

## The Diocese of West Texas Small Church Ministry

### San Benito Gathering Survey Responses and Table Discussions Sep 17, 2023

1. What is your church doing that can be replicated at other small churches?
  - Thrift store during Food Bank weeks.
  - Rewrite the Prayers of the People (POP) to be more specifically current. POP are read by members of the congregation in rotation.
  - All Saints, San Benito - We make sure each new parishioner is welcomed. Welcoming events, services. Attending "Market days" to invite others in the community to church. Community outreach specific to local needs.
  - Grace Weslaco - Hosting AA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts. Annually – arts & crafts show, BBQ, Rummage sale, Bible or Book Saturdays, Game nights or afternoons, Hosting EFM, providing children's Sunday School, VBS, youth group, lunch every Sunday after service & breakfast before adult bible study at a restaurant, men's breakfast and gathering a month Saturday.
  - St. Paul, Brady - Halloween Trick or Treat book bags. Little tree library – 24/7 free children's books. Card ministry – special occasion holiday cards to parishioners. Monthly newsletter. Network and church use with groups such as AA, food pantries, funeral homes, civic groups.
  - Saint Andrews, Corpus Christi – We have adopted one foster family to help them out for part of one day a week to reduce the foster family burn out rate.
  - Santa Fe, Southside San Antonio – Regular, consistent food ministry (distribution) as partner with a larger, more affluent Episcopal congregation. Collaboration of St. Thomas and Santa Fe Food Bank distribution.
  - St. Andrews, Port Isabel – Facebook page, online Sunday services, Internet access. Alpha, ESL, block parties with outdoor kid's games/hamburgers/music, firetruck, etc., we also use a very easy to use broadcast system called MEVO. It doesn't require a computer.
  - San Pablo, Brownsville – Translated - We pray, talk about the Word of God and miracles He's done in our lives. We help those in need.
  
2. What assistance does your church need?
  - Stewardship, Audit, Technological, I would appreciate a "Clericus" of small church clergy, monthly lunch? Fixing our church – maintenance: plumbing, electrical, paint
  - Tech-savvy parishioners. Hands-on help with social media broadcasting, etc.
  - Supply clergy for 2023
  - Physical updating of physical structures-repairs.
  - Ideas to grow the congregation, to be better known in our community. Ideas for a better community response. Musicians for services, Fund raising ideas.
  - Music options – without piano, organ or choir.
  - Facilitate networking. Prayer.
  - What is working well and why? What isn't working well and why?
  - A dedicated Bi-vocational priest. Technical assistance with online services, training for techies.
  - We need help with how the digital vergers interact with online participants. We need to know where they are located compared to the service, they are broadcasting.
  
3. What other topics would you like to hear more about at future small church gatherings?
  - Fundraising ideas.

- Music
  - Equipping the congregation to integrate the “apostles” teaching and prayers and worshiping into outreach. Dinner church.
  - International outreach.
  - How to publicize our activities.
  - Stewardship/fundraising
  - Senior ministry.
  - How small churches in close geographic area can share resources, fellowship, network, address needs of each other.
  - Spiritual gifts in practice
  - Shared youth events
  - Combining? to provide services to a needy community.
  - Retention of members.
  - Prayer groups, chains.
  - Sunshine cards.
  - Fellowship outside of Sunday afternoons.
  - Bible study resources suitable for zoom meetings to reach out to online viewers.
  - Diocesan resources.
  - How to interest non-Christians in Christian life, when they think they don’t need anything.
  - Our Diocese’s plan for small churches.
4. How can you help other churches?
- All Saints, San Benito – Collaboration, donations. Join together to do group projects of outreach.
  - Grace, Weslaco - Ideas; Aids to communicate our activities to the community and our members.
  - Santa Fe, an Antonio – Guidance to reach out to the community.
  - St. Andrews, Corpus Christi – We can help them connect with non-profits who also need additional help for foster children.
  - Providing ideas that work for us.
  - St. Paul, Brady – Fellowship with other small churches in our Convocation. Attend and support special events at small churches in our area. Stay engaged on a regular basis with neighboring churches within easy driving distance. Prayer volunteering.
  - St. Andrews, Port Isabel – Start English as a second language class. ESL or run Alpha.
  - (Translated) - We should get together with other small churches to share and mutually help each other.

### Table Discussions

- I. What is your parish doing as a Parish Family that successfully brings people together for teaching, fellowship, meals, and prayers? What are one or two ways that your parish has integrated members who have left the church back into Parish Life?
- Personal invites to church and fellowship meals
  - Coffee hour after service each Sunday

- Host community organizations free of charge: Rotary club, AA, wedding receptions, social events, baby showers, bridge clubs
- Funeral ministry - Nonmembers can use the church facilities free of charge for funeral receptions and family gatherings
- Card ministry that sends cards to members for birthdays, anniversaries, special occasions, get well, etc.
- Monthly newsletter
- Church membership directory
- Welcome bags to visitors with follow-up notes/cards
- Potluck meals monthly or after each Sunday service
- Support given to families weekly who care for children in CPS
- Annual Fall festival that furnishes free meal on church grounds
- Annual Rummage sale
- Quarterly chicken BBQ meal
- Valentine's Day party
- Special fellowship meals, such as spaghetti and pork roast dinners, fish fry, amigo luncheon, picnic on the grounds
- Bible study
- Bingo and chalupa night
- Prayer chain
- Breakfast before service every third Sunday of month; breakfast before service each Sunday
- Spanish communion service
- Support Cursillo attendance
- VBS with other churches
- Children's Sunday school; Adult Sunday school
- Pancake supper
- Beach party; Trunk or Treat party
- Community invited to view Christmas trees sponsored and decorated by community organizations
- Book club
- Loteria several times a year
- Hallelujah dinner annually to celebrate the church's accomplishments
- Annual meeting
- Monthly (Wed. night) Church Gathering and Discussions with Pastor

- II. Community Outreach: How does your church connect with your community to do God's work?
- Host ESL program at church
  - Distribute Trick or Treat Book Bags at community Halloween event
  - Sponsor a Little Free Library

- English classes provided to community
- Host line dancing; cooking classes
- Christmas bazaar
- Arts and crafts fair twice a year
- Food pantry
- Weekly morning prayer at John Knox Village (seniors)
- Furnish meals to new tenants in apartment complex across the street from church
- Participate and contribute to fund drives for United Way, local food pantry, women's shelter, hospital.
- Donate silent auction items to local fundraisers for non-profit organizations

III. World Outreach: How does your church engage your onsite and online communities of faith and others in outreach beyond borders and across barriers?

- Online
  - Facebook page
  - Website
  - Use of phone to connect homebound to listen to service
  - Wednesday night book club via zoom and at church
- Onsite
  - Mission work in Honduras
  - Support missionary in Spain
  - Help feed immigrants living in tents in Matamoros
  - Military ministry - send cards and notes