



FROM THE PASTOR

Tell Others of the Great Things God Has Done!

As we come to the close of the year 2013, we give thanks to our God who has so richly blessed us at Open Bible. Ten years ago last August, a few families saw the opportunity to begin a church in The Villages. They wanted to start a sound Bible teaching and Christ centered WELS church. As time moved on God blessed the efforts of this small group with Bible studies at the Church on the Square, worship services at a rented facility fondly referred to as "502", and finally a beautiful church on Bellwether Lane. Pastor Meier and Pastor Dale oversaw the congregation during these early years.

During the past 16 months, Open Bible has had a new Pastor. This pastor has one all consuming purpose in life. That purpose is to reach out to the lost. As the Lord has stressed, "Now is the appointed time, now is the day of your salvation." This pastor knows only one speed, and that is all out.

Why would a person want to join Open Bible? You can site the beautiful church building, the great location, the friendliness of the people, or having a go-getter pastor. But these really aren't the reasons. What one finds at Open Bible are a group of people who have been truly touched by the Word of God. The Holy Spirit has brought peace and joy to their lives. That joy can be picked up by guests when they join us for worship, Bible study, and other fellowship activities at Open Bible. The unchurched see that our faith really has helped us, and that Jesus is very important in our lives. They want what we have, and so they join our fellowship.

Open Bible has been blessed with an abundance of WELS members who have moved to Florida to retire. These people have been in Bible class, worship, and served on various boards and committees over the course of the years. As a result, they can easily be plugged into ministry at Open Bible without a leadership training class being taught. These people

know that they should give their first fruits to the Lord to support his work. They know the importance of weekly worship, and the necessity of staying in the Word through Bible study. When you have these logistics in place, it means that the pastor doesn't have to run or do everything. He simply directs people to use their gifts while he focuses in on preaching the Word, teaching Bible classes, and witnessing his faith to the unchurched. Your pastor joins the apostle Paul in saying, "In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."

What ceases to amaze me at Open Bible are the countless opportunities that God gives us to win souls for his kingdom. Constantly, God is putting people in our path who need to know Him. These are not coincidences but God instances. These people are coming to Open Bible because you are inviting them, they see our advertising in the Villages Sun and Yellow Pages, or the great location of our church calls them.

During the past 12 months, we have tried to improve our efficiency in doing all things decently and in order. We have been blessed with a church secretary, a computer system that includes a church management program, and a website, where members can not only be updated on events and programs, but also read or listen to the Sunday message.

We have been blessed with opportunities outside corporate worship for people to grow spiritually, serve their Savior, and have fun together. We have begun various new groups in our congregation. They are: The Book Club, The Defenders, Wednesday in the Word, 466A group, the North County group, Men's Breakfast out, Women's Bible study, and SPLASH(Single people loving and serving him).

The Lord has blessed us with financial gifts this past year where we were able to increase our worldwide mission offerings from \$10,000 a year to \$20,000 a year, as well as pay off an additional \$10,000 on our church mortgage. Our communicant membership experienced a growth of 30% from 2012.

So where are we headed in 2014? We continue to pray that God would lead us as we move forward. Under the direction of your Church Council, and Board of Elders, we will be looking at the formation of an Assimilation Committee, who will help new members get connected into ministry at Open Bible, find a small group home, and get connected with new friends. We will look to the formation of a Long Range Planning Committee which will study building expansion in the next few years. We will look to form an evangelism team that will help our pastor make regular calls on our prospects, and also recruit more elders to make calls on our weak and wounded members. We will look forward to putting together a television ad in 2014 with Pastor Jeske at Time of Grace, which will be used to promote Open Bible throughout the state of Florida. We will look forward to our worship services at Open Bible in 2014 having more special music within the traditional worship service. God continues to bless us with new members who have special musical talents.

My prayer for Open Bible is that of the Apostle Paul from Philippians 1: 9-11, "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ-to the glory and praise of God."

FROM THE PRESIDENT

This Christmas season we have many reasons to rejoice and give thanks. First, and foremost, is the fact that Christ has come. Because he came, because he went to the cross, because the Holy Spirit has worked faith in your heart, your heart and your life will never be the same.

Sometimes we only appreciate something after it's gone. Perhaps that's a way we can learn to appreciate Christmas and what it really means for us. Imagine what your life would be like if Christ had not come. There would be only temporal joy mixed in with a great deal of sorrow for all people because of sin. The beginnings of that temporal joy dates all the way back to the Garden of Eden. After our first parents disobeyed God, joy was lost.

But God had a plan to restore joy through the birth of His own Son. Luke 2:10-11 records that good news ... "I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Never before or

since, has the theater of the universe been more alive with His glory and joy than it was with the announcement that the creator of this universe loved us enough to come to earth to save us from our sins. God entered our world, experienced our sorrow, and conquered death, giving us hope that He will keep His promise to end pain, and eliminate sorrow and death.

This is real joy that cannot be taken from us. It exists in our hearts though our eyes may be clouded by tears. It does not depend on what our earthly circumstances are. We have a joy that transcends every situation in this life. That joy is in our Savior from sin, Jesus Christ. Our joy centers on all that Jesus won for us by his coming; the forgiveness of sins, fellowship with God, and eternal life. It grows stronger as we draw closer to the goal of our lives – eternal life with the Lord in heaven. We have joy, not just at Christmas, but all the days of our lives.

Christmas is the fulfillment of God's promise that we will be celebrating in the upcoming days. Christ was born to be our Savior from sin. And just as Christ came the first time, so he will come again. He will return on judgment day to take all who believe in him to the eternal mansions of heaven. Praise God for the joy that is ours through his Son, Jesus Christ.

All God's blessings and a very joyous Christmas to everyone,

Greg Wendorf

ADVENT WEEKLY WORSHIP SERVICES



The Bright Star of Bethlehem

Dec. 4th, 11th & 18th at 4 & 6 pm
Light Supper 4:45 – 5:45 pm

See the birthplace of Christ in a whole new way this Advent series. Each week parishioners will learn more about the little town where Jesus was born so long ago, and what Jesus, who is the Bright Star of Bethlehem, reveals to us even today.

Week 1: Jesus comes to Bethlehem to be born a star – the Star of Creation, and the ruler over heaven and earth. His presence brings light to the world, which is his creation. We are created in his image to shine forth with his love into the dark streets of our own cities and towns.

Week 2: Jesus comes to Bethlehem to be the Star of Hope to a people long forsaken. The fears of all the years are washed away by the sure hope of his salvation, which we are blessed to share with the lonely and the least among us.

Week 3: Jesus comes to Bethlehem to enlighten the world as the Star of Joy. The great glad tidings he has to tell bring a smile to our faces as we radiate to others his good gifts of forgiveness, freedom from death and everlasting life.

WHO'S WHO AT OPEN BIBLE

By Leslie Nelson



Alan and Pamela Johnson were married at Woodlawn Lutheran Church in West Allis, WI, 42 years ago and spent their first three years together living in Germany while Alan was serving in the U. S. Army. He worked in

transportation. During those years Pamela was also employed by the Department of Defense as a teacher at the American School in Mannheim. They have three sons, Karl, Erik and Kurtis, all of whom are bachelors.

Upon returning to Wisconsin, Alan was hired by the Miller Brewing Company. Pamela stayed home to raise the boys. In 1992 she went back into teaching at Woodlawn Preschool in West Allis. In 2002 she started the Extended Learning Center there, serving as Director while continuing to teach preschool. In 1999 Alan completed 25 years as an Army Reservist. By that time he was working at InSinkEerator, where he remained for 9 years.

He is currently employed with Closet Maid as Procurement Manager, the job that brought the Johnsons to Florida 6 years ago. Pamela took another teaching position, at St. Paul's in Beverly Hills.

They both love to read. Pamela likes historical fiction and mysteries by authors such as Catherine Coulter, Colleen Cable, Sue Grafton and Mary Higgins Clark. Alan has a wide range of interests and reads books about political science, early American history and government, early Christian literature and fiction. Some of his favorite authors are W. E. B. Griffin, Frederick Forsyth, Ken Follett and Tom Clancy.

As to hobbies besides reading, Alan likes to work in the yard and target shoot. Pamela is a knitter and a rubber

stamper, making her own greeting cards. She is also blessed with a beautiful singing voice, and we are fortunate to have her in our choir and as an occasional soloist.

Alan was born in Tomahawk, WI, into a Methodist family. He attended the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh, where he met Pam, and earned a Master's degree at Marquette University. Pamela, who was born in Milwaukee, attended Lutheran grade and high schools, and has a degree from UW-Oshkosh. She has additional certificates from Martin Luther College in New Ulm, MN, and UW-Whitewater in Early Childhood and Special Education.

Somewhere along the way they picked up a love for riding motorcycles, so don't be surprised when they show up for church on their Gold Wing. They are members of a motorcycle club in Ocala, and have traveled as far as Billings, MT, with the group.

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY AT OPEN BIBLE

During the month of December most small groups will be taking a breather as they have finished their first semester of studies at the end of November. However, some of these groups will be doing a service project or fellowship activity in December. The second semester of small group Bible studies will begin in January 2014 and run through March 2014.

Here is an update for December:

SPLASH (Single People Loving and Serving Him)

They will be serving the Advent dinner on December 4th from 4:45-5:45 PM.

They have a fellowship activity planned on December 15th at 11:15 am. There will be a brunch held that day at Water Oak.

466A and Ladies Bible Study Group

These two groups will team up to serve the Advent dinner on December 18th from 4:45-5:45 pm. Their twice a month Bible studies will begin again in January 2014.

The Choir

The Choir will be meeting to practice on the first three Wednesday nights in December following the second Advent service which begins at 6:00 P.M. The choir will be serving the Advent Dinner on December 11th from 4:45-5:45 pm.

The Book Club

Please give suggestions to Joe and Mary Price for a January 2014 book to read. The group will not meet in December but plans to meet again on January 28th at 10:00 am.

The Defenders

The Defenders will meet at the Leesburg Gun club at 10:00 am on December 20th. Following the shooting of 100 rounds, the group will have time for prayer and lunch at Beef O' Brady's in Wildwood.

Men's Breakfast Out

The men will continue their study on "Godly Men of Leisure" on Friday, December 13th at 8:00 am. They will meet at Perkin's restaurant on Route 466.

Women of Open Bible

Advent by Candlelight on December 8th at 6:00 pm.
Christmas Luncheon on Friday, December 13th at 11:30 am at Mimi's Café in Ocala.

CHURCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

The regular meeting of our church council met on Thursday, November 21. After a brief devotion by Pastor Schulz the meeting commenced. All boards were present except for Building and Grounds.

The treasurer's report showed that October offerings fell short of our expenses by \$2,844. This was due to the fact that monies went out as directed by the congregation at the September congregational meeting. October's offerings amounted to \$16,364. We still have a YTD balance of just under \$40,000. As of October 31, our mortgage balance was \$435,138.

The council released the Steve and Allison Langer family to Calvary Lutheran Church in Dallas, TX. It also recommended the confirmation of Chuck and Patricia Majors and the associate membership of Jeanne Nelson.

Council approved a donation of \$500 to Time of Grace Ministries out of Milwaukee, WI. We hope to be working with them in bringing a daily devotion to our online members and also to place an advertisement for Open Bible Church at the end of their weekly cable broadcast.

The council welcomed Captain Paul Valentino from the Wildwood Police Department. He informed us of all the programs that the WPD has available and we in turn thanked the WPD for nightly pass throughs of our

property. They are doing a fine job looking after our property.

Vanita McCurnin has volunteered to coordinate the newly formed SonShine Committee. This committee was started by the Board of Elders and will be responsible for helping members as they return from the hospital and are in need of help in any circumstance.

Our next meeting is scheduled for December 5. This is two weeks early but we changed the date to accommodate council members who are leaving for the Christmas holidays.

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

The WC (Worship Committee) met on Thursday, November 7 at 4:45 pm. The majority of our time was spent on going over the worship services for Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas and New Year's Eve.

We welcome Judy Hainen as one of our organists and we give a BIG thank you to Ruth Niermeyer for her years of serving as one of our organists. We appreciate her service to The Lord and to Open Bible.

Service times are as follows for all of our special services:

- Wednesday Advent services will be held at 4:00 and 6:00 pm.
- Christmas Eve service is at 6:00 pm.
- Christmas Day service is at 9:30 am.
- New Year's Eve service is at 6:00 pm.

As we come to the end of 2013 we hope that the services we have put together and the special music for many of our services have enhanced your worship at Open Bible. To God be all praise and glory.

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

The Fellowship committee's activity for December is Christmas Caroling. If you would like to carol with your fellow members please join us on Saturday, December 14, at 3:35 pm. We will have a brief run through of our carols and then head over to Carriage House and SteepleChase for a half-hour of caroling at both places. At Steeplechase we will sing during their dinner hour.

Following our caroling we will return to the Fellowship Hall for a chili dinner. Carolers are asked to bring a half dozen Christmas cookies for our dessert.

As we plan for monthly activities we hope that we have events that you will enjoy. All members are invited to these activities and they make an excellent opportunity to invite friends to join us. These activities are a great way to introduce Open Bible to your friends.

Not all activities are planned for the coming months but we will be having a "movie night" and a game night for sure. We are looking at an off site activity so if you have suggestions please contact either Diane or Ron Brutlag.

We are still looking for a few couples who would be willing to sign on to the Fellowship Committee. Diane and I would be willing to work with the new committee members to get them started in 2014.

Have a very merry Christmas and remember, He is the **reason** for the **season**.

WOMEN OF OPEN BIBLE NEWS

Merry Christmas everyone!

Ladies don't forget to sign up for the Christmas Party at the kitchen pass through. Deadline to sign up Dec. 1st.

Where: Mimis Café, 4414 Southwest College Rd, Ocala. We will order off an abbreviated menu.

When: Friday, Dec. 13th at 11:30 am. We will car pool from church if you need a ride. **We will leave from church at 10:45 am.**

Please bring a wrapped White Elephant gift. This gift is optional.

Sandy Hahm, President



CHURCH DECORATING



We will be decorating the Church Christmas tree on Saturday, December 7th at 9:30 am. Come and help get the church ready for Christmas. Your help will be much appreciated.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY



Christina Langer – 2
Mary Burel – 5
Dorothy Plybon – 7
Karen Dahm – 9
Karen Pearson – 9
Larry Fronk – 10
Carol Benrud – 14
Linda Buss – 14
Duane Anderson – 14
Pam Johnson – 15
Margie O'Connell – 16
Chance Langer – 19
Ruth Vance – 20
Elisabeth Wells – 22
Velma Miner – 26
Shirley Roback – 27

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY



Fred & Gail Rathgeber – 28
Dave & Lynn Buss – 31
Daniel & Morganne Langer – 31
Jim and Jeanette Kellam – 31