

A new holy home

Abiding Grace celebrates open of new facility

(The following article appeared in the Rockdale Citizen newspaper on Saturday October 30, 2010 and was reported by Beth Sexton, Staff Correspondent.)

Even the stones that adorn the front of the new sanctuary of Abiding Grace Lutheran testify to this church having a strong foundation and faith in God.

“We tried to build something that just by seeing it would give a message about God,” Abiding Grace Pastor Jonathan Scharf said. “We’ve got stone and stucco exterior, but the stone is dominant. It (reminds people) about the firmness and stability of our God.

“The bell tower and the high pitch on the sanctuary indicate the fact that God is above us and watching over us — the transcendence of God. The stained glass windows try to tell the stories — the scene of the Crucifixion ... the picture of the ascension and a smaller window with the picture of the dove, the Holy Spirit sent to strengthen us.

“Around all of the windows we’ve got the vine and the branches. John 15:5 is our theme passage. He is the vine. We are the branches. It reminds us of our connection to God. That’s why this building is here.”

The pastor and congregation of Abiding Grace will celebrate the grand opening of that new building with a full day of worship, food, fellowship and fun on Nov. 14 at the new facility located at 5500 Ga. Highway 212 in Covington.

The grand opening begins with a worship service at 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch at noon. Family fun and games, including a bounce house, a cake walk, pumpkin painting and hayrides will continue until 3 p.m.

Everything is free and open to the public, the pastor said, adding that the day is “our gift to the community.”

The church had a service of worship and praise last weekend in its new sanctuary in which members thanked God for the new building and for “setting it apart for His use.”

At 10:30 a.m. Sunday, the church will have a worship service in its new sanctuary followed by Trunk-or-Treating in which church members will give candy and goodies to children in the church parking lot.

At 4 p.m. Sunday, the church will have a Reformation Festival as it commemorates the Reformation of the church that began with the posting of the 95 theses on Oct. 31, 1517. This

service will include the mass choir made up of the choirs of seven area Lutheran churches. A meal will follow the service.

The upcoming activities all lead up to the big celebration day on Nov. 14, and a time to reflect on how God provided workers to help build the new facility. The church began with a group of area families who had been part of a church in Decatur and saw the growth moving to the Rockdale and Newton area, the pastor said.

“They wanted to start a church here and long story short, in March of 2003, they started gathering in the afternoon with a pastor who had another church,” Scharf said. “In May 2003, I was called as their first full-time pastor. I got here in July.”

When the church bought property on Ga. Highway 212 and made plans for its new facility, Builders for Christ stepped up and sent volunteers who stayed in motor homes on the site and helped the congregation volunteers as construction began on the church.

After Builders for Christ volunteers ended their stay, Massana Construction of Tyrone served as contractor through completion of the work. Members of the church were involved from start to finish, including work on insulation, painting, staining of the woodwork, landscaping and many other parts of the project.

The new facility includes two large rooms that can divide into four classrooms, a kitchen, restrooms, office and storage space, along with a sanctuary with moveable seating to allow for tables and chairs during fellowship times.

“We tried to build something we could use in a lot of different ways and something that would give the glory to God,” Scharf said.

“Taupe is the main color in the sanctuary with mahogany wood trim along the floorboards and windows. That same mahogany accents the chancel area ... It has somewhat earth tones with a kind of rich wood look. The windows pop the color into it. The sanctuary can seat over 200.”

When the church was first established, Abiding Grace Lutheran held worship services on Sunday afternoons at another church then moved to Veterans Memorial Middle School where it held morning services.

From there, the church moved to a child care center and then again to another local school until finally moving into its own sanctuary last Sunday.

Abiding Grace Lutheran offers regular Sunday activities, beginning with Sunday School and adult Bible study at 9:15 a.m. The study is presently on the Book of Revelation. Sunday morning worship is at 10:30 and a Bible study is held at 7 p.m. Wednesdays.

The church averages about 120 in worship on Sundays.

“We want to serve the community in any way possible and get to know the community better and be a blessing,” the pastor said.

“As God blesses us through His word, we want to be a place where people know they can go to find answers and find inspiration for His love.”

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