

Open Arms Newsletter

From The Desk of Pastor Paul

Dear Friends,

As I head into my fifth month among you, I am looking at the ways in which I best need to spend my time and energy. I ask myself: "what are steps that need to be taken at this time in the life of Living God Church".

As a follow up to the work that our elected leaders did at the annual council retreat, I know that enhancing our **communication skills** is a very high priority. Sometimes you feel as though you don't know what is going on, or so the leaders are hearing from the congregation. Our first steps are to work on the structure of our committees (especially in terms of scheduling), improve our newsletter, develop more bulleting board space, and create a system of care and communication which we are now calling our **shepherding program**.

The Program, in brief, will be a method of communicating and caring for all the members of the congregation. Twelve deacons will oversee small groups (1/12 of our 300 members). Each

small group will decide for itself what sorts of activities it will undertake. Getting messages around quickly would be a primary goal, such-as in the event of a death or a snow storm.

High on my list of priorities is a review of our **ministries with youth and families**. Some of our leaders have been working hard to further develop our ministry with teenagers. In fact, they have planned a snow tubing trip to Jack Frost on February 18 – 20. At this date 22 adults and youth have signed up. Blessings to them all, that they may come back happy and healthy. How else can we work toward a comprehensive ministry with children, youth and adults; with seniors, juniors and all in between? Do we need a singles ministry, a newlyweds group, a group for families with newly born babies? There is a softball team forming for those with that interest. There is so much we can be doing. Please let me know, or call Donna if you have some ideas that I have not yet mentioned.

Looking to the future, I also am aware that you are beginning to get anxious about the **process of calling the next regular pastor** of Living God. The last Sunday of January has been designated by the Council as a day to collect your thoughts about the future ministry of this congregation. With your approximately 150 responses we should have a good indication of your opinion about the direction that needs to be pursued. By the end of March I would anticipate that the Council will be ready to appoint a Call committee that will interview the prospective pastors. It is difficult to say when exactly this will all be final. It may be that you will be voting on the new pastoral candidate by mid-summer, but it could be sooner, or later. In any case, part of the continuing questions asked among us is: "why can't Pastor Paul stay with us?" Please know that I love the congregation and people of Living God, but my ministry at this stage in my life is to do Interim Ministry.

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I have chosen to help congregations go through the very difficult transitions that come when one pastor leaves and another is expected. This can be difficult work, challenging me to search for new ways to serve each congregation; tailoring solutions that I believe will work in each individual place. Obviously this kind of ministry is not for everyone, but I find that I have a set of skills that meet a need in our Church. I feel that I serve God, even as I serve the several congregations for which I have had the privilege of pastoring.

February is arriving, Lent is near and Easter will soon follow. May God lead us in His mighty acts to serve Him always in the love of Jesus.

Keep the faith,

Pastor Paul

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday worship, February 9

The people of Living God Church have a variety of opportunities to prepare for the Passion of our Lord during the six week season of Lent. Lent means: _____

Ash Wednesday we will have worship opportunities at Noon and at 7:30 p.m. this will be a traditional observance with confession of sins, the imposition of ashes and communion.

On the Sundays of this season of preparation and anticipation, traditionally a time for new believers to prepare for baptism, Pastor Paul will preach a series of sermons on the Lord's Prayer entitled: "Living at the Edge."

Midweek services will bring a new opportunity this year.

Wednesday Noontime brown-bag lunch, Bible studies, led by Pastor Paul.

Wednesday Evenings will again be time to enjoy supper and worship with the special feature of the Word brought in the form of drama. All