

Alaskan

Tells Story of Life, Testimony, And Work

"I KNOW I won't forget this for a long, long time!" Speaking was the brown-skinned pastor of the Covenant church at Elim, Alaska, Fred Savok. Along with Matthew Kongawi of the Belgian Congo, he was a guest at the 20th midwinter conference of the Covenant Church.

He was giving his first impressions of his visit to the "south 48" states in a question-and-answer hour.

"Well, for one thing I've never seen so many preachers in one place," he told the audience in his low-pitched voice and with a smile. "And everywhere I go I see people, people, and more people!"

In answering other questions, he described Alaska's "greatest need" as that of having "more educated and trained native pastors." Roman Catholics, whose homes are often closed to missionaries, "will be glad to listen" to new radio station KICY in Nome, he said. "Each family—no matter how poor — has a set. They will be listening!"

Earlier in the week Fred Savok presented his testimony in his short and to-the-point manner.

"Thank you for your kind gift of sending missionaries," began the man whose grandparents were converted through the work of the first Covenant missionaries sent to Alaska in the 1890s.

"I grew up in a Christian home, and I was taught to be a Christian ever since I could remember. As I grew up, the Devil got me—but not for long. A favorite verse is: 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith. . . .' Aren't we glad. I am!" He smiled and sat down.

That smile and testimony are now

becoming familiar to Covenanters throughout the country as Pastor Savok, together with Matthew Kongawi and his interpreter, Dan Ericson of the Congo missionary staff, travel from church to church to tell their story (See page 16 for their schedule).

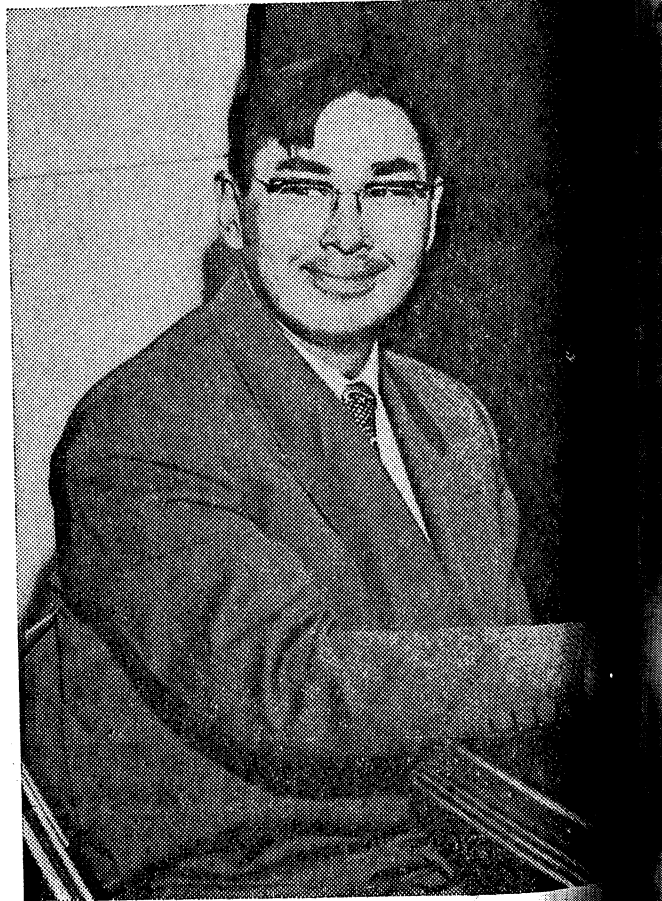
In these visits 38-year-old Fred Savok is also telling about his work as a pastor in northern Alaska. He serves in a village with 136 citizens whose primary occupations are hunting and fishing. The nearest village is 40 miles away and the chief contact with the outside world is by "ham" radio.

Seventy-eight of the village's citizens hold "general membership" in the Covenant church, which was organized only recently although the work itself is one of the oldest on the field.

Services are held in a one-room frame church. The schedule goes like this: Sunday school and morning and evening services on Sundays, prayer service for communicant members (those who partake of the Lord's Supper)

on Tuesday evenings, mid-week prayer service on Wednesday evenings, Bible class for school children on Thursdays, and sewing circle for women once during the week.

Both Pastor Savok and his wife Gladys teach in the Sunday school and are assisted by other natives. There is a Sunday school superintendent and an assistant. They together with two deacons (the chairman of the deacons is chairman of the church), two deaconesses, two trustees, and a secretary make up the church board.



Fred Savok is pastor of the Covenant Church in northern Alaska.

The church has no treasurer as yet, although an offering is received once a month for the support of Alaska's native pastors. The money is sent to a central treasury in Nome and Pastor Savok is paid from that fund. Costs of local maintenance are handled by the members.

"Our Sunday morning service," the pastor says, "is just a simple service. There is singing and prayer and I preach a sermon." He has a few books (which "I wouldn't call a library") to help in his sermon preparation, but most of his study time is spent in reading the Scriptures. Visiting his members "isn't much of a problem in a little place like that."

The missionaries, he comments, visit the village "when they have the time. But they have lots of work to do. We don't like to bother them more than we have to."

Elim, where he has lived since last July is a familiar spot to Pastor Savok since his parents, John and Lily Savok, were pastors of the church there when he was a youth. It was there too that he met his wife (They have two adopted children: seven-year-old Robert and two-year-old Rhoda). Previous pastorates were at Marshall, Mountain Village, and Hooper Bay.

"It was just natural for me to become a pastor," he says. "I had that understanding even in my late teens." To prepare for this calling, he attended the Covenant Bible Institute at Marshall where he studied for a year with the Rev. Maynard Lomborg, "a very nice teacher." Previously he had studied by correspondence such courses as English, mathematics, and composition. At the same time he did a variety of jobs such as truck driving, bulldozing, and gold-dredging.

He attended public school in Buckland until he was 14 years old when he was forced to quit in order to help support the family (He has six sisters and two brothers). His birth place is Shakttoolik and his birthday June 21, 1922.

Even as Pastor Fred Savok of Elim, Alaska, won't forget his visit to Covenant churches for a "long, long time," so too Covenanters, as they hear the story of his life, work, and testimony, won't soon forget him.

Humble Commitment to Work Characterizes Editor's Life

By Frederic E. Pamp

GUSTAV F. HEDSTRAND (retired editor-in-chief of Covenant publications, who died Tuesday, February 16, and whose funeral was Friday, February 19) was God's gift to the Covenant as a minister and eminent as a Christian journalist. His life of 74 years was an example of an immigrant youth thirsting for knowledge and reaching a high position where his trained abilities were dedicated to the church of Christ.



G. F. Hedstrand

He was born in northern Sweden, Heda Parish of Härjedalen, January 20, 1886. He grew up amidst the beautiful mountains of that region. He came to America as a youth of 18 years. At first he worked in steel mills; but times were hard and work was scarce, and so he found his way to Minnesota and worked as a laborer on a farm.

There it was his life was changed. He came among Christian people, Mission Friends, who influenced him to accept Christ as his Savior

and Lord. His gifts as a speaker became prominent in his testimonies and his friends urged him to enter the ministry. They helped him to come to North Park College and Theological Seminary in 1908, where he spent six years in study, graduating from the Academy and then the Seminary in 1914. On graduation he was called to serve the church in Danbury, Connecticut, which he served until 1918. He grasped the opportunity for further training at nearby universities, studying for a term at Columbia and then at Yale Divinity School, where he graduated in 1918.

While in the last year there he married Miss Elvira Myren of Indiana Harbor, Indiana, whom he learned to know at student meetings. She has been his faithful companion these many years and together with a daughter, Lillian of Columbia, Missouri, and a son, Ted of Chicago, survives him.

He began his literary work for the Covenant in the field of Sunday school literature. He inaugurated the training course by correspondence for teachers. One of the first graduates of this course was Olga Lindborg, with whom he collaborated later in much of the Sunday school literature. This work led to his call in 1923 to become editor of *The Covenant Companion*, a magazine for youth work in the Covenant. When in 1934, because of the depression, the publication was combined with *Förbundets Veckotidning*, the denomination's official organ, he continued as editor of *The Covenant Companion* section. In June, 1936, he assumed responsibility for both sections (together called *The Covenant Weekly*) as editor-in-chief, a position he held until his retirement in 1955. Thus he gave 32 years to the Covenant in faithful and efficient service.

The deepest impression our brother gave us who knew him and worked with him was that of humble, quiet commitment to his work and service for Christ in the Covenant. His mind was stored with treasures from wide reading. Thoreau's "Walden" was a favorite of his in quotation. Behind the retiring exterior there lay a strong character which expressed its convictions without fear when needed. He steered *The Covenant Weekly* in times of controversy. He was a man of great moral courage, and he spoke out at times when he met criticism and antagonism. He never compromised for the sake of popularity and never sacrificed the truth for gain. His name is written on the Book of Life and we know that he has heard the word of the Master, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."