



# Newsletter



**June, 2017**

**Volume 12 No. 6**

## **From the Pastor**

### **Open Bible Grows With Radical Love**

**by Pastor Schulz**

Why is it some churches continue to see numerical growth and others don't. Some say, "It is the music! You need to have a great praise band for those who like modern music." Others say, "You have to have well maintained facilities and a ton of small group ministries to meet the needs of people today." Others say, "You need to look at building a Christian Day School. That is where you will get your young families. Florida has a terrible education system and you need to tap into that weakness." Finally, some say, "You need a pastor who is truly dynamic and preaches unbelievable sermons that relate to people today."

What if I said to you, "All these opinions can have an effect on attracting people to your church, but all these methods are not hitting the heart of a growing church. So where does numerical growth come from? The answer is simple: Radical Love. Members who have been moved by the selfless love of Christ radically love others. Christ motivates these people. The Bible says, "Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life for many."

A church where members appear on a Sunday and then disappear as quickly as possible, will struggle with

growth. However, a church where radical love is seen attracts people like a strong magnet. A growing church is one where members look for ways to serve others unselfishly in their daily lives, and look for places to serve in the church.

I have heard people say about Open Bible. "They sure are a friendly group." "I received several cards in the mail when I was sick from those people at Open Bible, and I don't even know who some of them are." "Open Bible members are praying weekly for me and other people in their weekly knee mails."

Yes, Loving churches grow. Cold churches don't. That's the story of the early church, too. They loved each other deeply. Acts 2:44-45 says, "All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need." That's radical love. The Roman government hated Christians. It was illegal to be a Christian. The Romans often tried to kill believers. But even the Romans would say that Christians really loved each other. You know it must be true if the enemies of the Church would say that! But the early Church was known for exactly that kind of love. It is the same kind of love that drew people to Jesus. The Bible said the early Church grew on a daily basis.

We all want that kind of growth in our churches. The way to achieve that is to love like the early Church. We call that fellowship—or being as committed to our fellow believers as we are to Jesus.

There are two reasons people aren't believers in Christ. They don't know any Christians—or they do! People want to be around those who love them. When a church genuinely loves others, you will have to lock the doors to keep people out. Go Open Bible!

## **President's Message**

### **Excelling in the Grace of Encouraging**

We are all running our race through this life and as in our youth, we love to have people cheering us on. Remember those days; Grammar school, high school, college, competing in various sports and games? It always felt good deep down inside when people were cheering for you to do well. This is what Open Bible is to me, a large cheering section, urging me to continue running the race through this life, while continuing to keep my eyes on the prize.

We are running through "the valley of the shadow of death"; why is death referred to only as a shadow? Death is only a shadow of its former self for Christian believers because our Lord, Christ Jesus, defeated death at the cross and the empty grave. Death has no power over us anymore. Romans 6:3-4 "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

We are free of sin's sentence of death and look forward to the prize; an eternity in the presence of our God, basking in His warmth and light. 1 Corinthians 15:54-58 "When the perishable has been

clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting?" (ref. Isaiah 25:8 & Hosea 13:14) The sting of death is sin, and the power of death is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

Open Bible has excelled at the grace of encouraging from its very beginnings and I pray that this will continue to be our trademark until the Day of our Lord. Hebrews 10:23-25 "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another ---- and all the more as we see the Day approaching."

The most awe inspiring encouragement for me at Open Bible are the suffering "Jobs" within our midst. You remember Job; He lost every earthly possession, family, and health, but not his faith in God. Remember his famous confession of faith in Job 19:25-27 "I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes --- I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"

I think of Barb Hartshorn and the many trials she has borne and her continued strong faith and up-beat attitude. I think of Ken and Elizabeth Wells, how they continue to run their race through many

trials, holding on to the Lord's promises. I think of Jutta and Skip Owens and their health issues and not a stumble, as they continue their respective races. I am reminded of Jutta's confession of faith to Pastor Schulz and me as she was contemplating her possible by-pass surgery: "I will not let the devil pull me away from my God." I think of Jeri Leeper, Carol and Jerry Yahn, Chuck Jeager, Judy Hainen, Bill and June Murray, and many others who continue their race, with confidence and trust in the Lord. And Mike Villemure, as he keeps running his race for the Lord, with the devil trying very hard to silence him. But he continues to trust his Lord's promises and forges ahead day by day to spread the gospel message. They are not moving along the course as fast as they used to, but they all have smiles on their faces and peace in their hearts as they look forward to the Day. What awesome inspiration I get from these people of Faith, as they continue their race, never taking their eyes off the prize. What awesome encouragers they are; Who wouldn't want to be around people like them? They give me the inspiration and courage to run my race even harder in service to the Lord. So, as Pastor Schulz would say, Go Open Bible!

Your humble servant in Christ Jesus,

Dan Blaho

## **Mike's Corner**

### **Journey in the Word with Mike:**

In the last two months this outreach ministry at Buffalo Crossing, has grown from 3 residents to 8. And, what a dynamic group it is. The Lord has opened some eyes and opened the possibility of one gentleman, an atheist,

to reconsider his belief that there is no God of the universe. While in seminary there were times that I wondered why I was "wasting my time" performing extensive study in theology and apologetics. Well now, I know. "Bill" who is an atheist, comes to the devotion where I officiate. It has gradually developed from combativeness to a point where he sits quietly and listens to the Lord's teachings.

We meet on the first and third Mondays at 1 pm. From my standpoint, I can only praise our Lord for growing this ministry. The senior ministry is unique, they are at heavens door and they care how this life on earth ends.

Pastor Mark and the council have blessed me and Linda so much by allowing us to serve the seniors of these independent, assisted living, and memory care facilities (IAMs). When I began to visit the facilities we were just folks visiting. At this point folks come up, at both the Willows and Buffalo Crossing, and greet us as friends. What a blessing.

On another front, the congregation that serves these senior communities is steadily expanding. Recently Armand has joined the troops! All of those who serve make huge differences in these seniors' lives. As I have said before, many of the residents of these facilities are alone and feel isolated.

Finally, as the Mercy Me singing group sings "I can only Imagine," the extent of how big a difference OBLC can make in the lives of seniors in their final years. Finish strong, we all say. It is just a plea; yet, each of us can make a difference in a person's eternal destiny. What would you do to change eternity through our Lord's love and the Spirit's work for someone who may be lost?

Personally, I love all of you and want each of you to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Mike Villemure

## **Devotional Thought As We Remember Memorial Day**

We live in a time when death seems an unnecessary sacrifice for any cause. Yet men and women have given their lives so that the world could be a place of freedom. How many people are dedicated to anything to the degree that they would die for it? How many of us would give up our lives if the opportunity arose, especially for future generations we will never see?

*Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people.* (Hebrews 9:28, NIV) Jesus gave His life for generations of people who did not even know Him. That is what the men and women in the armed forces did for our country. They sacrificed their lives for strangers, just as Jesus did. As we remember them, may we be reminded of the greatest Sacrifice of all.

## **Who's Who at Open Bible**

### **Let's meet Steven and Nancy Kuepker**

Steven and Nancy Kuepker were both born and raised in Illinois. Steven was raised in a Christian home where he attended St. John's Lutheran Church in Peru, IL and later married in St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Rowe, IL. Nancy was raised in the a Christian home that practiced the Catholic faith later in 1970

she joined St. Paul's Lutheran Church where she and Steven were married April 15 , 1972. Nancy was introduced to Steven though her step cousin Randy who was Steven's best friend in high school.

They have 2 children, a son Adrian and a daughter Allison. They also have 4 grandchildren Ian, Anna and twins Avery and Hayden.

Steve attended Western Illinois University and Illinois State University while Nancy attended Danville Community College. He worked for 37 years managing the manufacture of canned and frozen fruits, vegetables, bottling juice and beverages and processing frozen fish. He worked for Goya Foods, Seneca Foods, SnoKist and Fish People. His work has taken them from New York, through Michigan, Wisconsin, Washington State, Oregon and Minnesota, North Carolina, California and finally Florida. Nancy has worked in grocery stores, and the meat and deli departments as a clerk. They are now retired and living in Ocala.

In their leisure time they enjoy reading. Steven likes Jeff Shaara's War novels and Nancy loves reading a little bit of everything. Nancy likes Italian, Chinese, German and Polish cooking and Steven's favorites are beef and seafood. They enjoy old movies, John Wayne and Tom Hanks among others.

We look forward to getting to know Steven and Nancy better in the coming years and hope they find ways to grow in faith and find friends at Open Bible to share their Christian walk.

Written by: Peggi Carrier

## Small Group Ministry

The following small groups will meet again in the Fall:

North Country Group  
Facilitator: Alan Johnson

Ladies Tuesday Bible Study  
Led by Pam Johnson

Game Nights  
Facilitator: Carol Yahn

Happy Hearts, Happy Hands Handiwork  
Facilitator is Sandy Pawlowski

LIFT (Ladies in Faith Together)  
Facilitator: Genie Selvey

Journey With Jesus  
Led by Judy Hainen

The Defenders  
Led by: Bill Sigurdson & Ken Wells

### **Men Of Leisure - Men's Breakfast Group** **Led by Dennis Duessler**

The group is discussing a Bible study booklet on some of the issues retired men and men in general face. Next meeting is scheduled for Friday, June 9<sup>th</sup> at the Bob Evans Restaurant 2199 Parr Drive, The Villages (on the corner of CR466 & Southern Trace). The starting time is 8:30am and the Topic of discussion will be a 19 Minute Bible Study.

### **Friday Fore-Giving Golfers** **Facilitator is Sandy Fehlhaber**

This group meets once a week on Fridays to golf the Executive courses in The Villages. Teams are determined by the Sunday prior to the golf date. Each golfer is equipped

with a small plastic bag with extra-long tees and a business card from Open Bible to hand out to unchurched golfers.

### **SPLASH**

**Single People Loving and Serving Him**  
**Led by Mike Villemure**  
**Facilitated by: Peggi Carrier, Ina Taylor**

The next SPLASH Bible study is on Monday, June 12<sup>th</sup> at 1 pm. The Topic: Our God of Politics. After the study we will have a social. ALL ARE WELCOME to attend. In the meantime feel free to contact Peggi, Ina or Mike.

### **WinGS**

**Led by Jane Valley**

The Women in God's Service will have their annual June Luncheon. This year the committee chose Nancy Lopez's Restaurant in The Villages. There is a sign-up sheet located in the kitchen Pass-thru. The Date is Friday, June 9<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm. All women are invited but are encouraged to sign-up. Everyone is responsible for the cost of their own lunch.

More people are needed to sign-up for the Coffee Hostesses. Please see the sign-up sheet located on the kitchen pass-thru.

## **LWMS News**

The 54<sup>th</sup> annual LWMS National Convention is in Orlando, Florida this year. Wow! It's so close. If you haven't experienced a LWMS National Convention before, here is your chance . It will be held on Thursday June 22<sup>nd</sup> thru Sunday, June 25<sup>th</sup>. There is a registration form on the internet. Just look up LWMS.org and click on the Convention info.

## Did You Know?

**Coffee Host/Hostesses:** Please sign-up to help with the coffee/fellowship hour. The sign-up sheet is located in the Kitchen pass-thru. Thank you.

**Can Collection:** Bring your “crushed” & “rinsed” cans to church on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month. Put your cans in the back of the red car parked out in front of church. Thank you from the Women of Open Bible.

**Food Pantry Collection:** Please bring non-perishable food items on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month. A collection bin is located by the front doors. Jim & Eva Orcutt will take the items to the donation site for the Wildwood Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen.

**The 2017 Flower Calendar** has been placed on the door at the back of the fellowship hall. Again the cost is \$35.00 per arrangement or \$70.00 for both. Please indicate on your envelope payment is for “flowers”. Two families may sign up for a Sunday and share the cost. If you have questions, please call Carol Stauske at 352-292-3079.

## Happy Anniversary

Alan & Pam Johnson – 1  
Gene & Bette McConkey – 3  
John and Janis Liermann – 5  
Frank & Genie Selvey – 7  
Greg & Carol Wendorf – 7  
LeRoy & Jane Valley - 7  
Jerry & Mary Brooks – 10  
Ron & Diane Brutlag – 14  
Joe & Mary Price – 15  
Ken & Elisabeth Wells – 15  
Tom & Betty DeWitz – 18  
Larry & Ardyce Fronk – 20  
Fred & Judy Hainen – 20  
Ken & Brenda Severa – 20  
Dan & Karen Pearson – 25

Walt & Bonnie Farnsworth – 25  
Ray & Norma Welch – 28  
Bob & Carol Hinz – 29



## Happy Birthday

June Murray – 1  
Elvin Schlegel – 3  
LeRoy Valley - 4  
Maya Ute Mitta – 4  
Pat Holmes – 5  
Joanne Stuedemann – 7  
Jane Valley - 8  
Jeanne Schulz – 9  
Brenda Severa – 11  
Mary Whitford – 11  
Carol Stauske – 12  
Ruth Niermeyer – 13  
Ken Wells – 13  
Donna Davis - 17  
Jennifer Schlegel – 19  
Frank Selvey – 21  
Sandy Richesson - 23  
John Kiewra – 25  
Ardyce Fronk – 27  
Mary Brooks – 29  
Ted Hahm – 29  
Norma Welch – 29



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**“Growing in Christ through the Word, Making His Salvation Known”**  
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS)  
[www.openbiblelutheranchurch.com](http://www.openbiblelutheranchurch.com)



Please join “The Voice of Open Bible” Sunday’s  
11:00 – 11:30am on 89.5 FM (The Boulevard)



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