



The Cross-stitch Corner

Home Missions in the ELS ~ Cristo Rey 6:3

EARLIEST HOME MISSION WORK

Our history of home missions has ties back to the first pastors arriving from Europe as our nation expanded into a new frontier. The earliest home mission work is very well summarized in the synodical history book *Built on the Rock*.

Cristo Rey Lutheran Church in Bell Gardens, CA

Cristo Rey Lutheran Church is a mission revitalization project of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS). In 2016 the congregation began a partnership with the ELS to renew its mission and ministry. This mission is in Bell Gardens, CA, approximately ten miles southeast of downtown Los Angeles. There is an estimated population of over 60,000 people within its 2.4 square miles. Over ninety-seven percent of the population is Latino or Hispanic.



Part of the revitalization process also included an extensive building remodeling project. Most of the project was completed by volunteers from the congregation and community. The project included a new ceiling, lighting, and flooring. It also changed the sanctuary layout to increase seating capacity, create a dedicated nursery space, and create a main entrance in the front of their building.

Cross-stitch contributed \$5,000 to help with the renovations.

Outreach and evangelism initiatives are carried out primarily in Spanish. To reach out, the congregation focuses on neighborhood canvassing, publishing short video devotions, and hosting family events.

In August of 2018, Cristo Rey hosted their first annual Back-to-School celebration. This was a community event and resource fair. A variety of non-profit and community groups tabled at the event. There was music by a mariachi, bounce houses, a petting zoo, pony rides, and give-a-ways. There was also a short devotional message and blessing of the students. This event helped us identify several prospective families interested in the church. It led to two adult confirmations and a family of five joining the church.



In December of 2018, Cristo Rey hosted their second annual Christmas event. It featured music by a mariachi, pozole and tamales, activities for children, and a traditional Mexican posada. Catechism students and children from the congregation dressed up as Mary, Joseph, shepherds, and angels. During the celebration of Las Posadas, the children recited verses from Luke 2 and sang "Silent Night." At this event we received several names and phone numbers of people requesting more information about the church.



The congregation is blessed with a catechism class of nine students. These students meet every Friday for year-round catechism. The students also regularly sing for our worship services. In addition to catechism, the congregation also offers an adult Bible study in Spanish on Friday nights. Many of the parents of the catechism students participate in the adult Bible study.



Pray that we can connect with the people who attend our outreach events. **Pray** that new people and families visit our worship services. **Pray** that God blesses our catechism students and helps them grow in their faith. **Pray** that our new members continue to grow in faith through the connection to Word and Sacrament. **Pray** that the Lord would raise up members to serve in leadership positions.

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