

# Pilgrims Covenant Church

“These . . . confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Hebrews 11:13

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December 29, 2022

Dear Friends,

Our last gospel ministry update covered June 16 – September 2. This one picks up where that one left off. I want to thank all of you who have prayed for us and those who have helped us have the means for our small church to carry forward our open-air gospel work. From March 5 of this year through November 18, our little company of laborers has given out **over 45,000** gospel tracts. The great majority of those tracts were our *Christ Jesus Came into the World to Save Sinners* tract, but we also we gave out a quantity of our *Heaven or Hell* tract and some of our gospel booklets. In addition, multitudes have read the gospel signs we hold at some events, and multitudes more have read our gospel message which we have posted on the billboards we rented this year.

This year, we have had our gospel message on billboards in Bowling Green and Glasgow, Kentucky; South Beloit, Illinois; and Appleton and Onalaska, Wisconsin. Currently, we have billboards reserved in Superior, Shullsburg, and Watertown, Wisconsin. The billboards we choose are in high-traffic, low-speed areas. It also bears mentioning that due to the web site link on our gospel tract and on the billboard message, many men and women have read our gospel booklet *From Death unto Life* since that link goes right to it. We know individuals have then also gone on to read much other truth on our website. To God be the thanksgiving and the glory!

*“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Titus 2:14*

## Wisconsin State Cow Chip Festival – September 3

Yes, there actually is such a festival in Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin, and it includes the State Cow Chip Throwing Championships! Believe me, many of the “athletes” who enter this contest are very serious about the competition, especially the men contestants. But we were also very serious about sharing the gospel with as many men and women “*dead in trespasses and sins*” as possible during the well attended parade, which was one feature of this gala event.

The weather report for the day was ominous with a very large, intense area of rain moving into our state; in fact, Prairie du Sac was right in the bull’s-eye of the storm which covered a very wide area of our state. But, we prayed and



headed out in the rain. We drove the 55 miles to Prairie du Sac in a non-stop pouring rain. One of our number, who by necessity stayed home for this one, was watching weather updates on a radar map and praying the witness could go on, though Prairie du Sac was socked in with a pouring rain. At least, that was the case until just before the parade began! At that point the radar weather map showed rain all around Prairie du Sac but clear over the city, which caused rejoicing at home and for us who were in Prairie du Sac.

We loaded up with our gospel tracts, and as the parade began, started walking and working each side of the parade. There were, as always, some individuals not thrilled by our witness, but there were also some Christians who offered encouragement. By far, the greatest encouragement was the many tracts we handed out, including to elderly



nursing home residents sitting in front of two different facilities who received the tracts gladly for the most part. By the time we reached the end of the route, we had given out **4,064** of our gospel tracts and not a single drop of rain had fallen during the time of ministry!

There was another church “witnessing for Christ” at this parade as well. That church’s idea of a gospel witness was a float with a giant mockup of a ketchup bottle label with the slogan “Catch up with Jesus. Lettuce praise & relish Him. ‘Cuz He loves me from my head to-ma-toes.” Apparently, some pastors and elders believe blasphemy is the way to win souls for Christ. *“Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God”* (2 Corinthians 4:1-2).

### **Lion’s Fall Festival Parade – Lena, Illinois – September 10**

Due to unseen circumstances, only three of our number were able to make it to this small town parade, which featured a good number of those watching the parade drinking alcoholic beverages. Open containers and much drinking at public events is rapidly becoming more the norm than the exception. It is also very common to have what would seem to be all of the patrons, men and women, of the various bars along a parade route come out of their favorite haunts with drinks in hand to watch the parade pass by. But we see it as a wonderful opportunity to reach these individuals with the gospel. While there are invariably some hard-hearted individuals who want nothing to do with the gospel, also the occasional mocker, most of the men and women accept a gospel tract.

Those attending this particular parade on a hot and very humid day, drinkers and non-drinkers alike, were very receptive to the gospel. Three hard-working, determined Christians with a great desire to see the lost found, and the blind made to see, handed out **3,182** tracts in this town with a population of 2,772! This means not only was the gospel well received, but also a number of individuals who did accept tracts were from the rural area around the town. Suffice to say, once again, we had cause for much rejoicing and giving of thanks to the Lord!



### **Cheese Days in Monroe – September 16-18**

Due to the necessarily long report on this huge event, I have put that report out of place, at the very end of this update.

### **Hazel Green, Wisconsin Homecoming Parade – September 23**

Just two of us were able to make this parade which, as so many parades do, went through the downtown area, although it was a pretty small downtown. But then again, Hazel Green is a pretty small town. As we worked our way along, laboring to offer gospel tracts to all present, my side had a good number of bars, or taverns if you will, where the

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scene was a familiar one with men and women standing with beer bottles and glasses of beer in their hands. Although some answered the offer of a gospel tract with utter contempt, a good number of both men and women did very willingly accept tracts. Remember, no one can mistake our tracts as anything but what they are, due to the content on their covers. So when men, women, and young persons willingly accept tracts, we find it cause for great rejoicing.

When we got to the end of the parade, we began doing what we generally do: offering tracts to individuals on floats and vehicles that are in the parade. Normally, we have to walk along those floats and vehicles handing out tracts to those on, and in, them. But at this parade, each entry stopped dead in the road; and their occupants, including drivers of a number of cars with kings and queens, princes and princesses of various kinds, all received gospel tracts, royalty and commoners alike! And when I say all received gospel tracts, I mean all! One float featured an individual, no doubt a high school boy, dressed entirely in a lion's suit, including the full lion's head with face, a lion's body, legs, and paws. As I was handing tracts to the other students on the float, the "lion" extended one of his front "legs" with his paw making a grasping motion. It was clear Leo very much wanted a gospel tract, though the head he was wearing combined with the noise around him, made it all but impossible for him to verbally ask for one. Obviously, his request was quickly, and gladly, complied with. This seeking young person was just one of **702** who received gospel tracts from us that day.

### **Two High School Homecoming Parades in One Day – September 30**

On this day three of us travelled to Dubuque, Iowa to share the gospel in this very hard town with a Roman Catholic background and present influence. But the good news is the young people were, in general, open to receiving the gospel. During our gospel labors, we meet a lot of young people who are eager to receive gospel tracts. We have had a number of them go out of their way to make sure they get tracts; and in some cases, we have seen young people take hold of an offered tract with both hands. This year, as is the case with previous years, we gave out many thousands of tracts to young people. When all was said and done in Dubuque, we had given out **822** gospel tracts.

Meanwhile, Mark finished his work day, and knowing that there was a homecoming parade in nearby Stoughton, Wisconsin, he headed there. He had taken a good supply of gospel tracts with him to work that morning in hopes his schedule would allow him to make it to Stoughton to share the gospel; and by the grace of God, it worked out that way. During his witness along the parade route, Mark came to a group of nuns and one priest. Praise be to God, all accepted gospel tracts! By the time the parade was over, **300** gospel tracts had been given out in Stoughton.



### **Harvest Festival Parade – Lancaster, Wisconsin – October 1**

This was a good-sized parade for a small-sized town. The local police officers were very nice. I might mention here that a good percentage of the police officers and EMTs we have been offering tracts to at various parades have taken tracts. We also thank them for their dedicated service. We handed out **1,501** gospel tracts at this parade. At one point, a young man was spotted who had separated himself from the crowd after receiving a gospel tract and was standing alone reading it.

### **Oregon, Wisconsin Homecoming Parade – October 7**

For an event staged on a weekday afternoon, the turnout for this parade was amazing. The parade route first went through residential neighborhoods, and the turnout there was very sparse. But when we hit the business district of Oregon,

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we found an enormous crowd standing rank on rank. On one side of the street, there was a good deal of drinking going on, with some of the individuals clearly feeling the effects of that drink. Our witness was met by quite a bit of mocking, in some cases even by the young. On the other side of the street, a woman teacher commanded one of our number to cease handing out gospel tracts. When that had no effect, she unsuccessfully attempted to bodily block the one handing out the tracts. But, all resistance to our witness aside, we did find that there were a good number of men, women, and perhaps especially student-age young people who willingly, in some cases gratefully, accepted our gospel tracts. By the time this event was over, we had handed out **1,996** gospel tracts.

### **Craig High School Homecoming Parade – Janesville, Wisconsin – October 13**

Just two of us were able to witness for the Lord on this cold, overcast day. Once again, rain was forecast for the day. It did rain, and actually snowed a little. But once again the Lord held back the rain, other than a little light drizzle now and then during our ministry to those gathered along the long parade route which the two of us worked very hard to cover well.

At this parade, a teacher sought to keep the gospel from young people standing on the public sidewalk. This lady insisted that the public sidewalk was still school property. Did she actually think that high school students standing on a public sidewalk turned it into school property? Later on, another teacher made an effort to keep young people in her area from receiving the gospel of life. At one point in the parade, students and teachers from a Roman Catholic school lined the parade route. Here a RC teacher also made an attempt, though more of a mild attempt, to discourage the giving of gospel tracts to those young people. In addition, we ran into a nasty priest who clearly did not have warm feelings for friendly Christians simply offering gospel tracts to men, women, and young people. Later along the route was a Lutheran School, and again, the students of the school lined the public sidewalk along the city street. There was no trouble with teachers here; in fact, most were nice. The important thing is a good number of both RC and Lutheran students received gospel tracts. The same was in general true of the government school students as well as the adults attending the parade. Our tract total for this one was **823**, which we felt was a good number considering that the ministry was undertaken by just two of us on a cold, nasty midweek afternoon.

### **Durand, Illinois Homecoming Parade – October 20**

Three of us made it to this one which, like all of the high school homecoming parades at which we witnessed, was held on a weekday. Durand is a very small town, and the school is not a large one. The parade began on the street in front of the high school. Thus, the public sidewalk in front of the school and for some distance past it was lined with students. It was here that we ran into a spiritual descendent of Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13:6-12) in the person of a teacher who seemed to be almost insane with rage about us sharing the gospel. She got in my face, demanding I cease and desist. The students were in small groups; and this woman would dart into the spaces between each group, spewing out her vitriol, and follow me from behind the next group, all the while breathing her hatred before lunging forward in the next space between groups to vent her anger at close range. And so it went. But all her efforts did not stop the



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gospel from being shared. This only enraged her more. She then grabbed a driver and headed for the school parking lot to get a car. These two followed the parade so that when we reached the end of it, they drove slowly by us with the woman teacher screaming out the window at us.

At the same time, almost every person along the short parade route took tracts, including a Hispanic man on a ladder painting a storefront who reached down for the gospel tract offered and seemed very glad to get it. People had come out of the local bar to watch the parade, including one woman who looked intently at the front of the gospel tract given to her which read, “Christ Jesus Came into the World to Save Sinners.” She then said, “What’s this all about?” before heading back into the bar with the tract in her hand. No doubt those tracts made for a good amount of conversation in that bar that afternoon, even as they have in other bars after our gospel witnesses. At this event, we handed out **240** gospel tracts.

## **Halloween Event – Galena, Illinois – October 29**

Three of us shared the gospel at this devilish event which celebrates “*the unfruitful works of darkness*” (Ephesians 5:11). One of our number held a small gospel sign and at the same time handed out gospel tracts. Our Scripture sign read, “*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23,*” on one side and, “*He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. 1 John 5:12,*” on the other, with the sides being alternately displayed throughout our time of ministry. The other two of us concentrated all of our efforts on handing out gospel tracts to the constantly moving crowd of costumed grown-ups and children. The costumes, many of which were clearly expensive and elaborate, included devils, witches, skeletons, zombies, and a number of pirates. Remember, the majority of these costumed people were “grown-ups.” That being said, there were a fair number of young people on hand, ranging from groups of teenagers to young children with their parents. Many costumes were gruesome and bloody. For instance, there was a family of a father, mother, and young children dressed as bloody zombies, including the youngest child who was five or six years old. At one point, a costumed parent, after reading our Scripture sign, said in a mocking way to his children, “Look at that. They’re dressed up like Christians!” Though he did not realize it, there was truth to his statement in that we are washed in the blood of Jesus and “clothed” in the imputed righteousness Christ wrought out under the law and on the cross for our justification unto life! We were overjoyed that the Lord enabled us to give out **1,337** gospel tracts to a crowd so fixated on darkness, mayhem, and death.

## **WIAA State Football Championships Day One – November 17**

Once again, we were on hand to share the gospel of Christ at this high school event at the UW football stadium in Madison, Wisconsin. On Thursday, the 17<sup>th</sup>, four of us witnessed to the students, grown-up fans, and teachers from four Division 6 and Division 7 schools from around the state, including one Roman Catholic school, as well as to police officers and security personnel on hand. These are the smaller schools of the tournament. It turned out to be a very cold day, but that is more the norm than the exception for this event. A gusty, even high wind was forecast, so we used only a small Scripture sign.

During our time of gospel labor at this event, I did have some trouble with a UW security guard who assured me he is a Christian! At one point, a young man who had refused to take a gospel tract soon had a change of mind, coming back to ask if he could have one. One girl who received a tract began reading it out loud as she stood in a line at the entrance to the games where tickets were being taken. By her public reading, this young lady unwittingly caused others, including no doubt some who had refused to take tracts, to hear a gospel message. Such a public reading of one of our gospel tracts is not all that unusual.

The most encouraging thing that happened during this particular ministry was a conversation I had for close to 50 minutes with a young priest who seemed to be not at all sure of what he believed, knew almost no Scripture verses, and seemed to be very affected by the great many Scripture texts which were shared with him. He also seemed touched by the concern shown for his own soul as well as the joy of salvation displayed by the one sharing that concern, even as the Romish dogmas/doctrines he held to were shown to be utterly unscriptural and much worse than worthless for salvation. It

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seemed obvious the Holy Spirit was working with great power by the word shared. Toward the end of the conversation, this troubled man looked down at the sidewalk in utter silence with his eyes squeezed tightly shut and stayed like that for perhaps a full minute before looking up again. I then spoke to him for a while longer. Though he had first refused to accept a gospel tract, he now suddenly said, “I would like one of those tracts.” We have prayed the Lord would be pleased to save this bondservant of Rome through the gospel tract which he received and that he would then use the link on the tract which goes right to our gospel booklet *From Death unto Life*.

In all, we handed out **784** of our gospel tracts on this day.

## **WIAA State Football Championships Day Two – November 18**

Only two of us were free to witness for the Lord on the second cold, breezy day of this event. This time around, it was the Division 2 and Division 3 schools that were playing, including Monroe. Since there were just two of us, we did not use a gospel sign but concentrated on handing out gospel tracts – in fact, **862** gospel tracts. One young boy took a tract, looked at it, hung back from his family who kept walking, and asked, “What’s this about?” This then was an opportunity to share some truth, though the boy could only linger for a few moments before necessarily hustling away to catch up to his family.

A few days after the football championships, we received the following email message from a man who obviously had received a gospel tract from us during that event: “Could I get a few more I Timothy 1:15 brochures to give to my loved ones? I will gladly pay. God Bless.” The man signed with his name and gave us his address. We did gladly send tracts, telling him there was no need for him to pay for them.

## **Cheese Days in Monroe, Wisconsin – September 16-18**

This is a large multi-day event very well attended, including by people from many other states and even other nations. We conducted a gospel witness all three days of the event. But this is an exceedingly difficult gospel witness to sum up in an update since we interacted with a multitude over three days, seeing and hearing, saying and witnessing so many things. A total of five of us spent many hours laboring for the Lord on the streets of Monroe. On Friday, we split up into two teams, each laboring during a different time slot but providing a continuous witness for many hours with our Scripture signs and our tracts. Saturday, two of us were on the square at 8:45 a.m. to share the gospel with runners and spectators who were on hand for the Cheese Days Chase. 10:30 a.m. marked the beginning of another gospel witnessing shift. 1:00 p.m. was the start of another time of gospel witness by a team of three with one of the three continuing on non-stop until 5:40 that evening. The Lord’s Day afternoon found four of us loaded down like pack mules with our tracts at the start of the parade route, waiting for the long line-up of floats, bands, jugglers, dancers, farm machinery, cows, gymnasts, and other attractions to be put into motion. We stood with our hands over our hearts as the color guard passed, and it was the last time our hands, or feet, were still until we reached the end of the packed 1.6-mile parade route.

Not surprisingly, during our ministry at Cheese Days, we met with a certain number of hard, cold people and a few downright hostile and even angry. When it comes to our gospel ministry in Monroe, the “hometown advantage” does not apply, quite the contrary. Nevertheless, by the time the last alphorn had been blown, the last polka played, the last of tens of thousands of cheese curds eaten, the last beer drunk, we had been enabled by the Lord to hand out a total of **9,191** gospel tracts, with 5,443 of those given out during our parade witness. During the parade time, Joy also had her table with Bibles and Scripture literature set up in front of her house. In a matter of just a few hours, individuals passing by on the street selected four Bibles, one Spanish New Testament; and also parents with children picked up a total of five Trinitarian Bible Society coloring books with Scripture on every page.

So much for the overview of this witness. Some of you would perhaps be interested in hearing about at least a few interactions we had with those attending Cheese Days 2022, this along with a few of our observations about the multitudes attending the event. As for observations, the first thing I would note is that the drinking of alcoholic beverages has risen to epidemic levels at this event. Not only are people drinking beer, but also this year, individuals were walking around with a cup of beer in one hand and a pitcher of beer in the other, so to provide for instant refills of the cup. This

Cheese Days event also featured something new by way of the open drinking of fermented beverages in that not only were people walking around drinking beer, but also wine and other alcoholic drinks. The drinking will only get worse so long as our nation continues down the Romans 1:18-32 road.

Another thing we noticed this year is that, in general, the people attending this event seemed to be harder-hearted than the last Cheese Days in 2018, though the hard hearts were no doubt mostly local. That being said, we also still found a good number of people who were friendly toward us, seemed to think we were doing a good thing, and even thanked us for our witness. A few of these asked for a second tract to share with others. Unfortunately, this friendly demographic did *not* include a number of seemingly irritated new evangelicals from this area who were very cold toward us and our labors, which is nothing new.

At one point on Saturday, two male homosexuals stood in front of one of our large Scripture signs being held by one of our Christian sisters. These two then lewdly kissed each other, so the better to show their contempt and hatred of the gospel as well as the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.



One woman who was at Cheese Days with her sister made a mocking remark to two of our number, one of whom was giving out tracts while the other held a Scripture sign. Later, the sister came back and spoke for a while with our brethren. At one point, an extended family of Hindus stoutly refused to take gospel tracts. Sometime later, they willingly accepted the same tracts! A drunken woman, seemingly under conviction, went out of her way to speak to one of our ladies holding a Scripture sign. She shared how many beers she had drunk but said she was not going to drink any more and received a gospel tract.

On Saturday, a lady who had been an intense enemy of ours when we carried on ministry in front of Planned Parenthood in Monroe came to us, speaking with warm friendliness. By way of explanation, we witnessed, preached, and picketed weekly, and sometimes bi-weekly, in front of Planned Parenthood in Monroe for almost twenty years until that wretched business finally shut its doors for good and left town. The particular woman just mentioned was the wife of a very evil man who was eventually jailed for murder. We witnessed to both of them since they had a business in the same building as Planned Parenthood; but at the time, neither showed anything toward us but open hostility. To make a long story short, we have bumped into this lady a few times over the years since PP left town. She has been increasingly friendly and warm toward us and perhaps never more so than this past Cheese Days. The feeling was mutual. We have felt a great concern for her soul and are glad to have been able to share the way of repentance and salvation with her. This year, she told about her grown son who has a rare, very serious form of cancer. She spoke of the importance of prayer, and we assured her that we would be praying for her son.

This year at Cheese Days, one Gene Simmons from the rock band KISS, a very evil man, made an appearance at the Minhas brewery's Oktoberfest which coincides with Cheese Days and is just off Monroe's square. Simmons drew in a lot of hard rock fans who ended up on the square. A number of them were very lost, aimless, pathetic teenagers. A good many of these young people very willingly received gospel tracts. In fact, one young girl in black, a loop piercing through her nose, cat ears on her head, stood back watching as one of our ladies was giving tracts to others; and then she came up to ask if she could have a gospel tract.

On the other end of the spectrum of humanity, an older WELS Lutheran lady said she did not need a gospel tract because she is a Lutheran. When asked if she had been born again, she scornfully replied, "I was born before; how can I be born again?" This was certainly not the first time we have had such a response from Lutherans.

On the Sunday of Cheese Days weekend, we, of course, have our regular morning church service, but we rearrange the rest of the day so to engage in a gospel witness during the Cheese Days parade which attracts multitudes from near and far. This year, due to the downsizing of our never large church in recent years and the need that one of our

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number stay with the small children of church members, we had only four able workers to cover the long, crowded parade route. It was a daunting task, including because we did not have anyone to pull a roller bag with a supply of tracts. So we had to improvise with one of us using a backpack, another with a mailbag, another with a large-sized bag attached to a belt around the waist, and last of all, one of us with a large video camera bag on a shoulder sling plus each of us starting out with hundreds of tracts in our hands. The forecast for the day was rain and thunder, which of course means lightning as well. Had it begun lightning, the parade would have been cancelled. But praise be to God there was no rain, no thunder, no lightning! He who commands the rain and the lightning cleared the way for our witness once again. The truth be told, this was a hard labor – a labor of love, yes, but a hard, hot, intense, physically demanding labor over a 1.6-mile long parade route with rank upon rank of people lining the route. Yet I trust it was a *“work of faith,”* and I know it was a *“labour of love”* (1 Thessalonians 1:3). And are we not *“his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10)?

During the course of our parade witness, Janet and Mark took one side of the parade route, while Joy and I took the other side. The parade route includes a loop around the square. As we were working our way around that part of the route, I ran into a couple of very nasty characters. The first, a young man in the 25-35 year old range, ripped into me with nasty, mocking language and then ordered me in no uncertain terms to cease handing out gospel tracts and to get off the square or else. I continued doing what I was doing and noticed that the reception of tracts actually improved in that area! But lo and behold, before we were off the square, another man let loose verbally on me, also letting me know that I needed to stop sharing the word of life and make myself scarce. But I just continued doing what the Lord has called me to do. On the other side of the square, Mark had some trouble with an angry man as well. Certainly, we met a good number of dour, surly individuals, some openly disgusted or even hostile with us as we labored along the parade route. But we also did get some encouragement from various individuals, including a few Christians. The biggest encouragement was the great number of individuals who willingly, in some cases eagerly, received the gospel.

I would also mention that the Monroe Police Department headed by Chief Fred Kelley as usual did a wonderful job at Cheese Days as did the Green County Sheriff’s Department. Our religious and civil liberties are greatly respected and protected by these departments.

As mentioned earlier, we handed out 9,191 gospel tracts at this event. The Lord only knows how many unbelievers also saw and read our gospel signs, but it numbered in the tens of thousands.

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”* Romans 1:16-17

Sincerely,



Ralph Ovadal