

## Sunday Schools Key to Mission Work in Venezuela, Douglas L. Rutt

Veteran missionary Dr. Rudolf Blank affirms, “The most effective way of evangelism has been through Sunday schools, vacation Bible schools and youth work.” Dr. Blank first went to Venezuela in 1957 as a vicar, and has spent most of his career as an LC-MS missionary there. He continues to serve the Lutheran Church in Venezuela voluntarily as a theological educator teaching classes for lay and pastoral church leaders. He has witnessed personally how several of the children who first heard the gospel through participation in Sunday School programs offered by missionaries years ago are some of the most faithful and committed leaders and pastors of the church today.

It doesn’t happen overnight, of course. Working with children, many of whom come from homes that are not Christian, or whose parents do not teach them anything of the faith, is painstaking work. The children participate in Sunday school because they like the attention, the crafts, the music, and, of course, many genuinely want to hear about God’s love in Christ Jesus. Even though the parents often do not participate in church activities, missionaries in Venezuela have found that usually they are happy to have their children receive Christian instruction.

Pastoral Deacon Ricardo Granado is one example of the result of evangelism through Sunday. Ricardo began attending Sunday and Bible school activities when he was a small child. He came from a humble family living in the rural countryside. As he grew up, the instruction he received in the faith has stayed with him. Although he now has a degree in Business Administration (in addition to his theological training) and owns his own successful consulting firm, he continues to serve the church in Maturin, Venezuela as administrator for the Lutheran day school and pastoral deacon, in addition to directing the theological education program of the Lutheran Church in Venezuela.



“The children are the future of the church,” says Deaconess Intern Mireya Johnson. She and her husband Ross, who is completing his vicarage (pastoral internship), have been living in Maracay, Venezuela for approximately one year. In Maracay, the youth, who have come up through Sunday school evangelism, are now the most active members of the church. They are the ones that are the most “interested in and excited about becoming deaconesses and pastors in the future,” says Vicar Johnson.

“Many other methods of evangelism have been used in Venezuela through the years, such as door-to-door, mass media, etc., but really, I would have to say that the most effective way of bringing people into the church through the years, and providing for the future leadership of a new church, has been through Sunday school,” reiterates Dr. Blank.



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Caribbean for LC-MS World Mission. He continues to work as a consultant for LC-MS World Mission, and wrote this article after a recent visit to the churches and mission in Venezuela.