



Western Jurisdiction Commission on Archives and History

The United Methodist Church

Letter of Invitation

February 9, 2017

On behalf of the Western Jurisdictional Commission on Archives and History, I want to issue a special invitation to you to be a part of the joint meeting of Western Jurisdiction Commission and the Historical Society of The United Methodist Church which will be held in Anchorage, Alaska June 26-29, 2017 at our Methodist College, Alaska Pacific University.

The meeting will highlight some of the people, places and events that have historical significance for us within The Western United Methodist Church and especially Alaska. Alaska was first serviced by the Woman's Home Missionary Society in Unga in 1886 and then at the Jesse Lee Home in Unalaska in 1890. The Gold Rush in the late 1890s, fishing industries, the fur industry headed by the Russian merchants brought many people to the District of Alaska and these people needed spiritual guidance along with economic survival. Initially this was accomplished by the Russian Orthodox, then the Catholics, Moravians, and then the others including Methodists. We will highlight these stories with presentations and field trips.

2017 is a banner year for Alaska. It is Alaska's Sesquicentennial. It has been 150 years since Alaska was purchased from Russia. Celebrations are being planned all during 2017. Some of these celebrations will happen during our June meeting.

Many of you, when they hear the word "Alaska," vision its geology and biological beauty as well as it's outdoor activities, our meeting in 2017 will add a cultural history dimension to that agenda, as we learn about Methodist activity since 1886, Alaska Native involvement, and many social and economic issues.

Since traveling to Alaska is a long distance for many of you, it is suggested that you will want to either come a few days early or stay a few days after to see some of the many interesting sites in the Anchorage area or in other places in Alaska. The summer solstice with its 20 hours of sun light has many special activities. However this is prime tourist season so it is important to make reservations early.

Optional local tours may be arranged for those interested in seeing the Anchorage area either before or after the June meeting. Suggested areas include: Ship Creek salmon watching/hatchery; Alaska Wild Berry Gift/Candy store; Alpenglow ski resort near a former Nike site; Alaska zoo; Flattop viewpoint; Point Woronzof; curling lanes; railroad snowplow engine etc. These options will be led by local people in local vehicles.

There are many other places outside of Anchorage to visit and things to do. I would highly recommend a trip to Seward and taking a boat out into Resurrection Bay for whale and other wildlife watching as well as a tour of the Seward Sea Life Center. About 70 miles south of Anchorage is the Portage Glacier area of the Chugach National Forest, however one needs to take a boat to see the glacier as it has retreated behind rocks. Smaller hanging glaciers are still visible from the road system as you travel to Whittier which is an interesting World War II community. Just driving south along the Seward Highway is spectacular and you might even see a bore tide or Dall sheep. Out of Homer you can take a small airplane on floats and get close and personal with bears that are eating the salmon across Cook Inlet. You can take the train to

Denali National Park. The Alaska Botanical Gardens is another interesting site. Alaska has something for everyone. At the end of this letter of invitation will be web addresses for many of these places.

Anchorage and Alaska, our 49th State, are wonderful places to visit. We are a causal state so causal clothing is the order of the day and good walking shoes are a must. Please accept our invitation to the June 26 to 29, 2017 meeting to learn about Methodism in the West and experience the beauty of Alaska.

DarEll Weist, President, and Larry Hayden, Vice President and Host
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It will not be as dark as this when you are here. Notice the star on the slope below the ski resort.



DarEll hopes none of you will try surfing the bore tide while here but maybe you will be able to watch it, like some people did after the WJCA&H meeting in Homer in 2009. It will be about this dark at 11:00 p.m.

Interesting web sites include:

www.weio.org
www.arcticwintergames.org
www.alaskahistoricalsociety.org
www.cookinlethistoricalsociety.org
www.alaskapacific.edu
www.anchorage.net
www.historicalsocietyunitedmethodistchurch.org
www.alaskascottish.org
www.stjohnalaska.org
www.antiochianladiocese.org
www.ak-byz-cath.org
www.holyfamilycathedral.org
www.alaskaumc.org
www.iditarod.com
www.travelalaska.com
www.adn.com
www.blackandindianmission.org/nationalcollection

Museums in the Anchorage area include:

Anchorage Museum of Art and History: www.anchoragemuseum.org

Alaska Heritage Museum at Wells Fargo: www.wellsfargohistory.com/museums/museum_anchorage.html

Alaska Aviation Heritage Museum: www.alaskaairmuseum.org

Alaska Museum of Science & Nature: www.alaskamuseum.org

Alaska Native Heritage Center: www.alaskanative.net

Alaska Law Enforcement Museum: www.alaskatroopermuseum.com

Alaska Veterans Museum: www.alaskaveterans.com

Elmendorf Wildlife Museum: www.mybaseguide.com for access information

Alaska Jewish Museum: www.alaskajewishmuseum.com/

Afognak Native Corporation Alutiiq Center at 3909 Arctic Blvd. left on first floor, did not find a web address. Features Kodiak and Afognak Island culture and Earthquake impact in 1964.

Please also be aware that Alaska is one hour earlier than Seattle and four hours earlier than the East Coast so please don't call before noon East Coast time if you wish to connect with businesses which open at 8:00 a.m. Alaska time.