

FROM THE PASTOR

CHRISTMAS LASTS

Before our brave astronauts were whirled out into space atop those thundering rockets, engineers and technicians from Cape Canaveral and elsewhere pored over long lists of facts and figures, checking and rechecking every minute detail, every step and every process before the A-OK signal was given. Every single item had to be accounted for and all systems had to read “go” before the blast off could take place.

As you and I stand at the threshold of a new calendar year, we do well to run down a checklist of our lives and ask: Is all in readiness for us to enter a new year?

We are going forward with a newborn Savior. True, He’s been with us for a long time now, but our faith and confidence in Him have been renewed through our Christmas worship. We have heard once again how our Lord Jesus Christ became a man to bring light to the darkness caused by sins. We know that He will be with us in the new year to lead us. With that in mind, we can be sure that every detail of our lives is in God’s capable hands. That is why He sent His Son: to give us life through Him.

Since many of you are retired and are enjoying your life in Christ, a great way to start the year off right would be to take a trip to Palestine, Turkey and Greece on an all expense paid 5 week trip. Let me assure you this trip would cause no danger to your life. Actually we will be keeping our feet in this country as we study the Missionary Journeys of the Apostle Paul in the book of Acts beginning on Wednesday, January 9th. The course will run for 5 weeks on Wednesdays from 5:00-6:00 P.M. It will be a PowerPoint study, with a good deal of visuals taking place on a large screen in the fellowship hall.

Furthermore, since we have such a large number of prospects attending Open Bible, I have plans to send out a letter to them and invite them to a New Life in Christ class. I would call them on the phone as a follow

up to the letter. The New Life in Christ class would run for 13 weeks at Open Bible beginning on Thursday, January 24th from 3:00-4:30 P.M. (except March 28th) Any member of Open Bible can attend this class who is looking for a refresher course of basic Scriptural teachings as well.

Keep these dates on your calendar. A concert by Chris Driesbach on Sunday, January 20th at 4:00 pm. A talk by President Zarlino from Martin Luther College on Saturday, January 26th at 11:00 am. Don’t forget the Voters’ meeting on January 27th at 11:00 am. Your input and voice are important at Open Bible. Be sure and attend the Voters’ meeting!

Finally, many thanks for the generous Christmas gifts. I played a round of golf with my future son-in-law at the Arnold Palmer course on December 26th. I used some of the money to be able to play this course. Further, I plan to use the gift to purchase ceiling fans, and a front door light for our new house. Happy New Year! Go Open Bible!

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we begin the year 2013, we know we will be facing a new year filled with many choices and decisions ahead of us. Our lives are and have always been full of choices and decisions. Some are easy, and some more difficult. At times we end up choosing between two good things and sometimes between the lesser of two evils, or so it seems.

From little on we have been taught to make wise choices. Hopefully the lessons our parents taught us figured heavily in our decision making skill development and most certainly the lessons taught in our home churches played a key role in our maturation. As we grew and developed, the decisions increased in significance as well as the consequences for those decisions. And I am sure we all made some choices we wish we hadn’t. We eventually became adults and many of us were faced with the task of selecting a spouse and/or contemplated starting a family. We

chose careers and places to live. Maybe you had the opportunity for advancement in a company that forced you into making other important decisions. How about the decision to move to a warm climate either before or after you retired? And what about choosing The Villages or some surrounding community to live in?

I guess the questions or concerns of decision making involve a long list of variables and have been an ongoing process for as long as we can remember. And we will probably have to make a number more of lasting significance before God calls us home for the last time.

How about in your personal faith life? Have you had questions or doubts? Have you at times felt so all alone that you wondered if God was still there and really listening to you? Have you been in so much despair that you felt as if you were sinking in water over your head? The difficulties of choices and decisions in our spiritual lives can be very cumbersome. But that is where we need to remember that the most important choice of all is one we didn't even make. It was when God chose us to be his own. He called us to be his child and he continues to use his word today to strengthen our faith and call us to a life of service.

God doesn't promise that we will escape the turbulent seas of life, but he does promise, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Heb. 13:5) Remember, he is in the business of turning our mistakes into moments of grace.

We can trust our faithful God to be there in all of our struggles. Be patient. God is using today's difficulties to strengthen you for tomorrow. Give your mental burdens to the Lord. The more you do, the more exciting it gets to see how God will handle the things that are impossible for you to do anything about.

We will always be faced with making decisions and choices. Yesterday you can't alter, but your reaction to yesterday you can. The past you can't change, but your response to your past you can. As for tomorrow you can choose where to spend eternity. And believe me that is the only earthly decision or choice you can make that really and truly matters.

God's blessings to all,
Greg Wendorf

CHURCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

The church council met for the December meeting on Thursday, December 13th. A full council was in attendance. The following actions were taken by the council:

- The treasurer reported that for the second month in a row offerings did not meet expenses. However, expenses were somewhat higher than normal.
- The balance in both the checking account and the money markets is just over \$22,000.
- The council members personally donated money towards the new Nativity scene which was placed above the entry doors to the sanctuary.
- Approval for hiring a paid part-time church secretary for 9 hours per week.
- Approval of the purchase of a bulletin board for the fellowship hall.
- Approved the Hartshorn's request on how they would like to use the memorials that were given for Doug.
- Approved Armand Occhetti as a member of the board of elders.
- Approval of a concert on January 20th presented by Chris Driesbach.

The council would appreciate feedback from our members and suggestions on how better to do the Lord's work at Open Bible. We are growing and are finding that more business is being handled by the council that could be committee work. Seriously think about serving on a new committee when asked.

The council's next meeting is set for January 10th, 2013.

Ron Brutlag
Council Secretary

WHO'S WHO AT OPEN BIBLE

By Leslie Nelson



By now we're all familiar with the friendly face of Fred Aguda. But who is this man? What has he done during his life so far? Why did he choose us to be his church family?

To begin, Fred was born into a Catholic family in Callicoon and raised in Narrowsburg and Wurtsboro Hills, New York (on the Erie Canal.) He has an older sister, Emily, and a younger brother, Paul. He went to the public high school in Monticello, NY, and loved playing baseball and basketball. Fishing was also big in his life.

He moved to Central Florida in 1971, shortly after graduating from high school, and has spent his working years driving trucks throughout the United States. He met Loreli at a Qwik King Store in Ocala where she was working part time, as well as at the Post Office. They were married on May 14, 1988, at Lamb of God Lutheran Church in Westerville, OH. Eventually, Fred took adult classes and was confirmed as a Lutheran.

As a youngster, Fred had a lot of pets - ducks, chickens, birds, raccoons, dogs and cats. Now, he and Loreli have only a Shiatsu named Belle, a Dachshund named Jake and a cat named Mia.

The Agudas were attending Abiding Hope Lutheran Church in Ocala and, through friends, heard about Open Bible. When they came for a visit, Fred was impressed by the togetherness and the friendliness of our members. He sensed that we try to help one another in times of need.

Fred has a hard time choosing his favorite restaurant because he loves all food. His favorite reading material is National Geographic magazine. On TV, he likes watching Matlock and Jeopardy. And he really enjoys square dancing, which he learned to do in third grade! Hopefully, we can have another social event with more square dancing. Fred also loves to travel, and to help other people.

FROM THE WORSHIP COMMITTEE

The Worship Committee hopes that all of our members found the Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and the New Year's Eve services to be most worshipful and meaningful. We welcome suggestions for these services for next year.

We would like to thank the choir and the organists for the extra time and work they put into the special Advent, Christmas, and New Years services. Well done!

As we look into making worship the best it can be for our Lord and for our members we will be looking into new music, using different hymns, and introducing liturgies that are being used throughout our Synod. There is much beauty in some of the newer hymns and liturgies.

If you think about how worship has changed throughout the centuries one will see that there are many types of worship that believers can use in praising their God. Sacrifices in the Old Testament disappeared when Christ completed the ultimate sacrifice. Liturgies have gone from only the priest reciting or chanting the words to

full participation from the worshipers. Psalms are still used weekly but not as hymns as they were intended. As singing by the congregation was introduced hymns were being written to praise the Lord. New hymns are being used like the ones we have in Christian Worship. A new collection of hymns appear in the Supplement and newer ones will be coming as the synod works on a new hymnal. Instrumentation from only a string instrument has been replaced by piano, organ, or full orchestra. Liturgies have been updated and new ones have been added.

As the Worship Committee looks into using some of the newer hymns and newer forms of liturgy let's remember that our Lord deserves our best and welcomes us to worship Him in all we do. A new song that really speaks of salvation, a new liturgy that offers thanks and praise for God's goodness, a different instrument providing the music in the service are all God pleasing if Christ continues to be the focus of our worship.

Our new members who have joined us and our winter guests coming from other WELS congregations are all of different worship experiences. Let's be aware of this as we enhance our worship services.

WOMEN OF OPEN BIBLE

We wish everyone a happy & healthy New Year.

There is a lot to do for 2013 so we are starting with the Officers meeting on Monday, January 7th to plan for the remaining of this season. There is a Women of Open Bible Meeting on Wednesday, January 9th at 1 pm. We will have Les Stauske, Treas. and President Greg Wendorf as our guests to discuss some important matters. Please attend so you can use your voice to ask your questions on these matters. Also please attend the Congregational Meeting on January 27th after fellowship. Our report will be read by Marilyn to the congregation.

This is my opportunity to thank all the ladies for their support and help whenever they were asked. Bless You! We are a team effort and we stand united to help Serve with Gratitude.

Your Sister in Christ,
Marilyn Acklam, President

FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

The Christmas caroling activity was very enjoyable for our carolers and also for the residents of Steeplechase. We had 20 plus carolers turn out for this event. We hope to make this a yearly event and also carol at the Carriage House complex. After caroling we came back to church for a chili supper prepared and served by Armand Occhetti. A wonderful time was had by all.

Next month was to be a movie night. However, we are postponing that until later. Instead we are planning to make a trip to Winter Park for a tour of the Morse Museum and the Tiffany chapel. We will also plan on having lunch before the museum tour.

Lunch can be your choice of restaurant, we won't all have to go to the same one. The cost of admission to the museum is only \$4. We will plan to car pool to Winter Park. Instead of a weekend event we have scheduled this for Tuesday, January 22nd. We plan to leave church around 9:00 am, look around Winter Park's shopping area from 10:30 -11:30, have lunch from around 11:45-12:45, tour the museum from 1:00 - 2:30 and then depart. We should be back at church around 3:30 pm. This will make for a great day so plan to attend. There will be a sign up in the pass through this Sunday.

Mark February 3rd on your calendars as this is the date for our annual new member welcome and to greet all of our returning associate members. We will have a pot-luck brunch after the worship service. We ask that only our members bring a brunch item to serve 8. New members are our guests for the day and needn't bring a brunch item. All new members will be receiving a personal invitation to this event. Look for the email. There will be a sign up sheet in the pass through area during January.

That's all for this month.

OPEN BIBLE QUILTERS

MAKE A DONATION TO LOCAL KIDS

We can all be proud of our Open Bible ladies for all the wonderful things they do, not the least of which is making beautiful quilts for those in need. Recently, our Quilters donated 5 of their handmade small quilts for the benefit of children who attend LaFaye's Precious Angels Daycare Center in Ocala. Several more are now

ready to go, and will be donated in January. We also have lap robes and larger quilts for adults of any age, and invite requests from any of our readers who may know of a need we could fill. Please call Ruth Niermeyer at 259-1018.

The Quilting Ladies have a work meeting the first Friday of every month at church, from 10 to 2. All ladies are welcome to come and give it a try. We have a lot of fun working together, and you would be surprised at the beautiful quilts we are able to put together. You don't need any special skill; just be able to follow a few simple directions. Bring a sack lunch. We have plenty of material, tools and equipment thanks to the generosity of our ladies and Thrivent for Lutherans.

GOLF ANYONE?

All Open Bible golfers who live within The Villages, both men and women, are encouraged to join a small group from church and play together once a week. We have a group of ladies that has been playing on Friday afternoons. Other groups could be formed for other days. Leslie Nelson has volunteered to help us get organized, so please let her know if and when you would like to participate. Email: leslien42@comcast.net or phone: 753-2484. We welcome all skill levels!

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Phil & Karen Herring – 1
James & Liliane Pergola – 9

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Armand Occhetti – 3
Carol Hinz – 5
Fred Aguda – 15
Kalyn Waugh – 15
Leslie Nelson – 18
Abigail Langer – 19
Loreli Aguda – 22
David Langer – 22
Alison Langer – 23
Nancy Gonja – 24
Joan Blaho – 29
Bob Hinz – 31