

Lutheran Braille Workers

Helping People Touch the Promises of Jesus

Work Center Memo #388 – May 24, 2011

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Growing, CONNECTING, Celebrating

I have several exciting items to share with all the volunteers of LBW about how we are not only growing as a ministry, but also connecting with His people in significant ways. On May 6th the home office sponsored our first Dining in the Dark event. The staff and volunteers at the home office put together a wonderful dining experience where we all ate our dinner in complete darkness.

The invitations we sent said: “*Lutheran Braille Workers’ Dining in the Dark* presents an unforgettable dining experience taking you on a journey of emotional and spiritual awareness that will create greater appreciation for the needs of people with visual impairment and for the precious Light of the Gospel of Jesus.”

The Three Objectives of *Lutheran Braille Workers’ Dining in the Dark*:

- 1) To create awareness of people with special needs, especially people with visual impairment.
- 2) To create awareness of the message of Jesus; that without Him we live in darkness and that by nature we are spiritually blind, dead, and an enemy of God. When Jesus enters into our life, it’s like a candle brought into a totally dark room that allows us to see and know Him.
- 3) To help LBW raise *mission dollars* in order to connect with people with visual impairment throughout the world. Mission dollars will be used to fund outreach to the World Blind Union (WBU), the International Conference of Education for people with Visual Impairment (ICEVI), for mission trips to known places of need including: Estonia, Latvia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Argentina, Japan, and other countries with high rates for blindness.

In the coming weeks there will be a “You Tube” video that will show you a short version of our Dining in the Dark Event which will, hopefully, tempt you to sponsor a Dining in the Dark event in your own Work Center or congregation. The home office will provide a link to you when that’s ready so you can share that with everyone in the group. If you would like a copy of the “Dining in the Dark Event Manual” (how to sponsor a Dining in the Dark event in your own congregation), contact the home office and tell us if you want us to send you the pdf file electronically or a bound print version via US Postal Service.

CONNECTING to world-wide Readership

As mentioned in our third Dining in the Dark objective, Lutheran Braille Workers is reaching out into the mission field in a very intentional way. Several exciting opportunities have been given to LBW. The first is an invitation to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Some of you may remember EJ who once worked at the home office (now retired). About 10 years ago, LBW sent EJ on a mission trip to the Baltic States where she met a number of missionaries who serve people with visual impairment. EJ visited congregations, orphanages, schools for the blind, and pastors who serve the visually impaired community. The congregation EJ now attends is going to Estonia (and other countries) this September and has invited me on the trip.

While on this trip, EJ will introduce me to people with whom she maintains a friendship, including Pastor Oleg of Estonia who serves a number of people who are blind. Visits will be made to other ministers that serve people with severe visual impairment in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. We are also looking into going to the Ukraine where, reportedly, many people have become blind due to nuclear fallout from the Chernobyl disaster of April of 1986. As we connect with these ministries and Readers, we will be raising awareness of LBW’s ministry of providing the Gospel message of Jesus to people with visual impairment throughout the world. Orders for Estonian, Latvian and Russian are expected to rise dramatically. If God opens the doors to visiting the Ukraine and Belarus, more Russian language orders will be made possible and we might set the stage for adding Ukrainian and Belarusian languages to what LBW offers. As the largest

manufacturer and distributor of free Braille Bibles, LBW, as a “world-class ministry,” has the best capability of providing the Braille Gospel in these new languages. (Your support has made LBW the leading Gospel provider in Braille in the world! May God richly bless each of you!)

But regarding mission opportunity, I quote the shopping channel: “But wait! There’s more!”

India

LBW has received an invitation from the President of the Lutheran Church in India (IELC) to visit their ministry to people with visual impairment. On a recent trip to St. Louis, I met Dr. Samuel at the hotel where I was staying (he had meetings later that day at the LCMS-International Center). The IELC has many ministries including a school for the blind. I am planning on a mission trip sometime in late spring or early summer 2012 (but yet needs coordination with the IELC and Dr. Samuel). The plan is to partner with another “Recognized Service Organization” of the LCMS, “Mission Opportunity Short Term” (MOST), who will help us with logistics. If you are interested in going to India on such a mission trip, contact the home office and I will keep you informed of our progress. (Above all, please pray for more doors to open that we might reach more and more people for Christ!)

Thailand

Also next year is a wonderful opportunity to meet people from all over the world who are blind as well as many people who make decisions on topics such as Braille formatting, distribution, rights of people with disabilities, and other important issues, by attending the World Blind Union. In years past LBW has always attended the World Blind Union as well as the ICEVI (International Conference of Education for people with Visual Impairment), but in recent years, this has been financially difficult. In 2012 the World Blind Union will be combined with the ICEVI and will be held in Bangkok Thailand. LBW will have a display at this event and will talk with people who attend these meetings from all around the world. In years past many hundreds of orders have resulted from attending these events and we get a chance to meet our Readers from all over the world.

Connecting with our Readers

LBW needs to meet our Readers where they live whenever and wherever possible. We do this because LBW is a world-wide ministry and our Readers cannot come to us. We need to understand our Reader’s needs, the Christian items they need in Braille, formatting and binding issues that meet their needs, learn better how to get our materials into the right hands, solving postal/shipping problems, and a host of other such issues. LBW also needs to know how our materials are being used, who is reading what we send, and what impact does it achieve. We need to hear our Reader’s stories, come to know their heart, and how we might better bless God’s ministry to people with visual impairment.

You Were There. . .

In the early to mid 1950’s Walter Cronkite hosted a TV program called “You Were There,” featuring reenactments of historical events that gave the audience a sense of “being present” at important historical events.

You are invited to participate in LBW’s mission endeavors, and in an important way, you will be able to say “you were there.” For the next 12 months I’m inviting you to prayerfully consider contributing your “coffee can money” to LBW’s “**Connecting the World to Christ**” mission endeavor. Mission trips are an expensive but important investment for God’s Kingdom. By sending in your “coffee can” money (or perhaps better referred to as “special project offerings”) you will be helping to fund these and other mission endeavors to connect the Word of God in Braille to eager Readers throughout the world.

When monies are sent in for this project, please indicate your intent by using the word “Connecting” on the check or envelop. This will help ensure that these monies go to mission trips and not placed into the general fund.

In My Prayers

Each of you are in my prayers. I find myself starting many prayers with “THANK YOU, GOD for these volunteers.” I am thankful to you for many reasons, but most central on my heart is my appreciation that you care so much for people

with visual impairment that you are willing to volunteer your time and contribute financially. There are so few ministries in the world willing to take on such a challenge as the one you have embraced. **People who have never seen anyone or anything in their life will one day see for the first time. Because of you, the first thing many of these people will ever see is Jesus! Thank you!**

Work Center Funding

I have also spent many hours in prayer over Work Center funding. Several years ago I began placing more emphasis on Work Center funding. The move was to more closely tie together funding with production. As you know, we have been moving from “encouraging” complete Work Center funding (meaning that the Work Center pay for all supplies and associated costs) toward “expecting” complete Work Center funding.

My intent in moving the organization toward “expecting” complete Work Center funding was to help financially stabilize the organization and help volunteers see the ministry’s “big picture.” This has not worked as well as anticipated and has caused a few unanticipated results. For some it has taken away their God-given joy of giving, making this too much of a business transaction. For others the change was welcome, but instead of helping people see the “big picture” it has narrowed people’s focus onto the money. Most Work Centers have increased their contributions, but some are (understandably) holding back offerings anticipating next year’s income/expense.

Within the next couple of weeks I will be sending a special letter to each Work Center with our plan to address some of the concerns of the Work Center funding policy track we have been pursuing. Please pray for God’s guidance regarding Work Center funding, and please pray for me so that I will discern and place into action God’s specific will. If you have comments or suggestions, please email me: RevPhil@LBWinc.org.

Blessings in Christ!
Rev. Dr. Phil Pledger, President

News from the Braille Department

The Braille Department is going through a change in staff and thought you would like to know who to contact for specific items or tasks.

Contact Lori for:

- Returned books
- Change in label production or label questions
- Braille orders and reader information (addresses)

Contact Rose for:

- Increase in production
- Concerns or problems with work center

Contact Kathy for:

- Ordering of supplies
- Ordering of T-shirts

REMINDER! If you are attending the LWML Convention in Peoria and would like to attend the LBW Breakfast on Saturday, June 25th from 7:30-9:00am please contact Rose at 800.925.6092 for reservations.

Paul Eide has stepped down as leader; William LaRose is now in charge of visiting work centers and scheduling of Braille Press maintenance. If you need to contact William please call him at (585) 301.5349. William no longer has an email address.

FYI: Warren Werbelow decided to retire as of April 8, 2011. He will continue to volunteer when he is not traveling the US. Blessings to you Warren and safe travels!

Rose Jaimes, Braille Administrator



In Loving Memory

A plaque will be placed on our Memorial Wall in memory of Nelda Berndt, co-leader of Work Center #81, who realized her lifelong dream when she entered the arms of her Heavenly Father on April 27th of this year. Nelda and her husband, James, opened Work Center #81 in July 2008.