

One of God's Fishermen: Pastor David Zietlow

by

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Preface

My memories of Pastor David Zietlow consist mostly of the times I went fishing with him. I was the vicar for Faith Lutheran Church in Anchorage, Alaska from August of 1993 to August of 1994. Pastor Zietlow was not my bishop, however, because he had been retired for a few years already and was living in his retirement cabin in Soldotna. Since he was pastor of Faith congregation for 24 years and their first pastor, I heard plenty of information about him. One member told me, "If you want to learn about evangelism, go down to Soldotna and pick Pastor Zietlow's mind. How did he start all those churches?" I really had not had a chance to talk with him yet and I thought that suggestion was a good idea. So I went. He took me out fishing; I asked questions and he answered them. As he spoke to me I thought, "Surely the Lord has blessed this man." I thought it was worth writing down on paper (and it even fulfilled my church history paper assignment), and I did.

I would have to confess that I did not do much writing in this paper. I determined that the people I interviewed could do a much better job of giving a full picture of Dave Zietlow than ^I me. This would explain the large number of long quotes.

The title of the paper is *One of God's Fishermen: Pastor David Zietlow*. I took this title from the interview with Lance Hartzell; I thought it summed up the life and ministry of David Zietlow well. He loved fishing and was good at it. He fished for the trophy for the wall and he fished for lost souls as well. Sometimes he even did both at the same time.

Writing this paper has been good for me. I have learned, and I have thought much about the ministry that the Lord will soon call me to do. I thank our God for introducing me to one of His veteran fishermen. Now let me introduce him to you.

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This paper is first of all dedicated to the glory of our Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In His infinite mercy, God has won salvation for all sinners through the substitutionary death of our Lord Jesus Christ. After calling His people to faith, God then calls them to spread the saving message to the whole world. This is indeed an amazing thing that God calls sinful, imperfect human beings to spread his perfect message. We sinners would fail miserably if left to this task ourselves. The only reason we do succeed is because God is leading us and working through us. We are His agents to spread the message of salvation to all people. Pastor David Zietlow was one of those agents of God. Through Pastor Zietlow, God started many churches in Montana and Alaska where the Word of God was taught in its truth and purity. God made him into a fisher of men. This paper will take a short look at the ministry of David Zietlow emphasizing the blessings that God showered upon him. To the glory of God, then, we proceed as we take a closer look at one of God's fishermen, Pastor David Zietlow.

David Zietlow was born on December 30, 1932 in a little country town named Chaseburg right outside of La Crosse, Wisconsin. He was the second child of three; the first died before he was born. His parents were farmers and went to the English Lutheran church in town. Little David loved the farm life in this small community and got to know many people by attending the one room Chaseburg public school. Tragedy struck the Zietlow family when Dave was in fourth grade; his father was an alcoholic and committed suicide. After the death, the family (consisting of David, two year younger brother Donald, and mother) moved to Viroqua, Wisconsin where David attended grade school one year. After that year, World War II broke out and the family moved to La Crosse where David's mother got a job in a defense factory.

The Zietlow's had relatives living in La Crosse and it was there that David's aunt convinced his mother to send the children to a Lutheran Elementary School. David attended school there from sixth to eighth grade and received substantial

encouragement to attend Northwestern Preparatory School from the capable grade school staff. In sixth grade, Dave had a teacher named Ralph Schwantz who later went on to teach at Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. In 7-8 grades, he had Erich Sievert who also went on to teach at DMLC. His pastor at this time was Walter Schumann who went on to be a professor at Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin. These gifted men had a considerable influence on Pastor Zietlow. In 8th grade, Mr. Sievert would call a boy inside during every recess and talk to him about attending Northwestern Preparatory School in Watertown, Wisconsin. By the end of the year, he had convinced four boys to go on and David was still on the fence. David was thinking about going to medical school to make money so he could support his mother and younger brother. During the summer, Mr. Sievert arranged for the vicar of First Lutheran Church in La Crosse to take David down to Watertown to see the school. There David met school President, Pastor Kowalke and Dean of students, Pastor Pless and these men so impressed him that he decided to attend Northwestern Prep.

Even in high school, David still thought he would eventually go on to medical school but when he got to Northwestern College, also in Watertown, Wisconsin, he liked the classes and the other students and he was sure that the Lord wanted him to become a pastor. In his sophomore year at NWC, he decided to stay there and complete his training for the pastoral ministry. He wasn't the only one interested in his decision as Pastor Zietlow says, "My mother was hoping I would be a pastor and she got her wish fulfilled." His brother Donald also went to Northwestern Prep but dropped out after two years because of a stuttering problem and finished high school in the public system.

While a senior at NWC, David met a Lutheran school teacher named Carol who taught in Columbus, Wisconsin. One of David's classmates, Kenneth Lenz, tells how they met:

I was a senior at Northwestern College and had known Carol from the high school in New Ulm. She was teaching in Columbus and I was dating her. Dave had told me that if we ever broke up he would like to go out with her. So one night I drove my car out to Columbus to pick her up for a concert at the college, and on the way to Watertown she kept grabbing her coat and rubbing her knees. It was dark in the car so I couldn't see what was happening. But the hose for the oil gauge had broken and was spraying oil all over her dress and coat. When we got out of the car at Watertown, she was furious with me and I don't blame her. I went and told Dave that now was his chance because she wasn't talking to me and I had to fix my car. He took her back to Columbus and they started dating and got married.

Carol was instrumental in encouraging Dave to become a minister and in the summer of 1955, after Dave's first year at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin, they were married. They rented an apartment in Mequon and Carol taught at Calvary Lutheran church. Dave went to school and worked odd jobs like driving school bus, being a waiter, and doing construction jobs. He vicared at North Trinity in Milwaukee. In 1958, during senior year at the Seminary and five days before call day, Dave and Carol were blessed with their first child, a baby girl that they named Carrie. Five days later on call day, Dave was assigned to a small mission church in Winnett, Montana. His close friend Kenny Lenz was also assigned to a church in Montana and they were quite excited because Montana was far away and offered plenty of opportunities not only for mission work but for their hobbies like fishing and hunting.

Pastor Zietlow talks about the move out there and his first impressions of the church:

It was a little church started by a disgruntled Missouri Synod pastor who was kicked out of his congregation in Roundup, Montana, and shortly thereafter had a nervous breakdown. I was very excited and we packed our first child who was born 5 days before graduation as

well as all the belongings. We headed west to Montana. When we saw the parsonage and the little church that had once been a school house, I kind of cried. It was a pathetic mess. The parsonage had been a sheep pen and the manure that had just been cleaned out of it was still in the front yard. We spent the rest of that week until the installation cleaning the parsonage and installing a hot water heater so there would be hot water in the parsonage. We got everything ready for the arrival of our folks who were coming out for the installation. When my mother saw the parsonage and the church she said, "You are not staying, you are coming home with me." But of course, by that time we had fallen in love with the people of that small town. It was our hope for doing work there and we were intent on staying and we did. I was installed on Sunday by the mission board chairman and Norbert Meier from Billings, Montana.

The day following my installation, at 8 AM, the president of my congregation came to my house with a shovel and said, "Let's build on to the church." The church was a one room country school house with a wood burning stove in the corner. There was no bathroom. We started digging the foundation and went out 12 feet so there was room for an altar and a bathroom. Then he said, "Lets go alongside the church and build a shed roof." We went out 16 feet all alongside the church so there was room for kids in Sunday School and a kitchen. By fall, we had the whole thing remodeled with new siding and a roof. The old school in Chaseburg, Wisconsin, was no longer in operation and they gave me the old school bell to put in the steeple we had built for the church.

Winnett had a population of 150 people and was in Petroleum County. The county was 40 miles wide and 100 miles long and had a population of about 800 people. Pastor Zietlow's church was the smallest one in town being the new one on the block. It soon grew to be the largest church in town. Membership started to grow and these members had relatives and friends from different counties that came to church. Soon they wanted services in their counties. Dave started services in Melstone, a town

80 miles to the south. They met on the second and fourth Sundays of the month in the afternoon. Pastor Zietlow was the leading force behind building a church in Melstone. The city donated the land for the church and the congregation and Pastor Zietlow did most of the work building it. A new church was built in Melstone for \$8,000. He also started services in a town 50 miles to the east of Winette named Sand Springs. He held services there on the first and third Sundays of the month in a one room country school. He also started services in a town called Grassrange which was 25 miles to the west of Winnett. There Pastor Zietlow bought an old store building and remodeled it so it could be used as a church.

It is obvious that Dave kept himself quite busy in Montana. Pastor Roland Zimmerman is slightly older than Dave and was serving in Montana at the same time. Their families became good friends and enjoyed hunting, fishing and vacationing with each other. He explains the mission attitude in Montana:

Dave Zietlow's attitude was "do whatever had to be done." In many instances he had to do 99 percent of things. Whenever there was anyone interested [in the gospel] he moved by plane or by car to get to them. It is a long way but that's what we are here for! That was the attitude he had. Don't worry about being helped; just do it! We had one command and that was to get missions started and keep plowing ahead. We loved it in Montana. We enjoyed the country. The circumstances were that we were a long ways away from relatives but that didn't mean a hill of beans to us. Let's get at it and do it.

We would go out to a mission with just a few people. This is the way that missions would work. Get your people together and organize them. If you need land, then get it. If you need to build a church, then build it. If you need a parsonage, then build it. We were our own contractor and builder, and we worked with the plans. If you didn't know how to do it, then learn! Nobody was going to do it for you. We did it the way it worked.

The attitude of "I can't do it" was unheard of. We were

young and thought we could do anything. The attitude is - Let's do it. Nothing will stand in our way. The Lord will be with you. Will we make mistakes? Yes, but we will learn from them and not make those same mistakes again. [Dave] wasn't afraid to tackle something. "With God's help I can do anything."

Not only did Pastor Zietlow build the parsonage and churches but more importantly reached many people with the gospel message. How did the Lord use Pastor Zietlow to reach all these people? One way was that Dave visited every house in Petroleum County on a yearly basis. Pastor Zietlow explains other ways of reaching out:

How did the mission in Montana grow? Well, it was just my becoming a friend to people, going and calling people, talking to them and selling yourself as someone who had a product that they needed - the Word of God. I remember one man who said he didn't want me on his place; he was an atheist. But I would stop by his place periodically say, "Hi" and help him out in what he was doing. A few years later he had a heart attack at the age of 45. He was in the hospital and eventually died of it. I went to the hospital to see him and he welcomed me with open arms. He said, "I certainly have missed alot." There he had a bouquet of flowers that somebody had the audacity to give him - he was a cowboy - and he said, "Take these back and put them on the altar in the church so the little kids can enjoy them when they come to church on Sunday." I had his funeral; he died a Christian.

[There were other ways of reaching out.] We were building the church in Montana, doing it all ourselves and the members were helping me. One day I looked around and I had about five men helping me nail on the 2 by 6 tongue and groove on the roof and not one of them were members of my church - yet. They were all members of the community who saw we were building a church and came over, grabbed a hammer and nail and [thought] I needed some help. So even the building part of it was a good invitation and a way to get people to come and get acquainted with our

church and join it eventually.

I think that if you can be all things to all people and if you can show them that you have their interest at heart - interest of their souls mainly at heart, and also their personal interests, their health, family, children, parents, husband and wife, and that you are concerned about them that they live happy, wholesome lives, it will rub off and will not be a stumbling block to you in getting them to - by the grace of God - become members of the church.

Have a very good adult confirmation manual. One I like the best is Eichman's *The Wonders of God*. Know it so well that you don't have to read it and can talk to the people. I felt one of the best ways to have an adult class, although it uses much of your time, is to try and get 1 or 2 families together and meet at their home. That way they never miss class, you're always there, and it is much more informal. They are not afraid to ask a question or something embarrassing. One woman asked if she had to wear a hat; a man asked if he could wear his Levi's to church. These are questions that they probably would not have asked if they were in a larger class. I found much joy in teaching adult confirmation classes - the more I did it the more I enjoyed it.

Pastor Zimmerman speaks about Dave's evangelism methods:

Evangelism was his life. If he went to the lumber yard, he was talking to the lumber guy about religion and church. He invited people hunting and fishing. He got to know them and they trusted him. It was a total dedication to spreading the word in all forms of life and circumstances.

Pastor Kenneth Lenz, classmate and fellow worker with Dave in Montana, says that the Lord knew what He was doing when He sent Dave Zietlow to Montana. Pastor Zietlow's tenacity and "never say die" attitude worked well in a mission area. Pastor Lenz explains:

Everything to Dave was an exciting challenge. He wanted to beat everyone else at fishing, hunting - you name it. Every human

being was a challenge also. He knew everyone in the county and everyone was a challenge to get into church. He was a motivator, only slept 4-5 hours a night, and was a tireless worker. He had incredible enthusiasm and it always rubbed off on people. He was always thinking, always scheming, always plotting, "What can I do to reach these people? What can I do to help them? I'll do whatever it takes."

His attitude was to get to know the people. "This is my community." Winette was a depressing sight at first but he had the attitude of: "This is my home!" Also, his enthusiasm rubbed off on people. Think of the enthusiasm of the apostles in Acts. They were kicked out of the temple courts but it didn't stop them. They then went from house to house. The enthusiasm they had surely had tremendous impact on those people. Dave's enthusiasm for the gospel had an impact on his people.

Pastor Zietlow's enthusiasm for the gospel was tested right away in Montana. As soon as he arrived in Winnett, he was confronted with the problem of lodges. He explains:

[Winnett] was a little town full of lodges. We had Masons, Eastern star, [a group for] teenage boys, Oddfellows, Rebeccas, and Daughter of Rebeccas [which was a] girls' organization. It seemed that anybody who was anybody belonged to these lodges. Well, we were of course opposed to them. I began by starting an opposition group, and I started with the teenagers. I called the group the Teen League. It got to be very successful; all the teenagers in the town came. It was the type of thing that you wanted to be a part of. We did all kinds of fun stuff - ice skating, roller skating, hay rides, hikes, and overnight camping trips. We would cut Christmas trees for the whole county and set them in the [church] yard and people would make donations for the trees. This was the way we had money to do some of these things. Later on we would go and get the bottom part of the trees from the people and sell them to the ranchers for corral poles. We also made floats for parades. It was just a good, strong organization.

This led into confirmation classes. I started to teach these classes and didn't tell them right off the bat that lodge members couldn't join the church. We had gone to confirmation class for about 6 months (they had to go 2 years) when I told them that they couldn't be confirmed unless they quit the lodge. When I confirmed two sons of the worshipful master, who was the leader of the Masons that year, it broke the back of the youth organization of the lodge.

Then about 6 months later I confirmed the next worshipful master. I got him into class and he had no intention of joining our church. He just wanted to know what we taught because he knew the church's stand against the lodge. One night we sat down, right when the class was just about over, and went through the teachings of the lodge and the teachings of the Bible. He said, "If I would have known this I would never have started this class. I'll let you know my decision next week if I will join the church." The next week I came to his house and he said, "I am quitting the lodge. There is no other decision I can make than to join your church." By the grace of God we got through the class and he said, "I want to join the church." He resigned the lodge and that just about broke the back of the lodge. Most of them then joined our church. From then on we didn't have much of a lodge problem.

This teen group he started to oppose the lodge was all part of Pastor Zietlow's philosophy of ministry. He wanted the church to be one big happy family. The members should know each other better than just a handshake on Sunday morning. He encouraged and planned social gatherings so the church members could get to know each other, learn to depend on each other, and bring their friends to learn what the church was all about. Montana had many opportunities for outdoor activities like fishing and hunting. Dave and his family went on many trout fishing outings and picnics with other couples and families. Sometimes it would be quite a few people going along into the mountain streams on an overnight fishing trip. There were

sometimes a number of people along that were prospective members in the church.

The pastors also needed fellowship gatherings. It was during Dave Zietlow's ministry in Montana that the Poaching Pastors' Fishing Association (PPFA) was organized. Every spring and fall pastors from Montana and North and South Dakota would get together and fish in the Montana mountain streams. This organization is still operating today.

Another way of encouraging fellowship was the Bible camp. The Bible camp was held in the summer and it was open to the children of all the churches in Montana. The children and the counselors would stay a week in rented cabins along Big Timber Creek between Livingstone and Billings. It was a week of Bible lessons and learning but also included many outdoor activities. The parents would come up on the weekend and stay in tents or trailers. On Sunday then there would be a worship service and by the afternoon everyone would go home. This soon grew to become a large family congregational outing and the people realized that it was a wonderful way of building fellowship with the other churches of Montana. Pastor also saw the value of Bible camp and it had a large influence on him. In the future, Bible camp would play a larger role in his ministry.

There were many other experiences that molded Dave as a young missionary. He explains:

In Montana, I bought a pickup truck for hunting and fishing. It helped me to fit in also because everybody in a ranching community had a pickup. On a Sunday it was all pickups in the front of the church. The pickup helped me to get around to see people when the roads were rough, and they usually were after a hard rain. I remember one night I was coming back from the Melstone church across the backcountry and I hit a bad bump, a washout, and ran the fans through my radiator. I stopped every once in a while to fill the radiator with water from the nearby reservoir and then I finally came to a ranch and stopped there. I

woke up the rancher and asked him if he would help me get my radiator fixed. The rancher at that time was not a member of my church and I told him about my problem. He said, "Oh, that's no problem. I'll go in the house and get some flour." He got a hand full of flour and went along the barbed wire fence on the edge of the yard and picked off some sheep wool, mixed it together with water to make a paste, opened up the hood, threw the mixture against the radiator and said, "That will take you back to town." And it did. It created a strengthened paste over the breaks in the radiator and it got me back to town where I could get it fixed. The rancher and I became very good friends after that. Eventually, he became a member of the church and was quite active.

This same rancher also asked me to lamb every spring. In that time of year the ewes were giving birth to their lambs. Most of the lambs were born during the day so the rancher could make sure the lamb came out alright and began to suckle. My job was to watch the sheep at night. Night was the quiet time but I would go around and look at little pens the ewes were in and when they got ready to give birth to a lamb I would see if there was trouble and pull the lamb out and get it to suckle. I helped other ranchers brand calves in the spring and gather cattle in the fall.

I belonged to the volunteer fire department. One time after a terrible ranch house fire, the county manager asked me to go with him to help locate the two bodies of the older couple that had lived there. He said, "Here is what to look for. When you get into the house look for a yellowish, smoky flame. It will be the fat of the body burning." We did go into the house which was still smoldering and smoking. We went into the back room and there where the bed had been were the 2 corpses lying there. And it was just as he said. There was a yellowish, smoky flame coming from the torsos of their bodies.

I helped drag a reservoir for a teenager in my congregation who had drowned. He was hunting ducks and shot some and they fell in the reservoir. Before waiting for them to blow to shore, he took off his clothes and went out to get them and drowned. We didn't have a place to put his body when we brought it back to

town so I placed it on the steps of the church in a blanket. I was a very nervous person until the mortuary in Lewistown, 50 miles away, came and picked it up seven hours later. I didn't want anybody walking in the church and finding that body laying there.

Another time a member of my congregation was out irrigating, an older person of about 60. He was irrigating and always took his dog along with him. It was a dog that went wherever he went. The dog came home alone and his wife noticed that the dog was home and suspected that something had happened to her husband. She went out in the field and found that he had died of a stroke or heart attack. She came in to get me and I went with her to get her husband. When we came up to the man there was a red handkerchief wrapped around his head. The wife had first found him with his mouth wide open from gasping for breath. She had taken off her red handkerchief and wrapped it around his jaw and around the top of his head to hold it shut. I picked up the body and put it in the back of my pickup, brought the wife to the parsonage, and put the body in the entry way to the church again. I called the undertaker and waited a couple hours until he got there.

All these goings on cemented ties with the people and gave me experiences that made me ready for just about anything. People had confidence in coming to me in marriage, children, and even money problems.

Of course, even with all his activities in reaching out to others, his family took a high priority. While in Montana, Dave and Carol were blessed (added to Carrie) with Peter, Hans, Todd, Tom, and Jane. Every pastor has to deal with the dilemma of balancing family and church work. Pastor Zietlow set aside quality time for his family. They went hunting and fishing together. They camped and hiked together. Carrie remembers doing lots of things with her father in the winter time. Also, whenever her father went to the other churches he always took the family with him or just a few children. Carrie said she quickly got to know all the people in the other churches.

This is a good place to talk a little about Pastor Zietlow's wife, Carol. Being the

wife of a pastor can be stressful enough and now she was raising six children out in eastern Montana. Some pastor's wives might not want to be in a situation like that but Carol seemed to thrive in it. She was an independent woman who had grown up in South Dakota, which wasn't too far away. She had good friends in Montana and Alaska and that was important to her. Carrie adds, "[Mom] made friends easily. I never remember her being negative in either places (Montana and Alaska). She was always there for my father."

Pastor Zimmerman talked about Carol in this way:

Let me say something about a missionary's wife. She must be totally involved and committed to the missionary's existence. Her attitude is "the family is nice but we, my husband and I, have a job to do and I will do anything to get that job done. I will make due with what I have." The attitude of the missionary and his family is "this is not the boondocks; this is the garden spot of the earth for me. This is the best spot for me." Carol had this attitude and lived it. She was a LES teacher and played organ and was involved with the choir. She played organ and piano everywhere they went.

Pastor Kenneth Lenz adds, "Carol was totally committed to Dave's ministry. She was stuck with the kids all day while Dave was gone attending the churches. You never heard her complain once. She had the same attitude as Dave and she knew her role. She was tough. She had a farm girl background. She kept Dave in line."

With the addition of new family members came the need for room in the parsonage. Pastor Zietlow continues:

We added on to the parsonage as our family grew and what once was the sheep barn grew into one of the nicer homes in Winnett. I dug a well by hand about 26 feet down and 3 feet wide and put a pump on the bottom of it. With that well I had plenty of good water. We put in a nice big yard by the parsonage. I planted about 500 trees which I got from the soil conservation service, and

it was the nicest yard in the city. It added prestige to our church and parsonage, too.

During this time there were six vacant lots next to the parsonage on main street. They were for sale, believe it or not, for 25 dollars a lot. I bought all six of them and had a big yard. About this time one of the ranchers in my congregation in Melstone said it was time for me to have a horse. So after a church service he told me to come out to the ranch and pick one out. So I went out there and picked one out and he said, "No, that one is not very good. Pick that one over there." So I had a horse. I brought the horse back and put a fence around the lots I had purchased. Now I had a horse pasture and it was there I broke these horses. The next year [the same rancher] said, "It's time for you to have another horse." By now I knew what to look for in a horse and went to pick one out. My children and I rode these horses; we used them for hunting and packing.

Pastor Zietlow wasted no time in fitting into his surroundings so he could share the gospel message with as many as he could reach. He talks about how a public pool turned into an evangelism tool:

We [the town] started a toast masters club because people wanted to know how to speak in public. One of the speeches I made was that we should have a town swimming pool. This was because one of the teenagers in my congregation had just drowned in a stop damn. The idea caught on and in a month the city gave me land right across from the church. We made a public drive for funds. I had a friend in Melstone who was a contractor and he lent us a cement mixer truck. The county and state used their dump trucks to haul in gravel. The hardware store furnished much of the cement. Then we built a swimming pool right across from the church; it had the same dimensions as the church in Melstone, 30 by 60. It became a meeting place for children from the whole county and surrounding counties. I was the caretaker of the swimming pool. Sometimes city waterlines were broken and there was no water available so they went down to the firehouse and

used an auxiliary pump to fill the swimming pool with my well. I fixed up everything when it broke down and even was the lifeguard when the guard didn't show up. This lasted until we got a board of control - then I was relieved from much of my duties.

His oldest son Peter Zietlow talks about his ministry in Montana:

There [in Montana] you have a bunch of poor cattle and sheep ranchers and some farmers. Dad's elbow rubbing started there. He wasn't afraid to go to a sheep rancher and shoot coyote out of a plane. We had a big yard in a small town of about 200 people. About once a week or so we would have the city softball game right there in our front yard. Dad built a well by himself about 30 or 40 feet down. He built a horse pasture for our two ponies. He even built the town swimming pool which of course was a good evangelism tool. I still remember the time he taught me how to swim - he pushed me off the high board and said, "Sink or swim" and I chose the latter.

It is easy to see how David could use his social contacts to spread the gospel. He did everything that those people did and tried to reach all of them at their level. The townspeople liked him immensely. Carrie remembers that the town would throw parties for him. They would try to get him to go into politics and run for the state senate. Pastor Lenz said the town wanted to make him mayor but Dave declined citing the provision that to be mayor one had to own property. After hearing this, the town gave him one acre of property to make him eligible. He still declined.

Another challenge of the mission field in Montana was the challenge of money. Many pastors who had large families had hard times making ends meet. Pastor Roland Zimmerman said, "I was paid 170 dollars a month when I first got out. But we never worried about money. Our wives would have fits. Sometimes it got tight. I got a license and permit to start trapping beavers to support my family. I saw Dave about six months later and he said that was a good idea."

Dave talks about trapping:

I had a member in Melstone who was quite old and had done quite a bit of trapping when he was younger. He said, "Why don't you do some trapping." He gave me his traps and information that I needed and I went out to trap beaver, mink, and muskrat, that were right in the vicinity. It wasn't too long and people would come up to me and say, "I've got beaver damming up my irrigation ditch. Will you come out and trap them please?" I really was doing them favor. Towards spring I would sell the furs and we would take the children to a larger town and each one would get to buy a big gift like a bike or tricycle or a special gift with the money.

Another way to save money was to live off the land. When Fall came around, hunting season was sure to follow and that meant it was time to fill the freezer for winter. Pastors Lenz and Zimmerman would get together with Dave and form a hunting party. They would hunt antelope, deer, moose, and elk. They had big freezers and did their own butchering and packaging. They would go fishing and smoke the fish they caught. They would pack so much away that they lived on wild meat from October to Easter. Pastor Zimmerman says, "In winter time we never had to buy meat in the grocery store. It was a different lifestyle and we adapted."

Pastor Zimmerman and Pastor Zietlow spent some quality time together in Montana as Dave explains:

The Zimmermans were good friends of the family. One time our families went on a trip to Glacier National Park. It was a nice sunny day and the kids were playing around in the lake. There was a stream that came out of this lake down the mountainside. [Zimmerman] said to me why don't we float this stream. I had taken my plywood rowboat up there. The stream kind of followed the road and we went down with both cars, dropped one off, and then came back to start the run. We left the one car about 7 miles down the road where we would take the boat out of the water and drive back. We said good bye to our wives, grabbed our fishing

poles, set off in this nice Sunday afternoon to float this creek. It was a nice quiet creek and we went around the first bend and there were some rapids there and lo and behold we tipped the boat over. Everything came out of the boat but it was shallow water and we managed to save our fishing poles and everything else. We went down fishing again, and went around another corner and another set of rapids. Then around another corner and the rapids were getting worse and worse and finally we ended up going over a waterfall and everything else. We lost everything including the boat. The only thing we salvaged was one oar and one boat cushion. We tipped over more than 20 times. Wet, dirty, tired, scared, we finally got down to the area we left the car. We got in and drove back to camp and somewhat sheepishly explained to our wives and children what had happened.

Later on Zimmerman said he was going to write an article, a first person award, for Reader's Digest. I thought, "Well, if he could write one I could too." So I wrote about a mountain goat hunt that a rancher from Winnett and I had made. 25\$ Got My Goat was the name of the article. It turned out that Outdoor Life bought my story for 350 dollars and Reader's Digest didn't buy [Pastor Zimmerman's story].

Montana was also the cite where Pastor Zietlow lost the two small fingers on his left hand. There are many stories about how he lost those two fingers and there have even some reports of finding them in walls of church buildings he has worked on.

Dave sets the record straight:

It was in Montana that I lost the two little fingers on my left hand. Reverend Zimmerman had come to the mission in Great Falls and our families got together quite often. It was in the Fall after we shot a bunch of deer, elk, and antelope and we were going to make solomi. I had inherited a meat grinder from my grandmother and she had given me all the recipes. [Pastor Zimmerman's] family came down and we started making solomi. Later on in the evening we were still grinding meat for solomi - we

had bushel baskets full of it - and I was having trouble with the motor that was driving the grinder. The belt kept coming off. With one hand I was guiding the belt and the other hand was picked up the meat and threw it into the grinder and pressed down the meat into the grinder to fill the stuffings. About 11:30 using the stomper got to be a little bit slow so I took the meat and with my two middle fingers pushed the meat down. All of a sudden there was a "klump" and it took off my fingers and my wedding ring. I went upstairs and my wife grabbed a clean diaper and wrapped it around the hand. I told her to call the doctor in Roundup which was 50 miles away. [Zimmerman] and I headed out for the doctor's office at the hospital. We had 6 inches of new snow. After driving a mile, [Zimmerman] opened the door and got out and tossed his cookies. It was too gory for him. He got back in and we finished the trip to the hospital. The fingers healed well and to this day I really don't miss them that much.

While Pastor Zietlow was serving in Montana, the Lord opened another mission field far away that would soon need a shepherd of the Word. In 1966, (Dave had been serving in Montana for eight years already) a tiny mission congregation was formed in Anchorage, Alaska. Through the General Board for Home Missions of the Wisconsin Synod, a divine call was issued to Pastor Zietlow in the fall of 1967 to serve the mission in Anchorage. The Lord led him to take that call.

Carrie, 9 years old, talks about the move to Alaska,

Everybody in school knew he had the call to Alaska. The whole town had a send off for him. We packed a station wagon with a dog, cat, and 6 kids plus taking 2 other moving vans. I was excited but I didn't want to leave my friends. We stopped at pastor's houses along the way. We drove to Seattle and put the moving vans on a ship and we flew to Alaska. My first impressions of Alaska were that it was dark; there were no lights because of a power outage. There was snow and nobody met us at the airport. We rented a house at Rabbit Creek and dad wanted us

to go to school the next day but we begged him to let us play in the snow, and he did. Church was in the Seventh Day Adventist Church in downtown Anchorage. The church started with just 2 families, a total of 12 people. Sometimes church was just our family or a couple of families.

Peter also remembers:

I still remember that trip to Alaska. Then we flew for the first time ever to Alaska. We arrived in the dead of winter at Anchorage International Airport and for the next couple of hours there was a blackout. The Hahn family drove us to the rented house and most of our belongings were on the moving vans so we slept in sleeping bags for a few weeks. Mom didn't complain. It was pretty difficult the first couple years up there; Mom and Dad would have disagreements from time to time. But I don't suppose it is easy serving in a mission field where so many things are up in the air and all these little rugrats running around and the income being limited as it was. Through thick and thin Mom was always there for Dad. If you'd meet mama, she may be small but don't stand in her way. For her husband and children her love has no end.

The Zietlow family arrived in Anchorage on December 12, 1967. On the following Sunday, December 17, Pastor Zietlow was installed by Pastor A.B. Habben in the first worship service. Nineteen people attended that service.

Dave used all of his Montana ministry experiences to serve the souls in Alaska. In those early years in Alaska, the Lord created opportunities for Dave to expand his ministry. One of those opportunities was the business he started. It was and still is rare for a Wisconsin Synod pastor to own and run his own business. It raises many an eyebrow when it comes up in conversations of WELS members. But this business was the foundation of Dave's ministry in Alaska. Jim Perham, a member of Faith Lutheran Church in Anchorage since its founding, talked about the business, "Dave started a

business because he couldn't make ends meet. He had a lot of kids and the cost of living was high. Carol couldn't work because there were so many kids and that meant Dave had to go out and find another job." Dave's son Peter adds:

Dad was a tent minister. All the way through, starting out with moonlighting, it was always with the approval of the congregation and district mission board. The mission board's eyes were opened when they learned the cost of living in Alaska. Nowadays there is much more concern for that. When you pay twice as much for a gallon of milk that you pay in Seattle it puts a dent in your income.

Dad is kind of handy. He felt his talents could be used in starting out. He didn't start out in the electrical business. Actually, he was doing handyman jobs, just about any kind of construction. I remember helping him put stones on brick fireplaces. He didn't start it only for the money. I think it was a determined, conscious way of rubbing elbows with more people. The more people you can meet outside your ivory tower, the better. You can meet them on neutral ground even if it's wearing a tool belt. You can invite them to church or activities and it's even better if you are one of those blue collar workers. Shorty Hall was a contractor and Dad started doing some electrical work for him. He whispered in Dad's ear to get a little more involved and look into getting his workman's license, later his journeyman's, and finally his contractor's license and with the blessing of the congregation he did. By the time people said good bye to Dave Zietlow the electrician they also knew he was a pastor and that his church was on 5200 Lake Otis and they were welcome to attend.

Carrie remembers the start of the business, "It started after building the church and parsonage. He watched the electrical contractors work and helped them also. He watched the contractors lay the fire place. He said, 'I can do this in the church.'" Jim Perham adds, "He started doing the rock work on fireplaces. He went into wiring houses. That snowballed and grew and he had to take tests to get a contractor's license.

He was able to meet an awful lot of people while working. He could do things for the church in the area of construction that didn't cost anything because he would donate his time."

Pastor Zietlow talks about his Safeway Electric Company:

The Safeway electric business grew primarily because I was too dumb to charge enough money and after a while we were known as someone who was very dependable and economical. We were known as a reputable business and the thing just boomed along with the economy of Alaska. It couldn't have been started at a better time.

I don't think it really had a bad effect but what it enabled me to do was, after it was established and I got a license, to give employment to some people in my congregation who didn't have a job and train some young fellows to become electricians, including my boys who needed to make money in the summer for school.

The electrical business enabled me to meet a lot of new people who were moving to Alaska and building houses. I got to know them very personally and it allowed me to rub elbows with affluent people such as those who were in the construction business, and contractors. As a result, this young country boy raised on a farm and whose first church was in Montana was suddenly thrown into a suit and topcoat environment. Being in the electrical business I got to meet one on one with affluent people which helped in my church work, too. The congregation at Faith had everything including doctors, bankers, contractors, real estate people, and teachers; it enabled us to become self-supporting after five years. Then our main push was to start a Christian elementary school and we did. We began holding school classes in the lower part of church and built on to the church the following year. Then added on to the entry of the church and then put on a second story for a school and now we have four teachers, a pastor, and a vicar.

Safeway Electric Company was indeed an integral part of Pastor Zietlow's ministry and the Lord used it to reach out to lost souls. A question one may ask is how

did Dave have time to work his business and be the pastor of a church. One would think that there would be conflicts in time. Were there any negatives? As Peter was quoted earlier, the business was started with the blessing of the mission board and Faith congregation. But, as one would expect, there were some members who, from time to time, would issue their concerns that Dave was spending too much time with the business. Carrie explains, "[In the early years] he had the time for the business because it was a new mission. In the later years, it was tough on him because he was older, the business was getting bigger, the school was there, and the church was bigger. He didn't know he would be so busy. He would get calls from people who said something is not working right. There was too much he couldn't control. I know he wished he wasn't so busy at that time." The people interviewed for this paper, however, stressed that the positives of the business far outweighed the negatives. Lance Hartzell, the first school teacher and principal of Faith Lutheran Church, states:

[Dave] had a lot of energy and I would not advocate that all ministers have a business because they are not all him. I remember him saying, "If I just didn't have to sleep at night, I could get so much more done." The Lord certainly blessed him with the ability to do both [church and business]. Maybe there are some pastors out there that could do it but I think that Pastor Zietlow was just special in that way.

The business was good for the church in the fact that it gave him so many contacts. He got out into the community and many people could see him. Many people have misconceptions about pastors - think they are holier than thou - and they got to meet him as a real person. They could see that he was working like they were. He had to work to make it financially and people appreciated that. I think the congregation appreciated it too because they, even though they were generous, appreciated that they didn't have to pay for everything. He had a large family and Anchorage is a very expensive place to live. If he had nothing but the church supporting him, the church would have felt bad that they could not

have given him more.

As far as it taking up too much of his time to do church work, I never thought that. I'm sure he did much sermon work on the job site. He had a real ability to do that. He had good sermons. They were down to earth, simple, easy to follow, common language, and not a high and lofty type sermon. He would preach to the children, and a lot of his people were spiritual children because they were new converts. There were definitely more positives than negatives.

It is safe to say that starting a business is not the way that every pastor should conduct his ministry. Pastor Zietlow was blessed with the gifts and abilities to run a business and a church. It was a ministry that allowed him to reach out to his surroundings and it fit his personality. Dave had business sense and he used Safeway Electric to open doors for other business ventures. Dave continues:

It was during this time also that I became interested in real estate. I bought some land in Anchorage itself, Kenai River (talked my boys into buying lots down here also), I went together ^{with} a man and his father and bought a mountain subdivision in Idaho. It was 260 acres on a side of a mountain. The father of the partner built the roads into it, and then had a heart attack and died. The son went bankrupt so I ended up with the subdivision myself. I kept feeding it with money from Safeway Electric until finally now it is selling and is doing very well.

I bought another piece of property here in Anchorage and sold it to another church who wanted to build a church in that area. It was not in an area where we could utilize it ourselves. Also during this time, the man that I bought land with in Idaho came to me with a business proposition along with a man from Seattle to put up a furniture manufacturing plant and sales room in Anchorage. They had all the know-how so all I had to do was put money up front. I knew where to rent the building, knew people to hire and we opened up a business called Business Furniture of Alaska. Again my partners in this venture had financial troubles

and I wound up with the business. I then knew Pastor Walter Elgin, a pastor who just had left the Missouri Synod and joined our church in Anchorage, who didn't have a job. I offered him and another member in the church the jobs to be managers of this manufacturing plant and store. It gave them an opportunity for employment, it was a good job, and I could trust them. Eventually, Pastor Elgin took the colloquy for the Wisconsin Synod and was called to be my associate at Faith [1985]. He then went to Sitka, Alaska [1989] and when he went to Sitka he no longer wanted the furniture business so I sold it to the other member. Everything worked out good for all parties involved.

Evangelism was also a large part of Pastor Zietlow's life. One could say that evangelism was his life. He used his business and personal life to reach out to lost souls. It was friendship evangelism, plain and simple. The oldest son, Peter, answers when asked what his father's evangelism methods were:

Probably didn't have one and that is why they were so good. First of all it is the love for your Savior who first loved you, taking your Savior seriously and His call, and the promise of salvation. He had a chance to rub elbows with the hoi polloi and got down in the trenches with them in a mission congregation. In Alaska, it was easy to rub elbows with people if you just roll up your sleeves. Dad did that. He found the right time and place to talk to people about their Savior. He wasn't pushy and would wait for their question before giving the answer. His evangelism efforts were just friendship evangelism, caring enough about your friends that you share your Savior with them. He rubbed off on a lot of people including his son.

It was more of an unplanned way of finding the right opportunity to share the Savior with your friends and people that you meet. Dad had that gift, a man of the people, he could meet anybody, shake their hands and look in their eye and finally share with them what he believed. Some of us don't have that gift but we should really work on that and pray about it, becoming all things

to all men so that by all possible means we might save some. Dad was able to rub elbows with blue collar and white collar people and relate to them both.

Dave talks about the people ripe for mission work that crossed his path in the course of daily life:

One of the benefits in getting to know people is the amount of outreach that comes your way automatically. I got to know so many people because when it came time for their sons or daughters to get married and they didn't belong to a church, they would come to me and ask if I would marry them. We would have 25 weddings a year and of course now I had very good prospects for membership in the church. Besides the counseling I would do with them before they were married, I would follow up after they were married, and baptize their babies. It was a wonderful outreach tool. It was because I knew so many people that they came to me in the first place.

Lance and Annette Hartzell, teachers in Faith's grade school, give some insight into Dave Zietlow and his ministry:

He reached out to people through his connections. He had connections through church, business, outgoing personality, fishing, hunting, and hobbies. He has such a magnanimous personality and charisma and contagious zeal that people just liked to be around him. So when they found out he was a pastor they would come to his church. That was basically it. The Lord put the right kind of guy in Alaska. When he went to Wasilla he was always looking for people and thinking about his church. He was a person that could get your confidence and you wanted to be around.

Another reason is that he was optimistic and the most generous person that there ever was created. If you go out for a hamburger there was no way you were ever going to pay the bill. He would always pick up the bill. When we would go down to

conference in Washington or Oregon and there would be 25 people that would go out to eat and he would pick up the tab for everyone. He would help out people who were in dire straits. He would buy airline tickets for people who would need them and there was never talk of being repaid. It was his personality that got people to the church first and then the Holy Spirit hooked them in. He had a nurturing outlook on congregations. He would water them for a while, nurse them until they could walk and then let them call their own pastor.

He was a businessman at heart and wanted to see the tangible results. He read the statistical report with the same fervor that he read the Bible. Businessmen are interested in growth and things that they can see. He approached the church a little more businesslike than others. His brother is a millionaire and he would have been too. Pastor Zietlow had that business sense in him, it was his nature, but yet he had the Holy Spirit in him and that created the zeal for the Word. He had a different approach because of his business background. He is just so totally different than any other pastor we ever met.

He was perfect for Alaska. He was allowed to be different. Back here he would have been constrained; it would have been like putting chains on him, a race horse in a harness. He had incredible energy. He was a bundle of raw energy, not always organized. The Lord let him explode and now the things that happened while he was there are being organized by people who are better organizers. It didn't dawn on him that he could fail. He thought big and he attempted big things and because it never dawned on him that he could fail he accomplished big things. He was like this starting churches; it just didn't dawn on him that it wouldn't happen. And his whole life was like this. His guardian angels worked overtime. He did things full speed ahead and when there was an obstacle you just charge right through it. He always came out unscathed. You would ride on a snowmachine with him and he would say, "Hang on we're going over the edge here." Many kids rode with him and never wanted to ride with him again.

He just met people in the course of life. He did do door to

door canvassing and had a big sign outside and had articles in the newspaper. But those were not the main ways or ways that he was comfortable with. His best was one on one evangelism.

The Lord blessed Faith Lutheran Church through Pastor Zietlow and his methods of ministry. It was not easy at first. Jim and Sandy Perham are original members of Faith and Jim talks about those first days:

Miriam and Shorty Schultz were the founding members of Faith in Anchorage. They got together with the Hahn family and ultimately with us. Prior to my attending any services, Sandy attended a number of services in Miriam's home. Sandy was a member of WELS and I was not. I was a Methodist at the time even though I didn't go to a Methodist church. We went to a Missouri Synod church here in town. I met Dave the same day he got here. Our families were the same ages and we spent a lot of time socially together.

From 1967-1970, worship services were held in the Schultz's home, the Zietlow's home, and then most of the time in the rented Seventh Day Adventist church. During 1968-70, the church built a parsonage and a church. Peter Zietlow remembers those days:

Dad, whose motto was you can do anything if you put your mind to it, decided he would be the general for all the building projects of the house and church. He bought a pre-fab home, sort of a house in a box. We started on the parsonage first. We bought land on Lake Otis Parkway. I remember alot of people helping in the building projects and I remember seeing Dad out there alone shoveling dirt for the foundation. We cleared alot of land; the woodpile behind the house was still there when I went to college.

Jim Perham also remembers those days:

We were in church every Sunday. I was one of the first adult confirmands. The church was a family; we didn't do much

socializing outside of our church.

It was Dave who motivated and went out and did the work himself. He just said he would do the work and the church let him. His leadership philosophy was that he would just do it, from changing the light bulbs to ordering this or that part. He did the spiritual and secular part of the work.

He didn't meet the expectations that we had of other pastors. He was down to earth, both he and Carol. You wouldn't think that a man who had that much fun could be a Christian much less a pastor.

The church building was dedicated on May 24, 1970 with Pastor Lee Sabrowsky, chairman of the Pacific Northwest District Mission Board, giving the sermon. The Holy Spirit blessed Pastor Zietlow's labors as more souls were brought into the church. The congregation continued to grow despite the fact that Anchorage had a transient population; those in the military would be stationed for only a few years. By January of 1969, the average attendance was 45 and the average communicant's age was only 25. By the end of 1977, the membership stood at 170 communicants, 290 baptized souls, and average worship attendance of 145. In 1987, there were 185 communicants, 260 baptized members, and average worship attendance was 147.

Pastor Zietlow talks about ministry at Faith congregation:

Many of the things we did in Montana we tried out on the congregation in Alaska. We weren't bothered by lodges but boy scouts. After I confirmed the boy scout leader (Jim Perham), they never again presented a problem in our congregation. We started a girl and boy pioneer program as well as teen league, men's club, women's guild, Bible camp, overnight camping trips, hikes over mountain passes, canoe trips, and men's 3-4 day goose hunting trips. I met some teachers in Cordova and they made arrangements for me to bring a bunch of men, about 8-10 guys. We'd fly over by jet, they would pick us up at the airport, haul us out to the river,

and set us up with boats and cabins. All we had was our food and things we needed. We'd spend 3-4 days out there hunting ducks and geese. It was a tremendous time and a good time to be together. We went on clam digs, and rock hauling parties to get stones for the parsonage and church.

Teen league and I built a float for parades. We took a big trailer and hung boughs around it, built an archway on it, covered it with pine boughs, and made a good sign reading Faith Lutheran Church. Then [we] usually built a log cabin out of log slabs and put a steeple on it with a cross, and took some of the girls from our teen league, dressed them in parkas and had them standing in front of the float waving to the people.

We started a basketball team, softball team, and a couples' bowling league which was very successful. I coached little league and served on the board of directors for it and was responsible for the canteen.

My favorite memories - I think of the impossible ones that you got to come to church. I think of Jim Pulton back in Winette, the cowboy. I had a man like that in Anchorage, Dick Wilson. I came to visit him and his wife. She was from Michigan from a Wisconsin Synod church. He had been confirmed there but that was it. When I came to visit them he walked into the other room (they were a young military family, he just got out of the military) and he said, "No, I want nothing to do with church; I don't trust preachers." I kept visiting them - I got their children involved in Sunday School and teen league. My children and their children got to be good friends; we got to be good friends. To this day, if he is driving by the church and he sees someone monkeying around in the church parking lot, he will drive in and check it out. The church has become one of the most important things in his life and life of his family. He got his parents who were much older to come to church, they both died Christians. He sees to it that his grandchildren are in the church. He has become a wealthy businessman in the barricade business. He builds road signs and will do anything for the church. I think back to the first time I saw him and he said, "No I don't want anything to do with the church."

One of the things you will want to do is remember that the Lord is always with you. Sometimes the first time you call on someone, it looks impossible but the Lord has different things in mind and he certainly did in the interests of these two men.

I remember helping Dick and Marie Wilson when they first started out in the barricade business. They were very poor, just got out of the service, and had children, also. He didn't have a job and lived in a little trailer house. He worked for this barricade business; the owner died and they took it over. They called me to help put up and take down barricades for Fur Rendezvous events. I was happy to do so; they didn't have the money to hire anybody.

While we were building the church, we had a young couple in the military from Cedarburg, Wisconsin - Gary and Elaine Hostetler. They were in Anchorage during the tour of service, Elaine became pregnant and then gave birth to a baby just as the church was completed. They asked if I would baptize the baby. We had a special service that Sunday evening. The next morning he called me and said, "My baby is dead." I said, "Call the paramedics and I'll be right down." The baby had died in his sleep. An autopsy was performed and the baby was found to have a bent esophagus. They have had other children since then and we are very happy that this first child is in heaven.

The Lord used Faith congregation as the base for starting other churches in the vast mission field of Alaska. The zeal that Dave had in Montana for starting churches continued in Alaska. Pastor Zietlow had a part in starting all eight Wisconsin Synod churches there. Jim Perham talks about how Pastor Zietlow began to do this:

On his own, Dave decided that he was going to Fairbanks to start a church up there. He got on an airplane and flew up there. He would stay for 2 or 3 days and then come back. He kept doing that - he had a name or two to start with. The group began to grow and would get to the point where they had expectations of regular services. Dave would then go to the mission board and get mission approval. In Eagle River, we bought a trailer and had services in

there until a church was built. The mission board finally came out and told Dave to stop because they did not have all the resources to respond to the missions he was starting. Every 12 to 15 months another mission in Alaska would ask the Synod for money and a pastor. Faith had vicars over the years that did alot of this mission work also. The Synod said we would have to stop, and if we wanted to start anymore we would have to support them. That is how the church in Kenai was started. It was our daughter congregation for 3 years. We helped them with the building of the church and finally we convinced Synod to take them.

Fairbanks was the first church to call a full time minister in 1975. Eagle River called a minister in 1976, Sitka in 1978, South Anchorage in 1983, Wasilla in 1983, Kenai in 1984, and Juneau in 1991. Pastor Zietlow comments on the starting of these other churches:

Kenai was the daughter congregation for about 2 years and then the Anchorage congregation would get me a vicar every year to help out with the missions we had in Wasilla and Kenai. The vicar was mainly down here in Kenai. Finally, we had to find a place for the vicar to live and eventually [the church] would get a minister so the congregation in Kenai asked the synod to grant them mission status. They agreed. Synod bought land and we built a parsonage and chapel. Kenai became the fourth church in Alaska.

At this time also we were looking at land in Sitka [so we could] build a church. Since this was as close to Seattle as Anchorage, men from Seattle would come up and hold services. Ralph Baur was head of mission board and he was really instrumental in getting the Sitka congregation going. When it was time to build a parsonage we bought a house and land near it where we built a church. I went down and did all the electrical work on the church as I had done on all the other churches in Alaska. I had a member who let us use their carpet store in Wasilla and carpeted Sitka as well as all the other churches in Alaska. Her name was Karen Paulson.

After we got the Sitka congregation going, the Wasilla church was big enough so that they could call their own pastor. They had a vicar previously. A pastor was called, land bought and parsonage and church built.

The next place to start was south Anchorage. We should have started earlier. My thought is that there would be a church in each of the four corners of Anchorage and Faith would be the educational institution for the other four churches. We started a church in South Anchorage and bought land for a church in Southwest Anchorage. I don't know if that church will ever get built [in SW Anchorage]; it's up to the men who are in that area now to work on that. The church in S. Anchorage was a group of people from Faith who lived in that area. Services started in the public school and land was bought, parsonage and church built, and pastor was called.

Our last mission is in Juneau and it was started by a nucleus from Faith congregation and incidentally the two main people in that congregation were people I had in my congregation in Montana. We used the room in the airport for services; I would fly down on Sunday night, stay overnight, have classes, make calls on Monday and come back Monday night. We bought land and pastor bought his own parsonage who happens to be my son Hans. And now we have built a church and they will be dedicating it the end of February of 1994.

At the same time Pastor Zietlow was starting the church in Fairbanks, Faith church in Anchorage voted to start an elementary grade school. In May of 1975, Lance Hartzell, a graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, was called to be the principal and lone teacher of the school. Lance Hartzell comments:

I received the call to Anchorage in 1975. Pastor Zietlow was busy with the church and business. The church was small with about 110 members. They were an eager congregation, willing to grow, wanted to succeed, and wanted the Lord to bless them even though alot of them were new converts. They were not the typical

third or fourth generation Lutherans. Somehow the zeal that they showed followed their first love. They voted unanimously that they wanted a school. The school started in the fall of 1975 with 16 kids and we held classes in the basement of the church. The church added on three more classrooms and the school moved into them in December of 1976. Pastor Zietlow did 60 - 70 percent of the work on the classrooms. He was the general contractor; he was the mover and the shaker. He didn't ask a lot of questions and just did it. His attitude was "don't ask, just do it." There really wasn't much planning or discussion about the addition; the congregation told him that they trusted his judgment. The people really didn't have a lot of spare time and they appreciated that they didn't have to worry about it; just do it. That was the thinking in the congregation, "Don't ask because that takes too much time; just do it." That is not the way it is in the rest of the WELS - to do a building addition you must go through the proper channels and everybody says what they think should be done. It wasn't like that way at all in Anchorage. They told him, "Whatever you think is fine is fine with us." It was the attitude of the old pioneer log cabin raising; everybody just got together and worked on it. You worked together and when you saw something that needed to be done you just did it.

[Pastor Zietlow] was very supportive of the school and he was the one who got it started. He got people excited about it to support it also. When I got there he turned it over to me. My responsibility was the school. He was around there encouraging but never meddling. He was glad to let me run the school and let me take credit if something worked well or take responsibility if something didn't.

Dave Zietlow appreciated that the Lord sent a talented couple in Lance and Annette Hartzell to Anchorage:

My first teacher was Lance Hartzell and his wife was Annette, who was a teacher but stopped when they were married. After he taught here for a year, the congregation asked her to teach

a class of kids because the school had grown so fast. Lance was a great asset to the start of our school and the continuation of our school. He was a gifted teacher, good choir director; his wife was an excellent organist and a great benefit to our school.

One part of ministry that Pastor Zietlow enjoyed thoroughly was Bible camp. He had been a part of summer Bible camps in Montana and he wanted to continue having them in Alaska. He explains:

I wanted to have Bible Camp. In 1969, I had quite a group of teenagers, about 16 or 18. I got together some big army tents and made one for the boys and one for the girls. We went to the Buffalo Mine area, near Palmer. We set up the tents near a road or stream and there we had Bible camp. The public school teachers in the congregation helped me; it was in the summer time. It was one week; we fished in the stream, cooked on gas stoves, slept in sleeping bags in the tents, washed with water from the creek (heated it if we had the inclination), brushed our teeth in the creek, used outdoor toilets, and had a tremendous Bible camp. On Sunday, I had a service in the morning in Anchorage and another one in the afternoon and just about everyone in the congregation came out to worship. We had a picnic afterwards and it was very successful thing.

The next year we did the same thing only this time it rained and rained and rained and rained. People would come up at night and ask the children if they wanted to come home - teens and grade school children - and they would say no we want to stay at Bible camp because we were having too much fun. I remember on the Thursday or Friday of that week that the rain got so bad that there was standing water in the tents and I had one tent that was a little bit high and dry and I took all the little girls in that tent. They slept around me and I kept pulling them up out of the water into the center of the tent all night long. That was enough for me so after Sunday service we went looking for land.

I knew a fellow who was a contractor and owned some lakefront property on a private lake and he sold it to me for a very

low price. I bought it - our congregation was still a mission and could not buy it - and then I got together with a man (whom I knew because I had wired his first house) and said that I had bought land and I wanted him to build some cabins on it. I bought the lumber, he built the cabins, and he could use the cabins anytime he wanted during the year except the Bible camp weeks. We got a bulldozer in there and we set a pump down in the lake and pumped water into barrels for flush toilets. We used a generator for electricity. We built another little cabin in which we cooked over gas stoves, and had meals for Bible camp and now we were under cover. [1971 was the first year we used Camp Luther.]

We had 2 weeks, one for grade school and one for teenagers. It was followed up by a big church service at the lake. The lake was about 40 acres, big enough to water ski on. We had fun swimming in the lake, water skiing, handicraft, Bible study, and the camp grew and grew until now we have a well, hot and cold running water, showers, large dining halls with electric stoves, big recreational area, volleyball court, more cabins for kids to stay in and we bought more land. When I retired I deeded all the property over to Faith Lutheran Church so now it is owned by the congregation and is run by all the Alaskan congregations. They send their kids to Bible camp there every summer, about 60-70 in the camp week. The camp is also used for retreats or for private individuals as they wish. This was all possible through finances from Safeway Electric and some of the other things I did along the way.

During their time in Alaska, Dave and Carol's family matured and started to go their own way. One of the rules of the Zietlow household was that all the children had to go to a Wisconsin Synod high school and college. Carrie, the oldest, graduated from DMLC and is married to Dave Niemi, who is a principal in Milwaukee. Peter went on to become a minister and now is a pastor in Florida. Hans went on to become a minister and is a pastor in Juneau, Alaska. Todd went three years to Northwestern

College and now is a lead electrician for the family business, Safeway Electric Company. Tom graduated from Northwestern College, then went to the University of Fairbanks and is now an electrical engineer for Safeway Electric Company. Jane went to DMLC and married another student, Paul Burow, who is now an electrician for the family business. JP, the youngest, is currently a senior at Northwestern College.

Carol was the housewife, secretary, and accountant that worked behind the scenes. Lance Hartzell talks about Carol Zietlow:

Carol helped the most by taking care of [Dave]. She took care of the kids so that was a full time job for her. She didn't work outside the home. She helped somewhat with the electrical business. She just took care of everything. She tried to keep him safe. He wanted an airplane and she said no. Finally, she said, "it is either me or the plane." She was ideal for the Anchorage church. She was gracious, outgoing, and always had company. Any time you went to the Zietlow's they had company. It was not an imposition to come in when they had company. It was, "Come on in the party just started." They had people up there from the lower 48, friends, neighbors, and church members. I'm sure Carol was very busy just keeping the kids in line and looking after the house. The parsonage was the meeting place. She was independent, too. She didn't need alot of close friends and that is important in a mission area. There you can see the Lord's hand in putting them there. Being out on the frontier, there just wasn't alot of companionship.

Alaska was a good place to raise a family according to Pastor Zietlow:

Our family life in Alaska was good; all kids learned to ride snowmachines, ski, toboggan, ride motorcycles, do all kinds of outdoor sports, hunt, fish. They all with the exception of JP have shot a moose. It was a good place to raise a family; Todd, Tom, and Jane and their families live here.

Other fond memories are hunting and fishing, taking my boys hunting and fishing and seeing them get their trophies. It is a

hobby that we have enjoyed very much.

Peter talks about his father, the family man:

His Lord Jesus was first in his life, then came his family, then his work and people. He found time for us as kids, a lot of times doing stuff with the congregation like Bible camp, canoe trips, or potluck dinners.

He loves the outdoors. He loves to breathe the cold, crisp Alaskan air when he is 10,000 feet up on a mountain with an odd six in his hand and binoculars around his neck. Whether it was back in Montana fishing on the reservoir or in Alaska fishing and hunting I guess that is where we spent the most time with Dad, prime time when you are an impressionable son or daughter. There was the thrill of the hunt, and sure we shot our share, but the most fun was just being with Dad.

I remember one time we were on the Kenai River looking for good spots to fish for Red Salmon. We were driving down in the boat in a little runabout and Dad was behind the wheel. Watch out! Hans and I were sitting on the back corner of this little boat with our poles and suddenly Dad does a little buttonhook without warning and I go head over heels into the icy Kenai River. I had a big parka on and was hanging on to my fishing pole. The next thing I know I have my head above water, my fishing pole around my neck, and I was swimming up stream like a King Salmon! I looked up and there is the boat full of boys and Dad laughing their fool heads off as I'm sinking into the cold Kenai River. It took about a minute, it seems longer, for them to fish me out with the big fishnet.

Here is a hunting story. A couple years ago we were on Boulder Creek hunting for moose or caribou and hadn't shot anything. This is a little summary of Dad's life: he knew not fear. The day before he stumbled upon a bear cache, where a bear had killed animals and then buried them to rot and then come back later to eat them. The next day when we were coming down the same riverbed, Dad said, "Hey, come over here I want to show you

this bear cache." And Hans, Tom, and I were thinking about Todd's encounter with a bear a year ago when he was charged and had to shoot it point blank. We entered this bear cache apprehensively but not Dad. No, he's whistling and showing us all the different animals the bear had killed - the moose, caribou, the half-eaten black bear. Meanwhile Hans, Tom, and I are doing 360's like Arnold Schwarzenegger or Sylvester Stallone ready to shoot our guns. Dad had his gun over his shoulder, whistling, and was as happy as could be. I guess that might be the epitome of Dave Zietlow: he knew no fear.

Carrie talks about her father from a daughter's point of view:

He had a big influence on me going to DMLC. He wanted us all to go to Lutheran schools and colleges. I had four brothers and sometimes I was overwhelmed by the boys. I was pretty quiet and that is somewhat like my dad. My dad never said anything bad about people and I'm like that now, too. He wasn't a gossip at all. I got my sense of humor from him. He would get up early in the morning and would be singing in the kitchen so loud that the whole house would wake up. He had little sayings, "Let's walk In the way that Enoch trod", and when snowmachining, "I'm going up on the mountain to talk to God." He would say to us kids, "The apple doesn't fall very far from the tree," and that was his way of patting us on the back, telling us we did a good job. Dad would get close to you by doing little things with you, not really by having deep conversations. He didn't have a father growing up or sisters; I think he may have had a harder time relating to us daughters. He was funny and enjoyed embarrassing us kids in funny ways. He had a love for the beautiful things and the outdoors that he gave to all of us kids. But most of all, he gave us a love for the Lord. He was the perfect man to go to Montana and Alaska. We were blessed to go to those places.

Lance Hartzell talks about the friend he had in Pastor Zietlow:

[Dave] was a big operator in the way that he didn't like to

do anything by himself. If he was going to go do something, he would invite everybody he knew to go along with him. Usually, there was a big party of people to go on hunting and fishing trips; [we would] float down the river on the rafts, fish, and set up camp. One time fishing he just couldn't sleep and he wanted to get going - there were about twenty of us on that trip - so he discharged his 12 gauge shotgun right outside the tent about three times to wake everybody up. It was at about 4:30 AM.

You could just say that he was a fisherman in several different respects. He was a good fisherman, he liked to fish, he knew what the fish were thinking. When I first got [to Alaska] he took me fishing down in Kenai. What a fun trip that was. When you go down there for the first time and see those mountains and Turnagain pass . . . I still remember one of the things he said. I asked him why the salmon jump when they return to spawn. It was a good question I found out later because nobody really knows why they jump. But the answer that he gave me was that they were so glad to be coming home. He was a fisher of men. The Lord made him a fisher of men. He was as good at doing that as he was fishing.

One can see that Pastor Zietlow's years as pastor in Anchorage were busy and fruitful. The Lord blessed him and the congregations in Alaska. After 24 years as pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, Dave decided to retire, and in December of 1991 at the age of 59 he did. Carrie Zietlow gives her insights into the reasons her father retired:

One time when he was preaching he had a blackout, where he just lost his place and it was a big one. The congregation insisted he go to a doctor. They didn't find out what caused the blackouts but they did find intestinal cancer. The blackouts could have been from a horse kicking him in the head or a horse shoe when he was younger. He would get real nervous before he preached, and sometimes blackout. He hasn't preached in his retirement partly because he doesn't want to blackout. Also,

toward the end there was the same nucleus of people but a lot of younger people trying different things, and when you get older you have troubles relating to the younger generation. He didn't understand why he had to change things.

Peter Zietlow comments further:

I think when Dad started his ministry he liked to do things whether people were there to help him or not. He was there to build the church and do the work primarily himself. But as the church grew, he realized he couldn't do it all himself and began to rely more and more on the other leaders of the church. My Dad is stubborn and it was a change for him to listen to other's ideas and wait before doing something.

It is kind of neat for me to see him in retirement. When he ^{was} working for the church and the business he was a busy man and you could tell that some things made him stressed. There was alot of responsibility; as a pastor you get stressed enough without having a whole electrical company, too. Now in retirement he has time to see the aspen leaves tittering and to straighten out his fishing tackle which I don't think was ever straight while he was working. Now he has time to sit there and drink his draft beer and ask Mom to bring him some more mixed nuts.

Dave himself says the years and also the cancer began to take its toll:

I just did not have the zeal anymore or willingness to do the work I had done in any part of my life whether it was church work or electrical work or playing around. After I had my operation for colon cancer, it just kind of took the zest out of me. I tried to continue for about 6 months or a little longer and then asked the congregation to grant me a peaceful retirement and call another pastor. I would stay there until the new pastor arrived. That was done and the congregation called pastor Jim Oldfield who is the Mission Board chairman, and he is a good man and carrying on the work of the church close to my heart and the way it should be done. I thank the Lord that He has led him to take that call.

Dave Zietlow had a good effect on numerous people throughout his lifetime. God in his infinite wisdom is to be thanked and praised for giving Pastor Zietlow the abilities to shepherd His flocks and for using him to reach out to the lost with the saving gospel message. The people close to him talked about the impact that Dave has had on their lives and what young ministers can learn from his ministry. Their quotes are listed below.

Carrie Zietlow:

Be yourself and meet people on their level. Dad wasn't into wearing suits that much. Mr. Wilson had admiration for him as a man. Have a supportive wife. He did a lot with his kids, and the kids of the congregation. He had an active teen league, canoe trips, and Bible camps.

Peter Zietlow:

The best encouragement I got was his example, seeing the joys and disappointments that he experienced as a pastor. I saw it actually could be fun and rewarding and there is no more important job this side of heaven. You can spend time with your family and your church family. That had the most impact on me becoming a pastor, seeing the joy in my father's eyes.

I learned to rub elbows with people, shut your mouth so you can open your ears, and hear what people are saying and what they are feeling. Patience, always being there active on work days so you can lead people by your example. Dad did that well. His ministry started with his own relationship with his Savior which was a deep one. Because of that he could share that Savior with others.

Be people oriented; by the time you get done with school you know how to translate Greek and Hebrew and you know your doctrines backwards and forwards but your people don't. Your people are simple people with simple joys and simple sorrows and I think you need to come down off your high horse and rub elbows

with people. Get out of your office, spend as little time in your office as you can and as much time with your people whether in their homes or if they allow at their work. I am not suggesting that everybody start an electrical business to evangelize the different contractors and subcontractors in town but we can get out more. Look beyond your own church. We had just one church ^{where} we first got to Anchorage and now there are many more. We can look to needs of not only our church but other churches and world missions. Enjoy your ministry. There are so many pastors that are getting burned out and are losing their focus. The Apostle Paul said he found joy in spreading the gospel. I wonder how pastors really do that. We need to do that more. When we pick up the paycheck, that is just the icing on the cake. The real cake is just the real joy you have in sharing your Savior with your church family and people who are outside your walls. That is the joy I saw in my dad's ministry that the young guys can take to heart, too.

Jim Perham, one of the original members of Faith Lutheran Church in Anchorage:

You don't need to be a zealot but you do need to be confident in what you are doing and to communicate that confidence to the people you rub shoulders with inside and outside the church. Reflect a fairness to people. He communicated by his life. He spoke in the plural. He never spoke down to anybody. In a sermon, he would say "we" or "us" or "I" am a sinner. He wasn't above the people. One example that has stuck with me over the years is that church is like a gas station. You can only go so far in a car before you have to go into a gas station to get refilled. That is what you are doing in church; you are filling yourself with the Holy Spirit every Sunday.

When I think of Dave Zietlow I think of self-reliance of a man totally confident in his abilities. He was unafraid to step out and do things, building a project, hunting, or reaching out with the gospel. He had the confidence to step out, the same confidence

that other people in this world have who make a lot of money and are successful. He had that strength in the Lord to do the same with the gospel. That set him apart. Seldom did I see him downhearted, and I never saw him looking back.

Lance Hartzell, the first principal and teacher of Faith Lutheran School in Anchorage:

I think the thing that I learned the most from Pastor Zietlow was to be optimistic. When I came to Anchorage, I was quite new to teaching for one thing and quite a young man, too. I was not confident particularly in what I could do or what the Lord could do. Being around him I caught the constant optimism that stemmed from a Christian faith. It's the way we should be when you think about it. There is no room for pessimism in a Christian's life. Pastor Zietlow always emphasized the positive and that rubbed off on me while working with him for thirteen years, and I am truly grateful for that. We worked together, we played together, we fought the fight of Christian soldiers together and when you're in the army with somebody under fire you get particularly close to them. We worked together and played together and nearly died together doing both.

What can others learn? They can learn to be more optimistic and not let pessimism get in the way of progress. We can learn to take the bull by the horns and just do it. Don't be afraid to go ahead and just do it because in the ministry we are never alone; the Lord is always there with us.

One can say that God matched Pastor Zietlow perfectly with the Montana and Alaskan mission fields. Jim Perham speaks about that match:

Dave could have been a Donald Trump. He would have been a multi - millionaire. He had that tenacity, that drive, and all those things that identify one of those men. But Dave wasn't trying to enhance his own life. He was in the business of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord used Dave very effectively. He was the agent that

was most responsible for the WELS in Alaska. We give thanks to the Lord for sending him here.

In conclusion I will let Pastor Zietlow himself talk about his ministry. In one short paragraph he sums up his whole life and finishes this paper:

I guess what I am trying to say is that we should be all things to all people so that we can gain a few for the Lord. This working to get people to come to church and to get to know Jesus is fun and it really isn't work. He is the one who makes it all possible. He is the one who grants the increase. He is the one who gives you the promise, "I will be with you all the way." and "Whatsoever you do to these little ones, you do to me." "Whatsoever a man soeth, so shall he reap." Yes, and he also says to you and me, "My word shall not return unto me void." Yes sir, Nate, with the Lord by our side we've got the world by the tail.

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