

## Zion Lutheran Church • Fairbanks, Alaska

### Pastor's Monday • July 23, 2007

I am sitting at the counter with Pastor Rex Longshore in our condo waiting for the coffee to get done. It's Monday morning! Pastor Dennis Morner, Circuit Counselor, who also spent the night with us has yet to come down. I've promised oatmeal (simple fare) for all before I take Dennis to the airport for his 8:30 flight. Pastor Longshore leaves this afternoon. Where to start...

The Board for Missions Services (LCMS) meeting and the 63<sup>rd</sup> Regular Convention of the LCMS (I returned 2:00 am on Thursday from Houston) are a distant memory – or so it seems. It is hard to believe that a week ago I was working at the Open Arms Institute exhibit at the convention center. What is fresh in my memory is this past weekend.

I'll start with Friday evening; Judy and I arrived at Zion on our bikes a little after 9:00. Craig Robinson was putting finishing touches on the float. WOW! What a transformation in 10 days. When I left for Houston, it was just a trailer...when I came back it boldly depicted the Water of Life. When we came in the building, the mountain of water (4000+) bottles were gone! They were in the huge walk-in cooler getting "cool" for their mission the next morning. Celebrate Recovery was just moving into its fellowship time. An ebullient Alice told me that there were over 50 in attendance! Many familiar faces...and as always, some new ones. The familiar faces bright and smiling, the new ones, tense, confused... but if they keep coming, if they become familiar faces, they too will be smiling. That is what the "celebration" is all about! God is doing wonderful things in that program.

Saturday morning early at church – and the place was a beehive of activity. Habitat volunteers hanging around, bunches of LAMP volunteers, and of course the "water handlers" loading pickups and SUVs. The two principals (Craig Robinson and Jayne Patterson) in the float construction along with their first back up (Alice Heckert) were putting the last minute touches to the float while Chad Stadig was putting together the sound system that would work flawlessly (!!!) during the parade. The staging area at the Carlson Center was as exciting as the parade later. Pastor Joe and his family were pulling wagons full of water handing out bottles to most of the parade participants! For those who walk the parade, it is a chance to see the other entries...and of course the inevitable comparisons with other entries. We were privileged to have our own Jaunelle Celaire joined by Bobby Lewis and Eustace Johnson on our float and they sang and witnessed the whole way through. So very wonderful were the Open Arms families that walked the parade with us. Now we pray that the 4000+ bottles of the "Water of Life" will be an invitation to others to learn more about Jesus and/or join us at Zion. For those of you who didn't see the label that was on each and every bottle, it read

#### THIRSTY?

Water quenches our thirst but it can't give us life! We invite you to get to know someone who can!

*Jesus said, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.'*

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Thanks to all of you who brought the water – we tripled the number of bottles we handed out last year... My estimation is that we could have given out twice as many. Now the challenge is to think through this outreach – is it the best way to use the resources that God gives us to spread the good news? I would be interested in knowing what you think.

It was great to be back in worship at Zion on Saturday evening! It was Pastor Joe's first time to worship with us... and it was so great to see him welcomed so warmly.

Church Picnic Sunday -- it is always an anxious day. Will anybody come? Have all the details been taken care of? And...it was the sending of our five adult leaders and 27 youth to Orlando for the Youth Gathering! And...the really big event was the installation of Associate Pastor Joe Baumgarten and the official welcoming of his family; wife Cyndi and children Madeline and Duncan. And yes, they did come! A huge attendance at the 11:00 service....A wonderful turnout with the best potluck in the world for the picnic....and an inspiring installation service. Summer precluded many of the Alaska Pastors from attending but we did have Pastor Rex Longshore, who is interim pastor at Zion/Anchorage; our own Pastor Dr. Fred Schramm; Pastor Rick Twenhafel; Pastor Dennis Morner, Circuit Counselor/pastor of Beautiful Savior, Anchorage; and the preacher, Pastor Roland Kauth. The music was wonderful, the sermon outstanding, and the welcome warm and much appreciated. Thanks to those who did so many things for the arrival and welcoming of our new pastor. While all of our staff worked hard, it was Kathy Gappert who handled the details of the move and put the "Things I wish I had known about moving to Alaska" into a beautiful scrapbook! Please keep the welcome going!

For your information, we are hosting a Thrivent international group for a week as they work on a Habitat For Humanity project. We are providing many of their meals as well as a place for them to stay! May God continue to bless this important work.

Please keep our youth in your prayers as they leave on Thursday!

Pastor Kuehnert