

The Open Door Witness

May 2020

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Inside this issue

- Preschool Guests – 2
- Valentines – 2
- Foundation Grant – 2
- Classroom Center – 3
- Water Experiments-- 3
- 100 Days – 3
- Gifts to the Open Door – 4
- Volunteer Hours -- 4
- Wish List – 5
- Special Events -- 5

Dear Friends in Christ:

The coronavirus has affected all of our lives to some extent, and it saddens me to tell you that it also affected the Open Door Preschool. In mid-March, we started seeing businesses closing and health directives issued. It was difficult to make sense of all that was happening and by April 1, the board elected to close the doors of the preschool until next September.

This was a tough decision to make but in some ways the parents had already made the decision for us. Many of them had already made other arrangements for child care. We also had a directive from the bishop to close our churches for the foreseeable future.

With no cash flow, it would be impossible to keep the lights on, so we chose to furlough our dedicated team of employees. However, our employees – led by Jolene – have accepted the current state of affairs and appear to be willing to pitch in again when the time is right.

It is our hope that we can open our doors again to 22 preschoolers and start a new school year in September. We picked this date because it gives

us several months to return to a state of normalcy.

We understand the importance of quality child care, and Open Door always wants to be the premier preschool for young children in the Bismarck-Mandan region. However, sometimes things are just beyond our ability to control the variables. That's when we want to error on the side of personal safety for our students and our staff.

So while we are currently on hiatus, we ask you to pray for this mission to continue and that you will support us financially if you are able. The fees paid by our parents cover only the cost of staff. Other necessities, such as food, books, and furniture, come from the gifts of our loyal supporters.

Thanks for your support, and, hopefully, Open Door can open its doors again in September.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve A. Van Dyke". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Steve Van Dyke
Chair of Open Door

Guests at the Preschool

On December 18th Pastor Jenny Hallenbeck Orr was a guest reader for the preschool class. She



shared two Christmas stories, *God Gave Us Christmas* and *Room for a Little One*, both of which were thoroughly enjoyed by the children. The books were beautifully written and illustrated. Pastor Jenny is well known to the children as she greets them when she sees them while they are

moving about the church.



On February 14th Steve Van Dyke, the Open Door Board Chair, brought his guitar to teach the children some camp songs. While the songs were familiar to staff, they were new to the children. The class very much enjoyed listening to and learning the songs, as well as Steve's telling of personal stories about the meaning and memories associated with the songs. Steve plans to have monthly visits with the children, and we look forward to seeing him when the Open Door is in session again this fall.

Valentines for Major White

The children were fortunate to share some love with 104-year old Major Bill White, a USMC veteran and Purple Heart recipient. He was hoping to gather about 100 Valentine's Day cards to add to his scrapbook collection. In the article we received he said his secret to living so long was simple, "Just keep breathing, I can tell you all sorts of ideas and suggestions, but if you're not breathing, it doesn't mean anything."

Each of our 22 children created a Valentine which was gathered in a large brown envelope and mailed to Major White in Stockton, California.



In response we received confirmation that our 22 valentines were delivered and became part of more than 300,000 valentines, personal messages, and thank you notes he received from around the world. These included handwritten cards, balloons, and even boxes of chocolate. Major White said he was overwhelmed with gratitude. "I was as close to speechless as possible. I really don't know what to say. It's something that I've never had before and probably will never get again," said White.

Foundation Provides Grant

Through contact with C.B. Aichele, Foundation president, we learned of and successfully applied for a grant through the McCabe UMC Foundation. A few days before Christmas we received the requested funds. The \$1,000 grant allowed the purchase of a mobile storage unit for our Science Center, 8 standard cots for nap time, one cot carrier, and 16 cot sheets.

The mobile storage unit for our Science Center has been a wish list item for a long time. The movable cart is more convenient than a closed closet, allowing science items to be on display. The longer cots are more comfortable for our older children to use at nap time. We are very thankful that the Foundation provided this grant to enhance our programs at the Open Door Preschool.



New Fine Motor Center in Use

A new ever-changing learning center devoted to developing fine motor skills has been implemented at the preschool. Each activity is related to an appropriate monthly theme. In December the children placed small jingle bells inside Christmas cookie cutters. Wintry January involved creating snowflake patterns using craft sticks and following patterning ideas. February, with a Valentine's theme, used plastic tweezers to pick up candy hearts and place them in heart shaped ice cube trays. A much beloved children's character was recognized in March by grouping various Dr. Seuss erasers into tray compartments.



We also introduced retro toys. The children enjoyed making pictures with Lite Brites and going into a dark room to watch the different light patterns.

Water Experiments

February science activities included a weather study involving water, snow, and ice. In our experiment, we placed snow in a clear plastic cup, marked the level of the snow on the cup, and brought it inside to determine how long it took to melt. We made another mark on the cup to indicate the level of the water, and



discussed the volume difference of the snow and the water. We also experimented with how salt affects the speed of melting and ice texture. There were lots of interesting differences!

The following day we went outside and "painted" the large snow hill in the parking lot. That was a lot of fun! On the last day we enjoyed ice cube racing. The children chose from ramps that had different inclines, surfaces, and other features. Everyone enjoyed having a race with their friends. Each winner of a race got another chance to race some other winner.



Celebrate 100 Days of School

On February 4th we celebrated the 100th day of the school year and used that theme to advance our counting, matching, literacy, and art skills. The children made counting crowns that displayed 10 sets of 10 decorations, to aid in learning to count by tens to 100. They worked hard at Seek and Find to locate 100 color-coded craft sticks, numbered 1-100, hidden around the classroom. Then they matched each numbered stick to the same number on a color-coded sheet.



We also enjoyed reading books such as *"I'll Teach My Dog 100 Words."* We created our afternoon snack by using a baby carrot as the one in 100 and two cucumber slices as the zeros in our 100, learning about shapes as well as numbers.

Gifts to the Open Door

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, 2019 and the present.

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

UMW Devils Lake UMC, Devils Lake, ND
UMW Langdon UMC, Langdon, ND
UMW Mandan UMC, Mandan, ND
UMW McCabe UMC, Bismarck, ND
UMW Rolla UMC, Rolla, ND
UMW Washburn UMC, Washburn, ND
Rolla UMC, Rolla, ND
Streeter UMC, Streeter, ND
Darlene Farrell, Bismarck, ND – in memory of Bob Ritterbush
Mary Ann Hanson, Mandan, ND
Lewis and Sherry Heaton, McKenzie, ND – honoring Sterling UMC Pastor Marlin Sapp, Carol Sapp, Sharon Lang, and Sherry Wilson
Jim Karn, Bismarck, ND
Barbara and Daniel Kingsley, Hill City, MN – in memory of Anita Neumann
Daniel and Bonnie Taylor, Bismarck, ND – in memory of Anita Neumann
McCabe UMC Foundation, Bismarck, ND
Dakotas UM Foundation, Mitchell, SD
Dick and Pat Unkenholz, Prescott, AZ – two gifts, including a memorial for Alexis Griffin, granddaughter of Vicki and Roger Griffin

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

Nancy and Brian Haider, Bismarck, ND – play-doh, dry erase markers, construction and space activities
Bev Solberg, Bismarck, ND – fruit cups

Our heartfelt thanks go out to the University of Mary SPURS for hosting Christmas and Valentine's parties for the children at the Open Door Pre-school.

Volunteer Hours

During the fourth quarter of 2019, 260 hours of time were volunteered in activities that support the Open Door. For the first quarter of 2020, 158 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.

Christmas Gifts

Several individuals from Mandan UMC generously provided each child at the Open Door a Christmas present. The gifts were delivered to the center by Pastor Bruce Adams on December 13. The children were excited to see them under the Christmas tree while waiting to take them home on December 20, the last day of school before Christmas break. We extend a big Thank You! to Steven Van Dyke for coordinating this thoughtful effort.



Wish List

While many of the items on the Open Door Wish List have been donated by UMW groups and individuals, some still remain. If you are thinking about making a donation or providing a gift, here are some items that would be greatly appreciated by our children and staff.

- Spiral notebooks
- Small rectangle cardboard pencil boxes (22)
- 24-piece puzzles or wooden puzzles
- Scotch and masking tape
- Alphabet, math, science learning center activities
- Stickers of all kinds
- Baby food jars
- Copier paper
- Thermal laminating sheets 8.9 x 11.4 inch
- Disinfecting wipes
- Brownie, muffin mixes
- Postage stamps



Learning the correct way to brush our teeth on Dentist Day!

Special Events Days



Indoor snowball fight on Pajama Day





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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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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