

Dated: June 9, 2007

STRATEGY FOR OUTREACH
WITH LATINO PERSONS
IN THE
DELAWARE-MARYLAND SYNOD

Let us go now to the banquet,
to the feast of the universe.
The table's set and a place is waiting;
Come, ev'ryone, with your gifts to share.
From the Salvadoran Peoples' Mass

INTRODUCTION

As God's people in the Delaware-Maryland Synod, we celebrate the fact that God's banquet table is open to people of every race, color, language, and ethnicity. We also take to heart our Lord's urging to look at the banquet tables we set in order to see who is *not* there. With this in mind, and recognizing the fact that the Delaware-Maryland Synod contains a sizeable and steadily growing community of persons who are of Latino background, the Synod Council formed a DE-MD Synod Latino Ministry Strategy Team. It was given the task of exploring potential ways in which the Synod can engage in mission and ministry with and among Latino persons. Our Synod wishes to welcome Latino persons to the banquet.

After a period of work in advocacy, surveying needs, and providing support for Latino outreach in a few areas of the Synod, the team was asked to create a Synod-wide strategy on Latino ministry for presentation to the Synod Council and the Assembly. This report, by the DE-MD Synod Latino Ministry Strategy Team responds to the Synod Council's direction.

OUR STARTING POINT: AN ASSESSMENT

Demographic statistics about the Latino population in Delaware and Maryland are very compelling. The Latino population in Delaware now stands at, approximately, 50,640 persons, or 6 % of the population and the Latino population in Maryland now stands at, approximately, 319,222 persons, or 5.7% of the population, an increase of 75.3% since 2000.¹ The social and economic force of this population group is a strong reality in the life of our states, and increasingly the concerns and needs of Latinos and Latinas for housing, education, health and other services are gaining the attention of our institutions. While the Latino proportion of the general population stands at approximately 6.0%, only .258 %, or about 167 of the Synod's

¹ Figures compiled from The State of the Delaware Census and the State of Maryland Census, 2005.

64,706 baptized members are Latinos². This disproportionate share shows in stark numbers how far our church must travel until it reflects more clearly the demographic make-up of the general population.

As a church with an immigrant history, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has for over two decades had as its stated goal to become a more ethnically diverse church. The ELCA recognizes that not only does it need to respond decisively to new mission opportunities presented by recent immigrants and minority groups in the population, its very health and renewal as a spiritual body are at stake in the ongoing demographic shifts. The Latino community presents the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with an incredible, largely untapped, resource of faith and spiritual power in that the majority of its members are religious. As a matter of course, they look for churches and pastors who will receive their gifts and support them in their walk of faith.

Today, the Delaware-Maryland Synod stands at the threshold of fresh growth and spiritual renewal through exciting new mission opportunities with and among God's Latino people in our midst. This area of mission, however, calls for courageous visioning, strong faith and a willingness to undergo transformation. It calls for us to tear down walls of fear and isolation, and to confess and reject the sins of class prejudice, racial discrimination, and inhospitality to the stranger. It likewise calls for us to reject some of the false notions that we hold, such as thinking that a homogeneous congregation situated in a multicultural community is a trustworthy reflection of the Church of Jesus Christ, or that leaving urban areas and forgetting the poor is good stewardship. One day, we will be asked, "Where is your brother? Where is your sister?" Your brothers Pedro and Jose; are they at my banquet? Your sisters Carmen and Maria; are they at your tables?" What will our answer be?

As the DE-MD Synod Latino Ministry Strategy Team, we propose to address the challenges and opportunities for ministry presented by our Latino brothers and sisters through following series of Goals, Priorities, and Strategies, to be developed over the next 5 to 6 years. We pray that God's inspiring Spirit may continue to blow through this Synod in a mighty way, so that persons of Latino origin may find their rightful places at the banquet.

LATINO MINISTRY IN THE DELAWARE-MARYLAND SYNOD: EXPERIENCES AND STRENGTHS

Latino ministry on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and its predecessor bodies has a relatively short history in the Delaware –Maryland Synod. In the mid-1990's an attempt was made to provide Word and Sacrament ministry to Latino people through Los Tres Reyes at Messiah Lutheran Church in Baltimore. While this was an interesting model of joint

² ELCA Department of Research and Evaluation, Source: Congregational Report Forms, Synod Totals for Delaware-Maryland Synod 8F from 1998-2004 (Chicago, ELCA Office of Research and Evaluation).

Episcopal-Lutheran mission, it failed to take root due to the fact that the church was located far from places where most Latinos lived.

Currently there are several congregations in the Synod that have been doing ministry in and among Latino persons or have expressed support to do such ministry. A vision for Latino ministry was held by the pastors of the time of the Lutheran churches in the Highlandtown/Canton neighborhood and a proposal to do Latino ministry jointly was put together. A few of these churches, St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran on Clinton Street (current interim pastor, Rev. Stan Steele, P/T), and Luther Memorial on Eastern Avenue (current pastor, Rev. Lois Nehmer), have expressed continuing interest and support for this vital ministry. The two other churches included in the original proposal, Emmanuel Lutheran on Baltimore St., (current pastor, Rev. Bobby Booher, P/T), and Messiah Lutheran on O'Donnell St. in Canton, (current pastor, Rev. Lee Hudson, P/T), as well as, Amazing Grace on McElderly St. in Baltimore, (current pastor, Rev. Karen Brau), will be contacted as part of this strategy, in order to discuss present status and develop plans for Latino outreach.

During the last several years, both Gloria Dei! in Arnold, and students from Lutheran Campus Ministry in Towson and College Park, have worked with Latino persons by giving ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) courses in area schools or community centers. These experiences are a valuable asset to the Synod in terms of willingness and potential commitment of university students and groups of our church members for engagement in Latino ministry. Another noteworthy strength is that a number of our churches have been much blessed by having lively partnership relationships with sister parishes in Central America. These churches and their partnerships are: The Redeemer, Damascus, and Nicaragua; Ascension, Towson, and Nicaragua; Holy Comforter, Baltimore, and El Salvador; Gloria Dei!, and El Salvador. Their relationships have involved sending and receiving delegations, and such efforts as Spanish-language learning, Sunday School projects, fund-raising, the celebration of Mission Sundays, music festivals, and much more. This represents an important resource of cultural sensitivity and mission commitment on the part of those involved.

Without a doubt, the single most viable and growing Latino ministry in the Synod, is the work being carried out by Peace Lutheran in Glen Burnie. This ministry, which started in 2004 with the arrival of Manuel Caceres, is a model of developing a Latino congregation out of an existing congregation. Actively supported by Peace, the ministry conducted or coordinated by Manuel Caceres, comprises week night ESOL classes, pastoral counseling, visitation, and the celebration of Sunday Worship Services, as well as other special occasions. The Synod's interest and strong support for this ministry will be vital to its continued growth.

LATINO MINISTRY IN THE DELAWARE-MARYLAND SYNOD: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Latino ministry in our Synod, in most cases, means living and working with poor people, many of whom do not have legal documentation. While it can also mean working with some Latinos who are second or even third generation immigrants and have managed to establish themselves, most of the persons of Latino origin in our region are recent immigrants who lack fluency in

English (and necessary time to study the language), transportation to and from paying jobs, health insurance, and the means to better education and vocational training.

Challenges to take into account:

- Language barrier- Bilingual volunteers and/or training in Spanish will be needed to carry out Latino outreach effectively. This may be hard to come by. Bilingual materials are in short supply and the resources available in Spanish may not be appropriate. When congregations wish to offer worship services, these will need to be either bilingual or Spanish-only.
- Immigration status- New immigrants have to move frequently according to changing housing and working conditions. Most lack transportation to come to church if they move too far. Ever-changing membership is a feature of Latino ministry.
- Lack of documentation- In addition to housing expenses and medical bills, most resources and savings of recent Latino immigrants will be spent on getting the necessary immigration papers. New immigrants face many anxieties as they go through the legalization process: loss of time and energy, fear of not receiving the papers or getting sick, and worries about family members left behind. Many are vulnerable to abuse and extortion by others who supposedly are out to help them obtain legal documents.
- Social and economic situation- Many Latinos continue to be poor, and their lives are being impacted in numerous ways by harsh economic conditions. Many children are being raised in families without a father present and/or in which the mother is, like most first generation immigrant families, working multiple jobs to support the family. Pledging support to a church is difficult if the family income is never secure, not sufficient for the most basic needs, and support is being given to families in their countries of origin.
- Discrimination- Discrimination works on different levels: tensions between different ethnic minorities, work-related discrimination, and open hostility and outright racism by members of the white majority. It is easy enough to ask for fluency in English, easy enough to take advantage of undocumented workers, easy enough to remain sheltered in your own ethnic community.

Opportunities to consider:

- Community- A sense of the wider community, easily built and enjoined in faith, is certainly a gift that is present within the Latino community.
- Sense of Justice- A wider consciousness that justice is an essential component of the life of faith. This awareness is both a strength within the Latino community and a gift to the wider Church.
- Adaptability-Due to the social and economic challenges facing them, members of the Latino community have generally learned to be resourceful, inventive, and very adaptive, and they live from a sense of hope.

- Witness—The Latino community integrates the concept of suffering as a part of the life of faith, recognizing in a very real way that as Christians, we are not exempt from suffering. Liberation theology exemplifies that we do not suffer in isolation, i.e., Christ bears our suffering even as we stand with one another in the struggle for life.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: PRIORITIES FOR OUR WORK

Priority I: To create welcoming spaces for members of the Latino community, with due recognition of the perspectives, challenges, needs, and gifts these persons offer.

Objectives:

I.A. For the DE-MD Synod Latino Ministry Strategy Team in conjunction with the Bishop's assigned staff liaison:

- 1) To engage and assist churches and ministries of the Synod to actively address racism by encouraging hospitality with the Latino community through the use of Spanish-language signs, and worship and music resources as appropriate. In addition, churches will be strongly encouraged to include Latino cultural symbols and celebrations in their congregational life, and, by all means possible, to publicize their interest in, and welcoming of, Latino persons
- 2) To call on the congregations of the Synod to actively learn about and engage with their Latino neighbors through contacts with area schools, health and community centers, businesses, social service agencies, and existing Latino ministries.
- 3) To equip and urge congregations to advocate for justice for their Latino neighbors in terms of access to healthcare, housing, education, employment, and immigration services in their areas.
- 4) To assist and resource congregations in establishing Latino outreach ministries such as ESOL classes, after school programs, youth clubs, and similar programs.
- 5) To provide follow-up and support for congregations actively pursuing ministry with the Latino community.
- 6) To consider establishing an Immigrant Resource Center, possibly in partnership with others.

1.B. For the DE-MD Synod:

- 1) To express hospitality on the Synod level by developing Spanish language resources in The Vineyard, including documents and resources related to Latino ministry

already available from the ELCA, the Lutheran World Federation, our ecumenical partners, and others.

- 2) To engage the resources of the ELCA Multicultural Ministries Unit to help implement Latino outreach within the Synod, by such means as invited staff, sharing of existing models, and providing relevant materials.
- 3) To request the Bishop to write a Pastoral Letter to all congregations to highlight the urgency and opportunity of outreach to the Latino community, stating the unequivocal commitment of the Synod to engage in this new mission frontier.
- 4) To express hospitality on the Synod level through issuing occasional statements on issues and concerns affecting the Latino community by the Office of the Bishop, the Synod Assembly, and the Synod Council.
- 5) To encourage the Bishop, or the Bishop's assigned staff liaison, to participate in Latino worship services in our Synod on special occasions.
- 6) To urge the Synod to participate in significant ecumenical services or symbolic actions such as processions, dedications, the commemoration of the death of Archbishop Romero, and the like.
- 7) To encourage the Synod to provide for a bilingual presence at Synod assemblies.
- 8) To encourage the hiring and equipping of a bilingual Synod staff person.
- 9) To stay apprised of the policy debates on immigration and their impact and consequences for the Latino community; and where possible, to work with LIRS (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) on policies that are fair and just; and to work with the LOPP (Lutheran Office for Public Policy) Coordinators in both Maryland and Delaware on policies that are fair and just.

Priority II: To raise the percentage of baptized Latino membership in the Delaware-Maryland Synod.

Objectives:

- 1) To call on the Bishop and the ELCA Outreach and Congregational Mission Unit of the ELCA to plan for the start of a Latino mission congregation before 2010.
- 2) To assist existing Latino ministries by supporting them with financial resources.
- 3) To help with the establishment of Latino ministries and/or Latino congregations in

those churches where the current congregational leadership is interested and willing to work for this to happen. This will involve intentional work and planning with St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran, on Clinton Street, and Luther Memorial, on Eastern Avenue; both in Baltimore.

- 4) To engage with Messiah Lutheran, in Canton, and Emmanuel Lutheran on Baltimore Street, as well as other congregations in areas of high Latino population concentration, to develop mid-term plans for Latino outreach and/or Spanish-language worship services.
- 5) To work with the Bishop's office and the Seminaries to engage seminarians, interns, and qualified Latino Pastors for work in this ministry.
- 6) To conduct an on-going search for bilingual supply pastors and indigenous Latino pastors.
- 7) To develop a "Congregational Companion Program" modeled after the Synod Companion Program, in which congregations will be partnered for mutual support and growth for Latino ministry.
- 8) To develop local and regional "banks" of Latino-ministry supporters out of (but not limited to) persons who have been involved in such ministry, or in their church's partnership relationships, in the past.
- 9) To carry out on-going exploration of effective models of new Latino congregation development with churches in other Synods and with our ecumenical partners,

Priority III: To increase the number of Latino pastors and develop Latino lay leaders in the Synod.

Objectives:

For the DE-MD Synod through the DE-MD Synod Latino Ministry Strategy Team, in conjunction with the Mission Through Leadership Team, and the Bishop's assigned staff liaison:
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- 1) To facilitate by all means possible the rostering of Manuel Caceres.
- 2) To develop a plan for identifying potential Latino lay leaders and candidates for the pastoral ministry through the use of retreats, workshops, and seminars. Special attention should be placed on the role of women in ministry.
- 3) To consider bringing in an additional Latino pastor as a short-term exchange pastor-missionary, in order to enhance the conditions for growth in church membership and lay leadership development.

- 4) To consider discussing with the Episcopal Church the possibility of involving a priest-missioner from their communion in the development of a Latino ministry.
- 5) To seek recognition for alternative ministry models such as synodically authorized, trained lay ministers who would be commissioned as Lay Evangelists.
- 6) To affirm and use the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) program for qualified leaders.
- 7) To work with our Lutheran Theological Seminaries in Gettysburg and Philadelphia to facilitate the offering of both Spanish language and ESOL classes for students in training for Latino and Multicultural ministries.

Priority IV: Call on the resources and structures of the Synod to express commitment to the vision and goals of these new mission opportunities.

1A. Financial Resources

Objectives:

For the DE-MD Synod through the DE-MD Synod Latino Ministry Strategy Team, in conjunction with the Bishop's assigned staff liaison to consider:

- 1) Calling on the Bishop and the Synod Council, through the Mission Through Congregations Team to consider including in the 2009 budget, \$50,000 a year, or other amount as determined by the Mission Through Congregations Team, over three years as a match with the ELCA Outreach and Congregational Mission Unit of the ELCA to fund a new Latino mission start.
- 2) Calling upon the Mission Through Congregations Team, Synod Council, and the Synod Assembly to consider including in the 2009, 2010, and 2011 Synod budgets, an amount as determined by the Mission Through Congregations Team, of new funding to underwrite Latino ministries already ongoing and in support of new Latino ministry and outreach efforts.
- 3) Calling on the Mission Through Congregation Team, Synod Council, and the Synod Assembly to consider including in the 2009, 2010, 2011 Synod budget, \$12,000, or other amount as determined by the Mission Through Congregations Team, of new funding to support the already established Latino ministry led by Manuel Caceres at Peace Lutheran in Glen Burnie.
- 4) Calling on and authorizing the DE-MD Synod Latino Ministry Strategy Team, under the direction of the Mission Through Congregation Team, in conjunction with the Bishop's assigned staff liaison, to seek out and obtain other sources of funding to be used specifically for the ongoing support and development of Latino ministries within

the DE-MD Synod. Specifically, the DE-MD Synod Latino Ministry Strategy Team seeks permission to solicit in 2007, 2008, and 2009, mission partners to support a missionary among us from the church in El Salvador.

1B. New Latino Mission and Ministry

Objectives:

For the DE-MD Synod through the DE-MD Synod Latino Ministry Strategy Team, in conjunction with the Bishop's assigned staff liaison:

- 1) To accompany congregations seeking to develop Latino ministry.
- 2) To develop, organize, and offer Latino/Latino outreach events in several strategic areas of the Synod, as determined by the Task Force and Bishop's staff liaison.
- 3) To liaison with other DE-MD Synod organizations, i.e., BURP, to identify new Latino mission areas and to coordinate resources in reaching out and beginning new ministry in the identified areas.

DE-MD LATINO MISSION AND MINISTRY
IMPLEMENTATION RESOLUTION

The DE-MD Synod Latino Ministry Strategy Team, at its meeting on December 10, 2006, voted to adopt the Strategy for Outreach with Latino Persons in the Delaware-Maryland Synod (the "Strategy") and to forward the Strategy to the Synod Council for review and recommendation to the Year 2007 Synod Assembly.

Signed:

Rev. Ana Langerak, Gloria Dei! Lutheran Church, Arnold

Rev. Bill Gohl, Peace Lutheran Church, Glen Burnie, and Bishop's staff for Evangelism

Kristy Caceres, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, Baltimore

Pastor Manuel Caceres, Peace Lutheran Church, Glen Burnie, Minister of Outreach

-Latino Ministry

Rev. Vicki Hamel, St. Luke's Lutheran Church and Good Shepherd, Dundalk

Marliese Diaz, Lutheran Church of the Holy Comforter

Rev. Dot Lundgren, Israel's Creek Lutheran Parish, Woodsboro/Libertytown, and Synod
Council

Endorsed by:

Mission Through Congregations Team of the Delaware-Maryland Synod