

IN DIVERSE TONGUES

One of the best moments of the Diocese of New Jersey was its response to the foreigners who moved to these shores. Rudolph J. Vecoli, in his book *The People of New Jersey*, told of the wave of Germans that first arrived in Newark about 1847 for the purpose of finding employment in the many breweries of that city. It took but one year, May 31, 1848, to be exact, when a German parish called St. Matthew's was organized by the Rev. Julius D. Rose, a former Lutheran pastor. Rose had immediately translated the *Book of Common Prayer* into German and so was ready to begin this ethnic ministry.

St. Matthew's was the first in a number of ethnic ministries that would spring up in the many corners of the sprawling State. Dedicated clergy, like Rose, arose to meet the needs of each wave of immigrants that reached New Jersey. In 1853 St. Matthew's organized another German ministry called St. Peter's a mile or so away in the German area of Newark called The Hill. The services there also were in German.

There were a large number of Germans who came to New Jersey for a variety of different industries. In 1855 many came over to work in the glass factories of South Jersey. Services in German were begun in St. Thomas', Glassborough, at first using Prayer Books borrowed from St. Matthew's, Newark. By 1861 the Germans in the Philipsburg area were being ministered to by the Church and by 1865 a ministry to the Germans flourished in Trinity Church, Middletown Point, now called Matawan, where the services were said in German on the first Sunday of each month. In 1875 an Episcopal Lay Reader reacted to the needs of the Elizabethport area by establishing a Sunday School that met in the Railroad Depot. The largest part of this congregation was composed of German workers and their families

French immigrants soon settled in and around West Hoboken where they found services in their language at St. John's.

In 1883 the rector of Christ Church, Elizabeth, announced to the Diocesan convention that a weekly Friday evening service was being held in the church exclusively for black people. This ministry continued for quite some time. Christ Church also established St. Paul's Chapel, in 1886. It apparently flourished to an amazing degree for by 1907 they reported a Sunday School of some 225 scholars. In 1909 Bishop Scarborough mentioned, in his annual address to Convention, that the character of the population was changing and was heavily Italian. An Italian-speaking priest, Fr. Domenico A. Rocca, was placed in charge.

Grace Church, also of Elizabeth, began a response to a group of Russian Orthodox families in 1917 although the nature of that response was not recorded in the Diocesan Archives.

St. John's, the grande dame of Elizabeth, began a chapel for the poor named St. Andrew's in 1891 although the ethnic nature of the work is unknown.

Camden, another burgeoning city of the era, found its parishes rallying to minister to its sons and daughters. St. Paul's maintained two chapels, St. James' and St. Stephen's, the latter congregation ministering to a large Armenian population. St. John's, now extinct, supported a chapel named St. Barnabas' and a Mission House known only as St. Agnes'. The Church of our Saviour, now extinct, began an extensive work among the Italian residents of South Camden and, in 1915, an Italian priest was in attendance for them. Camden, like Elizabeth and Newark, found the Episcopal Church ready to mobilize its forces to minister to the growing and changing population.

Trenton, our See City, had several parishes active in the mission work of the Church. Christ Church established a mission named St. John's that was located in the southern region of the city where it was established in 1910. St. Monica's was a church for the black residents of Trenton. It was established in 1919 and was first housed in a private residence on Spring Street.

A ministry to the Lithuanian and Hungarian population of Trenton called St. Elizabeth's, was established by St. Paul's. By 1916, services were being held both in Lithuanian and Hungarian and St. Elizabeth's came into being. There is no record of how the Lithuanians fared. All Saints' Church took part in this particular ministry for it donated a building lot for the Chapel of St. Elizabeth.

St. Michael's had a distinctive ministry that began in 1839 when it assumed spiritual ministry to the State Prison on Cass Street in Trenton. So we can add Trenton to those cities who met the challenge of a changing population.

In 1861 services in the sign language of the deaf were begun and by 1900 services for the deaf were being signed in such diverse locations as Trenton, Camden, Dunellen, Princeton, Lambertville, and Westville.

In 1913, Bishop Scarborough suggested that a chaplain provide an Episcopal presence on the docks of the proposed Immigration Center then planned for the Delaware River near Gloucester.

Finally, a ministry to the Spanish-speaking migrant workers was established in the middle of the 20th century and still lives. Each of our three largest cities has at least one congregation that is primarily Hispanic and one of the biggest challenges to the Diocese is the expansion of that ministry to the areas of this Diocese where Hispanics live in goodly numbers.

*(The Rev. Canon) Laurence D. Fish
Archivist and Historian
1998*