

Easter — Paas'kaa

UGNERKAMI PAAS'KAARTAARTUKUT. – WE HAVE EASTER IN THE SPRING.



Photo: Easter at the Afognak Bible Church, ca. 1961,
Chadwick Collection.

Orthodox Easter is a central holiday in Alutiiq communities. Like Russian Christmas, it combines cultural traditions. Forty days of Lent precede Easter, creating a period of reflection and sacrifice. The Alutiiq faithful live simply, eating fish and vegetables, as no animal products are allowed. This period of fasting mirrors spring in classical Alutiiq society when people lived on dried foods and shellfish as they waited for sea mammals, fish, and birds to return to coastal waters.

Religious services mark the days leading up to Easter. In Akhiok, Easter Sunday begins in church, as worshippers circle the building with lit candles. In Old Harbor, an egg hunt in the village cemetery follows the liturgy. Children search for eggs then visit neighbors to announce the resurrection of Christ and trade their finds. The eggs have Christian and Alutiiq significance. They symbolize both the rebirth of Christ and of the land—the return of migratory birds that foreshadows the coming wealth of summer. In the days that follow Easter, men ready their gear for fishing.