

## ALASKA

### The Indigenous Church at Work

The Eskimo people of the Kotzebue Sound area of Northwestern Alaska, who are under the direction of California Yearly Meeting of Friends, continue in their desire to be an indigenous church. They faithfully work among their own people spreading the Gospel message. Each village has its own Eskimo pastor who is called and supported by the Eskimo people, except in Noorvik where we operate the Bible Training School and here at Kotzebue, the headquarters of the field. Through the efforts of the teachers of the Bible Training School and the call of God upon the lives of our pastors, we have these faithful workers preaching the Word to their own people. Many of our people have made spiritual commitments to the Lord through the faithful ministry of these Eskimo pastors. We continually breathe prayers of thanks for the sacrificial work our pastors are doing. They continue to need the prayer support of each of us.

Under the leadership of the Executive Council, with Jack Jones as presiding clerk, they assume the responsibility of the church services and work. They are still working toward the time when they can be a full-fledged yearly meeting. They assume the financial responsibilities of their meetings and arrange pastoral placement and support. California Yearly Meeting money given for Alaska is used only for missionary support, travel of the missionaries on the field, and our part in the cooperation with Covenant High School and radio station KICY. The Alaska Executive Council meets regularly to transact business and take care of the decisions of the field. Work that formerly was done by missionary families is now being done by the people themselves. It is a healthy situation showing life and vitality in the church.

In Kotzebue the people have purchased materials for a foundation for a new larger church and have the foundation work completed and ready for the structure. They plan to erect the structure in the summer of 1967. They want to finance this themselves and to do the work on it.

### COOPERATIVE HIGH SCHOOL

Again this year we joined hands with the Evangelical Covenant Church's high school at Unalakleet and sent some of our more promising students there. We had eight students in high school this year at Covenant High School, two of whom will graduate this spring. Marilyn Miller has been our staff representative and carries a full load on the staff. She has been a real contribution to the high school and the students all like her. She has been dorm counselor this year, as well as carrying a teaching load. Her girls in the dorm have confided in her and have been helped spiritually by Marilyn's presence and counsel. We are thankful for this opportunity for the students who wish a Christian education to be able to attend a Christian school.

The population of Unalakleet is 700. It is located 250 miles south of Kotzebue situated on Norton Sound.

## BRIEF HISTORY OF FRIENDS IN ALASKA

On Kotzebue Sound, under the Arctic Circle, in 1896 Dr. Sheldon Jackson, the United States General Agent of Education in Alaska, found a group of natives who annually came to this point to trade. They came down rivers which flow into the Sound, coming from the far north and from several hundred miles to the south even from Siberia. Thus a trading center was established at Kotzebue.

The preceding year Anna Hunnicutt (Foster) had offered herself to California Yearly Meeting for missionary service in Alaska and plans were made for her work under Oregon Yearly Meeting until a satisfactory field of service could be found. In 1896 Anna Foster accepted an appointment at Douglas Island, under Dr. Jackson, as a government teacher. Through this contact Dr. Jackson, who was an active Christian layman, came to know of the concern of California Friends for a place of missionary endeavor and opened to them the golden opportunity at Kotzebue.

In the spring of 1897, Anna Foster returned to the States and committees were appointed from the Christian Endeavor, the Women's Missionary Society and two Quarterly Meetings to carry forward the Gospel enterprise in the far North. Robert and Carrie Rowe Samms volunteered for service, and together with Anna Foster, sailed on what proved to be a forty-nine days voyage, taking with them material for a log house, food, clothing and supplies for one year. At the sessions of the Yearly Meeting in 1897 the Alaska field was officially adopted as its first missionary obligation.

Faithfully these three, with many others, have labored for various periods of service for the Eskimo. Through the years the shifting bands of hunters have settled into more stable communities. Friends have had organized churches in eleven villages. However, in very recent years, people are again moving because of the changing economic situation, and our churches are not always able to operate.

Kotzebue is the headquarters for the Friends work and where the field superintendent, Harold Beck and family live.

A Bible Training School was established at Noorvik and has been a vital force in preparing leadership for the churches.

The village of Ambler is the latest one to be established and has a thriving church.