



The Alaska United Methodist Conference

ERBELE ETCHINGS

Spring 2016

Dear Friends,

As we compose this letter, Teri is preparing to go to Unalaska for a second time this year. Ev was there last year in May and October. During her sojourns, Ev's ministry involved crisis management after the pastor left suddenly. Teri found matters much more settled and the church is already looking ahead to the future instead of feeling overwhelmed by it.

At this writing, a clergy person will not be appointed next year. The official appointment won't be until Annual Conference, but Evelyn has been asked to be lead pastor. We will share the circuit between Ketchikan and Unalaska. The goal is for one of us to be onsite in Unalaska each quarter for 3-4 weeks. It isn't an ideal situation for the congregation in Unalaska, but they are a hardy group well-accustomed to working in 'flex mode'. Since there are no direct flights from Ketchikan, it is necessary to overnight in Anchorage. If the weather permits and if the 18 passenger airplane is fully loaded leaving Anchorage the flight is just over 4 hours.



Unalaska is a destination we both thoroughly enjoy. It has an ebb and flow population of 4,500. The economy is maritime based (you may recognize it by the name Dutch Harbor), meaning the community's infrastructure is built around the fishing and shipping industries. Isolation, blowing weather and the high cost of goods are but a few of the challenges to living in the Aleutian Islands. **God is in the midst of the congregation at this mission outpost.**

It is a challenge to be in ministry here, and we invite you to seriously consider ways you can participate. The Alaska Conference and the congregation firmly believe the UM presence needs to be here. The Erbeles are committed to working with the congregation and the town to figure out ways to make that happen. But we need your help: both prayers asking for wisdom to see the way forward and financially. The congregation averages 15 in number (depending on the fishing season). They can't pay the bills,

maintain property, and further develop ministries without your help.

The Advance Special Number for Unalaska is 931855. Find them on FB: <https://www.facebook.com/Unalaska-United-Methodist-Church>

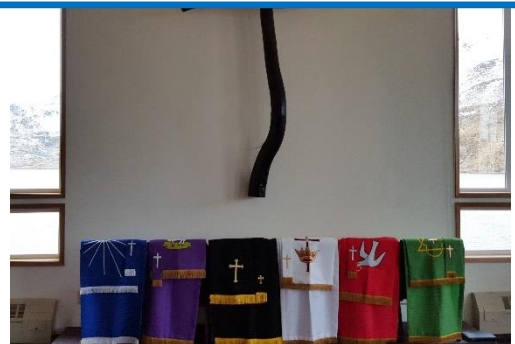
ALTAR CLOTHS TO UNALASKA AND SOCKS TO KETCHIKAN

We learned that the UMC in Scotland, SD was closed and the items inside would be auctioned. Ev requested the Dakotas Conference send the altar cloths to us for the benefit of Unalaska. On his February visit, Teri delivered them to Unalaska where their consecrated ministry is continuing.

In response to a Facebook post, the UMC in Olivet, SD sent a case of new socks for the Ketchikan Day Shelter patrons. After we thanked them for the case of socks, they told us two cases were sent. Didn't we get two cases? After researching the USPS it was discovered that one of the boxes ended up in Atlanta and sadly to date, 3 months later, it still hasn't been delivered.



Socks are the most needed item for people who live on the streets in wet weather. When the church closed in Scotland, SD the ministry of the altar cloths was transferred to Unalaska.



Downtown Ministry

Ev received a phone call imploring her to attend an urgent meeting with two city council members, the chief of police, assistant chief of police, and a representative of the Ketchikan Wellness Coalition. Ketchikan's little mall had been experiencing an increase in loitering and mischief-making by indigents. The conversation went something like this: (none of these words came from the police officers) "These are your people. What are you going to do about it?"

Evelyn: "My people! Well, if you give me their names I will talk to them."

Others: "How much is it going to cost us for you to open a 24 hour shelter so we can get these people off the street?" "Can't you buy a bus so you can round them up?"

Evelyn: "No, I can't buy a bus to round them up that practice was outlawed years ago."

One of the painful aspects of ministry with those who are homeless is that as you get acquainted and connected you find yourself crying with them over the captivity their addictions impose on them. Drugs and alcohol don't care how delightful, talented, or well-educated a person is. The beauty of island life faces reality when it comes to availability of resources, especially mental and physical

health. It really is a catch-22. Resources are few in Ketchikan for homeless people with impaired minds and addictions, plus if there were a program, one has to have the funds to participate. The most recent ache has come from the disappearance of a person nicknamed Hambone. He left the Day Shelter one afternoon and has not been seen since. Three others have vanished in the past six months. The common belief is that they are dead from falling in the water or the woods.

First City Homeless Services (FCHS) hosted an informational luncheon for groups and agencies that address homelessness and feed the hungry. Representatives from 16 organizations in Ketchikan plus interested citizens came to a noon meeting where they gave information about what, when, where, for whom and times of their services. Out of that meeting came a comprehensive list with contact information that is shared throughout the community. Additionally, out of that meeting came invitations for FCHS to tell their story at AARP, the Chamber of Commerce, and on the radio.

Advocacy is a full time task for all of us.

The last two months we have found ourselves in court more than usual as we have sat with families dealing with custody issues and other matters.

As you may remember the Day Shelter is located in the social hall of the church. Now that the shelter is open 7 days a week, the congregation and shelter join together for Sunday potlucks and special events. Most recently we enjoyed the Maundy Thursday Tenebrae service and Easter brunch. A member of the church told us how incredulous she was after a conversation with an acquaintance. Here is the paraphrase: "I was having a conversation with friends about the shelter being open 7 days a week now and how we share potlucks on Sunday. One person said, "You share food with them?" Me, "Of course we do!" She continued, "You actually sit with them and talk to them. You are not afraid?" "Pastor Ev, I am so angry. I honestly didn't know what to say."



Chris, Charlotte and Teri march in the Ketchikan Chooses Respect Parade. We choose to respect all people, in all places all the time.

The Path

During Advent and Lent the Ketchikan UMC used the theme "Come Walk With Us". We accompanied Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. Each week the panel of Mary and Joseph moved closer to Bethlehem and the stable. On Christmas Eve we were with them at the birth of Our Savior. All along the way more and more feet joined us.

When we think of life as a journey. It can feel overwhelming, long and tiring. However, when we envision life as walking along a path where we get to see the beauty around us, feel the sun and winds, meet and chat with people, it is then that we know that God is with us in this place at this time.

A parable, "A Father Had Two Sons". Do you see the 3 men? The yellow are the prodigal going on his foray and returning after coming to his senses. The blue feet are the father running for joy. The two of them hugging. On the right behind the tree, pointed in the opposite direction, is the older son.



"The Way of the Cross" was emphasized for Lent. Jesus invited us to walk with him to Jerusalem. We stood by his side throughout holy week and, as did the disciples, we witnessed the empty tomb on Easter morning. Fourteen artistic re-imaginings of the Stations of the Cross were created by members of the congregation and hung along the path. They reminded us that even in our mundane daily activities we walk the way of Christ.

We had people who read the Facebook posts ask if they could send their feet. They wanted to join us. By Easter, there were hundreds of feet from all walks of life on the path: snow shoes, ballet slippers, rain boots, baby booties, comfy slippers, etc.

WANTED: A MANAGER FOR THE KETCHIKAN HOSTEL
Ketchikan Hostel, a ministry of First United Methodist Church in Ketchikan, Alaska is seeking a manager.

The hostel operates from May 28th through August 31st.

The manger is responsible for the oversight of this ministry. You will welcome and register guests from 5:00pm – 11:00pm at which time the doors lock for the night and open again from 7:00am – 9:00am. The hostel is closed during the day allowing you to explore and enjoy the community.

If you have a bucket list of places to visit this should be on it. Our island community is located in the southern southeast of the Tongass National Forest. The fish run thick and a catch is guaranteed. Hiking trails abound with spectacular views.

Go to <http://ketchikanhostel.com> and <http://ktnumc.org> for more information on both the church and the hostel.

We have 4 Advance Specials we request that you prayerfully consider:

- Unalaska Ministries # 931855
- Evelyn's Salary Support # 10832Z
- Teri's Salary Support # 10831Z
- Downtown Ministry – Day Shelter # 3020487

We thank you for your prayers and support. May you have a most blessed holiday season.

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