

## **Spanish Language Ministry Group**

During the past year, the clergy leaders in nine Spanish language ministries in Connecticut continued to meet monthly for mutual support, prayer and Bible study, mission development and coordination. We also worked to further involve lay leaders in our congregations.

**Block Grant** – Having received our second Block Grant from the Episcopal Church in CT, we formed a subcommittee of clergy and lay representatives tasked with deciding upon its distribution. Because of the mutual trust that has been built up among us over the past few years, we were able to bring our parish budgets to the table for discussion, fully disclosing our financial affairs to one another and the ways in which each parish wished to use the block grant funding. We set goals for ourselves, desiring to continue to increase the level of awareness of parish finances among our laity, and to reduce over time the reliance on funding from The Episcopal Church in CT. After several meetings during the Fall of 2013, the subcommittee made its recommendation to the group as a whole for the apportionment of the block grant. The plan was ratified by the group and reported to The Episcopal Church in CT. We subsequently held an accountability meeting in the Spring of 2014 at St. John's in Bridgeport, where each parish reported back on its progress and use of the funding. Lay leaders were participants in this process as well as the clergy.

**New directions** – On a Saturday in April at Christ Church Cathedral in Hartford, there was a retreat for the clergy group around the three topics of Accountability, Vitality/Vision/Mission, and Strategic Planning for the Future. In the context of worship, Bible study, meditation, and song the group took time to map out its plans for the future. Those plans include developing educational programs for our laity, and continuing to involve them more in the workings of our group.

**Education** – Two of our members are currently investigating two tracks of educational possibilities. One track is for the raising up and education of ordained leadership for our Spanish-speaking ministries. The other track is for the education of lay leadership within our parishes. We are working with Hartford Seminary, and also exploring seminary courses available online from various sources. This will be an ongoing project of our group.

**Lay involvement and encouragement** – As part of our 2014 Block Grant, we held aside \$5,000 for our group to administer as a whole, rather than allocating it for a specific parish or ministry. So far, we have used some of this money to hold a retreat on September 27 at Wisdom House. Seventy-two people participated in that day! Held in Spanish, with occasional translation, it was a complete success. We repeated

the topics covered at the clergy day in April, looking at each one in the light of Scripture. We heard introductory words about each topic and then broke into small groups to facilitate participation of our lay members. Each small group then reported back to the plenary. It was a very moving day in which the voices of these dedicated lay leaders could be heard and honored. New friendships were forged as we intentionally sat with people from other parishes. At the end of the day Bishop Curry, who has been our bishop, our encourager, and our inspiration, led us in Eucharist. Our Thanksgiving to God was mingled in our thanksgiving to Bishop Curry, who has been a great gift to our ministry.

**Progress** – For the very first time, the planning team of this annual convention came to us, asking how they might better plan to include Spanish-speaking members of The Episcopal Church in CT. Our response was taken back into their planning process, and we are so grateful. We see this as an important part of the story of God’s Mission taking place among us!

The Rev. Dana L. Campbell, Convener