

The Tide of Pentecostal Leadership

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On January 13, 2011, a rare phenomenon exploded across the Turnagain Arm of Cook Inlet near the community of Girdwood, Alaska. With a height of ten feet and a speed of fifteen miles per hour, a bore tide of immense power roared 300 surf junkies past curious harbor seals and across treacherous mud flats.¹ Since most surf rides last only twenty seconds covering fifty yards, this wave, which carried surfers over five miles, wrote a page in the history books. One dedicated Alaskan surfer stated, “You could catch this wave right after breakfast and ride it till lunch.”²

Throughout Christendom, moves of the Spirit call to mind images of rushing wind, Pentecostal fire, latter rain, and waves of glory. Some revivals reached new spiritual heights and engaged rapid speeds of repentance and renewal. Effective leadership provides the platform necessary for carrying the body of Christ further into the mysteries of the Spirit’s movement. Pentecostal leadership, from a tidal perspective, includes thoughts on timing, change initiatives, demonstrations of faith in action, and empowerment of the believer.

The Timing of the Tide

Tides occur all over the world. The Alaska bore tide in Turnagain Arm is the only wave occurring in the far north, bordered by pristine mountains, accessible for forty to fifty miles on a picturesque highway.³ A

bore tide rushes seawater into a narrowing and shallow inlet from a broad bay. Location, surroundings, and availability provide for only a portion of Alaska’s remarkable tide. Timing plays the key role in delivering the most spectacular and noteworthy bore deluges

On the ocean of the soul, the breath of the Creator’s voice, along with the Savior’s gentle urging, causes the surge of the Spirit to swell in a person’s depth of reasoning. Pentecostal leadership understands the wave window of God’s timing and acts responsively. Timed action includes daily interaction with the Holy Spirit, enhancing the leader’s ability to understand the Spirit’s timetable for an entire people group. Enhanced leadership, based upon God’s Word, validates the timely movement, bringing confidence for the leader, assurance for the follower, and enlightenment for the pre-believer.

The timing of the first Pentecostal wave in Alaska began at the beginning of this century. In 1917, Charles and Florence Personeus arrived by steamship in Juneau, the territorial capital. Upon landing, they opened their Bible to Philippians 4:19, noting God’s promise to supply all their needs.⁴ With this promise, a call, and few resources, the Personeuses pledged to invest their lives in riding the tide of the Spirit in Alaska. On Thanksgiving Day, 1917, in a tiny storefront filled with chairs and an

organ, the Personeus' first service began with fifteen people.⁵ The church in Alaska is blessed because the Personeuses understood the timing of God.

The Change Initiative of the Tide

When it is time for a tide to come rushing into a bay, changes begin to take place. According to Vlad and Carol Kononov, "Experiments show tides moving at a rate of a half mile per hour will transport medium size sand grains."⁶ Bore tides, traveling at fifteen miles per hour, will move mountains of sand in a short time span. Changes are also noticeable in the coastline and in intertidal ecology. Therefore, one can conclude that change is initiated when a tide surge begins.

Spiritual tides of change are enhanced by the gravitational pull of God. In this scenario, change is initiated by the gentle pulling toward the holiness of God. Just as with bore tides, the desire to live holy initiates the movement of sin stones, eroding the sediment in the heart. The change creates an environment suitable for spiritual growth and development. Anchored in a new culture, the Pentecostal leader is empowered to see the benefits and joys of the ebb and flow of change while continually growing and developing into the image of Jesus Christ.

In Alaska, the Assemblies of God is in a season of change initiatives; not long ago the wind of the Spirit began to blow, causing a new wave of leadership to emerge. In April 2008, Bill Welch was elected as Superintendent, and I was elected as the first female presbyter of the Alaska District Council. In January 2010, the Presbytery adopted a new mission statement. The intentional move encourages networking, aids in resource development, and equips

leaders to do the work of the ministry. Pentecostal leaders understand the timing of God and boldly initiate change for the glory of the name of Jesus and the advance of His Kingdom.

The Demonstration of the Tide

The bore tide in Alaska shoots into Turnagain Arm against the direction of the bay's current. Even standing yards away from the shore, the incoming tide sounds like a howling freight train. The tide causes intense turbulence and a reverberating ruckus. Demonstrating immense power, the bore bombards anything or anyone in its path.

The display of the power of the Holy Spirit contributes to the unique leadership arts a leader possesses for guiding individuals and directing organizations. Catching the wave of the Spirit, a leader works in tandem with the Spirit, cutting through opposing currents and aiming at issues that bring transformation of the heart. Power is thereby demonstrated through the elimination of any concentrated commotion or deafening disturbance caused by the Evil One. The words and deeds of God and those He chooses to empower become the catalyst for moving individuals and entire groups from the clutches of sin to the embrace of the believers.

The Alaska church has recently seen a renewed interest in God, spiritual things, and the demonstration of the Spirit. A small village in Western Alaska reports people getting saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. Several Anchorage Assemblies of God churches report an increase in the number of people baptized in water and filled with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. At Muldoon Community Assembly, I had the opportunity to speak

with two ladies looking for hope and searching for answers. Also, four people in our congregation testified to God's healing tide arising in their bodies. Partnering with the Spirit's powerful demonstration of God's love outpoured has excited our staff and many other believers across our state.

The Empowerment of the Tide

Pentecostal leadership not only includes walking in the demonstration of the Spirit, cultivating a willingness to initiate change, and understanding the times, it also includes empowering the believer to boldly pursue fulfillment of the Great Commission. From a tidal perspective, the tide is made more powerful when technology can harness the energy created by a wave. For example, one of Maine's current projects includes incorporating new machinery that will capture tidal waves and release the energy from the waves when needed.⁷

The Spirit-led leader captures the zeal of the believer and maximizes it through discipleship training. Such training exists as the key to harnessing the wave of God's anointing and blessing. To connect the power in God's wave window with the excitement of an individual believer or an entire congregation, leaders must engage, educate, and equip their followers. Discipleship training includes seeking and selecting, teaching and training, providing and arming.

One of the goals of the Alaska Ministry Network includes equipping ministers. The Alaska School of Ministry (AKSOM) comes

as a result of a dream that all Alaskans would have the opportunity to receive training and discipleship. AKSOM is an educational alternative for fulfilling the ministerial credential requirements for the Alaska Assemblies of God. I praise the Lord for the record number of students currently enrolled.

Conclusion

Alaska bore tides have another outstanding characteristic. At times, the wall of water jumps and virtually boils with salmon. Something changes in the fisherman when the tide starts coming in. Anticipation and excitement electrifies the air as the fisherman prepare to receive the fish. The powerful tidal surge dumps a deposit of fish into nets acting like open arms embracing a long-lost love. Quickly, the fisherman and his crew work to collect every fish so that none go to waste.

Only a few pages are left to be written in the history book of time. During these final days, may all Alaskans realize their need of a Savior and begin to call on His name. As this happens, eagerness and enthusiasm will grip the hearts of the believers in preparation to receive the harvest. Since the commission and challenge of Christ-followers is to fish for the souls of people, Pentecostal leaders must be willing to ride the tide, understand the timing of God, initiate change, walk in the demonstration of the Spirit, and empower believers to go forth in the name of Jesus. In embracing this tide, not one fish will be lost.

⁷Lola Jones, "A Rare Tidal Bore and a Unique Opportunity for a Few Lucky Surfers," Xtreme Sport Blog, <http://xtremesport4u.com/extreme-water-sports/a-rare-tidal-bore-and-a-unique-opportunity-for-a-few-lucky-surfers/> (accessed February 28, 2011).

²Peter Thomas, "Surfers in Alaska Ride Waves for an Astonishing Five Miles," Grind TV Blog, comment posted on January 13, 2011, <http://www.grindtv.com/surf/blog/23568/surfers%20in%20alaska%20ride%20waves%20for%20an%20astonishing%20five%20miles/> (accessed March 1, 2011).

³"The Bore Tides," Alaska.org, <http://alaska.org/bore-tides.jsp> (accessed March 1, 2011).

⁴B. P. Wilson, *The Assemblies of God in Alaska* (n.p. [Anchorage]: 1980), 17.

⁵AnnaLee Conti, *Frontiers of Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 29.

⁶Vlad and Carol Kononov, "Facts About Ocean Tides," Go Metal Detecting, <http://gometaledetecting.com/ocean-tides.html> (accessed March 3, 2011).

⁷Ramona du Houx, "The River Runs through It, and That Tidal Power Could Empower Maine," *The Maine Democrat*, Issue 19 (November-December 2008), Polar Bear and Co., <http://www.polarbearandco.com/mainedem/atide.html> (accessed March 5, 2011).