

HISPANIC OUTREACH IN SIOUXLAND

Rev. Henry and Ruthie Witte
 1013 South Newton Street
 Sioux City, IA 51106
 712-202-4751
Henry.Witte@idwlcms.org



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“The sun does not shine on the north side of the house.” I heard that many times as I was growing up in Indiana and took that to be a universal truth. It is true for the northern part of the globe, but it is not true in all parts of the world. I had been in Venezuela for several years before it dawned on me that the sun was shining on the north side of a car in which I was riding. At first I thought that something must be wrong, that we are going some other direction or on a curve in the road. I thought that this could not be possible since I “knew” that the sun does not shine on the north side of anything. After some internal debate and thought, realizing that the sun was really shining on the north side of the car, I remembered my geography lessons and accepted the fact that in Venezuela during certain months of the year, the sun does shine on the north side of everything. This experience made me think about how difficult it is for us to change thoughts and concepts that we learn from our youth. Especially difficult to change are the religious beliefs and customs that are a part of the lives of many people. If it was difficult for me to change some little obvious concept, how much more difficult is it to change peoples’ beliefs and religious practices. Humanly speaking this would be impossible, but with God nothing is impossible. As St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “If the good news we tell is veiled, it is veiled to those who perish, whose minds the god of this world has blinded – they don’t believe – to keep them from seeing the light of the good news of the glory of Christ, who is God’s image. You see, we don’t preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as the Lord, and we are your servants for Jesus’ sake. God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of the dark,’ has shone in our hearts to bring you the light of knowing God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Cor. 4:3-6)

We ended our first session of ESL for this new year on March 4. Even though the weather was unfavorable, we had a good attendance in South Sioux City with 63 participating and in Sioux City with 28. We were able to serve over 30 children in the child care, teaching them stories from the Bible along with songs and crafts. This month we also began a Bible study at Hope in South Sioux every Saturday afternoon while continuing with our Sunday worship at St. Paul in Sioux City. Two of those in attendance are studying the catechism and the life of Jesus according to Luke. We pray that others of our contacts will also come to participate and learn about their Savior.

Our next session of ESL begins the second week of March in both Sioux City and South Sioux City. We also have begun again the ESL classes for the Hispanic senior citizens, who took a winter recess during the past few months. This group is also working with local leaders in South Sioux City to form a community garden so as to help the economies of the families and provide more fresh vegetables in their diets.

I was asking some of our ESL students about other ways to help the Hispanic families, but their opinion was that learning English was one of the most important helps of all. They need this help not only for work but also to communicate with their children's teachers and for doctors' visits and other matters of daily life. They need people who will patiently guide them in their language learning. Since many have not finished high school and others not even grade school, they need help to learn basic grammar and reading skills. We are very thankful for the many members who give of their time to help the students and share with them the love of Christ. We also give thanks for the others who work with the children and guide them to Christ. Please pray that as we share the Word in these classes, God would bless it to bring a future harvest.

Please pray for the 1,400 plus workers of the local meat packing plant that will close in April. Pray that God would provide for their families and that employment can be found quickly for them and many others who will be affected by this closing.

May God continue to provide the necessary resources in order to shine the light of His Gospel in the world around us.

Yours in Christ, Pastor Henry and Ruthie Witte