Outreach Center Network News Letter

July 2016

In this issue:

Independence and Freedom – A Devotion

This Month’s Focus

Braille Books Available

Notes from Centers

A Retreat for People Who Are Blind

Audio Bible Study Options

Final Thoughts

Each article will begin with ###. You may move to the next article by searching for this.

### Independence and Freedom

This month, we Americans celebrate our country’s 240th Independence Day. It is a day that commemorates the signing of the "Declaration of Independence." Rev. Earl Federson, in the devotion, "Edit-O-Earl" e-News July 2003, sent out on behalf of LCMS World Mission, wrote the following:

“It is interesting that we often hear speeches on that holiday and often use prayers in our worship services that emphasize our freedoms. The freedoms we mention, however, are found in the Constitution, not the Declaration. As a matter of fact, although they are often used almost synonymously, independence and freedom are not synonyms.

The independence that our forefathers won from Britain, for example, did not guarantee that an even more oppressive government would not rule us. In addition, when freedom is at its best, it includes a great deal of dependence and interdependence. Political, social and economic freedoms all carry with them an implied responsibility. The signers of the "Declaration of Independence," for example, all mutually pledged to each other their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor! Their freedom from the British Crown gave them the choice to depend on each other.”

I was so taken by this observation of Rev. Federson that I kept the words and thoughts. To declare independence was one thing, something the forefathers fought for and for which many gave their lives. Freedom, however is still a different thing. Freedom was won at a price which cost many their lives. This Freedom did not mean they had no government over them, guiding or directing them. Freedom meant they were free from the oppressive rule of the British Crown and were now under a different authority; the rule of Democracy.

spiritually there is a parallel situation. We are “declared” forgiven. This Declaration of spiritual independence was made by Jesus. He fought and died on our behalf to make it happen. Jesus has given us freedom. Just as the freedom from the British Crown did not mean total freedom from government, rule or authority but a freedom from one to go under a different authority, so also our freedom won by Jesus is a freedom moving us from the authority and service of sin to service of Jesus.

For people who are blind and/or visually impaired this has daily implications. Often when a person looses sight he or she feels like earthly circumstances has trapped, oppressed, and has taken away personal freedom. Yes, earthly independence is impacted. When a person understands the spiritual aspect of life, that Jesus has won his/her freedom from sin, death and the devil, that we are now free to serve Jesus. We serve Jesus by serving other people in love.

For Paul, it was not a matter of independence. The only question was on what or whom we will depend. Paul urges us, as He did the Galatian Christians in chapter 5:1,13 all those years ago, to become servants of Jesus and loving servants of each other. We are free from having to justify ourselves before God, but we are willing followers of the One who gave us that freedom.

“1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. . . .

13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” ESV

Paul saw that Christian freedom binds us to Christ and to each other. Luther wrote: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."

When a person looses his or her sight, yes some independence can and will be lost. When one lives under the “Spiritual Declaration of Independence” provided by Jesus and his cross, we are under Jesus authority and free to serve. And so our life has meaning and purpose.

Pastor Dave

### This Month’s Focus

Reaching People Who Are Blind

It is true that many people who are blind and/or visually impaired are isolated from busy society and live alone. Yet, even with this said, there is an informal network in and among the blind community. None of these on their own are comprehensive yet when used in tandem with one another they go a long way in connecting with many in the blind culture.

Certainly the best form of communication is done by word-of-mouth. One person informing and inviting another person is the best form of communication.

Many larger metro areas have what is called "The Radio Information Service." This is a closed circuit radio station for people who are blind. It usually is broadcast over the third channel of an F.M. station and requires a special receiver. These stations read newspapers, books and give current events. They also are more than willing to run a press release when it pertains to the blind community.

Don't forget all A.M. and F.M. radio stations. All these stations will run a Press Release for community functions. Many people who are blind listen to the radio for many hours every day.

Placing a Press Release in local news papers is beneficial. No, people who have lost sight cannot read the paper, but friends and family members do. When they spot a Press Release relating to blindness or low vision, they are quick to tell their family member or friend.

There are two blind consumer organizations: National Federation of the Blind; American Council for the Blind. These national organizations have local chapters made up of people who are blind or visually impaired. They gather to talk about national and local issues related to sight loss. If approached and asked they usually are willing to let a person provide information concerning local events.

If one is able to present at these organizations it not only connects with active blind people but also provides the opportunity for these local groups to understand that the outreach center is not in competition with them.

Last, as church members go about their weekly activities they will notice people who are blind through their use of canes and dogs. A flier or calling card in Braille and/or large type can be handed out along with the verbal invitation to come.

Once a center is established, this lends credibility to the work and invitation. Brochures and/or business cards might be offered to people of the community who intersect with people who are blind. These workers include:

bus drivers; cab drivers; social workers of the city, county or region; rehabilitation counselors; eye doctors.

### Braille Books Available

**The outreach center in Grand Junction Colorado started in June 2000. It closed in 2014. Sadly the center had to close due to the death of first the Pastor, a faithful promoter of the center, and second, the death of its lead volunteer.**

**During its years of service it assembled a small Braille library. It has 35 Braille book titles. It would be nice to find homes for the books rather than recycle the paper. If interested, let me know.**

**Pastor Dave**

### Notes from Centers

The outreach center in Baltimore Maryland started April 2007. They gather monthly on the last Saturday of the month. They meet at St. Thomas Lutheran for about 4 hours. They start with a Bible lesson; then move to dinner, an activity, and finally a vespers service. The gathering usually sees 15 to 18 people.

The outreach center in Fort Wayne Indiana started in August 2007. It meets on the fourth Saturday. Including the volunteers, they see 35 to 40 people each month.

### A Retreat For People Who Are Blind

On September 25-28, 2016 a retreat which was started by the Andalusia Alabama outreach center will again be held. Retreat activities, designed for blind and visually impaired adults runs on Sunday through Wednesday. Total cost (double occupancy) is $200 for lodging, meals and learning activities. Recreation opportunities include: swimming, archery, crafts, games, beep baseball, nature walks, canoes, dancing, hayride, and campfire.  Mornings provide the latest information on independent living skills, technology, O & M, ADA Compliance filing to the Department of Justice. Please contact Wanda Scroggins for more information: phone 334-428-3335 or

wareaglewanda@gmail.com

### Audio Bible Study Options

At your next outreach center meeting you might want to ask who has a computer, Victor stream or smart phone. With any of these electronic forms an audio weekly Bible study and devotion can be received from this ministry; Not Alone Internet Ministry for the Blind.

The devotion is called “Youre Not Alone”. It connects an event, or life circumstance of a blind person to the Word of God: 6 to 8 minutes long.

The audio Bible study is also done by myself but includes Cecilia Lee, a former outreach center blind leader. Again, we relate the Word of God to the life of a blind person. The Bible study is called “Room 4216”. It is 25 to 30 minutes long.

We are now starting the book of James.

You can sign up to receive either of these podcast in several ways. You can go to the Apple podcast store. You can send me an email and I will add you to the email list which sends out the link to play when posted. You may also use a Victor Stream and search for the podcasts by name.

Pastor Dave

### Final Thoughts

In upcoming issues we can and will look at many of the same topics as well as others. If you have questions, thoughts or suggestions, please post them on the blind ministry email list.

Pastor Dave

Rev. Dave Andrus

Not Alone Internet Ministry (NAIM)

http://www.not-alone.net