

MANY VOICES, ONE PEOPLE, ONE MISSION

A Call to Increased Understanding and Appreciation of Our Diversity

The Intercultural Ministries Initiative is a resource designed to encourage and develop Christ-centered, culturally competent ministry and mission in a diverse world by increasing the capacity of American Baptists to accept and embrace our gift of diversity. We seek to facilitate the movement of American Baptists from and beyond an understanding of diversity as a representative process to a missional motivation which anticipates and encourages the full participation and sharing of all.

We recognize and acknowledge that the world is splintered along the lines of age, ethnicity, social class, culture, gender, and language. We take seriously God's call to unity and believe that God calls us to embrace our rich intercultural reality. By doing this, we gain understanding, respect, and appreciation of the integrity and uniqueness of all groups of people. Furthermore, the ministry of Christ and the church is enriched when the contributions of all are engaged in the mission of the Kingdom of God.

We can find this focus and unity only in Christ. We are proud of the rich heritage that American Baptists have in the area of cultural understanding and the intentional representation of a myriad of voices in our ministries. We also know that we need to continue to move forward, toward a more complete understanding of what happens at interpersonal levels in groups, teams, and congregations when cultural differences are brought together in mission and ministry.

This ministry is synergistic, missional, and transformational because we encourage American Baptists to relate to one another as sisters and brothers in Christ. National Ministries is seeking to build bridges of understanding that engage in effective mission and ministry in today's society.

Ethnic Breakdown in the ABCUSA

	<i>Population</i>		<i>Congregations</i>	
African American	46.86 %	(651,122)	21.49 %	(1,211)
American Native	.12 %	(1,716)	.55 %	(31)
Asian-Pacific	.79 %	(10,962)	1.76 %	(99)
Hispanic	2.98 %	(41,464)	6.99 %	(394)
Haitian	.43 %	(5,922)	1.05 %	(59)
Multi-Racial	2.44 %	(33,927)	3.57 %	(201)
Euro-American	45.86 %	(637,284)	62.34 %	(3,513)
Other	.51 %	(7,107)	1.92 %	(108)

The mission of the NM Intercultural Ministries Initiative is to encourage and develop Christ-centered, culturally competent leadership for a diverse and changing world:

- Leaders who reflect theologically on issues of culture in order to build bridges of intercultural mission and understanding.
- Leaders who are comfortable and fluent in the cultural values, life perspectives, and patterns of others.
- Leaders who can readily adapt to change and cultural influences.
- Leaders who are aware of the changing socio, economic, and political realities impacting the lives of individuals and the larger society.
- Advocate leaders who are able to address the issues that confront diverse congregations and communities.

RACE IN AMERICA

Race still matters in America and, in many ways, we remain splintered along the lines of race. While it can be difficult, dialoguing about racial issues can serve to lessen racial fears and promote racial harmony. Many denominations have already engaged in dialogues about race in America today. American Baptists can seize the moment and advance the cause of Christ through a focus on conversations directed towards racial reconciliation.

Questions for Consideration:

- What are our hopes regarding conversations about race?
- What are our fears regarding conversations about race?
- How can we prepare ourselves to face the fears and pain that may be associated with this issue?
- Who should be included in these types of discussions?
- What tools do we need to better equip ourselves for race-related conversations?
- How readily does our church adapt to change?
- What do we understand about conflict transformation?
- What resources and tools do we have to better equip us to handle conflict transformation?
- How do we understand racial reconciliation?
- How can the Bible assist us in these types of discussions? See Psalm 85:10: Truth and mercy have met together and justice kissed peace. Reconciliation must address these components. Without justice the brokenness continues to fester. There can be no reconciliation without transformation!

Resources:

Resources available fall 2008

MULTI-ETHNIC CONGREGATIONS

For a myriad of reasons, such as the vision for future ministry in the church and demographic shifts in society, multi-ethnic congregations are becoming more of a reality. The movement to multi-ethnic worship is appropriate for some congregations, but not all. Congregations that are wondering about whether the move to a multi-ethnic form of worship is appropriate for them would do well to engage in some level of internal conversation.

Questions for Consideration:

- How do we understand pluralism, diversity, and multi-ethnicity?
- What diversity currently exists within the church?
- How readily does our church adapt to change?
- Why are we seeking to become a multi-ethnic church?
- What do we understand about conflict transformation?
- What resources and tools do we have to better equip us to handle conflict transformation?
- Is the community in which my church is located experiencing demographic shifts of any kind?
- Is our church open to cultures other than the one which is currently predominating?
- What changes might we anticipate by inviting others into our worship experience?
- How can we begin to determine if we are ready for those changes?
- What do we gain by these types of change?
- What do we lose?

Resources:

Resources available winter 2008

IMMIGRATION

Each year the United States is infused with newcomers who are viewed as a blessing by some and a curse by others. The experiences of immigrant peoples vary greatly as does the impact they are having on the landscape of this county. Over the past few years the increase in the number of immigrants to the country has had a significant impact on the communities and congregations of the ABCUSA.

Questions for Consideration:

- How has immigration impacted church leadership and community roles?
- How have the neighborhoods where churches are located and where the congregants live been impacted?
- Are we aware of any sociological and economic implications that have resulted from immigration matters?
- Are we aware of any legal implications associated with immigration?
- What opportunities exist for advocacy in the area of immigration?
- What challenges exist?
- How does the ABCUSA respond to issues of immigration?

Resources:

Resources available winter 2008

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

For more than 45 years American Baptist congregations have been resettling refugees, one family at a time. In that time more than 98,000 refugees have been resettled due to the efforts of American Baptists. With assistance from affiliate offices of the resettlement agency and/or local churches, refugees are able to gain access to resources in the community. However, there is an ongoing need for advocacy efforts on behalf of refugees in domestic and global arenas. Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program provides some of this advocacy along with other resettlement agencies and the various denominations.

Questions for Consideration:

- How aware are we of refugees?
- Are churches aware of the need for refugee resettlement within their communities?
- How equipped are our churches to respond to the needs of refugees within our churches and communities?
- Who are the refugees? Do we know that today refugees are coming to the USA (and our communities and churches) from Burma, Dabar, Somali, Haiti, Serbia, and Iraq?
- Do our churches know that in the first five months of 2008 ABCUSA churches and congregations sponsored refugees from 11 different countries and that the largest number arrived from Burma?

Resources:

Resources available spring 2009

LEADING THE WAY TO FULL ENGAGEMENT

We applaud the extraordinary efforts that have been and continue to be made throughout the ABCUSA to insure that representation is a part of our rich heritage in the area of diversity. We also acknowledge that many voices struggle to be heard and that some express a desire for more meaningful participation. Because ministry in a denomination as richly diverse as the ABCUSA is a multi-faceted experience, achieving the full rewards associated with this gift requires leadership that is wise, patient, and tenacious.

Questions for Consideration:

- Are we fully recognizing the many cultures and leaders and their gifts, styles, talents, and competencies that are a part of the ABCUSA?
- What evidence do we have to support our response?
- What can be done to improve our reality in this area?
- How easy or difficult is it for others to interact and provide leadership in our ministries?
 - For example, would bi-vocational pastors find it difficult to participate in the life of the denomination?
 - Given that a vast majority of bi-vocational pastors are ethnic pastors, what might that mean in terms of our decision-making processes?
- What do we do to ensure that everyone who is seated at decision-making tables experiences a sense of being heard?
- How might we increase our sensitivity in ways that will help us to hear others and empathize with their perspectives?
- Have we fully examined the ways in which access to decision-making tables are impacting ethnic, generational, and special needs groups?
- Do we perceive the cultural diversity of the ABCUSA as a gift or something else?
- Why do we believe that God has given ABCUSA this gift of diversity?

Resources:

Resources available spring 2009

INTERCULTURAL MINISTRIES RESOURCES

Books

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- *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993.
- *The Word at the Crossings: Preaching and Teaching in a Multicontextual Community*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2003.
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Organizational Resources

The Grove Consultants International

1000 O'Reilly Avenue; San Francisco, CA 94129; 415-561-2500; 415-561-2525 FAX

www.grove.com

Visions, Inc: Training and Consultancy in Multiculturalism

www.visions-inc.org/vis-who.htm

The Implicit Association Test for Detecting Hidden Bias

www.implicit.harvard.edu

Damascus Road Anti-Racism Process (Workshops and Resources)

www.mcc.org/damascusroad/workshops/

Indicators of Institutional Racism Sexism and Classism: Some Suggested Responses, from the Inclusiveness and Justice Standing Committee of the National Council the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

www.nccusa.org

National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

www.nnirr.org

Bureau of Migration and Refugee Assistance

www.state.gov/g/prm/

Church World Service

475 Riverside Drive, Suite 700, New York, NY 10115-0050, USA

www.churchworldservice.org

Institute for the Study of Asian American Christianity

Dr. Timothy Tseng, President & Executive Director; Adjunct Professor, University of San Francisco; 510-962-5584

Dr. James Chuck, Senior consultant

www.isaacweb.org

Judson Press
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