Programs of Iglesia Luterana Cristo Rey

Since Cristo Rey began its ministry sixteen years ago, its projects and programs have been a visible sign of its mission within the community. Many of these endeavors continue to be in operation. Currently, the missions of Cristo Rey include an After School Program, the Border Immersion Program, Ciudad Juárez’ Ministry, Youth Ministry, Sunday School, CEPCO (Central El Paso Community Organization), and additional Community Outreach programs.

After School Program

In 1992, Cristo Rey began the After School Enrichment Program (ASP) in response to the concerns of working single mothers in the neighborhood. There was worry about children’s safety from the time they got out of school until their parents arrived home from work.

The After School Enrichment Program takes place each Tuesday through Thursday from 3:30 p.m. to 5:50 p.m. for community children ranging from 7 to 13 years of age. Volunteers and coordinators assist the children with homework, daily projects, and academic games, to create an extended school day. This additional time is intended to build each child’s experience base and promote continuing education.

At the end of the regular school year, children have the opportunity to participate in the Summer Recreation Program. The summer program offers many activities such as field trips, service activities, and lunch.

The mission of the After School Program is to assist and encourage children to successfully graduate to their next grade in school, and eventually through high school. As the first member of the program graduated from high school in 1998, Cristo Rey saw the need to provide money to assist kids in attending college. This realization led to the creation of the Cristo Rey Scholarship Fund. At present, this program has more than 15 graduates.

This year, the After School Program has space for thirty children. A Border Servant Corps volunteer typically serves as the director of the program and receives help from members of the community to serve snacks to the children, assist with homework, and plan fun activities in which the children can participate.

Border Immersion Program

Cristo Rey’s week-long Border Immersion Program (BIP) gives groups from around the country the opportunity to learn about the border through educational and service opportunities in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. The BIP offers a time to step out of everyday life, out of our comfort zones, and into an in-depth, experiential learning and cultural immersion process. This is an opportunity to learn about the issues that affect the border as well as our entire country. The program includes:

- Meeting members of the Cristo Rey community
- Listening to personal accounts of border life
- Experiencing Mexican and Mexican-American culture
- Visiting the colonias in El Paso
- Hearing presentations from people involved in social justice ministries
- Visiting with Doctora San Juana Mendoza who runs a Medical Clinic in Ciudad Juárez
- Planning and facilitating activities for the After School Program
- Meeting with Border Patrol and/or touring an immigration detention center
Ciudad Juárez Ministry

Cristo Rey works with Doctora San Juana Mendoza Bruce, a Mexican mission doctor who works at two clinics in Juárez, helping more than 800 families live healthy lives. Although her clinics see patients with a wide range of health problems, the most common afflictions are related to poor sanitation, drug addiction, violence in the home and poor nutrition.

Doctora Mendoza is able to hold 5,565 consultations at the Holy Spirit Clinic and 2,250 consultations in her own clinic in Ciudad Juárez. It is important to note that 85% of her patients are children and women of childbearing age.

Doctora Mendoza also assists 100 students in all grade levels with scholarships to continue their education. The scholarships help the students by paying a portion of their tuition, purchasing uniforms, shoes, classroom materials, textbooks, and paying exam and computer fees.

Youth Ministry

The youth group meets every week for bible study and activities. Every year the youth group participates in service projects and events with other youth groups in El Paso. Our church’s goal is to get the youth involved in programs that will help them make positive choices, and offer safe alternative activities after school hours when their parents are at work.

Each year, the group helps to plan the play for the Christmas Posadas (the biggest event for the year for our church) and helps to deliver over 90 Christmas baskets to families in the church and the community.

Partnership with CEPCO (Central El Paso Community Organization)

In 2003, Cecilia Herrera, director of CEPCO, began working with Cristo Rey to bring new resources to our community. She also wanted to offer her assistance with the After School Program as a volunteer. The council of Cristo Rey felt this was a blessing and gladly accepted to work with CEPCO.

CEPCO is a member of CADCA (Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America); a federal agency whose mission is to build and strengthen the capacity of community coalitions to create safe, healthy and drug-free communities. CEPCO has team members who receive national training on ways to create these types of communities. CEPCO is a faith-based initiative that has been helping the After School Program, Youth Ministry, Health Fairs, fundraising and additional activities.

Border Servant Corps Volunteer

An important partner in our community outreach program is the Border Servant Corps. Cristo Rey sponsors volunteers to become coordinators for the Border Immersion Program and to help as tutors for the After School Program. These bilingual, primarily college-educated volunteers, offer a year of service and solidarity with the people of El Paso, and work in many capacities with this community. A member of Peace Lutheran Church in Las Cruces, NM, where the main office is located, started the Border Servant Corps.
Iglesia Luterana Cristo Rey
After School Enrichment Program & Summer Recreation Program

The ministry at Cristo Rey is actively involved with the youth in our community on a year-round basis. Our programs offer opportunities for children to be encouraged in their learning processes and provide safe environments for those who would otherwise return to empty homes.

For several years now, these programs have been included in our Border Immersion Program. Your group will be responsible for running one day of the After School Program, which we will discuss in further detail upon your arrival. We have found that when participants of the Border Immersion Program meet and spend productive time with the students of our After School Program or Summer Recreation Program, it becomes a wonderful opportunity to build relationships.

Our children come from low-income families, many of whom live in single parent households. While most are bilingual, several of the children only speak Spanish, but you will be surprised how easily you will be able to communicate with them – they are eager to learn!

Throughout the school year, we run the After School Enrichment Program from 3:30-5:50 p.m. three days a week. This academically-focused program provides students with a nutritional snack, tutoring, homework help, study skills and life skills. Your group’s planned activity will take about an hour of the program.

During the summer months, we offer a Summer Recreation Program from 12:00-4:00 p.m. four afternoons a week that provides kids with opportunities to participate in games, music, arts, crafts and other recreational activities. This program is more focused on fun; the children do not have homework so groups that come at this time can design any activity for a two-hour period.

Ideas for programming for the After School Enrichment Program could include a combination of the following: games, arts and crafts, board games, puzzles, reading time, music and one-on-one interaction.

It works well to bring with you a repertoire of games that your group can teach; these can be as simple as tag, or as organized as kick-ball or soccer. The kids get very excited to have guests and love new ideas that each group brings – be creative and have fun!

Cristo Rey has some arts and crafts supplies such as scissors, glue, crayons, markers and sidewalk chalk. We also have some board games and puzzles, but feel free to bring any of your favorites. If you desire to use more specialized supplies, please bring these with you.

Reading aloud is a positive time that not all of our children have the opportunity to experience at home – they love to read and to be read to. Perhaps you have favorite childhood books that you would like to share with the kids; checking a few out at your local library is a possibility. The program also has a reading room with children’s books in both English and Spanish.

The kids enjoy learning fun camp songs—especially with actions—and know a few from years past. Bring a guitar, a kazoo, a drum and have a sing-along!

Since the kids vary in age (2nd to 6th grade), your group may decide to offer more than one activity simultaneously for these different age groups. It is helpful to plan activities that you are excited about and comfortable leading.

The key to these programs is flexibility and fun. If your group has fun with the kids, the kids will have fun. We don’t run an elaborate or extensive program, and they are used to new ideas – some that work and some that don’t. And don’t worry, we will have some planning time once you arrive.

Our goal is to offer them a caring and encouraging environment where they can just be kids, and we are excited about your part in this mission.

Note: Cristo Rey Lutheran Church is not receiving any federal funds this year and therefore religious materials, including Bible stories and Christian songs, are acceptable materials.