

*Our Covenant's Missions*

*in*

**ALASKA**

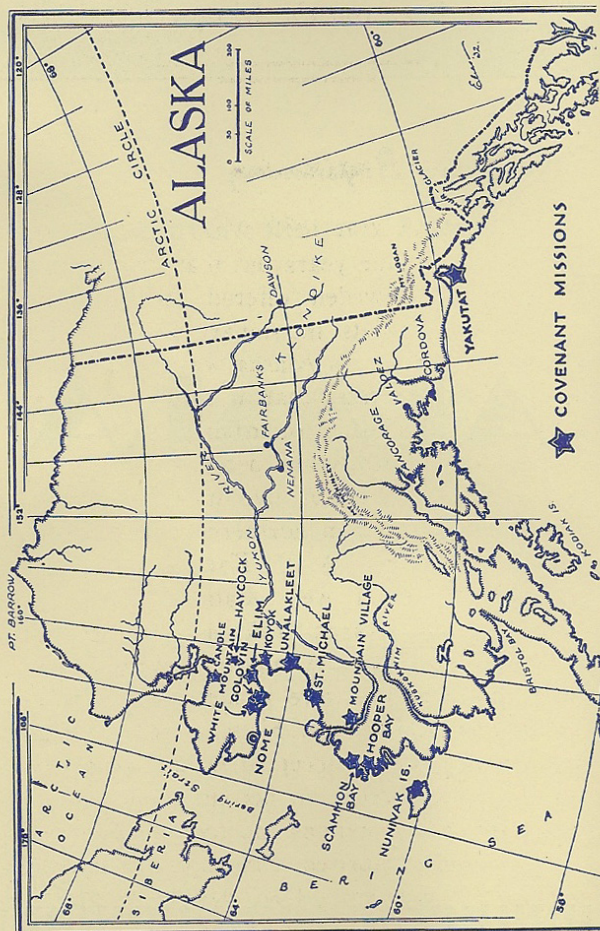
THE MISSION COVENANT

1005 Belmont Avenue

Chicago, Ill.



# Our Mission Field in Alaska



## The Present Status of Our Covenant's Alaska Missions

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### *Its Early Beginning*

IT was in the year 1889, when the Covenant was only four years old that the Mission Covenant in Sweden offered the Covenant in this country its missionary enterprise in Alaska, inasmuch as Alaska was much closer to the United States than it was to Sweden. This work was still in its infancy, having been founded just two years before, in the year 1887. It consisted of two mission stations. One at Unalakleet in northern Alaska, where the founder, Rev. A. E. Karlson, and Rev. August Anderson were stationed, and the other station was in Yakutat, southeastern Alaska, where Rev. Adolph Lydell and Rev. Karl Hendrickson were located. Rev. Albin Johnson was already on his way from Sweden to Alaska, having accepted a call from the Covenant in Sweden to become a missionary to Alaska. Two stations and four missionaries on the field comprised the whole missionary staff and equipment. That was the beginning of our missionary enterprise in Alaska.



## *Its Rapid Growth*

Our Alaska missions won the hearts and the interest of our churches immediately. And no wonder! It was our "first born" or our "first love." During the first seventeen years of its existence forty-two missionaries, both men and women, were sent up to the north-land to carry on this ever expanding work. Some were preachers, some were teachers, one was a medical doctor, some were nurses, some were builders, and some were "just missionaries."

Churches, parsonages, schools, teacherages, hospitals, and even orphanages, were built. The work developed so wonderfully that it even surpassed the expectations of the leaders in the home-land. The Lord was singularly blessing the efforts of his servants in Alaska.

## *Its Time of Trouble*

But this work was not to continue uninterrupted. There came a time of testing. As the historian of the Covenant says: "Gold was discovered in Alaska and with the gold came grief." This proved altogether too true. The gold rush was on. The interest in the mission waned. And a sad chapter has been written in the annals of the Covenant about this Alaska gold. But inasmuch as it is neither edi-

fying nor educating we pass it by. Great damage had been done, and it took a long time before the interest in our Alaska mission was regained. At one time, years 1929-1930, we had only one missionary in the northern Alaska field and one missionary family in southeastern Alaska. The work was then at its lowest ebb and very few seemed to be interested or cared.

## *A New Lease on Life*

But then came a return to better days. And, thank God for the new lease of life, which God so graciously bestowed upon the mission in the year 1935, the year of the Golden Jubilee anniversary of the Covenant.

The board of missions met then at the annual conference to discuss and to solve many of its problems. The most vital one was the one concerning our Alaska missions. Should we continue as we had done during the last fifteen-twenty years, carry on in a slipshod, haphazard, indifferent, God-dishonoring and Covenant-disgracing manner? Should we step out of the field and let another organization do the work, which God had intrusted to us? Or, should we call a halt, ask God to forgive us our carelessness and neglect and to give us grace to start anew, in other words, give us another opportunity to prove ourselves

worthy of the name we bare — Mission Friends? Needless to say, this last suggestion prevailed and the Alaska missions had a rebirth and was again placed on the map.

That very meeting decided to raise an Alaska Missions Golden Jubilee Fund of ten thousand dollars for the specific purpose of building churches in strategic places. It also decided to call and send up new missionaries, and the third decision was to purchase an airplane to solve the transportation problems for the missionaries.

## *And Today—*

### **We Have Five New Churches and Two New Parsonages in Alaska**

The greater part of the ten thousand dollar church building fund was raised, and as a result there are now five new church buildings in the northern Alaska field. These are located on Nunivak Island, in Shaktoolik, in Koyok, in Solomon, and in White Mountain. The church in Elim was so badly delapidated that it needed and was given a general overhauling. A parsonage was built at White Mountain which is a pride to northern Alaska. But the one in Candle is as primitive as can be, just an one-room cabin.



## *And Today—*

### **We Have Six New Missionaries in Alaska**

Before the above mentioned board meeting adjourned, we had called two new missionaries, Rev. and Mrs. Ralph Hanson, to go to Alaska with Rev. E. B. Larsson, who was to return to the Northland that summer. And within a month they were happily on their way. Since then we have added four others to our staff. We have now nine missionaries in Alaska, namely, Rev. and Mrs. E. M. Axelsson, Yakutat, Rev. E. B. Larsson, Unalakleet, Rev. and Mrs. Ralph Hanson, White Mountain, Rev. and Mrs. Paul B. F. Carlson, Candle, and Rev. and Mrs. George Welch, also at Unalakleet.

### **We Also Have Eight Native-born Missionaries**

Mr. and Mrs. Wilson Gonongnan, Scammon Bay, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Andrewuk, Hooper Bay, Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Kenick, Nunivak Island, and Mr. and Mrs. Axel Ojumik, Mountain Village. These workers are also expected to take care of the surrounding territory.

### **We Have Permanent Work in Sixteen Villages**

We do not have churches in all these places, but in most of them. They are nevertheless visited regularly by our missionaries, while

many other villages get an occasional visit. Our northern Alaska field is divided into three distinct districts.

The Southern District comprises the following places:

Nunivak Island	Hooper Bay
Scammon Bay	Mountain Village

The Central District comprises the following places:

Unalakleet	Koyok
Egawik	Bonanza
Shaktoolik	

The Northern District comprises the following places:

Elim	Solomon
Golovin	Haycock
Bluff	Candle

And in southeastern Alaska we have an isolated station, Yakutat, where we have carried on a work without disruption for fifty-five years.

## *The Airplane—*

### **A Great Boon and an Asset to Our Work in Alaska**

The great problem confronting the missionary, both winter and summer, was that of transportation. Dogteam travel was slow and tiresome, dangerous and costly, and could



only be relied upon in the winter. In the summer the only method available, where there were no rivers, and where there were rivers, there were oftentimes no boats, was hiking over the tundra, which was also tiresome and inconvenient. The young people of the Covenant purchased a Fairchild 24 airplane, and that has solved the transportation problem, both in winter and summer and brings the most far away villages to within three or four hours' flying distance from the station.

## *Souls Are Saved*

That is a most blessed manifestation of the new lease on life in our Alaska mission. There has been a revival spirit prevailing at all the special meetings and at the conferences, and also in the local communities, even at the out-stations, places where the work is being taken care of by a leader, a layman.

## *Grateful to God*

We are truly grateful to God for this new lease on life bestowed upon our work in the northland these last few years. Much has been accomplished, but we expect still greater things to happen. Yes, we are looking forward to the brightest day the Alaska mission has ever had.

# *Tomorrow—What?*

## **Bright Prospects for the Future**

Alaska has been considered a bleak and barren country, a land of ice and snow, of isolation and darkness, only fit for polar bears and the most primitive people who lived like bears, in igloos in the ground. But the real Alaska has recently been discovered and is being recognized as the last frontier for the American people to conquer, to civilize and to colonize; and for the church of Jesus Christ to evangelize. It has been known chiefly for its precious metal, gold, which has enriched the coffers of Uncle Sam, but its real wealth is yet little known. The sea, which surrounds Alaska on three sides, south, west and north, teems with fish of many kinds, and with fur-bearing animals. Much of its soil is fertile and tillable and adapted for cultivation, and its hillsides are covered with timber and the hills contain not only gold, but copper, coal and other valuable minerals and ores.

And now the government of the United States is spending millions to develop roads, aviation fields, military camps and naval bases throughout the entire country, where thousands of young men will be quartered. This, no doubt, will be a boon for Alaska and create much prosperity. But with the white man's arrival comes serious problems for the mis-

sionaries, as the white man brings with him evils into which the poor, ignorant native is easily enticed, namely the liquor habit, dancing, gambling, and immorality.

## *A New Challenge*

Our work has been carried on exclusively among the natives, both Eskimos and Indians. Hereafter we must expand it to include also the white man. And what an excellent opportunity for soul winning will not these great military centers with their white population afford!

Then there are several large towns, both in southeastern and northern Alaska where real spiritual work is not to be found, and in these places the natives fare much worse than they do in the interior. Nome on Bering Sound is such a place, and as soon as satisfactory arrangements can be made our missionaries intend to take up work there.

With the excellent staff of missionaries and with a group of wholehearted, devoted supporters in the homeland and with God's choicest blessing resting upon our endeavors we are ready, not to write, but to make new history for our Alaska missions.

We covet the interest, the prayers and the support of all Covenant Christians in our effort to win Alaska for Christ.



Pray especially that God will move, both young men and women, who are well qualified and trained, to go to the fields in Alaska. The doors are wide open, the opportunities are many and great, the possibilities are beyond our comprehension, and exceptionally blessed and happy will they be who are fortunate enough to be chosen of God to bring the gospel of salvation to this benighted country.

If you are interested and wish to help in one way or another in the great work, we would appreciate immensely to hear from you. Write Covenant Office, 1005 Belmont Ave., Chicago, Illinois.