

Workshop Summary:

## **MINISTRY WITH IMMIGRANT HISPANIC CONGREGATIONS**

*This workshop was led by the Reverend Mauricio Chacón, who has been involved in immigrant ministries in San Francisco and Houston for many years, after crossing the U.S./Mexico border 35 years ago.*

The Rev. Mauricio Chacón came across the border at Tijuana over 35 years ago and became a citizen in the last year that it was legally possible to do so. In immigrant congregations, he says, it is important not to be focused on one particular people (country). Hispanic/ Latino communities are diverse by their very nature, and it is more important to know the customs and foods of the people. He feels that it is very important for the church building to be used all the time as a tool to reach out to the community. Working with immigrants expands your heart as you get to know their needs.

After 14 years in San Francisco, Mauricio accepted a call to Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church in Houston, where he began a new immigrant fellowship. The church wanted the program but to have it meet off-site. He began in April, and by May there were 50 people coming ... primarily due to his “working” the neighborhood. The initial meetings were in a school, but they later moved to another facility. Eventually, Memorial Church decided that they wanted the Fellowship to move to Memorial Drive and for Mauricio to become an Associate Pastor. At first, he said “no” but when the Fellowship was promised its own separate space, an area of the garden, and the use of the kitchen, he agreed to have the proposal considered by the Fellowship. Three legs form the base of their program: Generosity, Prayer, and Blessed Challenge (being with people). The vote was to take place on Monday, April 19, 2010, a few days after this workshop was held. Chacón feels that the church will be open to helping discern and meet the needs of the Fellowship members, e.g., with health programs, English classes (basing them on vocabulary relating to the jobs the people are pursuing), and the teaching of computer skills.

Workshop description developed by Mary Lynn Walters