

Guardian Angels Church

Justice & Outreach Commission

Sister Parish Community

Ministry Program Plan

August 2014



FOREWORD

This is the Ministry Program Plan for the Sister Parish Community within Guardian Angels Catholic Parish in Oakdale, Minnesota. This Community operates as a Committee of the Justice and Outreach Commission within Guardian Angels.

Our Mission

Engage in a relationship with a Christian Community beyond our own culture.

Our Objectives

- ◆ Establish and maintain a reciprocal relationship with a Christian Community in Teustepe, Nicaragua. Cultivate this relationship to reflect the qualities required in all human relationships – respect, kindness, sincerity, tactfulness, a sense of humor, and a spirit of sharing.
- ◆ Communicate and grow our Community experience within Guardian Angels and beyond, so that Guardian Angels’ members and others may benefit from and be included in our relationship.
- ◆ Enlighten ourselves about the history, culture, language, and social issues that encompass the lives of the people of Teustepe and the region, and share with them the attributes of our way of life.
- ◆ Contribute to solutions for challenges faced by our brothers and sisters.
- ◆ ,Attract and manage funding for the Community relationship to accomplish our goals.

Our Name – “Sister Parish”

For the Christian Community of Teustepe, this relationship can be best described by the Spanish word, “Hermanamiento”. It means that we are “brothers and sisters” in everything we accomplish together.

For Guardian Angels Parish, we use the name “Sister Parish” because it describes our part of this relationship, and it has been our name for the past 30 years. Our relationship has changed over the years from priest to priest, to parish to parish, to parish to Community. We expect it to continue to change into the future.

1. Ministry History

Guardian Angels' relationship with the Christian Community of Teustepe began in 1985. It is the longest sister relationship in the Archdiocese. It began as a key part of what was then our parish mission – **“Engage in a relationship with a Christian Community beyond our own culture”**. For 30 years, we have walked in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, developing bonds of love and commitment, which inspire us to be advocates for justice and peace in our world.

As members of Guardian Angels, we believe that we must share the spiritual and material gifts that God has entrusted to us. As members of the Church in the Americas, we want to better appreciate the rich cultural heritage of our continent. And, as part of the Universal Church, we desire to expand our horizons to include all of our brothers and sisters in faith.

Role of AKF. For many years, our relationship with the Community of Teustepe has been facilitated by *Escuela Asociación Kairos para la Formación* (“AKF”). AKF is a social justice organization dedicated to improving the lives of the people in Nicaragua. They provide many services to the Community of Teustepe, including:

- banking services for our small loan program,
- leadership training,
- translation,
- meeting facilitation,
- annual retreat coordination.

Relationship with the parish of St. Rita. The members of the Christian Community of Teustepe are all active members of the Church of St. Rita in Teustepe. At the start, the pastor of the parish was part of the creation of this relationship. Over the years, the pastor has been changed frequently, and the Community of Teustepe is not always able to count on his full participation. Because of the need to own land and to manage a small loan program, the Community has, through considerable effort, become incorporated as an independent legal entity. Their legal name is “The Guardian Angels Community of Teustepe.” They have formal by laws, membership requirements, and election procedures. They remain active members of many ministries at St. Rita’s, but the Community itself exists independent of the parish.

What Guardian Angels Gains from this relationship.

- We learn to live and love outside our comfort zone, in another world.
- We change how we view all of human kind, meeting and loving other members of Christ’s body who are different, yet the same as ourselves. Billions of people live at this economic level and below, and this experience opens us to understand their world. This kind of experience can literally change the world. It makes us better citizens of our world.
- We bless them, by visiting them, by naming them, by working with them to accomplish their goals.
- They bless us, by opening their hearts and homes to us, and helping us see some life values from a truly different perspective.
- We are building the Kingdom of God. The kingdom is for the poor, from the poor.
- We can make a significant difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters, and in our own lives. Through this relationship, our children, the children of both sides of this relationship, will be very different human beings, who will change our world.

2. Background – Activities & Challenges

Teustepe is a municipality located in the Boaco region of Nicaragua covering approximately 225 square miles. The city proper has a population of approximately 4,000, with another 26,000 living in 50 surrounding small agricultural villages that are considered part of the municipality.

The beautiful Church of St. Rita, located in the city center, is the parish for the city of Teustepe and the rural villages. As the marketplace for the area, the city is economically dependent on the success of the harvest. In many years, drought and natural disasters have brought extreme hardship; however, the sense of community and faith in God is abundant.

We regularly sponsors visits with our sister community. Travelers from the North learn the history, the culture, and the political and economic condition of the country. They experience the warm hospitality and love of our brothers and sisters in Teustepe. This face-to-face connection sustains the relationship and maintains our commitment to work for a better tomorrow for all God's children. Travelers from the South stay with our parish members, and participate in many parts of our parish during their visit.

Over the years, our relationship has grown and matured. At the start, we visited primarily in one direction, and we sent things for the southern community. Now, we are joint partners in their development. The Community of Teustepe administers a thriving small loan program which enables many forms of local entrepreneurship. They are a legal corporation in their municipality, with formal membership requirements and bylaws. This growth has enabled them to set about planning for the fulfillment of their dream – the creation of a community center and community garden.

We have a strong determination to continue to deepen our *Hermanamiento* relationship, and we are now being invited to participate in more tangible ways to support our brothers and sisters in Teustepe.

The following are additional changes affecting Community activities:

- AKF has acquired a facility and become a school, a center for vocational education, resulting in changes to the services AKF provides and their pricing model.
- Guardian Angels has experience some budget challenges and the method of funding our Community activities has changed.
- Rotary International (local chapters), with the encouragement of Guardian Angels, has selected Nicaragua for their new sustainable initiatives, which are also mediated by AKF.
- The Community in Teustepe has become a legal entity in order to own land and to manage their small loan program.

3. Organization Plan

Consistent with the culture within Guardian Angels, the Sister Parish Community adopts the “servant leader” style of leadership that is participative and encourages everyone to contribute fully according to their respective time and talents.

Membership

All members of Guardian Angels Parish are Members of the Sister Parish Community, and may take part in all meetings and activities. Delegates who travel to Teustepe are expected to take an active part in Membership Meetings, as they act as representatives of the Community and Guardian Angels.

Decisions

All significant Community decisions are arrived at by means of a consensus discussion at a formal Member Meeting.

Leadership Team

The Leadership Team consists of:

- **Two Co-Chairs** – they serve two-year staggered or overlapping terms and share leadership of our Community.
- **Vice Chair** – serves a one or two year term assisting the Co-Chairs, with the intent to succeed one of the Co-Chairs.

The Leadership Team has these responsibilities:

- Plans the agenda and leads our Community meetings.
- Represents the Community on the Justice and Outreach Commission.
- Serves as the coordinating point for Community planning activities.
- Recruits leaders for the strategy areas of the Community.
- Plans and facilitates an annual planning retreat.

The Leadership Team works closely with the leaders for the strategy areas, including:

Membership, Delegations, Finance, Communications, Events, and External Affiliations.

These areas may exist as standing subcommittees or less formally as one or two individuals, depending upon the amount of work to be accomplished. We want to be structured in our approach, while maintaining flexibility to react to changing conditions.

The membership of the Community determines our leaders at our annual planning meeting.

Meetings

Members attend a variety of different meetings during a calendar year. These meeting dates are established and published annually so that all members of the parish may attend.

- **Annual Planning Meeting** – We elect new leadership, create the annual calendar of meetings, and define key strategies and subcommittees for the year’s work. The meeting recruits and assigns leaders for each of the Strategy Areas, and defines our expectations for the year.
- **Business Meetings** – conducted by the Community Leadership and open to all Members. These meetings are held according to the annual calendar, but generally at least once a quarter. Minutes are published and action steps established and reported.
- **Social / Educational Meetings** – these meetings are planned by the appropriate strategy area or subcommittee. They are focused on building up our common spirit and hermanamiento with our southern brethren. They may take the form of music, entertainment, food, lecture, movie, reflection, discussion, etc. These meetings are generally held monthly to maintain our sense of community.
- **Celebrations.** These gatherings are focused on our Members in the larger parish. We celebrate important events in the life of the Community of Teustepe, such as the feast of St. Rita, Purissima, and the like. The annual planning meeting assigns the dates, and assigns volunteers who plan these meetings. In a typical year, we will have two of these celebrations.

Distribution Lists / Information Availability

Our Community maintains several distribution lists for contacting Members. Individuals can select which list is appropriate for their involvement.

- **Email List.** Individuals who wish to be informed about all of the activities of the Sister Parish Community, and are open to calls to participate in working groups.
- **Web Site.** The Community maintains a web site presence within the GA Parish website. We publish our calendar, meeting minutes, budget, sub-committee reports, and communications with the Community of Teustepe. This is one of the responsibilities of the PR Strategy Area.