

The predicted increase in Spanish-speaking persons within our diocesan boundaries has begun ahead of schedule and is far outpacing what was anticipated. While the preparations we've already done will be helpful, now is the time to respond to this demographic change by building a network for diocesan-wide communication and programming.

Relationship-building with our companion diocese of Puerto Rico has been the priority this year. Last October 2023 I attended the annual convention of the [Episcopal Diocese of Puerto Rico](#), representing our diocese to them while making lots of connections and discerning the varied ministries and collaborative opportunities available to us in our companion relationship.

This included finding ways to exchange learning and formation opportunities for clergy and lay people in both dioceses, including a revised Spanish immersion class through their seminary that enables both in-person and online participation and is tailored to the needs and abilities of the student. We are also currently discussing formation opportunities for clergy including arranging for field education and internship opportunities here in the Diocese of MO for their seminarians as well as continuing education courses in Dio PR for our clergy and lay leaders. I am also working with The Rev Erin Pickersgill, the diocesan Developer for Children & Youth ministry on establishing mutual mission trip exchanges.

I recently attended the Latino Ministry Conference in the Diocese of San Joaquin (CA) led by their Latinx Missioner, The Rev. Nelson Serrano Poveda. This conference provided practical steps we can take here in Dio MO as we plan for a projected steep rise in Latinx population over the next 10 years, a rise we're already seeing happen. I am now ready to renew my efforts to build a Latinx Ministry Development Team comprised of interested persons from across the diocese.

The Latinx Mission webpage contains ways every church can begin to prepare to welcome our Latinx siblings in Christ including ways to celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month, the middle of September to the middle of October each year. Included are menus and suggested Christian formation class information -even a salsa dancing instructional video!

I also encourage every Sunday presider/officiant to learn to say something in the liturgy in Spanish, - the Offertory Sentence, the Peace, a blessing, as a means of extending hospitality to the growing number of Latinx visitors we will begin to see. To that end, I have provided written text and audio files on our webpage to facilitate learning and practicing them.

All interested persons are welcome to grow with us this coming year. Contact me to get involved. Spanish language is helpful but not necessary.