**From Father Herring…**

 **Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

It is with great happiness that I share with you that St. Peter’s is partnering with the Diocese of Atlanta in planting a Hispanic Mission here in Rome at St. Peter’s. This possibility has been discussed over the last four years at vestry meetings, and in conversations with Bishop Wright, and Canon Thompson Quarterly. We discussed

the need for a Hispanic mission in Rome, because of the growth of the Hispanic population combined with the absence of outreach to this population in Northwest Georgia by the Episcopal Church.

Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population grew from 10% of the Rome population to 16%, and has continued to grow since 2010. In addition, the City of Rome School System now has a Hispanic population of 25% to 35% of the student body. Yet, the two closest Episcopal congregations are in Smyrna and Roswell. In fact, people have driven to St. Benedict’s Episcopal Church in Smyrna from as far away as Cartersville, Cedartown and Trion, in order to attend Spanish speaking services. Yet, despite the need, things never really lined up and the idea was always put on hold.

This year, St. Peter’s and the Diocese are ready to take action. A small amount of money has been set aside in our budget for 2017 for a Hispanic mission, towards which the Diocese of Atlanta will also contribute from its budget. In addition, the Diocese will send one of its Diocesan Hispanic Missioners, the Rev. Ramon Betances, and his wife, Gregoria Betances, to Rome on Sunday evenings**. Father Betances will preside over the Eucharist in Spanish at 5:00 PM in the Chapel on Sundays, beginning February 26th.** In 2018, Gregoria Betances will be ordained, at which point, she will assume the role of Missioner at San Pedro. After she is ordained, she will hold part time office hours at St. Peter’s 2 to 3 days per week, and lead the Eucharist on Sunday evenings. In addition, the Diocese of Atlanta will continue to partner with us financially by contributing to this mission from their budget.

These are small but exciting steps in the life of our parish. I am thrilled that St. Peter’s is in the position to draw the circle wider, making disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

 **La paz del Señor sea siempre con ustedes,**

 **John**