



The theme of this OakLeaf is "Bible Fellowships," one of East White Oak's Pathways of Discipleship. Our three "Pathways" (Sunday Worship, Bible Fellowships, and Small Groups) each make unique contributions to the process of transforming people into worshipers who are maturing in Christ.

Join the Journey

by Pastor Scott Boerckel

At East White Oak our Focus is "Seeking to be worshipers, maturing in Christ."

Whether you are a seasoned believer looking for a place to worship and serve, or a person looking for answers to your spiritual questions, or somewhere in-between, you are welcome here. Our prayer is that you will join us in...

"Seeking"--humbly implying that none of us have "arrived"; that we are all on a life-long journey. We may be at different points along the way, but we are united in our pursuit of something. What is that?

"to be worshipers"--contrary to popular opinion, worship does not begin and end with the singing on Sunday morning. In fact, our lives are to be lived out as an act of worship - all that we do bringing glory to God.

"maturing in Christ"--we each begin our new life in Christ as a spiritual infant, but God does not intend

for us to stay that way. Graciously He makes us and molds us into people who are becoming ever more like Jesus.

Churches do lots of things, but the three clearest, most consistent pathways to maturity in Christ which we offer here at East White Oak are Sunday Worship, Bible Fellowships, and Small Groups.

The theme of this edition of the OakLeaf is Bible Fellowships and the unique contribution participation makes in the life of a follower of Jesus.

At East White Oak we believe that God wants every man, woman, boy, and girl to grow to maturity in Christ and that He has called us to this Focus. Our mission is stated well by the Apostle Paul in Colossians 1:28: "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ."

May the Lord bless each of us in our journey towards maturity in Christ.





Faith Nurturing Communities

by Pastor Traig Whittaker

East White Oak is not the biggest church in America, but it is big enough that people could come regularly for Sunday Worship and yet remain anonymous.

There is at least one problem with that...Biblical Christianity is not lived out in anonymity—it is lived out in community. Bible Fellowships create environments where faith-building relationships are nurtured.

Bible Fellowships are groups of 20 to 90 people who meet on Sunday mornings for Bible study, prayer, and fellowship. The connection which participants share with one another goes beyond Sunday morning to fun socials and meaningful service projects. This type of Christian community makes unique contributions to the journey toward maturity in Christ.

Here are just a few reasons why our Adult Bible Fellowships are important for you:

- It's a time and a place where those on the fringes of the congregation can conveniently get to know others before or after Sunday Worship.
- When studying the Bible with friends, life issues get connected to the scriptures more easily and authentically.
- Everyone needs to be in relationship with others in order that the "one anothers" of scripture can be lived out (love one another, encourage one another, care for one another, etc.).
- It's a group of people with whom your prayer requests can be shared and for whom you can pray.

Make this month the month you find an Adult Bible Fellowship to call your own.

- Because "one anothering" requires relationships.
- Because sometimes you have questions about the Bible.
- Because you want others praying for you.
- Because you really can't carve out another day from your week to meet.
- Because you no longer want to be anonymous at your church home.
- Because you want to be available for God to use to bless someone else.

This type of Christian community makes unique contributions to the journey toward maturity in Christ.



Pastor Traig Whittaker has served at East White Oak since 2000. His ministry responsibilities include oversight of the church's Christian Education programs and administrative duties. Traig is married to Laura and they have four adult children.

Sunday Mornings: Strategic Discipleship

by Pastor Walt Baertsch

If you walk in the Gymnasium entrance on Sunday morning, one of the first things you might see is what we in the youth ministries call “The Welcome Wagon,” with an East White Oak Youth Ministries banner on it.

You might not actually “see it,” as there is usually a group of Junior and Senior High School students hanging out around the Welcome Wagon or in the Junior High room in various clusters laughing and telling stories about things that happened during the week.

Youth Bible Fellowship at East White Oak is one of the elements of our pathways to youth discipleship which include: Corporate Worship with the rest of the church body; Jr High Crosstrainers or Senior High Sunday Nights (Youth Group); Small Groups; and Youth Bible Fellowship.

What most people don’t realize is that our combined Junior and Senior High youth ministries draw from as many as 15 different schools, and Sunday mornings serve as a “regathering” place where students get back together again after a long week at school. That’s one of the reasons for the laughter and chatter that you see both before and after our formal time together. They love to linger and laugh.

What you might not see is that Youth Bible Fellowships are a strategic time of discipleship as we study God’s Word in depth during these times. Over a student’s youth ministry experience at East White Oak, they will have gone through the entire Bible in Junior High on Sunday mornings. Each student can

Sunday Mornings are a strategic time of discipleship as we study God’s Word in depth.

experience an overview of the Old Testament and the New Testament alternating each year so they will have a good idea of what the Bible is all about cover to cover. In their four years of Senior High, we go more in depth into books of the Bible with definite application of God’s Word to their lives.

So, when you see the students on Sunday morning at Youth Bible Fellowship, praise God for bringing the students together, thank God that our students love each other, and thank him that they love to learn from his Word!



Pastor Walt has served in Youth Ministry at East White Oak since 2003. Prior to coming to Illinois, Walt served as the Senior Pastor at Northwest Baptist Church in Denver. He holds a Masters Degree in Global Leadership from Fuller Seminary.

Walt is married to Penny, and they have two adult children.

Maturing Young Worshipers

by Kris Seifert, Children's Ministry Director

From the oldest to the very youngest among us, we at East White Oak Bible Church desire to become worshipers growing in Christ.

Take a small peek at how God is maturing the young worshipers at East White Oak in our Children's Bible Fellowships (CBFs).

One way to worship God is to care for others. Relationships with children's peers and teachers are nurtured in CBFs, helping our kids see and demonstrate God's loving care. Significant relationships are being formed in the CBF community. In a recent CBF a 5th grade girl mentioned that her two best friends are in her CBF. She said she trusts these girls and values that they, too, want to live out their Christian faith. They can talk to each other and be helpful—even when they disagree. They go to different schools, but they have formed a sweet friendship in their CBF. Teachers regularly share how they love the boys and girls in their CBFs. They learn their lives—their hurts, fears, and joys. One of our teachers prays regularly for the children in his class, as well as the children he has had in years past—a list of MANY kids. The community of worshipers formed in CBFs goes beyond the walls of our classrooms.



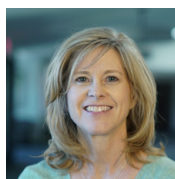
Each Sunday, to help them become rooted in Scripture and grow in Christ, the boys and girls focus on a main lesson point. Children learn in a variety of ways, so in CBFs they read, sing, listen, do crafts, act, and play to help them remember the lesson point. Recently, toddlers played with a parachute to learn how Mary cared for Jesus when she poured perfume on His feet. The goal was to care for a ball placed on the wiggling, moving parachute, keeping it from falling to the floor. Although their excitement made it challenging, they practiced caring for something (a ball) like Jesus cares for us. Third graders learned about the care Jesus, the Good Shepherd, gives us, His sheep, by leading their sheep/classmates through obstacles. As the third graders prayed later in the morning, their prayers reflected a desire to seek the Good Shepherd's care as they prayed so sweetly for the unrest in our country and world. Sometimes the lesson point isn't communicated as accurately as hoped. Recently a kindergartner answered the question, "Who can tell me a miracle of Jesus?" with "One time he healed 10 leprechauns, but only 1 came back to say thank you!"

Prayer is an essential part of helping our kids become mature worshipers of Jesus. A teacher of 5th and 6th grade boys shared this encouraging note with parents recently: "Parents, you can be proud of your sons' grow-

ing maturity. It's quite evident when we pray together that they've grown spiritually since September. It's greatly encouraging to have an opportunity to witness the Lord's faithfulness in these young men!"

Please pray for our CBF volunteers and children! Pray that God's Word would be shared truthfully and age appropriately. Ask God to use their time together to draw the children into a relationship with Him through faith in Jesus and create a deep love and hunger for His Word. Pray that what is shared in class sinks deep into fertile heart soil and transforms the boys, girls, and teachers.

Pray that the volunteers would be encouraged in their own faith as they serve and love the boys and girls in their care!



Kris Seifert enjoys serving the boys and girls at East White Oak. She is married to Chris and has two grown boys, Adam and Aaron. Kris is looking forward to her new role as grandma sometime this fall! She enjoys reading and spending time with her family and dear friends.

Jumping Into Adult Bible Fellowship

by Mark Heil

Marla and I have been coming to East White Oak for many years.

We had attended some of the Winter Electives in the past, but we had never committed to joining an ABF. Looking back, I think we were uncertain as to what sort of commitment we'd have to make and if missing a class now and then would negatively impact the experience.

Recently, when we found out there was a new ABF, Koinonia, we decided to give it a try. We have genuinely enjoyed getting to know people that we used to just smile at and casually say "hello" to. We now discuss important matters, whether they be personal, cultural, or spiritual. Most importantly, we pray for each other. It has been encouraging to hear others' stories of struggle and triumph. We have had some excellent group discussions. The testimonies of our fellow East White Oak family members are amazing!

The ABF has also encouraged me to dig deeper into the Scriptures. Our group started off this year in

the Gospel of John, and we really took time to focus on each passage and apply it to our daily walk. Jeremy, our ABF teacher, has such a passion for the Word, and he encourages us to embrace ALL of it.

Although the ABF is relatively new, we're currently growing our way into other areas like missions support, outside service projects, as well as serving inside the church. Especially for the times in which we live, a closer connection to others is more important than ever. I'm so glad that Marla and I have "jumped in." It's been rewarding on many levels.



Mark Heil and his wife, Marla, have been attending East White Oak for over 10 years. They have served in AWANA and Sunday School Ministries. They have three school-aged children at Cornerstone Christian Academy. Mark works in

Sales at Burwood Group, a technology consulting firm based out of Chicago. Mark enjoys hiking, fishing and spending time outdoors with his family.

The Fellowship in ABF

by Ashley Deal

I used to think it was strange that East White Oak didn't use the terminology that I was used to when referring to the OTHER hour on Sunday morning.

You know what I mean... there's "church" and there's "Sunday School"—the other hour... the EXTRA hour.

As a young newlywed, that extra hour at church wasn't very appealing to me. "I'll just go to worship, put my hour and a half in, and call it good, thanks," I would think to myself. As time went on, though, "church only" wasn't enough. I wanted to get to know the people I saw on a weekly basis. An East White Oak Adult Bible Fellowship (ABF) was the next logical step.

When my husband and I first attended the Fellowship 13 ABF, I thought I was joining a "Sunday School class" where a group of individuals would be led in Bible studies. But now I realize why East White Oak doesn't call that OTHER hour "Sunday School." They call it Adult Bible Fellowship because it truly is adults—FELLOWSHIP—over the Bible! We absolutely spend our Sunday mornings studying God's Word, but we also spend a lot of time just getting to know each others' hearts. We visit, we joke... If you get there on time, you might even get to participate in an icebreaker! Just as Proverbs 27:17 states, "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another," our class believes that surrounding yourself with Christian friends, both IN and OUT of church, will draw you nearer to God.

For the most part on Sunday mornings, couples attend together, so outside of church we enjoy splitting up into men's nights and ladies' nights. This usually results in "BYO Meats" BBQ nights for the men, and dinner out at a restaurant, free from cooking and cleaning, for the ladies. It's not unusual for a group message to come



through looking for strong backs for a carpentry project, or a veteran mom organizing a meal train to welcome a new baby to the family. Annually we host bonfires, Friendsgiving, and ugly Christmas sweater parties. We've even had a family-friendly night at the Cornbelter's baseball stadium and have hopes of making it to a Christian concert at some point.

This amazing group of men and women have blessed my husband and me in so many ways, and have truly brought meaning to Matthew 18:20, *For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.*



Ashley Deal and husband, Greg, have been attending East White Oak for 10 years. Ashley serves in Summer Children's Ministry and is the Member-Follow-Up and Record Keeper of Fellowship 13 ABF. Ashley, Greg, and their 3 young kids live on a farm in rural Danvers. Additionally, Ashley works full-time for IL Corn Marketing Board and Corn Growers Association, where she represents corn farmers throughout the state and in Washington D.C. Free time is spent trying out new recipes and visiting extended family.

The History of Adult Bible Fellowships

by Dr. Jeff VanGoethem

In 1994 the main building of East White Oak Bible Church was destroyed in an early morning fire. One of the good fruits that came from the fire was the beginning of the ABF's we now enjoy in our church.

It took just over two years from the time of the fire to settle with our insurance company, plan, and then build a new facility. In the meantime, we had worship in an older gym (not the gym you see now) which had escaped the fire. We were blessed in that it was large enough to hold the entire congregation.

However, the rest of the facility was very limited. We only had enough room for one adult class, one youth class, and a bit of a nursery/children's area. This effectively ended the old Sunday School system that had been in place for many decades. Something new was needed.

"It just so happened" during that period that I attended a workshop at the Moody Bible Institute Pastor's Conference entitled "Adult Bible Fellowships." The teacher was a pastor from Ohio who also had a book out by that same title—it outlined a fresh method of organizing mid-sized adult communities for teaching, prayer, fellowship, and outreach. I brought this information back to East White Oak. I was excited when many of our members caught a vision for it. We did some training and preparation and when the new church building was ready in 1996, with its many classrooms, our ABF's were born!

"Adult Bible Fellowships"...
a fresh method of organizing
mid-sized adult communities for
teaching, prayer, fellowship, and
outreach.

The early vision for the ABFs 25 years ago is still the same today. . . to see believers participating in life-giving fellowships. Learning, growing, serving, leading, and reaching out together.

I have happily visited just about every ABF since I returned to East White Oak last fall. What an encouragement to see them thriving after all these years.



Pastor Jeff VanGoethem has been in pastoral ministry for 40 years, including nearly twenty as Senior Pastor of East White Oak. He has returned to East White Oak after pastoring for some years in Dallas, Texas, to serve as Associate Pastor of Spiritual Development and Missions.

He is married to Karen. They have four daughters and four grandchildren.



Crossroads ABF

by Joan Rich

For over 50 years I have attended Sunday School classes at East White Oak. At some point along those years, classes became known as Adult Bible Fellowships, and the group I attend was named Crossroads.

Whatever the title, the times of teaching and fellowship have always been a huge blessing and encouragement to me.

CROSSROADS is a name to remind us that every minute of life can be considered a crossroads . . . a time to decide which direction to go, what to do, what to say, how to react. By studying God's Word and praying (together and individually) and seeking His will, God gives guidance and strength to make decisions which honor and glorify Him.

Crossroads ADULT Bible Fellowship meets at 10:30 on Sunday mornings and is currently attended by long retired worshippers. Even in our older adult years, we seek to be growing in Christ and serving Him—no retirement from living for Jesus.

BIBLE is the focus of Crossroads. Together we choose a book of the Bible to study; and during the next months, we read the book chapter by chapter. Our teacher, Harlan Schad, expounds on each verse and that along with group discussion gives us opportunity to gain new understanding and applications from the Scriptures. Isn't it amazing that no matter how many times a Bible passage has been studied, new insights can be revealed each time?

FELLOWSHIP is vitally important as we have the privilege and joy of meeting together as friends. Each week Wes Hill leads us in meaningful times of sharing and praying about our concerns and praises. A weekly offering is also collected giving us the opportunity of sharing monetary help plus encouragement to others as needs arise.

Crossroads Adult Bible Fellowship. To God be the glory!

By studying God's Word and praying (together and individually) and seeking His will, God gives guidance and strength to make decisions which honor and glorify Him.



Joan Rich lives in Normal and is grateful for her two sons (Jay and Joe), their wives, and her 5 grandchildren—and for 53 happy years with her late husband John. She is involved with the East White Oak Library Team, Senior Saints, Mission Circle, and hosting home Bible studies.

Interests include walking, music, traveling, cooking, genealogy, and sitting in her rocking chair.