

A CRITICAL/HISTORICAL VIEW OF THE USE OF VICARS IN BEGINNING
WELS CHURCHES IN ALASKA

For Prof. Edward C. Fredrich

By Nathan Radtke

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library
11831 N. Seminary Drive. 65W
Mequon, Wisconsin

Senior Church History

March 31, 1982

The motivation to write this paper was generated by a love for Alaska and its missions which I was privileged to become acquainted with while vicaring in Kenai, Ak. The body of this paper was composed with the help of comments from all four of the former vicars who served in Alaska, from Rev. Frey, the district Pres., from Rev. Zietlow who was the supervising pastor for all four vicars, and from pastors now serving those congregations who began with vicars. May the Lord bless this paper for the benefit of such wonderful endeavors.

WELS VICARS IN ALASKA

The history of church growth of WELS in Alaska displays a rather singular trend in the establishment of congregations. Of the five WELS congregations now in Alaska, three were aided in the initial stages by the use of a vicar serving them although he was at some distance from his bishop, Rev. Zietlow. This high percentage is not just a coincidence nor a fluke but rather, it is a direct reflection of a need particular to Alaska's vast expanse. The great distances between towns, the need for manpower on location, and the expenses involved will continue to be with us for some time. ~~Since the use~~ Since the use of vicars to serve these new churches is the easiest way for our church to meet those needs adequately, we hope that this practice will continue. Therefore, this paper is written to encourage, expand, and improve the practice of using vicars in our beginning churches.

Alaska was not the first location to employ the use of a vicar to serve at a distance from his bishop but it was the first to do so in the Pacific Northwest District of our synod. Rev. Frey, the district Pres., reported that previously only summer vicars had been used for survey work in that district. But then, the need arose as Rev. Zietlow in Anchorage, was called upon to do exploratory work in Fairbanks, Ak., some 400 miles away. Due to the distance and his own work load in Anchorage, Rev. Zietlow initiated the request for a vicar to

serve Fairbanks during the summer of 1973. This request was channeled through the mission board and granted. The purpose for this vicar, of course, was to have a man on location who could do more intensive work than what Rev. Zietlow could provide having to travel 800 miles for one round trip!

Keith Kuschel, presently pastor of Christ Redeemer church in Trumbull, Connecticut, was called to be that summer vicar for Fairbanks in 1973. His duties were to preach every week, hold a catechism class for a military family on their base, and also to conduct a Bible Information Course for LC-MS unchurched people. No intense canvass work was done as there would be no chance of follow-up after his departure in August. During his three months of vicaring, Fairbanks gathered for their first service, continued with regular weekly services, and received three families into membership by way of the instruction course.

The second such opportunity for this kind of vicar work came in 1975. Mark Braun, presently pastor at Grace congregation in St. Joseph, MI, served as a summer vicar in the Wassila/ Eagle River area. That summer his specific duties were to do exploratory and survey work. By spring of 1976, this group had reached mission status and the mission board called for a seminary graduate. However, the position was not filled due to a lack of men. Therefore, they assigned a full year vicar to serve Eagle River and that vicar turned out to be a familiar face in the person of Mark Braun.

During this second trip to Alaska, Mark Braun served the members of Peace Lutheran Church in Eagle River from Sept. 1976 through July 1977. His duties at this new mission were to preach every Sunday with one Sunday out of three finding him in Anchorage while Rev. Zietlow preached at Eagle River. He also carried on usual mission outreach duties and was given opportunity to be involved with Anchorage's youth group, Bible Camp, Ladies Guild, and the adult information class. As the first full year vicar in Alaska, these latter opportunities helped to round out his "practicle experience in church work" as is designated in the Purpose and Policies of our Vicarship Program recorded in The Shepherd Under Christ, Appendix E, page 384.

During Vicar Braun's labors in Alaska, the mission in Eagle River remained stable even though two of the original families moved out of the area. This was due to two adult confirmations and the reactivation of a rather lax couple. At the end of the year, Eagle River received its first full-time resident minister in the person of Rev. Thomas Spiegelberg.

The next WELS mission was opened in Sitka, Alaska. This mission, however, did not need the use of a vicar at any time and is the only other WELS church in Alaska to do so other than the mother church in Anchorage. But shortly after Sitka received its first resident minister, another group of people in the Kenai-Soldotna area were interested in becoming a WELS mission. This small group contacted Rev. Zietlow in Anchorage and eventually became a daughter congregation. Kenai and Soldotna are 150 miles away from Anchorage via two mountain passes and several

avalanche areas. This distance did not allow for weekly visits by Rev. Zietlow and so, it was decided that Faith congregation in Anchorage would call a vicar who would live in Kenai to serve these people more intensively.

Paul Ibisch, presently pastor of Zoar Lutheran Church in Detroit, MI., served as that vicar from June 1979 to August 1980 - thereby serving more than the usual one year term. The duties Vicar Ibisch fulfilled were doing exploratory work and holding regular Sunday worship in Kenai. He also held Sunday School classes, Bible classes, and conducted a land search. It was also established that every other Sunday Rev. Zietlow and Vicar Ibisch exchanged pulpits. (A handy commuter air service facilitated this practice greatly.) This kept Rev. Zietlow in contact with the daughter congregation as they filed for corporation papers, adopted a constitution, and applied for membership in the WELS. It also cut the sermon writing load in half and allowed for more outreach effort.

During his vicarship, Paul Ibisch saw this flock grow from 8 souls with 6 communicants to 33 souls with 20 communicants. He also witnessed its incorporation and acceptance into the WELS. Since Grace congregation in Kenai was as yet too small for a full-time resident minister, it was decided that another vicar should be called. This time the congregation in Kenai itself called a vicar to serve under the supervision of its pastor, Rev. Zietlow.

That next vicar was Nathan Radtke, presently a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary busily writing this paper in hope

of someday being the pastor of (?) . The author of this paper arrived in Kenai on August 21, 1980 and served until July 19, 1981. His duties were the same as Vicar Paul Ibisch's with the addition of two confirmation classes and two adult information courses. During his vicarship, a women's group was organized, a mobile home was donated to become the first parsonage, and that first call for a resident minister was filled by seminary graduate Carl Busse. At the time of Rev. Busse's installation, Grace Lutheran Church in Kenai had approximately 50 baptized souls and 30 communicant members.

This brief history of vicarships in Alaska then, serves as a background upon which we will paint a more complete picture of this phenomenon. We may be able to shade in a few more details by considering this situation from a distance. What are the 'pros' and 'cons' of using vicars to serve beginning congregations as far as the synod is concerned?

Rev. Frey, Pres. of the Pacific Northwest District, responded to a questionnaire which asked, "Were vicars the best way to get these churches going or were they used as a last resort?" His answer is, "Under the circumstances, they were the best way. If we had access to a full time mission developer, that would be the preferred way to go." Rev. Frey pointed out the lack of experience and demand for work of a nature the vicar isn't prepared for as his reasons why the vicar is less desirable. The practical aspect of that observation is that each vicar will get off to a slow start as he must first learn the ropes of mission work himself and then he may begin doing some intense

work in the field.

On the other hand, Rev. Frey did say that it was the best way to go under those circumstances. His reasons for that conclusion included the fact that it relieved the supervising pastor of the time consuming work of canvassing and traveling especially when the mission is a great distance from his home. He also pointed to a vicar's great enthusiasm in doing mission work and the fact that he may provide fresh ideas to the methods of outreach. Rev. Zietlow added depth to that statement by pointing out how a vicar has the spirit of really trying to make a success of his call - after all, it's his first one!

Rev. Zietlow naturally has had more close relations with these vicars and their work and so, we consider his comments well worth our attention. In pointing out the 'pros' and 'cons' of using vicars for these beginning congregations, Rev. Zietlow gave no 'cons'! Rather, "I am all for the use of vicars. It is an inexpensive way to go ... money always plays a great part, sad to say, in starting a new mission." He also pointed out that the vicar usually being single "had little else to do but work. It was easy to move them here and back, easy to set up housekeeping." Along with Rev. Frey, Rev. Zietlow included the vicar's zeal as a big plus. As far as the vicar's lack of experience, Rev. Zietlow states from his experience that "vicars generally have abilities that, although not always tried previously, show forth and they do a good job." Summing up Rev. Zietlow's comments on this subject, he says, "I think

from experience that I have had, that this is the best way to go." And again, Rev. Frey agrees when he says, "The fact that missions are now established and have permanent manpower can only indicate that the desired results were achieved."

This leads us to consider how the individual churches were affected by such vicarships. The reports I received both from Rev. Norbert Meier and Rev. Carl Busse, pastors in Fairbanks and Kenai respectively, began by saying that the congregations were very grateful. "They were gratified at the attention given Fairbanks," says Rev. Meier, "and they were given hope that a mission might actually be started here." Rev. Busse remarked that the people in Kenai were glad for getting started that much sooner and having the gospel brought to them on a regular weekly basis.

The congregation which this author served also found it easier on their budget as a daughter congregation because the housing was easier and salary lower. At the same time, Rev. Braun commented about the mission church he served by saying, "The mission has a greater awareness and appreciation for the home church in Milwaukee and the necessary work done by the money sent away in an envelope marked 'missions!'" The congregation also has the security of being guided by the supervising pastor in aspects of constitution, organization, finances, land and other things. They also have an excellent opportunity to see what is coming out of our seminaries while yet knowing that the continued doctrinal stance will be that of the older pastor whom they trust. To many people who have gone through

the trying times of religious decay in their midst, this is important. They know that what the seminary teaches will be reflected in its students and a good sign of future orthodoxy in this church body is a vicar who speaks the true Word in his preaching, teaching, and ordinary discussions.

Another aspect of that congregation-to-vicar relationship was reported by Rev. Ibisch as he wrote, "The zeal of a young man straight from the Seminary can be refreshing. To see someone young struggling to devote his life to the Lord is encouraging. The congregation is very supportive (always routing for you through good and bad sermons). They take a lot of responsibilities on themselves." Along the same line, Rev. Zietlow mentioned that the young congregations is sympathetic to mistakes the vicar might make and just say, "Well, he's only learning." Yet, he goes on to say, "They are old enough and schooled enough to hold their own in most company, command respect and are looked upon as almost the pastor. And why not, in a year, they will be."

The major drawback to this set up of vicarship all seemed to deal with time. Rev. Kuschel who was a summer vicar spoke of having no follow up calls because of the lack of time. The author himself found the one disappointing factor in returning to school was that the many contacts made with those whom you meet other than in church are all lost as the new man has different interests and will make different friends. (Perhaps the vicar feels deprived of the joy of carrying through with such a contact which could lead up to a mighty working of the Holy Ghost.)

The idea of losing contacts or opportunities to follow through with prospects found by a former worker was also noted by Rev. Meier. He said, "None of them eventually became members due mainly to the time lapse between his leaving and my coming." That time lapse was nearly a year and so, we could treat it as just one isolated spot but even so, it fell in line with comments of others and must be recognized as a problem.

One final situation which involves time and may be detrimental is that with a yearly turn over in men, the congregation becomes a little tired of meeting and entertaining new people all the time. As Rev. +bisch put it, "The vicar barely gets moved in, the people just get accustomed to him and then, he leaves and a new man comes." Or as Rev. Braun gave this insight, "It's kind-of a no-win situation; if the vicar's good and things go well, he has to leave in a year; if they go bad, it's the vicar's fault." These of course, are just possible feelings which may affect their attitude toward the situation or the synod, or whatever, but I don't think it is really a loss of member type factor. A worse situation would be for a no-win predicament for the vicar.

So, let's hear about the men who served those vicarships in order to see what their experiences brought them. I believe Rev. Frey was very accurate when he stated that such a vicarship is a valuable experience for the young man involved. That is what every vicarship should be as it was set up to be a part of his instruction.

For all of those who served as vicars in Alaska, this instruction came under the supervision of Rev. Zielrow. It is worth noting then, what his attitude toward the practical vicar training is. He said, "The more experience he has as a vicar, the better his future ministry will be." The great distances involved and the small amount of contact between bishop and vicar certainly set the stage for a lot of personal experience opportunities for the vicar. The vicar independently had to take care of his duties according to priority which also made him become time schedule conscious.

On occasion, the vicar even needed to take some initiative to enter a field of service new to himself. Such an example would be the starting of an adult information class or a week night Bible class due to a need that arose. Although the vicar was not assigned this duty, he took it upon himself because it was the natural reaction of the shepherd to his sheep's needs. In other vicarships this may have been seen as stepping out of line but in these vicarships, the vicar is more accountable to the owner of these sheep than to the older shepherd.

Rev. Ibisch commented on Rev. Zielrow's advice given to him at the outset of his vicarship this way, "He told me that much of the time I would be on my own while in the Kenai area since distance would make it difficult for him to check up on me. Instead, he told me that I had to answer to God for my labors. He is a much more demanding overseer of our work than any bishop. ... that thought that we work for God and for the

welfare of His children was the gem I prize the most."

This is not to leave the reader feeling that the vicar was a free-wheeling student out on the loose. The standing relationship of the bishop to the full-year vicars not only included altar exchange every other week or so, but also, hours of visit and discussion in person with the bishop. The additional advise given this author was, "If you have any problems or questions, be sure to give me a call anytime." As to the effectiveness of this arrangement, Rev. Braun states, "I felt I could always talk with him (bishop) and he would give me personal and frank answers."

The practical application of this set up usually found that things developed slowly enough so that the vicar could wait to discuss the situation in person with Rev. Zietlow on one of the week ends when they met. One such example which I would be qualified to describe took place in the fall of my vicarship in Kenai. The ladies of the church desired to organize a guild and asked me about it after a Sunday service. The preaching schedule had me slated for Anchorage the next Sunday and so, I discussed it with Rev. Zietlow at that time. He gave me advice, the "go ahead", and a model constitution of the ladies guild in his congregation. Upon return to Kenai, I set up a date for an organizing meeting and informed Rev. Zietlow so that he could preside at that meeting. Other instances required a short phone call such as when the Jehovah Witness organization called to see if we wanted the building they would soon be leaving. Having a vicar on the spot gave us this contact and possible

deal and yet it was handled by the experienced bishop through an advisory phone call.

This sort of responsibility laid upon a vicar brought various responses from the ex-vicars. Rev. Kuschel said, "You can grow with them (mission)." And again he comments in a positive way, "After Sem., I was assigned to a group just starting. I have taken one call since to another group just starting. That indicates that my vicar experience in such a situation was rewarding and through it, the Lord blessed me."

On the other hand, Rev. Braun mentioned his own desire for more regular accountability to the bishop for better assessment of his work. "I think the vicar has to be a self-motivator to a greater degree than 75% of the average Middler class coming out to vicar." This conscientious statement is a reminder that individual vicars have individual needs and it is a point well made. The difficulty, of course, arises in how the bishop, who has limited contact with these vicars, is to assess the man's strong points and weak points and then adjust the working set up accordingly.

Finally, I would like to reproduce for you the answers these men gave to the question, "What are the 'pros' of serving as a vicar in a beginning church?" I'm sure these answers will display a vast spectrum of positive results for the benefit of the vicar in such a situation.

Rev. Braun wrote, "Pro: you have to get on the streets; you have to learn how to verbalize the Christian faith to people who are not steeped in WELS orthodox terminology; you get a greater appreciation of how the things that can be taken

for granted later on have to be struggled for in the early stages; you get a greater appreciation for each individual soul won; you feel the tremendous acceptance and friendship with the nucleus and the mission as opposed to the cold institutionalism of "Oh, you're our 37th vicar!"

Along with Rev. Kuschel, I agree that you grow with the mission. You have the joy of confirming an adult or baptizing someone that you sought out. You aren't doing these things because they just happened to come up and you were allowed to do them. In other words, as a vicar in these type of situations, you taste the full joy of sharing the gospel and it inspires you on in His work more than any compliment from a bishop or church member ever could.

Rev. Ibisch aptly described this enlivening experience with these words, "It was the ultimate experience in preparing to administer to one of the Lord's congregations." Nothing else need be said.

To be very honest though, we all know that along with the good comes the bad. What were some of the draw backs for these vicars? One commented, "I got much encouragement but not a great deal of 'how to' mechanics of mission work." Perhaps the bishop knows that each disciple of Christ witnesses to the truth in his own way and wishes not to shackle such a person to another's methods, but as is common for any novice entering something new, it's a great encouragement to "think" you know how to do something! Besides that, some guidelines remove the fear of committing "dumb moves".

As to a general short coming of these vicarships, there are some intrinsic factors which eliminate involvement in all aspects of the ministry. Minimal organization and record keeping are required. These are very small congregations with an average aged member being around 23 years old. This means no shut-in calls, no funerals, and only a slight chance of having a sick call. The missions also had no youth groups but Faith congregation in Anchorage invited the vicar to join in on their youth outings and summer Bible Camp.

These are some aspects of ministerial responsibility which are not seen by vicars in mission churches. That is not to say that other vicarships are much better. After all, what vicarship offers all the experiences possible for a future minister? A difference in experiences on the part of vicars will be noticeable no matter which group of vicars you get together.

What I can feel confident to say is that such a vicar year spent in an Alaskan mission congregation instills a great desire and love for the small-sized church. Quite interestingly, Rev. Kuschel put it this way, "Unless you have had contact at your home or in another way with a large church, you might be unwilling to try one later." If that is a bad outcome of this type of vicar situation, then, I guess we will accept it as a 'con' !.

An important part of the vicar year is, of course, the conducting of worship services. Undoubtedly, the vicars in Alaska had plenty of opportunity to enjoy that aspect of the ministry. However, the desire to improve one's sermon work

has mixed opportunities. One ex-vicar appreciated the high number of times he wrote sermons as it produced greater ease with more practice. Another ex-vicar commented how he desired more time for the writing of each individual sermon. In addition to the multitude of sermons and the limited time for each, there also is the disadvantage of not being able to stroll over to the bishop's for some homiletical helps. Closely connected to this is the lack of opportunities to hear other preachers present God's Word in a tried and tested manner. The wisdom of the seminary faculty shows through here as the vicar year is strategically placed before the one final year of instruction where all the accumulated questions may be answered.

At this point of our paper, having looked at the 'pros' and 'cons' of such vicarships, we have to evaluate the program. Is there a future for this use of vicars? Yes, indeed there is. Although several pointed out the preference for an experienced man or a fully time resident minister to be assigned to these missions, nevertheless, district Pres. Frey, Rev. Zietlow, all the ex-vicars of Alaska, and even the pastors now serving those congregations started with the aid of vicars reacted positively to the idea of a continued use of this type of vicar set up. This positive attitude is also reflected in the fact that this summer two men serving as summer vicars will be spending several weeks in the Anchorage area helping to establish a second congregation in that city. Since this is a feasible way of serving our new missions in Alaska, and apparently it will be continued,

we endeavor to look to the future trying to improve, if possible, this type of vicarship.

Improving on this program I'm sure is not a new concept for in dealing with the responses that I received from my questionnaires, I did see a development in the use of the vicars. Rev. Kuschel who was the first vicar in Alaska who served as a summer vicar to Fairbanks in 1973, pointed out that one of the things he saw as a draw back was that he was limited in his outreach because there would be no follow up. This did not present itself as a problem to any of the other vicars as this became one of their main priorities in those congregations. Obviously, this change could well be due to the different situations in which they found themselves.

Rev. Braun mentioned that when he vicared in Eagle River, his preaching responsibilities found him preaching one out of three services in Anchorage. He also found that he would have liked more time to spend on the writing of each individual sermon. The two vicars that followed him by serving in Kenai, Alaska did not find that to be a problem as they preached every week but by alternating with Rev. Zietlow in Anchorage, they only needed to write one sermon every other week. This change in practice may well be reflected in Rev. Zietlow's own words as he says, "I feel vicars are qualified to preach every week and write a sermon every other week."

One final comment upon improvements as I have seen them developed by the history of these vicars deals with their involvement in church organizations. Due to the small size

and other factors already mentioned in this paper, the missions themselves offered very limited experience for vicars in such areas as sick calls, youth groups, and other organizations. Again the situation has a lot to do with how this is handled but Rev. Zietlow, as the bishop, made conscious efforts to involve the vicars from Kenai in at least one or two congregational meetings, a council meeting, and various organizations like the youth group or ladies guild. These experiences are obviously not as frequent as some vicars might experience but then, it probably shouldn't take more than once or twice to learn how to run such meetings.

With a full understanding that this type of vicarship is beneficial for both the missions and the vicars involved, we can yet allow room for improvement. The three areas of time, experience, and turn over of man power seem to be the areas of which need consideration.

In the area of time, we know that it is very beneficial to send a man to serve these people as soon as possible. But, then, we see the draw back of sending only summer vicars where there will be allapse of time between men. This problem is not unique as indeed it happens every time a congregation calls for a new pastor. However, in a mission congregation it seems much more critical. Even if the first vicar is followed by a second vicar, it is true as Rev. Zietlow said that these single men can travel up to Alaska more easily and set up house quicker and yet, as pointed out by others, they have a harder time getting going as they are inexperienced. And so, we heard Rev. Braun

mention that he wished there would be more 'how to' mechanics at the start of his vicarship.

Of course, related to these two is the problem of the turnover of manpower. Every year you have a new man coming into the same field having to spend the same amount of time becoming experienced before his work blossoms.

Rev. Zietlow gave this advice to anyone who would be in a similar bishop situation so that no additional time would be lost, "Don't make them fill out reports and waste time with paper work." He goes on then to address the problem of inexperience when he says, "I would encourage bishops to encourage the vicar to get out and at it as much as possible. Watch the vicar closely at first and try to correct any laziness or wrong impressions he might have - then let him have a freer reign. He's trained - he's got zeal to do the Lord's work - don't stifle it! The vicar just might show the old bishop a few tricks."

Those first two months in the field are the months which would prove least fruitful and most bewildering to the vicar. For more of the 'how to' mechanics and 'closer watch', an orientation would be very good. Rev. Spiegelberg included in his response, "I believe a very thorough orientation should be a prerequisite for a man coming to an area as unique as Alaska." He also included with that the idea that such orientation would be good for the ordained men as well. This need is not particular to vicars only. As Pastor Spiegelberg continued, he commented that "the man should work extremely closely with the experienced

man in the area - watching and learning how or how not to do things - 'Some things are still better caught than taught' holds especially true of the vicar situation." These comments by both Rev. Zietlow and Rev. Spiegelberg show a need that they recognize for the new vicar to be shown what he is inexperienced in, to be indoctrinated, and orientated in as best they can. The problem still arises that with the vicar being hundreds of miles away from the bishop, daily contact and direct supervision are quite often impossible. Therefore, as the one year vicar situation stands now, it would be very hard to put these ideals and theories into practice. So, is there the possibility of changing for the better?

There were a few ideas offered and forwarded by the men I contacted. One was a comment by Rev. Ibisch who said, "It do have one very strong suggestion." He goes on to say, "I was told that the vicar who would follow me would be in the area for about two weeks before I would leave. ...That way he wouldn't come into the situation cold (as I had) and wouldn't have to waste a lot of time getting to know the area and the members." And in conclusion, he says, "I would have advised him to spend as much time as he could in Kenai before the previous vicar left." Certainly this comment is worth considering because it takes care of our turn-over problem. It shows a continuance and there would have been a follow up on contacts. There would also have been some sort of orientation and the time element that it takes for a new vicar to get started would have been reduced.

Another idea would be that of having a two year vicar program. As Rev. Spiegelberg says, "The best learning situation for vicars would be team ministry with an experienced man." This could be incorporated in a situation where two vicars were used at the same location. The one vicar would be in his second year of service and the other in his first year. Theoretically this would work very well except when the congregations do not need the use of vicars for more than two or three years. When it would be impracticable. And the experience with Alaskan missions up to this point is that they have not used vicars for more than two years. But, if perhaps, they went into 'district vicars', using them in tandem, serving for two years, then they could be used in one area and then moved to another area still using the two year set up with one man in his first year and the other in his second year.

To obtain Rev. Zietlow's opinion on this topic, I addressed him with the question, "What would be the best situation for such missions given anything needed? (other than 150 new members!) He responded this way, "Money to immediately build a chapel, and other necessities such as mimeograph machine and advertizing, and maybe two vicars to work together - like the Mormons. The two would give aid and comfort and support to each other - the cost would not be so much greater - they could use the same apartment and car. They could share the duties of conducting services and preaching - I think calls ~~made~~ on prospects would be more convincing - with two together there would be less small talk and more of the Lord's business would be discussed."

From this we see that the future vicar ministry in Alaska as Rev. Zietlow sees it, will also take on a new shape. The two member vicarship would definitely eliminate some of the 'cons' listed earlier in this paper. It would cut down on the preaching load. It would give two sources of talent from which to draw in that situation. It would continue to be an inexpensive way to serve these Alaskan missions but would increase the effectiveness of such a ministry. If the alternating two year program would prove feasible, it would also cut off quite a bit of the 'breaking in' time. Then, I believe, there would be some greater fruits for the Lord's harvest.

The two year program would definitely be showing favor to the mission field rather than to the seminary student who would have to delay his graduation for another year. This would have to be approved by the seminary faculty and probably would ask for a special vicar call which would include a pre-call consultation, but, that is not unheard of. In fact, as it is, almost every year some vicar call or other requires a pre-call consultation. Try it and see!

These are some of the blessings, difficulties, and future hopes of the use of vicars in Alaskan missions. The realities of our synod's financial base, its man power, and its urgent pause will continue to produce mission fields that under the circumstances will best be served by vicars such as ministered in Alaska. May God continue to bless these efforts as he enlarges our knowledge and improves our methods and may this critical/historical view of the use of vicars in beginning WELS churches in Alaska be of some service to that end.