

MIDLANDS

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SECTION B

For Bible study teacher, sharing God's word one of 'greatest joys'



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Gilmore

COMMENTARY

Many people go through life without passion. They exist from day to day without experiencing that feeling of exuberance. That is not the case with Velma Jean Sanders. You can tell when you meet her that there is something very special about her.

When someone gave her a little red Bible as she was leaving her elementary school in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a seed was planted. Little did she know that God would water the seed that had been planted.

"As a teenager living in Omaha, I remember the first time I attended a home Bible study," Velma said. "I was amazed that people met together on Saturday evening to study the Bible. The prayers made such an impression on me, and I sat in wonder as they discussed the verses read."

God placed in Velma a passionate love for the word. Always a voracious reader, she couldn't get

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enough of reading and studying the Bible. Soon word spread of her knowledge of the Bible, and in 1988 people started inviting her into homes, beauty salons and churches to teach the word.

"One of my greatest joys is to teach in the church where God has planted me," Velma said. "As a member of Salem Baptist Church for over 40 years, I feel joyful teaching the Contemporary Bible class each Sunday for the last 30 years, and being the director of the Bread of Life Speech Choir."

She is also the founder and president of God's Word, Alive! Inc., a biblical teaching ministry dedicated to "holding forth the word of life" (Philippians 2:15-16). She hosted the first God's Word, Alive! conference in 2014, which was highly successful and now is an annual event. (Her website is godswordalive.net.)



Velma Sanders

For past 30 years, she has taught Bible study at "the church where God has planted" her, Salem Baptist.

One of Velma's favorite books of the Bible is Revelation. In 2014 she started a summer 10-week Bible teaching series held at the University of Nebraska at Omaha Thompson Alumni Center. Revelation was divided into quarters, and each year she taught one quarter of the book. This summer, she completed the series.

It was a popular series, attracting people of diverse ethnic groups from 18 churches across the city. The class participants enjoyed her word-by-word, verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter study, with supplemental handouts such as articles written by

Velma and others, charts, diagrams and poems.

She had two faithful helpers. One was Jewel Gay, Velma's mother, a devoted Christian who also has a ministry at Salem, Path of Light Midday Ministry. Her other helper, Marion Freeman, is likewise a devoted Christian with an eagerness for helping and a welcoming smile that lights up a room. They both were a support and blessing not only to Velma, but also to the participants. They helped provide an environment of love and warmth.

Participants expressed their thankfulness for Velma's teaching on evaluation sheets. One said: "I finally understand the Book of Revelation, and I have you to thank." Another said: "While visiting my sister this summer, she brought me to one of your classes and I was deeply moved by the teaching of Revelation and began to understand it, which I never understood before."

Velma feels blessed that she has had the opportunity to minister to many people of different religions and racial backgrounds the past 30 years. She is aware of God's many blessings; her desire is to continue living life in a manner that pleases Him. Her life motto is "God is faithful." She has found that to be true repeatedly.

And although she recently retired as a program analyst after 36½ years with the federal government (33 of those years with the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Omaha District), she has no intention of retiring from teaching God's word.

"God's word, the Bible, speaks to humanity in every generation. It has a message for everyone," Velma said. "It is my constant prayer that many will be brought into the blessedness of hearing, reading, believing and obeying the word of God. I want everyone to know that its rewards are without measure and are eternal."