

Inter-Cultural Outreach at Faith Lutheran in Surrey, BC.

When you arrive on Sunday morning at Faith, you will find a lot of activity. At 10:00 am is Chinese worship in Mandarin with translation into Cantonese. That is also when Sunday school and Bible classes (adult, youth & ESL) begin and the Hispanic Fellowship meets for worship in the chapel. This is followed at 11:00 with English worship and at 12:30 with Korean worship. If you are present for a Chinese or Korean service, you will be invited to join for an ethnic lunch members of these fellowships prepare. And if you are fortunate enough to be present for one of six annual joint-fellowship services, you will be treated with worship that includes representatives from each fellowship doing readings in their own language and an ethnic choir. Following the service an international taste sensation awaits as members share their traditional dishes.

As if this were not enough bustle, in 2016 we began sharing our facility with three other congregations (a Mennonite Brethren church plant, a South Sudanese Anglican Network, and a Syriac Orthodox) who needed a place to worship. This not only helped pay our expenses, but multiplied ministry in our area where churches are relatively scarce.

We also have a group of South Sudanese members from the Nuer tribe who worship regularly on Sunday afternoons. They carry out an outreach in their community that include weekly Nuer language classes for all ages and bi-monthly activities. Pastor Wilch meets each month with the leader of the Nuer ministry for pastoral training. This year our church submitted an application through CLWR for refugee sponsorship of a Nuer family stuck in a camp in Ethiopia.

Perhaps our most significant outreach to the community involves the church's Sowing Seeds Preschool with a capacity of up to 100 students. Following a Lutheran curriculum hundreds of students have heard about God's love for them over the past 12 years that the school has been in operation. That is very significant, considering that the vast majority of the students are from a south Asian background (Sikh, Hindu and Muslim) and it may be the first time they learn about Jesus from the Bible.

The biggest outreach event that draws about 40 volunteers from all our ethnic fellowships together is our annual Vacation Bible School. In order to accommodate those who work, VBS takes place in the evening. Last year we got about 100 participants, including four age groupings of children rotating through 4 stations and Bible classes for adults in four languages.

Another favourite is our annual Christmas dinner. This event originally began years ago as an outreach of our Hispanic Fellowship to the migrant Hispanic workers in the lower mainland. Last year members of our other fellowships also took part, making it an international Christmas dinner, though still with a distinctive Hispanic flair. A piñata keeps the kids excited and wired for the night!

Since winters can be miserably wet, if not cold, we began opening our gym to young families for an after school activity where kids could run around while parents got to know each other. After the children got enough exercise we all sat together for a potluck, enjoying the flavours from each other's homes.

When the weather got nicer we organized family outings to Vancouver favorites such as Deep Cove, Lighthouse Park, Centennial Beach and Fort Langley, organizing rides for those who needed them. As our congregation has a number of camping enthusiasts, we organized a weeklong family camping trip for over 50 people at a group site in Manning Park. This was a wonderful opportunity to bring unchurched family and friends as well as introduce newcomers to one of Canada's finer past-times. New this year was a canoe trip, mountain biking (into the lake!) and the Sunday sermon preached from a canoe on the lake.

Last year we began the tradition of handing out treats from decorated trunks of cars on Halloween night in our church parking lot. About 200 children visited our site and received Gospel literature related to Halloween and invitations to Sunday school.

In May Surrey hosts our nations' largest Vaisakhi parade which many of South Asian origin celebrate. Since the parade route is near our church, we used the occasion to offer parking and partner with a Punjabi church to distribute Gospel literature in various languages, including Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu. We did this from the sidewalk in front of our church, reaching thousands *en route* to the parade.

We pray we may continue to take advantage of the many opportunities God gives us of "reaching the nations" with the Gospel, even as our core membership ages and retires to more serene locales. We are thankful for all who are committed to reaching the lost, including the congregations in the ABC District who support us with their mission offerings to the District. By God's grace, we seek to build the leadership needed to reach a new generation for the Lord.



International Christmas celebration tradition started by the Hispanic Fellowship at Faith Lutheran.



The cast of the Sunday school children's pageant who presented the play "The Journey" written by nonagenarian member Poly Kusch.



VBS junior class singing F-A-I-T-H with gusto



Some members of the Faith camping trip at Manning Park