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Upper Tanana Valley Mission News

Alaska Mission for Christ—A ministry of the LCMS congregations in Alaska

March 2015

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The Light of Day Lengthens as Darkness Deepens

The beginning of March brings increasingly more sunlight each day. It would seem people would experience joy as the days lengthen, but for many the increase of sunlight serves to only make the darkness deeper.

The phone rang—a native that has been very helpful since we arrived is trying to connect me with someone from Tanacross—He has a question, “Could I come and offer prayer for a family who lost a loved one?” The family is going to be stopping overnight in Tanacross on their way to Northway (traveling from Fairbanks). The young man of 40-something had finally succumbed to injuries received during an alcohol related accident years earlier.

We gather to pray, another village resident announces the news that in another village a young man of nineteen just committed suicide (the likely result of a life tied to drug addiction). Later, the family gathers for a meal prepared by the residents of Tanacross. A village resident, a Vietnam vet has obviously been drinking heavily. At the village hall, while helping make breakfast for the family the next morning a woman informs me that Tanacross reportedly has the highest per capita drug rate in the state.

The prayer requests that I receive are most often related to drugs or alcohol and the issues that follow in their wake. It seems each week that the darkness in these villages weighs heavy on all the members of the tribes. Several ‘outsiders’ (people familiar with but not native) have described several villages as having a ‘cloud of darkness’ cast over them. In these moments, Satan has a way of making prayer feel almost useless. Even moreso when the prayer request is for safety and protection of a child who must still socialize with the very person who molested them. It might seem like it would be easy to change such situations, but there are so many factors that come into play and are not easily resolved by normal western lower 48 ways of thinking. Even as the light of day lengthens the darkness deepens. Please keep these villages and the work Stacey I are doing in your prayers! Only the light of Christ can truly break the darkness and heal the wounds that sin inflicts!



Casket with body ready to be transported in the back of a family member's pickup to Northway for the Potlatch (funeral) after an overnight stay at Tanacross in St. Timothy's Chapel.

Tables are not used at a Potlatch. Food is brought down the rows of chairs by the young men while people hold their food on their laps or on the floor.



POTLATCH—Generally associated with what we would call a funeral, but may be held as part of a memorial celebration or other special occasion. It lasts several days but is mostly used to refer to what happens after the funeral service and burial. It begins with singing and dancing followed by a meal (with native dishes), mourning songs, dancing, and a gift giving. The Potlatch lasts until late at night (1:00am—3:00am) when the family gives out gifts as a sign of generosity and appreciation for all the people in the loved ones life. The hundreds of items given range from beads to blankets to the most prized gift—a rifle.

Recent Activities:

- Dinner and prayer for a family in Tanacross
- Helped prepare breakfast for family headed to Northway for Potlatch
- Sled Dog Races in Tanacross March 6-8
- Counseling people in crisis and praying with them
- Services at Tanacross
- Preached in Copper Center on March 8 and experienced first whiteout driving conditions. Pulled a truck out of the ditch and assisted another
- Spring Break in Fairbanks at Chena Hot Springs
- Provided rides to and from town for people

Contact Pastor Keith at

Mobile: 979-716-9910

E-mail:

revkeithamc@gmail.com

Address:

537 Maes Way

Tok, AK 99780-0537



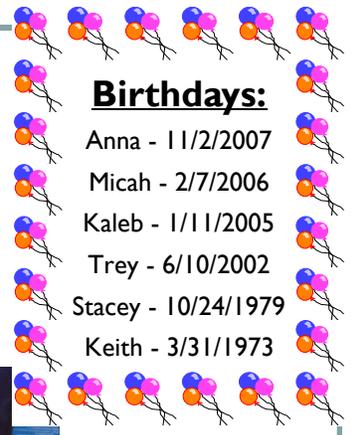
Ice Fishing & Making Hot Chocolate



Sled Dog Races in Tok

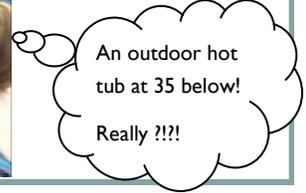
Mush! Mush!

The Ice Museum & Chena Hot Springs



Birthdays:

- Anna - 11/2/2007
- Micah - 2/7/2006
- Kaleb - 1/11/2005
- Trey - 6/10/2002
- Stacey - 10/24/1979
- Keith - 3/31/1973



An outdoor hot tub at 35 below!
Really !?!!

E-mail: revkeithamc@gmail.com

Mobile: 979-716-9910

Tok AK 99780-0537
537 Maes Way

Mission—Rev. Keith Aschenbeck
Upper Tanana River Valley



STAMP

PRAY

How Can You Support the Proclamation of the Gospel in Alaska?

GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES...

Give Thanks for the new faces we have been seeing each week at Services and that the Word of Christ fills their hearts For Easter Services and Holy Week. The start of a Sunday School for children in Tanacross. The children of Mentasta whom Stacey has bonded with. Community of Chistochena Thankfulness for the opportunities to form relationships and share the love of Christ. A friend and supporter whose wife is being lost to Alzheimers

PARTICIPATE

Contact Ruth Zellar (AMC Volunteer Coordinator) for more info:
907-232-3823
ruthzellar@alaskamissionforchrist.org

PROVIDE

By sharing the resources God has gifted you with to help fund and supply the needs of missionaries, groups, and of AK residents that the Gospel may be proclaimed!

Donations are tax deductible. Statements are sent out after the end of the year.

Donate online at:
www.alaskamissionforchrist.org
Mail donations to:
Alaska Mission for Christ
8100 Arctic Blvd.
Anchorage AK 99518

Note "Keith Aschenbeck" in the memo section and 100% of your donation will go to support us directly.