



**ALASKA MISSION  
for CHRIST**

sharing CHRIST in  
the last frontier



## CHRISTMAS: WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

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"This year feels a bit more like Christmas," my friend mused. "The last few years I have just not felt in the mood."

"Why not?" I asked.

"I don't know. It seems like everybody was all worried that they wouldn't have the money to do the Christmas things. It seems like people were negative."

Christmas can be a hard time of year for people. We have expectations but they are mixed with memories. For some of us the memories are good. For some the memories are awful. Rarely does the holiday live up to our expectations.

So what do I expect from Christmas this year? What is it all about? I know that we will have presents, food, family, and friends. We will have a tree, lights and decorations. But beyond that I have to think about what it is that God was doing over 2000 years ago in Bethlehem.

Somehow in some way far beyond my understanding, God was entering a Jewish family and their community. He would hear their squabbles and their disappointments. He would laugh with them and cry with them. He would have deep conversations about God but he probably also had simple and inane conversations about the weather and about whatever little first century Jewish boys talked about.

So Christmas at its deepest level is really about God entering our lives. Jesus became human so that he could be Immanuel—"God with us". In Bethlehem, he joined Mary and Joseph's world. Today, through his Word and in the Sacraments, he enters our world. That is an amazing gift!

That gift has implications for what we do in Alaska. Just as Jesus enters our world, we are called to enter the worlds of those around us. I spend a lot of my time visiting people. I don't have the answers to the struggles in their lives. What do you say to a young woman who has lost a baby to SIDS? What do you say to a person who has fallen off the wagon again after trying for years to be sober? What

do you say to a person whose kids have been taken away by the Office of Child Services? I don't know. So I listen. I pray. I just try to be with people and point them to Jesus who promises to be God with us. He brings the healing and life that I cannot bring. That is the gift that people need in Alaska and everywhere. It is what the holiday is all about. I hope that my friend (and you and I) will remember that. Have a blessed celebration of the coming of God with us!

*Todd Roeske*  
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*Jesus entering the life of a young man through baptism. He chose to be immersed in the Fire Hall. That is a true Christmas celebration!*

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### Thank the Lord for...

...Growing ministries in Copper Center and Tok.

...Jesus and his love!

### Pray for ...

...the Lord to provide a 12 or 15 passenger van to serve the Tanana River Valley. If you would like to know more about this need or if the Lord moves you to help please contact:

[toddroeske@alaskamissionforchrist.org](mailto:toddroeske@alaskamissionforchrist.org)

...the call of a Seminary Graduate to serve in Juneau as missionary to Southeast and as pastor to Faith Lutheran Church.

...wisdom as we make plans to call a missionary for the Bethel area. These plans are in the early stages.

[www.alaskamissionforchrist.org](http://www.alaskamissionforchrist.org)

# THE LIGHT HAS COME?

*In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:4-5)*

As we in the Frozen North make our way swiftly to the winter solstice (aka the shortest day of the year), many are filled with anxiousness. The warmth of the sun no longer hits many homes, and spirits are dwindling. Darkness increases with each passing day, until December 22nd when the slow increase of sunlight lasts through the summer. These extended days of darkness take a toll on even the most experienced Alaskan. Addiction, child abuse, depression and suicide rates are incredibly high in our beautiful state. We are burdened. This world is deeply askew as we live in the darkness of our sinfulness.

There is good news though, we do not have to wait months for the light to increase. For the Light has come to shine in our darkness! The Son of God, Christ Jesus, is the Light and Life of men! In Him, there is no darkness at all!

*Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)*



*Adoration of the Shepherds,  
by Gerard van Honthorst*

Pray fervently, dear brothers and sisters, for those who are not in Christ that they might no longer walk in darkness! We have the hope of life in Jesus, a gift from our loving Lord. The cure for every troubled heart darkened by sin's stain is found in Christ alone. There

is no more waiting, the Son has risen and shines forever! The Light has come! Merry Christmas!

**Brittany  
Baumgartner**

**Servant Event  
Coordinator**

*I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 1: 3-6*



## News From Bill and Roberta Serving in Sterling and Cooper Landing

Sterling Lutheran began a new after school program, called the Hungry Caterpillar Club. Eight children ages 6 to 11 have been coming on Mondays after school since October. Bill or Roberta Hilgendorf teach the Bible lesson and songs, Janet and "Aunt Marty" help with the crafts, and Barb helps with the snacks. With the church directly behind the school playground, one of us walks the children over after school and parents pick them up at 5. We're hoping these hungry kids will not only hunger

for the snacks but also for the Word of God and someday turn into resurrection butterflies. In this picture they are learning to Let their Gospel Lights Shine by making get well cards for Mary, a congregational member. The children come from 3 different churches and we have been encouraging them to pray for their friends that don't go to church and invite them to join us.

The children's classes in Cooper Landing, led by Ladonna Herbert, are still thriving, and have 10 children enrolled this year. We will be putting on another Christmas program Dec. 18 for the children's families and the community. Since so many of the Cooper Landing people leave for the winter, the church has decided to have formal worship only the first Sunday of each month. The children are invited to join us and sing some of their songs that Roberta has been teaching them. Nov. 6 we had 18 people attend worship, including 2 of the children's families. The children were an important part of the service, including Axell, a 7 year old, reading the Epistle Lesson for the day very fluently.

Soon we will be teaching them about Advent and the preparations for Jesus' birth, the real story of Christmas. Pray for all of them to "grow in knowledge and stature, and in favor with God and with men." Luke 2:52



# WAITING FOR CHRISTMAS

There is a saying, “Don’t ever pray for patience, God will only make you wait!”

Here is a great irony...

In the Church year the twelve days of Christmas doesn’t actually begin until Christmas Day (Dec. 25th). And even though we are

supposed to be in the season of Advent (a season of waiting), most of us are frantically preparing for and in many ways celebrating Christmas. I’ve already heard Carols being sung, and decorations were up the day after Thanksgiving. (Of course stores have been offering Christmas for a couple months already.) How many parties will be held and gifts exchanged before Christmas? And then for many folks, like my mom... come Dec. 26 the Christmas décor will be taken down and put away for another year. On the **SECOND** day of Christmas!!

We often talk about the impatience of youth this time of year not being able to wait for Christmas. However, we adults are not really any less patient nowadays. Just try telling people that they should **WAIT** to sing Christmas Carols or to put up decorations until Christmas Day. The irony of course is that come the day after Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> it seems people are all too ready to put Christmas behind them: wanting to get rest from all the festivities, return to pre-holiday weights, and forget about all the excess spending! However, it seems our bodies will ache, our belts won’t fit, and the bills keep coming.

The need for patience isn’t a virtue often extolled in a society where so much of the economy revolves around entertainment and the idea of immediate gratification. At our house we record most television shows because we don’t like to wait for commercials! Sadly, I have even done this with sports games often choosing to watch the recorded event rather than viewing it live. (I know! I know! It’s a travesty!)

I speak about waiting, not because it’s Christmas, but because I’ve realized it is an absolute necessity in the mission and ministry of Alaska. So much here moves

slowly, very very slowly! (Except the meat I have tried to harvest, it moves fast! Very, very fast!) I imagine that in a life that is so surrounded by a daily fight for survival, non-essential things do tend to move slowly. Of course, any time things are not

*But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Romans 8:25*



*The kids waiting in the Fairbanks airport for mom to return from a trip to Illinois!*

going the way we want or hope, it often feels like it takes FOREVER!

As Christians, we are in a perpetual state of waiting. What waiting looks like can differ for each person. Some will be eagerly watching for the first sign or hint; others will just go about their business knowing it will happen when it happens. Neither way of waiting is wrong. The question is whether or not we are ready? Whether or not we realize why we are waiting? Or understand what we are waiting for?

The answer is found in the Apostle’s Creed: we are waiting for Jesus to return! For the resurrection of the dead! And the life everlasting! Amen!

Keith Aschenbeck

## Missionary to the Tanana River Valley

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[ruthzellar@alaskamissionforchrist.org](mailto:ruthzellar@alaskamissionforchrist.org)

#### **Volunteer**

We need both long and short term volunteers to help us share the Gospel in Alaska. Volunteers lead VBS, Sports Camps, do hammer and nails projects and even live in villages and serve people with Jesus' love. For more information, contact:  
[ruthzellar@alaskamissionforchrist.org](mailto:ruthzellar@alaskamissionforchrist.org)

#### **Give**

Alaska mission for Christ depends on gifts from people like you. Either donate on line at [www.alaskamissionforchrist.org](http://www.alaskamissionforchrist.org) or send checks to Alaska Mission for Christ, 8100 Arctic Boulevard, Anchorage, AK 99518



*Don't forget to find us on Facebook!*

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