**Proyecto Santiago**

Proyecto Santiago’s mission is to take the church to the East Austin Latino community and help provide Christian-based outreach, community building, leadership development, and sacramental ministry in that community.

The pandemic, of course, derailed our plans for 2020 that we had laid out at the last parish meeting; and we did our best to meet the challenges that arose.

As to our liturgical and sacramental work, we had to move our regular 1:00pm in-person service to Zoom and cancel our Eucharist service at the Casa Marianella refugee house on the last Sunday of each month. We moved our annual Good Friday Via Crucis in the neighborhood around Casa on-line, built (and showed off) Day of the Dead altars in our houses (rather than doing the large one at St. James’), and created a beautiful Nochebuena (Christmas Eve) service on Zoom.

Our 1:00pm Zoom service is also live on Facebook, and we have had people from Mexico regularly join us on Zoom. We were able to celebrate outside Eucharist for four months until Covid cases escalated.

We had to table our home-visit plan in local *colonias* (neighborhoods), the first being Las Cimas in northeast Austin, with the goal of beginning house church meetings. We were to have started on March 1.

The pandemic also put a hold on the Reading Buddies program that we do with St. James Baptist for Norman/Sims and Pecan Springs elementary school kids. However, we continued to provide support for teachers (lunch pizzas/sandwiches twice a month and First Friday donuts). The remodeled Norman/Sims campus opened this semester, a tribute to St. James’ efforts to keep it from being closed altogether.

Likewise postponed for the year was our ambitious legal workshop program for immigrants, preparing Powers of Attorney for parents. In 2019, we collaborated with local Latino Episcopal congregations and other volunteers to do six workshops that served 46 families. However, these workshops require people and staff to be present, which unfortunately is not doable these days. We explored other possibilities, such as Zoom; but nothing was viable.

A good deal of time has gone into helping people access support services and into education about Covid-19 and the vaccine since we serve many “essential workers.” We are fortunate to have a seminarian, Toni Álvarez, with us, assisting in pastoral work, albeit remotely.

With regard to the larger St. James’ community, I have been leading Tuesday and Thursday Evening Prayer since April and have partnered with Rev. Don Brewington of Houston-Tillotson to do presentations at Seton Cove and for local clergy on Black Liberation Theology and Spirituality. Together with Lora Livingston, we continue to help build the Texas Pauli Murray Scholarship program at the Seminary of the Southwest for African American seminarians and seminarians of color. The scholarship began as a St. James’ project.

Finally, and alas, to the consternation of many, the pandemic ruled out our annual tamalada for St. James’. For Christmas 2019, we made 2,000 tamales with all the funds going to the parish. Fingers crossed for a tamalada this coming December.

The Rev. Jim Harrington, Missioner for Proyecto Santiago