



**Hispanic
Ministry**

HISPANICS IN THE HEARTLAND
Paul Burrow, Director of Hispanic Ministries for the
South Central District

"She has done what she could . . . Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her." (Mark 14:8-9 NRSV)

Her name is Teresa. She is poor and struggles to support her family. She does not consider herself to be anyone of importance. Yet, the influence that she has had is already being felt in Ottumwa.

Have you ever considered the power and influence that a single individual can have? Jesus certainly did as can be seen in the passage from Mark above. This passage came to my mind recently as I was working in Ottumwa to begin a new Hispanic Ministry there. Rosa Pachas Villalonga, a candidate for pastoral ministry who is a member of the Familia de Dios ministry in Oskaloosa, and I have been working over the past few months to lay the foundations for a Hispanic Ministry in Ottumwa. With all of the preliminary details taken care of, we had now traveled to Ottumwa. What we needed was a place to meet.

We decided to begin our efforts in a trailer park on the outskirts of Ottumwa. Probably over 90% of the residents of this trailer park speak Spanish. However, since they live on the outskirts of the city, many find it difficult to get into town. We talked first with the manager of the trailer park (who also speaks Spanish) and gained his permission to talk with residents in the park and later to post flyers – if we were fortunate enough to find someone who would be willing to host us.

Then, we started driving around the trailer park. Rosa spotted a lady sitting on her porch and suggested that we talk with her. Teresa was very interested in the possibility of a Hispanic ministry in Ottumwa, and when we told her of the need for a meeting place, she volunteered her home.

Rosa and I had both prayed that we would be able to find someone who was willing to host us. We had done our homework and laid the foundations. However, we never expected that we would have success with the first person to whom we spoke. God is indeed good!

Now, with a place to meet, we were able to move forward to actually establish a new ministry in Ottumwa. Teresa has no idea of the impact that she has had. Without her cooperation, we would not be able to actually bring God's word in the language of the residents of this area. But, because of her cooperation, we have now distributed flyers announcing the new ministry – and, hopefully by the time you read this, we will have held our first worship in Spanish in Ottumwa.

So often we tend to minimize our efforts. "I'm just one person. What can I do?" I'm sure Teresa felt the same way. Yet, because of her, her neighbors will now have the opportunity to hear God's word in their own language. And, only God knows how this ministry will develop.

Yet, we should not be surprised that God uses an individual in this way. Paul's ministry in Philippi depended upon Lydia. God depended upon a young teenager to be Jesus' mother. When we respond to God's call in our lives, great things can truly happen!

In late October and November, I was invited to speak at Ottumwa First, Kirkville, Ottumwa Willard Street, Oskaloosa Central and Ottumwa Wesley United Methodist Churches. If you would like to me speak at your church, please be in touch with me at one of these possibilities:

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Throughout this season of the Advent of Christ's coming into the world, do what you can. Do not underestimate your power or your influence – especially when you are working with God. Until next time, I commend you to God's care – *Adios*.