The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's (LCMS) Hispanic Ministry encourages and upholds the work of pastors, deaconesses and laypeople around the country who are engaged in outreach among the Latino population. Through demonstrating focused, intentional mercy to meet urgent and critical community needs within Latino communities, close relationships develop that, under the Holy Spirit’s power, open opportunities to share a Gospel witness. To strengthen and encourage all who are involved in this work, LCMS Hispanic Ministry is working to build regional networks where ministry leaders can share best practices, lend support to one another and demonstrate mercy and love in their communities as Jesus commands.

**Resources and Services**

- On-site visitation of existing Hispanic ministries
- On-site consultation and assessment, in partnership with the LCMS districts, in planting new Hispanic ministries
- Directory of Hispanic ministries in the LCMS
- Periodic E-News from field
- Consultation on resource development
- Connecting Hispanic workers with available LCMS ministry resources

**Strong Faith, Fervent Love: Making Disciples of All Nations**

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's (LCMS) Hispanic Ministry encourages and upholds the work of pastors, deaconesses and laypeople around the country who are engaged in outreach among the Latino population. Through demonstrating focused, intentional mercy to meet urgent and critical community needs within Latino communities, close relationships develop that, under the Holy Spirit’s power, open opportunities to share a Gospel witness. To strengthen and encourage all who are involved in this work, LCMS Hispanic Ministry is working to build regional networks where ministry leaders can share best practices, lend support to one another and demonstrate mercy and love in their communities as Jesus commands.

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Find Spanish-language resources at lcms.org/espanol
Changing Demographics Present Opportunities

by Megan K. Mertz

The 2010 U.S. Census reported that 15.5 percent of the U.S. population was Hispanic/Latino. By 2050, that number is expected to jump to 29 percent, according to a Pew Research Center report. These changing demographics are a reality for the country, individual communities and an increasing number of LCMS congregations surrounded by growing Latino populations.

“Many LCMS congregations are located in neighborhoods that are now 40, 50 or even 60 percent Hispanic/Latino, even in places you wouldn’t imagine like Lexington, Neb., or Storm Lake, Iowa. But how does a congregation reach its Latino neighbors with the Gospel? We start with caring expressed in ministries of mercy,” said the Rev. Dr. Carlos Hernandez, director of LCMS Church and Community Engagement, which includes the strategic development of Hispanic Ministry.

The Rev. Martin Zarate, associate pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Melrose Park, Ill., also advocates offering mercy to meet community needs and developing relationships that open opportunities to share a Gospel witness. “When we connect with [human-care] organizations in a partnership to meet the Latino community’s critical human needs, the Holy Spirit opens doors for us to also serve with spiritual needs like Baptisms, confirmations, first communions and adult instruction classes,” he said. In response to the care offered, Zarate now conducts Spanish-language worship services at St. Paul. Sunday school and confirmation are taught bilingually.

Zarate is part of a group of more than 10 Chicago-area Latino pastors that have joined together to form Castillo Fuerte — “Mighty Fortress” in Spanish — to support each other and their work in Hispanic ministry. Regional support networks like Castillo Fuerte are an important part of the plan to strengthen and expand Hispanic Ministry in the LCMS, according to Hernandez. “By creating regional networks or ‘round tables,’ Latino pastors not only break their isolation but share ideas about what’s working for them in their ministries. They pray for and encourage one another. This kind of networking is the only way we will be able to meet the challenge of the explosive growth of the Hispanic/Latino demographic,” Hernandez said. “That’s the life together piece of our Synod’s work.”