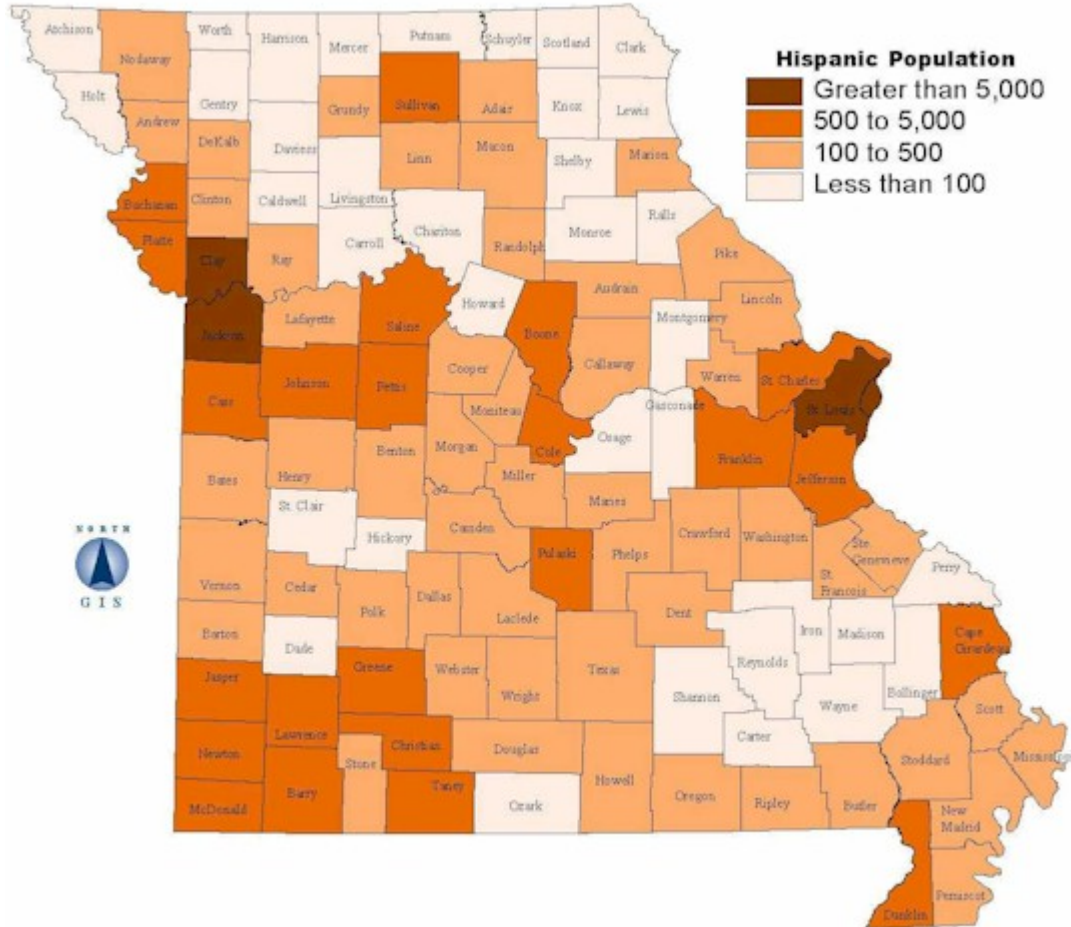


## HISPANIC MINISTRY COMMITTEE

### Total Hispanic Population



Missouri's Hispanic population grew by a staggering 92.2% from 61,698 in 1990 to 118,592 in 2000. In contrast, Missouri's total population grew by 9.3% from just over 5.1 million in 1990 to slightly under 5.6 million in 2000. Sullivan (2,164%), McDonald (1,577%), and Barry (1,027%) counties reported enormous percent increases since 1990 in Hispanic population due to expanding employment opportunities. Jackson County reported the largest increase in persons - 16,272, an 86.1% increase; followed by St. Louis county with 4,766, a 48.6% increase; and Clay county with 3,055, an 86.3% increase. Fifty-six of Missouri's 114 counties reported percentage increases from 1990 of over 100%. The majority of our Hispanic population is found in three distinct areas: the southwestern corner of the state, where some school districts are now Spanish-speaking majority; the greater Kansas City area, and the Missouri valley. We have established ministries for Spanish-speakers in the first two of these areas.

The Diocese of West Missouri responded to the growing Hispanic population in our area starting in the late 1990s, when St. Nicholas, Noel, established an English as Second Language class, which eventually led to the establishment of a Spanish-language worshipping community. Grace Church, Carthage, began the same process in the early part of 2000. In 2001, the Diocese called Fr. Pedro Valdez to oversee work in congregations interested in establishing such ministries: Mother Barbara Beam assumed primary care for the Spanish population in Noel while Fr. Valdez opened a worshipping community in Carthage and explored opportunities in Neosho, Springfield, and Branson. In the same time period, St. Matthew's in Raytown began English as Second Language classes, which have similarly grown to include worship opportunities. During the early years of the decade just past, efforts were made to establish a worshipping community in the Kansas City area in conjunction with the ELCA which did not come to fruition.

During 2008-2009, the Hispanic Ministries Committee conducted a search for the position of Diocesan Hispanic Missioner. After seeking nominations and conducting a number of interviews, the Committee recommended to Bishop Howe that he call the Rev. Jose Palma, Rector of San Francisco de Asis Church, Austin, Texas. Father Palma is a native of El Salvador who has been an Episcopal priest since 2001, having been received in to the Diocese of Texas from the Roman Catholic Church. His wife Mercedes and their four children, Christopher, Jose, Jonathan and Stephanie, joined him in June of this year.

Fr. Palma began in October as a member of the staff of Grace church, Carthage, and started on the diocesan staff as Canon Missioner January 1, 2009. He is responsible for the worshipping Hispanic communities of St. Nicholas, Noel, and Grace Church, Carthage, and for offering leadership to the diocese in education about Hispanic ministry. Membership at the two congregations has grown consistently under Canon Palma's leadership, to the point where the average Sunday attendance at the two congregations is now between 30 and 40. Together, their ASA is in the 75 range, which is approximately the average for any congregation in our denomination, and growth is steady in both congregations. Significant new weekly activities at the two congregations include education in stewardship, home Bible studies, and the formation of a choir and band. Leadership teams have been formed in both congregations to support the ministry and work for spiritual growth and evangelism.

In Raytown, St. Matthew's, continues to offer English classes and worship services in Spanish are provided by Kansas City area clergy. Deacon Laurie McKim of the Hispanic Committee has offered leadership in this area to new initiatives and is currently studying Hispanic Ministry at the Seminary of the Southwest.

The committee offers any congregation or deanery in the Diocese which wishes to explore Hispanic ministry the opportunity for education about culture and liturgical Spanish, strategies for establishing social ministry, as well as occasional regional worship. In order to schedule such an event or class, please contact the chair, the Rev. Steven Wilson, at Grace Church, Carthage.

Respetuosamente sometido,  
El Comité Hispano de la Diócesis de West Missouri