

Mission Opportunities

December 2009

For God so **loved** the world, that He **gave** His only Son! Isn't that what Christmas is all about? As you are privileged to lead God's people to the manger and unwrap God's gift to them, help them to remember those who haven't yet received God's gift of a Savior. Christmas services, programs, and events provide great opportunities for your members to invite their unchurched friends and neighbors and explain what Christmas means to them! Here are some more ideas and resources to help you in your ministry.



Ablaze Christmas gifts – The District has several items from shirts to lapel pins to witness bracelets and more that would make great Christmas gifts as well as providing a possible door-opener for sharing the faith. Click on the following link to visit the District's Website and an order form for items beginning for as little as 60¢ (www.idwlcms.org/district_news/ablaze/ablaze_items.htm). Great stocking stuffers!

Your parents, children, or grandchildren don't need any more "stuff"? Instead of a gift that will soon wear out, break, or be consumed, give the gift of support for one of our District subsidized missionaries. Not only will your gift support and encourage those who are proclaiming the news of Christ's birth, but you'll also be

kept informed of what God is doing through the missionary and how you can be praying for them. Click the link to be taken to the District website

(http://www.idwlcms.org/district_news/giving_opportunities/index.htm).

Witness Workshops - Not just the angels and shepherds get to proclaim the good news of great joy, but all of God's people do! The Personal Missions Subcommittee is planning a series of half-day workshops to equip and encourage us in that mission. The workshops, including breakfast (Saturday) or evening snack (Sunday) will be held at Faith, Council Bluffs (Feb. 6); Gloria Dei, Urbandale (Feb. 13); Prince of Peace, Fort Dodge (Feb. 20); and First English, Spencer (Feb. 21). A mailing with more information will be coming out the first of the year.

Sharing the Faith – If you haven't already utilized it, don't overlook this helpful FREE dvd from Synod. Released in 2007, it contains clips of individuals from across the Synod telling of their personal experiences of sharing the faith. One congregation in IDW showed a clip on non-communion Sundays while the offerings were being collected in worship. As their members were encouraged to seize opportunities to share their faith, their stories were then recorded and shared with the congregation! Free copies of the DVD are available either from the District Office or by clicking here www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=9024.



Servant Events – Jesus came to serve and encourages us to do the same! Once again this year the LCMS is sponsoring a wide variety of servant events to give youth and adults an opportunity to live what they believe and demonstrate Christ's love not just in word, but in deed. Visit Synod's webpage (www.lcms.org/ca/dcs/SERVEevents/sehome.asp) where you'll find not only a listing of possible events, but a multitude of resources for before, during and after the servant event.



Youth Outreach - "The Blind Side," starring Sandra Bullock and Tim McGraw, depicts the remarkable true story of Michael Oher, a homeless African-American youngster from a broken home, taken in by the Touhys, a well-to-do white family who help him fulfill his potential. How about an opportunity to take your youth, along with their friends, to the movies, followed by a Bible study picking up on some of the important lessons depicted? For free study guides and movie clips go to www.ccli.com/theblindside/.

What Are the Most Urgent Questions Tomorrow's Church Must Face?

Leadership Network posed these questions. While I'm not sure I would phrase them as they did, the questions are certainly "food for thought." What do you think should be questions we might ask about the LCMS for tomorrow? Send them to me at mark.gerken@idwlcms.org. If I get enough responses, I'll share them next month. Click the link to read the article <http://learnings.leadnet.org/2009/10/what-are-the-most-urgent-questions-tomorrows-church-must-face.html>.



National Mission Good News is a quarterly newsletter from the LCMS World Mission-National Mission Team. It informs and encourages LCMS pastors, missionaries, and laypeople for faith in action. Download the latest issue (www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=14927) where you'll find thoughts on National Mission's vision, stories of congregations being transformed in New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Ontario, Canada, and resources for revitalization, outreach and new church starts.

Fan Into Flame - LCMS World Mission would like to share an updated feature on the Fan into Flame Web site. They have recently expanded their list of congregational profiles to include profiles from California, Louisiana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Kansas, and more! These profiles contain exciting stories about how congregations run their appeals and how they are using their 'Jerusalem' funds for local mission and outreach initiatives. Praise God for these wonderful gifts that enable His people to share the Gospel! To view the profiles, please visit: www.lcms.org?12731. To learn more about the Fan into Flame campaign, please visit www.fanintoflamecms.org or call me at 515-570-2331.



As you move from one responsibility to the next this month, don't forget to kneel yourself at the manger! Gather with family or friends and ponder the indescribable gift that God has given to you – and the amazing love that is behind such a gift! May you know His love, presence, and guidance throughout the coming year as He uses you to bring the *good news of great joy* to others!

Celebrating the Victory,

Rev. Mark Gerken, Executive Assistant for Missions
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Sunday School Superintendents and Day School Principals – Each month we will be providing a devotion that you can utilize in your Sunday school opening or weekly chapel service. They will be written by our District missionaries to the Hispanics, Rev. Dan Vogel and Rev. Henry Witte. These devotions are in support of our two-year mission project that we are suggesting for our Sunday schools and day schools, *Amigos en Cristo*.



Rev. Mark Gerken, Executive Assistant for Missions

The Amigos en Cristo campaign is a two-year program with a goal to raise \$20,000 a year to provide scholarships for Hispanic children to attend Lutheran day schools and preschools in Iowa District West.

DISTRICT CHAPEL WORSHIP FOR **"AMIGOS EN CRISTO"**

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11

What did baby Jesus bring you?

That is the question many ask on Christmas day in Latin American. They are asking what did you receive for Christmas. Instead of asking, "What did Santa Claus bring you?" they usually ask the traditional question of "What did baby Jesus bring you?" On Christmas many see baby Jesus as a small Santa Claus bringing gifts to all of the children at Christmas time. This however is not totally correct.

Jesus does give us all that we have. He provides us with food, clothing, house, family, and many other things. But He came to earth to give us a very special gift; more special than a toy or clothing or electronic game. He came to give us Himself. He did not remain a baby and is not a baby today. He grew up to be a man and He lived His whole life for us. He lived to serve us by obeying all of God's commands for us and by dying on the cross to forgive our wrongs and sins. After dying He became alive again and is present with us to forgive us, love us, and keep us strong in our faith.

We sometimes don't see this gift of Jesus as very important. We want toys, trucks, balls, games, dolls and clothing. We want bright lights, cookies, candy, and parties. We think that those things are what make Christmas great. But the real celebration and joy is in Jesus and the love that He came to give us. Our toys and clothes will get old and worn out. Our parties and fun will soon end. But Jesus will always be with us and promises to give us His love now, tomorrow, next year, and always forever and ever. He is the gift that never ends.

Mary and Joseph and the shepherds did not have a Christmas party with turkey and cakes and cookies. They did not have presents in bright wrapping paper. They did not have a Christmas tree or bright lights. They had a stable with straw and animals. They had government orders which made them leave their home for another city. They had very little money and no bed to sleep in. What did they get for Christmas, they got Jesus. They knew and believed that He was more than just a baby. He was God's Son who came to give us love and forgiveness and eternal life.

What did baby Jesus bring you for Christmas? He brought Himself for all of us. He gave us His love and His life. That's the best gift and that's the best Christmas.



Sharing the Love of Jesus

Outreach Workshops - February 2010

95% of people who become Christians are influenced by a Christian with whom they had a previously existing relationship. Do you have friends, family, co-workers, or neighbors? Are they Christians? All of them? In the parable of the dishonest manager (Luke 16), Jesus instructs His followers to make use of their earthly blessings for the purpose of bringing salvation to unbelievers. One of the blessings God has given us is our relationships with other people. We are frequently reminded that we cannot take our possessions with us when our earthly life is ended, but there is one thing that can go with us into eternal life—other people—and 19 times out of 20, Jesus chooses to take His message to the people you know through Christians like you.



The Personal Missions Subcommittee will sponsor Outreach Workshops in February at four locations through Iowa District West. These workshops will include an opening presentation on personal evangelism before breaking into several discussion groups on more specialized types of outreach. Look for a mailing in early January with full details about the workshops or check the upcoming editions of *The Monthly* to keep up on further developments. The dates and locations for the workshops are:

Saturday, February 6, 2010, 8-11:30 a.m.—Faith, Council Bluffs

Saturday, February 13, 2010, 8-11:30 a.m.—Gloria Dei, Urbandale

Saturday, February 20, 2010, 8-11:30 a.m.—Prince of Peace, Fort Dodge

Sunday, February 21, 2010, 3-6:30 p.m.—First English, Spencer

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