

GOOD NEWS IN THE DIOCESE
Monthly Report from the Office of The Bishop
August 2009

A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP KIMSEY

Grace and peace be with you and yours.

I was struck by an article written by an op-ed columnist, Steve Duin, in yesterday's Oregonian. Mr. Duin had visited the Franklin Delano Roosevelt memorial in Washington, DC and was quite impressed by how FDR's life and wisdom speaks to our times. The quote he singled out as notable was actually something Eleanor said of her husband: *"Franklin's illness gave him strength and courage he had not had before. He had to think out the fundamentals of living and learn the greatest of all lessons—infinite patience and never-ending persistence."*

I have been privileged to have been a part of your ministry in all four Diocesan deaneries and to have represented you in the House of Bishops at our General Convention. I have known your life as it is with you in Point Lay, Chalkyitsik, Seward, Sitka and Wasilla, and I give thanks to God for the grit and wisdom with which you have lived into Eleanor's words: infinite patience and never-ending persistence. You have done so, I believe, by the grace of Christ, and you have honored him and his Church with your faithfulness.

We are approaching a significant chapter in the life of the Diocese of Alaska. The nomination and election of our next bishop is an exciting time and it is also a time that raises all the issues of being The Episcopal Church in and for Alaska....issues that are inviting and affirming, but also, at times, confusing and controversial. We are not called by Christ to be in perfect agreement one with another, but we are called by Christ to be in communion one with another and share on all sides the love we know in Jesus Christ....with Eleanor's words echoing in our hearts and minds. May it be so with us.

Faithfully yours in Christ,
Rustin, Assisting Bishop for Alaska

EPISCOPAL MISSION EXCHANGE

Group from Virginia hopes to continue to exchange ministry with St. David's, Wasilla

By: The Rev. Paul Klitzke

St. David's, Wasilla, has been blessed with mission group support over the past years. Many groups and individuals have helped us grow spiritually as a congregation as well as accomplish projects that we have long dreamt of completing. This year a group from Grace Church and St. Mary's, both of the Diocese of Virginia, came to assist us at St. David's. The decision to come to Alaska came through much mutual prayer and discernment and 15 months of planning.

Although they were unable to help with our building expansion as originally planned, they accomplished a great deal. They came with grant funds that help us establish a garden - a long-time dream for many at St. David's. The garden will hopefully be used as an opportunity for us to work collectively, as well as help feed ourselves and others through outreach ministries such as Family Promise and the Food Pantry.

The group was also able to perform a lot of landscaping on the church property. The work around our sign (designed by Burt Lent) and the work around our new parking lot help make us more welcoming to newcomers. The group spent many hours collecting rocks, grooming the trail, and helping care for the outside of our beautiful church building.

Those who came from Virginia, along with the rest of their congregations at home, hope that this ministry exchange may continue. If you plan to be in Virginia, please consider a visit to their churches. May we also continue to express our gratitude to the group and to those who did so much to help host them here in Wasilla.



Please remember this wonderful group of 22 individuals in your thoughts and prayers as they return home to Virginia. Thank God for all the work that has been done at St. David's and all those who gave many, many hours to make it all possible. Visit <http://gracechurchberryville.blogspot.com> to read more and see more pictures from the Virginia group and their trip.

DANCING WITH THE SPIRIT VISITS EAGLE

By: The Rev. Belle Mickelson

Pete Peter and I flew into Eagle on July 21st. Bertha Ulvi met us at the airport. We loaded 12 fiddles, 3 mandolins, 8 guitars—and our bags in the back of her small pick up truck and traveled 5-10 mph over a temporary road (mats laid over the wetlands). This road ran parallel to the river to reach the gravel road to the New Village on a high bluff overlooking the Yukon River, about 5 miles away.

We really saw the flood devastation as Bertha drove us back on the new road. The village site was bare ground—and all the buildings were pushed back in a shambles a half mile from the river—and downstream a half mile... Just the church roof was sitting there on the ground. The granite baptismal font and the church bell are outside the Village Council Office.

Music and Art Camp went really well with 25 youth participating from 1-5 pm at Redmen Hall. We had a great final picnic, student concert (both outside at Redmen Hall) and fiddle dance with about 100 people participating.

The highlight of the week for me was the 5:30 pm Wednesday church service at the village site attended by 15... The sun shone on the grass and sand—as we stood and sang and prayed in the outline of the church. “Here’s where the door was, here’s where the altar was,” they said. We set up the altar on a blazo box covered with a sheet. Ruth Ridley prayed in Han. It was very moving with people crying as they thought of all the good memories—and some sad ones, too. Daisy told me later, “I’ll never have a home like this one.” We did GBD—the walking on water story—and we thought we felt and saw Jesus out there walking toward us on the Yukon River. It was a good time to remind ourselves that the church is the people—not buildings—and that we are all here... What a blessings that no one died in the flood. I have to admit, I cried when we left Friday morning. We had made such great friends!

YUKON ISLAND RETREAT FOR TEENS

By: The Rev. Paul and Sarah Klitzke

The beginning of August brought a fantastic group of 11 teens together for a back-to-school retreat on Yukon Island, off the coast of Homer. Eight youth from Anchorage, one from Wasilla, and two from Point Lay, gathered together with us for a weekend of fellowship, prayer, and bonding. One of the most amazing activities that the teens completed was an “art in spirituality” afternoon in which they each created art projects made entirely of things found on the beach, loosely modeled after some of artist Andy Goldsworthy’s works. The art that was created was simply amazing, and each piece was unique. It was the explanations, though, of what the teens had created that was the most powerful part of the activity. Each piece was created with the theme of “teenage life and faith journeys” and many of the teens shared pieces of their lives with each other through their works. The teens also enjoyed other creative and fun endeavors such as writing limericks, digital scavenger hunts, and island tour which included berry picking, a tree house, rope swings, and history lessons about the area.

We would like to say a huge thank you to Gretchen Bersch for inviting us onto the island and all the hospitality and good food we could possibly imagine, Red Mountain Marine for being so patient with us and all our luggage, and the Diocese of Alaska, which, through money set aside in the budget for youth, gave eleven teenagers and their adult chaperones a God-centered, powerful adventure that they will remember for life.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL: POINT HOPE

By: Sarah Klitzke

I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. **(Philemon 1:6)**

In July, Paul and I were invited to lead a vacation bible school in Point Hope, Alaska. We spent many hours preparing and praying about this opportunity. We looked through many, many resources to find what we felt was a fun and appropriate curriculum to take to this small Arctic village. We ended up designing our own curriculum for the week under the theme of “The Strength of God”, teaching how strong God is and how God can use strength through all different kinds of people for good in the world. We focused on five stories throughout the week: The story of Jacob wrestling with God from Genesis, the battle of Jericho from the book of Joshua, the life and death of Jesus, the earthquake that set Paul and Silas free from jail from the book of Acts, and the armor of God from the letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

The week was absolutely fantastic, for us and for the children in the village. It was a God-filled week of stories, crafts, snacks, games, and prayer. We were blessed with an abundance of children of all ages participating—estimating between 70-100 children at different points throughout the week. We were amazed and encouraged by the knowledge of the children, the readiness to participate in songs, dancing, games, and even role-playing. We felt so welcomed in the village and were filled with awe at the beauty and kindness we experienced. We were honored to be a part of the community of faith there, and we can’t wait to return. Thank you to all those that prayed for us and supported us in this wonderful ministry.

Thank you to all those at St. David's who donated to this mission outreach, and thank you to St. Mary's, Anchorage, for the use of Sunday School and Vacation Bible School materials. Thank you especially to the village of Point Hope, especially Gail Gallahorn, Alfred Downey, and all those WONDERFUL children for the hospitality, generosity, and kindness during our stay.

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LARGE BRASS CHURCH BELL, FREE TO ANY CHURCH

The current Vestry at Saint Christopher's Episcopal Church in Anchorage would like to make available a large, cast brass bell. Both because of increased pranksters and vandalism in the church neighborhood, and the necessity of building a new, larger bell tower, the current Vestry has voted to make their exchange bell from the church at Tanana available to any church that would pay to transport it. The bell is estimated to weigh between 700 to 1,000 pounds and is on a palette for ease of transport. The wooden clapper will need some repair.

Anyone interested is urged to contact Senior Warden Anne Masker, either by e-mail to: masker_a@msn.com or by writing to her c/o Saint Christopher's Episcopal Church, P.O. Box 211896, Anchorage, AK 99521-1896.

