

Planting From the Inside—Creating an Along-side Ethnic Ministry (Regional Mission Retreat; St. John, The Grove)

Beginnings

First of all in 70's and 80's, the neighborhood around St. Mark changed from Anglo to Hispanic. Today around 98% Hispanic.

- So, in 1985, congregation considered moving.
- They didn't—not necessarily from a desire to do Hispanic Ministry—but because it was cheaper to stay put.
- That did lead, though, to beginning to talk about outreach.
- That conversation went on for about 10 years—when in 1994 the congregation had a young lady who served as a summer DCO intern to the Hispanic neighborhood.

Having put our toe in the water, we pulled it out for a bit.

- Then in 1996 two things happened:
 - Cong. began “Story-Time” a VBS style program 3rd Saturday each month.
 - And Ramon Montanez came to work as a DCO intern.
- Story-Time continued—however, we did not continue with another intern.

In 2000 three important things took place.

- Paul Krentz led us through a strategic planning seminar.
 - Hispanic Ministry was identified as an area of interest.
- The committee that was formed initiated a ESL program.
- We also contacted Pastor Hiram Orea in Dallas to conduct 2 Spanish language Advent events (Posadas) during Dec.
 - The purpose was to find out if the people in the Hispanic neighborhood would come to a “service” at St. Mark.
 - We were astounded at the neighborhood response—about 90 people.

So we had Pastor Orea back during Lent. And until 2003, he came each Advent and Lent.

When we saw response to first Posadas, we began talking to District about assisting us in getting something more permanent off the ground.

- That led to conversations with Emmanuel, Temple about possible partnership (didn't pan out).
- We also spoke to our own Circuit—which has a strong history of local mission starts.
 - This led to a partnership of St. Mark, District, Circ. 18—each providing financial help with St. Mark as the “calling” congregation.
- In 2004 Juan Garcia was “called” to serve as vicar—with hope that he would complete vicarage and then continue on as called pastor.
- In 2005 he was called as pastor of Hispanic Ministry.

Five Crucial Factors Leading to Hispanic Ministry At St. Mark

- 1) God's Word and Spirit pressing and convicting us.
- 2) A small but strong nucleus of people at St. Mark kept pressing & convicting us.
- 3) Prayer.
- 4) Patience [First spoke of Hispanic Ministry in early 80's; Pastor Garcia called 20 yrs. later]
 - Lots of stereotypes, outright racism, fear, and resistance in the Anglo congregation.
 - People had to be dealt with patiently.
 - The congregation had to be behind the ministry.
 - All the small steps along the way helped.
- 5) Action.
 - Taking the first step (even if a small one) is critical.
 - The first step is often the most difficult.
 - 1st step may simply be: planting a thought, talking to circuit, trying something out.
 - God used the early attempts that were sometimes seen as failures to plow the ground for later work.
 - The more exposure the congregation had to the community, the more they saw it was not the end of the world.