



**Ellie Menz**  
**IOWAY Director**  
**807 W. South Street**  
**Jefferson, IA 50129**  
**515.386.8420**  
**ellie.menz@idwlcms.org**

“Who can come forward and recite the 10 Commandments?” was the question to the members at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in West Des Moines on May 2. The kindergarten class stepped forward and did an amazing job reciting each commandment clearly and correctly. I was so impressed by them and their teachers Kimberly Mouw and Patti Lenz that I asked Pastor Dahlke for details.

He shared, “As part of our faith building blocks ministry at Shepherd of the Valley we seek to place this precious treasure, God’s Word, in the hearts of all ages. However, the children of the congregation have the special privilege of living out their faith by sharing God’s Word from their hearts by leading in corporate worship. Each year during spring different grade levels lead the church by sharing what they have learned.

“The fourth grade class takes on the challenge of sharing the beatitudes. The third grade class recites the Old Testament books of the Bible, and the second grade class, the books of the New Testament. The first graders share the Apostle’s Creed and the Kindergarten class, the 10 commandments. The preschool class leads the congregation in the Lord’s Prayer and all our blessed by the gift of grace in God’s Holy Word.”

How do you put your faith into action when you are in high school? Members of the St. Paul Lutheran Church, Schaller youth group shared an amazing weekend recently.

Their Friday night started with everyone piling into a 15 passenger van and heading to Des Moines for the Hope Ministries Wake Up Call. The youth were inspired by Rodney’s story of how he started with one beer—just to be one of the guys which led to 30 years of drinking. Rodney’s life was turned around after getting to know his Savior. He now works at Hope Ministries and share’s his real-life testimony. They also heard an inspiring message from Ashley Smith Robinson who shared that she had several wake up calls but kept ignoring them until drugs and alcohol had basically taken everything away from her. She also shared that she was held hostage by a man who earlier that day had killed four people. He eventually let her go unharmed. It was then she realized that her life had to change. The youth were uplifted by her message that no matter how bad the sins, there is forgiveness.

On Saturday, youth counselors Lori Lyon and Mallory Hansen kidnapped the nine youth

who will be attending the National Youth Gathering for a team building opportunity.

The youth were asked to bring a Bible, notebook, pen, sweatshirt, sweat pants and blanket. They could bring nothing more. Cell phones were not invited! They were not informed where we were going.

Lori shares, “We met at the altar with prayer and each was given a 5-lb weight on a chain for around their waist. This was to represent our sins. This was not to be removed until they were instructed to do so. We then headed to a beautiful spot along the Des Moines River. On the way, we had to make a bathroom stop. One of the youth asked, “Do we have to wear this sin belt?” My reply was, “Yes, sometimes sins are quite evident. We try to hide them but it is impossible.”

We then arrived at our destination which belonged to a friend of a friend. It was a beautiful piece of God’s creation with two campfires. By one campfire was a beautiful 12 foot black walnut cross. We did many activities to represent everything from anger, understanding, and our likes and dislikes. We talked about the dangers of anger by asking the youth to place an Alka-Seltzer in their mouth followed by a glass of 7-Up. It soon caused a ‘foaming at the mouth’ as anger does.

We demonstrated group weakness by showing how one strand of twine gets thin as we pull it apart—which is caused when we put others down, our sins, sickness, etc. Soon the strand is so thin, it breaks. We each then braided three strands which made it stronger and when we combined all of our strands, it was a thick rope. There is strength in unity.

Late in the evening, a youth finally asked, “How much longer do we have to carry these sins around?” I said “I’ve been waiting to hear that. Let’s take them to the cross!” We went over to the cross, hung our sins and left them there. This represented that Jesus took our sins to the cross and remembers them no more. Our group learned that we don’t need all those extra things and in fact we can survive without our cell phones for 12 hours! It was amazing.

Another awesome blessing was when the owner of the land, who was a complete stranger, gave our youth a check for \$500. When he came to the camp fire, we thanked him and he said “Halleluiah! It’s not what I’ve done. It’s what Jesus has done!” He continued with quite a message to encourage the youth to stay connected with Jesus and to have HIM guide their paths.

