

Mission Forward/Mision Adelante Report

In December of 2008, St. John's applied for a **UTO Grant** to fund a bi-lingual employee who could help St. John's begin a mission initiative to the Mexican community in the neighborhood and the greater Sturgis area. It was named **Mission Forward/Misión Adelante**. The Diocese is only allowed to recommend one grant request each year, so our grant did not get forwarded to the National Church. We resubmitted it in 2009, and at the end of May 2010, the United Thank Offering informed us that **St. John's was awarded a \$26,000** grant for Mission Forward/Misión Adelante, which needed to be used within the 12 month grant cycle.

A **Mission Forward Committee** was quickly formed and was open to any member who wanted to be a part of this initiative. To date, more than 40 people have participated in this initiative in varying ways, from interviewing candidates for the position to deciding that St. John's needed to call a priest for the job, from leading Movie Night discussions on movies that address the issues of hospitality to helping decorate the Altar of Remembrance for All Saints' Day, from attending the bilingual liturgy to learning how to make tamales, from spending serious time in goals and objectives planning to meeting with the Vestry this past Tuesday to chart the future course of St. John's Mission and Ministry. There was also a Bible Study on the Book of Ruth in January and a National Church Conference at Kanuga, NC—Nuevo Amanecer—on Hispanic Ministry in the Episcopal Church, which 4 people attended.

On September 15, 2010, the **Reverend Sandra Castillo** began her work here as an Assistant Priest to help this Mission move Forward. She is a third generation, Mexican American, bi-lingual, and an ordained Episcopal priest. She worked with this parish until the end of March 2011 when she took a position as Vicar of a church in Wisconsin. The question for this church, upon Sandra's leaving, was: What will be the future direction of this ministry? and How shall we accomplish it?

On this past **Tuesday, May 3**, the Vestry listened to the learnings and vision of members who have been active in welcoming new members, whose roots are from Mexico, to this church. I think these comments sum up the feelings of the members who attended: **"I think it is important to go ahead with our plans of becoming a welcoming church...we are all God's children...I want to see this go forward...It makes sense to do this...we are supposed to be spreading the Gospel...1/3 of my neighborhood is Mexican American...I want to embrace this...we need to incorporate Mexican Americans into our congregation, not just offer charity...Easter this year was glorious with all the children...it's a person to person relationship thing."**

The **Vestry voted unanimously**: That the Vestry and the Rector proceed with the beginning steps of a search process for a new bi-lingual priest or layperson, for at least a 2 year commitment, to be funded with earnings from the Trust Funds, in order to continue St. John's Mission Forward/Misión Adelante initiative.