



The Alaskan Shepherd



Volume 47 Number 3

April 2009

Some give by going to the Missions

Some go by giving to the Missions

Without both there are no Missions

THE JESUIT VOLUNTEER CORPS: PT I SERVING IN THE ALASKAN MISSIONS SINCE 1956

Editor's Note: In 2008, I wrote to Krissy Peterson, a member of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps in Bethel, Alaska, at the time, asking about her experiences. Krissy responded: *Hi Patty, I can answer some of your questions. You asked about our accommodations. Well, from what I have heard from former Bethel JVs, who volunteered in the 70s and 80s, our accommodations are very comfortable. There are six volunteers and we live in a rather large home, especially for Bethel. It is a 4-bedroom and 1 1/2-bath house. We are on city water, so we don't have a tank and have unlimited water. The only thing uncomfortable about our house is that we have to keep it pretty cool in the winter to save on fuel costs.*

The length of our volunteer commitment is one year, from August to August. There are no set guidelines for returning home. Five of my six roommates made one trip home. Two of them went home around the holidays. Most volunteers in Bethel would go home once, if at all, since it is so expensive to fly anywhere.

We are actually supported by the organizations where we work and not by the JVC Northwest. So, I myself work for the Catholic parish here in Bethel, Immaculate Conception. Every month, I get a "community check" from the church for \$513. All six of the volunteers get such a check. All of that money is put together in one account. This money is used to pay our monthly rent, utilities, fuel, phone, food, and any other community expenses. There is a lot of budgeting that goes on in our community! From our agencies, we also get a personal stipend of \$80 each month. We can use that money however we want. Our agencies are also responsible for providing us with health insurance, benefits, etc. The agencies also pay for our travel to JVC retreats, which happen three times a year (two in Anchorage, one in Juneau). In the end, the agencies end up paying less than half of what they would pay for the salary for a qualified person to serve in that role.



Krissy Peterson, originally from Homer Glen, Illinois, poses for a photo while traveling on the Kuskokwim River. Krissy completed her year of Jesuit Volunteer service in Bethel, Alaska, in 2008.

--All photos courtesy of Krissy Peterson

As for my personal career plans and how the JVC fits into this: I studied journalism in college and worked throughout college at the newspaper for the archdiocese of Chicago, Catholic New World. My ultimate career plan would be to work in religion writing/journalism. This position as youth minister at the church in Bethel was a good opportunity for me to get more experience in direct ministry and a chance for me to live in another culture. It has been a really great experience.

—Thanks, Krissy

Krissy Peterson left Alaska in August of 2008. She is currently employed at Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois, and works in the public relations department. In this issue, I have reprinted excerpts from her blog entries, which you can view in their entirety at triblocal.com. —Patty Walter

**CATHOLIC BISHOP OF NORTHERN ALASKA
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Special Masses are offered throughout the year for you and your intentions by our Missionary Priests. Please pray that God may bless us and our work.

From Homer Glen to Alaska 09/26/07 05:51 PM

Some mornings on my 30-minute walk to work—through mud and puddles, across the Alaskan tundra, under and over water pipes and on a boardwalk over small ponds—I wonder, “How did I get here?”

“Here” for myself is Bethel, Alaska, a town of about 6,000 people on the tundra of southwest Alaska. I moved here at the beginning of August to work as a Jesuit Volunteer. I work full-time as the youth minister at the one Catholic church in Bethel, and I live in a community with five other volunteers, who work at different sites.

I was asked to write about my experiences this year as a volunteer in Bethel since I am originally from Homer Glen. I went to Lockport Township High School, and I just graduated (2007) in May from Dominican University in River Forest, Ill., where I studied journalism and photography.

I decided a few years ago that I wanted to participate in a year-long service program after college. In my last year of school, I began applying to programs. I decided on the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC) because my site placement was in Alaska. I have always wanted to live in Alaska, and I wanted the experience of living in a different culture without having to leave the states. The majority of the people in Bethel and the surrounding area are Native Alaskans, mostly Yup’ik people. I wanted to share a little bit about life here in Bethel, since in many ways it is very different than life in Homer Glen or another suburb of Chicago. Bethel, to me, is an extremely small town.

It has less people than many American universities. But surprisingly, Bethel is the biggest town in southwestern Alaska. It is located in what is called the YK—Delta region, or the area around both the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers. There are over 50 villages of several hundred to several thousand people each, and residents of the villages come to Bethel for goods and services.

In a way, Bethel is a lot like other small towns in America. But the difference is that in most American small towns you can just go to the next town over if you were bored and wanted to go to the mall or the



Six JV’s live in this home, during their year of service in Bethel, Alaska. It is a 4-bedroom and 1 ½-bath house.

WHAT IS A JESUIT VOLUNTEER?

Every year, hundreds of “20-somethings” give a year or more of their life as a Jesuit Volunteer and work to “be the change they wish to see in the world.”

The Jesuit Volunteer Corps offers women and men an opportunity to work full-time for justice and peace. Jesuit Volunteers are called to the mission of serving the poor directly, working for structural change in the United States, and accompanying people in developing countries. The challenge to Jesuit Volunteers is to integrate Christian faith by working and living among the poor and marginalized, by living simply and in community with other Jesuit Volunteers, and by examining the causes of social injustice.

Since 1956 the Jesuit Volunteer Corps has worked in collaboration with Jesuits, whose spirituality the volunteers incorporate in their work, community, and prayer life.

Each year, men and women across the country and around the world begin their commitment as a Jesuit Volunteer. This commitment is lived out in a variety of ways—the most important is how the volunteers live out the interconnected values of *social justice, spirituality, simple lifestyle and community*.

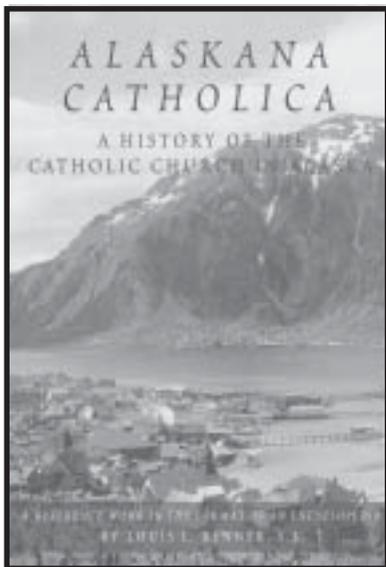
For Jesuit volunteers, the commitment to the integration of the *four values* of the JVC doesn’t end when they finish their year(s) of service. Their formation in these four values as an integral part of their lives is a significant reason that the thousands of Former Jesuit volunteers form such a vibrant community around the country.

In 1956 the first Jesuit volunteers began their service to the native people of Alaska at Copper Valley School. The small nucleus of volunteers grew under the sponsorship of the Oregon Province of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), eventually reaching out to remote areas of Alaska, to Native American communities in the Northwest, and to inner-city placements in Washington and Oregon.

Communities of Jesuit Volunteers still venture forth to new frontiers, including all the major cities in the United States, the Rio Grande Valley, and California. As described in the Where JVs serve section, Jesuit volunteers are needed today in virtually every kind of social justice work. JVC has been able to respond to current social justice issues because volunteers offer a spirit of generosity and willingness to go where they are needed. Jesuit volunteers also work in developing countries, often alongside Jesuits, in places as diverse as the coastal desert of Peru; the Pacific Islands of Micronesia; South Africa; and throughout Belize.

Jesuit Volunteers draw inspiration and direction from the traditions of the Society of Jesus. Ignatius, the founder of the Society of Jesus, sought to integrate a life of prayer with active work to further the Reign of God. A Jesuit lives as a contemplative in action. His life is a balancing act between service and listening. A Jesuit’s life clearly involves an active apostolate. Beside the obvious work of a Jesuit, though his life involves prayer, retreat community gatherings and a renewal of vision. Like Jesuits, JVs are invited to share the same elements that make up the spirituality of the Jesuits. Thus, retreats, community gatherings, voluntary spiritual direction, and sharing of vision are all incorporated into the experience of being a JV. JVs try to find where God will best be served and where people will best be helped.

INSPIRATIONAL AND HISTORICAL



ALASKANA CATHOLICA:

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By Fr. Louis L. Renner, S.J.

(Hardcover 702 pages) \$85.00 includes shipping.

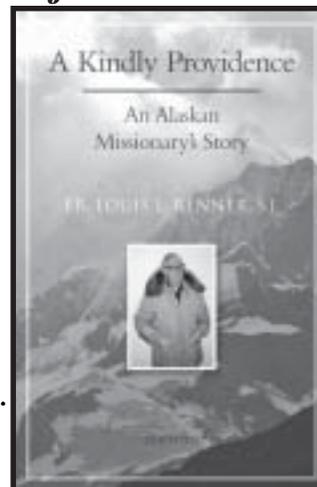
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By Fr. Louis L. Renner, S.J.

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Just Published:



In *Alaskana Catholica*, Fr. Renner offers a thorough picture of the Catholic Church's ministerial activity in Alaska from its beginning in the nineteenth century to the present. In his autobiography, *A Kindly Providence*, he tells the story of a dedicated missionary priest. A scholar, a teacher, and always a Jesuit priest, he taught German and Latin at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, edited the Catholic newsletter *The Alaskan Shepherd*, and served as pastor of two different Indian villages on the Yukon River during his 40 years in Alaska. He was a recipient of the "Governor's Award for Friend of the Humanities," in 2002. The two books, both richly illustrated, are now available from the *Alaskan Shepherd*. The books are perfect gifts, whether to give or to receive!

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All donors are truly co-missionaries, since they alone make possible our work for the Lord and His Kingdom.

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Date _____ 2009

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As a member of the Alaskan Shepherd **"Buck-A-Month Club"** I enclose my contribution of \$ _____ *OR* I have already contributed but please accept this additional donation of \$ _____ to be used where most needed.

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NOVENA IN HONOR OF

THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS



To the friends and benefactors of the Missionary Diocese of Fairbanks: On each of the eight days preceding the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and on the feast day itself, June 19 (2009), a novena will be offered in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and for our benefactors and their intentions. You are invited to submit petitions to be remembered during the novena. No offering is necessary. Any received will be used to support our ministries here in Northern Alaska.

You are also invited to join us on the novena days (June 11-19th) inclusive by praying the following prayer:

O Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, you said: "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." With confidence in your loving, compassionate Heart I come to you as the fountain of every blessing. I ask you to make my heart humble and holy like yours. Grant me to live a holy life and to die a happy death. During this novena I humbly ask also for certain spiritual and temporal favors: _____.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me!

Please remember the following petitions during the Novena in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus:

Four horizontal lines provided for writing petitions.

movie theatre. In Bethel, there is no next town over, and there are no roads that could take you there, and there aren't any movie theatres or malls.

To many people, Bethel would sound boring, but my five housemates and I have really learned to enjoy some of the simple joys in life.

We have gone berry picking; both blueberries and cranberries grow throughout the tundra. It was weird to me at first that we were able to just pick berries wherever we wanted and didn't have to pay, but berry picking is still hard work. We have also gone over to friends' houses for potluck dinners and have had friends and co-workers over for dinner. We have attended different events and talks throughout town.

We have gone fishing and learned how to gut, clean and filet fish. We have a freezer full of salmon, all that we either caught or received as gifts. While the weather is still nice, we have been playing soccer with some other friends on the weekends. In the wintertime, we hear that there is more to do outside such as ice skating, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, and a game called "broom-ball" that involves running on ice and hitting a large ball with a broom.

There is more to say about life in Bethel. I will try to write about some of the eccentricities of the town, in addition to some of the serious issues facing the people in this area of Alaska.



Krissy poses for a photo with Jesuit Father Charles (Chuck) Peterson (left), her father, Donald Peterson (right), and Susan Murphy, Parish Administrator (seated), in Bethel, Alaska. Fr. Chuck is the pastor at Immaculate Conception Church. Photo by Rae-Marie Peterson (Krissy's Mom)

I will also explain more about the work that my roommates and I are doing through the JVC program.

From Homer Glen to Alaska:

Kindness of Strangers 10/05/07 02:52 PM

I was making a routine trip to the city post office the other day. In Bethel, Alaska, where I live (see previous post "From Homer Glen to Alaska"), there is no mail delivery so everyone in town goes to the post office to collect their mail. Consequently, the post office is a very busy place and you are almost always guaranteed to see someone that you know there.

On this day I was picking up the mail for the church where I work and for our house (the Jesuit Volunteer community where I live). Between the church and our house we had about six packages to pick up. I wasn't able to carry all of the packages out to the car at once, so I left half of the boxes sitting on the counter in the post office to come back for.

As I was walking back to the post office after depositing half of the boxes in the truck, a man whom I didn't even know was carrying my other boxes out to the car for me. Only in a small town like Bethel would a stranger voluntarily go out of their way to help another person. I am constantly surprised by the kindness of people in this town. People seem to have the mentality that in a small town we are all in this together. We need to help each other out.

On Tuesday, some of my housemates and I worked as judges for the local election. We met a lot of people in town and saw a lot of our new friends. One instance stands out in my mind from that day because it was so different from anything that would happen in most American towns. A woman came into the polling place and asked if anyone had a blue suburban. She backed into it, she said, but she saw no damage. She still



Jesuit Volunteer Corps members learn to cut fish from former JV (seated) Kate Hudson. JV roommates shown are: (back) Courtney Adams, (left to right) Krissy Peterson, Chelsea Gulling, Sarah Jones and Kaela Geschke. Another roommate, Bridget Crowell is not pictured.

We want to thank in a special way those of you who have included the Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska (our legal title) in your bequests and wills, and those of you who, at the time of the deaths of dear ones, have suggested that in their memory contributions be made to the Missions of Northern Alaska or to the Alaskan Shepherd Endowment Fund. A suggested wording: "I give, devise and bequeath to the Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska, 1312 Peger Road, Fairbanks, Alaska..."

wanted to let the driver know. A man emerged from the polling booth and said that he drove a suburban. He shrugged it off. "You couldn't have hurt it," he said. No argument was started. No harsh words were said. There was no point getting upset over such a silly thing. Plus, people don't really care about their cars in Bethel. The roads are full of mud, puddles and potholes.

We have observed other instances of kindness since moving here. People say "hi" to strangers that they pass on the street. People will honk their car horns to say hello to someone—not to express their road rage. People we know will stop to give us a ride when we are walking home. Most people in town drive pick-up trucks, so we all just climb in the back.

One of my roommates was at the DMV the other day to get her Alaska driver's license. One of the guys there did not have the \$20 that he needed to pay for his license. Another guy in line just gave him \$20 from his wallet.

There is a lot of sharing that goes on in this town. This may be influenced by the Native culture. In the Native culture if someone hunted a moose or a seal, they would share the meat with everyone in their village. It is still common in Bethel for people to share fish that they caught. A neighbor who we didn't know brought a salmon to our house the other day.

There is also a lot less fear in Bethel that people are going to steal your stuff. People don't usually lock their homes. We don't even have a house key! It is common for people to leave their car keys in the ignition. There are no roads into or out of Bethel, so a car thief doesn't have far to go. I did hear of one woman whose car was stolen. She knew who did it and the car was eventually found out in the middle of the frozen river!

Weather update in Bethel, AK: Today it was cloudy, windy and rainy. The temperature was around 35-40 degrees. The sunrise was at 9:03 a.m. and the sunset will be at 8:06 p.m. We are losing about 5 minutes of daylight a day.

From Homer Glen to Alaska : Things that I don't miss about the Lower 48 10/24/07 02:18 PM

For those of you who don't know, once you are in Alaska, the rest of the U.S. is simply referred to as "the lower 48." And, when Alaskans leave the state, they say that they are going "outside." It is weird at first to hear people say things like, "We are going outside for vacation."

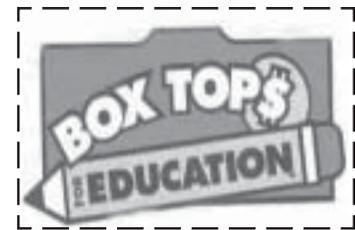
While Alaska is part of the United States, at times it can feel like you are very separate from the rest of the country. This is even more applicable for me as I live in Bethel, a small town that is not connected to other towns through roads. When my roommates and I watch TV, which happens rarely, I am always amazed at the number of commercials for products and businesses that are not available in Bethel. Wal-Mart, Target, McDonalds, Costco, car dealerships, furniture stores, Starbucks, Home Depot, J.C. Penny's—these are all businesses that you can't find in Bethel. We do have a Subway and a UPS store.

It is surprising that I don't feel like I am missing much of what can be found in the Lower 48. While there are some things—and many people—that I miss from home, I decided to compile a list of things that I don't miss from the Lower 48.

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--Bishop Donald J. Kettler

You can view additional needs on our website <http://www.cbna.info/currentparishneeds>



Left to Right: Rose Domnick, Krissy Peterson, Katrina Domnick, and a Domnick family friend, at the Domnick's fish camp.

Cell phones

In Bethel there is no cell phone service, unless you pay the huge fees to have a cell phone that only works within Bethel. Few people have those phones, and it is a rare occurrence to hear a cell phone ring. It is so refreshing to not have social gatherings interrupted by obnoxious ring tones or to have to listen to people jabbering on the phone in public places. Another oddity is that people in Bethel actually use their landline phones. If you try to reach someone at home but they aren't there, usually whoever answers the phone will give you a detailed description of where they are. "He's not here, he's at the high school for open gym." "She's not here, she's over at her daughters house. Try calling 5245." Since there is only one prefix to phone numbers in town, people just give the last four digits of their phone numbers.

The fast food mentality

In America, fast food restaurants have taught us to expect the fastest service possible. This creates a culture of very rushed and impatient people. In Bethel, everything seems to be slowed down. People talk slower, the service at restaurants and stores is slower, and there is very little road rage. People seem to appreciate the time that is spent with one another, instead of always rushing off to the next thing.

Multiple radio stations

Americans love variety—just look at the cereal aisle in any grocery store. When I moved to Bethel, I was disappointed at first to hear that there is only one radio station in town. Now, I love when I get to drive the church truck to the post office because that means a few minutes of listening to KYUK. Since

it is a public radio station, there is a lot of variety in the music and the programming. There is local news broadcast three times a day in English and Yup'ik, a few chat shows, national Native news out of New Mexico, and other NPR programs. The only program that drives me crazy is "The Birthday Line," which is when people call in to wish their family and friends a happy birthday or sometimes a happy anniversary. Unless that day is your birthday, the show is rather boring.

Traffic

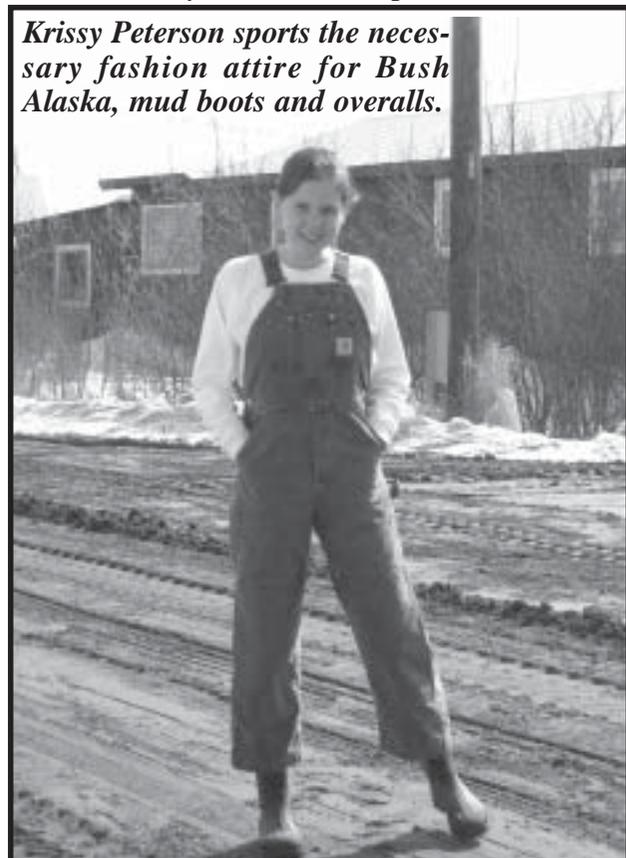
This word is pretty much non-existent in Bethel. Except for when the main road was under construction, I have yet to see any traffic in town. I have a 30-minute "commute" to work, and it is only so long because I walk to work.

Suits and ties

Alaska in general is a very informal state, but Bethel is even more informal. When your clothes get muddy and dirty just walking outside, there is no point in wearing nice clothes. Pretty much everyone wears jeans to work here. We have a friend who is a law clerk and the lawyers tease him because he wears dress pants and a tie to work each day.

Fancy, clean cars

One of the first things that I noticed when I stepped out of the airport in Bethel is that people's cars are dirty. Cars can get so dirty at times that you can't even read the license plate number. I have even seen taxi cabs that were covered in dirt and the driver only cleaned off the part of the door that has the



Krissy Peterson sports the necessary fashion attire for Bush Alaska, mud boots and overalls.

cab company name and number on it. People don't care much about what their cars look like as long as they run and are able to drive through mud and snow.

From Homer Glen to Alaska: Working together 11/06/07 01:47 PM

At Immaculate Conception, the Catholic church in town, we have rummage sales throughout the year and it is usually the same person who prepares for those. We are having a book sale at the end of the month but that is another person's project.

On a larger scale, in Bethel, a town of only 6,000 people, there are over 20 different churches. With so many different beliefs and personalities, it is difficult to start a project where churches work together. But the needs in the town are so apparent. At the Catholic Church, homeless men regularly come into the church to use our bathroom or ask for warm clothes from our rummage room. This past Sunday the church hosted a potluck to welcome home the National Guard troops from this area who were stationed in Kuwait. A couple dozen homeless people came to the potluck to enjoy a free meal. The need to help these people became so apparent to many of the members of the parish who were at the potluck.

About a month ago, I began thinking about starting a free meal program at the church. This would be a way to provide a meal to people who needed it and also a way to get my youth group members involved in service. I was somewhat overwhelmed by the thought of starting this program from scratch, but then a few weeks later I heard that another guy in town was trying to start up a soup kitchen as well. Now, the Bethel free meals program is set to have its grand opening next Friday. Every Friday evening, anyone can come and enjoy a free meal.

A great thing about this program is that it is a joint effort between a few churches in Bethel. The Covenant Church has offered their social hall and new kitchen to be used for the meals, and volunteers from the Catholic Church are going to help prepare and serve the meals. The hope is that if we start small, we can build up to providing more services and support.

Weather update: The temperatures have been in the 20s and 30s and there is about 4-6 inches of snow and ice on the ground. Some of the lakes are already safe enough to walk on. The sunrise today was at 9:30 a.m. and the sunset at 5:32 p.m.

Editor's Note: The free meal program that Krissy helped bring about is in its second year and very successful. Many people in the community work together to make it possible. Every Friday night from November through April the "Friday Night Supper Club" is held at the Covenant Church in Bethel.

(Krissy Peterson's Bethel experience continues in the next issue of The Alaskan Shepherd.)



The Central Yup'ik Eskimo town of Bethel is located on the right, the northwestern, bank of the Kuskokwim River, in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. It lies beyond the tree line. It is a port city, accessible to ocean-going vessels. It is also an airline hub, serving 48 villages in the Delta. As a regional center for the Delta, Bethel has the only hospital, community college, and court system. State and Federal offices are home-based in Bethel. The Alaska Commercial Company had a store at the site as early as 1880. This was called "Mumtrekhtagamiut Station." The name was derived from a small Eskimo village on the opposite side of the river, Mumtrekhtagamiut, which freely translates as "smokehouse people." In 1885, Moravian missionaries founded a mission near the store and called the place Bethel, after the biblical name. Bethel's population numbered 5,471 in 2000. Boardwalks, like the one on the right, run throughout the town, making travel by foot, and four-wheeler possible in the often muddy and icy conditions.

***Your first class stamp donations
are greatly appreciated.***

(First class stamps will be 44¢ beginning in May.)