

# Zion Lutheran Church • Fairbanks, Alaska

Pastor's Monday • October 29, 2007

Another Fabulous, Wonderful, Gift Filled and Spirit Driven Weekend! Again – the menu was filled – just how much can we pack into a single weekend? – keep coming! It's only going to get better. That's the promise!

Easter!

Open Arms Fall Festival!

Reformation!

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed, Alleluia! Walking with the Word has finally brought us to the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of John's gospel. It is the story of the empty tomb, the story of a two disciples running, a woman crying and a call to faith. But of course, that is what the Gospel of John has been all about from the beginning – “that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living, God, and that believing you might have life in His name!” From Tia's children's sermon to Paul Lyle's inspired playing to Pastor Joe's sermon, it was all about seeing Jesus and celebrating his living presence in our midst.

And nowhere, as Pastor Joe said in his 11:00 AM service, is the presence of Jesus more evident in our community than at Open Arms. You want to see Jesus – you will find him and his Open Arms in the rooms at Open Arms – from the infant rooms to the Miss Heather's Kindergarten room – you will find Jesus and his Open Arms loving, sharing, disciplining, encouraging the 225 children that come to Open Arms every day. The slide show was wonderful, but the most moving event was Julie Benson, the chair of the Open Arms Board of Directors, telling the members of Zion that she was at Zion because of Open Arms! In her enthusiastic manner she shared the stories of how she found Open Arms on the recommendation of Dale Seay and Randy Weaver, how she came to register for a place in the infant room the day her pregnancy was confirmed – how the community at Zion and Open Arms embraced her family in times of crisis, and how grateful she is to the members of Zion who have made Open Arms possible. For me, I thrilled when two women that I have seen work day in and day out, week after week, month following month and now for an accumulated five years – Krisy Jo Yates and Maria Vilchez. These lead teachers are the essence of what Open Arms is. Both were honored for their five years of service. It continues to be a ministry of unlimited mission opportunity, not only here in Fairbanks, but in the 57 Open Arms centers around the country. The afternoon Fall Festival was a hoot with wonderful games, perfect weather for “Trunk or Treat” and a terrific time of fellowship. Thanks to all who came and volunteered!

What does Reformation have to do with this? It is all about the good news of the Gospel of Jesus... and how we share that Gospel with others. Of all the gifts we have, the good news of salvation through faith in Christ is the greatest. Our Fall Stewardship Program, Consecrated Stewards, will focus on how we individually, and as a congregation can grow in our stewardship. We officially began the program this weekend – unfortunately the US Postal service did not deliver the letter that we had hoped would inform you of this beginning. In the next four weeks – we will be challenged through Bible Studies, Sermons, letters, Testimonies and Ministry Highlights to celebrate how we are being “Consecrated Stewards” of what God has entrusted to us. The ministry of Open Arms is just one of the ways that we are passing on the Gospel of Jesus to others. The leadership of our Fall Stewardship Program consists of Raelynn and Bruce Radway, Chairs; Kip and Dawn Harmon, Events Chairs; Brett and Cindy Helms, Reservations

Chairs; Amber and David Cagwin, Spiritual Growth Chairs; Andy Pugh, Finance Chair; and Michael Bolz, Communications Chair. Pastor Joe and myself are also part of the leadership. Our Consultant and our guest speaker on Consecrated Steward Weekend, November 23 and 24, is Ryan McIvor, who is on staff at the Northwest District.

It is with sadness that I announce that Pam Rice, our director of Christian Outreach will be leaving our staff to take a job with the National Park Service. We celebrate her 13 years of connection with our congregation, during which time she has spent considerable time away as a missionary in Africa and more recently working for the World Home Prayer League and doing Master's Work at Concordia University in St. Paul, MN. And we are especially grateful for the almost three years that she has served on our staff, using her considerable creativity and communication skills to enable Zion to be effective in reaching out to our community.

A Congregational Meeting has been called by the Leadership Council to address our financial situation. If you have been following the level of giving published each week in the Fridge Flyer, you know that offerings are considerably less than our budget. In consultation with our finance committee and at the encouragement of the Leadership Council, I will be suggesting a significant reduction in our budget for the remaining fiscal year (ends March 31) so that our budget will more closely match the monies that we are receiving. Please come and learn why this situation has developed and what we as a congregation can do about it... Sunday, November 11<sup>th</sup> after the 11:00 AM service.

Prayers are requested for Eva Lose, who continues in her fight with cancer.... And for Jeris Freeman, the mother of Tammy Weaver and Joy Gerhauser, who was medivaced to Alaska Regional Friday evening for heart problems. Late word on Sunday was that she was stabilized and that more tests are coming to determine the exact nature of her illness.

Miss Heather, our Kindergarten Teacher; Lenetta, Open Arms Director and myself will be headed to Portland and the NW District Teachers conference. I will fly out Thursday morning (like 12:30 AM) and return late Thursday evening – Heather and Lenetta will stay for the entire conference. Lenetta and I will be sharing the ministry we have at Open Arms.

Blessings,

Pastor Kuehnert