

Report of the Canon Missioner for Hispanic Ministries

I work with congregations of the Diocese to integrate Hispanic brothers and sisters into their congregations. Our goal is to develop/plant Hispanic ministry in existing congregations who desire this ministry. This includes integrated leadership, ministry activities, and shared power. Prior to the development or planting of a ministry in an already established congregation, we focus on the involvement and complete support of the Vestry and Clergy.

The year 2018 was a year of great transitions. I have completed my time at Christ Church, Toms River. I am no longer present at Sunday services, but I am still available during the week for guidance. When we began at Christ Church in 2014, the attendance ranged from zero to 6. In 2018, the attendance ranged from 35-50. Spanish-speaking parishioners introduced new celebrations to Christ Church such as the Celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Posadas, Day of the Dead, and Quinceaneras. This was all new to the already existing congregation but it was very exciting for the members to learn about the Hispanic culture. Although there is still work to do, a Spanish congregation is now established and I have moved my main focus to Trinity, Asbury Park.

Services in Spanish at Trinity, Asbury Park began on Ash Wednesday of 2016, and thereafter on Sunday afternoons. Now this Sunday service has moved to 12:30pm. At Trinity, we have had Baptisms, Quinceaneras, Day of the Dead Celebration, the Celebration of our Lady of Guadalupe, and much more. We established a Pastoral Planning Committee at Trinity that is charged with developing Christian Education and lay training for children and adults of the 12:30 service. We can now focus on lay formation, and developing strong lay leadership, including altar guild, acolytes, and lectors. Sunday School classes for the children began this February.

There are two men who attend Trinity who have been ordained in other denominations. They are both from Peru and speak Spanish. They assist in lay roles. They may be interested in investigating ordination in the Episcopal Church and we will assist them in this process.

I offer pastoral care as requested and work with families who are dealing with immigration issues. For example, one woman, a Trinity church member, was involved in a car accident and did not have a driver's license. I accompanied her to court. Another example: A parishioner found her brother dead in his room, a complete shock to the family, and I helped the family through this difficult time. Additionally, I have been offering support to a young man who is going to be deported. He is currently in a detention facility in Newark. These are just some examples of the pastoral care I offer to the congregation and the community. I am sharing these situations with you so that you not only pray for me and this ministry, but also for the families.

At the Diocesan level, we continue to offer Academia, a course designed to train lay leaders to be equipped to serve their Latino/Hispanic communities. We have trained facilitators from several congregations across the Diocese in the Academia program. This training included planning, leading a group, the facilitator's role, and managing problems and conflicts. My hope is that this is just the start to building the leaders needed for our congregations.

Early this year, the Hispanic Coalition and Hispanic Commission met together with Bishop Stokes and the Rev. Canon Anthony Guillen of the Episcopal Church to discuss the future of Latino/Hispanic Ministry in our Diocese. Together we began identifying a clear vision for the Hispanic/Latino ministry. This work is ongoing. During Clergy Conference this past November, we asked for a list of those interested in beginning a ministry in Spanish. Over 20 congregations responded!! There is a need and desire in our Diocese to welcome Hispanic neighbors into our congregations and I pray that we find the resources to help every congregation willing to open their doors.

If you are interested in learning more about this ministry, please contact me. Thank you for your support, prayers, and the opportunity to serve in this Diocese.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ramon Ubiera Torres". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "R".

The Rev Canon Ramon Ubiera Torres+
Canon Missioner for Hispanic Ministries Diocese of New Jersey