



!AMIGOS EN CRISTO!

News from Iowa District West Hispanic Ministry
Missionary/Pastor Daniel Vogel

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Humberto playing the music for the Posada celebration in Storm Lake.

The children's lesson at the Posada in Denison

ADVENT POSADAS, CHRISTMAS & EPIPHANY CELEBRATIONS: The pictures above and below reflect the joy of our Advent, Christmas & Epiphany celebrations in Storm Lake and Denison. Our Advent season involves special gatherings called 'Posadas.' They relate to the journey of Joseph and Mary searching for a hotel in Bethlehem. In the modern Hispanic version, we journey to our neighbor's house and sing for entrance in the name of Joseph and Mary. Despite protests we finally are allowed to enter where we have Advent devotions for children and adults followed by holiday foods. They are popular gatherings, each week in a different home. Our folks are happy to invite their friends and neighbors. Our Christmas in Storm Lake took place on December 23 with a special candlelight service and the musical help of our new District Hispanic missionaries to Sioux City, Pastor Henry and Ruthie Witte. Following the service we enjoyed a special fellowship meal. On the 24th we had a beautiful candlelight service in Denison. In January we celebrated the Epiphany visit of the three Kings (in our case in Denison, the many Kings) followed by a Piñata and a fellowship cake during our Sunday School hour. We enjoyed many blessings during this special season, the most important being the privilege of sharing with our congregations and friends the Gospel of salvation through Baby Jesus, our Lord and Savior, the Christ.



Christmas Fellowship at Storm Lake

Our Kings/Wise men and Mary, Joseph, & Baby Jesus in Denison



OUR CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE: The Virgin of Guadalupe

The image at the right is the most important figure in Hispanic culture, from Mexico throughout many Hispanic countries. December 12 is the beginning of the celebrations for the "Lady from Heaven." The Virgin of Guadalupe is the Virgin Mary who is believed to have appeared in 1531. She appeared to Juan Diego, an Aztec Native American, and she requested that he build a church on that site. She demonstrated her divinity by leaving an image of herself imprinted on Diego's native robe. It is said to still exist today. That image is now reproduced on everything from churches, to T-shirts, tattoos, bumper stickers and more. The Virgin of Guadalupe is credited with converting 9 million Native Americans from idolatry to their many gods to Christianity. Unfortunately the Virgin of Guadalupe has become a idol herself. She has become more of the focus of Christmas and of Christianity than our Lord Jesus Christ. To be a Mexican or Hispanic means to worship the Virgin of Guadalupe. How big is her attraction? Each year between 18-20 million 'pilgrims' visit the Basilica in Mexico City, making it Christianity's most visited sanctuary! How did this happen? Over the years 25 different popes have officially honored 'Our Lady of Guadalupe.' The previous pope, John Paul II, visited four times from 1979 to 2002. December 12 has been declared a liturgical holy day by the Catholic Church. In Denison and Storm Lake the worship begins at 5 a.m. with songs, Native-American dances and an all day vigil. To Hispanics the Virgin represents everything from worship to God, to family life, care for the needy, acceptance of minorities, especially the native-Americans, the healing of the sick and much more. These cultural/spiritual distractions make our work among Hispanics a unique challenge, but God continues to bless.



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CHAPLAINCY AT THE TYSON BEEF

PLANT IN DENISON: One of my goals over the years at Tyson has been to work closely with the supervisors, to support their work, and to learn from them how I can help the workers. But it has been a challenge to gain their trust and their time as they are constantly running. During the last months I am encouraged that many of the supervisors have begun to seek me out to refer a worker to me. It a nice change and helps the workers to know that they are cared for and that they and their needs are important. This is the way the Chaplaincy program is supposed to work. From a sick loved one to a personal problem we want to teach the workers that they are a special part of the team effort to make the company successful.



**Ministry
Prayers**

+ In thanksgiving for our special Advent, Christmas & Epiphany celebrations. + For workers at the Tyson plant and other plants that they would not lose their work during this time of economic uncertainty. + For new outreach contacts in Carroll, especially our visits with Jerry and Walter, and our goal to begin a weekly Bible study this month. + For new contacts in Storm Lake, especially the family of Sergio and Cali. + I give thanks to the Lord for all of you and your congregations that have been so supportive of this ministry. It's obvious that so many of you see the need to reach out to the unchurched in your communities. God bless you all in the New Year!