

The Open Door Witness

June 2018

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From the Director

When I started the job of Director of the Open Door in 1996 I didn't dream that I would still be here 22 years later. I was teaching at Mandan Junior High School and saw a job advertised in McCabe's *Messenger* for the Open Door. My three sons were still living at home. The flexibility and anticipation of something different and challenging may be just what I needed at the time. I thought, "work there a few years and when the boys are older return to a school classroom."



The variety of Open Door programs over the years has created fun and exciting experiences. The after school program, morning preschool, Even Start program (with classes in parenting, English as a Second Language for refugees, and early childhood education classes, as well as home visits) and then the full day of preschool brought numerous diverse opportunities to work with young children, elementary-aged children, and adults. It also brought many occasions to work with great people (See *Director*, continued on p. 7)

Is Open Door Moving?

Over the past few months, the leaders of Open Door Community Center and McCabe United Methodist Church have been working together to see if it makes sense for the preschool to move from its present South 12th location in Bismarck to McCabe's location south of the North Dakota capitol.

Like a lot of change, this one is predicated on necessity. Open Door has struggled financially as former sources of financial support have been discontinued. So from Open Door's point of view, the move would reduce expenses if the two entities could "live under one roof."

From McCabe's point of view, the day care has the potential to be a new ministry that could lead younger families to Christ. And because of McCabe's location near the capitol, the number of preschool-aged students might actually increase. As we head into the summer season, the plan adopted by Open Door's board of directors is to keep the present location open. During this time, the board is working with the Bismarck School System to see if it would be possible to use the nearby

Will-Moore school playground for activities. The Bismarck City Council recently granted permission for the preschool's change of address if it could provide outdoor recreation at the nearby school. If that permission can be obtained in writing, then the plan is for Open Door to move to McCabe before the fall school year.

The mutual goal of Open Door and McCabe is to provide preschoolers with a high quality, Christ-centered program. However, moving the preschool is not a fait accompli. There are still many issues that need to be ironed out.

The long-range goal is to keep Open Door's doors open and welcoming to young families. Please keep praying.

Steve Van Dyke
Board chair – Open Door

Rachel Dinger Joins Board



My name is Rachel Dinger and I have lived in Bismarck for four years. Prior to living here we lived in the Aberdeen, SD area. I am first and foremost a lover of Jesus and then my family. My husband Don is recently retired from the military and on staff at Legacy UMC. We have

four children, two grown and married and two still at home. We also have five delightful grandchildren. Being a grandma is the best!

I work at Shiloh Christian School as an assistant cook. My education, however, is in Biblical Studies and Pre-Counseling because I have a heart for the Lord and for people. As we have moved often throughout MN and the Dakotas the Lord has always found me places to serve Him.

I am excited to be on the board for Open Door. I look forward to learning more about this ministry and how I might be able to be of service to the Kingdom in some small way there.

Rachel Dinger recently joined the Open Door Board, replacing Carol Nelson.

Introducing Marilyn Lawson

Hi, my name is Marilyn Lawson. I am a mother to four kids: three boys and one girl. My oldest son is in law enforcement, my second is in the Army Advanced Individual Training in Oklahoma, the third is taking over the family farm, and my daughter is studying to be a veterinary technician.



I have been a cook at the Open Door since mid-March and thoroughly love my job. I was a cook for many years at Prairie Learning Center and have now moved to Bismarck and am very blessed to have a job cooking here. I have learned to cook a variety of meals for the children - if you're not learning something new, then you aren't doing a good job!

My personal challenge here is in the fact that the Open Door doesn't order food from a truck in large quantities (which I have been used to from the former job). Instead, every week the supplies are bought fresh which is a good thing. I greatly appreciate the ladies who work here because they have been patient with me as I adjust to new ways of working!

It is always nice and very welcoming to come to work and the kids all say good morning. It makes my heart happy to be here!

Thank you all very much for the opportunity to work here and to serve our community, the kids, and our God!

Volunteer Hours

During the fourth quarter of 2017, 209 hours of time were volunteered in activities that support the Open Door. For the first quarter of 2018, 120 hours were contributed. We extend our sincerest "thank you" to all who so generously share their time and talents to support the mission of the Open Door.

Hurricane Experience Told

On March 1, 2018, three-year-old Valentina Feiner started preschool at the Open Door. Her family had just recently relocated from Puerto Rico due to the damage done by Hurricane Irma on September 6, 2017, and Hurricane Maria on September 20. Puerto Rico had been their home for the last 15 years.



Valentina's family consists of her father Jossef, mother Dyna Mena, and sister Milca. Jossef worked for the US Postal Service for seven years in Puerto Rico and has transferred to Bismarck. Valentine's mother, Dyna, is a dentist and is presently studying at the Adult Learning Center to learn English and to get

her work credentials. Milca, age 14, attended a school in Puerto Rico that had a focus on art education. Now she is a student at Wachter Middle School in Bismarck. Valentina has made great strides in learning English and creating friendships with the other children at preschool. The family plans to remain in Bismarck for at least four years to allow Milca to graduate from high school.

Jossef shared the family's personal experience of contending with the hurricanes and the resulting damage, their need to move from Puerto Rico, and adjustment to life in Bismarck in the following article.



The hurricanes created chaos for the entire island of Puerto Rico. Jossef recalled how the storm started at midday, continued into the night, and was still going strong at 5 a.m. the next morning. The family was inside the home for 24 hours hoping nothing would happen to them. Jossef had invested in expensive storm

windows and feels the windows and his preparation for the storm was what allowed his house to be fine.

It was three weeks before the family made contact with other family members to let them know they

were safe. Towers for cell phones were down. Those lucky enough to find a signal stayed in that spot and tried to contact family members. It was common for cars to be lined up on a road when someone discovered a spot that had a signal. The availability of only one AM radio station for the country further frustrated communication.

At Jossef's work place, the Postal Service was closed for two weeks waiting for the water to recede so workers could begin clean-up. Then employees worked seven days straight for two months trying to "catch up."

The land looked burnt, bark was ripped off the trees, nothing green was left. Sand carried all the way from the beach covered the highway. Cars were flooded, flipped and abandoned.

Jossef described the island as two main areas. The "metro area" and the "island area." The small island can be driven from one end to the other in about an hour and a half, and that is where the real destruction was. This area was what the world saw on news footage taken from overhead helicopters. The metro area suffered flooding and damage to roofs but most of the buildings were cement and that minimized the damage.

Major problems following the hurricanes were lack of drinking water, electrical outages, and no gasoline for generators. Gas lines for cars and generators were 2-3 days long. People were sleeping in their cars, hoping that gas would still be available to buy when they got to the front of the line. Some who were desperate for gas would car jack vehicles, puncture gas tanks, and siphon the fuel. Parked cars were similarly vandalized for gas. Fortunately for Jossef's family, the US Postal Service opened its office gas pumps to sell gas to its employees. Further, those employees received water and food rations from work. Others were not so fortunate. Even if a person had money there was nothing to purchase, resulting in price gouging, such as charging \$5 for a bottle of water.

Electrical outages plagued Puerto Rico. Jossef's family was without electricity for two months. Schools might open for one day, then close for an indeterminate amount of time. Many doctors and other professionals left; to see a specialist one needed to get to Miami.

The already faltering economy deteriorated even more. Jossef stated 60-65% of the people were on

government assistance before the hurricane. Minimum wage jobs were the job market on the island. Wal-Mart and Sam's were major employers and those businesses left or are leaving making it much harder to find work. Jossef's family is renting their home in Puerto Rico to a professional who stayed on the island. However, they can only get half of what their house payment is in rent because that is all the market will allow.

Those who wanted to escape the hardship conditions of Puerto Rico encountered still more frustration. Airlines sold tickets from Puerto Rico to Miami for \$1,500. Even then, one might go to the airport to find the lights were out or the area jammed with people wanting to get tickets; often the flights were canceled.

Jossef's family endured these conditions for 2 ½ months before they left the island. The opportunity to leave came about when a postal worker in Bismarck wanted to return to Puerto Rico to help family there and so he and Jossef swapped jobs. The family's trip from Puerto Rico to Miami to Las Vegas to Bismarck took three days. It was a cultural shock when they arrived in Bismarck not knowing anyone and receiving no assistance from any agencies. Arriving in winter, they had to buy warm clothing and a vehicle. Their apartment even now is not fully complete.

Jossef feels it will be a long time until Puerto Rico recovers. He felt the island was "broke financially before and now is super broke, and it will be a long time until they reach even the 'broke' status again." It will be a long time until electricity is fully restored. There is need to replace electrical lines and grids and Puerto Rico is not ready for that yet.

Still, the family does feel thankful. They did well because he had a federal job and could relocate. Jossef states, "We are thankful for what we have 'cuz some have nothing."

Volunteers Recognized

Marilyn Johnson, a board member from Legacy UMC, has taken on the library responsibilities and recently processed over 200 books for the Open Door library. Most of the books were given to us from the "Say Yes" program that recently ended at McCabe UMC. Marilyn continues to write thank you notes for us and actively create fun activities as well as identify and coordinate beneficial fundrais-

ers. Occasionally she will surprise the children by delivering McDonald Happy Meals for their lunch.

In February, Jim Karn, a volunteer reader from Legacy UMC, celebrated eight years of reading to preschool children. "Grandpa Jim," as the children call him, faithfully shows up on Thursday mornings to read to the children. We are hoping he will soon share stories from his second children's book, "Little Jimmy's Life on the Farm Stories 2." The children invite him to stay for lunch, and most days they can persuade him to join us.

Maurice and Sandy Thorenson from Mandan UMC also continue to read to our children on some Tuesday mornings. Their very animated style delight the class and invite involvement.



Craft Fun at SPURS party

The University of Mary SPURS (Service, Patriotism, Unity, Responsibility, and Sacrifice) led by Sister Gerard Wald continue to host four parties (Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day and Easter) a year. They have been faithful to the Open Door for many, many years.

The four Bismarck – Mandan UMC churches faithfully take turns mowing our lawn during the summer. Phil Sjursen maintains the schedule to ensure the yard always looks trim and well cared for.



Paradiso Fundraiser Held

A Dine to Donate fundraiser was held at the Paradiso Mexican Restaurant in Bismarck between 4 and 8 p.m. on March 8th. Paradiso donated 15% of the tab to the Open Door for each diner who presented a flyer to the serving staff. The theme was Be Filled and Feel Fulfilled.

At least seven of our 20 families attended along with many others from the local Methodist churches. Almost \$500 was raised for the Open Door.

Thank you to Paradiso Mexican Restaurant for its support of the Open Door, and to all friends of the Open Door who participated in this fundraiser. We extend a special thank you to Marilyn Johnson who coordinated the effort.

Graduation

The Open Door Preschool class of 20 children held the end-of-year program/graduation on May 24th. The celebration was held at McCabe UMC. The theme was "Colors All Around Me." The children each recited a song or poem concerning the 10 colors that we learned about this school year. The opening song, "Color Chant," and the closing song, "A.B.C. RAP," (where they wore sunglasses) were both well received from the parents, grandparents, and other family and friends in the audience. Bible Times songs included: *B-I-B-L-E*, *Trust in God*, *Love One Another*, *Love is Kind*, *Jesus Loves*, and *Praise God with My Feet*.



Lunch was served after graduation. The Taco in a Bag with toppings, watermelon, cookie ice cream sandwiches, and lemonade were chosen to involve all 10 colors of the program. Thank you to Mary Lee

Steele and Jadranka Buzakovic for volunteering to prepare and serve the meal.

Summer Program

Summer Day Camp started June 4th. Our summer program will be the last classes held here at our 12th Street location before moving to McCabe UMC this fall. We have 22 children enrolled. The first week, Gardening and Growing, involved planting the garden as well as some flowers for the children to plant at their home. Our garden this year includes potatoes, tomatoes, green beans, cucumbers and carrots. We plan on enjoying the summer with fun activities until the session ends on August 17th.

Fall Registration

We have completed fall registration. All of these positions available for the 2018-19 school year have been filled and our class list will be at its maximum of 22 when fall preschool begins on August 27. We had 24 families on the waiting list.

Wish List

Below is a list of some items that we would be grateful to receive. If you have questions about specific items, please contact Jolene at 701-222-3004. Thank you.

Copier paper; Play-Doh; Postage stamps; two storage units with shelving for science and math centers; art supplies - 1.25 oz bottles of school glue, fingerpaints and fingerpaint paper, color pencils, 24 boxes of crayons; classroom supplies - 24 piece puzzles or wooden puzzles, scotch and masking tape; educational supplies - alphabet, math, science learning center activities; small plastic animals - farm, dinosaurs, zoo, sea life; paper and related supplies - paper towels, toilet paper, Kleenex, 33-gallon and kitchen-size garbage bags.

Zoo Field Trip

On May 14th the children boarded the van and headed to Dakota Zoo on a field trip. The weather was wonderful and the children were excited which made for a fun day. The train ride was fun with the "conductor" giving us interesting information about all the animals. The children were very amused

watching a baby monkey playing with his mom and dad. The two baby bison were near to the fence so we could watch them staying close to their moms. Other baby animals included birds and geese. The two badgers entertained the children by racing each other in the long tunnel inside their cage



We extend a special thank you to Jerry Suko for driving the van and to Jerry and his granddaughter, Grace, for assisting Jean and me with the children.

Gifts

The Open Door has been blessed by many thoughtful people who support our mission with their prayers, presence, gifts, and services. Thank you very much for remembering us so generously. The following identifies contributors between November 21, 2017 and the present.

Materials and supplies have been donated by the following persons and church families.

Jean Anderson, Bismarck, ND - Toy donations
 Deb Emerson, Bismarck, ND - Barbie dolls, stuffed animals, dolls
 Jean Newborg, Bismarck, ND - Books, bubbles, plastic containers
 Rolla UMC, Rolla, ND - Four-foot white marker board with cabinet
 Karen Vasey, Bismarck, ND - Play Doh, Play Doh toys, 3-drawer cart
 Judy Wangler, Bismarck, ND - Paper towels, construction paper, paints, toilet paper

Monetary gifts were given for unspecified purposes in memory or in honor of a loved one, or as a donation for general use.

Roger and Betty Becker, Bismarck, ND

Melvena Bier, Bismarck, ND
 Betty R. Dockrey, Bismarck, ND
 Mavis Fuher, Bismarck, ND
 George Gagnon and Michelle Collay, Saco, ME - In memory of Renee Gagnon
 MaryAnn Hanson, Mandan, ND (3)
 Lewis and Sherry Heaton, McKenzie, ND - In honor of our Sterling Church Family: Pastor Marlin Sapp and Carol Sapp, Luella Rath, Sharon Lang, Sherry Wilson
 Jim Karn, Bismarck, ND
 Dan and Barbara Kingsley, Hill City, MN - In memory of Anita Newmann
 Gerald and Jean Newborg, Bismarck, ND
 Sheila O'Shaughnessy, Bismarck, ND - In memory of Sandy Toepke's mother, Verdis Hogan
 Roy and LaDaonna Schook, Bismarck, ND - In memory of Larry Colebank (brother of Marlene Brown)
 Lloyd and Majorie Stelter, Mandan, ND - In memory of Celeste Berger
 Jerry and Linda Suko, Bismarck, ND - In honor of Tom and Paula Redmann and Beth Swanson; in memory of Gene and Hazel Redmann, Bill Bohrer, Ralph Sjursen
 Roger and Vicki Griffin, Mandan ND - In honor of Richard Unkenholz's 90th birthday; in honor of our grandchildren: Emmet, Sara, Max, Lily, Alexis, Jadelynn, Joseph, and Victoria
 Daniel and Bonnie Taylor, Bismarck, ND
 Richard and Pat Unkenholz, Prescott, AZ
 Greg and Ruth Wanner family, Bismarck, ND
 Ashley UMW Ashley, ND
 Bowman UMC, Bowman, ND
 Chasley UMC, McClusky, ND
 Dakotas Conference of UMC
 Dakotas UM Foundation Inc. Endowment Fund, Mitchell, SD
 Faith UMC, Minot, ND
 First UMW Jamestown UMC, Jamestown, ND - In honor of Pastor Elmo Herman, Pastor Michelle Brennan, and Secretary Tami Severance
 Mandan UMW, Mandan UMC, Mandan, ND (2)
 McCabe UMW, McCabe UMC, Bismarck, ND (2)
 McCabe UMC Tuesday Workshop, Bismarck, ND
 Streeter UMC, Streeter, ND
 Tuttle UMW, Tuttle, ND
 UMW Rolla UMC, Rolla, ND
 UMW Dickinson UMC, Dickinson, ND
 UMW Washburn UMC, Washburn, ND
 Women of the UMC, Langdon, ND

(Director – continued from page 1)

who coordinated and enhanced our programs. Treasured friendships have developed with volunteers from the Bismarck – Mandan UMCs who served on the Board of Directors, as well as with those from community businesses, educational institutions, and organizations even beyond the local area who have given of their time and talents to support Open Door programs and activities.

Now we are dealing with quite possibly another change, but this time it is with location, not programming. The proposal is that by the end of August we will move the Open Door program to McCabe United Methodist Church.

Change is **hard!** And I have struggled (along with our board members) to accept the fact that change is necessary. Many dedicated and concerned people worked to get everything in order to make this possible. It has been a roller coaster ride concerning my feelings about moving from our location. Just the thought of the actual moving of 22 years of furniture, equipment, supplies, library, and memories is so difficult to comprehend. I will miss the playground and garden most of all. I will miss the comfort these walls have provided me.

A post on *Facebook*, strangely enough, brought me comfort. It said something like: If you continue to Worry, then you don't have Trust in God's Plan. So here I am, trusting in God's Plan. Thanks, Open Door, 1140 South 12th Street and Welcome, Open Door, 1030 North 6th Street.

In God's mission,
Jolene Stading Puhalla



Children enjoy an Easter egg hunt on March 30



Teacher assistant Jean helps the children create Mothers' Day gifts. Donated plastic containers were decorated and filled with dirt, and pretty flowers were planted.



Left: Each of our children tried a hand at tossing the hat into a circle during our Cinco de Mayo day.



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Open Door Community Center Mission
Through the Open Door Community Center, children and families receive Christian-based education and support services, enriching them to become responsible members of their families and community.

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