



## The missing among us

*“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb. 10:23-25).*



Rev. Dale Sattgast  
South Dakota  
District President

Dear friends in Christ,

Every year, each congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is asked to provide a statistical report. It helps track the membership of our Synod and its districts, as well as attendance in worship, Bible classes, Sunday school, and vacation Bible school. It is especially important when there are synodical conventions. Each circuit is supposed to have a certain minimum number of communicant members in order to qualify to send delegates.

A number that disturbs me when the report summary is published is average worship attendance. Our South Dakota congregations average 35 percent of their membership who attend worship in any given week. One of our smaller congregations averages 84 percent! The average in the Synod is a bit lower than South Dakota.

In most of our congregations, there are members who are away from home in the military, at school, or who have recently moved and have not yet transferred their membership. Most of our congregations have members who are homebound or are in assisted living facilities and are not able to come to church on a regular basis. And, in any given week, some members are gone because of illness, others because of work, and others because they are on vacation or are away from home for other reasons. For many of these, when they are home, they also are in church to be spiritually fed and nourished by God’s Word and the Lord’s Supper, and to fellowship with other believers.

But there is a significant number of our members who regularly are missing. Some have moved from home and have never transferred their membership to another congregation, even after many years. Some still live locally but, for any number of reasons, don’t come to church.

Although these people may be the missing among us, it is my prayer that they are not the forgotten among us.

Among the early Christians, some of the members of the Church had gotten into the “habit” of not meeting together in worship. As a result, they not only were missing worship, but they were missing spiritual nourishment and were falling from the faith. And so, one of the purposes of the New Testament letter to the Hebrews was that of encouragement. The writer expressed strong warnings to those who were falling away, but he also encouraged them to get back to the “milk” and, then, the “solid food” of God’s Word (see: Heb. 3:7-4:13).

But he also encouraged the others in the church regularly to be about the responsibility of “encouraging one another.”

People sometimes feel uncomfortable about speaking to other members who are missing. They don’t know what to say. Or they don’t want to offend. And, often, they suggest it’s primarily the pastor’s responsibility. After all, Jesus speaks of the shepherd who leaves the 99 sheep as he seeks the one until he finds it and brings it back (see Luke 15:3-7).

Indeed, the pastor does have that responsibility. Shepherds are to know the condition of their flock (Prov. 27:23). Part of pastoral care is seeking the straying sheep. They also have the responsibility of encouraging those who live away to transfer their membership to a congregation where they may be spiritually nourished. It is important to know that keeping names on the roles when people have been gone for a long time, but providing no spiritual care, is actually doing great spiritual disservice!

But the responsibility is not the pastor’s alone. We are our brother’s and sister’s keepers. If you know someone or have a family member who has moved and has not yet transferred, give a word of encouragement. Or if there is someone you know who no longer is in worship, be God’s instrument in welcoming that person back. Let the missing know that every person is valuable and precious in the sight of our God. Christ died for all (2 Cor. 5:15). He does not desire that any should remain missing.

*“... nothing ...  
except Jesus  
Christ and Him  
crucified”*

*In Christ,  
Pastor Dale L. Sattgast  
1 Cor. 2:2  
2 Cor. 3:4-6  
2 Tim. 1:8-12*

# DISTRICT NEWS

## **Dale and Marjorie Dunker remembered**

A new sign given in memory of Dale and Marjorie Dunker was dedicated July 26 at St. Johns Lutheran Church, Groton.

Dale went to be with the Lord in November 2008 and Marjorie joined him in April 2009. October was a special month for Dale and Marjorie as it would have been their 65th wedding anniversary on Oct. 6, but the Lord took them "home" to enjoy it with Him.

All six Dunker children were present for the dedication. Family members pictured are (from left) Lou Hammond, Sioux Falls, S.D.; Doug Dunker, Herriman, Utah; Nancy Larsen, Groton, S.D.; Jackie Hammond, Sioux Falls; Sandy Strom, Groton; Susan and Terry Ellingson, Aberdeen, S.D.; and Steve and Betty Dunker, Groton. Not pictured is Denice Dunker, Herriman.



## **Concordia, Vermillion, welcomes new pastor and his family**

The LWML and congregation of Concordia Lutheran Church and Lutheran Student Fellowship of Vermillion, S.D., welcomed Pastor Samuel Needham, his wife Michal, and children Jonah and Seth to Vermillion on July 20 with a food shower. Pastor Needham graduated from Fort Wayne last spring. He was ordained and installed July 26.

Concordia is located near the campus of University of South Dakota. The congregation invites and encourages all parents and students to stop in and worship with them on Sunday mornings at 10:30 a.m. There are many Lutheran Student Fellowship activities planned for the 2009-10 school year.

Visit Concordia's Web page at [www.lcmsvermillion.org](http://www.lcmsvermillion.org) or contact Pastor Needham via e-mail at [pastor@lcmsvermillion.org](mailto:pastor@lcmsvermillion.org).

Concordia congregation sincerely thanks the congregations of South Dakota and the district office for their prayers and support through the vacancy process.



Concordia (Vermillion) Pastor Samuel Needham, along with his wife, Michal, and children Jonah and Seth, are grateful for the many items they received in the food shower.

## **New DCE intern to begin work at Our Redeemer, Sioux Falls**

Sunday, Aug. 16, was a day of joy and excitement at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls. In the 8 a.m. service, Senior Pastor George Sagissor inducted Andrew "Andy" Koeppe as the congregation's new director of Christian education intern.

Andy hails from Omaha, Neb., and Concordia University Nebraska in Seward. South Dakota District President Rev. Dale Sattgast preached the sermon.

A reception for Andy, as well as for the staff of Sioux Falls Lutheran School and the Lutheran High School of Sioux Falls, followed the service.

Our Redeemer members feel truly blessed to have Andy in their midst!





**Call information**

*as of Aug. 19*

**CALLS PENDING**

None

**ACCEPTED**

Aaron Pingel, Christ, Falls City, Neb., accepted the call as pastor at Blessed Emmanuel, Sturgis, 8/19/09.

**DECLINED**

None

**VACANCIES**

- Our Savior, Aberdeen, senior pastor
- St. Paul/St. John, Aberdeen, assistant pastor
- Zion, Chamberlain
- St. John, Howard
- Bethesda/First English, Marion/Parker
- Christ, Sioux Falls
- Lord of Life, Sioux Falls

**Zion, White, honors Dorothe Robbins for 60 years of 'key' service**

On Sunday, June 28, the congregation of Zion Lutheran Church at White, S.D., honored its organist, Dorothe Robbins, for her service to the congregation. For more than 60 years, Robbins has faithfully served the congregation with her gift of music.

During this time, she served under 12 pastors and spent many hours practicing with choirs and special groups, for special events and weekly church services.

Dorothe was surprised, humbled, and honored with the presentation. In her honor, Zion congregation made a donation to Rev. Robert Utecht's mission at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Additional donations to this mission were made in Dorothe's honor by individual members of the congregation.

Dorothe's family also was present for the recognition. After the service, a special luncheon was hosted in her honor for her family and the congregation.



**Needham ordained, installed at Concordia, Vermillion**

Rev. Samuel J. Needham was ordained and installed on Sunday, July 26, as pastor of Concordia Lutheran Church, Vermillion.

Needham is a 2009 graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. He attended Boise State University in Boise, Idaho, and graduated with a major in construction management in 1995. Before entering the seminary, he was a project manager in commercial construction.

His wife, Michal, is a 2001 graduate of Concordia University in River Forest. She has been employed as a copy editor and editor in Christian publishing. The Needhams have two children: Jonah and Seth. Michal's father, Rev. Mark Mischnick, pastor of Hope Lutheran Church in Watersmeet, Mich., preached for the service.



Pictured above (front row, from left) are Rev. Mark Mischnick; Rev. Samuel Needham; Rev. Dale Sattgast, South Dakota District president; (back row) Rev. Daniel Redhage, First English Lutheran in Centerville and Zion Lutheran in Hurley; Rev. Richard Luttmann, Peace Lutheran in Alcester; and Rev. David Gunderson, St. John's Lutheran in Yankton.

**December issue deadline: Oct. 15**



When possible, please send photos in a JPEG format, at 300 dpi. If you send print photos, please send a copy that you won't need back. Thank you.

**Vonda Sturzenbecher**

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# LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE



*Travels  
with Elaine*



LWML District  
President  
Elaine Hankel

Autumn has arrived, and as I look outside and see the oak trees covered so thick with leaves and changing color, I wonder if I will ever get the yard cleaned and raked before the snow flies.

During the summer months, I enjoyed the shade the trees provided, keeping my house cool and the yard protected from the heat of the day.

In a poem called "Here's October," Ada M. McCalvy wrote "You can hear October walking through the heaps of fallen leaves; you can hear October talking in the wind among the leaves." I would rather think that it is the Lord I hear walking and talking among the leaves. What an opportune time to be outside walking and talking with the Lord!



In Deut. 30:20, He wants us to "listen to his voice, and hold fast to him." Are you able to find a quiet time to listen and walk with the Lord?

Autumn is a perfect time to bring the peace of God into our hearts and thank Him for all the blessings He imparts to us.

October is also the month where one Sunday is set aside as LWML Sunday. The theme for this year is our convention theme "Look to the Hills ... God Reigns," written by Dr. Warren Schumacher. He also was the opening worship proclaimer for the Portland convention. Through research, I was able to find that the first LWML Sunday was held in church services throughout The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on Oct. 1, 1967 (Women in League with the Lord). What a wonderful way to celebrate the mission of the LWML!

*"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Ps. 23:4).*



## 'Inspiring' national LWML convention leaves YWR 'hooked' for life

by Sarah Rausch

After working as an usher at the national LWML convention in Sioux Falls two years ago, I knew without a doubt that I wanted to be a Young Woman Representative (YWR) to Portland in 2009. The Sioux Falls convention was so inspiring and helped me understand in much greater detail what the LWML does.

The Portland convention was even more amazing than I anticipated. Just as in Sioux Falls, I found myself awed by the mission grants the LWML voted on, as well as the amount pledged. The dollars the LWML gives to missions are truly astounding. The presentations were interesting and insightful and the humorous aspects were hilarious.

The YWRs were involved in every part of the convention, with a special program developed just for

us. We were scheduled every day from roughly 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. with meetings, speakers, lunches, servant events, and even entertainment. We also got to walk in the morning processions with our district presidents—a pretty incredible experience in front of more than 3,300 people!

One of the best aspects of being a YWR for me was getting to talk with other young women about church and doctrinal issues. As a pastor's daughter, I've always felt somewhat alone with peers as far as my knowledge and interest in those areas. Being able to discuss some of the hot topics concerning our Synod with my peers was a highlight, as was making lifelong friends.

Someone at the convention said that once you go to one LWML convention, you'll be hooked for life. I have definitely found that to be true with the last two, and now I'm looking forward with great anticipation to the next one in Peoria, Ill., in 2011.

I've been so blessed to be able to go to the Portland convention as a YWR. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and I want to thank each and every person who made it possible—from the South Dakota LWML District to my kids' grandparents, who babysat while I was away.





Rev. Daniel  
Deardoff  
LWML District  
Counselor

## Counselor's corner

### Charity begins at home

Have you ever heard the saying, "Charity begins at home"?

This saying isn't actually a Bible verse, but the thought behind it is clearly biblical. In 1 Tim. 5:8, St. Paul warns his young pastor friend, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family,

he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." Strong words, but they drive home the point that Christians put their faith into practice by showing love to those closest to their hearts.

St. Paul goes on in the same chapter to describe the type of widow that was to be put on the church "relief list" of the day. He says she is to be "well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds" (1 Tim. 5:10). It doesn't garner headlines in the newspapers, and most people don't even think of helping their own family as "church work," but clearly God does!

At a recent LWML meeting, one of our members made the wise comment, "Charity begins at home, but it doesn't end there." Sometimes we feel tired and burnt out with all the volunteer work we do in our church and community. We may even feel like Jacob, who was clearly frustrated at his father-in-law when he asked in Gen. 30:30, "When may I do something for my own household?" We are told in 1 Peter 4:9 to "offer hospitality without grumbling."

In the LWML, we are given the privilege of participating in programs that benefit people you may never meet. You may ask yourself, "Why should I care for people who live such a long way off?" It helps to remember that God cared for us when we were a long ways off. We care for the hurting because Jesus cares for us when we are hurting. That's why the Bible says, "Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality" (Rom. 12:13).

The worldwide work of the LWML helps us raise our sights. It teaches us to help God's people who we won't meet until, by grace, we all meet in our Father's home in heaven. The best charity of all begins at home when we share the Gospel.

## 2009-11 grants selected; mission goal climbs higher!

Delegates chose a mission goal of \$1,825,000 for the 2009-11 biennium. This is an increase of \$125,000 over the previous goal. Praise God for blessing the LWML with mission-minded women!

1. Defray Costs of Shipping Quilts by Lutheran World Relief—\$80,000
2. Concordia Seminary, St. Louis Food Bank Relocation—\$50,000
3. The Carpenter's Hands, Youth Refurbish Homes in Florida—\$26,000
4. Psalm 69:14 Project, Emergency Disaster Aid in Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana—\$50,000
5. Digitize Classes for Specific Ministry Pastor Program, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne—\$36,000
6. 10 Chapels, Transportation, and Pastoral Training in Tanzania—\$88,000
7. Body and Soul Care for Children in India—\$50,000
8. LCMS Prison Ministry Provides Devotional Materials—\$50,000
9. Lutheran Braille Workers Provide English Braille Bibles, Africa—\$100,000
10. Kyrgyzstan Locals Trained for Evangelism—\$100,000
11. The Hope Center for Refugees and Immigrants, Ohio—\$90,000
12. Human Care and Pastoral Ministries Developed in Latvia and Lithuania—\$87,500
13. Mission Support to Disabled Children, Dominican Republic—\$50,000
14. Native Leadership Scholarships for Students Enrolled in Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology—\$100,000
15. Humanitarian Care Outreach in Kazakhstan—\$90,000
16. International Student Ministry Provides Bibles and Christ-Oriented Resources—\$30,000
17. Earthquake Relief Aid and Church Plants in Peru—\$100,000
18. Light of Christ Chinese Lutheran Mission, St. Louis—\$75,000
19. Humanitarian Aid Opens Mission Field in North Korea—\$82,482 (*revised amount from original news release*).

# LUTHERAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE

## International LLL Convention

At the recent convention of the International Lutheran Laymen's League in Greensboro, N.C., seven delegates from South Dakota were among the 750 in attendance. "Share His Story" (Ps. 66:16) was the theme of the convention.

Delegates from the South Dakota LLL are pictured below and include, in back row, Bob Portice, Bill Snow, Dawn La Mee, and Merle Heidenreich; and in front row, Judy Portice, Myrna Snow, and DeLovis Heidenrich. Pastor Ken Klaus, speaker of "The Lutheran Hour,®" shared



many powerful messages during the LHM Foundation meeting, the general session, "The Lutheran Hour Celebrates the Savior" worship event, and many opening and closing prayers throughout the convention. He said, "Help us proclaim the Savior's story to men and women you will never meet, whose names you will never know, who live in places you will never visit ... but who, because of your commitment and by the Holy Spirit's power, will have their names written in the Lord's book of life. Join us!"

Opening day included special events for both women and men attending the international convention. LHM's Phyllis Wallace hosted a women's luncheon during which she recorded a special episode of the "Woman to Woman" program with guest Pattie Petty, wife of auto racing legend Kyle Petty.

The program focused on the story of Victory Junction, a camp for children with chronic diseases, which the Pettys founded to accomplish a dream of their son Adam, who lost his life at age 19 in a racing accident.

While the women were enjoying front-row seats at a recording of "Woman to Woman," more than 200 men from the convention visited the Petty family's Adaumont Farm to celebrate the progress of the Men's NetWork, LHM's newest ministry. During a savory



African drummers and dancers perform at the convention.

North Carolina barbecue meal, the men learned that 2,000 congregations of the LCMS and Lutheran Church—Canada, along with congregations from a number of other church bodies, had registered as Men's NetWork users.

After lunch, the men spent an hour skeet shooting, fishing, tossing washers, or hiking across the rolling fields at Adaumont Farm.

The 2010 International Convention will be held next July 22-25 in

Omaha, Neb. For more information about the International LLL/Lutheran Hour Ministries, visit [www.lhm.org](http://www.lhm.org) or call 800-876-9880.

## LHM environmental witnessing tips

**Serve in your community and show that you care about God's creation:**

- Get involved in local environmental efforts through your local parks department. This is a great way to meet people outside your church.
- Organize a service project to pick up litter in your community. Invite non-Christian friends to come along.
- Give away energy-saving light bulbs as a "Jesus is the Light of the World" canvassing project.

**Share Christ with the people you meet:**

- Use your concern about the environment as an opportunity to share your faith in the Creator and Sustainer of creation.
- Be prepared to deal with the question of creation vs. evolution. Use LHM's online video Bible study *Out of Nothing: The Word, Creation, and Faith*. Visit [www.lhmmen.com/studies.asp](http://www.lhmmen.com/studies.asp) for this and other studies.
- Invite others to come to church with you on Sunday.

**Show visitors you care enough to conserve the blessings God has given you:**

- Place recycling bins around your church.
- If you print bulletins, limit the number of pages and use recycled paper.
- Avoid Styrofoam! For coffee hour, use cups and plates made of recyclable materials.

**Be an example of good stewardship:**

- Organize a churchwide garden club instead of hiring landscapers.
- Promote reusing things by designating a bulletin board for people to post items they'd like to give away or sell.
- Suggest that people carpool to church.



*Lutherans For Life—'Witnessing to the Sanctity of Human Life through education based on the Word of God'*

## Life: a better choice

by Rev. Bob Moeller, pastoral adviser of SD LFL

"Choice" is not a very important term in Scripture. As a matter of fact, in the entire Bible (ESV) there is only one verse that uses the word "choice" in the context of making a decision; and that refers to God's choice of Peter to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 15:7). The other 20 times, "choice" is used to denote quality.

But "choice" is very important in our American culture, isn't it? We want a wide variety of choices and the right to choose them. No wonder "choice" has been the mantra of abortion-rights activists for decades.

So, which is it? Is "choice" relatively unimportant or a basic civil right? Is "choice" a good or a bad thing?

It depends upon what you're choosing. Some choices are subjective. There is not a right or wrong choice, but merely a matter of personal preference. My choice for favorite ice cream is French vanilla. Your choice might be maple nut. Such choices are personal. They're private. They're individual. And so it would be strange for me to say that you are wrong about ice cream.

But suppose we weren't talking about ice cream but mathematics. Is the equation  $2 + 2 = 4$  true or false? If I say that this is true, I'm making a different sort of choice. I am asserting that  $2 + 2 = 4$  is an objective truth, and that there is therefore only one valid answer. And, if you disagree, one of us has to be wrong.

Moral choices also are objective. There is a right answer and a wrong answer. We know this instinctively. We tell our children to "make a good choice" or "make the right choice."

It is time for us who are "For Life" to reframe the debate on the word "choice" when it comes to morality. Let's not argue about whether or not people have a choice; let's talk about good choices and bad choices. Abortion is not merely a personal preference, but a choice between life and death. And who could reasonably argue that death is a better choice than life?

To this end, South Dakota LFL is launching an advertising campaign called "Life: A Better Choice." Throughout the year, we hope to broadcast a series of ads that deal with important life issues honestly, but tactfully and sensitively. Our goal is to encourage indi-

viduals and our culture to make better choices when it comes to life issues.

"Why television ads?" Because they're so influential. "By the time most Americans reach the age of 75, they will have spent 14 uninterrupted years in front of television sets—more time than they will spend with any other person, any activity, any relationship (*Advertising Consciousness & Culture* by John F. Kavanaugh).

Educational advertising was the key to reducing prejudice, littering, drunk driving, and smoking—and educational advertising can help lead the way back to a culture of life in America. According to *LifeNews.com*, in states that consistently aired pro-life educational ads over the past 10 years, abortion rates have decreased by 70 percent.

It is our prayer that these commercials will help SD LFL to fulfill our vision: "to be a powerful, biblical, pro-life voice and resource to Lutherans and, through them, transform society." About \$50,000 per year could purchase more than 7,500 spots on broadcast television throughout the state. It would be great to have at least \$25,000 raised by Life Sunday, Jan. 24, 2010, so we could begin in earnest.

We realize that is a lot of money, but if this campaign would help just one mother facing a crisis pregnancy to choose to carry her baby to term, it would be worth it, wouldn't it? "What value can you put on human life?"

But an even more important question is this: "What is the value of one human soul?" If one expectant father chooses to serve life and avoids the faith-destroying despair and guilt associated with an abortion decision, it would be worth it, wouldn't it? If just one mother hears and believes that the forgiveness of Jesus Christ covers even her sin of abortion, it would certainly be worth it, wouldn't it? If one more baby is baptized into God's family, it would be worth it, wouldn't it?

Please send your donations to:

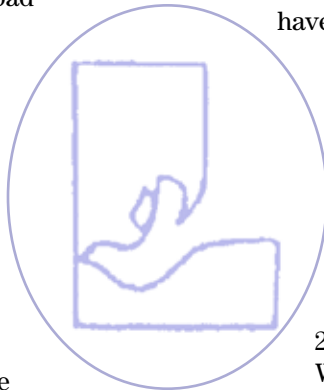
"Life: A Better Choice"

P.O. Box 193

Armour, SD 57313

Make checks payable to **SD Lutherans For Life.**

You can find out more about "Life: A Better Choice" by going to our Web site: [www.lutheransforlifesd.org](http://www.lutheransforlifesd.org)



# DISTRICT NEWS

## South Dakota District youth 'step up' to help flooded Iowa neighbors

What does it mean to put your faith into action? All those who attended the 2009 South Dakota District Youth Gathering—37 people total—traveled to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to aid in flood recovery from the June 2008 Cedar Rapids flood. “Stepping up” was the theme of this year’s gathering, based on St. Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 3: “You are God’s fellow workers.”

Youth gathering members helped frame out and paint rooms in a church basement, painted in the community cultural center, mucked out houses (removing all material down to the studs), and removed outside decks from damaged houses. Through the volunteer efforts of South Dakota District Youth Gathering participants, more than 800 hours were contributed to rebuilding homes, businesses, and churches—and, most importantly, the light of Christ’s love shined through His people as they reached out to help those in need.

Next year’s gathering will be the National Youth Gathering July 17-21, 2010, in New Orleans, La.



South Dakota District Youth Gathering participants and sponsors gather for a photo in front of a church being torn down in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

### Did you know that ...?

The South Dakota District edition of *The Lutheran Witness* is now available—in color—on the South Dakota district Web site in the “resources” area? Check it out at <http://sd.lcms.org>.



## High-school graduates from Emanuel, Milbank, receive quilts

The Quilting Group of Emanuel Lutheran Church in Milbank made quilts for their high-school graduates to take with them to college or wherever they go. It will not only provide them with warmth but also will remind them of their church home. Those pictured include (front row) Amber Schell, Natasha Mielitz, Stephanie Myers, Kylie Poel; (back row) Jacob Greiner, Shane Gertsema, Dustin Smith, Eric Larson, Chris Zubke, and Scott Morton.



## VBS shares Gospel with more than 50 students at Zion, Sioux Falls

What an exciting five days for more than 50 students and 45 helpers at Zion Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls. Vacation Bible school (VBS) was held July 12-16 using the theme “Rome—Paul and the Underground Church.”

The students week included a variety of activities:

- They ate, sang, made crafts, and met Paul (Pastor Schindler), members of the Underground Church, Roman citizens, and the dangerous Roman soldiers.

- They learned Bible verses from Romans that taught them about God’s love.

- They brought offerings that could purchase Bibles for those who have not heard of the Gospel. Daily, as the offerings grew, more Bibles were added to the ladder (see photo). A total of \$398.81 will purchase about 77 Bibles.

Vicare Lehr led an adult Bible study on the early Christian church during the week.

