

## PREACHING FOR SPANISH SPEAKING DEACONS - 2022 Conference

*by Deacon Maureen Hagen*

In The Episcopal Church, deacons occupy a unique space. Ordained to take Christ's redemptive love into the world, especially to those on the margins, deacons are also charged to interpret to the Church the hopes, needs, and concerns of the world. Because of that intersection, their often prophetic voices require a forum, a pulpit. To preach effectively they need training as part of their formation and ongoing ministry. Increasingly, dioceses understand this necessity and are looking for ways to provide it.

In the past few years, the Episcopal Preaching Foundation has partnered with the Association for Episcopal Deacons to provide this training. Deacons attending EPF events in Province VIII and V, recognize the high quality of EPF offerings.

Last year, AED approached EPF with an audacious request: Would it be possible to provide the same high-calibre training to the fast-growing numbers of deacons serving Spanish-speaking congregations? The challenges were considerable: many dioceses had only one or two Spanish-speaking deacons; many of the Province IX dioceses had no deacons.

And EPF said yes!

Peter Wild met monthly with AED Board Member Juan Sandoval, President Tracie Middleton and Past President Maureen Hagen to design an online program, held over two weekends. They assembled a team of major leaders from Latino community, including plenary speakers The Rt Rev Rafael Morales (Bishop of Puerto Rico), The Very Rev. Miguelina Howell (Connecticut), The Very Rev. Anthony Guillén (TEC Ethnic Ministries), and The Rev. Nancy Frausto (Seminary of the Southwest). Everyone said yes.

We knew we had to find high-quality small-group mentors to ensure an excellent experience for the participant. We assembled some of the best Spanish-speaking preachers throughout North America, including The Revs. Hernán Astudillo (Toronto), Ricardo Avila (Camino Real), David Chavez (Arizona), Yoímel Gonzalez Hernandez (Washington), Marivel Milien (SE Florida), Alex Montes-Vela (Texas), Ema Rosero-Nordalm (Massachusetts), Janet Suiero Rodman (East Carolina), Nelson Serrano Poveda (San Joaquin), Fabio Sotelo (Atlanta), and Ale Trillos (El Camino Real).

Worship played an integral part throughout our time together, highlighted by the Rev. Nancy Frausto's beautiful meditation and Dr. Sandra Montes' wonderful closing service.

Deacon Iñaki Guevara moderated the two weekends masterfully, extending hospitality to those coming from all parts of The Episcopal Church.

These EPF conferences have been so well received by the deacon participants. Everyone conveyed gratitude for the high quality of instruction, the value of the small groups, the interesting plenary sessions and group discussions, and the lovely liturgies. There is a quality to an EPF event that sets it apart. As Juan Sandoval wrote, it is “more like a gathering of friends than a sterile conference.” One way this happened was when Dean Howell used most of her plenary time talking with Deacon Bonnie Matthews about their relationship and the central role deacons play in church life.

The small-group leaders uniformly felt blessed by the invitation to participate in this conference. Padre Hernán Astudillo said this conference was “one of the great ways to build a church as a community in our times,” and hoped there would be future offerings. Many indicated it was a privilege to work with deacons from so many different locations. Those involved with diaconal formation were especially appreciative.

As someone committed to encouraging the formation of many more Spanish-speaking deacons, I am so grateful for the forward thinking of EPF.

*Deacon Maureen Hagen serves in the Diocese of Oregon and was President of the Association of Episcopal Deacons in 2017 and 2018.*