

Daily Reports from the FUMC 2017 Mission Trip to Willow, Alaska UM Church

From: Marilyn Zehring [mailto:mbzehri@icloud.com]
Sent: Friday, July 21, 2017 1:05 PM
To: Anne Kallesen
Subject: Alaska Last Report

Today is our last day and so everyone is busy getting everything cleaned up and the last of the assigned tasks done.

Yesterday Rocky, Cliff, Denise, Roy, Mae along with Terry and Cindy cut wood. They cut wood for Constance who is an artist and lives in a bus.

A weekly lunch is served in conjunction with the library at the Community Center. Twila, Mary, Marilyn helped Ola prepare the food along with volunteers from the church. 30 some children were served along with about 10 adults. The extra food is packaged and given to the families.

In the evening we went to Terry's for a cookout. We had moose, turkey and trout which was roasted over the bonfire. (some of us were chicken and ate hot dogs). And, of course, s'mores. Terry is originally from Neligh, Nebraska moved to Michigan and then to Alaska. He taught Industrial Arts in the school here and is now retired. He is an active member of the church and in charge of the "wood ministry". He lives on 40 acres of forested land. To get the wood he has a rule which is you have to help chop, stack and unload.

It has been a rewarding week and we have made a difference in many lives. We thank you for your prayers and looking forward to seeing you at church.

Mae and Roy are flying out on a red eye in the morning. Rocky and Mary are staying the night and flying out tomorrow (they came up early). Denise, Twila, Kodie and Bob are going to Seward to fish until Tuesday. Cliff and Marilyn are staying for another week going to Denali and trips on the Kenai.

From: Marilyn Zehring [mailto:mbzehri@icloud.com]
Sent: Thursday, July 20, 2017 6:24 PM
To: Anne Kallesen
Subject: Alaska Day 3

As I mentioned yesterday Wednesday is Food Pantry Day. People can come once a month. The amount of food depends on the size of the family. They pick out their own food and then it is weighed. The food is from donations and the Food Bank of Alaska. It is manned by church members. Mary, Twila and Kodie helped to register people. Denise was their replacement and chief cook. Monthly the FP averages 150 - 160 families and yesterday they had 44 families. Marilyn stayed at the church as men came to take showers and fill up water containers.

Bob, Roy and Rev. Joe-D went to the parsonage to work on refurbishing the sign. Cliff, Rocky, Mae along with Terry, Cindy, Vander and Cathy cut trees. Terry is in charge of the wood, Cindy is house sitting for Fran Lynch. Cliff and Rocky found black spruce which they cut down, chained them to the back of the pick up to pull out of the forest. Then they all cut off the outcroppings from the tree. The logs were then taken to Cathy's house. Vander is her grandson who has some special ed issues.

By the time they got back to the church they were exhausted and filthy. Cliff has been throwing his clothes away each day. A breaker had blown and there was no hot water for showers in fact it was ice cold. Not happy people!

In the evening we went to Talkeetna for dinner. It is about 50 miles away. We ate at the Brew Pub on the deck. Rocky's cousin, Gail and husband, Craig who live in Wasilla joined us. (For those of you who were on the first Slidell trip Gail is Alice Plettner's sister, Carol's daughter) Craig works on the pipeline at Prudhoe Bay.

After the day was over we all slept well!

From: Marilyn Zehring [mailto:mbzehri@icloud.com]
Sent: Wednesday, July 19, 2017 2:33 PM
To: Anne Kallesen
Subject: Alaskan VIM Day 2

Alaska VIM Day 2

As I write this I am looking out the window and watching cars drive up to the old church for the Food Pantry but more about that tomorrow. Yesterday Rocky, Cliff, Bob , Roy, Mae, Denise plus volunteers from Willow spent the morning cutting wood at the home of a woman. They cut enough to get her through winter. In the afternoon this crew cut more wood at the church and stacked it in a building. The building is almost full and holds two cords. Mary, with a little help from Marilyn, finished sorting the tubs of clothing. Twila, Kodie and the minister, Kristina, hosted young women and their children making bracelets, playing games and singing songs. Other tasks we accomplished were addressing envelopes for a mailing to supporters including one for Columbus, Twila vacuumed the building, Marilyn made Rice Krispy Marshmallow Squares while Denise and Mary cooked.

In the evening members of the church had a Dessert Potluck for our group. About 25 people attended. One woman is a potter and made each of us an ornament in the shape of Alaska, salmon or moose. It was a great evening of food and fellowship.

From: Marilyn Zehring [mailto:mbzehri@icloud.com]
Sent: Tuesday, July 18, 2017 12:49 PM
To: Anne Kallesen
Subject: Alaskan mission trip

The Adult VIM Team is in Alaska and already hard at work. The team consists of Leader Denise Kracl, Twila Wallace, Kody Kracl, Rocky and Mary Plettner, Mae and Roy Walter, Marilyn Zehring, Bob Bell from Bellwood and Cliff Zehring from Gypsum, Colorado.

We gathered on Monday morning in the lobby of the hotel after flying in at different times. We have three rented vehicles. Rocky, Mary, Mae and Roy went to Willow. The rest of the team went to Walmart in Wasilla and filled 4 baskets of food and water for the week.

The Willow United Methodist Church is along a highway among huge trees. The church has been built by VIM groups with a beautiful sanctuary. A room next to it is a combination Gathering Area and kitchen. There is a large room where the team is sleeping on blow up mattresses. Other rooms include a nursery, office, 2 bathrooms with showers and an office.

The ministers, Rev. Christina and Rev. Joe-D DowlingSoka, have only been here for two weeks, transferring from the Holston Conference in Tennessee. The Food Pantry Manager and in charge of volunteers is Ola Williams with lots of help from her husband. They are retirees from New York. The church averages between 20 - 40 in attendance on Sunday with close to 60 on special Sundays.

When we got here the men began work cutting and stacking wood. They also took down the welcoming sign as it had faded and needs to be refurbished. Mary worked on making coupon booklets to be given to Food Pantry patrons to use at the Farmers Market. Mae started pulling weeds. Twila, Kody, Marilyn and later Mary started sorting through bins of clothing which are given away at Christmas.

For the evening meal we gathered around the table in the Gathering Place. Marilyn had made the Chicken and Dressing Casserole which is served at the Mission Salad Luncheon. Denise made brownies for dessert. Adding fruit and salad a delicious meal with good fellowship. Outside our window we saw a man and woman in a pick-up filling containers of water - he lives in an RV with no water source.

After a full day everyone was ready to retire for the night. Marilyn and Cliff are staying in a B&B about 10 minutes away (Marilyn's knees say "no" to sleeping on the floor).

Keep us in your prayers and come back tomorrow for more!

Note added by Doug K: Willow UMC's internet links are:

<http://www.willowumc.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/WillowUnitedMethodistChurch>