

Volunteer's Frequently Asked Questions

Greetings!

Thank you for your interest in becoming a volunteer with Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S. If you're a man or woman of faith who is looking to serve God and the Native American communities to whom we are called to minister, then you've come to the right place.

And we're sure you've got plenty of questions. Hopefully most of them will be answered here. If you'd like more information or have additional questions, please feel free to contact **Kathleen Walrath**, Director of Volunteer Services, at **262-783-5267**.

Where will you serve?

Our volunteer ministry serves in communities throughout Alaska. While Christian ministry has been carried on in North America for several centuries, many factors have contributed to the difficulty for some areas and people to receive effective ministry.

What volunteer opportunities are available to me?

Our opportunities are as varied as our volunteers. It depends on your interests, our ministry needs, and the timeframe in which you wish to volunteer.

One special area of volunteer ministry is Vacation Bible School (VBS). Ministering in teams, volunteers share the faith through teaching God's Word to children and teens. Each team utilizes a program developed by Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S. specifically for the people we serve. Materials used were prepared by Native people particularly to teach Bible truths in culturally appropriate and relevant ways.

The majority of Alaskan communities are Native – Inupiaq (formerly referred to as Eskimo) Athabaskan, Haida, Tlingit - who have lived off the land for generations. The children may speak both their native language and English or just one of the two. It is amazing how Christ's love comes through to those children in the language of Vacation Bible School - the language of Scripture, story telling, music, drama, visual aids and crafts. Teaching Vacation Bible School usually involves a short-term commitment during the summer.

Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S. also sponsors construction teams to work with Native people building churches and community centers. There are also opportunities for engineers, ministers of music, sports camp staff ... wherever God is calling and arrangements can be made, you'll be able to serve as a volunteer.

What can I expect?

Typically, native communities are small, varying in size from 50-2000 people. The residents live in various size (but usually small) houses spread around in an un-

surveyed “town-site.” Each community may be the hub of or one of several population centers of a reservation. Generally, all the people on a reservation belong to a single tribe with its own chief and community council.

The Tribal Council is the official government authority. It has the authority to invite people to come as well as to leave the Reservation. You should be aware that you are in the community because the Tribal Council has invited you - through Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S. They, in turn have been in discussion with the local religious leaders who have recommended that Volunteers in Ministry be allowed to work in their community. Your presence there is essentially to strengthen the existing ministry. You are not necessarily bringing the Gospel to these people for the first time though there may be some persons for whom this will be true. Although a majority of communities have no permanent Sunday School program, rest assured that the work of the church in these communities goes faithfully onward. In most places, worship services are held every Sunday.

How will I get there?

You are responsible for getting from your home to the ministry site where you will serve. Commercial airlines are available into Fairbanks, Alaska. Local carriers are available from Fairbanks into the community where you will serve. While you will need to plan in advance for your flight into Fairbanks, it is not necessary to reserve a space on the commuter flight into the community until you arrive in Fairbanks. We will do our best to find the least expensive, yet reliable commuter service for Alaska’s interior. While commercial flights from Fairbanks into the community may not be necessary in all cases, we do ask that you plan your budget to include the possibility. The commuter flights average \$300.00 round trip.

Where will I stay?

...in Fairbanks

We will identify hotel lodging prior to your travel to Fairbanks and will do our best to find accommodations that are reasonably priced and easily accessible from the airport. Once identified, we will send the information to you for your contact and reservation information.

...in the Community where you will serve

Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S. staff, together with community leaders, will make arrangements for you. Housing ranges from spartan (no running water or indoor bathrooms) to comfortable (running water and showers). Be prepared for either extreme — it depends on what is available at that time. Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S. staff will give you more specific information on accommodations as your time for service approaches.

It's important to remember that it can take a good part of the day to reach the community from Fairbanks. Inclement weather can cause a delay ranging from a few hours to a day or two. Adaptability and flexibility take on a new meaning in the North. Coming a day or two early may be in everyone's best interest and give you a chance to get acclimated and do some sight-seeing.

A checklist of items recommended for your trip follows.

What is the cost?

Your financial obligation will be dependent upon your service assignment – i.e.: VBS or Servant Event. As previously noted, you will be responsible for the cost of transportation to and from the place where you will be ministering. Your lodging while in Fairbanks, food for your time of service and supplies for VBS projects as designated in the curriculum are also the responsibility of the volunteer.

Many congregations or church groups sponsor individuals or teams as part of their mission outreach program. Some people or teams organize fund raising projects to cover their costs. Also check with your local Thrivent representative about the possibility of receiving a matching grant.

How may I apply?

You can download an application to become a volunteer with Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S. from our website.

After you complete the application, you can then send it to us via email (the email link is next to the form on our website).

Or you can **fax** the completed application to us by at, **262-783-5290**

Or you can send it to us via surface mail at:

Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S.
3525 North 124th Street, Suite 1
Brookfield, WI 53005-2498
Attn: Kathleen Walrath

Personal items... what to bring?

Casual dress is in order... you'll likely wear jeans and running shoes every day. The weather might be suitable for swimming and the children love to swim, so bring your swimsuit and join in the fun. Also be prepared for rain. A pair of low rubber boots and a nylon rain shell are appropriate. Evenings can be cool - a light jacket and sweater should be adequate. It's good to dress in layers, then you can adapt as necessary.

Insects, mostly black flies and mosquitoes, will be a force to contend with, so you will need insect repellent. The most vulnerable areas are your arms, the back of your neck and your ankles. It may be warm enough to wear shorts, but long pants will give you added protection. There is a good product out that stops itching from insect bites. It's called "After Bite - The Itch Eraser" and is available in most drugstores.

A checklist of recommended items to bring is attached. You will discover that there are no luxury items included and it may seem a bit short. The reason is to emphasize that our air and water craft are limited in space as well as the total amount of weight they can safely carry. It is recommended that the total weight of people and gear be no more than 800 lbs for a team of four (4). Note: If you are driving to your teaching site the same restrictions would not apply but will serve as a guideline.

Use a medium sized soft suitcase or duffel bag for packing. DO NOT use a backpack with a frame. Pack teaching materials in small boxes that are easy to carry for a distance. If you think that you will need more teaching supplies than can be safely flown into your community, arrangements can be made to send materials in advance. Please notify the staff well before your travel date about these and other needs that may not be addressed here.

• CHECKLIST •

Clothing should be mostly cotton with minimal clothing changes:

- Pairs of blue jeans
- 3 cotton shirts
- Sweater or sweatshirt
- 2 pairs of socks per day
- Daily underwear change
- Light rain jacket
- Wind breaker or light jacket
- Extra pair of walking shoes - only 2 pairs of shoes - no open-toed sandals, or flip-flops. Shoes should not be brand new.
- Scarf or hat
- Light weight gloves, bandana

Personal items

- Toiletry articles
- Simple basic first-aid kit
- Prescription medication - **Enough for your entire stay in Alaska**
- Flashlight
- Space blanket (for warmth...takes up very little space)
- Bug spray - pump ONLY - **Not aerosol**
- Sleeping bag
- Sleeping pad (thermo rest or air mattress)
- Pillow
- No Hard Sided Luggage – **Soft duffel bag type only**
- Any type of food should be freeze-dried or packaged dehydrated. Try to keep food products as light as possible. Due to weight restrictions, **only minimal canned goods.**