



The Alaska
United Methodist Conference

Missionary Conference of the
United Methodist Church

ERBELE ETCHINGS
September 2011

Dear friends,

As we write this letter fall is in the air. We say this not because the trees are changing color, for the forests are perpetually green. We know this because the silver salmon are now in full run. They are the last of the 5 species of salmon to complete the 3 year migratory cycle and return to the creeks and rivers of their birth to spawn. The tourist season is nearly over which is evidenced by the dwindling number of cruise ship visitors. It is hard to believe, but one person told us she actually cries when the last cruise ship leaves Ketchikan. It is estimated that nearly 900,000 guests came to enjoy our town this summer.

It has been a full summer for us personally and for the Ketchikan United Methodist Church.

In June Teri accepted the position as the secretary of the Alaska Annual Conference. This meant sitting at the head table, which he found to be rather confining as he had to stay focused on the matters at hand. For the next two months he was working on producing the journal. Evelyn was elected an alternate delegate to Jurisdictional Conference. This means she will be representing Alaska in July at the Jurisdictional conference in San Diego.

Wilmington came and shed light on Ketchikan

About a year ago the UM church in Wilmington, Massachusetts asked if they could come to help us as a mission project. Initially, we suggested painting the interior of the church building and several other projects. On July 31, five people arrived full of excitement. Regretfully, one person had to cancel because of a knee injury and two withdrew because of a death in the family. We narrowed the project list to installing 82 energy efficient light fixtures.

Ole Sullivan, a member of the church who is handy with building maintenance, was present every day providing guidance and troubleshooting the 45-year-old wiring. Families of the church teamed up to make supper each evening. The team would go at noon to the Salvation Army soup kitchen to help prepare meals and to eat with the guests. Preparations for the August 6th annual Blueberry Festival included making pies and building the outdoor kiosk. We sold 57 pies, countless funnel cakes, ice cream cones and root beer floats. Thank you Wilmington for coming and spending a week with us. Your enthusiasm and hard work was truly a blessing to the Ketchikan church.

One evening after work a member of the church took the team out fishing. At one point our boat came close to a whale which was bubble feeding. Though we had heard about it and seen pictures we felt privileged to actually witness such an event. Several times we could see a ring of

bubbles form on the surface of the water. It became more and more definite. Then we would see herring and candle fish jumping out of the water followed by a whale bigger than our boat shoot up with its jaws wide open.



Ketchikan Hostel

Each May we have a hostel set-up and then in September we have hostel take-down. The Sunday school rooms are changed into dormitories and we provide a ministry of hospitality to the backpackers, new arrivals looking for housing, and for those wishing to simply spend a few days to explore the region. This year several people served as managers of the hostel. In June Christina Bush, a member of the church, got us started. For a week Sam Sullivan, a college student, took the responsibility until Eric and Sandi Edstrom arrived from Grace UMC in Carlisle PA. In August Bob and Susan Baxter also from Grace UMC came for three weeks and then Linda Shoup from Washington State finished the season. We extend our sincere gratitude to these ministers. If you could be interested in serving during the summer of 2012 as the hostel manager write us for details. We promise you it is more fun than work.

Pigs on a Mission Program continues

The weigh-ins continue to provide funds for One Great Hour of Sharing, relief to the Japan Tsunami victims and to those suffering from the Spring storms in the U.S. Most recently \$366.27 was sent for school kits in Minot, ND. The city of Minot lost all 6 public schools to flooding.

The First City Homeless Services, which is housed in the basement of the church building, has steadily offered a day shelter refuge for the homeless. It breaks one's heart to see families with small children show up. On September 17th they had a pancake breakfast and pie auction at the Moose Lodge. The Moose were very generous and donated all the eggs, sausage, and pancake fixings - thank you Moose. The next fund raiser will be a Thanksgiving dinner.

Ministry in the community is vital to the proclamation of God's love and concern of all creation. 'The Season' started with a Blessing of the Fleet down on pier #1. It is one of the few ecumenical services for our community. The honor guard from the Coast Guard and the Ketchikan Fire Department Pipes and Drums lead the processional down



the ramp to the boats. The service was completed with everyone present tossing a carnation into the water in memory of a friend or loved one lost at sea.

In August Ev received a phone call from a woman whose husband was in the hospital. They were expecting the doctor to come with the results from tests. Would she please come? We both went and prayed with them and shared communion. The doctor came with the dreaded news. The cancer had progressed to the point that nothing more could be done by the medical profession. Their son's wedding was scheduled to take place in three weeks. If Dale was still alive there was no way he would be able to attend. As the family struggled with wanting to somehow involve Dale, Ev suggested a blessing ceremony similar to what we read in the Bible when the patriarchs would bless their children as their last act. Ev created a Service of Blessing. The ceremony was held in the hospital chapel. The bride and groom came in their wedding attire. Dale was able to offer a blessing and the son was able to thank his father for the love and support all through his youth. Ten days later Dale passed.

Teri is running his legs off refereeing soccer games. This is his third year and more and more people are complementing the 'Pastor Ref' for his dedication of time to the youth soccer league.

Ev is now on the city Wellness Coalition - Drug and Alcohol Task Force. The purpose of the committee is to develop ways to bring awareness to and develop preventative measures regarding the rampant use of drugs and alcohol in our community. Alaska has the highest rates of alcoholism, drug production, suicide, rape and fetal alcohol syndrome in the nation. It is a very sad commentary for the state with the highest mountains, longest coast line, denser forests, and mineral wealth in the nation.

[Blessing of the Animals](#) took place Saturday September 17th in the parking lot of the church. There was a turn out from across the community. Each pooch, kitty, bird and human companion was prayed for. Karen brought Gracie back this year asking for a stronger prayer because the prayers of last year didn't last very long. We gave Gracie a double dose prayer.

[Gift of Love](#)

Two years ago we read that the Prairie City, Oregon UMC would be closing and joining with the John Day UMC. We wrote stating that if their paraments were not committed to another we would love to continue their consecrated ministry in Ketchikan. Last week a package arrived with the paraments and a note from the Prairie City/John Day members full of words of joy that the ministry of the paraments will continue in Alaska.



[Erbele Family](#)

In May we attended the graduation of our son, Andrew and our daughter-in-law, Jolita, from Asbury Theological Seminary. In actuality they merely "walked" because they had a few more classes to take during the summer session. They had decided to do the classes online and discovered that there is indeed value to physically being in a class. They both are now alumni. In August they had the nerve to take our granddaughter even further away as they moved to Lithuania to be the pastors of the Kybartai and Pilviskiai United Methodist churches. Unlike us, they are not Global Ministry Missionaries. They are clergy members of the Lithuania church and receive their salary from the Lithuania church. Individuals and churches are invited to support [Pastor's Salary through the Advance Special #14715A](#)

They have created a blog: www.erbele.com for keeping readers informed of their adventures. Please pray for them as they adjust to new circumstances.

Early in July we had our children and grandchildren here. We get used to the quiet in the huge parsonage so it was a refreshing jolt to have all the commotion that two three-year-olds and a one-and-a-half-year-old can create. Julian and Teri became pretty good buddies since Teri seemed to be the only one that could get him to lay down and take a nap. Teri usually fell asleep first. Emily informed grandpa that milk mixed with juice is "totally gross" and "so not good."

Emily Adeline Gappy Julian Gram Emma



Thank you for all you do on our behalf and the Church around the world -Teri and Evelyn

Home:
Terence and Evelyn Erbele
PO Box 8515
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

Church: www.ktnumc.org

email: Evelyn: everbele@yahoo.com
Teri: erbele@gmail.com

h:1.907.225.2487 o:1.907.225.3780

Our Advance Special numbers for salary support are:

Teri - 10831Z Evelyn - 10832Z