



## ECMN Responds to Changing Demographics

*You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Deut 10:19, NRSV)*

In a state of approximately 5.6 million, there are nearly 500,000 foreign-born Minnesotans from countries around the globe, representing 8.2% of the population, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#) and the [Minnesota Compass](#), a project of the non-profit Wilder Foundation.

The ECMN provides a spiritual home to many immigrants and refugees. In doing so, we learn from each other and respond to the call of the Holy Spirit in shared ministry. Communities with particularly large concentrations of foreign-born Minnesotans or with intentional ministries to foster their faith life include:

[Misión Santo Niño Jesús, St. Paul](#)

[San Nicolás Episcopal Church, Richfield](#)

[St. Andrews Episcopal Church, North Minneapolis](#)

[Messiah Episcopal Church, St. Paul](#)

[Church of the Holy Apostles, East St. Paul](#)

[Misión San José Obrero, Montgomery](#)

While many have settled in urban areas, emerging immigrant populations in rural Minnesota also offer opportunities for the Church to reach out and help bridge cultural gaps, work to overcome racism, and provide for those in need. [According to the New York Times](#), for example, the small Minnesota town of Willmar (population 21,000) is now nearly half Latino, Somali and immigrants from other East African and Asian immigrants.

For more information on immigration patterns in Minnesota and how these diverse groups of people contribute to Minnesota's culture, economics, and politics, visit: <https://www.mncompass.org/immigration/overview>

For a look at regions of the state and projections from the State Demographer's Office, [see here](#)



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### Minnesota's Ethnic Makeup by Percent of Population

White	84.4%
Black or African American	6.5%
Asian alone	5.1%
Hispanic or Latino	5.4%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.4%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.1%
Two or more races	2.5%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	79.9%



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Youth from Misión Santo Niño Jesús and San Nicolás serving at First Nations Kitchen located in All Saints Episcopal Indian Mission in Minneapolis

First Lutheran Church in St. Paul. Membership in Misión Santo Niño Jesús rises and falls in response to immigration patterns, opportunities for employment, federal immigration policies, and changes in leadership.

### San Nicolás Latino Community

In 2015 St. Nicholas Church invited Padre Neptali Rodriguez to serve Spanish-speaking immigrants in Richfield with a Saturday evening Spanish-language service. Despite the rise and fall in immigration patterns, the congregation at San Nicolás is stable with regular attendance of 20+ families. The youth engage in an active faith formation program that includes preparing for their First Communion, Baptism, and Confirmation. Its combined Confirmation class with Misión Santo Niño Jesús was the largest group of confirmands at St. Mark’s Cathedral in 2019. In addition, San Nicolás’ families create community with monthly meals and festive celebrations of The Feast of Guadalupe and The Presentation of Jesus.

### Messiah Episcopal Church’s Karen Community

St. Paul is home to one of the largest Karen (pronounced Ka-REN) communities in America. The Karen people fled from persecution in Burma/Myanmar to refugee camps in Thailand. More than 17,000 Karen have resettled in Minnesota since the early 2000s.

In the summer of 2007, a young Karen woman named Dah Bu telephoned Messiah Episcopal Church to inquire if it was an Anglican church. She and her family were the first Karen to attend a service at Messiah. During Advent that year, more Karen families attended and after the Christmas Eve service sang “Silent Night” in Karen. To welcome them, Messiah developed strategies to deal with language barriers and transportation issues and used a generous United Thank Offering grant to purchase Bibles in the Karen language. More recently, they began a Team Ministry discernment process for the Karen to participate fully in their faith community. In 2014, Messiah hosted the Karen Cultural Celebration.

### Misión Santo Niño Jesús

The Minnesota Historical Society notes that since the 1900s, Latinos have been “a productive and essential part of Minnesota”, some dating their citizenship to 1848, ten years before Minnesota became a state.

In 1993, when several hundred Latinos attended a funeral for a Latina-Indian child at St. Paul’s Church on the Hill, the diocese recognized a need for Spanish-language services and ministry. In collaboration with St. Paul’s on the Hill, Misión Santo Niño Jesús was planted. Outreach to Spanish-speaking immigrants grew. In 2010, Padre Neptali Rodriguez, a Roman Catholic priest from Columbia, was received into the Episcopal priesthood and became the spiritual leader of Misión Santo Niño Jesús

In 2015 the congregation moved and now shares space with the



Worship Service  
Messiah Episcopal Church, St. Paul





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## Church of the Holy Apostles Hmong Community

The Hmong people are an ethnic minority from southeast Asia where they were allies with the United States in Laos during the Vietnam War. The Hmong became refugees when the U.S. pulled out of the region. Today, St. Paul is home to more than 60,000 Hmong, the largest urban population of Hmong in the United States.



Holy Apostles New Year's Celebration with Bishop Prior and Stacy Prior

Church of the Holy Apostles, a once thriving congregation was in danger of closing. In 2004, The Rev. Susan Moss Metro Area Canon Missioner, learned from her friend Sy Vang, that 75 Hmong families had left the Roman Catholic Church and were interested in joining The Episcopal Church. She encouraged them to visit Holy Apostles, where they were welcomed by then Vicar, The Rev. William Bulson. Hmong elders then met with Bishop James Jelinek who, in 2005 received more than 200 Hmong faithful into The Episcopal Church at St. Mark's Cathedral. Holy Apostles is the first Hmong majority congregation in the Anglican Communion.

Since then, the Bishop has ordained five Hmong priests (including The Rev. Bao Moua, first Hmong woman priest) and two Hmong deacons. The majority of Hmong clergy were formed in a local bilingual Shared Ministry program, created and directed by The Rev. Letha Wilson Barnard, Vicar.

## St. Andrew Episcopal Church

Founded in 1858 in north Minneapolis, St. Andrews is now home to new Minnesotans from Liberia, Nigeria and other West African countries. St. Andrew's partners with Circle of the Beloved (Episcopal Service Corps) providing their former rectory as housing for corps members.



Community Gathering, St. Andrews Episcopal Church, Minneapolis

## Misión San José Obrero, Montgomery

The Misión San José Obrero (to honor patron saint St. Joseph the Worker) is an Episcopal Mission of migrant laborers employed in the Seneca

canning plant in Montgomery, Minnesota. Workers from Southern Texas have been coming to Minnesota for decades, living in Montgomery during the eight week canning season.



Members from Misión Santo Niño Jesús serve at Misión San José Obrero in Montgomery

Originally called the Montgomery Migrant Ministry, the seeds of Misión San José Obrero were planted in 1993 by The Rev. Carolyn Schmidt and The Rev. Vincent Schwahn. In 2008 our Diocesan Convention welcomed Misión San José Obrero as a Special Mission of the Diocese of Minnesota. Since 2011, Padre Neptali Rodriguez has led services, provided pastoral care, administered sacraments, and car blessings. ECMN faith communities provide meals and participate in "la misa", sharing meals stories and living into the gospel message of hospitality.