

## Session Four

### Alaska Subsistence Issues: Praying and Taking Action

#### Opening

Hymn *Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying* WOV 775

Other verses Lord, listen to your children sharing

Scripture Genesis 1:28-31

Prayer God of all time and all peoples, we seek your guidance in becoming present to Alaska Subsistence Issues. Open our eyes and ears and our minds and hearts to this matter. Native and non-Native, urban and rural, we come. Assist us each one in taking a place at this table for conversation. Give to us grace to pause, to reflect, to share, to be moved to action. In Christ's name we pray. Amen

**A Story** We open this class with a brief excerpt from a video tape of one Alaska Native group, the Athabaskan Indians on the Koyukuk River, that tells how their spirituality is integral to life. (Play the first ten minutes of *Make Prayers to the Ravens*, Volume One, "The Passage of Gifts".

The idea of coming together at one table as persons with great diversity of opinion is not a new idea. The Word of God shares this idea of gathering at one table. We all eat of the same bread of the Word of God. Today several people will share the bread of the Word of God by reading a Scripture verse. They will also read a question related to the verse about an Alaska Subsistence Issue. Please read the verse slowly and clearly for all to hear. Participants listen in an attitude of prayer reflecting on each verse and the question silently for two minutes. We take this time to allow the Spirit to bring us more fully into the Word of God as we prepare to brain storm about how to act as Lutherans on Alaska Subsistence Issues.

Matthew 23:23 *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.* How will we as Lutherans demonstrate justice, mercy, and faith related to Alaska Subsistence Issues?

Proverbs 11:14 *Where there is no guidance, a nation falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.* How will we as Lutherans offer guidance about Alaska subsistence?

Proverbs 16:1-3 *We gather our thoughts, but the Lord gives the right answer. People may be pure in their own eyes, but the Lord examines their motives. Commit your work to the Lord, and then your plans will succeed.* (NLT) What kind of answer(s) does God want from us, as Lutherans, in the matter of Alaska Subsistence Issues?

Deuteronomy 22:6 *If you come on a bird's nest, in any tree or on the ground, with fledglings or eggs, with the mother sitting on the fledglings or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young. Let the mother go, taking only the young for yourself, in order that it may go well for you and you may live long.* How do I honor this guidance in how I live?

II Corinthians 8:3 *For, as I [Paul] can testify, they gave according to their means, and even beyond their means...* What are the “means” or resources that I am to share?

### ***Two meaningful ideas to bring to the table***

“What a different world is possible if we came to the subsistence issue as scientist and Alaska Native seeking the means to survive and thrive in our world, in Alaska specifically.” David Hulen, city editor, the Anchorage Daily News from a series of five articles on *The Whale and the Supercomputer*, April 25, 2004.

“Among Inupiat, as among Northern hunters in general, hunting is a sacred act. Animals give themselves up to men whose wives are generous and skillful; it is also the man’s responsibility to treat the animal properly, but it is the woman to whom the animal comes” (Bodenhorn, p. 61).

### ***Developing ways to take action on Alaska Subsistence Issues as persons, as congregations, and as a synod gathered with others at the table.***

Alaska Subsistence Issues are related to Alaska Native culture and survival; Alaskans living a subsistence life style; land use and its regulation by Alaska Native regional corporations, state agencies, and the federal government; wildlife (animals, migratory birds, fish, and marine life) management by state, federal, international authorities, Native corporations, village councils, and tribal government; economic planning and welfare issues; energy use and development; environmental impact; population planning; and educational choices. This is a daunting list that also may be viewed as one offering many opportunities. So how might we as individuals and Lutherans in congregations and as a synod take action?

Every decision has its consequences. The answer to every question as we shared the Word of God today and answered a question matters. In making choices and decisions we begin a path of action through which God can have an impact. There are four pathways to changing our connection with subsistence issues: building relationships, increasing knowledge, activities, and strategies. The question session today will be to brain storm ideas for changing our personal and church relationship with the subsistence issue.

Building relationships

Increasing knowledge

Activities

Strategies

***A verse of Scripture and question for the week*** Proverbs 3:13 *Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding.* What is wisdom and understanding in how to act as persons and congregations related to subsistence?

1. In community by building relationships with
  - An Alaskan Native Lutheran church
  - Other ecumenical groups dealing with subsistence
2. Through knowledge by
  - Adult education class on *Talking about Tough Social Issues* (An ELCA pamphlet)
  - Study of *The Small Catechism in a Hungry World* (An ELCA pamphlet)
  - A book review of *Whales and the Supercomputer* or *Gift of the Whale*
3. By means of an activity
  - Be involved in land use planning.
  - Develop a church bulletin board with updated articles on subsistence
4. Via a strategy
  - Learn how to support public education that teaches subsistence skills
  - Learn how to take political action on subsistence issues

Alaskan subsistence is not an isolated problem about Alaska Native cultural survival. Alaskan subsistence is a piece in the large jigsaw puzzle named “Developing Sustainable Environments” for all local cultures in our global community. The Alaskan subsistence jigsaw puzzle piece interfaces with the puzzle pieces of sustainable environment in Anchorage, in Alaska, in the US.