

In her own words, Buie writes... I am very supportive of the SPLM Endowment Fund, an investment in the future of the Lutheran ministries in Alaska. It is hoped that this fund will eventually sustain the ministries of the congregations at Nome, Brevig Mission, Teller, Shishmaref, Wales, and Alaska Native Lutheran Church in Anchorage. Each of these congregations are important to the diversity of the ELCA. My perspective and experience is primarily from the church that I grew up in, Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Nome.

As a lifelong member of Our Savior's Lutheran Church, I've witnessed the blessings and challenges of ministry in rural Alaska. Among the blessings, our members share in a strong faith. Many of our members share close ties with one another, some by birth or by marriage, others share close ties with one another by virtue of living in the same small town where paths cross easily and often. Our lives frequently intersect with one another and I believe that bond also strengthens our ministry. Even when differences arise, whether inside or outside the church, I've seen our members set aside those differences and focus instead on what binds us together - our faith.

Membership for some goes back generations while other members live in Nome for just a short time but still become a part of our church family. The ministry of Our Savior's Lutheran Church is a reflection of the larger community of Nome. On any given Sunday here, you'll worship with members from Nome, visitors from other cities, and friends and relatives from nearby villages. You will hear a blend of gospel music, both traditional and some songs a bit more contemporary, and you will often hear a song seamlessly transition into a verse or two sung in Inupiaq. Often a prayer will be offered in the traditional Inupiaq language and each week the Doxology is sung in both English and Inupiaq. It is a beautiful blend of cultures and we're blessed with a pastor who understands and values this rich, multicultural ministry.

Rural Alaska, however, faces many challenges and our ministry is no stranger to these challenges. Many residents in rural Alaska live below the poverty line. It is incredibly expensive to live in these isolated communities. Though we promote giving and responsible stewardship, it is unlikely that our offerings will ever fully sustain the operations and ministry of our congregation. The churches in the smaller outlying communities are even more dependent on additional funding to sustain the ministry.

In addition to these financial challenges, many residents of rural Alaska struggle with high rates of depression, substance abuse, suicide and domestic violence. These struggles impact the health of our communities and we need the strong presence of a church to minister to families in need of support.

It is hoped that we can continue to support the mission of the SPLM Endowment Fund so that it can one day provide the financial support that these smaller congregations need to continue to grow a rich ministry in the Lutheran faith in Alaska and beyond.