

Pastor's Reflections

By Dr. Jeffrey Frantz

All the time, churches are challenged to *envision* the future. What is our vision? What is the ministry to which God is calling us in the years ahead? The following is a glimpse of who we are and where we seem to be moving.

Ministry context-Hispanic Protestants. For any church, the context of ministry is important. Here at Miami Lakes Congregational, we live out our Christian calling in a culture of Catholicism that is 70% Hispanic. Our challenge, therefore, is to find ways of growing our church in this largely Hispanic context.

One of the things I plan on doing over my four-months Sabbatical (May 17- September 16, 2010) is to read and reflect on the studies that have been done on *Hispanic Protestants*. They are a rapidly growing religious group in American culture.

For example, here in Miami Lakes, our church attracts new members and friends from the following Hispanic groupings:

1. Hispanics who are life-long Protestants, often termed *evangelicos* in Hispanic culture.
2. Former Catholics who have permanently left the Catholic Church.
3. Hispanics who, although no longer active in the Catholic Church, still consider themselves to be Catholic but who prefer to be active in our church.
4. Families who are still practicing Catholics (i.e., their children are in classes working towards their first Communion at a Catholic Church), but who prefer to attend our church on a fairly regular basis because of our Sunday School and the more hands-on ministry we are able to offer.

As our church becomes increasingly Hispanic, we need to find ways of welcoming and accommodating these new groups to our growing church family. For us, this is an on-going process. For example, one of the most notable characteristics of Hispanic families is the strong emphasis on family. As a church, therefore, we have to find ways of adjusting and complementing the emphasis on these *family happenings*.

The Growing Place expansion. With plans to break ground in August of this year on the new building which will add four classrooms for both our pre-school and our church, we are excited about the prospects for both ministry and service to the community.

Again, not only will we be expanding the outreach of our excellent pre-school to the community, we will also be able to offer additional educational services such as tutoring and summer school. Hopefully, the increased income from these combined services will enable us to expand our ministry as well.

For example, two or three years ahead, we would love to be able to employ a part-time youth director to assist us in developing a junior and senior high youth program. We also want to continue to expand what we already offer through music, Christian outreach and spiritual growth. Increased revenues from this expansion project, if we are successful, will enable us to grow in these ways and more.

Ministry to children and younger families. As our number of children and younger families continues to grow, this is a major area of emphasis for our church. Our challenge is to continue to strengthen our Sunday School, along with the programs we offer for both children and parents.

The larger goal is to help our church be a place where we can all come to be inspired and supported in our shared journey as people of faith.

These are exciting times for our church because of all of the above, as we continue to draw new families and new individuals into our congregation and to be open to the tug and the prompting of the *Still Speaking God*.