

September 11, 2008

Dear Family, Friends, Prayer Warriors, and Financial Partners,

I know I promised a newsletter from Shungnak this past summer BUT you never know what to expect in the "Bush" of Alaska. We tried to get the phone company to hook up the Internet at the Shungnak Baptist cabin a couple of weeks before I was do to arrive...that would have been mid-June...and they finally got to it on August 18th. I had the Internet a whole 12 days before I left! But you know what...the world didn't come to an end without Internet! Brian and I kept in contact with the telephone. I only had a very few days of regular TV, as well. Don't ask me why the TV didn't work...I'm still trying to figure that one out! Thank goodness the DVD and VCR both worked and worked and worked as the children and I watched lots and lots of movies.

So, this is the newsletter of happenings in and around Shungnak, Alaska, that I promised for this past summer.

My son, Jason and I arrived in Anchorage on July 5th and spent the next day going to Seward, Alaska to take an all-day cruise through the Kenai Fjords. Jason had never been to Alaska before and this was a treat for him...he got some amazing pictures of seals, whales, puffins, porpoises, eagles, etc and of the beautiful scenery that just seems to draw you in, everywhere you look. The waters were pretty rough and the wind was very cold...so I stayed inside the cabin most of the time and just looked out the windows.

On July 7th I taught him how to "Bush" shop from Anchorage for Shungnak...and we shopped and shopped and mailed and packed until it was time to catch our flight to Kotzebue. We arrived in Kotz that evening and spent the night at the First Baptist Church of Kotzebue. They had a team of volunteers there, helping renovate the aging sanctuary, so we got to sleep on twin blow-up mattresses on the sanctuary floor. After a good nights sleep, we flow out on the morning bush plane to Shungnak.

If I had any doubts (which I didn't and still don't) about whether God really wanted us serving Him in Shungnak, Alaska, they were wiped away on that arrival. As soon as I stepped off the plane 2 Shungnak men greeted me with smiles, hand shakes and a "Welcome Home Debbie". The Eskimo culture is such that men go with men and women go with women and here these 2 men, who barely spoke to me at all last year, were welcoming me home! God had surely gone before us to prepare the hearts of this village to receive us! And I am soooo very humbled and give God all the glory!

There was a volunteer team from North GA. that picked me and Jason up at the Shungnak airport with the 4-wheeler that day. They had been in Shungnak for a week and were leaving on the afternoon flight. Their week of ministry had been fulfilling and had opened several doors of opportunity for me. Thank you Cheryl and team members for a job well done!

Jason fell right into the surroundings and the culture. He is an electrician by trade and a very handy man to have around. He did a few things at the Baptist cabin that I needed for him to do and then he offered his services to the village...anyone needing electrical work done, let him know, and if they supplied the material he would do the work for FREE. Well, he did a lot of work for the Native Store and then had a couple of the elders ask him for help. He was received very warmly and I thanked the village for that. He got to experience going out on the boat and setting nets and then going back and checking nets. He helped haul in a huge Shee fish from one of the checking

nets trips and told his Dad that this was the way to fish...no rod just nets...and he said his Shee fish was bigger than the one Brian caught on his rod last year from the bank of the Kobuk River. Needless to say Brian wasn't impressed! Oh well, keep trying Jason. He also got some great pictures of a moose cow and her twin calves just around the bend in the river one morning. His son, Drake, told him he needed a picture of a bear and then he could come home. Well, Jason was supposed to stay with me until July 18th BUT he missed his family way to much to be gone that long. He changed his tickets and left the 14th instead. Katie and our three California grandchildren were glad to get him home. Thanks for sharing Jason and Daddy with me, you guys!

I hosted a 6 member volunteer team from MD/PA. the very next week. They lead a VBS for the children and they were amazing, to say the least! Thank you Mike and Sue, Howard and Angie, and Jeremy and Amy! Come again anytime.

I started a Children's Sunday School this year...because of Kids Club and Sunday services for the adults we didn't have Sunday School for the children last year. Thank you Brandy and girls, for specifically praying for the children of Shungnak. There were probably 7-8 children, on average, every Sunday until I left. These children have a head knowledge of Jesus (they know the right answers) but they have never had a heart knowledge of His love for them. Please pray for them to realize that without God's forgiveness through Jesus nothing will change for the better in their lives.

I also started a youth Bible study every Tuesday night and had 3 faithful teen girls (ages 19, 18, and 13) that came. We studied lessons from the *Purple Book* while at least 8 to 12 other teens played basketball outside the Baptist cabin. That's OK, at least those 8 - 12 other teens knew they could ask for the Baptist basketballs. And they came in for cookies and kool-aid one night, too. Didn't Lottie Moon start by baking and sharing cookies? I am building relationships through being friendly and caring. Thank you Barbara, for praying for the youth of Shungnak. I really feel that the 19 year old is very close to making a decision for Christ. I wish I could have been there just a little longer.

I also had the privilege to pray with several times and witness to a young lady who is battling alcohol and hearing voices. Because of detox from the alcohol her voices were very loud and wouldn't allow her to sleep. We prayed together for re-dedication of her life to Christ and I was able to help her find scripture to encourage her, gave her a Christian CD to listen to and I promised I'd call and check on her every once in awhile.

Please pray with us for the family of Bertha Sheldon. I received a call just a few minutes ago telling us that she had passed away this morning. She was the mother to Lottie Tickett and Polly Commack and the Aanna (Grandmother and Great Grandmother) to lots of children. She had been paralyzed and bed-ridden since her stroke almost 2 years ago. Brian and I had gone to visit her and had prayed with her before we left on August 30th. Bertha was the 19 year old youths Aanna and also Aanna to the young lady I prayed with several different times. Bertha was a Christian and is walking and talking with Jesus right now! Praise God!

I had full intentions of trying to start a women's Bible study but quickly realized that summer is not the time of year to do something like that. Spring, summer and fall in the Arctic is only 4 to 4 1/2 months long and that's when they gather and fish and hunt and prepare and store away for winter. When they finish their daily 9-5 jobs that's when they start the other work. And, to me, that other work is harder than a 9 to 5 job. I helped scale fish one Saturday for over 4 hours...standing in

one spot and doing nothing but taking a butter knife and scaling one fish after another until the entire gunny sack was empty. Believe me, that was a lot easier than taking an ulu knife and cutting a fish and then hanging it to dry. We had 2 scalers, 1 cutter, and 1 hanger and this was only for one day. They check their fish nets every day or two. And then they butcher and package caribou and moose and duck and geese after the men hunt and they also pick berries and prepare them for freezing or for jelly and jam. Winter is 7 1/2 to 8 months long and will be a much better time for a weekly Bible study. Thank you Carolyn and Mrs. Ruth for praying for the women of Shungnak and the Bible study. Please continue to pray for a Bible study to happen.

When Brian arrived on August 23rd, he walked into the cabin...turned the TV on and then off and then on again and it worked the entire week! Thank you Lord! We also ate like Shungnak Alaskans that week....we had Shee fish, caribou stew, moose and beans and blueberry buckle. The fish, caribou, moose and blueberries were given to us from different people in the village. Brian held a worship service on Sunday evening and again on Wednesday evening in the log-room, which will eventually be the Baptist Church Sanctuary, and we had a "Give Away" on Thursday. Thank you to all who helped get winter hats purchased and shipped within 3 days! They went quickly, along with the fleece tie blankets, knitted scarves and gloves that First Baptist Kotz sent us. We couldn't have done it without you!

Fall came early this year and I had the heat turned on several mornings during August. The NEW Toyo heat stove, purchased from donations from last year, works "great"! Thank all of you again who helped purchase it! During this years trip I felt very close to God and felt very safe in the village and the Baptist cabin. I know that was because of all the prayers that were being said on my behalf. I want to thank you for praying and for giving so I was able to go and serve.

As Brian and I prepare to go and serve God in Shungnak, Alaska on a more permanent basis we would ask for your continued prayers. Brian will complete his schooling sometime this next year and then when GM offers another early retirement package he will take it and we will be moving to the Northwest Arctic. Pray and ask God if you or your church or church group could be used to help with the monthly Shungnak Baptist Mission Church's expenses. Electricity and heating fuel prices continue to soar higher and higher and I know it is going to be hard to make ends meet without your help.

I'll tell you this...It is exciting doing the Lord's work and seeing peoples faces when they finally understand a verse of scripture or a truth or a promise that God gives us in His Word. I love being a MSC Missionary and I love the people of Shungnak, Alaska. I hope and pray this newsletter answers some of your questions about my trip and if you have questions that I didn't answer just e-mail me and I'll get back with you as soon as I can.

If you have a group who would like to come up next summer and help, let me know and we'll get things started.

Love To All Of You,  
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