

COACHING ALASKA CHURCHES AND CHURCH LEADERS IN PURPOSE AND VALUES

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Plateaued or declining churches are increasingly prevalent throughout Alaska.

Attendance of indigenous people groups in Assemblies of God (AG) churches is declining rapidly. Five out of twelve AG Alaska Native American churches closed over the last three reporting periods, resulting in low minister morale and many tepid or paralyzed churches.

New pastors sent to the villages often have little or no intercultural training, are unprepared for the isolation, and often leave the state for more lucrative and less severe conditions. The Alaska District Council is developing programs to help in ministerial training, but there is nothing for the training of non-professional church leaders (laity). Cultural diversity, open hostility, long distances, and small populations repudiate simplistic solutions.

This project developed a seminar using a church coaching model to help congregations refocus by defining purpose, establishing core values, and sharpening vision. Surveys and interviews with presbyters, pastors, and church boards refined the seminar content and ensured “buy in” at every level of leadership. A representative sample of both bush and highway churches participated in the coaching process. Conducting the coaching seminars with the entire leadership of the church expedited the acceptance process and aided in maintaining momentum.

This project resulted in a continuing process recognized and endorsed by the Alaska District of the Assemblies of God. I will teach ongoing classes designed to help churches across the state become better at equipping, encouraging, and supporting each member and one another as leaders. Both the Alaska District and I will continue to closely track the success of this project with participating churches. The development of healthy, functional, and dynamic churches has resulted from this team building leadership model.