

Living the Vision

Becoming a Multicultural Church



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Contents

- 3** BEGINNING WORDS
Becoming a Multicultural Congregation: An Act of Living Faith
- 9** CHAPTER ONE
Our Call to the Multicultural Journey: Biblical Foundation
- 19** CHAPTER TWO
The Multicultural Journey: Witnessing to Hope and Reconciliation
- 33** CHAPTER THREE
The Mission Journey of the Congregation: Preparing for a Unique Opportunity
- 51** CHAPTER FOUR
Creating New Ground Rules for Communication
- 63** CHAPTER FIVE
Making the Commitment to a Spirit-Led Journey
- 71** PARTING WORDS
Journeying into the Vision: Realizing a Multicultural Church
- 73** APPENDICES:
A. A Word to Presbyteries
B. Study guide
C. Selected Readings, References and Media Resources
-

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BEGINNING WORDS

Becoming a Multicultural Congregation: An Act of Living Faith

What does God require of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the 21st century? How do we live our faith as congregations of believers within an increasingly multicultural nation and world? What do we think and how do we feel about opportunities for crossing racial and cultural boundaries and barriers? What will be our responses to entrenched racism in the coming days? What models will we pass on to our young people who will become leaders for tomorrow? Then what is the vision that will inspire and guide us as we make our choices today?

An Awesome Opportunity.

Like many Christians, a growing number of Presbyterians believe that in this time, as in every period of human history, we are being given a particularly awesome opportunity to witness by our actions, not just our words, to the reconciling love of God for all peoples. God is sending to our doorstep the diverse world God created, strangers who bring their gifts to God's house of prayer. While the vision of a multicultural church is as old as the church itself, yet it is a vision to be renewed in our day. No matter how unreachable this dream may sound considering the fact that most Protestant congregations tend to be primarily homogeneous—we cannot forget that the church described in the second chapter of the book of Acts was a multiracial, multilingual, and multicultural church. This was no accident!

The mandate of Pentecost. The startling event of Pentecost still stands as a mandate for us today. Indeed, we are called, both as individuals and as the body of Christ, to open our doors, our minds, and our hearts to persons whom we see as strangers. This requires us to change ourselves as Christian practitioners, being willing to be transformed by the experience of embrac-



ing strangers, and becoming more accepting of other people's values and behavior, so long as both are acceptable to God and consistent with Christian teaching.ⁱ

Call to Presbyterians. Consistent with the multicultural vision, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has challenged our membership to develop and support multicultural congregations as part of a church growth strategy to increase racial and ethnic membership. This challenge addresses all homogeneous Presbyterian congregations to embark on a multicultural journey of opportunity and discovery, no matter what cultural, racial, or ethnic group they may represent. The exciting news is that, at the present time, more than 350 PCUSA congregations identify themselves as multicultural. They vary in size, history, and cultural makeup. Some of these congregations began their quest as long as 30 or more years ago and have much to share from their experiences. Reports and stories from many of these congregations assure us that *the multicultural journey is indeed a gift of opportunity*, and that becoming a multicultural community exemplifies today our hope for the future.

A Brief Overview

If you are reading this booklet, you probably are asking important questions about the church in a multicultural society. The ideas presented here for your consideration are directed to leaders of all Presbyterian congregations:

- homogeneous congregations regardless of racial or cultural identity;
- predominantly European American congregations with some racial ethnic membership;
- churches seeking more specific direction for how to practice both mutuality and inclusion;
- congregations who define themselves as multicultural and who are looking for confirmation, refreshment, guidance, and new ideas.

This booklet, *Living the Vision: Becoming a Multicultural Church*, seeks to present some of the biblical foundations of the multicultural vision, the major challenges for congregations and ideas for some of the essential ele-

ments of how to become a multicultural church. In our PCUSA there are two broad models for developing multicultural congregations. The “solidarity model,” seeks to create several racial/ethnic congregations, each worshipping separately and each focusing on the needs and reflecting the values of its specific racial/ethnic group. The second model is called the “unified model,” that seeks to include people of more than one racial/ethnic, or cultural group within a single congregation. These models are two of the main components of the Racial Ethnic/Immigrant Evangelism and Church Growth Strategy approved by the General Assembly of our Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 1998.¹¹ Both are vital models for evangelism and church growth. However, in this book, we will focus our discussion on the “unified model” of multicultural congregations. Other



booklets in this series such as *Living the Vision: A Vision for Native American Ministry*, *Living the Vision: Developing Strategies and Guidelines for Korean New Church Development*, *Living the Vision: Health, Vitality, and Growth in the African American Congregations*, and *Living the Vision for Hispanic Ministries* focus on the “solidarity model.”

In the following pages we begin to articulate a vision of the multicultural journey, drawing from the insights of many persons and congregations already engaged in multicultural ministries. We are grateful also to the members of the Presbyterian Multicultural Network who have shared with us their helpful ideas, especially Charles Hunter, Raja Nasr, Wanda Lundy, Randy Lee, Robert Chesnut, Marv Root, and Mark Smutny. Since space is limited here, we have not included real-life stories from churches. The video was made to go side by side with this booklet and the reader is encouraged to order his/her copy from the Presbyterian Church USA. (PDS #72341-04-003 for VHS English version; PDS#72341-04-004 for VHS Spanish version; PDS# 72341-04-005 for VHS Korean version; PDS#

72341-04-002 for DVD with all three languages) We also added several readings and other references listed in Appendix C, and we urge you to explore these as well.

Chapter One presents several biblical texts that ground the vision of a multicultural church in three principles: (1) that God intended to create a diverse world and that God calls us to leave our familiar lands and journey into the unknown; (2) that the life and teachings of Jesus demonstrate a ministry of inclusion of diverse peoples, and that Jesus calls us to join his ministry of inclusion; and (3) that God sends the Holy Spirit to dwell both within us and among us, drawing us together in all of our human diversity in order that we might learn the fullness of God’s creation and that Pentecost marks the beginning of the church as multiracial/multicultural and multilingual.

Chapter Two presents the idea of the multicultural journey as a gift of opportunity in our time and in this place, a challenging mission that takes us on an intensive journey, for which at this time few guiding models exist. As the world in which we live becomes increasingly multicultural, likewise local congregations are called to particular forms of creative ministry crossing cultural, racial, and class boundaries. The journey toward the practice of inclusion is long and winding, and as witnessed in many biblical accounts we must choose to give up what is most familiar. This journey challenges us to recognize three forces that oppose our good intentions: (1) the desire for power and privilege; (2) the security of our own cultural walls; and (3) our culturally conditioned habits of communication.

Chapter Three, continuing with the journey metaphor, identifies necessary steps of preparation for the congregation that will provide leadership and enhance the journey. These include (1) regularly uplifting the vision of a multicultural journey, (2) directly confronting racism and social forces that divide, (3) creating opportunities to engage in cross-cultural relationships, and (4) introducing practices of shared leadership and decision-making. The goal of “doing church” multiculturally entails several challenges as well as blessings for members of the congregation *together*.

Chapter Four presents the idea that in order for a congregation to make such fundamental changes in behavior, it must create a new congrega-

tional *culture of inclusion*. This is a new way of doing church that requires new ground rules for inclusive communication in three important areas of congregational life: (1) during the gatherings of the whole congregation; (2) within small group gatherings; and (3) during informal conversation between and among individuals in the congregation.

Chapter Five presents three basic components that are essential for equipping and sustaining the congregation on the multicultural journey: (1) the recruitment and training of multicultural leaders; (2) promoting multicultural competence in the whole congregation; and (3) building mutual inter-group trust.

We invite you to use this booklet not as a definitive guideline, but as a starting point for discussion with other leaders in your congregation. We suggest that you use this booklet together with the video of the same title, *Living the Vision: Becoming a Multicultural Church*. The video tells the stories of four vital Presbyterian multicultural congregations and includes interviews with pastors and practitioners of multicultural ministries. The video is designed to be used with this booklet and will be helpful in group discussions. (Study questions for use with both the booklet and the video are found in Appendix B.). Finally, we invite you to share with us your questions, your insights, and your diverse points of view. May we engage the journey and live the vision together.

Raafat Shehata Girgis and Sara J. Parker

Notes

- i National Presbyterian Multicultural Conference, Texas (2001)
- ii Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 210th General Assembly (1998).
Racial Ethnic/Immigrant Evangelism and Church Growth Report.

“The spiritual pilgrimage always takes us into new lands where we are strange to others and they are strange to us...”¹

CHAPTER ONE

Our Call to the Multicultural Journey: Biblical Foundations

Many people think of multicultural ministry as if it were a new trend in ministry, or as if it were one of the “new paradigms” of the 21st Century that responds to major demographic shifts in the USA. While these contemporary factors speak to present opportunity, in fact the vision of a multiracial, multilingual and multicultural community of faith is as old as the story of creation. The church is called to claim and live up to this vision in our present day. The Scriptures are full of references to this vision, many of which require little effort to interpret. In this first chapter, we present a few of the more compelling



texts in an effort to rediscover the roots of this age-old vision. The prophets and apostles confirm that a diverse yet harmonious world is God’s intention; that this has been revealed through the life and teachings of Christ, the incarnate Word; and that the vision lives on through the indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit. We are created as diverse peoples, united by faith.

A. God’s Intention and God’s Promise

From the beginning diversity, not homogeneity, was God’s intention. After creating a diverse world, God looked at what God created and saw it was good.

Diversity created, “of every kind” (Genesis 1). Diversity is a given from the first page of the Scripture. The phrase “of every kind” is repeat-

ed more than nine times in the first Chapter of Genesis. This is true for living creatures including plants, fish and animals, and it is also true for human beings who were created male and female. Both were given the commission to keep and nurture the continuation of this multiplicity of God's creation, to be *"fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth..."* (Genesis 1:27-28). The world was chaotic before the creation of this diverse universe. The Bible tells us that the *"earth was a formless void and darkness covered the faces of the deep..."* (Genesis 1:2) After creating this diverse world God *saw everything that God had made, and indeed it was very good."* (Genesis 1:31) Thus, the creation of a diverse world replaced "formless void and darkness" with beauty, energy and life.

Created different, yet equal (Acts 17:26). Regardless of the different races God created, they all came from one single stock. The writer of the book of Acts confirms this by saying, *"From one ancestor (Adam & Eve) God created all nations"* (Acts 17:26). This means that people of all nations, no matter the shade of their skin or the language they speak, come from one offspring. They are *all equally included in the blessing and they will be equally accountable for their response* to this blessing.

A blessing given to all nations (Genesis 12:1-3). God's call to the first parents of faith, Sarah and Abraham, was a call to a multitude of nations, a call to a multiracial/multicultural ministry. Their call and ministry are, by all means, a witness to God's intention and God's purpose for creation; that is, to bless and be blessed and to enjoy God's presence regardless of our racial or cultural differences. Abraham was the instrument to convey God's vision of inclusion: *"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Genesis 12: 1-3).

Abraham journeyed into the unknown. Abraham's call is important to consider as you begin this journey of multicultural ministry, because Abraham's journey of faith is a venture into the unknown, the unfamiliar and the uncomfortable. The starting point for multicultural ministry is faith. *"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out not knowing where he was*

going” (Genesis 12:1). Abraham’s story provides the example for us to get out of our comfort zone and break away from our defensiveness. Abraham challenges us to let go of what is earthly, and thus temporary, and to hold on to what is eternal and what really matters. A multicultural church is a fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham as a blessing to all nations. By holding on to faith and finding joy in venturing into the unknown and the unfamiliar land, our story also becomes the extension of Abraham and Sara’s journey of faith. We become the church of the journey, true sons and daughters of Abraham, and thus receivers and fulfillers of the promise of the church as God intended it to be.ⁱⁱ

No partiality among the members of God’s family (Acts 10:34-36). Acts Ch. 10 is a compelling example of Peter’s transformation and his discovery of God who is inclusive and who shows no partiality. As a result of his discovery Peter proclaims the Lord of all, saying, *“I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ... he is Lord of all”* (Acts 10:34-36). A Multicultural church is a church that affirms and confirms people’s particular gifts and cultural background that may be different from the predominant one. Peter at first would not recognize gentiles as equal partners and sharers of God’s promise unless they were assimilated to his own culture and tradition, that is, to be circumcised and to memorize the Jewish law and follow the Jewish tradition. Yet Peter was transformed by a powerful vision that taught him to accept people just as they are. People don’t need to be assimilated to our own culture or way of life to be equal members of the body of Christ. A Multicultural church is a church that recognizes and celebrates the gifts of a diverse membership by affirming the value and the uniqueness of each member’s race and culture.

Judgment based on acts of justice and kindness (Matthew 25:31-46). At the Day of Judgment, the only things that distinguish the people of one nation from another are their acts of justice and kindness. There is no mention of the color of their skin or the language they speak or the ethnicity they belong to or the culture they follow. Some will stand at the right hand and others at the left hand. *“Then the King will say to those who*

at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed...inherit the kingdom prepared for you.... 'Truly I tell you just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'... Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me'" (Matthew 25:31-46).

Fear of dissolution in exile (Ezra 9; Haggai 1). The people of Israel faced an issue that is similar to one facing the church in America today. The issue was how to deal with people of different cultures, both "foreigners" in the land of Israel, and also how the Israelites themselves should behave as foreigners in another land and another culture during the Exile. The leadership of an exclusivist minority group in exile feared the diminishing of the Jewish culture and faith if the trend of marrying foreign women continued. Expressed in the prayer of the exile priest Ezra (Ezra, Ch. 9) and the prophecy of Haggai (Haggai, Ch. 1), some leaders worried that their people in exile had become so involved in their daily affairs and business that they had completely forgotten about their homeland and faith. But Ezra's complaint was not so much about marrying foreign women, rather he was ashamed that some people actually rejected the idea of returning from Babylon to Jerusalem. They did not want to contribute towards the rebuilding of the Jewish temple. And so he pronounced a judgment upon this particular unfaithful group of people.

Inclusion, not dissolution (Jeremiah 29:4-8). The contrasting, but more common biblical view that deals with this same issue was clearly expressed by the prophet Jeremiah in his letter to the elders in exile. Jeremiah advised them to be an integral part of the society that they live in rather than living in segregation and exclusion. He encouraged integration without dissolving their own particularities. In that letter, Jeremiah delivered to the people of Israel in exile a different plan that was directly communicated to him by God. It said: "*Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles...from Jerusalem to Babylon; build houses and live in them, plan gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and*

daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease” (Jeremiah 29:4-7). Instead of being judgmental of this foreign culture of Babylon, Jeremiah affirms it, requesting the people of Israel to pray for its well being: “...Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jeremiah 29:7,8). The prophet Jeremiah laid out the same principles of multicultural relationships that we need to espouse today.

The Multicultural Journey as a faith based journey understands the importance of “let go” of the traditions that sometimes become stumbling blocks to Christian unity and relations. *“Identity based on cultural or racial origin will never be sufficient to make us spiritually mature... The multicultural church, although not demeaning or negating culture, does call us to a transcendent identity in Jesus Christ, as well as a transformational citizenship that lies in the reign of God. As the scripture reminds us, our identity has been given by God; ‘you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of his who called you out of darkness into his marvelous Light’”* (1Peter 2:9).ⁱⁱⁱ

Balance between giving and receiving culture. Jeremiah emphasizes being a giver and also a receiver of another culture, inclusion without dissolution. Jeremiah clearly advised the people of Israel to be sensitive toward other cultures by not being judgmental of the dominant culture in the land where they are living. This is another important element of multicultural ministry. To be inclusive does not mean at all to give up our own particular culture or heritage. It also does not mean to be ethnocentric, elevating one’s own culture over all other cultures to the point of denying the validity and importance of other cultures.

“In its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jeremiah 29:7). Our own cultural well-being is integrally related to the well-being of all cultural groups. This is an important insight for both our predominantly White European American congregations as well as all people of color including new immigrant groups. As we all venture together into this journey of multicultural ministry, we are both receivers and also givers of new cultures and new ideas. If we give in to cultural segregation and isolation, we may

very well miss out on the invaluable cross-cultural interaction that would enable us to critically view ourselves, our culture, and our worldviews. We also may forgo the blessings and the innovation that generate from such interaction.

“Blessed is the person who does what is right” (Isaiah 56:1-5). The vision of a multiracial/multicultural community of faith is also clearly stated by Isaiah, who writes that mistreatment of or separation between people based on race or ethnicity will be considered an act of injustice. *“Thus says the Lord: maintain justice, and do what is right...Do not let the foreigner joined to the Lord say, ‘The Lord will surely separate me from his people’; and do not let the eunuch [one who was mutilated in order to qualify for imperial service] say, ‘I am just a dry tree.’ For thus says the Lord: ‘To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.’”*

“A house of prayer for all peoples” (Isaiah 56:6-8). *“And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, ... these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer...for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, ‘I will gather others to them besides those already gathered’”* (Isaiah 56:6-8). This passage from Isaiah, especially when it is put side by side with the letter from Jeremiah (Jeremiah ch. 29), confirms our vision of an inclusive church where all are not only welcomed, but where they and their different cultures are appreciated and honored. This vision of “a house of prayer for all people” where people came from east and west, north and south became a reality at the time of the Pentecost. Chapter two of the book of Acts tells us that representatives from all nations and all families of the earth were together in one place and equally and without discrimination received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

No Longer Strangers and Aliens (Leviticus 19:33-34). Both the Old and New Testaments explicitly maintain the importance of not only inclusive worship and inclusive gathering but also a just and balanced share of

power in church and community. God commanded Moses to tell the people of Israel, “*When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself... I am the Lord your God.*” (Lev. 19:33-34). The church is challenged today to voice the concerns of the strangers and aliens in our midst, to meet their needs and to seek justice for them and their families. In post September 11, and like the time in which the book of Ruth was written, our American society today is marked by strong intolerance toward strangers and sojourners in our land. The passing of recent restrictive immigration laws give both legal and illegal aliens a clear message: “You are not welcome here, and if you choose to stay, we will make life as difficult and miserable for you as possible.” To be a faithful multicultural community of faith, the church must stand as a beacon of hope advocating for the rights of the aliens and strangers among us.^{iv} The track record of this nation shows that foreigners and strangers, people who are unlike us, are the source of innovation, wealth and growth. They will be the source of growth, wealth and innovation to your congregation as well.

Faithful sojourners. We must also remember that among these strangers and sojourners in our American society, there are those who in faith, like Sarah and Abraham, took the courage to leave behind all that was familiar and comfortable and chose to venture out into a strange land. Many of them are telling us, as in the words of Ruth the Moabite to her Hebrew mother in law, “*Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God*” (Ruth 1:16-17). A multicultural church is made of God’s pilgrim people who bring with them rich, and sometimes unexpected, gifts to God’s house of prayer.^v The theology of our mission is a theology of immigration where one is called to leave one’s own homeland and people and become a blessing to others. We see this clearly evidenced in the call and life of Abraham, Jonah, Jesus, who was incarnated, leaving his heavenly kingdom to share our humanity, and the disciples who scattered from their homeland, Jerusalem, to preach the good news to all nations.

B. Examples from the ministry of Jesus

Jesus was a descendent of the lineage of Ruth, the Moabite, who chose to become a stranger in the land of Israel. He carried out a ministry of inclusion, giving value to diverse peoples. He strongly challenged the laws and traditions of the predominant, segregated culture of his time and condemned the exclusionary theology of the scribes and Pharisees, saying, “*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them*” (Matthew 23:13-14; see entire chapter). In contrast to this exclusive approach to ministry, Jesus advocated an inclusive and diverse reign of God where people of all races, genders and cultures from east and west, north and south are welcomed and appreciated. He said, “*Whoever comes to me I will not cast out,*” and sent his disciples as “*light to the nations*” giving them the great commission, “*to make disciples of all nations*” (Matthew 28:18).

Jesus’ ministry of inclusive community. The Gospels are full of stories and parables of Jesus that explicitly convey this vision of inclusive community of faith that Jesus not only preached about but died for (John 3:16). Throughout his ministry he welcomed sinners and ate with them (Luke 15:2). He broke all race, class, and gender barriers when he visited Zacchaeus, the tax collector (Luke 19), and healed the child of the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15 and Mark 7), the son of the Gentile military officer, and the centurion’s slave.

Breaking Geographic and Cultural Barriers. In his encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42), Jesus simultaneously broke barriers of geography, gender, class, race, nationality, and religion. The woman was a citizen of Samaria, the capital of the Northern kingdom called Israel that was at odds with Judah, the Southern kingdom and its capital, Jerusalem. Walls of hatred and bitterness had been erected on both sides for more than 550 years. The text clearly indicates this historical hostility, when the Samaritan woman said to Jesus, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” For the Jews did not share or have things in common with Samaritans. Jesus broke all of these cultural, geographical, gender and religious barriers and so should we.

C. The Work of the Holy Spirit

At the day of Pentecost the vision of an inclusive community of faith became a reality (Acts chapter 2). The disciples and people from all nations, gathered in one place as a multiracial, multicultural and multilingual assembly, were formed into the first Christian church, united by the Holy Spirit across these and all other boundaries. Peter was inspired to declare that the amazing events of that day represented the fulfillment of God's promise to the prophet Joel that the time would come when the Spirit would be poured out upon all believers without regard to gender, age, or social class.

Furthermore, our Scriptures promise that the multicultural journey will continue even beyond this life. As the life of our earthly church ends, its everlasting one starts in heaven. This eternal, vibrant church will also be a multiracial, multicultural and multilingual one, as John envisioned: *"After that I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands..."* (Revelation 7:9-12).

Let us fervently hope and pray that the church seizes the growing diversity in this nation as an opportunity for bringing about this wonderful Pentecostal reality inaugurated in Acts 2 and consummated in Revelation 7.

Notes

- i Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), p56.
- ii Stephen A. Rhodes, *Where the Nations Meet: The Church in a Multicultural World* (Illinois: Intersity Press, 1998), pp 35-49.
- iii Rhodes, p.46.
- iv Rhodes, pp. 122-138.
- v Rhodes, p. 123.

“In God’s providence, we have been placed in a multicultural world. We are blessed by being in America where we are called to witness to Christ’s power to break down all walls that divide. This is a gift of immense urgency and opportunity.”¹

CHAPTER TWO

The Multicultural Journey: Witnessing to Hope and Reconciliation

One of society’s most pressing needs of this century is to foster positive multicultural relations. As people of faith, we are called to embrace the differences of others whom we perceive as strangers, to heal the elements of racial and cultural mistrust that exists among church members, to work together multiculturally in doing ministry, and to *provide a prophetic witness to hope and reconciliation* by putting into practice the commandment of Christ to “Love your neighbor as yourself.”



The *opportunities* offered by the multicultural journey are great indeed. The idea of opportunity suggests that we now live in a *time particularly favorable* to the carrying out of God’s purposes for God’s church, as discussed in Chapter One. The necessary resources are available: the presence of diverse peoples, the social context, and the spiritual motivation and energy. God has given us the mandate, as well as God’s sustaining Spirit. We are called now to embark on a missional journey of building multicultural congregations.

Creating a community that practices inclusiveness does not “just happen,” however. If it were so easy, multicultural congregations might be the norm rather than the exception! The journey involves significant challenges for both leaders and members of congregations. The journey begins

with opening our hearts and minds to others whom we perceive to be different. This requires us to confront intentionally the elements of resistance within us as members of this society. It also means opening our church doors and building communities of faith that go beyond rhetoric to actively practice “inclusion” of racially and culturally diverse peoples. It requires the spiritual discipline of sharing our material resources. It means building mutual partnerships with diverse others to carry out ministries of service, social justice, and evangelism. In order to practice mutual inclusion, we have to confront the reality of racism that leads to inter-group mistrust and hostility. The multicultural journey is a long-term effort that requires humility and perseverance.

A. Defining “cultural differences”

References are made throughout this booklet to racial/cultural groups such as African American, Asian American, European American, and so on. While these are constituencies recognized broadly within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), such broad terms suggest sweeping generalizations and overlook important distinctions inherent among the many subgroups within each racial/ethnic grouping. For example, the broad category of “Asian American” overlooks the historical experiences, inter-group relationships, class differences, and national and linguistic origins of the many and varied subgroups.

Such crucial subgroup differences must also be recognized by the multicultural congregation. Therefore, in this booklet we utilize the term “*cultural difference*” to refer to any one or more of the *many shared dimensions of life experience, worldview, historical experience, rules for social behavior and interaction, social identity, etc.*, that are perceived by group/subgroup members to comprise important elements of difference between their own group/subgroup and others within the local congregation and its neighborhood.

Varying dimensions of difference. For some groups, the most important element of identity might be *race*. For others it might be *language*, or *national origin*, or *gender*, or *shared life experiences of privilege, oppression or immigration*. No single one of these dimensions, such as race or ethnicity or class or language, comprises the whole of culture. Nevertheless, individual

persons often seek affiliation with others who share similar experiences and values. And those of us who have not shared that experience more often fail to understand its significance to those who have.

Significant differences. *For a congregation this means that cultural differences can be expected among persons whom outsiders may think possess a common culture, for example:*

- among those who share a common language but not national origin, such as people from Mexico and Argentina who speak the same language but belong to two different nationalities;
- among Americans whose families come from different racial/ethnic streams;
- among persons of similar racial heritage but with different historical experiences, such as African American, African Caribbean, and Immigrants from the continent of Africa;
- among different generations of immigrant people from the same country of origin, such as second and third generation Koreans;
- among persons of the same nationality, ethnicity, or race, but different social class.

The possibilities are really endless. It depends on what defines cultural identity for those persons involved. In a different way, within some congregations whose members are racially and ethnically diverse, but whose level of education, professional training, and income are similar, these persons could feel comfortable with one another and think of themselves as culturally similar.

B. The Missional Journey

What is a multicultural congregation? It is one that intentionally and actively seeks to recognize, utilize, celebrate and incorporate the gifts of its diverse membership in various ways: (1) In worship, through the utilization of different musical styles, languages and different spiritual expressions of faith that are meaningful and representative of the congregation's diverse culture; (2) in evangelism, by providing the good news to people in a cup that they recognize with love and respect to their unique cultural heritage and traditional backgrounds, and (3) In power sharing in ministry, church

session committees, and equal representation in the denomination governing bodies.

All multicultural congregations may be multiracial, multiethnic, and/or even multilingual, but the reverse is not necessarily true. *The presence of persons from two or more cultural or racial groups does not in itself make a congregation “multicultural.”* The key is the practice of mutual inclusion between and among the various cultural groups present in the congregation. This involves building community through enthusiastic and broad evangelism, embracing worship, shared leadership, joint decision-making, partnering for ministry, and inclusive patterns of interpersonal and organizational communication.

There are four important aspects to this missional journey: (1) intentional planning and dedicated leadership; (2) long-term commitment dedicated to facing and overcoming our deeply embedded societal resistance to multicultural inclusion; (3) building multicultural relationships at both interpersonal and intergroup levels; and (4) engagement by the whole congregation that accompanies structural change. These four themes appear and are discussed throughout the chapters of this booklet.

Enable others to participate and experience inclusion. Leaders of each cultural group, especially the dominant group, need to behave in ways that model inclusion. At the same time, in order for individual members to learn new ways of embracing cultural and racial differences and to work together in ministry, they need unified support of the entire congregation. The effort is necessarily long-term, because of long-standing, negative patterns of group to group relations in society and also in the church. It is a matter of learning as we walk the journey together, and so the mission of the multicultural journey is to discover a new way of “doing church.”ⁱⁱ

Create a culture of inclusion. To this end, congregational leaders will need to take intentional steps to create a “*culture of inclusion*” that characterizes the congregation and also confronts established values of power, inequality, and separatism that dominate our society. The congregational *culture of inclusion* fosters particular beliefs and values, goals, and ways of speaking within the formal and informal settings of the congregation that enable members to learn new patterns of behavior.

C. Identifying embedded sources of resistance to inclusiveness

In order to foster a new culture of inclusion, the congregation will need to directly confront three sources of resistance; that is, three types of beliefs, spoken or unspoken, and unquestioned behaviors that are influenced strongly by our habits as members of a particular cultural and racial group. Because these various embedded beliefs and habits of behavior work against inclusiveness, they have to be confronted directly. Congregational leaders will need to focus on the following three areas of social practice:

- **Power and privilege:** enabling all members to discern racism and confront personal and organizational behaviors that create social divisions and maintain positions of privilege within society and within the church.
- **Walls that divide:** recognizing unspoken assumptions about the nature of cultural diversity and the value of cultural differences, especially as they are relevant to members and ministries of the local congregation;
- **Habits of communication:** identifying habits of communication that maintain social inequality and privilege and contribute to racial and cultural exclusion, while intentionally learning new patterns of communication that enable members of the congregation to relate to each other in mutually inclusive ways.

These issues—power and privilege, cultural boundaries, and communication habits—are presented briefly below. They are discussed separately, but in fact each issue intersects and reinforces the other two. The integrated nature of these three issues suggests that, given inclusiveness as the desired goal, the congregation cannot productively tackle only one of these issues e.g., “racism,” or “cultural diversity,” or “communication habits”, and think that their job is finished. *All three need to be addressed and confronted by the congregation, simultaneously and over extended time.*

D. Power and privilege: confronting racism, classism, sexism

Whether or not we agree personally with the values that create social group hierarchies, we all live in a society fueled by competition for power and the privileges of power. This is evidenced by the separate, yet interrelated,

social forces of *racism*, *classism*, and *sexism* that create the prevailing system of inequality between and among groups of people as well as individuals. The basic value assumption has to do with relative worth of categories of people, asserting that some categories are worth more than others, whatever the criteria may be. The dominance of this value system in the United States means that no individual remains unaffected by these three forces. And no congregation can claim, “there is no racism in our place, because there are no Blacks here.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Understanding the implications of privilege. The eradication of racism, classism and sexism is not an option for the church. *It is an obligation.* Every congregation must find ways to recognize and confront the pervasive and often unconscious roles of racism and privilege. To face racism, classism, and sexism requires a conscious effort by all those who benefit from the system of power and privilege. This effort must include a consideration of how the position of privilege hinders their efforts to embrace others who are not so privileged. For most European Americans, it will require getting in touch *personally* with “White privilege” and the culture of “Whiteness.”

Interpersonal inclusion. The three forces of inequality are expressed through elitism, privilege, arrogance, envy, rejection, devaluation, oppression, anger, and hostility toward others. They are kept alive by ignorance, lack of awareness and denial. To change this pattern and open up the possibility of person-to-person inclusion, we must learn how to listen to and appreciate others’ stories as each has been affected by experiences of racism, classism, and/or sexism. These are often painful stories that need to be received with respect and caring. We also must become aware of how our own everyday routines of conversation, as well as the communication patterns of the congregation, create and maintain these hierarchies of power and privilege. As we become better able to identify and admit our own expressions of racism, devaluation, and exclusion — including our lack of empathy for those who suffer — *we can choose to replace them with positive and inclusive behaviors.*

Intergroup inclusion. The manifestations of social privilege within congregations are pervasive. Common examples have to do with how resources, like money and facilities, are controlled and by what group of

people. Examples also include: what type of persons occupy visible leadership and authority positions? How and by whom are decisions made and plans organized? What group's values are represented as normative? How would the greater value of inclusion change any of these patterns? How could both leadership and decision-making be shared more equally? Inclusive relationships between and among diverse groups requires crosstalk and mutuality, not unilateralism. Group to group inclusion means shared ministry and shared decision-making. The idea here is not, as one pastor has remarked, to be "serving at the front (or back) door, and then coming inside to dinner with your own people." It is not one cultural group deciding to make room for another. Instead, "It is doing co-ministry together."^{iv}

Difficult issues. Questions that arise from this issue are not easy to resolve. Members of most Presbyterian congregations, for example, enjoy comforts of middle, if not upper-middle, class status and identity. "Most Presbyterians — and this includes African-American and Korean members to a considerable extent — are among the 'haves' and not the 'have-nots'."^v Most immigrant peoples, by contrast, not only have limited income, but also may have very different views of the use of money and resources when it comes to sharing facilities and support of ministry. Should the new group adopt the values of the majority? Or can we who are the "haves" in this context allow "our ethnocentric selves... to undergo purposeful change in order to genuinely share discipleship"?^{vi} What must we learn about matters of faith from the "have-nots" in this situation? More importantly, are we willing to ask ourselves this crucial question: is our preference for homogeneous, "voluntary fellowships" of like-minded folk, those just like me, that typify Presbyterian congregations an expression of some perceived *right* based on sound biblical teaching-or is it in fact a justification of longstanding social preferences and values of ourselves that we do not wish to confront?

E. Recognizing walls that divide

Congregational leaders must keep in mind that their members likely hold unquestioned beliefs about the nature of cultural differences. These beliefs will shape their degree of resistance or openness to embracing diversity. One example is the belief of "*incompatibility*," the assumption that differ-

ences associated with race, social class, and gender, are by nature irreconcilable. The belief is that individuals are naturally limited as to how much they can tolerate cultural differences in their various social relationships, and therefore they prefer staying with their own kind. Another belief is that social groups are innately limited in their capacity for interacting across group boundaries, and that some groups naturally trigger mutual hostility. From this perspective, the “peaceful co-existence” of separate groups is preferred to the idea of tension-filled integration, or even partial assimilation. So the idea of embracing difference would seem unimaginable.

Ethnocentrism and xenophobia. Beliefs about the importance of our own group identity also produce an assortment of assumptions by which we justify our resistance to others who are not like ourselves. These assumptions include the belief in our right to the comfort and safety of fellowship with our “own kind,” our puffed-up pride in the superiority of our own group, the necessity of defending our own group boundaries, the naturalness of viewing the world from the standpoint of our group (ethnocentrism), the fear of other groups we perceive to threaten us (xenophobia), and the exclusion of others perceived to be inferior to our group.

Tolerance is not enough. Encouraging tolerance toward others may be a positive first step toward inclusion, but tolerance alone does not go far enough. Even the seemingly open-minded beliefs held by many in the dominant culture and taught in many churches that “people are really all alike” and that “culture” is only a superficial aspect of humanity, in fact feed the ethnocentric rationale for assimilation into the dominant group. *When we convince ourselves that cultural difference is not important, we inevitably evaluate others by the standards of our own culture.* The result is that some people are judged as inherently “inferior” because they do not fit our standards, while others are seen as “naturally superior” because they do. All these unquestioned beliefs need to be examined in light of the Scriptures. Only by the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and minds can we begin to understand and reject our own learned exclusionary behaviors toward others.

Seeing cultural difference as a gift of God. The present challenge for our church is to open our eyes to the broad diversity of life experience,

worldview, and creative endeavor derived from racial and cultural particularities, and to see this rich diversity *as a gift of God*. As such, it is not something to fear or to avoid. All God's people are free to worship God together in God's house, a compelling opportunity to experience new vitality and spiritual growth.

The power of cultures must be recognized. All people are shaped by the force of culture, and cultural views are meaningful and powerful for members of particular cultures. The multicultural journey invites us first to acknowledge ourselves as cultural beings, and then to recognize the importance of diverse cultural life experiences of others. Yet expressions of particular cultures vary significantly, and each cultural view expresses only one aspect or range of the entire human potential. This suggests that we need the combination of many other cultural viewpoints to enable us to see the limitations of our own cultural positions. The combination of several cultural viewpoints also enables us to develop *a broader understanding of God and the complexity and wholeness of God's creation*.

Cultural gifts of the Spirit. As believers we recognize that unique spiritual gifts are given to each individual. Relationships fostered within the multicultural congregation also help us to understand that those who may not appear to be “just like us” are, nevertheless, just like us, because we are each given unique gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the multicultural congregation we also seek to recognize the spiritual origin of cultural gifts as they contribute to the common life and whole experience of the congregation. The church as a whole will surely benefit, for example, from the strengths of Hispanic passion, Korean fervent prayer, African American preaching and singing, Middle Eastern hospitality, European organization, and Native American reverence for nature and deep sense of spirituality.

Diversity contributes to vitality. For members of a multicultural congregation, the motivation to practice a “culture of inclusion” is the belief that *diversity enables and promotes innovation, vitality, completeness, development, and spiritual growth* — as a result of learning from and ministering to each other through our differences. God through the Holy Spirit enables us to celebrate the fact that, while we do remain individually and culturally diverse, we are truly united by our common faith in our Lord, Jesus

Christ. Differences, not similarities, are the source of our vitality and strength. The Apostle Paul used the image of the body with its different parts, to emphasize the fact that the strength, vitality and sustainability of a congregation rely on the respectful presence and utilization of its different members, (see 1 Corinthians 12:14-31).

We know God created the natural world in order that diversity would contribute to strength and vitality in plant and animal life, and in ecological harmony. Systems that utilize diversity are more adaptable, more resistant to peril, and able to grow through innovation. Scholars who study human organizations have realized that the same principles apply. For example, organizations that recognize individuals' unique talents are filled with motivated employees. The managers within such systems tend to encourage employees with diverse viewpoints to work together and thus enhance organizational innovation and productivity. When diverse human experiences and viewpoints are brought together, the resulting whole represents a stronger and more vibrant system than would a simple sum of the separate parts.

F. Recognizing Our Habits of Communication

The third set of beliefs and behaviors that we need to closely examine involve our accustomed ways of talking with others during informal conversation and also in discussions and meetings. We all rely on the habits of communication we have acquired from childhood, and most of us pay little attention to how we ourselves talk. In fact, within person to person conversation, the processes of our ordinary communication commonly involve power inequality as well as cultural differences. This is because *speaking is an action* that has consequences for our relationships with other people. For example, during the routines of our everyday conversation we at times exert our personal power and influence over another, while at other times we may yield to the other. Sometimes we are open to the ideas and wishes of others, and other times we close ourselves off from others verbally or nonverbally.

Cultural rules of communication. Most people attribute communication style to personality and overlook the strong influence of culture upon

such habits. In fact, as individuals we learn rules for talking first within our families and then within a particular cultural community where there is consensus about the right way to talk in order to achieve certain social purposes. The more we are able to talk and act like members of a particular group, the more likely we are to be included as a member and be able to function within the group. Learned communication skills serve individuals in expressing their own particular interests and concerns; however, the way a person talks also serves to mark that individual as a member (or a potential member) of a particular group. This is because the rules for interpersonal communication and appropriate self-expression often do not carry over from one cultural group to another. Thus a self-expression that is deemed appropriate in one group might be interpreted as inappropriate by members of another group. We learn how to communicate our intentions such as power or submission, inclusion or exclusion, acceptance or rejection, as part of our socialization. What is appropriate deference to authority in one group may be interpreted as failure to stand up for oneself by the other. The greater the cultural distance between groups, the more likely that communication styles and intentions will be misunderstood, even if a common language, such as English or Spanish, is used.

The need for mindful communication. In order to learn the practice of mutual inclusion, we have to think consciously about how our actions of speaking may cause both inequality and cultural exclusion. Therefore, we have to consciously choose words and actions that communicate clearly and consistently with the practice of inclusion. We cannot ever leave it to chance, hoping that others will “know” that we intend to be inclusive simply because we are Christians. Nor can we expect others, in a multicultural setting, to give us “the benefit of the doubt.” Two steps are required for exercising mindful communication:

- (1) *Recognize how our own cultural habits of communication are perceived and experienced by others outside of our own group.* Feedback from others is crucial since we cannot really know how others perceive our ways of talking.
- (2) *Adjust our habitual communication routines and behaviors in order to enable other cultural groups to participate.* This also requires feedback

and information from others, since we may not know what the obstacles might be that prevent their full participation.

Three settings for communication. Communication practices of the local congregation occur in three kinds of settings. We need to carefully consider each of these settings, in terms of how our communication behaviors diminish or increase the practice of inclusion.

- (1) *Public communication settings*, such as the worship service or other gatherings of the whole congregation, where a few persons are leading and the audience participation is generally limited and often scripted, such as corporate prayer. *Group-to-group* inclusion is important in this context through the possible representation and visibility of all groups in leadership roles.
- (2) *Small group settings*, such as committee meetings, the session meetings, classes, and cell groups, where one person is leading or facilitating and all are invited to participate openly, without script, in discussion. Leaders need to recognize cultural differences in the group processes and be able to accommodate those differences in this type of setting.
- (3) *Informal, one-to-one conversation* among members around the “edges” of gatherings and congregational events. Person-to-person inclusion operates in this setting.

In each of these three settings, the goal is to identify communication habits that hinder inclusion and replace them with new patterns of behavior that promote the practice of inclusive communication. Despite the “best intentions” of individuals to be open to others, *because of the nature of group communication processes, the ways and habits of the majority group in the congregation inevitably continue to dominate unless intentional changes are made by the core leadership*. More specific suggestions for each of these three settings of congregational communication are found in Chapter Four.

G. Creating a congregational culture of inclusion

What does it mean to create a “culture of inclusion” in the congregation? First, all groups present in a congregation must relinquish their pride of

being “right.” We are admonished that “*the church must be on guard so that no one culture becomes an idolatrous substitute for the gospel.*”^{vii} The heaviest burden undoubtedly will rest on the dominant racial/cultural group. At the same time, no single cultural group in the congregation is asked to give up its cultural uniqueness in order to become like another, although inevitably *some adaptation is necessary* for all groups involved. As one church leader suggests, the multicultural journey is characterized to some extent by “mutual inconvenience.”^{viii} In other words, members of every cultural group in the congregation will have to make an effort to embrace others’ differences!

Second, the multicultural journey is made possible by courageously imagining new ways of being the church, the Body of Christ, so that cultural gifts are received in ways to delight, enrich, and transform the congregation. In this process, the standard for evaluating values and behaviors of all cultural groups is grounded in our common faith in Jesus Christ. The journey of becoming a multicultural congregation challenges us to reflect on our own unexamined beliefs and behaviors and to seek new patterns of relationship with diverse others. It requires us to examine our beliefs and behaviors that maintain privilege and racism, cultural division and exclusion, and our communication habits. All three interactively hinder our efforts of practicing inclusion. The challenges of becoming a multicultural congregation are significant and difficult, yet the satisfactions, rewards and blessings are significantly greater.

Notes

- i Mark Smutny, “Building an Inclusive Church in a Multicultural World: Principles for Effective Multicultural Ministry” (2002).
- ii Charles Foster, *Embracing Diversity*. Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute (1997).
- iii Naboth Muchopa, Methodist Church of Great Britain, in *Multicultural Ministry*, Sydney (2000:68).
- iv Randy Lee, Moderator, PC(U.S.A.) Multicultural Network (personal statement 2002)
- v Carl Howard, “Presbyterians Strive Toward a Goal of Growth in Multicultural and Racial Ethnic Membership,” (2001:12).
- vi Howard, (2001:14)
- vii Jin S. Kim, “A Pentecostal Vision for the Church,” Coalition for Korean American Ministries (2002).
- viii Brice Stahlmer, Los Angeles Regional Multicultural Consultation, PC(USA) (November, 2002)

“Oakhurst Presbyterian Church is unremarkable on the outside, but the congregation inside is quite remarkable. . . . People from the most divergent backgrounds—middle-class professionals, blue-collar and pink-collar workers, welfare recipients, old, young, and very young, black, white, Asian, gay and straight. All seem to feel comfortable there, and speak their minds.”

Ted Clark, NPR, “All Things Considered”¹

CHAPTER THREE

The Mission Journey of the Congregation: Preparing for a Unique Opportunity

*The role of the congregation is central to the multicultural journey, although our thinking about the nature and purpose of the local congregation must change. The 21st century church must be reoriented from one that sees itself as comforting fellowships of like-minded, homogeneous believers to one that engages a missional journey.*¹¹ The multicultural journey is not simply a “natural” process that unfolds once a few leaders are given a vision and enough members of the congregation are willing to follow. The multicultural journey requires rigorous planning, resources, preparation, training, and commitment. This is a journey of discovery, like an expedition to a new place, rather than simply a vacation trip for pleasure and enrichment. It calls forth a new way of doing church. Such commitment is neither for the faint-hearted nor for the quitters, because it takes relentless energy and perseverance. Each congregation must, therefore, pray diligently for the Spirit to lead.



Enabling individual members to embrace difference. A big complaint of non-European American persons in European American churches is that they do not feel included in the core of the congregation. Some have

pointed out that White churches especially should strive to “say less and do more” — in other words, to act in ways that clearly demonstrate inclusiveness. Inclusion has to be intentionally and mindfully communicated through the communal processes and gatherings of the whole congregation at both the interpersonal and intergroup levels.

Moving beyond “tokenism”. To be truly *multicultural* does not mean a mere tokenism that displays some persons of color in a mostly European American congregation. Nor is it authentic to say, “We welcome you — come and join us,” when we really mean, “Become one of us, affirm who we are”. Multicultural ministry involves meeting and embracing those who are different and whose ways may appear strange, respecting their right to self-expression, and learning to appreciate the differences.

Learning in community. Learning new ways to celebrate and embrace persons who are not “just like me” is usually easier and often more effective when individuals are part of a community of others engaged in the same missional journey. We have suggested in Chapter Two that the task of congregational leaders is to intentionally create a new congregational culture, a “culture of inclusion.” A congregational culture of inclusion fosters beliefs, values, goals, and practices of communication within the formal and informal structures of the local congregation that enable members to learn new patterns of behavior consistent with inclusiveness. This provides the context for individuals to be engaged, over an extended period of time, with diverse others in the ongoing common tasks and shared experiences of worship, service, and learning. These shared moments provide the time and space where common interests can be discovered. With guidance of congregational leaders led by the Holy Spirit, members can also experience these moments as times when uncomfortable questions can be raised and heard. Such feedback about our behaviors can be received with grace, so that misunderstandings can be spoken and forgiven, and the seeds of trust can be sown.

A. Unique opportunities for witness

Each local congregation constitutes a unique place from which to begin the missional journey of becoming a multicultural congregation. The degree of

diversity in the congregation and the local neighborhood, the specific cultural groups involved, and the history of the neighborhood, will vary from one congregation to another. In each case congregational leaders have to open their eyes to see the creative opportunities for embracing differences. This requires *imagination, discernment, and recognition*.

Witnessing to inclusiveness. Should all congregations seek to engage in a multicultural journey? This certainly depends on the local context of the congregation as members respond to God's call in a particular time and place. Undoubtedly a congregational response to the call to multicultural mission stands *as a witness to inclusiveness within two important contexts outside the congregation*: (1) in the broader secular context of social intolerance and exclusion of persons based on how society categorizes them; (2) within our denominational context where the great majority of congregations comprise homogeneous memberships, i.e., "like-minded" people enjoying the supportive fellowship of each other. Certainly, some congregations must lead the way toward what is still a new frontier.

Not Either/Or. At the same time, newly immigrated peoples, and perhaps many Racial/Ethnic peoples, are for a period of time better nurtured within a supportive environment of the culturally similar. This suggests that a homogeneous fellowship within a congregation will better minister to their needs, at least for a period of time. This reality, however, does not necessarily mean that homogeneous units, such as immigrant fellowships, and Racial/Ethnic Congregations are necessarily mutually exclusive. It may be that new immigrant fellowships, as well as solidarity-focused congregations, are well served by being in multicultural relation to another congregation. The principles of inclusion and mutuality certainly apply to *all congregations*, whether among cultural groups within the same local congregation, or between and among congregations of different cultural constituencies.

B.A journey led by the Holy Spirit

We envision the creation of a multicultural congregation as one of members committing to a journey in which we leave behind the security of our own familiar cultural practices and the "comfort zone" of our home port, and begin traveling with others whose ways seem different and unfamiliar.

In committing ourselves to a multicultural journey, we choose to entrust ourselves to be accompanied by the diverse other. The destination is not the primary focus, but rather the process and quality of the journey itself as we seek out the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Journey as process and relationship. The concept of journey strongly suggests the importance of process, because in addition to planned events and training, the journey includes the ongoing moments between programs and events, the informal talk among members outside of formal gatherings of the congregation, and the relationships that are being developed between and among members. The multicultural journey is never static but dynamic and dependent on the energy and movement of the Holy Spirit within the community. The process of the multicultural journey is one in which the very nature of the congregation changes significantly along the way.

C. Prepare for the journey

Preparations begin with those persons within the congregation who are given a vision, open to new possibilities, willing to learn, and courageous to step out. The vision then needs to be communicated consistently to the whole congregation. As interest grows and Spirit leads, it will be useful for congregational leaders to discern the readiness of the whole congregation for change. In this way, steps of preparing and mobilizing the congregation can be tailored to meet specific needs, and leaders will not get too far ahead of membership in the process of preparation. Questions for leaders to consider include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *What are the spoken, and unspoken, motivations for such change within your congregation? Are they sufficient?*
- *What hesitations and resistance, voiced or not voiced, are present? Empathic listening to all personal points of view and all potential cultural points of view is essential at this point of preparation.*
- *Are members of the congregation open to examining their own beliefs and behaviors related to privilege and power, cultural differences, and communication habits?*

- *Are congregational leaders, especially the pastor and ruling elders, willing to consider changes in organizational form and structure that may be necessary for creating a “culture of inclusion”?*
- *What cultural resources and social groups are found within the congregation? Within the local community? Within the Presbytery?*
- *Has the congregation engaged in sufficient spiritual preparation in order to fully engage the journey?*

Based on reports from church leaders engaged in multicultural ministry, some general approaches to preparing for mobilization and change may be relevant to all congregations. Congregational leaders should plan carefully for congregational change in the following four areas:

- regularly uplifting the vision of a multicultural journey;
- directly confronting racism and social forces that divide;
- innovatively creating opportunities to engage in cross-cultural relationships;
- boldly introducing practices of shared leadership and inclusive decision-making.

Ideally, these should be initiated at more or less the same time, rather than one at a time. These four approaches to mobilizing the congregation are outlined below.

D. Regularly uplift the vision of a multicultural journey

The multicultural vision needs to be communicated regularly, frequently, and without ambiguity to the entire congregation. During all gatherings of the congregation leaders should present opportunities for conveying multicultural messages. Reutilizing these opportunities is a matter of creative thinking and planning ahead. Here are some ideas drawn from practitioners:

(1) Introduce multicultural elements within the communal experience of worship.

- *Introduce a diversity of visual cultural elements during worship to both enrich and expand the experience of worshipers. The point is to encourage both imagination and respect, in order to promote appre-*

ciation and understanding of others' cultural expressions, for example:
culturally diverse “unleavened” breads for communion and/or a variety of vessels and containers;
indigenous weavings occasionally as vestments or drapes;
culturally specific representations of the “nativity” at Christmas

- *Draw from all cultural traditions of music with an eye toward variety, quality, and coherent worship planning.* These same criteria (variety, quality, and coherence) apply also to other elements, such as visual arts and movement.
- *Involve a diversity of individual members in preparation for worship* to create a time for cross-generational, cross-racial, and cross-cultural participation-creating banners, arranging flowers, offering other visual effects, musical preludes and presentations, and dramatizing biblical stories. In any of these efforts, leaders should invite representatives of all groups to participate in creative planning.

(2) Create a shared vocabulary that communicates desired values while naming and interpreting the multicultural missional journey of the congregation.

- *Intentionally create a shared vocabulary, written and spoken, and multicultural images used in*
 - the mission statement
 - corporate prayers
 - hymns and songs
 - visual messages (posters, banners)
 - sermons and other presentations
 - the printed order of service
 - the church newsletter

All these occasions contribute to the goal of uplifting the vision of a multicultural and inclusive congregation.

- *Use locally meaningful images.* Depending on the local setting (populations, history, etc.) and groups represented, one congregation might emphasize, for example, an explicit anti-racist vocabulary, another might prefer the “family of God” image, another might

choose a vocabulary that emphasizes “journey”, or even “surprises” or discoveries made during the journey.ⁱⁱⁱ

(3) Provide educational opportunities and events intended to raise cultural awareness and cultural competence

- *Plan regular Bible study* related to the multicultural journey. Start with the readings mentioned in Chapter One of this booklet.
- *Develop “mind activities”* to enable people to be more open-minded and accepting of others unlike themselves. Classes, workshops, and special programs all need to touch the mind, the heart, and the behavior of participants.
- *Plan adult courses with invited guest speakers* to introduce to your congregation the history and heroes, the traditions and wisdom of another culture.
- Offer a course of study focused on understanding the *migrant and/or refugee experience of dislocation* and invite individuals to share.
- *Consider having the adults and young people meet together* for shared educational opportunities, emphasize listening skills.
- Check out your public library or local college and university libraries for *videos related to ethnicity, race, immigration, etc.*, for use in discussion groups.

Celebration is a beginning. Keep in mind that celebrating diversity and increasing our tolerance and openness to people of other cultures, nations, and race, is a *beginning stage*. The celebration of diversity is an important preparation, but cultural enrichment does not comprise the full journey. The challenges are yet to come beyond the initial stage of celebration. *The multicultural journey is created through inclusive interaction — the experience of mutuality, of transformation* — and reaching this goal goes beyond the initial “honeymoon” phases of acquiring knowledge about each other’s culture and welcoming each other. It is also necessary to increase our knowledge about the “isms” that divide peoples and to confront directly the presence of those dividing walls within our church.

E. Directly confront racism and social forces that divide

Leaders of the congregation have to both challenge and assist their members to become aware of and confront the exclusionary forces of social hierarchy that obstruct the practice of inclusion, as we have suggested in the previous chapter. If your congregation has not recently sponsored educational programs for all ages on these issues, now is the time. Dealing with these exclusionary forces requires individuals to (1) *discern* ways in which their own assumptions and behaviors, and also the social networks of the congregation, contribute to the exclusion of others who are different, (2) *name* these behaviors for what they really are, and (3) *replace* them with positive action. Learning to deal with racism and its counterparts is absolutely necessary in order to begin the journey. Furthermore, given their strength in our society, learning will have to continue throughout the journey.

Facing the forces that divide. There are several ways to enable the congregation to become aware of and to confront their unquestioned beliefs and unexamined behaviors that work against the practice of inclusion. In choosing an approach, leaders will want to consider the demographic makeup of the congregation (economic, educational, racial, and ethnic diversity), the experiences of members in multicultural situations and their sensitivity about these issues, and the availability of persons (inside or outside of the congregation) who can lead training programs. Consider these possibilities in your planning:

- *Introductory “diversity” workshops and “anti-racism” training programs.* With good leadership, these sessions can help individuals to perceive some of the hidden aspects of racism, classism, sexism, and ethnocentrism in a relatively safe environment. Many presbyteries have staff trained to lead such workshops, or they can suggest other resources.
- *Multicultural small group sessions.* In small groups of diverse individuals, each person shares his/her story about the impact of social forces such as racism on their personal lives. By using tools that enable dialogue and skillful listening, leaders can enable members to broaden their understandings beyond their ethnocentric perspectives. One useful tool for this setting is the “photolanguage exer-

cise” developed by Eric Law that uses a set of black and white photographed images to enable persons to begin a process of mutual sharing about how racism has affected their lives.^{iv}

- *Monocultural preliminary gatherings* of church members also can be very useful and sometimes necessary for preparing groups to be able to talk about the way power dynamics affect them, both in society and within the congregation. The dominant cultural group in the congregation and the non-dominant groups would meet separately for training.^v

Preliminary monocultural group work. In congregations that have largely European American members, the separate training event may be especially useful. This is because there are at least two aspects of power and exclusion that need to be recognized by this group. First, European Americans will need to consider how their position as members of the dominant cultural group gives them access to personal and social power and privilege. Second, European Americans in general tend to dominate conversation and discussion; the group will do well to consider how that kind of communicative power excludes others from the table. It is also true that some European American groups, in fact, are burdened by powerlessness as much as some non-Anglos. If such persons are part of the congregation, some preliminary group work apart from other cultural groups may enable them to recognize how issues of power and privilege in society benefit their lives and even while hindering their particular efforts to practice inclusion.

F. Create opportunities to engage in cross-cultural relationships

The question for each congregation is not simply when does diversity become an issue for us, but rather how we understand diversity as an opportunity for growth. Becoming open to others who are different in ethnicity, race, class, and gender is a choice, an opportunity that we are given in this time and place. To make the opportunity a reality, however, we have to make it happen. We have to respond with action and create opportunities to learn how to engage in multicultural relationships and create multicultural communities. Leaders of multicultural congregations strongly suggest the following actions:

(1) Start with what you have and begin to see differences where you have assumed similarity.

- If your congregation is largely monocultural, *begin to think about ways in which your congregation can become conscious of diversity instead of assuming similarity.* Consider, for example:
 - members in your congregation whose parents were immigrants
 - families who have adopted a child of a different race or nationality
 - members who are themselves multicultural and/or multiracial
 - members who are persons of color seemingly to have assimilated into dominant culture
 - members with significantly different lifestyles and occupations.
- If your congregation constitutes largely immigrant people and your leadership is composed of the first-generation, consider *inviting second- and third-generation persons to share leadership roles in the congregation*, intentionally recognizing and celebrating the important differences in cultural and linguistic orientation.
- If your congregation is already multiracial, e.g., African American and Puerto Rican, or multiethnic, e.g., pan-Asian or pan-Hispanic, or multigenerational, e.g., first, second, third-generation immigrant families; *consider how to recognize the diversity as well as the similarities.*

An invitation to recognize diversity. All these situations represent possibilities for extending, with humility and grace, an invitation to begin a conversation in ways to perceive diversity in a new light. The point is to “start with what you have, evaluate it, and understand it” — and remember that everybody does not have to think like you do.^{vi} In a congregation where members seem to be highly assimilated, the question of diversity should not be ignored or overlooked as unlikely. By mutual telling of stories about their faith journeys, members may recognize the power dynamics of racism, classism, and sexism more explicitly. Offering a safe place to talk about such life experiences is one step toward a practice of inclusion.

(2) Make sincere and intentional efforts to reach out

Homogeneous congregations are challenged to reach out toward greater diversity by going outside their walls. It may sound obvious, but the more

homogeneous your congregation, the less likely persons of other groups will appear at your church door. So you have to be imaginative, believable, and sincere in your efforts to reach out to the people of other cultures. It is not enough to post a sign that says, “All are welcome.” Even though your own congregation believes it sincerely, the outsiders may not.

Where the neighborhood is highly diverse, the key is to see it as a God-given opportunity for spiritual growth, intentional outreach, innovation, and increased vitality, rather than as a liability. The congregation must begin to reach out to the community so that members can acquire experience in communicating with, relating to, and welcoming those who are not just like themselves, thus envisioning a fuller experience of “doing church.” In the process, it is more important to listen to and to know others who are different, than to insist of being heard and being known by them.^{vii}

Some specific suggestions for reaching out include:

- If your congregation is homogeneous, *identify cultural groups in proximity to your church location* that might be invited to participate in a multicultural congregation.
- *Extend hospitality to new immigrant groups.* Offer to share church facilities for Bible studies, cultural events, and worship space.
- *Create opportunities for persons new to this country to share stories with your congregation* about their dislocation from their countries of origin, their journeys to your community, their faith journeys, and so on.
- *Invite a congregation or a fellowship who shares your building facilities to consider a closer and more organic relationship.*
- *Articulate an ideal model for sharing facilities* that goes beyond the landlord/tenant relationship; think of the relationship as missional journey and also in practical terms such as scheduling and maintenance.^{vii}
- *Plan shared activities* during which both the host and guest congregations participate as equal partners.
- If your congregation comprises primarily immigrant persons, consider *participating in a Pan-Asian, Pan-Middle Eastern, Pan-African, Hispanic (etc.) fellowship*, if necessary using English as a common language, that recognizes and celebrates the diversity of persons

from a broad cultural stream.

- If your congregation is small and/or has limited resources, consider a *partnership with another congregation or with other community programs to offer services to neighborhood groups.*
- *Partner (covenant) with a congregation of a different racial/ethnic make-up to assist and support one another in becoming more diverse and inclusive. Think of this partnership as a “learning laboratory” for multicultural relationships. Plan pulpit and choir exchanges, social events, and especially joint mission projects. Consider engaging in a short- to long-term membership exchange.*
- *Create time and space for individuals of different cultures to share their cultural gifts with the congregation at special events.*
- *Create opportunities for cross-cultural exchange by breaking bread together, telling stories, learning each other’s traditions and struggles, making music together.*
- *Offer special programs and events that appeal to a neighborhood you are trying to reach. Organize exhibits of artwork, crafts, utensils, traditional weavings, and invite people to lend items for the event.*
- *Seek out racial/ethnic candidates for openings on your church staff, and if possible, create such a staff position. The commitment to a multicultural church is demonstrated most tangibly by having staff, particularly the pastoral staff that reflects the diversity of the community.*

G. Create the practice of shared leadership

Preparation for the multicultural journey also necessitates the creation of shared leadership practices in the congregation. This constitutes one of the more challenging aspects of the journey, and it needs to be introduced before the congregation commits to the long-term. It is important for pastors and congregational leaders, in uplifting the multicultural vision, *to make it a shared effort from the beginning.* Encourage people to bring their own preferences and values into multicultural activities that are collaborative. *Create a value of strong, active participation of each member.*^{ix} This lays out the groundwork for an essential component of the multicultural jour-

ney: *shared decision-making*.

Leadership shared broadly. The “sharing” of congregational leadership is broadly defined in the multicultural congregation. Leadership is shared between clergy and non-clergy, between older and younger age groups, between long-term and newer members, between men and women, between and among persons of various socio-economic status, and between and among all the cultural groupings present in the congregation.

Basic principles of mutual input and mutual listening. The concept of shared leadership is based on mutual input. This means that all groups in the congregation have equal voice and receive equal respect in discussions, deliberations, and decision-making. It means the concerns and perspectives of each group are heard by all and taken into account before decisions are being made. This is at times a slow and enduring process. Especially at first, when understanding between cultural groups is minimal, extra time must be invested in the process of listening. Members of all groups present are received as having spiritual gifts, and all are valued equally regardless of varying “social status” and achievements. “Those who see themselves as givers must constantly be aware of what they are receiving. Those who see themselves as servant must see how they are being served.”^x

H. Do church together, multiculturally

Cultural tension is to be expected as an inevitable component of the multicultural journey. For this reason, leaders must design the shared activities of communication that create coherence, fellowship, and bonding within a congregational community of diverse peoples. Such communication cannot be left to happen “naturally” at whim, but instead must be carefully nurtured and sometimes mediated by congregational leaders. We build community through common conversational routines such as welcoming strangers, showing respect, expressing opinions, engaging in disagreement, accepting differences, making requests, and partnering in ministry. However, it is crucial to recognize that the rules for how to engage in these routines tend to vary significantly from one cultural group to another. *When cultural rules come into conflict, they produce feelings of tension, unease, negative judgments, and resistance. Individuals often do not see that the source*

of the tension is cultural difference; instead they tend to attribute such feelings to some failure in the other person.

Doing church together involves all members, multiculturally. Doing church *together* begins with the multicultural leadership team and extends to include the entire congregation. The congregation *together* makes the effort, offers correction, experiences the pain, supports each person in his/her weakness, prays for one another, and rejoices together in the progress made. The challenges, the costs, the mistakes, and the efforts involved, all contribute to potential growth. Four areas of challenge have been identified by congregations who are engaged in the multicultural journey.

(1) Psychological challenges for individuals as part of the congregation *together*

- Stepping outside of our “comfort zone” of the familiar into an unfamiliar and uncomfortable place.
- Choosing to live with ambiguity and uncertainty
- Relinquishing our defenses and protective walls, and our need to be “right.”
- Letting go of our dependence on our old familiar ways of thinking and behaving, and our attachment to homogeneous symbols of cultural identity
- Recognizing and letting go of our stereotypes about ourselves and others.
- Getting in touch with our own cultural blind spots and arrogance
- Identifying and acknowledging our collective feelings of superiority or inferiority in relation to other cultural groups
- Recognizing our fear of losing our own cultural identity and heritage, and recognizing that same fear exists in members of other groups
- Letting go of negative assumptions about the likelihood of healthy multicultural relationships
- Recognizing our fear of not having much control over the future of the congregation, and our fear of demands from unfamiliar others

(2) Interactive, social challenges for members of the congregation *together*

- Letting go of old habits of cross-cultural and cross-racial relating

- Being open to new and different friendships outside of our own social/cultural group
- Learning to trust the “other,” the “stranger,” as a Child of God
- Choosing to share and receive feedback from another, humbly and graciously and in a mutual way.
- Being open to discovering new shades of “identity” that encompass all of the multicultural members of the congregation together
- Accepting that some members may leave the congregation, acknowledging the loss and not holding it against them
- Accepting that this mission is still “experimental,” bold, and perhaps risky. Recognizing that not everyone is as convinced as you may be, not everyone is called at this time, and some people may ridicule you.
- Recognizing the fragile nature of a multicultural community
- Recognizing that members of some cultures strongly prefer to avoid open disagreement and conflict while members of other cultures may prefer open and honest sharing, thus members of all groups need to expand their skills for handling these situations.

(3) Behavioral/action challenges for members of the congregation *together*

- Resisting inertia and committing to action
- Committing resources for the long-term objectives.
- Providing funding for training congregational leaders and church staff
- Committing to ongoing education and training for the congregation
- Seeking creative ways to reach out to neighbors and others
- Practicing the hospitality of inclusion
- Purchasing resource materials, such as multicultural and international music, art, artifacts, etc.
- Developing a new set of “rules” for conducting interpersonal relationships and intergroup relations

(4) Spiritual challenges and blessings for members of the congregation *together*

- Praying for the Holy Spirit to open hearts and minds

- Exploring the word of God for guidance in the practice of inclusion
- Seeking out regular and increasing reliance on prayer to sustain the fragile nature of our cross-cultural relationships and our tentative steps into areas of potential cultural conflict
- Developing a greater humility, hope, and knowledge of our selves, both culturally and spiritually
- Experiencing renewed faithfulness with each achievement
- Discovering our potential to expand human experience
- Developing a richer knowledge of the world and of God as we learn from and through each other
- Experiencing excitement about new possibilities and hope for the future
- Experiencing transformation in our lives together as children of God

The world must see the church as a place where the Spirit is at work.

The early church described by Luke was Spirit-led, Spirit-driven, and Spirit-inspired. If we are to be the church in our time and place, we should be nothing less. Doing church together as a multicultural congregation means allowing the Spirit to lead us in creating a new way of relating and engaging differences at all levels of communal life, from the greetings at the door, to worshipping together, and to the ponderings in the meeting rooms.

Notes

- i Nibs Stroupe and Caroline Leach, *O Lord, Hold Our Hands: How a Church Thrives in a Multicultural World: the Story of Oakhurst Presbyterian Church*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press (2003:17).
- ii Jin S. Kim (2002).
- iii Charles Foster and Theodore Brelsford, *We Are the Church Together: Cultural Diversity in Congregational Life*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International (1996:138).
- iv Eric Law, "Using Photolanguage in Small Group Communication," in *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press (1993:115-119).
- v See Eric Law's (1993:45-51) discussion of dominant and non-dominant power dynamics.
- vi Convocation 2001, Grace Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas (September, 2001).
- vii Frank Alton, Keynote Presentation, Multicultural Church Network Dinner, PC(USA) General Assembly, Denver Colorado (May, 2003)
- viii Shallowford Church, Atlanta, Georgia, quoted in Howard (2001.:9).
- ix PC (U.S.A.) National Multicultural Conference 2001, Grace Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas (September, 2001).
- x Miguel de Jesus, *Beyond our Comfort Zone: Developing social ministry programs in multiethnic settings*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Press (2002:34).

“We want to tell you what it is like from our side, but you speak too quickly and you don’t listen. Our voices become silent. Sometimes it feels we are invisible — you can’t see us or hear us unless we look and sound like you.”ⁱ

CHAPTER FOUR

Creating New Ground Rules for Communication

Undertaking the multicultural journey requires that congregational leaders create *a new way of doing church and a new congregational culture of inclusion* that fosters particular beliefs and values, goals, and new ways of communicating in formal and informal settings within the local congregation. Within small group meetings and public gatherings of the congregation, a leader can direct and facilitate inclusive communication practices such as mutual turn-taking, mutual invitation to speak, and empathic listening. Because the communication that takes place around the “edges” of congregational life is loose and unstructured, an intentional effort needs to be made to encourage healthy habits of interpersonal communication here as well. This chapter addresses the question of communication patterns — the ways multicultural inclusion is practiced — and establishing general “ground rules” for talk.



A. Create new ground rules for communication

The multicultural congregation faces the challenging task of learning both *a new language that models inclusion and a new way of relating to others that facilitates mutuality*. This task is new because none of our particular cultures teach us these skills. Just as in learning any new desirable behavior, to learn new ways of speaking and relating we have to extinguish the old habits and consciously establish new patterns. Because most people give

very little thought to their own cultural habits of talk and relationship, *the first essential step is to recognize one's own personal and cultural patterns of talk.* The second step is to *intentionally identify, nurture, and also rehearse new ground rules for speaking and listening.* This is best done by learning and practicing dialogue with persons from more than one cultural background.

How are the “ground rules” for inclusive communication selected? The starting place is to create a *Mission Statement* that is “owned” by all, each in his/her diversity. For each general idea that is included in the Mission Statement, congregation leaders can generate more specific guidelines for behaviors that express and work toward the desired goal. All cultural groups within the congregation need to participate in articulating these guidelines. Some of the “ground rules” may be already part of the positive congregation habit and simply need to be recognized and encouraged. Most “rules,” however, will need to be developed to specifically respond to the felt needs of non-dominant groups within the congregation and clearly express the values of a *culture of inclusion.*

Ground rules differ, depending on the setting. In most congregations there are three general settings of communication:

- (1) “*public*” gatherings of the whole community led by one or a few designated persons gathered for worship or special event.
- (2) *small group gatherings* where everyone can speak about the matters at hand; and
- (3) *spontaneous interpersonal conversation*, such as before and after worship and other events.

The “ground rules” for communicating inclusion and mutuality differ somewhat in each of these three situations. In gatherings of the whole community, the need is to create visibility of shared leadership and participation by all groups. In small group meetings and gatherings where cultural differences make inclusion difficult to practice, the need is to facilitate and encourage equal opportunity to speak and to listen. During informal, interpersonal conversation, the need is to communicate acknowledgement of each other, both personally and culturally. These three settings are discussed briefly below, with some models and guidelines that are serving other congregations successfully.

B. Ground rules for gatherings of the whole congregation

When the whole congregation gathers for worship and other events, *the ground rule for inclusion is that the diverse groups of the congregation must be visibly represented and their participation affirmed.* The nature of multicultural inclusion in this setting is “group to group.” Visibility of shared leadership and participation by all groups is the key. *The designated leaders for that event should not only direct and perform the several parts of the event itself, but they should also embody the values of the congregation.* That is, if *diversity* is valued, then it must be seen/represented among the leaders. If *inclusion* is valued, then these same leaders must act inclusively as they speak to, and interact with, each other. If *mutuality* is valued, then leaders must embrace differences of ideas, styles, opinions, and customs. The decisions must be negotiated with mutual respect. The commitment of the congregation to multicultural inclusion must be clearly and consistently communicated to all who are present. This can happen in various ways:

- *Shared visibility* means that *all groups participate in leadership roles* in relation to the larger congregation, and they are all equally visible in their roles, if not all at the same time, then rotating over a period of time. Shared leadership must be intentionally created and also *displayed to the congregation* for all to see and value.
- Worship and other events provide opportunities for all participants to learn a new language that expresses the values of the multicultural congregation.
- *Each group will have some kind of participatory presence* during each event of the congregation. At least on some occasions there should be freedom for each group to choose how that presence will occur, and have input into the structuring of the public gathering.
- One way to enable participation is by “open scripting,”ⁱⁱ whereby a *particular cultural group is invited to prepare an element of an event* in a creative way that they choose. This is in contrast to “closed scripting” in which pre-selected material is handed out for someone to read or perform.
- *Cultural elements of worship may differ* for members of the gathered community. For example, forms of prayer, weddings, and funerals

may differ significantly across cultures and carry strong emotional weight for members of different groups.ⁱⁱⁱ

- When *language differences* within the congregation are significant, it is important to encourage multiple ways, in addition to verbal communication, in which members of different cultural groups can learn to appreciate and celebrate the gifts of each other in, for example, music, art, drama, rhythm, and hosting.
- *Develop a spirit of hospitality* that goes beyond the rhetoric of “welcome to visitors” during worship, and the customary handshake across the pews. Congregational hospitality is a kind of *communal ritual of honoring the guest, of creating space where both host and guest find the possibility of a moment of inclusion*. Creating authentic signs of welcome is one of the most important tasks taken on by the whole congregation, not just the official “greeters.” In *welcoming newcomers*, the words and actions of members need to be congruent and meaningful to the receivers. Handshakes and smiles clearly communicate our intention of hospitality. Additional signs of hospitality need to be intentionally planned and implemented as such:
 - Diversity of greeters and leaders
 - Visual images that embody hospitality and inclusion
 - Introduction of your own name as you extend an open hand to others, even when you have met them before.
 - Explicit verbal messages of welcome, both spoken and written.
 - Nonverbal messages, such as facial expressions, eye movement, hand gestures, etc., that emphasize the verbal messages.

Communicating the multicultural vision. Congregational leaders must continuously convey to the whole congregation a “compelling” biblical and theological vision for creating a culture of inclusion. As one pastor urges, “Use all the persuasive and relational strategies at your disposal to reinforce the vision: preaching, teaching, Bible study, classes on racism and scripture, mission statements, advertising, websites, retreats, festivals, meals, and so on.”^{iv} Furthermore, this vision and commitment must be continually communicated as new persons come into the community of faith.

C. Ground rules for small group gatherings in the congregation

Small group gatherings differ from public events in terms of size, proportion of people who are expected to speak, and the purposes of meeting. Small groups may come together to make decisions, to carry out tasks, to explore issues, to study or pray together. In Presbyterian congregations, it is normally assumed that all members of such groups will participate actively in discussion and decision-making. *Ground rules for small groups should enable members to practice inclusion through mutual respect, mutual participation, and mutual listening.* However, in multicultural settings the practice of mutual inclusion in a small group setting can be problematic in two ways due to significant cultural differences.

Differing cultural rules for small group discussion. First, simply stated, members of different cultures may have different approaches to group participation and discussion. For example, European American cultural groups in general place high value on “individual” expressions of ideas, opinions, likes, and dislikes. In a group setting, such as during session meetings where ideas are presented and discussed, individuals learn to actively volunteer their input and defend their own ideas when they believe it is important to do so. Everyone is presumed to be included because no one is deliberately excluded. Where there are many voices competing to be heard, European American culture has rules for maintaining order, (one system is “Roberts’ Rules of Order”), without denying a person the right to speak.

In contrast, many other cultures rank individual expressions as secondary to the ideas expressed by those with more social status, or as secondary to a group viewpoint. Within this cultural view, individuals learn to wait for an invitation to speak from the leader and hesitate to volunteer individual opinions or ideas, especially if their opinions might contradict or question those of the person(s) with authority. The notion of the individual having the right and responsibility to speak up is not part of many non-European cultural views. Consequently, some legitimate concerns may not be voiced because a person is uncomfortable speaking against the authority figure, or disagreeing with other members of the group. Furthermore, since European American culture in general expects individuals to express their point of view, those who hesitate to speak are often

overlooked. However, the silence does not necessarily mean agreement. It might, or, perhaps more importantly, it might not.”

Some cultures emphasize assertive self-expression. The second problem is related to the first, and it also has the potential to hinder inclusion of all members of the small group. Rules for self-expression and styles of communication vary from culture to culture. Assertiveness, for example, is encouraged in the middle and upper-middle class European American culture. By displaying their knowledge and expertise, individuals in this culture assert their opinions about a certain subject and also back up their opinions with good reasons. As a result individuals with more education, income, and prestige often are given, and often expect, more speaking time; they also tend to dominate discussions and often have more influence over the outcomes of decisions.

Individual assertiveness and expression of opinion is also highly valued within African American culture, but it draws from a different mode. Within this cultural system, individuals are encouraged to speak up when they feel strongly about the topic being discussed. In disagreement, the person would be expected to speak up more with confidence, not with timidity. Speaking with passion, energy, and eloquence is highly valued in African American culture, whereas “cool” expression of logic and reason for discussion is preferred by European American culture. This differing cultural style easily contributes to misunderstanding of intention between members of these groups.

Some cultures emphasize harmony. To complicate matters further, both assertive cultural styles contrast significantly with other cultural systems that emphasize the importance of interpersonal harmony and discourage the use of direct disagreement and strong assertions for fear of offending others. Furthermore, several European American sub-cultures, especially more rural groups, tend to discourage long turns of talking and open disagreement, preferring to minimize conflict. Within this cultural view, silence would be valued more than “talking to hear yourself talk.”

Enabling participation. Creating a culture of inclusion within the multicultural congregation requires leaders to enable groups to discover a process of turn-taking and rules for speaking in group discussion that invites

the participation of each member and that respects the contribution of each. For most people, communication style is very closely tied to their personal, social, and cultural identities. Perhaps for this reason, members of non-dominant groups in the U.S. have for years observed that one aspect of racism is the need to change communication style and vocabulary in order to be accepted by the dominant culture.

The challenge for the congregation is to equalize each person's sharing time while simultaneously encouraging members of all groups to withhold judgment about persons who use different cultural styles of speaking. Shared leadership within a multicultural congregation has to take such differences seriously and learn how to bridge them.

Establish ground rules for small group situations. Ground rules for small groups should enable members to practice inclusion through *mutual respect, mutual participation, and mutual listening*. Here are some suggestions:

- **Develop a covenant of inclusive communication.** At the beginning, as people are learning a new practice of mutual participation in small groups, such as the session and the leadership group, it may be useful for members to create their own communication covenant that will guide the process. It can be revised as needs arise.
- **Learn and adopt the practice of Mutual Invitation.** This is a group process that facilitates sharing and discussion in a multicultural group, by randomly inviting everyone individually to speak in turn if they so choose. After each person speaks, he or she invites another in the group, and that person may speak or pass as they like but still invites the next to speak. This process empowers those who may be reluctant to speak up, and encourages others to listen.^{vi} Mutual Invitation is especially useful for discussion and study groups, but also for group decision-making that requires all viewpoints to be taken into consideration.
- **Adopt a collaborative view of conflict and disagreement.** Whether in committees or boards when strong opinions and/or needs threaten to divide the group, the European American model of “majority rules” has limited use, even though it may be a time-efficient model for resolving differences. Congregational leaders need to develop

conflict mediation skills, broaden their perception of conflict beyond their own cultural view, and learn the methods of promoting cooperative exploration of conflicts in a multicultural setting.^{vii}

The goal is to establish a practice for small group participation that can be used throughout the congregation, beginning with the session and the multicultural leadership group. Shared leadership and mutual inclusion begins with these two groups, but eventually they should be practiced routinely in all small groups within the congregation.

D. Ground rules for communication in interpersonal relationships

There are three key aspects to creating a practice of inclusion at the interpersonal level of informal conversation: (1) confirming the worth and uniqueness of the other person, (2) seeking out opportunities for multicultural relationships, and (3) being sensitive to cultural differences.

(1) Confirm the worth and uniqueness of the other person.

Every person wishes to be confirmed for who he/she is and, as a human being, he/she is created with the capacity to confirm the worthiness of others. This is the basis for developing positive and inclusive relationships. However, this act of confirmation *must be communicated* through spoken words in order for others to feel accepted. We cannot take for granted that others will understand our good intentions unless our communication is clearly receptor-oriented. When we confirm another person, we accomplish four important actions:^{viii}

- *We express recognition of the other person's existence*, by not ignoring him/her, or by treating the person in some way as non-existent or as irrelevant, or as not entitled to his/her own point of view.
- *We acknowledge the other person as a unique being-in-relation*, rather than simply as an object in the environment. Dialogue is more confirming than monologue; in an authentic dialogue we respond directly to what the other has said, rather than whatever is on our own minds.
- *We express awareness of the significance and worth of the other*, by treating the other personally rather than impersonally. A personal response to the remarks of others involves a concern for the feelings expressed

and sensitivity to their perspective.

- *We endorse the other's self-experience as he or she expresses it, through acceptance and understanding of the other's remarks, and refraining from judgments about his/her ideas and/or experiences.*

Confirming the other person means recognizing their humanness and self-worth, in contrast to reducing a person to an object of stereotype and discrimination.^{ix} Confirming the other person is to acknowledge him/her as a child of God. This is a worthy goal in all interpersonal relationships, but in a multicultural congregation the challenge is greater because we tend to rely on very superficial knowledge about cultural groups that differ from our own.

Anticipate how your remarks will be received. In cross-cultural communication, more so than in monocultural, one cannot automatically assume that others will readily understand one's well-meaning words or actions. Thus, one needs to develop *mindfulness*, to "think before speaking" about how words and actions may be interpreted by the receivers from different cultural and racial groups. Awareness and fore-thought about one's own words and actions is one side of mindfulness; looking for the response, the approval or disapproval, the reception or rejection of the message, is the other side of the coin. Sometimes our well-intentioned celebrations of diversity slip quickly into stereotypical images of cultural, racial, and economic groups, setting up a division between "us" and "them."

Confirmation of the other avoids "mindless" chatter. What may be perceived as racism by persons of color may be caused by mindless comments made by European Americans. It is common in our daily lives that Euro-American Whites lack racial awareness, resulting in over-generalizations and the unwavering but unfounded belief that one's "good intentions" outweigh one's words and actions. This then means for Whites that the task of confirming persons of color is especially important and needs to be taken seriously. Today there is really no acceptable excuse for the common pattern of ignorance on the part of European American congregations about the historical struggles of cultural and economic minority groups in the United States, and the depth of feeling associated with those struggles.

(1) Seek out opportunities to get to know diverse others, and make intercultural relationships primary

Because interpersonal conversation naturally tends to occur with “people like ourselves,” crosstalk has to be intentionally arranged. Members need to be given incentives to seek out and develop meaningful relationships with cultural others whose ways are unfamiliar and thus uncomfortable. One pastor calls these “border experiences” that work on our spirits and begin to heal us of the reasons why we put up walls in the first place.^x Taking the initiative to make cross-cultural relationships is not easy; for most of us, it requires a significant change in behavioral pattern. The first step is to build healthy cross-cultural relationships within group contexts, such as a prayer group, a study group, a service group, or a committee.

Linking strategies. Congregational leaders, especially pastors, can facilitate the process of forming meaningful cross-cultural relationships by using “linking strategies.” Leaders intentionally link individuals in the congregation to other individuals who have similar interests, but not common culture.^{xi} For example, if a person talks about a new idea for a service project or a study group, the pastor could encourage that person to seek out and share ideas with another person from a different cultural group in the congregation whom the pastor knows has similar interests. As members gain cross-cultural experience, they would hopefully discover things in common and begin to build some measure of mutual trust.

(2) Enable the congregation to develop communication skills for multicultural relationships

Forming meaningful multicultural relationships can be more complicated than some people might expect. Think of cross-cultural, interpersonal conversation like a slow game of tossing the ball back and forth—tossing the ball so that the other person can catch it easily, waiting patiently if they drop the ball, reaching as far as you can to catch their toss, smiling to show that you are enjoying the game. Congregational leaders can facilitate both interpersonal communication and community-building within the congregation by encouraging members in two ways: first, how we approach the task of communicating across cultures; second, to

remember that cultures have different rules about appropriate ways to carry on conversation and appropriate subjects for conversation.

- **Approach the task of cross-cultural communication with openness**
 - learn to listen with “cross-cultural ears”—that is, remind yourself not to jump to quick conclusions, whether positive or negative, about what someone has said or why they said it.
 - extend yourself beyond your own “comfort zone”
 - practice conscious reciprocity back and forth, allowing each person to both speak and to listen
 - suspend your own cultural expectations about how a conversation should proceed
 - allow the other plenty of free space within a conversation, withhold judgment, delay emotional reactions, extend trust to the other.

be patient with those who are learning to speak your language.

- **Expect cultural differences in rules for conversation**
 - *Differing cultural emphases on speaking versus listening*, for example, European American culture traditionally emphasizes the importance of competent speaking more than competent listening.
 - *Differing ways of showing courtesy and respect*, e.g., European American culture tends to be very informal; many other cultures reserve informality, in general, for close relationships and maintain more distance with others.
 - *Differing cultural rules about asking personal questions*, for example, some cultures tend to look at information as “free” for the asking; some other cultures tend to emphasize privacy, assuming that if someone wants you to know something, they will volunteer.
 - *Differing cultural approaches to resolving conflict and disagreement*, such as direct argument, indirect hints, third party, etc.
 - *Differing cultural rules about whether persons should “be friendly”* when they do not want to initiate a close friendship, for example, middle-class European American culture is likely to expect “friendly behavior” from everyone, without necessarily expecting the relationship to develop into deep friendship.

Transformational change. For a monocultural congregation to become multicultural requires fundamental changes. Change feels risky because we are asked to go against social norms and familiar ways. Moreover, this kind of change is by nature neither simple (involving only one dimension or one program) nor linear (following specified steps in a certain order). So we must recognize at the outset that there are no established blueprints or programmed “success” models to follow, and we have to be willing to experiment. The key to such change is to create new patterns and routines of communication at all levels of congregational life and, in the process, to be transformed as a congregation.

Notes

- i Quoted by H. Richmond, Uniting Church in Australia, in Seongja Yoo-Crowe and Colville Crowe (eds.), *Multicultural Ministry: Report of the Second International Network Forum*. Sydney (2002).
- ii Foster (1997:88)
- iii Kathy Black, *Worship Across Cultures: a Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press (1998:9).
- iv Mark Smutny (2002).
- v See Eric Law's valuable discussion of silence in *Inclusion: Making Room for Grace*. St. Louis, Chalice Press (2000).
- vi See full discussion of “mutual invitation” by Eric Law (1993:79-88,113-114).
- vii See David W. Augsburger, *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press (1992).
- viii A. Barbour and A. Goldberg, “Principles of Confirmation,” in Kathleen M. Galvin and Pamela J. Cooper, *Making Connections: Readings in Relational Communication*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury (2000:139).
- ix Barbour and Goldberg (2000:139).
- x Frank Alton, Los Angeles Regional Multicultural Consultation, PC(USA) (November, 2002).
- xi Foster (1997:49).

“We have no divine guarantees that, even when we have the best of intentions, everything is going to work out as we think it should. There are bound to be unexpected and sometimes unwelcome turns on our spiritual journey. . . . So we walk by faith, not by sight.”¹

CHAPTER FIVE

Making the Commitment to a Spirit-led Journey

The missional journey of becoming a multicultural congregation is like that of a long migration, an exodus from what is known to what is unknown and not yet experienced. This is a Spirit-led, long-term effort. No one can predict the exact course of change in any local congregation, nor anticipate exactly what discoveries will be encountered on the journey. Nevertheless there are certain basic components — *mindsets and heart-sets* — that should be developed intentionally within the congregational leadership and nurtured broadly within the congregation. Three basic components have been identified by multicultural congregations as essential for equipping and sustaining members on the journey: (1) recruitment and training of multicultural leaders; (2) promoting cultural competence; and (3) building mutual intergroup trust.

A. Recruit and equip multicultural leaders for the congregation

Creating new strategies and new ways of relating requires both discernment and recognition of certain gifts among the members of the congregation. Persons who have these gifts may be found in any of the various cultural groups. These persons will facilitate and extend the work of a designated multicultural leadership group as they begin to plan and implement new language and new patterns of relationship within the congregation. Some of these special multicultural roles include, for example:

- **Bridge persons or cultural brokers** who can move between cultural groups, having gifts of understanding and interpretation, and especially the gift of humor.
- **Visionaries** with gifts of insight and creativity and the ability to

think “outside the box.”

- **Listeners** (who have the gifts of observation, intuition, patience and insight)
- **Translators** (who have the gifts of language, interpretation and insight)
- **Others** (such as motivators, hosts, conflict mediators, mentors, etc.)

Remember also that each culture has established rules about how to identify persons whose gifts will be recognized. In other words, an individual’s particular gift needs to be confirmed by other members of his/her own group, and in turn recognized by other groups.

Recruit a multicultural leadership group. As the congregation prepares to embark on this missional journey, the session must recruit and equip a leadership group that is responsible for multicultural ministry. Members of the leadership group need to represent diverse culture, race, gender, and age found in the congregation. Such a mission journey will require certain qualities in those who are chosen by the congregation to lead:

- *an intentional seeking out and being open to the leading of God’s Spirit*
- *a willingness to humble “selves” and become learners*
- *an intentional seeking of new ideas, receiving feedback from others, and embracing new ways of relating to others*
- *a consistent and ongoing dedication to learning and practicing new behavioral and communication skills*
- *a willingness to make a long-term effort in the midst of ambiguity and uncertainty*
- *the capacity to listen to many perspectives and opinions, without being judgmental.*

Balance the relative power of groups. Equal, not “token,” representation of each identified group is important, so that power differences in the group may be minimized. If that goal is not possible, at least make sure that the number of persons from the dominant cultural/gender/age group of the congregation is smaller, or no more than equal to, the number of persons of other groups.

Nurture the leadership group. The pastor should devote energy “up front” to building inclusive relationships in the group, nurturing the group spiritually and biblically, and steering the group toward mission and evangelism. Think of the process as forming disciples for multicultural ministry, grounded in prayer, trusting one another, and committed to a common vision of mutuality and inclusion. From the beginning the leadership group must understand and attend to certain basic areas of congregational activity: the ministry of hospitality, the ministry of mutual acceptance and inclusion, and the ministry of “embracing difficult differences.”

Train and develop culturally competent leadership. Without a doubt, shared leadership, whether between clergy and lay leaders, or among cultural groups in the multicultural congregation is of primary importance, and extra effort has to be given to the continuous training of those leaders. Learning in a multicultural context never ends but is a life-long process. *Training is essential, because the skills necessary for cultural competence are not taught broadly in our society.*

Resources should be invested for the ongoing training of leaders, who in turn share what they have learned with the rest of the congregation. Training materials and training programs for congregations are beginning to be developed and will be increasingly available. If possible, seek out training opportunities in your presbytery, in the denomination, and from other organizations. If possible, send your leaders to conferences, regional and national, that focus on multicultural ministries.

Do not assume that pastors and staff already have adequate multicultural training. Seek out racial/ethnic candidates for staff openings, but also equip all staff members with multicultural training and orientation. Pastors also need to realize that creating a multicultural congregation is not a short-term program, and usually requires the pastoral staff to commit to pursuing this vision for many years.ⁱⁱ

B. Strive for expanding cultural competence

The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 9:22 that we need to become “all things to all people.” This does not mean that we try to change who we are to become like the members of another group, but it does indicate a cer-

tain approach to the multicultural situation. First, we must suspend the ethnocentric expectation that our own cultural way is “right,” “most reasonable,” and “best.” When we step away from ourselves enough, we begin to see that we are also cultural beings and we also behave in particular cultural ways. We need to learn enough about the cultural practices and patterns of other groups in the congregation and its surrounding neighborhood so that we can begin to anticipate *how our own actions, words, and nonverbal signs might be interpreted according to their cultural perspectives*, and thus to choose actions and words that will be more likely understood by others as we would intend.

Accept tension and uncertainty. Tension is a given and an integral part of the multicultural journey. It is to be expected and welcomed! “Tension means we are doing something!” We are pressed into a suspended time and place when we step out of our familiar cultural routines into a place of the unknown and unfamiliar. It holds us in tension until we become familiar with new processes of multicultural relationships. Eventually our feelings of insecurity subside as the unfamiliar becomes routinized and predictable.

Tension is also triggered by conflicting worldviews. Misunderstandings on each side are inevitable, and disagreements are also inevitable, yet each represents the possibility of mutual growth. Disagreements enable us to see ourselves from a little distance, from the perspective of the other. “Confronting something new and unexpected in each other is an ever-present possibility.”ⁱⁱⁱ *This is the positive side of tension: the fragile nature of new relationships and new patterns is coupled with vibrancy and energy resulting from discoveries about the other and about self.*

C. Cultivate mutual trust in the congregation

Mutual trust cannot be assumed, but it can be cultivated. One of the results of racism is that many persons of color hesitate to extend trust to European Americans, and the reverse is probably also true. However, there are many levels of trust, and many points from which to begin building trust. Each congregation can search for these places.

- **Develop the ability to listen without judging**, a necessary trust-

building skill to be developed broadly among members.^{iv}

- **Practice cultural humility.** It is especially difficult to learn to forgive members of other cultural groups for “breaking the rules” of our own culture! When we find ourselves thinking, or saying, something like “Everyone should know...,” it is surely a sign that we are judging someone else based on our own cultural beliefs. Therefore cultural humility would be appropriate.
- **Create an active prayer life.** The congregational leadership is responsible for *creating an environment in which personal and cultural tensions can be expressed safely, respected, and understood*. An important part of this environment is to enable individuals, both leaders and members, to receive criticism and negative feedback from others with grace and forgiveness. Whenever an encounter of misunderstanding upsets part of the community, these steps need to be encouraged by leaders, along with a recommitment to embracing differences. This indicates the need to *promote an active prayer life in the congregation*-both when members gather together and apart.
- **Create opportunities for reciprocity.** A foundation for communal trust can be built by practicing reciprocity, defined as the exchange of special privileges by two, or more individuals or groups. Create and plan such opportunities:
 - reciprocal exchange of story-telling
 - reciprocal celebration of traditional cultural customs
 - reciprocal listening to different viewpoints of emotion-triggering topics, such as experiences of racism or oppression.
 - reciprocal exchange of speaking turns within group discussions
 - rotating leadership roles among different groups

Planned opportunities for equal exchange begin to establish a foundation for building trust. Even though mutual understanding may still lag behind at this stage, reciprocal exchange can be achieved by conscious attention to it on the part of leadership. For example, the intentional practice of “mutual invitation” during group discussions gives everyone the experience to exercise personal power, regardless of their cultural back-

ground.^v Beginning with conscious planning, *over time reciprocity becomes the routine practice*, which provides foundation for building further trust within the congregation.

Training activities to enhance multicultural community-building.

Congregational leaders might consider providing one or more of the following training activities which have been developed by Eric H. F. Law for small groups to enhance community-building and reciprocity in the congregation:

- *Photolanguage Activity for Small Groups*. Since culturally diverse groups often find verbal communication challenging, this activity draws on photographs to encourage individuals to talk about experiences or feelings related to questions, such as “Who are you?” or “What is racism?” or “What is your relationship with God?” When each person has chosen one or two photographic images (there are 50 in the set with instructions), all are invited to share their thoughts by using the process of “Mutual Invitation”.^{vi}
- *Community Bible Study, with “ground rules.”* The process involves listening to the same Bible passage three times, with sharing after each reading. The purpose of this activity is to share insights.^{vii}
- *An Intercultural Dialogue/Worship Service*. A three-hour liturgy in three sections: Biblical reflection process; Intragroup Dialogue Process; and Intergroup Dialogue Process.^{viii}
- *A Five-Session Intercultural Dialogue Program*. Goals are to introduce the participants to the dialogue process, to introduce participants to each other, and to share experiences of being different.^{ix}

D. Embrace difficult differences

A rich, complex level of communal trust would involve the experience of *mutuality*-the voluntary exchange of feeling between two persons, or an understanding shared jointly with others. For example, “Mutuality asks us to give serious consideration to what the other is saying, not only to respect it but to be willing to accept it as good for all.”^x Many people seem to speak of mutuality as the ideal goal of multicultural relationships, the establishment of full trust and shared understanding. What does it mean if deep

mutuality is not achieved within a multicultural congregation? Can trust still be experienced?

The real nature of cultural diversity means that there are indeed differences that cannot be reduced, merged, or ignored, and which make “mutuality” difficult, and sometimes impossible—there are people we do not understand, even after years of living or working together. Some congregations maintain that in their experience trust is indeed possible and desirable. They suggest that the goal is not mutuality but rather *solidarity*, defined as the capacity to “embrace these incomprehensible differences as gifts to our common life.” Solidarity does not suppress differences but rather grants each other “sufficient respect” to listen and trust, suspending expectations and judgment of others with whom we disagree.^{xi} Working toward solidarity is a part of the faith journey, the goal of which is *mutual embracing of differences*: a reciprocal candor in which we can acknowledge the others’ tradition that we have difficulty appreciating, as well as ask forgiveness of the other when we inevitably offend.^{xii}

We also have to recognize that conversation has its limits. For example, words are always inadequate to fully explain to another the pain we have known or the fullness of our experience with the gospel. Cultural and racial differences make that limitation even more challenging because our reference points are seldom the same. “The more cultural groups there are present in the congregation, the more possibilities for differing interpretations and meanings emerge.”^{xiii} It is the responsibility of good leadership to nurture the process of embracing differences, remembering humility and forgiveness as we walk the journey.

Notes

- i Robert A. Chesnut, *Transforming the Mainline Church*. Louisville: Geneva Press (2000:41).
- ii Foster (1997:126)
- iii Foster and Brelsford (1996:11)
- iv See Eric Law's discussion of maintaining dialogue, rather than arguing about who is right and who is wrong., in *The Bush was Blazing but not Consumed*. St. Louis: Chalice Press (1996:23-25).
- v Eric Law, "Mutual Invitation as Mutual Empowerment," (1993:79-88).
- vi Eric Law (1993:115-119).
- vii Eric Law (1993:121-131).
- viii Eric Law (1996:127-134).
- ix Eric Law (1996:135-153).
- x Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, in Anne Leo Ellis (ed.), *First, We Must Listen: Living in a Multicultural Society*. New York: Friendship Press (1996:.22).
- xi Foster (1997:47,68).
- xii Foster (1997:69-70).
- xiii Foster (1997:92).

We are a multicultural community of sojourners, and we welcome each individual into this community as a unique child of God, recognizing each as a steward of a unique expression of God's truth. To be a multicultural Christian community we accept our differences of languages, cultures, and cultural expressions of faith. We seek to be bridge builders:

- *with faith, to trust, give voice, and give ownership in the community to one another;*
- *with hope, to be patient, humble, open, and kind with one another;*
- *with love, to listen intently and communicate carefully with one another.*ⁱ

PARTING WORDS

Journeying into the Vision: Realizing a Multicultural Church

Our understanding of the multicultural journey of congregations is still emerging, and it will expand and grow as more churches engage in the journey. Even so, it is clear that to become a multicultural congregation is not simply another off-the-shelf “program” to be carried out in a certain sequential order. There is no single “right” entrance; there are many points of embarkation on the journey.

Nor is “multicultural” an ideal state of being that we might achieve—very likely, its reality is never to be static. As some pastors have noted, congregations never really “arrive,” because there is always more to be learned and there are always more ways in which to grow. Furthermore, each congregation will be unique, insofar as the cultural groups that comprise a congregation will vary significantly.

One thing is certain, however: *it is impossible to learn how to be a multicultural person within a monocultural setting.* To realize the vision requires the interactive participation of persons of multiple cultures, thus the congregation is the locus of this effort. To become a multicultural congregation is a communal journey of discovery. Stepping outside of our communal comfort zone into the unknown is at best uncomfortable and at worst frightening. Yet God’s messengers tell us not to be afraid, but to hold on to

courage and faithfulness. Yes, God is with us on this journey.

To relinquish our tight grip on our defensive wall, to set aside our inner urgings to defend cultural identities demands humility, repentance, and steadfast prayer. To be willing to trust the “other” as pilgrim and as child of God requires a leap of faith. For most of us, it also requires the support of the community and the interactive engagement with others who are not like ourselves.

Notes

i Mission Statement, Calvary Presbyterian Church

Appendix A: A Word to Presbyteries

Presbyteries have an important role to play in filling the gap for supporting multicultural ministry. Training and education are key to this support, as outlined specifically within this present discussion. Furthermore, the kind of training needed for developing multicultural ministry also carries over to supporting both new immigrant ministries and racial/ethnic ministries. Presbyteries should seriously consider the following types of support:

- Facilitating cross-cultural interaction between and among different “monocultural” congregations within the presbytery
- Assisting congregations in sending representatives to regional and national training events, who will then share their learning within the presbytery
- Providing regional multicultural skills training events annually for congregational leaders, both clergy and lay, from basic training to advanced including anti-racism training, cultural proficiency and communication skills training
- Creating a team of multicultural trainers who would work directly with congregations in the presbytery
- For presbyteries that have high numbers of racial/ethnic/immigrant congregations, adding a staff person whose training and work responsibility focuses on cross-cultural communication and relations, and who would train and oversee a team of multicultural trainers working in the presbytery
- Supporting pastors who are doing creative cross-cultural ministry and providing training for cross-cultural relations within the organization of the presbytery

Appendix B: Reflection Questions and Study Guide

We encourage you to use this booklet together with the video, *Living the Vision: Becoming a Multicultural Church*, for group study and discussion with your congregational leaders. The video can be purchased through the Presbyterian Distribution Service.

To maximize the success of group sessions, leaders and participants are urged to read the booklet ahead of time and bring the booklet to the sessions. Presbyteries and other governing bodies also are encouraged to study the booklet and the video with their outreach and church development committees. These resources can also be used in evangelism/mission and cross-culture seminars and more formal courses of study.

The questions suggested here are for the purpose of initiating discussion. Questions apply to both the video and the booklet. Leaders are encouraged to come up with more questions that stimulate discussion that is relevant to their particular situation.

The video is divided into three segments separated by a pause after each segment to allow time for discussion. For small groups (not more than ten people) we suggest that you pause after each segment and allow at least 20 to 30 minutes for discussion. In larger groups, and especially if time is limited, you may choose to show the whole video without pause, and then divide the audience into small groups for reflection and discussion.

Video, Segment 1:

1. What are some of your thoughts and feelings when you hear the phrase, “multicultural congregation?” Please share your excitement and fear. (Video, segment 1 and the introduction of LTV booklet).
2. Describe pre-human creation and how it is a precursor to God's plan for diversity in Genesis. Describe key moments in Genesis that reveal God's deliberate intentions to send people on a journey of multicultural ministry (LTV booklet, chapter 1)
3. What are your automatic responses to differences, such as food, clothing, language, time and space concept, skin color, etc. (Video, segment 1)

4. How can the contemporary church find its way through the OT portrait of sojourner and the NT portrait of Pentecost? What are some of the ways the Gospel's message can be communicated in a manner that is meaningful in a multicultural congregation? (LTV booklet, Chapter 1)
5. What cultural aspects of your church need to be re-examined with biblical principles? (LTV booklet, chapter 1)
6. What are some ground rules for inclusive communication across cultures? (Video, segment 1 and LTV booklet, chapter 4).
7. What images of leadership do you envision in creating a multicultural church? (Video, segment 1 and LTV booklet chapter 5).

Video, Segment 2:

1. What approaches would you use to help your congregation/Presbytery or denomination become more multicultural? What challenges and opportunities do you anticipate? (Video, segment 2 with LTV booklet, chapter 2)
2. Why is diversity so crucial to the Christian church? (Video, segment 2 and LTV booklet, chapter 2)
3. What are some of the key ingredients for building mutual trust across cultures? (Video, segment 2 with LTV booklet, Chapter 5).
4. What are your denials and resistances both within you and your church in embracing diversity? (LTV booklet, chapter 2)
5. What changes do you need to make to enhance inclusive leadership? (LTV booklet, chapter 3)
6. What are the main sources of conflict in your congregation? How does your congregation deal with conflict? (LTV booklet, chapter3)
7. Has your congregation been a welcoming house of worship to new immigrants? In what ways? (LTV booklet, chapter 3 & 4)

Video, Segment 3:

1. What are some concrete ways we can create multicultural space in our church life together? (Video, segment 3, LTV booklet, chapter 2)
2. What are four important aspects of the “Missional journey” of a multicultural congregation? (Video, segment 3, & LTV booklet, chapter 3)

3. What are the negotiable and non-negotiable values in becoming a multicultural congregation both personally and congregationally? (LTV booklet, chapter 3)
4. What are some specific ways in which you could practice sincere confirmation of members of another culture who are part of your congregation? (Video, segment 3, with LTV booklet, chapter 3).
5. In what ways do you communicate that may be misinterpreted by persons of another culture different from your own? (LTV booklet, chapter 4).
6. In what specific ways does your congregation need to change in order to create a culture of inclusion? (LTV booklet, chapter 4)
7. At what point in the journey is your congregation in regards to multicultural ministry?

If you have just decided to become a multicultural congregation, please, know that you are not alone, we are here to serve and accompany you in this journey. You may also choose to have your congregation listed along with our list of growing multicultural congregations in our PCUSA. Please, visit our network website at www.presbyterianmulticulturalchurch.net or call us at 888-727-7228, ext. 5252 and/or 5233. If you are already a multicultural church we urge you to become a mentor to others. Please, call us if you would like to share your story and your gifts.

Appendix C: Selected Readings, References and Media Resources

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Selected Videos for Denial Stage

Land of O's: available from www.goodmeasure.com

P.O. Box 381609, Cambridge, MA 02238-1609, (617) 868-8662, Fax: (617)-576-7671

A Peacock in the Land of Penguins: Available from CRM Films, 2215 Faraday Ave., Carlsbad, CA 92008, 1-800-421-0833.

Rainbow War: Available from Pyramid Films, P.O. Box 1048, Santa Monica, CA 90406, (310) 828-7577.

A Tale of "O": Available from Goodmeasure.

Selected Videos for Ethnorelative Stages

Black & White in America: Nightline/ABC News and distributed by Films for the Humanities and sciences, P.O. Box 2053, Princeton, NJ 08543-2053, Phone: (800) 257-5126.

Color Adjustment: Available from PBS, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314, Phone: (800) 344-3337.

Cultural/Racial Identity Development: Available from Microtraining Associates, P.O. Box 641, North Amherst, MA 01059-9641, Phone: (413)

549-2630.

Managing Diversity: Available from CRM Films, 2215 Faraday Ave., Carlsbad, CA 92008, Phone: (800) 421-0833.

True Colors: Available from CorVision 1359 Barclay Blvd., Buffalo Grove, IL 60089, Phone: (847) 537-3100.

Website Resources on Diversity

www.kcmetro.cc.mo.us/diversity/one.htm:

www.intercultural.org

www.presbyterianmulticulturalchurch.net

www.pcusa.org/evangelism/churchdevelopment/ercd.htm.

For further information, please call the office of Evangelism and Racial/Cultural Diversity toll free 1-888-728-7228 Ext. 5252 or 5233 or e-mail us at rgirgis@ctr.pcusa.org or ddages@ctr.pcusa.org

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Living the Vision series

There is a hunger for information on evangelism and church growth. *Living the Vision* is a series of booklets produced by the Evangelism and Witness (EW) Goal Area of the National Ministries Division, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This booklet and other new resources will help the denomination with information to meet the challenge of reaching the unchurched and minister to many different racial and ethnic groups in the next millennium. The series is part of our implementation of *A Vision for Church Growth in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, adopted by the 211th General Assembly (1999). For more details about this series contact EW at (502) 569-5227, or by e-mail ecd@ctr.pcusa.org.



National
Ministries Division
Evangelism
and Witness