



ANNUAL REPORT

**Orthodox Diocese of Alaska Diocesan Assembly
Anchorage, Alaska
September 1, 2012 – October 2, 2013
October 15, 2013**

MISSION: Respond to the call of our fellow countrymen, heirs to the spiritual legacy of St. Innocent as they struggle in America's Holy Land to preserve the Orthodox faith against the evil one, treacherous weather, and harsh subsistence lifestyle.

OBJECTIVE: To provide hope for the faithful of Alaska through major projects inclusive of organized prayer, theological education, and Church School programs. This will be accomplished in unity with all Orthodox jurisdictions by sharing our God-given treasures: financial means, time, talent, ability, and experience.

Your Grace, Vladyka BENJAMIN, Fr. David Mahaffey, beloved clergy, brothers and sisters in Christ, Glory to Jesus Christ! Master, bless!

My prayers and hopes are with you all as you take on the business of this Holy Diocese and plan for another year of work in our Lord's Alaska Vineyard. Thanks be to God, for our donors to the **Outreach Alaska** projects. They make it possible for this report on our activities over the past year – September 2012 thru October 2, 2013. Please forgive this lengthy report. **Outreach Alaska** does a lot and since there has not been a report in the past 2 years, there is much for you to know and report for this home based mission.

Projects for St. Herman Theological Seminary:

- All seminarians available for the Adopt a Seminarian project were sponsored during the seminary years of 2012/13. Again, **Outreach Alaska** provided seminarians with monthly sponsor checks in the amount of \$200 totaling more than \$2,400 for each family annually. There was one graduate in 2013 who was also given a commencement gift of a large icon representing his sponsor parish and his final sponsor check in the amount of \$600.
- Sponsorship will continue this year for all seminarians who are enrolled in the classes from 2nd year through 4th year. Total to date from September 2012, **\$24,800** was distributed to SHS seminarians in "Adopt a Seminarian" sponsor fees. There are 9 qualified seminarians beginning the 2013/14 seminary year who are fully sponsored.

The "Adopt a Seminarian" project is changing beginning September 1, 2013. Second year students will no longer automatically be placed in the sponsor program. Sponsorship will be based on the first year performance and on an individual basis. Students must be in good standing according to the seminary "Policy and Procedures" particularly regarding class /service attendance/timeliness. There must not be any alcohol/drug abuse. The seminarian should demonstrate a sincere interest in studies as well as potential to serve Holy Orthodoxy in Alaska. Participation in extra projects would be helpful (missionary trips, seminary fundraisers, community service, sponsor communication, etc). Please refer to the newly implemented "Criteria" for each student on the sponsor program. Also we have developed a 2 tier sponsor system. A single student will receive \$100 per month and the married/family student will receive \$200 per month. The families need more assistance than the single students. This change also provides more opportunity for parishes/individuals to participate on a smaller level so that sponsorship can be more widespread – bringing more awareness to the Diocese of Alaska and to **Outreach Alaska**.

- **Outreach Alaska** provided printed commencement announcements to Nathan Anderson as well as for Fr. John Dunlop, Dean for use to announce the SHS commencement (**\$162**).
- More than **\$2,100** was given in Wal-Mart gift cards to the Adopt a Seminarian students for Nativity and Pascha. This was in addition to the monthly sponsor fees and was provided by general donations to **Outreach Alaska**. Also, some seminarians received some cash gifts directly from their sponsors during the year – one was more than **\$1,000**.
- More than **\$4,318** were paid to Safeway for purchases to stock the St. Juliana Food Pantry. This project is ongoing and funds are donated regularly for purchases. The Food Pantry assists married students and their families.
- In May of 2013, **Outreach Alaska** sponsored the Annual Ladies Luncheon for the women of the seminary and others who were our guests. This was very well attended and seemed to be enjoyed by all. This has become an annual event and will be planned every year that I visit as long as I have the funds to provide this wonderful afternoon for the Ladies of the Seminary. Mill Bay Catering was paid **\$300** for the meal. Red plates were purchased for **\$220** and have been put away to be used specifically for these luncheons each year. Plates that have been purchased in past years have disappeared each year.
- **SHS Kitchen Project:** Industrial dishes/serving pieces for up to 40 place settings were purchased from Anchorage Restaurant Supply for the seminary. These are to be used for the seminary meals and for community fundraisers. The total cost was **\$1,147.50**. The seminary is responsible for inventorying this and the newly purchased red plates and making sure seminarians do not remove these items from the Refractory for their personal use.
- **RADACT Project: Currently** I am writing an application to IOCC requesting \$3,000 for expenses to provide one week of substance abuse training for the seminarians at SHS. This will be provided in February of 2014 and I do expect the grant to be approved. These funds should be received by December 1 to **Outreach Alaska** accounts. These receipts will be reported in the 2014 report to the Diocesan Assembly.

In review, during the 2012/2013 Seminary Year, **Outreach Alaska** provided more than **\$32,747** in sponsor fees, food pantry, and other purchases for the St. Herman Theological Seminary.

Other Expenses: \$9,566.88 – Alaska Travel, Kansas City Antiochian Diocese of Wichita and Mid America Parish Life Conference (all fees, lodging, transportation, subsistence, booth supplies, etc), postage, printing, website, accounting fees, miscellaneous supplies.

Spiritual Travel: The **Outreach Alaska** website always tries to post information on the annual St. Herman Spruce Island Pilgrimage in August. Currently a “Spiritual Travel” tour is being planned for August 2014 – in celebration on **Outreach Alaska** 15 years. I am working with FOS Tours to develop this schedule and pricing and hope to have it finalized by the end of October. Dates are tentatively planned for August 1 – 15, 2014. First stop will be Sitka and then to Anchorage for a few days before flying to Bethel. In the Kuskokwim, the plan is to attend a service at St. Sophia if possible with our timing and the travel to Kwethluk for pilgrimage to Mother Olga’s gravesite. This part of the itinerary may need to change based on the timing for the Kuskokwim Conference and the availability of clergy in that area during our visit. It would be wonderful if the clergy could come to Bethel and have some time with the travelers since some of them may have been sponsors for these clergy while they were in seminary. Once I get some things finalized with FOS Tours, I will be in contact with Kuskokwim to make some final arrangements for our travel there. We will attend the pilgrimage in Kodiak and possibly be up to 5 nights there. It is possible we will travel to Denali – but other things are definitely being planned and I am trying to bring these people along the path I traveled in 1999 as much as possible in the short 2 weeks allowed for the trip. There will be approximately 16 travelers at the most. During the Parish Life Conference in June in Kansas City, 14 persons signed up for ongoing information as the pilgrimage is planned. We look forward to this Alaska experience and I especially look forward to our Kuskokwim visit and being at the new St. Sophia Russian Orthodox Church – where it all started for me in 1999.

Outreach Alaska Website: The website is in great need of updating. Fr. David has referred someone to help with suggestions and I am working with a woman at my church to also help with this. Funds will be needed at some level and I hope to raise some funds to the general account to help with this – hopefully not to exceed \$1,000.

Review of all projects for the diocese since 1999: Next year (2014) will mark 15 years since I first traveled to Alaska in 1999. Many projects have been accomplished over the years. Most significant was our participation with St. Sophia Russian Orthodox Church rebuilding (Project 2010) and development of Sunday school in Bethel as well as the many projects for St. Herman Theological Seminary beginning in 2001. There have been partnerships with many parishes and individuals from all Orthodox jurisdictions in the lower 48 as well as with IOCC and OCMC over the years. These partnerships continue as we near this 15 year milestone. For next year's report, I plan to provide a review of all that has been accomplished over the years for the Diocese of Alaska and pray for increased vision and strength to accomplish God's Will for the next 5 years – bringing this home-based missionary to a 20 year anniversary.

Since 2007, I have not been able to travel to the AAC or to lower 48 Antiochian Parish Life Conferences due to lack of funds that had previously been provided by the diocese to assist **Outreach Alaska** with this work. Being at these conferences is most crucial to the outreach and exposure of **Outreach Alaska** and the work that is done. The booth sales – especially at the AAC - are most helpful and always provide extra funds for the general expenses. Therefore, there has been limited opportunity to connect with Orthodox Christians throughout the Antiochian Orthodox Diocese of Wichita and Mid America. This is usually where I raise extra funds for the **Outreach Alaska** projects. Projects that were in the process of growth and development have been stopped due to the lack of funding and communication with Alaska administration. Those projects are inclusive of the following:

- Development of a Diocesan Sunday School Administrator inclusive of training in the lower 48 was being completed. This person was to be helpful in training others to be Sunday School Coordinators and supervise a well established Sunday school program in the diocese. This would also coordinate with the "Sister Parish" project funding Sunday school supplies, etc. This was beginning at St. Sophia in Bethel and was to be the model for the diocese. The person who was trained, etc. moved from Bethel and it is my understanding that the Sunday school there no longer exists. This is a great loss and now needs to begin all over again with a person who really wants to develop these programs and help the village parishes maintain their Sunday School programs for the Orthodox education of the Alaska youth. If we do not do this, we may lose the young people who are always the future of the church. This is the only way we will increase.
- Lower 48 parishes have inquired about the "Sister Parish" projects but the few times we have made these connections, the Alaska parishes do not follow thru on their communications with the lower 48 parish. This needs to be worked on and an understanding needs to be developed that if these programs are going to be successful, the Alaska parish has to do their part. It is really very simple and the "Sister Parish" would be excellent for youth to communicate with each other as partners in Orthodoxy. So much could come out of the Sunday school programs and the "Sister Parish" connections.
- An "**Ambassadors for Alaska**" project was being developed. This would bring individuals from parishes in the lower 48 as local, parish based representatives for **Outreach Alaska**. Each ambassador would be educated in the mission, make presentations to their parishes on behalf of **Outreach Alaska** and possibly work at their local conferences for **Outreach Alaska** booths. They would also provide some kind of fundraising for **Outreach Alaska** at their parish level – example: Soup and Salad meal during lent with donations going to the food pantry. I need to be able to further develop this "Ambassador for Alaska" project in order to grow and enhance this very important mission.
- **Prayer Journal with IOCC** program was underway and being promoted with various parishes in Alaska. This is a fabulous tool for children. IOCC publishes these journals for use of young children to learn more about Orthodoxy across the world and develop a prayer activity. They are very easy to implement and anyone could use these to bring youth together for a teaching project. It has not been utilized for several years – even though we had a commitment from at least one parish – I think it was St. Innocent Cathedral in Kodiak – but whoever it was, it has fallen through. This would also be a good project for the children of the seminarians.

All of this takes individual communication and travel to inform parishes of what opportunities they have to participate in **Outreach Alaska**. A lot of planning needs to be reestablished and a better focus on ongoing projects needs to be implemented. I am optimistic and hopeful that with my retirement this last year – providing more time for me to dedicate to **Outreach Alaska** – and the possibility of an on the ground Bishop for the diocese – God willing, soon – some things can be reviewed and priorities set on how we will proceed with the **Outreach Alaska**

mission. Once a bishop is in place, it will also be important that **Outreach Alaska** be fully discussed and understood in order to have the blessing needed to further this mission. I look forward to this communication at some time in the future. I am also hopeful that this assembly will vote to include some funding from the diocese in the upcoming budget for **Outreach Alaska** so that the work will maintain and grow according to His Holy Will. Prior to 2007, \$5,000 was the amount usually placed in the budget for **Outreach Alaska**. The diocese would always send me \$2,000 for expenses needed to maintain supplies, website, accounting fees, printing, travel etc. The balance of \$3,000 was used as needed for travel – airline tickets to AAC, other conferences, registration, lodging, subsistence, etc. If these trips were not taken, the funds were not spent and left in the budget. In addition, St. Herman Theological Seminary always paid expenses to Kodiak when traveling there for working with the seminarians, etc. Thanks to Fr. John Dunlop, he has maintained these travel expenses for me for the years 2007 – 2013. You can see from the reports that there are significant “other” expenses that must be raised every year for general funds so that these “other” expenses can be met. Currently the funds in this account are from specific gifts to sponsor the seminarians and for the food pantry. In 2007 **Outreach Alaska** had a good cushion for these expenses. However, at this time there is only half of what we had in 2007 and a focused fundraising effort must be made to provide some of the funds that will be needed in the next few years. The cushion is flat. It takes these general funds to pay for the fundraising supplies – postage, printing, booth supplies, and travel when necessary.

I want to state that all participation in **Outreach Alaska** projects does not need to and should not only come from the lower 48. Since 1999 the lower 48 and one parish in Canada have funded all of these projects and other expenses. For the first time, we have a seminarian sponsor from Alaska. It has been a wonderful partnership and I was so pleased when this man and his wife contacted me asking to sponsor a seminarian. He stated that he has seen firsthand the goodness that is coming from this project and that he wants to give back to what is being given to Orthodoxy in Alaska. He was so excited when I gave him a sponsorship that he started sending me the checks before they were needed - God blesses a happy giver. As you travel home from this God blessed Assembly, please consider what you can do to participate in **Outreach Alaska**. Would your parish give \$50 a month for the St. Julianna Food Pantry? One in California does. Would you give \$25 or more a month to **Outreach Alaska** to help meet expenses to keep the mission going? One in Canada gives \$100 each month. Is your parish capable of putting \$500 a year in the annual parish budget to give to **Outreach Alaska**? Would your parish provide a fundraiser once a year to send to **Outreach Alaska** from sale of fry bread, potluck after church with donations, Nativity or Pascha offering for **Outreach Alaska**? Would the regional conferences provide an event that would raise funds for **Outreach Alaska**? If you benefitted from these projects while in seminary, would you encourage your parish to help you give back for what was given to you? There is a very small parish in New Jersey that every year during Pascha places a basket at their coffee hour every Sunday for St. Julianna Food Pantry. They have sent more than \$1,000 each year the past 3 years. I need to raise at least \$5,000 for expected pantry expenses over the next 12 months. This little parish has provided 20 % of the total needed. You are the beneficiaries of this mission. It is OK for you also to be participants.

All accounts for **Outreach Alaska** are kept at Intrust Bank in Wichita, KS. Since funds have depleted since 2007 and most now coming in is specific to the projects, I closed the savings account in 2011 – not enough interest worth keeping the account. All donations are tax deductible as **Outreach Alaska** is an institution doing business under the Diocese of Alaska. Mary Ann Khoury is a volunteer maintaining all controls and records for this program. There is no financial compensation other than expenses for travel associated with **Outreach Alaska**. All supplies, basic needs to operate the program, raise funds, and monthly accounting is paid from the program receipts. Monthly financial reports are maintained by separate accounting measures paid for from the general funds of **Outreach Alaska**. The recording system is based on general practices of non profit fund accounting systems. All records for this program are maintained at 2421 N. Perry Ave, Wichita, KS 67204. In closing, I request your prayers for my health and continued work to support and enhance Holy Orthodoxy in our Lord’s Alaska Vineyard – for those who serve, according always to God’s Will.

Love and Prayers – Always, In Christ,
Respectfully submitted by Mary Ann Khoury, Coordinator – October 15, 2013.

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