

# HISPANIC OUTREACH IN SIOUXLAND

Rev. Henry and Ruthie Witte  
 1013 South Newton Street  
 Sioux City, IA 51106  
 712-202-4751  
[Henry.Witte@idwlcms.org](mailto:Henry.Witte@idwlcms.org)



## December 2009

From November 5 to 7 I attended the “Reaching Rural America for Christ” Conference in Nebraska City with several other pastors and leaders from Iowa District West. We heard about some of the changes which have been occurring in rural areas of many states and how they affect the ministry of the church. In the presentations special emphasis was given to integrating with the community. Small rural towns have their unique culture not only different from large cities, but also from one small town to the next. One needs to study the history of the town, its inhabitants, and the congregation. The newcomer has to spend time knowing the biographies of individuals and of the institutions so as to integrate within the new history that is being made. In this way one can become accepted by the community and contribute to it. It was interesting to see how this parallels with outreach to the Hispanic community. Each Hispanic country has its own history and unique cultural characteristics. Also within the same nationality, some will come from poor rural areas with few resources and others from large modern cities. Likewise the Spanish spoken from country to country has unique accents and nuances, where words take on different meanings and objects have different names. Thus one needs to be sensitive to these individual differences and try to know the background of each individual so as better relate with them.

In my experience with Hispanics in Venezuela, Panama, and now in the Sioux City area the personal relationship is very important. The individual is more important than the organization. In school teachers may be more loyal to the director than to the institution. Likewise in churches the people attend because of the pastor or some leader. Thus for outreach we need to remember that the friendship and care is more important than a well organized efficient program. Disorganization is tolerated more than impersonal treatment. Not greeting each person is a greater offense than stumbling through a program or meeting. Likewise as we share God’s Word, each person has unique questions and experiences with religion. Much time is necessary to visit and share with them so that they feel confident to express their questions and to participate in a new church.

One of the ESL students remarked that she really enjoyed the pot luck suppers that we had at the end of each session. Students, teachers and children would come together to share in the meal, songs and games. She liked this sense of community among the students. Having left

home, family and friends, many now live as strangers in a strange culture. They are thankful for those who want to form a community with them and share in their life. Of course, only Jesus Christ can help us to form a true community and union. His love changes us and helps us to forgive, share, and even sacrifice for the good of others. In Spanish the word “convivio” (which is used for pot luck) is made of two words “with” and “live.” As Christians we “live with” one another in harmony as we “live with” our Lord and Savior. May He help us to expand His community of love in rural and urban America and in the entire world.

***“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:27-28***

-Please give thanks for the continued good attendance at ESL classes and for the volunteers who help to teach and care for the children.

-Please pray for wisdom to share and apply the Word to their needs and to plan new activities for outreach.



Hispanic Senior Citizen Group celebrating a member's birthday