

HISPANIC OUTREACH IN SIOUXLAND

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“When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:33-34).

It is not easy to show love to people we do not know or understand. Their language and culture create barriers to communication and harmony. Fear and mistrust enter, and then words and actions are misinterpreted and distorted. We may ask “Why don’t they do things the right way, like I do?”

Of course we know that all is not “right” even in our own culture. We have misunderstandings among ourselves and misinterpret the words and actions of others. We have communication barriers and disharmony caused by our sins. We are “turned off” even by those of our own family. We would rather not reach out and expose ourselves to being hurt by others.

God reminded Israel that they had been aliens in Egypt, where they were enslaved and mistreated. He saved them and freed them from Pharaoh’s power and helped them on their journey to the Promised Land. He showed them love even though they did not deserve it. He was patient with them and forgave their wrongs. He treated them with kindness and goodness.

Thus we also have been given freedom from the slavery to sin. God is accompanying us to the promised land of heaven which His Son Jesus Christ won for us. We have received God’s love and compassion. He has been patient with us and shown to us much kindness and goodness. During Lent we again meditate on the great acts which He did through His Son in order to save us and make us His people.

God would like all people to know of His love and brings unknown peoples and aliens into our midst so that we can share with them that love. They need to know the Gospel message which many have not heard or understood. How, then, should we treat them? How can we communicate to them? How can we break down the barriers which divide us? How can we share the love of God with them?

During the first three Saturdays of February, I am participating in the workshops led by the Personal Missions Committee of the Iowa West District. My session addresses the question of how to reach out to the nations that live among us here in Iowa. The answers are not easy and the task can be difficult and complicated, but showing Christ’s love in words and actions can break down the barriers. Even with little or no knowledge of the languages and cultures, one can communicate through love and friendship, helping the “alien” live in our society and culture.

Here is a list of some suggestions which one can do alone or with others in the congregation: teach English; teach citizenship courses; visit with tracts in their language; help with job applications and resumes; reach out to the children (many know English) through VBS, Sunday school, sports, etc.; invite the families to special congregational events; give classes in cooking, sewing, quilting, embroidery, banking, shopping, taxes, driver's licenses, local laws, health, family, drugs, alcohol, etc.; and offer help to the children with school work (many parents may not have finished grade school and are not able to help their children in the upper grades and high school). Any little act of kindness can help to build a friendship and open the doors to share the Gospel of our God's love in Jesus Christ.

1. We hope to begin worship soon in South Sioux City. Our Sunday worship continues with our small group in Sioux City gathered together in our Lord's name and presence.
2. I with some other members will be participating in the formation of a community garden in South Sioux City. The senior citizen Hispanic group received a grant from the Center for Rural Affairs in Nebraska for this project. The Center is offering classes and direction in gardening and planning so that any in the community can participate and help their families. I am not a great gardener, but help with the translation and communication.
3. On February 10 some of the members and I were able to meet with the mission directors from Iowa West and Nebraska Districts to discuss the work of reaching out to the Hispanics in our area.
4. I have been able to help with Bethany church's after school program on Mondays. The children have a shorter day and thus time to participate in the Bibles stories, games, songs, and activities which are offered every week. We have had Hispanic children from four families participate at different times.
5. Several churches have given donations for the purchase of printed materials for our outreach. We are very thankful for this contribution.

Please pray for our ESL classes, Bibles classes, confirmation students, worship, garden project, and interaction with the Hispanic community so that we can faithfully share the love of Christ in word and deed.



Spanish worship service at St. Paul's Sioux City

Some of the children in Bethany's after school program in Sioux City



Some of the children who received Christmas storybooks donated by Iowa West churches.