



**Hispanic/Latino Ministry Report for Diocesan Convention  
March 5, 2022**

Dear Brothers & Sisters,

The Hispanic/Latino community has grown so much in our Diocese. We have 11 Latino congregations<sup>1</sup> and counting. We have 4 congregations that are fully Spanish, and 7 congregations that are English and Spanish. The Hispanic Commission and I work closely to support all of these congregations. In addition, the Hispanic Coalition and I have worked with churches that have an interest in beginning or expanding a Hispanic ministry in their existing church, although it has been difficult to do much outreach with the pandemic.

**Affects of the Pandemic**

With the hardships we have all faced these past two years I wanted to share how greatly it has impacted the Hispanic/Latino community. Many of our Hispanic brothers and sisters had COVID-19, lost someone to COVID-19, or lost their jobs or homes. The Hispanic community was unable to stay home like many of us had the privilege to do. They risked their health and their family's health in order to survive. Unfortunately, some did not survive and in most of those cases, it was the main provider of the household who got sick. Some of the Hispanics are undocumented and were not able to collect unemployment and were left with no resources to survive. With the job losses, they also have to deal with not affording basic needs or housing. I want to emphasize how important it is as a Clergy person to remind them they are not alone after these so difficult two years. The Hispanic community are a very faithful and religious community and when they go through challenges their faith is what they lean on. Once in-person services began, they were happy to be able to return to worship in church.

**Update on our Hispanic Congregations**

**St. Andrews, Camden – The Rev. Canon Pedro Guzman**

Fr. Pedro leads the Spanish service at 11am every Sunday. Fr. Pedro is very active with the Hispanic community in Camden as well as the Hispanic Commission.

**San Jose, Elizabeth – The Rev. Toribio Rodriguez**

Fr. Toribio leads the Spanish service at 11am every Sunday. Sunday school takes place every Sunday at 9am. San Jose has a formation group for the youth on Saturdays at 11am. The food pantry is open to the community on Saturdays. They have AA meetings through out the week.

*Cristo Rey, Trenton – The Rev. Canon Francisco Pozo*

Fr. Francisco leads the Spanish service at 10:30am every Sunday. Fr. Francisco maintained communication with the Hispanic community through the pandemic with social media such as Facebook.

*St. Johns, Elizabeth – The Rev. Jorge Antonely*

Fr. Jorge Antonely has been developing the Spanish ministry at St Johns. The Spanish service takes place at 11am on Sundays. The pandemic has affected the church greatly because it has caused a decrease in attendance and membership. It has also prevented the community service and programs held at St. Johns.

**Update on our Congregations with both English and Spanish***All Saints, Lakewood – The Rev. Juan Monge and the Rev. Nicole Kurkowski, Dcn.*

All Saints currently has their Spanish service at 12:30pm on Sundays with an average attendance of 30-50 people. In the year 2021, a lot of shared activities that had been planned had to be put on hold due to the pandemic. When the services were taking place via Zoom there was very little attendance with the Spanish speaking members. Virtual Sunday School took place and once the children were able to, they got together and went to the movies and had a picnic. This year they have a Quinceanera service planned, and they have a group of 15 people who will be received into the Episcopal church on March 6<sup>th</sup> by the Bishop. The Mexican Consulate is coming to All Saints in the month of April. There are fundraisers being planned this year which will include selling a variety of different foods.

*St. Thomas, Red Bank – the Rev. Mark Van Sant, the Rev. Clive Sang, Dcn. the Rev. Joseph Luzardo, Dcn*

Deacon Jose Luzardo, Deacon Clive, and Fr Mark have been working together at St. Thomas. Services at St. Thomas take place at 9am in English and 11:30am in Spanish, and every third Sunday of the month they have a bilingual healing service at 10am. The average attendance at the services fluctuates for many reasons. Compline takes place every Friday via zoom at 7pm. There are discussions of having Bible classes in the near future. During Black History month in February, they had special guest speakers every Sunday.

*Christ Church, Toms River – The Rev. Lisa Hoffman, the Rev. Jose Cantos, the Ven. Theodore Foley, Dcn.*

For most of 2021 Christ Church needed to pause in-person services and remain virtual. Fr. Jose remained in contact with the Hispanic members through social media. The pandemic affected some members in different ways. Some members were hospitalized. Many members lost their job &/or family members due to COVID. Throughout the difficult circumstances, the congregation kept in touch and were actively praying for one another through WhatsApp. The

Rev. Lisa Hoffman became Rector at Christ Church in April 2021. In February 2022, in-person services began again, and there has been a slight increase in attendance (since before the pandemic) which shows that the online presence during the pause of in-person services helped reach more people. Mother Lisa is present at the 12pm service and enjoys working alongside Fr. Jose. She does a blessing for the children during communion at the Spanish service. Fr Jose and Mother Lisa hope that more shared activities between both communities can begin this year.

Trinity Church, Asbury Park – *The Rev. Chase Danford, the Rev. Gail Bennett, Dcn*

Trinity Church in Asbury Park is known for embracing and accepting all people. The Hispanic community have felt that since beginning the ministry in 2018. The Spanish service takes place on Sundays at 5pm. Fr. Chase Danford celebrates the service in Spanish (although he is not fluent in Spanish) and offers a brief English homily since the children and youth who attend are more fluent in English than Spanish. Felipe Huamani is a lay minister and is in the process of being recognized by the Diocese for his previous ordination in another denomination. Felipe Huamani preaches in Spanish and assists with the service. Mr. Huamani plans robust outreach in the community in 2022, starting with the guests at the Trinity Saturday Soup Community Meal and Food Pantry. The Spanish language ministry at Trinity has always been a struggle, and while the effort was showing some hopeful signs of taking off in early 2020, the pandemic has been very hard on this ministry. It is unsustainable in its current format, although Fr. Danford continues to feel it is important to offer a service for the small number of people who attend semi-regularly, given the limited church options Spanish speakers have in the community. Fr. Danford met with Canon Ubierra, Canon Phyllis Jones, and Bishop Stokes in November 2021 about the need for additional assistance for Spanish language ministry in Asbury Park and the surrounding communities.

St. Mary's, Keyport – *The Rev. Juan Monge, the Rev. Jose Cantos*

St. Mary's opened its doors again in December 2021. Prior to the opening the church had repairs done. The plan is to make St. Mary's a Hispanic congregation, since the area has a big Hispanic community. There are three days during the week that the office and church are open at St. Mary's to allow the community to come in to pray or talk. Every Sunday, Fr. Jose Cantos or Fr. Juan Monge hold a Spanish service at 5pm. Little by little they have noticed more people in the area noticing the church.

Holy Trinity, South River – *The Rev. Gregory Bezilla, the Rev. Brigitte Pincelli, Dcn.*

Fr Gregory says in the months before the 2016 Presidential Election, Spanish immigrants, primarily from Venezuela, came to the church seeking the sacraments of baptism and marriage. First steps were explored toward establishing a ministry with Spanish speakers. On the Sunday after the Election, those people disappeared, and there was almost no ministry with Spanish-speaking people for the next four years. After the 2021 Presidential Inauguration, there was a new wave of interest in the worship and ministries of the church.

Fr. Ramon provided leadership for the ministry with Spanish speakers. He made several phone calls, organized a WhatsApp group for those that wanted to be included. In the second half of the year, services were held once or twice a month in Spanish on ad hoc basis. Other

ministries with Hispanic people were accomplished during Sunday English services. These ministries ranged in attendance between 12 and 30. The highlight of the year was a fundraiser luncheon for the church organized by the Venezuelan community in observance of the feast day of the Virgin of Chiquinquirá. Bishop Stokes presided at the worship and over 80 people attended! A Hispanic Bridge Committee, with equal numbers of Spanish and English speakers was organized, to coordinate future ministries and to support ministries with the Hispanic community.

*St. Peters, Perth Amboy – The Rev. Canon Ramon Ubiera*

I have been offering support for Sunday Eucharist that is taking place in Spanish every second Sunday of the month at 11am. The community of Perth Amboy is made up of a significant number of Hispanic/Latinos and we hope to further develop this community.

*Hispanic Coalition*

The Hispanic Coalition is comprised of congregations who are currently working with me, or who have worked with me in the past. It is chaired by the Rev. Canon Joan Mason. We gather to share ideas and challenges, and to encourage one another in this important ministry. It is also a resource for congregations exploring a new ministry in Spanish.

*The Hispanic Commission*

The Hispanic Commission is a long-standing Commission of the Diocese of New Jersey. It is currently chaired by the Rev. Juan Monge and in the next meeting the co-chair will be elected. The Commission works with all Spanish-speaking congregations in the Diocese, including the ones recently planted in English-speaking congregations. They are a resource to these Spanish-speaking congregations, providing training, formation, and spiritual development at the congregational level, the diocesan level, and at the wider Episcopal Church level.

**Conclusion**

It is my hope this year that we can all continue to grow and strengthen the Hispanic community. It is evident this community is developing and growing more and more each day and with your help it can continue. If you are interested in learning more about starting or expanding a ministry in Spanish in your congregation, please contact me. It is my desire to assist all churches with this interest. I thank you all for your support for this ministry and I continue to ask for your prayers as we grow and strengthen new communities.

**The Rev. Canon Ramon Ubiera Torres+**

*Canon Missioner for Hispanic Ministries Diocese of New Jersey*

<sup>1</sup>**Our 11 Hispanic/Latino congregations (alphabetical by town):** Trinity Asbury Park, St. Andrews Camden, St. Johns Elizabeth, San Jose Elizabeth, St. Mary's Keyport, All Saints

Lakewood, St. Peters Perth Amboy, St. Thomas Red Bank, Holy Trinity South River, Christ  
Church Toms River, Cristo Rey Trenton