



NEWSLETTER



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FROM THE PASTOR

We Have Not Gone This Way Before

When the children of Israel were on the eastern side of the Jordan, ready to cross into the promised land, there was a bit of apprehension. They had spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness. Everyone over the age of 21 when they started, except Joshua and Caleb, died in the desert. Joshua was their new leader. Would he lead them in the right direction? Would he lead them to victory over any enemies who opposed them? Joshua reassured the people that even though they had not gone this way before, the Almighty God would be with them wherever they went. He told them that God would keep the promises he made to them. And God did.

At Open Bible we are crossing the Jordan into another year. We have not gone this way before. But the same Lord that led the children of Israel is leading us. His New Testament name is Jesus. We will keep our focus on Him, and He will safely lead us through whatever awaits us in 2015. We have so much to be thankful for at Open Bible.

The Lord has blessed our congregation with an 18% growth rate in 2014. Our average weekly worship attendance went up from 117 in 2013 to 138 in 2014. Again an 18% growth rate. We had 24 Adult confirmations in 2014, 5 transfers in, and 2 profession of faiths. We lost two members by release, 3 full-time members in death, and 1 by transfer out. What exciting times these are for Open Bible with so many new faces joining our fellowship. We need to continue working on assimilating these newcomers by providing them roles where they can serve, and new friends they can make.

God's Old Testament people had the ark of the covenant as a visible sign of God's presence with them as they entered the promised land. Obviously, we don't have the ark before us today, but God has left us His Word as a lamp for our feet and as a light to our path. Let's keep our focus on the Word in 2015. Take advantage of the many Bible study opportunities provided for you in small group settings that you see listed in the bulletin, newsletter, and on our website. We may be getting older, but our Lord still wants us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Savior Jesus Christ.

I have very much appreciated how members have been utilizing their musical gifts in our worship services. What a joy to have a Women's Ensemble, duets, soloists, violinists, and our choir glorifying their Savior in our worship services. Martin Luther once said, "Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to man that he should proclaim the Word of God through music." I am very happy when I see our organists and other musicians spending time at church each week, practicing what they will present on a Sunday. We want to do our very best for our Great Savior who has done and continues to do so much for us.

We have met our commitment to our Congregational Mission Offering of \$20,000 for 2014. The Church Council is recommending to the Voters' that we increase our Mission offering to \$22,200 in 2015. How wonderful to be part of a congregation that regularly increases their CMO each year. As a result of these gifts students will be trained for ministry and missions will be opened.

Our average worship attendance on Sundays with two services in December 2014 increased from 122 in 2013 to 154 in 2014. I realize that for those who prepare snacks, it needs to be done earlier in the

morning, and you need to stay longer. But rather than look on it negatively, why not look at the additional 32 people a week who are hearing God's Word at Open Bible. Two opportunities to hear God's Word instead of just one.

On Sunday evening February 22nd and on Monday morning, February 23rd, our Building committee will be meeting with the District Mission Board and Jude Peck to discuss ideas for expansion at Open Bible. Please keep praying. We all want to do, not what our will is, but what the Lord's will is. Thank you for the joyful and positive spirit toward kingdom work that I see in most of you.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Does it appear to you that sometimes there is a little natural let down once the Holiday season has come and gone for another year? It really was only a short time ago that we were singing those wonderful Advent and Christmas hymns of praise and celebrating the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. Regardless of the time of the year, we should always remain excited about the fact that God loved us enough to send His son to eventually pave the way to our final destination. From the cradle in Bethlehem to the cross in Jerusalem God urges us to fix our eyes and thoughts upon Jesus.

For some people it is very difficult to truly believe in this troublesome day to day world. We are constantly being pulled in a multitude of directions contrary to God's divine plan for us. But stand firm for God continually reminds us not to be anxious about things that are difficult to fully comprehend. Our gracious Lord has given us many amazing, incredible, and precious promises in His word. Some of these promises can seem so incredible that we might be tempted to doubt them.

Each one of us needs to daily remember that our Lord will strengthen our faith with the great news of free forgiveness and eternal life. In the weeks and months to come we will once again hear the reassuring messages of God's everlasting promise of spending eternity with him.

This life is often like observing live sporting events. There are shocks and surprises, frustrations and fears because we are unsure of the outcome. Our limited minds are ill-equipped to handle the thoughts of eternity. When it comes to a world with no boundaries of space and time we don't have the ability to wrap our thought process around that concept. As followers of Christ, we can draw comfort, however, from the fact that though many of life's situations are uncertain, our eternal outcome is assured by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Because Jesus kept His word to suffer, die and rise again, we can be assured that every promise he gives us is faithful and true. The apostle John wrote "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." (1 John 5:13)

Life may present us with surprises along the way, but because of Christ's work we can have peace. He has already settled our eternal outcome. Remember, the greatest comfort of this life: Jesus promised that one day we will go home to be with him.

All God's blessings,
Greg Wendorf

WHO'S WHO AT OPEN BIBLE

Corinne Mahoney



This month's Open Bible featured member has been a Village resident since 2004. Corinne Mahoney moved with her husband, Frank, from Massachusetts in 2004 where Frank was a state patrolman.

Frank and Corinne resided near the beach in St Petersburg before deciding to come north. Corinne says that was a very good decision and only regrets that they didn't move to the Villages sooner.

Unfortunately, in 2009, after 48 years of marriage, Frank passed away from a heart attack. This left Corinne with a decision to stay here or move near one of their two children. A son (the oldest) lives in

Waltham, Massachusetts where he and his wife have five boys ages 18 to 26. Corinne's daughter lives with her husband and their two daughters near Wilmington, Massachusetts.

Corinne has expressed great happiness here and expects all of her years will be spent in the Villages as she has a strong support group of friends. She said she was very fortunate to meet other ladies through the hospice grief counseling service. These friendships have prevailed. She and her husband were very close and she said she feels the significant change in her social life as a result of losing her husband. Because of this, she is very thankful for the recent connection with other ladies who have endured the loss of their husbands also.

Corinne was a financial controller for a couple of different companies when she went to work after their two children were out of high school. Corinne said her first duty was to stay home and take care of the family. She was so pleased she was able to do this. Corinne likes golf, bocce ball, bowling and deep water aerobics. She said being single is lonely, but her friends and activities help greatly.

Corinne was raised catholic and attended St Vincent DePaul with her husband. After Frank's death, she attended the Church on the Square. She loved the music there but had to look for a new church when it closed. After visiting many churches, she feels Pastor Schulz was instrumental in leading her to membership in Open Bible. Through the Bible information classes she found out about the biblical Word of God. The smallness of the church, and the sincere friendly people were also reasons she gave for choosing to be part of Open Bible.

Corinne, we appreciate your worship with us and feel blessed to have you as part of our Open Bible family.

By Michael Benrud

Wednesday in the Word at 5:00 PM. (Led by Pastor Schulz)

***Revelation: Renew Your Vision (PowerPoint Study)**

Learn about the 1000 year rule of Christ in Revelation 20 and a graphic portrayal of heaven in Revelation 21-22. Two Sessions: January 7th and 14th.

***When People Forget About God:** A Look at Judges (4 Sessions)

SPLASH Single People Loving and Serving Him (Led by Pastor Dale)

*First meeting will be on January 12th at 11:30 AM. The group will be going to lunch at Glenview Country Club followed by a Bible study at Pastor Dale's home. For more information please contact: Joan Sanderson, Nancy Rodriguez, and Angela Spengler.

North Country Group (Led by Alan Johnson)

*Meeting twice a month on Sundays from 6:30–8:30 PM. Meeting at the home of Alan & Pam Johnson January 11th and 25th.

Topic: Whole Bible Project: Titus

466A Group and Vicinity (Led by Pastor Schulz)

*This group will meet twice a month on Tuesdays. **First meeting is January 27th** from 2:00-4:00 PM at the home of Tom and Betty Dewitz.

Topic: Take a Ride with Noah: A Look at the Universal Flood.

MEN'S BREAKFAST GROUP (Led by Dennis Duessler)

*Men at Leisure meets at Perkins Restaurant at 8:30 AM on Friday, January 16th. Travel through Great Chapters of the Bible this winter. Perkins is located on corner of Hwy 441/27 and Aviendia Central, 905 Bichara Blvd.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY (Led by Judy Anderson)

***Colossians: Weekly study on this New Testament book.**

This study provides an insight into the nature of Jesus Christ. Specifically, we see Jesus as the very

image of God, as the Creator, as He who has always existed, as the head of the church and as the great reconciler, and most importantly, as the one in whom all the fullness of God dwells. Besides the great things we learn about Jesus as noted above, we also learn about false philosophy, Christian grace, the Christian family, and the character of the new man in Christ 6 Sessions: Begins on **Tuesday January 13th from 1:00 - 2:30 PM.**

Open Bible Book Club (Pastor Schulz)

*Group meets at church on January 27th at 4:00 PM. "A Lutheran Looks at Catholics". Please sign-up with Karen so she knows how many books to order. Cost is \$17.00.

Women of Open Bible (Led by Sandy Hahm)

* Wednesday January 14th at 1:00 PM. Meets on the Second Wednesday of each month at 1:00 PM for service, spiritual growth, fellowship, and recreation.

Happy Hearts-Happy Hands Handiwork

Coordinator: Sandy Pawlowski

*Meets on the First Friday of each month at church. This group creates quilts for those in need in our community. Also does knitting, crochet, and embroidery.

Fellowship Group (Led by Joe and Paula Malec)

*Meets once a month for a recreational activity. First activity will be **Friday January 23rd** at 6:00 PM for a Movie Trivia Night. Have fun with others as we look at clips from old movies. All ages and friends welcome.

Adult Choir (Led by Stacy Vance)

*Meets on Wednesdays from 6:15-7:15 PM starting **Wednesday, January 7th**. All Voices are welcome.

GRIEF CARE (Led by Patricia Major)

*GRIEF CARE 8 week video-based small group to help those who have lost a loved one in death. Offered when needed.

Defenders (Led by Ken Wells and Bill Sigurdson)

*Meets on the last Friday of the month at 11:00 AM. First meeting will be January 23rd at the Ocala

Indoor Shooting Range. Contact Bill Sigurdson for more info.

Women of Riches (Led by Pam Riches)

*Meets on **Mondays at 2:00 PM starting February 2nd** for 6 weeks at the home of Pam Riches. The study will take a look at Kings and OT Prophets. 5 studies and one lunch get-together.

New Life in Christ (Led by Pastor Schulz)

*Take a look at God, creation, the work of the Holy Spirit, Baptism, Lord's Supper, the dual natures of Jesus Christ, Heaven and Hell, Judgment Day and more. Class is a good refresher for members and pre-requisite for those wanting to join Open Bible. Begins on January 8th from 2:00-3:30 PM. 9 Sessions.

CHURCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

The church council met on December 18th.

Following are the highlights from the meeting:

- November income was \$7,729 more than expenses. So far year to date income is \$12,638 more than expenses. The mortgage balance as of 11/30/14 was \$403,012.
- Approval was given to accept the offer from a member to arrange and pay for the exclusive private showing of the movie "Jerusalem" at the Regal Hollywood Stadium #16 and IMAX theater in Ocala on Tuesday, February 10, 2015 at 10:00 AM.
- It was decided to reopen the library using metal shelving.
- The audit committee will complete the audit of the church books by the third week in January.
- It was decided to accept the gift of a baby grand piano. It will be placed at the front of the church on the left side.
- A movable sign will be placed near the entrance to the parking lot that will direct guests to the guest parking spots near the church.
- The original builder of the church has been contacted. He will provide some details

regarding the expansion of the church building to the south end of the church sometime in January.

- We have contracted with Massey to take over both interior and exterior pest control at church.
- The amounts were established for each detailed line item in the 2015 budget.

WOMEN OF OPEN BIBLE

We will meet January 14th at 1 pm in the Fellowship Hall. All ladies are welcome. Hostesses for January are Nancy Gonia and Karen Pearson.

A few events that Women of Open Bible sponsored in 2014 were:

- Spring Salad Luncheon & Fashion Show in April.
- A Ladies Luncheon held in June.
- Advent by Candlelight on Dec. 7th.
- Ladies Christmas Luncheon.
- Supported the missions assigned to Open Bible by LWMS.

I would like to thank all the ladies who helped make these events a success as they were enjoyed by many.

God's blessings on your New Year.

Your Sister in Christ,
Sandy Hahm, President

THANK YOU

Dear Open Bible Family,

This has truly been a year of illness for me and throughout it all you have been there supporting and loving me. I am so blessed to have each one of you in my life. I thank you for your cards, your words of encouragement, your visits, the meals, the telephone calls, the help getting me to and from appointments and hospital stays and the

many offers to do anything I needed. I especially thank you for your prayers. I know Jesus listened to your sweet words on my behalf and that He is always at my side. There are not words to tell you how very much you each mean to me and how very blessed I am to have my church family.

Also, Pastor, this of course includes you, you are always there for me, your telephone calls, text messages, prayers, and the devotions at the hospitals. We are blessed to have you as our caring shepherd.

In Christ love,
Barb Hartshorn

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Phil & Karen Herring – 1
Ed & Marilyn Pearson – 25

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Shirley Miller – 2
Armand Occhetti – 3
Carol Hinz – 5
Paula Malec -6
Ed Pearson – 8
Dave Mottl – 11
Eva Orcutt – 12
Fred Aguda – 15
Leslie Nelson – 18
Vern Griffin – 18
Joan Mucci – 19
Loreli Aguda – 22
Marilyn Vander Weir – 22
Nancy Gonia – 24
Sharilyn Bielefeldt—25
Joan Blaho – 29
Bob Hinz – 31