: the goal of seeing how things really are out there. Kicking off this March, the process involves three steps:

- 1) A congregation survey completed by members. (approximately 15 minutes)
- 2) A survey completed by council and pastor on the congregation's ministry life.
- 3) A visitation by one of the cluster deans and two representatives of the synod council who will have the preliminary results of the surveys available and will have one to one and small group meetings within the congregation. Together with the survey results, a final report will be prepared that will assist each congregation in doing mission and ministry planning in the coming years. The information from all the congregations and other synod groups will be combined to formulate an assessment of the entire synod. This information is the beginning gathering of data to prepare a Ministry Site Profile of the Alaska Synod to be voted on in Assembly in 2011 in anticipation of the election of the bishop in 2012.

REMINDER!! Don't forget to include in your congregational planning for 2010:

- Collegium April 20th and 21st
- Synod Assembly April 22nd through 24th at Gloria Dei in Anchorage (times TBA)
 - Theme— John 1:16; *From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.*
 - **Deadline for resolution submittal is April 1, 2010**
- Assembly Youth Event 8th and 9th grades April 23 and 24th
- Leadership Event High School age Mentors April 23 and 24th



Alaska Synod Discernment Process

God's Call, Our Hearts.

What is God's call upon our hearts? Who is God calling us to be and what is God calling us to do? What is God's work in Brevig Mission, Trinity-Dillingham, Good Shepherd-Wasilla, Christ-Soldotna, Lord of Life-North Pole, First Lutheran-Ketchikan? How will our hands do this work in Bethel, Shishmaref, Petersburg, Valdez, Anchorage, and Delta Junction? What must we consider as we look forward from 2010; what changes must we recognize in our ministry sites as the Alaska Synod? How is the Holy Spirit already present in new places and new people who hear God's call to do the work of the Kingdom?

The Alaska Synod is committed to faithfully look at the ministry of congregations, the synod, and our interdependent relationships with ELCA churchwide and along with our ecumenical and community partners. This time of discernment will help frame conversations and actions around ministry in Alaska. Congregations are given resources to rediscover God's call and how the work our ministry can move in new directions of proclaiming, discipling, sending, and serving...all in which we worship God. This discernment will help the Alaska Synod create a ministry profile in preparation (2011) and anticipation of the election of the bishop in April 2012. Prayer and Biblical Work resources are being prepared for congregation use over the next two years.

With our churchwide partners, the Alaska Synod will assist in a synodwide Assessment & Visitation process that begins with congregations discussing and choosing to partner with the faith community and the synod to do this work. Will you join in the work of reflection, conversation, assessment and commitment to God's Work, Our Hand?

FAQ about the Synod Discernment Process

Why is the Alaska Synod using the Discernment Process?

The Alaska Synod is living into the commitment made at the 2007 Assembly to plan for our ministry together. Through the Synod Ministry Strategy and annual evaluation, this planning, activity, and assessment continues. The assembly anticipated the need for a more thorough assessment as the synod moves closer to the Election of the Bishop in April 2012. The Synod Council, collaborating with our churchwide partners, is designing a way for each congregation and the synod organization to assess the ministry. Assessment tools and congregation visitation by synod leaders will provide essential information that will take God's mission and our ministry the next step.

What is the benefit to our congregation in participating in the Assessment and Visitation Process?

The benefits to a congregation could be:

- a) assess the current ministry and how it is working in relation to the goals--stated and unstated--and expectations of the community.
- b) review of current interdependent relationships with synod, churchwide, ecumenical and community partners... How can our Gospel work be more effective (What can we accomplish?) and efficient (How can we accomplish it with the resources we have?)
- c) renewed sense of mission--God's work Our hands--and a deeper understanding of our setting or context for

(Continued on page 5)



(Synod Discernment Process Continued from page 4)

ministry.

d) positive view of our future living in God's abundance (Having what we need when we need it) and empowered by the Holy Spirit to new ways of thinking, feeling, and acting as disciples.

The structured responses will be connected to the listening process of one-to-one & group meetings done by the visitation team.

Does our congregation have to participate in this process?

No. Congregations are asked to take this decision seriously and to schedule time to discuss why or why not to participate. This can be an excellent opportunity to look at the congregation's mission, ministry plans, objectives and structure--with outside eyes, ears and hearts giving feedback.

What is the timeline for congregations?

In February/March, congregations are asked to make the decision to participate in the assessment from members, council and pastoral staff. The assessment tools are available in March. The one page congregation assessment could easily be completed after worship; the council and pastor assessment could be distributed the week before the council meets and collected at the meeting. ELCA Research and Evaluation will compile the information and produce a report for each congregation. (Our hope is this would be available by the end of April at Assembly.) The congregation that "invites" the team of three people to visit and do one-to-one and small group would set a time during the summer 2010. These face-to-face conversations will be integrated with the data compiled by ELCA Research and Evaluation. A final report will be available in the fall.

Can congregations participate in the assessment after March 2010?

Absolutely. Though the information will not be available this spring.

How will the synod use the information gathered from congregations?

From the synod's perspective, the congregation information is integrated into a composite picture of the ministry happening in Alaska and identifying the needs for and direction of the synod's future ministry. This information will be combined with the synod review process led by ELCA churchwide staff. All of the information will be integrated into the Ministry Site Profile which is to be completed in the winter and spring before the 2011 Assembly where it is revised and voted on. This Profile along with prayer and biblical resources will help to prepare the synod for the election of the bishop in 2012.

Does the synod have resources for evaluations of staff, biblical and prayer resources, and time to consult?

Resources are available online in .doc and pdf format. Synod staff is available to congregations in the review process and providing coaching for strategy planning. Schedule this time at least 60 days in advance of the planning event.

How does the Bishop's sabbatical fit into the process?

A sabbatical gives a person time and space to pray, reflect, and plan for next steps. This time includes: retreats and spiritual direction, travel for study and fun, ministry discernment, and enough time away for renewal and reenergizing. The hope is to come back ready to do the ministry of the synod and assistance with the discernment process.

Bishop Keys' Sabbatical Reflection and Study Focus:

Congregations face extraordinary challenges for ministry in these days. Congregations and leaders must expand their capacity to be resilient--cope with stress, overcome negative factors, "recover quickly, effectively, efficiently"--and live graciously into "metanoia"--the radical change of heart--nurtured and sustained by the Holy Spirit. In short, Survive the Challenges, Thrive in the Abundance of God, and Dive into Ministry in the World.



2010	Timeline Synod Discernment Process
Jan-Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Consult with ELCA SR and RE for tools for congregation assessment and visitation. +Review with the Mutual Ministry the work to be done with Bishop Keys. +Communicate with congregations and synod partners on the purpose of the synod discernment process. Covenants and Information mailed to congregations.
Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Congregation and council surveys completed by congregations. +Synodical Review with Council; Training for visitation teams. +Mail/email annual evaluation of the Bishop in conjunction with Synod Process
Apr-May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Assembly--Synodical Review with clusters and groups; distribute prayer and biblical work resources; bless Visitation Teams; blessing of Bishop in preparation for Sabbatical. +Team training and begin site visit
Jun-Jul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Synod Teams visitation with congregations; provide coverage for visitation teams; 2011 Prayer and biblical work begins
Jun-Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Ministry Profile Committee gathers demographic info--tests information through clusters.
Aug-Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Visitation Team Reports: Congregation, Synod Council, and Bishop +Council makes recommendation on Process for Election of the Bishop
Sept-Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Recommendations to synod for needs, services, resource funding, etc. +Synod Profile-preliminary report of Exec Com; writing team completes work
Nov-Dec	
2011	
Jan-Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Synod Profile reviewed, revised and recommended to Assembly--available online +Council reviews Prayer and Biblical Work resources +Communicate resolution on election process
Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Assembly revises/approves ministry profile for Alaska Synod; distribute 2011-2012 Prayer and Biblical Work resources

If your congregation has resources to share with other congregations in the Synod, please notify us at elcaalaska@alaska.net .

ASWO Retreat September 17-20
 "Sweet Life Café" North Star Bible Camp

A seminary student from Wartburg Theological Seminary will be doing his Clinical Pastoral Education at Providence Medical Center this June to August and is looking for housing. Call or email the Synod office if you are able to help.

The Alaska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 is all of us working together
 as interdependent congregations
 to invite, welcome, grow and serve in Christ
 by helping each other through sharing prayer, encouragement, financial and pastoral support.

Bishop's Travel Schedule

February

5 Mutual Ministries Committee Anchorage
 11 Dialogue about the ELCA and Assembly
 Anchorage
 14 UMC-ELCA Full Communion -Central
 Anchorage
 16 Dialogue about the ELCA and CWA Chugiak
 17 UAA-Religion Guest Lecturer Anchorage
 Churchwide Care of Creation
 18 Alaska Christian Conference-- 1st Presby
 Anchorage
 20-21 Bethel Lutheran Install Pastor Deiss Bethel
 24 Synod Assembly Planning
 Executive Committee Anchorage
 26-28 Ordination Mark Orf Colorado Springs

March

3-9 Conference of Bishops Chicago
 10-14 Continuing Education-
 16-17 EOCM-Alaska Native-Native American Seattle
 18-20 Synod Council Anchorage
 23-25 EOCM Review Table Chicago
 28 Ordination Phil Kettering Central-Anchorage
 28-4 Holy Week /Easter

April

6 Anchorage United for Youth Anchorage
 7-10 Seward Peninsula Spring Conference
 Installation of Pastor Mark Orf Shishmaref
 11 St Mark 50th Anniversary Anchorage
 18 Gloria Dei Lutheran Sabbatical Blessing
 Anchorage
 20-21 Clergy Collegium Anchorage
 22 Assembly Pre-Workshops Anchorage
 22-24 Synod Assembly -- Gloria Dei Anchorage
 25-29 EOCM All Staff Gathering Chicago

May

1- 2 Installation Phil Kettering Epiphany Valdez
 6-7 Region I Governing Council Seattle
 11-14 Retreat for Bishop Keys

Reminder:

May-August Visitation with congregation in the Ministry Assessment process.

Congregation Transitions

Congregation Location Process Interim

Fairbanks Lutheran	Fairbanks	Interviewing	Bill Ottum
Our Savior Lutheran	Nome	Call Committee (Names)	Everett Arnold
St Mark Lutheran	Anchorage	Call Committee	Gary Steele
Shishmaref Lutheran	Shishmaref	Called Mark Orf	Ordination Feb 28
Epiphany Lutheran	Valdez	Called Phil Kettering	Ordination March 28

New Ministries

Bethel Lutheran Bethel Called Pastor Jana Deiss Installation Feb 21
 Mat Su Ecumenical Outreach Wasilla Interviewing

Alaska Synod of the ELCA
1847 W. Northern Lights Blvd. #2
Anchorage AK 99517-3343



Phone: 907-272-8899
Fax: 907-274-3141
E-mail: elcaalaska@alaska.net
Bishop Email: aksynodbishop@alaska.net
Website: www.elcaalaska.net

Prayer Partners

Congregation March April

Alaska Native, Anchorage	Thornton Memorial, Wales	Teller, Teller
Amazing Grace, Anchorage	Trinity, Palmer	Thornton Memorial, Wales
Bethel (SAWC), Bethel	Alaska Native, Anchorage	Trinity, Palmer
Brevig Memorial, Brevig	Amazing Grace, Anchorage	Alaska Native, Anchorage
Central, Anchorage	Bethel (SAWC), Bethel	Amazing Grace, Anchorage
Christ, Fairbanks	Brevig Memorial, Brevig	Bethel (SAWC), Bethel
Christ, Soldotna	Central, Anchorage	Brevig Memorial, Brevig
Christ Our Savior, Anchorage	Christ, Fairbanks	Central, Anchorage
Dillingham Trinity, Dillingham	Christ, Soldotna	Christ, Fairbanks
Epiphany, Valdez	Christ Our Savior, Anchorage	Christ, Soldotna
Fairbanks, Fairbanks	Dillingham Trinity, Dillingham	Christ Our Savior, Anchorage
Faith, Delta Junction	Epiphany, Valdez	Dillingham Trinity, Dillingham
First Ketchikan, Ketchikan	Fairbanks, Fairbanks	Epiphany, Valdez
Gloria Dei, Anchorage	Faith, Delta Junction	Fairbanks, Fairbanks
Good Shepherd, Wasilla	First Ketchikan, Ketchikan	Faith, Delta Junction
Island of Faith, Wrangell	Gloria Dei, Anchorage	First Ketchikan, Ketchikan
Joy, Eagle River	Good Shepherd, Wasilla	Gloria Dei, Anchorage
Lord of Life, North Pole	Island of Faith, Wrangell	Good Shepherd, Wasilla
Hope, Anchorage	Joy, Eagle River	Island of Faith, Wrangell
M/V Christian	Lord of Life, North Pole	Joy, Eagle River
Our Savior's, Nome	Hope, Anchorage	Lord of Life, North Pole
Petersburg, Petersburg	M/V Christian	Hope, Anchorage
Prince of Wales (SAWC)	Our Savior's, Nome	M/V Christian
Resurrection, Juneau	Petersburg, Petersburg	Our Savior's, Nome
Resurrection, Seward	Prince of Wales (SAWC)	Petersburg, Petersburg
River of Life, Peter's Creek	Resurrection, Juneau	Prince of Wales (SAWC)
Shepherd of the Valley, Juneau	Resurrection, Seward	Resurrection, Juneau
Shishmaref, Shishmaref	River of Life, Peter's Creek	Resurrection, Seward
Sitka, Sitka	Shepherd of the Valley, Juneau	River of Life, Peter's Creek
St. Mark, Anchorage	Shishmaref, Shishmaref	Shepherd of the Valley, Juneau
St. Paul, Kodiak	Sitka, Sitka	Shishmaref, Shishmaref
Teller, Teller	St. Mark, Anchorage	Sitka, Sitka
Thornton Memorial, Wales	St. Paul, Kodiak	St. Mark, Anchorage
Trinity, Palmer	Teller, Teller	St. Paul, Kodiak