

## Compelling Statement

By Pastor Mark Schulz

Open Bible Lutheran Church was placed in the Villages community by the grace of God. How our congregation was able to buy property, sell a portion to Steeplechase, have golf cart accessibility, and build a beautiful church for God's people to gather, could not have been done without the direct intervention of God. Our God wanted a conservative, Bible teaching church serving in the Villages community. He has richly blessed us with members who have had prior leadership positions, love to study the Word, worship regularly, have servant hearts, and realize their financial commitment to the Lord's church. He has provided us with a very low mortgage on our building, which is being paid back regularly by the generous offerings of our membership. Because of an adjustment in interest rates, the amount we are paying back is even lower than when we first started.

As our congregation has grown by over 50% during the past 3 years, we have identified certain needs that could help us more effectively carry out our ministry. During the winter months, when our attendance has blossomed to over 200 on certain Sundays, we have alleviated the need for a larger sanctuary by adding additional worship services. We have attempted to keep the fellowship bonds close by having fellowship time between our services. However, during peak season, our present fellowship hall has more people in it than the fire code allows. Likewise, the large round tables have made it difficult at times to communicate with people across from each other. It is also a very tight fit.

An expansion of our present building would allow us to remove the tables and chairs in our present fellowship area and allow several lounge chairs to be placed in designated spots for people to sit in before or after our worship services. The back of our present fellowship hall could have a designated section with a permanent half wall or temporary wall where parents or grandparents with a small child could sit and still watch the worship service from the TV located on the wall above. Close by nursery area is a definite need.

With a new building placed strategically behind our present worship and fellowship facility, there would be an abundance of blessings. We would have a new fellowship area that would be 3x the size of our present fellowship area. This fellowship hall would be large enough to host much larger gatherings than our present hall accommodating us as we continue to grow with God's help. It would provide an expanded kitchen to our present kitchen. It would provide easy access to our restrooms with additional stalls added to our present restrooms. In addition, this new area would contain 3 classrooms. These classrooms could serve as a choir room, with space for choir robes, a teaching classroom, and a board room. Our choir would have a place to warm up before our worship services, so that they would not infringe upon worshippers who are preparing for worship, or be forced to practice in our present fellowship area. If the Lord one day blesses us with children, these rooms could also serve as Sunday School rooms. What is always a negative when a young family comes to Open Bible, and they look for a place of learning for their children, and all we show them is our present board room with chairs, it automatically tells them, we really don't want them here, since we really have no place for them. Classroom space would send a positive message to any younger families which may decide to join our fellowship. As we grow, special small group classes could make use of these 3 classrooms for teaching and fellowship. There would be practice space for a handbell choir, or any other special music groups that may want to meet.

The new addition allows us to have a space for a church library. This library could be filled with many books, and have a checkout system where members and friends could find good reading material. Also, attached to the new addition would be storage space, a portion air conditioned or heated, the other portion not. This storage space would allow us a location to place Christmas and Easter displays, banners, grill, power sprayer, lawnmower, edger, tables, handbells, chairs, records, janitor supplies, maintenance bench with tools, and even a used golf cart that could be used to offer people a ride to the front door either from our parking lot, or one of the assisted living homes nearby.

There would be a side entrance to this new building, for easy access to church activities that would meet specifically in that area, and provide a patio for outdoor small group gatherings.

As we look back at our present meeting rooms in our older structure, we could turn the present board room into an expanded office for our pastor, where, there would be space with chairs for personalized counseling, and adequate book shelves for the many books a pastor has. Our secretary would inherit the present office of the pastor as well as the present copying room, which would give her more storage space for church supplies, and space to carry out her responsibilities.

A building program will spur enthusiasm both in a congregation and in the community. The message being given is: "This church is on the move, people are excited about its ministry, and why not come and join us as we grow." We would anticipate that more guests would be coming to worship on a Sunday, to check us out, as a direct result of this building program.

"With God, all things are possible." We continue to see the hand of God richly blessing our congregation as we continue to reach many new souls, and share with them the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. Let's get behind this effort, and give it our support. As Jesus once said to his disciples, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."