



# NEWSLETTER



February, 2014

Volume 10, No 2

## FROM THE PASTOR

The year 2013 was a year in which we attempted to become more efficient in the way we do ministry at Open Bible. The congregation approved a part-time secretary. Our secretary took care of worship bulletin preparation, website updates, membership updating in PowerChurch Plus and in our membership directory, assigning mailboxes, getting pictures taken of new members, offering envelopes, etc. She also ordered and fixed up our Mission Table, and bulletin board. She answers the phone with a joyful spirit.

The Lord has blessed us in the past year with a 27% increase in weekly worship attendance and an 18% growth in full-time membership. The growth rate in membership is down from weekly attendance since we released 10 of our 12 long term backsliders at the end of 2013. What remains a joy to see is the large number of adult confirmations that took place in 2013. In many WELS congregations, if you are blessed with 10 adult confirmations a year, you are really celebrating. At Open Bible we were blessed with 23 adult confirmations. I am not sure what the Holy Spirit has in store for our congregation in 2014, but I can see a distinct possibility of 20-40 adult confirmations in 2014. That number does not include transfers or professions of faith. We could easily experience a 30-50% growth rate in the next 12 months.

Prospect information is being stored on an internet site called, Salesforce.com. I have access to this site with my iPhone and can record and read prospect information on the fly, while I am out and about. I categorize our prospects as either being High, Medium or Low priority. I attempt to make regular contact with the high priority via email,

phone calls, or personal visits. I have found that dropping off a gift packet on Mondays or Tuesdays following a first time visit has been very well received by our Sunday guests. The gift packet contains a small Fresh Market loaf of bread, jam, a Meditations, brochure about our church, and business card. It is all about building relationships with our newcomers, and this initial visit helps in that regard, so that one day, I may have the chance to talk to them more about Jesus and our church. In 2014, I plan to have a monthly evangelism meeting with a committee. The committee will be responsible for email contact, personal notes, phone contact, and some personal visits when necessary.

To give people more chances to worship at Open Bible, we began two services during our Lenten season. The first service was held at 4:00, with a light supper following, and then a late service at 6:00 P.M. These two services made it possible for those who don't like to be out at night to be home, and those who still work, to be able to worship. Our Lenten series was entitled, "Names of Wondrous Love". During Passion week, we had a special Good Friday service, called, the Service of the Nails. Other special services during 2013, were a patriotic service, 10th Anniversary celebration, and our first ever Mission Festival. You will note in the statistical report that worship attendance increased significantly when we had two services in 2013 vs. one service in 2012. (Those stats show dramatic increases in both mid-week Advent and mid-week Lenten services)

On June 25th, 13 teenagers who were on their way to a youth rally in Orlando, dropped off informational packets about our church to some 250 homes in the immediate vicinity of our church. Special thanks to Pastor Dale, Connie and Ron and Diane Brutlag in this effort.

As we continue to grow, it is essential that new members as well as old, stay connected and feel that Open Bible is their church. We need to provide opportunities outside corporate worship for people to grow spiritually, serve their Savior, and have fun together. In order to meet this need, Open Bible began various new groups. They are: The Book Club, Wednesday in the Word, 466A group, the North County group, Men's Breakfast out, Women's Bible study, SPLASH(Single people loving and serving him), and the Defenders. More small groups will begin as the need presents itself. At a seminar in Orlando, we learned that new members need to be assimilated soon after membership. Two ways that were suggested is giving the new member a chance to serve in some limited capacity, and involve them in a small group, so they can get to know more members in a natural way.

Our church website is regularly updated. The home page is changed each week to reflect the sermon theme for Sunday. In addition, a printed manuscript of the sermon is uploaded to our website, and can be read there. If you would like to listen to an audio of the sermon, it is available as well.

I have continued the practice of a weekly Knee mail to our congregation, and a pastor update. The pastor update lets everyone know what has been happening during the past week. This update is important to keep the communication lines open to our congregation.

At Open Bible we began a Children's Church in 2013. 4 teachers served to teach the lessons and sing some songs with the children. Pam Johnson coordinated the effort. Since the 2 Langer children attended only twice a month, each teacher prepared one lesson for two weeks. On the Sundays when the Langer children were not in attendance, the teacher who taught the last lesson with them would teach it again, should new children be in attendance.

Bible classes were offered in 2013 on Wednesdays at 5:00 P.M. Some of the studies were on the book of Daniel, the Missionary Journeys of Paul, Tough Questions, and Speaking the Truth in Love to Muslims. In addition, a class was taught on Angels

and Demons to our 466A small group. Finally, regular adult information classes were taught to new people desiring to become members at Open Bible. (New Life in Christ)

A banner stand and some initial banners were ordered in 2013. Our banner committee produced their first banner for our Anniversary and Mission Festival services in August of 2013. It featured an Open Bible on it. The banner committee also produced an Advent and Christmas banner.

Our worship committee met once a month to coordinate our special services and to add additional instrumental and vocal music to our regular traditional worship services. We have been blessed recently with new members who have skills with the violin, clarinet, and harmonica.

Plans for 2014 involve the possibility of having a one minute television ad that would follow the Sunday morning telecast at "Time of Grace". Pastor Jeske and Pastor Schulz would do a promo ad inviting people to come to worship at Open Bible. 3 concerts are planned for the winter of 2014. These concerts will provide another way to reach the unchurched in our community by getting them to come inside our building, meet some of our Open Bible membership, and possibly come back again one day for worship.

What a wonderful opportunity it is to serve in this congregation. Thank you for your support!

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's a little difficult to believe that another year has passed since our last annual voters meeting. Nevertheless it is time to review some of the highlights that have occurred over that time span at Open Bible. The first thing that grabs your attention has to be the outreach efforts of Pastor Schulz that have led to the addition of 40 new members. That growth figure has had a positive domino effect. Numerous new groups have been formed to assist in the assimilation process as well as to promote spiritual growth and create Christian fellowship and service opportunities.

These growth elements have also caused the Church Council to take some positive steps in the area of advanced planning. We purchased thirty five new chairs along with one hundred Bibles to address our growth needs. We also added numerous banners, some made by a group of ladies, some purchased and some donated. These banners coincide with the seasons of the Church year as well as the matching hymn board insets and pulpit stoles and certainly enhance the beauty of our Sanctuary all to the Glory of God.

Many events, such as our annual welcome back for our winter members, our friendship Sundays and our concert series have become annual happenings. We also had numerous very special events during the year. They included our tenth anniversary recognition, our first mission festival, Pastor Schulz's first anniversary as our Pastor as well as his thirtieth anniversary in the ministry and a wonderful one hundredth birthday celebration for member Anna Lind. We also welcomed the addition of new Church signs designed to make it easier to locate our entrance way.

At our September Congregational meeting we conducted our usual Church business and also asked for and received Congregational approval to spend some surplus funds on a number of major projects. We paid additional monies to help reduce our church mortgage as well as adding funds to our CMO (Congregational Mission offerings). The voters also granted approval for the purchase of the Risen Christ statue that graces the balcony alcove area in the back of Church. This statue will be on display for most of the Church year with the exception of Advent and the Christmas season when we display our beautiful nativity scene that includes several recently purchased additions.

Also under the heading of new business, we elected a member at large to our newly formed nominating committee and accepted a number of changes to our current BYLAWS. Included in these changes was the establishment of a rotation system that now clearly defines when Council positions rotate in the future. Since our Congregation is still rather new, we needed to assure that not all Council positions would change

at the same time as occurred three years ago. With that in mind we would like to take this opportunity to thank two council members who will be leaving the board this month for their past service. Walt Farnsworth has served for the past three years as head of Buildings and Grounds and Herb Schaefer has served for the past nine years (six as this Congregation's first President and the last three as Vice President). Thank you gentlemen for your many positive contributions to Open Bible and we pray that you will continue to serve your Lord and your Church in the future.

The year 2014 will almost certainly see a number of changes as Open Bible continues to grow and evolve. One major change included in our BYLAW revision calls for a third Congregational meeting to take place in May of each year. This was designed to continue to allow for more membership input into the affairs of this Church. The Council has also already begun the process of forming an ad-hoc committee that will be assigned the long range task of looking at future growth areas and potential expansion possibilities. We ask all of you to not only pray for the successful work of this committee but please continue to thank and praise our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for His many blessings bestowed on Open Bible. We all know that prayer is a very powerful tool but also remember that the power is not in the prayer, it is in the one who hears it and answers it.

God's continued blessings to each and every one of you,

Greg Wendorf

## WHO'S WHO AT OPEN BIBLE

By Leslie Nelson



Gunnard Fredrickson has been part of our Open Bible family for about seven months now, so many of you know that he is from that most wonderful northern state: Wisconsin!

Born in Rhinelander, he attended a public school for four years before transferring to Zion Lutheran.

His parents were members there, and that is where he was baptized and confirmed.

While growing up and attending Rhinelander High School, hockey was his sport. After graduation he enlisted in the Air Force. Upon his discharge he moved to Kenosha and worked at American Motors. While working there he went to Gateway Technical College and received degrees in Accounting and Data Processing. He taught evening classes at Gateway for two years. He then moved to Georgia and worked for Reliance Electric and J. C. Penney, who relocated him to Texas, where he earned a degree in Management at Dallas Baptist University. Gunnard had a successful 54-year career in Information Systems, working over 28 years at J. C. Penney, where he retired in 2010. He still does consulting for them.

Gunnard married Barbara at St. Luke's in Kenosha, and during their 44 years of marriage they lived in Madison, Kenosha, Augusta and Athens, Georgia, and Allen, Texas. They had three children: Gunnard, Jr., Lisa and Patricia, who now have provided him with three grandchildren: Jason, Juliana and Stephen, who live in Dallas and Oconomowoc.

Gunnard celebrated his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday in Paris and his 70<sup>th</sup> in Beijing. His travels have also taken him to France, Italy, Greece, Sicily, Rhodes, Ephesus, China, Canada, Mexico, and the Virgin Islands. But he hasn't neglected the U. S., and has visited most of our states, including Alaska.

He is a fan of the Darden Restaurant chain, especially Red Lobster and Olive Garden. A big reader, his favorite authors are W. E. B. Griffin, Vince Flynn, Brad Thor and Tom Clancy. He is in our church golf league and plays a mean game of pinochle. Sit at his table at the next game night!

### FROM THE WORSHIP COMMITTEE

We hope that all of our members have liked the special music we have tried to have each service. The instrumentalists, cantors, choir selections and

soloists have been used to add praise and honor to our God during our worship services.

New to our Psalm portion of the service is the use of Psalms from the Reformation Psalter. We will try to use these arrangements once a month. They are usually sung with a cantor or small group.

With the capital fund monies approved in the new budget we are planning to purchase a full scale electronic piano for use with the choir and singing groups when appropriate. At the present our electronic keyboard does not have a full keyboard and can't be used for accompaniments for the singers as the music calls for.

Plans are underway for the Lenten season. We will again have 2 services each Wednesday at 4 & 6 pm with a light dinner between services. Ash Wednesday is on Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>. Through these Wednesday services we can all walk the path to Calvary with our Lord, a segment each week until Good Friday when He died so that we might live with Him eternally. All our sins were placed on Him and because of that we have forgiveness of our sins.

In the future we will try to make sure that special music won't add to the length of the service. We have had 2 extra long services, both communion services, but the reason that happened is that our communion attendance has been larger than in the past, plus we have had special things happening in the services; guest vocalists, confirmations, all of which are blessing that we should be thankful for. Open Bible is growing! Praise The Lord!

### FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

The first fellowship activity was held on Friday, January 24<sup>th</sup>. The movie night was well attended and everyone enjoyed the W.C. Fields short film and the feature length film, "Captain Philips". We wish to thank Fred Hainen for showing the film and letting us use all of his equipment. We think that our next movie night might be an old fashioned 'drive in movie' shown outside when the weather is agreeable.

We invite all of our members to our February fellowship activity. What is planned is a 'Presidential Game Night'. As an ice-breaker we will assign a secret president or First Lady to you as you arrive and throughout the evening you will try identifying who you are only asking yes or no questions. But the real event will be our annual Game Night. Please bring along your favorite game and a favorite snack to pass. The committee will provide soda and water plus a dessert and coffee. Can you guess the dessert for a 'Presidential' theme activity?

Mark your calendars for Saturday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 6:30-8:30 pm, for this event. Hope many of our members will attend and think about bringing a friend or two and introduce them to Open Bible.

We are still looking for two couples who are willing to take over the leadership of this committee. If you are interested please contact R. Brutlag

That's it for this month. Read about our future activities in the March newsletter.

## CHURCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

The church council held its first meeting of 2014 on January 16<sup>th</sup>. Here are the highlights from our meeting:

- Year end financial report very favorable. Open Bible was \$43,832 in the black for the year.
- Mortgage balance is \$427,712.
- Elders have been assigned to various areas of ministry at Open Bible.
- The second new sign should be installed soon.
- The television in the Fellowship Hall will have rolling announcements running before and after services.
- Coffee mugs imprinted with Open Bible will be available soon.
- A prayer partner program will be soon implemented.

- Possibility of starting a New Life in Christ class at Steeplechase.
- Finalized 2014 budget to be presented at annual meeting.
- Establishment of a Long Range Planning Committee.

The council is here to serve our congregation. We welcome suggestions and comments from our members.

## SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

### **New Life in Christ Class- Taught by Pastor Schulz**

A great refresher class on the basic teachings found in God's Word. This seven week study will look at the natural knowledge of God, the work of Jesus Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit including spiritual gifts, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the end of the world with discussions on Judgment Day, Heaven and Hell, church fellowship, the history of the Lutheran Church, and the differences in Lutheran Church bodies today. If a person would like to join Open Bible as a full-time member and is not already WELS, this class would be a pre-requisite to membership.

The class meets on Thursday from 6:30 pm until 8:00 pm. The final class will be on Thursday, February 27<sup>th</sup>.

### **Women's Bible Study – Led by Judy Anderson Meets at church**

You are invited to spend time in the light of God's Word looking at some of the challenges women face in their lives today. Whether these challenges appear as positives or negatives, the bottom line is that we are not facing them alone - it's "You and Me, Lord!"

- 1) As I become emotionally drained! Tuesday, February 4<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm.
- 2) As I become spiritually challenged! Tuesday, February 11<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm.
- 3) As I see new opportunities to serve You! Tuesday, February 18<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm.
- 4) As I celebrate relationships blessed by You! Tuesday February 25<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm.

### **Wednesday in the Word - Taught by Pastor Schulz Older and Much Wiser!**

A six week study on the prophets Elijah and Elisha as they deal with issues of depression, loneliness, contentment, life-changing health issues, persecution for being a Christian and much more. We will be studying the books of I Kings 17 to 2nd Kings 7. The studies will be held on Wednesdays from 5:00-6:00 pm. The Older and Much Wiser class will conclude on February 12<sup>th</sup>. On February 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, we will engage ourselves in a 2 week Bible study taught by President Mark Schroeder, President of the Wisconsin Synod. This study will be shown on the screen in the fellowship hall.

### **Book Club- Facilitator is Pastor Schulz**

February 25<sup>th</sup> from 4:00-5:30 pm at Open Bible.  
Discussion: Conversion: Not By My Own Choosing.  
If you would like to order your book, you can either order it yourself from Northwestern Publishing House, or our church secretary, Karen Pearson can order a copy for you and you can reimburse her.

### **SPLASH (Single People Loving and Serving Him)- Facilitator is Pastor Dale**

The Singles of Open Bible will meet for a fellowship activity in February. Currently they are planning on lunch at the Golden Corral at 1:30 pm on Friday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, followed by a movie, "Walking to Egypt", at church. There will be no meeting in February as Pastor Dale will be out of town.

### **Godly Men of Leisure- Facilitator is Dennis Duessler**

The group is discussing a Bible study booklet on some of the issues retired men and men in general face. They meet monthly at Perkins Restaurant off of 466. Their next meeting is on February 21<sup>st</sup> at 8:00 am.

### **The Defenders- Led by Ken Wells and Bill Sigurdson**

This group meets once a month to shoot 50-100 rounds at the Gun Club off 44 near Leesburg. Ken and Bill supply everyone with targets or you can buy one for \$1.25. The cost to use the range is \$10.00.

Following the activity, the group has lunch at Beef O' Brady's and devotes time to pray for our country and military. On some months, to save on ammunition costs, the group will look at battles in the book of Judges. Next meeting on February 28<sup>th</sup> at the Gun Club at 11:00 am.

### **The 466A Group- Taught by Pastor Schulz**

This group meets twice a month for two hours at homes of members at Open Bible who live in the southern portion of the Villages in the 466A area. The group meets on Thursdays from 2:00-4:00 pm. They start off with a few mixers, have a 50 minute study with discussion, devote time to prayer, and then have some light food and drinks provided by the host family.

Engage, a series of short films, is a new style of Bible study that fits right where you are and shows you where God wants you to be.

February 13<sup>th</sup>- Home of Jim and Sandy Fehlhaber

February 27<sup>th</sup>- Home of Klaus and Helga Maas

### **The North County Group- Led by Alan Johnson**

These are a group of Open Bible members from the Ocala area who meet twice a month on Sunday nights from 6:00-8:00 pm. Right now they are tentatively planning to meet on Sunday, February 9<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> at the home of Alan and Pam Johnson. For more information on topic and meeting place, please call Alan Johnson at 352-390-6982

### **Quilters- Facilitator is Ruth Niermeyer**

Meets again on February 7<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 am. Join these ladies as they make some great homemade quilts.

### **Women of Open Bible- Led by Sandy Hahm**

Meeting on February 12<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm.

### **Grief Share**

February 3<sup>rd</sup> thru April 28<sup>th</sup> Mondays from 4:00 – 5:30 pm 13 weeks.

## CONCERT AT OPEN BIBLE

### Branches Band

February 9<sup>th</sup>, 4:00 pm



Branches Band is a Christian group from Milwaukee performing their own arrangements of familiar hymns, Christian contemporary songs, as well as original

music. Performers Andy and Rachel Braun are graduates of Wisconsin Lutheran College. Andy plays guitar, harmonica, ukulele, and adds vocals. He also performs in an acoustic duo with Rachel aptly named “Andy & Rachel”. Andy & Rachel play all over the Milwaukee area at a wide variety of venues. Rachel plays small percussion (including bongos, tambourine, and shaker) as well as piano. Her most prominent instrument is her voice.

## WOMEN OF OPEN BIBLE

Women of Open Bible will meet February 12<sup>th</sup> at 1 pm in the Fellowship Hall. All ladies are welcome. Hostesses for February are Carol Yahn and Joan Blaho.

Women of Open Bible will be serving at the “Welcome Back Snowbirds Brunch” on February 16<sup>th</sup>. Please sign up on the sheet located in the kitchen pass through if you plan to attend and also there is another sheet for food donations for the brunch. Thank you for your help.

The funeral committee met in January to set up a policy for serving at funerals when asked by the family. A sign up sheet is located in the kitchen pass through if you would be willing to help serve at a funeral. You will be called on a rotating basis. (You will not be asked to serve for every funeral).

Reserve the date of April 4<sup>th</sup> for the Salad Luncheon. More information in the March Newsletter.

Hope to see you at our February meeting.

Sandy Hahm, President

## S.P.L.A.S.H.

### Single People Loving and Serving Him

Are you single, are you lonely, are you grieving? Then this is the club for you. We meet once a month at church on the second Monday.

We start off with a 19 minute Bible study, which usually runs longer because we find it so interesting and we have lots of discussions as how the lesson pertains to us today. Then we plan our social activities and ways on how we can serve Him. Currently we are planning on lunch at the Golden Corral at 1:30 on Friday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, followed by a movie, “Walking to Egypt”, at church. In the future we hope to go to more movies and on some day trips.

For our service project, we are looking into ways we can help Steeple Chase and The Carriage House.

There will be no meeting in February as Pastor Dale will be out of town.

## ASSIMILATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

When is the last time you have been a new member in a church? Last year? Upon the founding of Open Bible in 2003? Have you been a Lutheran all your life? What’s it like for a newcomer to experience a new church, a new denomination, different music, a new group of people? Is it intimidating, exciting, challenging? Perhaps all of these.

To help make the welcoming of new members to Open Bible even more welcoming than it already is, an Assimilation Committee has been formed. That’s an academic title for “helping new members find their niche”, to feel at home, engaged, useful, and a part of the Church.

The Assimilation Committee held their first meeting on Thursday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>. It was attended by members Peggi Carrier, Nancy and

David Gonia, Patricia Major, Ed Pearson, Mary Helen Schultz, and me, Jerry Mucci.

We started off getting to know each other's church backgrounds, why we sought a new church, why Open Bible in particular, and what assimilation really means. How do we know when a new member has been "assimilated?" Is it a onetime milestone or a continuing process? We voted for "continuing process."

How do we, and the entire church body (assimilation of new members is part of every Christian's job description, just like evangelism) engage in the process of assimilating new members? At the top of the list is "make a friend" – get to know the person or couple. Ask questions, converse on the phone, send emails, invite to breakfast or lunch. In addition to these basics, the Spiritual Gifts inventory taken by all new members at the end of the New Life in Christ class will be used to match the spiritual gifts of the new member with the activities, groups, ministries and needs of the church. Believe me, there IS something for every conceivable spiritual gift – everything from nurturing others to being nurtured, from learning to teaching, from helping to being helped, from leading to following. When you think about it, being helped, learning, being nurtured and even following are not passive activities. When wholeheartedly engaged, they all lead to becoming stronger, more faithful followers and servants of Christ.

Once the new member discovers his spiritual gifts, those gifts will be matched to the opportunities in the church that best engage those gifts. The Committee will bring these new members to the attention of the appropriate ministry leader in the church to personally invite the new member into that ministry. And, of course, follow-up will be an important ongoing responsibility.

Once this new Committee fine tunes its forms and processes over the next several weeks, individual Committee members will begin their own ministries of engaging, dialoging, matching, and inviting new members, holding the banner "Go Forth and Assimilate" in the same manner as our Pastor cheers "Go Open Bible."

## ALTAR GUILD

February	Joan Blaho
March	Bonnie Farnsworth

## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Herb & Doreen Schaefer - 9

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Bill Sigurdson – 2  
Marilyn Pearson - 5  
Sharon Sigurdson – 12  
Judy Mahnke – 14  
Ardith Schmidt -14  
Dan (Doc) Blaho – 17  
Judy Hainen - 23  
Gloria Butzow - 24  
Les Stauske - 27  
Judy Anderson - 28  
Dianne Bliss - 28  
Barb Hartshorn - 28  
Jeanette Kellam – 28