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ABSTRACT

PROMOTING CROSS-CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT
AMONG THE PASTORS IN THE GREATER
NEW YORK CONFERENCE

by

Oriel Thomas

Adviser: Alanzo Smith

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Document

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: PROMOTING CROSS-CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT AMONG
THE PASTORS IN THE GREATER NEW YORK CONFERENCE

Name of researcher: Oriel Thomas

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Alanzo Smith, PhD, DMin

Date completed: March 2014

Problem

Cultural diversity in the Greater New York Conference has created frequent conflicts among pastors and workers. Examples of the types of circumstances engendering conflict may be seen in the following: (a) Lack of cross-cultural evangelism. An outstanding evangelist of one ethnic group does not have the opportunity to do evangelism with another ethnic group. (b) Lack of adequate representation for all ethnic groups. In choosing speakers for camp meeting, seminar presenters for workers' meetings, or job placements, there is sometimes inadequate representation of all the ethnic groups which may cause disharmony and disunity among the workers and members. (c) Lack of social and cultural programs among pastors of different ethnic

groups. Pastors generally meet at workers' meetings and joint camp meetings, but during this time, interaction between pastors of various groups is minimal. (d) Lack of pulpit exchange preaching. Pastors preach within their own ethnic group, but only on rare occasions will someone cross into another sector to preach. (e) Lack of evangelism funds for areas of greatest need. Evangelism funds are distributed proportionately to the ethnic groups. This distribution plan fails to provide sufficient funds for areas of greatest need. Examples of conflict (c) and (d) will be the focus of this project because the other three examples are beyond the jurisdiction of the local pastor.

Method

A selection of pastors (N=7) from the conference formed a core group of participants who took part in an experimental model of cultural integration to gather information for cultural diversity resolution. Through a string of six social monthly gatherings and a pulpit exchange preaching assignment at the Crossroads SDA Church, the participants interacted with each other and the church members, and gained a deeper understanding and appreciation for cultural diversity. Themes were drawn from the pastors' journal reflections to explore the effect of the experiment on cultural diversity conflict among the pastors in the conference.

Results

Five of the seven pastors completed all the required activities of the project, while the other two fulfilled 80%. An average of more than 85% completion suggested a high level of interest among the pastors in cultural diversity. However, one out of the five major groups was not represented in the sample of individuals that may have biased the

findings. Nevertheless, from the data collected, it is evident that the pastors benefitted from the study. The study also provided suggestions that can nurture stronger and broader intercultural relationships.

Conclusions

Notwithstanding the limitations and apparent biases inherent in this study, promoting cross-cultural engagement among the pastors in the Greater New York Conference demonstrated a spirit of togetherness that can reduce cultural diversity conflict. The practical lessons gained by the participants and the researcher of this study authenticate the fact that this project needs further reflection and implementation with an inclusive sample of the pastoral sectors. In addition, the social gatherings should be more frequent in order to deepen impression, and increase the possibility for pastoral diversity togetherness.

Reducing cultural diversity conflict among pastors in the conference demands relentless effort and time in order for the pastors to make adjustments in their perceptions and behaviors to have cultural flexibility. Consequently, the intervention described in this study can serve as an encouragement to the pastors, assuring them that they have additional resources to assist them in their quest for pastoral unity.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

PROMOTING CROSS-CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT
AMONG THE PASTORS IN THE GREATER
NEW YORK CONFERENCE

A Project Document
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Oriel Thomas
March 2014

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AMONG THE PASTORS IN THE GREATER
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Oriel Thomas

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Personal History	1
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Statement of the Task.....	5
Justification for the Project	6
Description of the Project Document Process	6
Expectations From This Project.....	7
Limitations of the Project.....	8
Delimitations of Study	8
Definition of Terms.....	9
2. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION	12
Introduction.....	12
Decision Making: A Theological Reflection of Acts 15:1-29	13
Unity in Diversity: A Theological Reflection of Gen 11:1-9	19
Addressing Community Negligence: A Theological Reflection of Acts 6:1-7.....	23
Embracing the Vision: A Theological Reflection of Neh 1:1-7	28
Peace-building: A Theological Reflection of Ezek 11:19, 20	33
Conclusion	37
3. LITERATURE REVIEW: ADDRESSING MULTICULTURAL DIVERSITY	38
Introduction.....	38
The Challenges of Multicultural Diversity in the Atlantic Union Conference	38
Sociological and Psychological Dynamics of Change.....	40
The Dynamics of Communication	50

The Dynamics of Trust	52
The Dynamics of Respect	53
Cultural Symbols and Interpretation	54
Culture Conscience	56
The Need for Cultural Competency	60
Cross-cultural Pulpit Exchange Preaching.....	62
Conclusion	64
4. METHODOLOGY FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT	66
Introduction.....	66
Cultural Profile of Greater New York Conference	66
Cross-cultural Engagement Opportunities	72
Research Design.....	73
Monthly Social Gathering.....	74
Pulpit Exchange Preaching	74
Research Method	74
Participation Criteria.....	75
Sampling Frame	75
Measuring Instrument	76
Journal Reflections.....	76
The Evaluating Process.....	76
Theological Reflection and Literature Review Perspectives	77
Theological Perspective	77
Literature Review Perspective	79
Narrative of Intervention.....	82
Arrangement for Monthly Social Gathering.....	83
Arrangement for Pulpit Exchange Preaching	83
Two-Pronged Approach.....	84
Fellowship Lunch.....	85
The Seven Preachers	85
Concluding Elements	86
Conclusion	87
5. PROJECT ASSESSMENT	89
Introduction.....	89
Profile of Participants	89
Observation	90
Monthly Social Gathering Observation	92
Pulpit Exchange Preaching Observation.....	94
Highlights of Journal Reflections	94
Formulated Themes	96
Cross-cultural Capacity Improvement	97
Identified Barriers Removal.....	98
Pastors' Professional Growth.....	99

Culturally Diverse Church	101
Interpretation of Reflections	105
Analytical Considerations	106
Conclusion	110
6. SUMMARY	111
Conclusion	113
Recommendations	115
Appendix	
PASTORS' JOURNAL REFLECTION	118
REFERENCE LIST	123
VITAE.....	132

LIST OF TABLES

1. Membership vs. Average Contribution per Person.....	69
2. Tithe and Membership by Sector	70

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Deut	Deuteronomy
Ezek	Ezekiel
GA	Georgia
Gen	Genesis
GNYC	Greater New York Conference
Isa	Isaiah
Heb	Hebrews
Jer	Jeremiah
Lev	Leviticus
Matt	Matthew
MPh	Masters of Public health
Neh	Nehemiah
NY	New York
Ps	Psalms
Phil	Philippians
Vol	Volume

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Cultural diversity is perhaps one of the world's most rapidly growing phenomena in the 21st century and, undoubtedly, aided and abetted in its evolutionary process by technological advances and travel. With this ever-advancing diversity also comes a growing need for some form of intervention in the global village, including the Greater New York Conference (GNYC) that would keep culture and diversity in proper perspective. Cross-cultural engagement may help to address this. Without question, cultural diversity is an age-old question that has always challenged community dwellers everywhere. Cultural diversity has been a concern for the researcher for many years as he grew up in a community comprised of two distinct ethnic groups that lived culturally different lives that were in some instances admirable, and at other times, undesirable.

Personal History

I grew up in the ethnically divided twin Island state of Trinidad and Tobago where race dominated practically every aspect of one's life, especially in the areas of politics, religion, and wealth. The majority group (Africans) held sway over the electorate and consequently, they controlled the government, whereas the minority group (East Indians) automatically got possession of the wealth of the state as a balance of power. As an African, I felt proud to belong to the majority group; however, I craved the

independence and flexibility enjoyed by the minority group due to their financial viability. There were times when these cultures crossed paths and the experience was exhilarating. For example, at Christmas which is a Christian holiday, Hindus celebrated it more lavishly than the Christians. At other times, as in an intermarriage or religion change, the result was hostility that seems to distance the two groups for long periods of time until some other occurrence provide the opportunity for another round of temporary co-existence.

Simply put I was nurtured in an environment where cohesion and separatism constantly collided with each other. Consciously or unconsciously, we learned to appreciate different foods, tolerate hearing another tongue and music that we had extreme difficulty making sense of, and yet, there was that symbiotic unspoken something that suggested that we needed each other. The community portrayed an atmosphere of friend today and foe tomorrow, which were too complex at the time for me to grapple with, and therefore I obviously simply went along with the flow.

I joined the Adventist faith in 1968 only to discover even more cultural issues. For example, at the conference office, 100% of the staff were Africans and 99% of the pastors were African, even though the general membership constituted about 25% East Indians and other ethnicities. Strangely enough, everyone was welcomed and no one seemed to challenge the structure. The same held true for the London Baptist church which I had attended previously—the pastor was always foreign and white. This was not the case within the Indian community; their Pundit or Imam was of the same descent and local. These different scenarios compounded my cultural conundrum just about the time I was grappling with my socioeconomic plight.

I started college at Caribbean Union College in 1975, being the first of my father's family and the second of my mother's family to make this academic ascent. As a self-supporting student, I found financial freedom in the colporteur ministry. I spent two summers in Canada canvassing in a culture that I had to relate to in order to succeed as a literature evangelist. Working in Canada reminded me of the white English pastor of the Baptist church in my community and how he must have felt. I recalled while canvassing someone said to me, "Once upon a time we brought the gospel to you and now you are bringing the gospel to us." Those words gave me a sense of importance in spite of the cultural barriers encountered while canvassing there.

I joined the South Caribbean Conference pastorate in 1979 and began shaping my ministry by taking a cross-cultural approach in targeting communities with diverse cultures, thus resuscitating my previous interest which I suppressed because of my priorities. Following the counsel of White (1900) that health should be used as an entering wedge for ministry, I pursued a Master's degree in Public Health (MPH). With this degree coupled with my canvassing experience, I hoped to increase the effectiveness of my ministry among the different ethnic groups within the conference. This dream, however, never materialized because I migrated to the United States.

My family and I relocated to America in 1988 before I had the opportunity to complete the MPH degree and work with it. Upon entering the United States, I served as an itinerant preacher, both locally and internationally. In my preaching abroad, I had to face constant cultural challenges. Sometimes I think I did very well, whereas other times, I barely survived. Nevertheless, my urge for this form of engagement never dissipated. I also did 72 hours of continued education in trauma and awareness and peace building at

the Mennonite University in West Virginia about cultural diversity. I took the time to understand a bit about the culture of law and order by serving in the 47th precinct in the Bronx as a member of the auxiliary police for fifteen years.

Becoming an employee of the GNYC in 1994 exposed me to a bitter cultural diversity conflict in both the constituency, as well as the pastorate that paralyzes the work force even today. During constituency meetings, the conflict rose to a level that left the spirituality of the members in question. This exposure led me to believe that I needed some authoritative reference point from which to aid others, especially pastors, to harness cultural diversity to benefit the ministry. I grasped the opportunity to do this project for self-satisfaction, to contribute something to the cross-culturally minded folks, to motivate my sons to keep climbing the academic ladder, to encourage those of my father and mother's family to be ambitious regardless of their age or economic plight. Fourteen years ago, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer, which changed my life dramatically. Being involved with this project offered me a measure of tranquility while battling the disease. In addition, I was motivated to complete this project as an academic achievement arising from my development and growth within this conference.

I am motivated to complete this project because of the prospect of using the information to benefit the GNYC and other ethnic conferences both nationally and internationally.

Statement of the Problem

Cultural diversity in the Greater New York Conference has created frequent conflicts among pastors and workers. Examples of the types of circumstances engendering conflict may be seen in the following: (a) Lack of cross-cultural evangelism.

An outstanding evangelist of one ethnic group does not have the opportunity to do evangelism with another ethnic group. (b) Lack of adequate representation for all ethnic groups. In choosing speakers for camp meeting, seminar presenters for workers' meetings, or job placements, there is sometimes inadequate representation of all the ethnic groups, which may cause disharmony and disunity among the workers and members. (c) Lack of social and cultural programs among pastors of different ethnic groups. Pastors generally meet at workers' meetings and joint camp meetings, but during this time, interaction between pastors of various ethnic groups is minimal. (d) Lack of pulpit exchange preaching. Pastors preach within their own ethnic group, but only on very rare occasions will someone cross into another sector to preach. (e) Lack of evangelism funds for areas of greatest need. Evangelism funds are distributed proportionately to the ethnic groups. This distribution plan fails to provide sufficient funds for areas of greatest need. Examples of conflict (c) and (d) will be the focus of this project because the other three examples are beyond the jurisdiction of the local pastor.

Statement of the Task

This study formed and piloted programs at the Crossroads Seventh Day Adventist Church to encourage cross-cultural engagement among pastors using a seminar at the GNYC to set the stage, and recruit participants. The intention was to reduce cultural conflicts among the clergy by heightening appreciation of cultural diversity. The programs will be evaluated and the results will be recorded, reported, and used for future expansion.

Justification for the Project

During the last 25 years, the Greater New York Conference has been experiencing a multicultural diversification that sometimes affects harmonious relationships. The growth of the ministry is sometimes negatively affected because some ministers are preoccupied with cultural conflicts. Due to this apparent ethnic “divide,” precious resources are sometimes wasted in duplicated ministries. The situation is also contributing to ministry distraction at a time when the constituents need to be focusing on the mission of the conference to proclaim the good news of salvation.

The ratio of the non-churched to the churched within the Greater New York Conference is increasing, compounding the need for a united mission in ministry. The existence of cross-cultural and social programs among ethnic ministers will foster greater harmony. In addition, exchange preaching among cultural groups will enhance greater togetherness, cause less mistrust, and result in more collegiality.

Description of the Project Document Process

Theological reflection focused on the theme of God’s cultural diversity in areas of decision-making, unity in diversity, addressing community negligence, embracing the vision, and peace-building. Special attention was given to biblical passages in Acts 15:1-29; 6:1-7; Gen 11:19; Neh 1:1-7, and Exod 11:19-20 in an attempt to understand God’s cultural diversity in the areas mentioned and the principles that applied to the situation being studied. This chapter concluded with a theological admonishment that pastors should work in the interest of the common good of the ministry of the conference. Current literature dealing with cultural diversity and pulpit exchange was examined, and

resources from the Atlantic Union Conference of SDA concerning pastors' cultural diversity issues were considered.

Demographic data and related information about the pastors in the conference were obtained from the conference archive and notes were generated during the monthly social gatherings to establish profiles in the study.

Each participant wrote a journal reflection to measure the effect of cultural diversity conflict. Information gathered from these journal reflections was evaluated and the responses recorded for further studies. Recommendations were made that this project model of promoting cross-cultural engagement among the pastors be given greater study by the GNYC and the Atlantic Union Conference and that additional research be done.

Expectations From This Project

It is hoped that this project will help to strengthen the vision and structure of the Greater New York Conference. It seeks to encourage pastors to embrace unity in diversity. Furthermore, it is intended that the results of this project will give insights in developing greater harmonious relationships among pastors by reducing cultural conflicts.

It is also expected that this project will help to increase the effectiveness of human resources in the conference and possibly avoid duplicity of ministries. I further envision that this project will enhance my leadership skills and broaden my understanding in cross-cultural communication.

Limitations of the Project

This study has some limitations. First, all participants were volunteers; therefore, the quality of their contribution was limited by their availability and willingness to

participate. Further, as a result of the voluntary nature of the sample, sectoral representation was uncontrollable. The scope and durability of this study may be limited due to the dynamic-evolving nature of culture and its many variables (Saxena, 2010). Thus, this participant pool makes it unlikely that all potential views of the pastoral groups have been captured. Indeed, data derived from this small participant pool, while adequate for the population in question, is definitively insufficient for the general community of pastors of other religious persuasions. In addition, this study focused mainly on ethno-culturality.

Delimitations of Study

Caution should be exercised in generalizing the results of this study across all cultural diversity groups. For example, other culturally diverse groups or institutions may have varying working policies or job descriptions that dictate behaviors based on those circumstances. However, this study may be of interest to culturally diverse groups or organizations seeking intercultural engagement, especially ethno-culturality as a path to community integration.

This study was pastor-focused, as opposed to being member-focused, hence the sourcing of the participants for the experiment. While this focus may enhance the interpretation of data, it may also limit the project's applicability to other organizations. It is worthy to note that lack of feasibility to investigate some topics formed the basis for the exclusion in this study since certain issues were too complicated to deal with in this pilot project or were not relevant to the present study.

Definition of Terms

The terms contained in this section will be used interchangeably throughout this document. To provide the reader with a better understanding of how these terms have been applied and construed in the context of cross-cultural sense, definitions are in order.

Cross-cultural: Generally used to describe comparative studies of cultures; used interchangeably with intercultural.

Babelites: The people who dwelt on the plains and were involved in some way with the tower of Babel.

Culture: For the purpose of this study: the set of attitudes, ideas, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different from each individual, communicated from one generation to the next (Matsumoto, 1996, p. 17).

Cultural Flexibility: The propensity to relate in other environments while maintaining one's cultural ties

Community of Inquiry Theoretical Framework: The development of the elements of cognitive, social, and teaching presence; a learning experience.

Cognitive Presence: "The extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection and discourse" (Garrison, Akyol, & Archer, 2011).

Community of Inquiry: In the context of this study: a group of persons who cooperatively engage in intentional critical discussion and reflection to develop personal meaning and affirm understanding (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001).

Multiculturalism: "...multicultural personhood begins at birth and continues throughout development, reflecting idiosyncratic conditions and experiences and those related to group memberships" (Lott, 2010, p. 51).

Social Presence: "The ability of participants to identify with the community (e.g., course of study), communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop inter-personal relationships by way of projecting their individual personalities" (Garrison, Akyol, & Archer, 2011).

Teaching Presence: "The design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes" (Garrison, Akyol, & Archer, 2011).

Unicity: Being united as a whole.

Cross-cultural: The interaction of pastors with different ethnic background within the conference.

Cultural Diversity: The variety and differences that exist in the culture of the conference.

Multiethnic: One of the groups in the conference consisting of a combination of languages, and ethnic groups including the Caucasians.

Koreans: Made up of churches in the GNYC whose primary language is Korean and its dialects.

English: Comprises members in the GNYC whose primary language is English.

French (Franco Haitian): Comprises churches whose members in the GNYC speak primarily French and its dialects.

Hispanic (Spanish): Constitutes churches in the GNYC whose first language is Spanish or Portuguese and its dialects.

Caucasian: Those members in the GNYC commonly called whites with light complexion and mainly of European descent.

Ethnic: A group of people sharing a similar custom, language, and culture.

Clergy: A person with a college degree and some formal training in ministry employed GNYC to serve as spiritual leader in the school system, church district, or conference office.

Pastor: A person with a college degree and some formal training in ministry employed by the GNYC to serve as spiritual leader in the school system, church district, or conference office.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Introduction

The evolving of cultural diversity in the Greater New York Conference for the past ten to twenty years has been a constant challenge to its operational framework. A side effect of this evolution is conflict among the clergy. Because of this conflict, some ethnic groups contend with each other for administration and departmental positions. Some churches demand ethnic pastoral placement even at the expense of more qualified and experienced workers, while others have placement thrust upon them.

The GNYC attempted to address the conflict by introducing sectorial and proportional representation. However, the conflict remains. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the reason or reasons as to why these attempts have not succeeded completely and to explore a theological and cultural prospective that might better promote cross-cultural engagement among the pastors of the conference.

For the purpose of this study, the following themes will be developed: Decision-making, unity in diversity, addressing community negligence, embracing the vision, and peace-building.

It is hoped that through a reflection on the above themes, ideas may emerge that can be beneficial to the pastors in the conference as they seek to fulfill their responsibilities in this constantly evolving environment of cultural diversity.

Decision Making: A Theological Reflection on Acts 15:1-29

Decision-making is one of those life activities that determine one's destiny and the failure or success of governments, organizations, and societies, just to name a few. Decision-making ranges from simple to complex and from favorable to unfavorable, depending on the circumstance. In the GNYC, decision-making is one area of pastoral conflict that is extremely challenging because of its multicultural dynamics that appear to be growing in complexity. Acts 15:1-29 grants us the opportunity of a theological reflection that deals with decision-making in the interest of cultural diversity.

As we consider the role Judaism played in the mission to the Gentiles, we find the Jerusalem council, which consisted of the apostles, elders, and the community figuring prominently in the nescient stage of the early church. James' speech and the use that was made of the Old Testament as a vehicle of the divine showed largely how the believers were able to arrive at a decision regarding a cultural impasse between two distinct groups of widows. Some authors take the position that Luke believed that the reception of the Gentiles as well as the mission to the Gentiles was the result of the Jewish rejection of the Gospel (Ludemann, 2005; Thompson, 2008). On the other hand, there are those who are of the opinion that the partial acceptance by the Jews of the gospel led to the mission to the Gentiles (Talbert, 1994).

In his assessment of the conflict in Acts stemming from the neglect of the widows, Finger observed that "When poor people study the bible... they have different ways of looking at it than do middle class people for whom economics survival is not in question. Issues of power, faith, and money come together in different ways" (2007, p. 8). What Finger (2007) said about power, faith, and money applies to cultural diversity. The

narrative of Acts 15 shows how God, according to Peterson, “guided the debate and the decision making process, protecting the church from error and division, and allowing the respective mission of Jews and Gentiles to flourish separately in harmony together” (2009, p. 442). This kind of engagement of guarding against error, division, and encouragement of diversity, if applied, may help to reduce the inertia of ministry in the conference. The leaders recounted the intervention of God for salvific purposes, the fulfilling of the Scriptures, and the need to solve the problem presented by the Judaizers (Peterson, 2009).

The conflict and debate presented in the narrative by Luke are not to be viewed as distractions, but as important and necessary elements in the process of determining what the will of God is in the particular circumstance. In this case, the conflict gave the leaders eyes and ears to discern the fundamental principles of identity in the community. The presentation of events by Luke suggests that the task of the church is not to dictate God’s action, but to discern it, not to close the Scriptures to future interpretation, but to open them (Peterson, 2009). The meeting was not unity at all costs, but rather the focus of mission. Drawing from the previous happenings of Acts 2:4, the ideals of life, together with the prevailing conflict, allowed them to provide a model for making decisions, which included drawing upon the people’s faith.

Looking at the historical nature of the episode, it is observed that the action began in Antioch after the arrival of men from Judea and ended with the departure of the New Judean envoy taking the proposition of the conflict concerning the Gentiles and their mission that was debated at the Jerusalem meeting. At the meeting, the discussion appeared to focus on decision-making (vv. 9-14) and concluded with a

resolution preceding James's proposal which was then sent to the Gentiles for ratification.

The issue discussed dealt with the Jewish group's fundamental demands on Gentile converts. Members of the Jerusalem community attempted to formulate a missionary policy, which provoked serious opposition from the Gentiles. The group was comprised largely of unauthorized Palestinian teachers with a different mindset concerning the inclusion of foreigners into the community of believers. Their idea appeared foreign to the Gentile believers and consequently, they met fierce resistance in the form of considerable dissension and debate (Peterson, 2009).

Luke focuses on the functional significance of the debate. Talbert wrote, "He directs attention to the speeches of Peter and James which are more closely allied to the resolution dear to the discussion of the issue" (1994, p. 195). Peter's speech was related to the Cornelius episode, Gentiles conversion, and their admission into the Christian community. James' speech centered on Judaism and the mission to the Gentiles. How are the Pharisees' demands met and the Mosaic Law justified while at the same time maintaining non-interference with the divine plan of God? It is to be noted that the mission was not to be an extension of Judaism, but rather, the implementation of a gospel that was to be cross-cultural, a sort of re-structured Israel with God as the builder.

From the discussion at Jerusalem, it is clear that the Gentiles' mission was in no way to be free of the law, and therefore, the supernatural intervention that occurred among them was simply a means of expressing the divine purpose in a cross-cultural atmosphere. James quoted Amos 9:11-12 to support this argument. Concerning the appeal by the Pharisees to the Law of Moses, James invoked the regulations for resident aliens in Lev 19:18: they were not to abolish the law, but to present it for further

interpretation that would bring together, not separate the believers regardless of ethnicity. Talbert (1994) makes the point that the Law of Moses continued to be valid for Jews as Jews, but not for Gentiles as Gentiles. His argument is good counsel for the pastoral conflict in the Greater New York Conference. In our decision-making process, cultural diversification should enhance mission growth, while at the same time supporting cultural identity.

From Peterson's argument, Luke appears to have recorded this event to show the amazing way in which God worked to bring a sense of purpose for the cross-cultural engagement and agreement to a potentially disastrous situation in the early church (Peterson, 2009). Without pressing the issue, Peterson refines Talbert's submission by stating, "The guidance given allowed the respective mission to Jews and Gentiles to flourish separately, but in harmony together." He continues his argument by declaring, "Luke uses the Apostles statement to shape a new definition of the people of God as one based on messianic faith rather than ethnic origin or ritual observance" (Peterson 2009, pp. 442, 443). The decision-making process at the Conference office, if guided by this principle of messianic faith, will bring more togetherness among the pastors.

In view of this argument, the Gospel of salvation by faith is the key to defining the true nature of the church which involves both Jews and Gentiles (Peterson, 2009). Borrowing words from John Knox, Peterson wrote, "Salvation without circumcision is a victory of the truth confirming the gospel of grace, and victory of love in preserving the fellowship by sensitive concessions to conscientious Jewish scripture" (2009, p. 446). There must certainly be a preservation of the pastoral fellowship; therefore, everyone involved in decision-making would need to be endowed with sensitivity to cultural

diversity in order to reduce and not encourage the cultural conflict among themselves.

Looking again at the passage, it is evident that the conflict jumped out immediately from the opening verses of the narrative: Judean Christians were contending that the Gentiles could not be saved unless they were first circumcised. To this end, as promoters of cross-cultural engagement, Paul and Barnabas sponsored a debate concerning the matter. Gallagher and Hertig observed that, “The Pharisees demanded that Gentiles should be ordered to keep the Law of Moses” (2004, p. 200-1). By that, they meant the ritual, the law of circumcision and abstinence from certain foods, not the moral law, which all were required to obey. The question therefore was whether Gentile converts had to become Jewish proselytes in order to be saved. To answer the question meant the automatic inducement of a second conflict that demanded further resolution. If Gentile Christians did not have to keep Jewish laws of purity particularly those surrounding food, how could Jewish believers enjoy table fellowship with Gentiles? The issue could only be resolved scripturally and James made sure that happened by reframing such texts as Zech 2: 11 “Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord on that day and shall be my people.” Other references are, (Deut 26:18-19; 32:8-9 and Ps 135:4). Quoting the words of Amos 9:11-12 James reminded the believers that, “In the last days however, the nations will be incorporated with Israel into a single people of God.” He also alluded to Hosea 3:5; Jer 12:15-16, and finally ended with Isa 45:21 (Gallagher and Hertig, 2004).

Gallagher and Hertig raised an important point by stating, “The most fundamental question when entering into contextualization, therefore, is whether a people has placed its faith in Jesus Christ and whether there is evidence that it has done so”(2004, p.203).

Following through with an answer to their own question, the authors argue for priority of harmonious fellowship before individual satisfaction (Gallagher & Hertig, 2004). Their point is that harmony supersedes individualism when faith is evident. With faith in Christ as their intersection, pastors can achieve harmonious fellowship without surrendering their individuality. Conflict calls for mutual submission, a change on both sides, and that translates into a willingness to forgo preferences in order to act cross-culturally.

The cultural storm within the GNYC has become quite noticeable within the past two decades. The category of the storm is not determined, but it is posing a serious threat to the original structure of the Conference. There are now demands for ethnic representation in administration, giving rise to cultural clouds that are rapidly shifting from the Caucasian horizon to a heavy overcast in favor of ethnic minority. Talking about storms, Sweet wrote, “Storms prove and purify. They tear down all that is not tied down and lasting... They enforce the rule of perseverance or perish” (2008, p.5). The conflict among the pastors, then, is an opportunity for spiritual fortification and mission expansion that we can ill afford to miss and, therefore, a step in the direction of cross-cultural engagement can lead to conflict resolution for the pastors.

However, because of this pending doom, some pastors seem willing to go out and engage the storm, while others appear to be taking flight from its path. The latter are moving in search of safe harbors and the constituents, in some cases, are faced with the choice of sailing on or sailing out according to Sweet (2008). The promotion of cross-cultural engagement may be too late for the decision makers at this point; however, it will certainly help in the avoidance of shipwreck in the future. Sweet’s admonishment fits in appropriately. He wrote, “Become a storm chaser. Stop wasting precious time in religious

safe harbors; stop planning irrelevant religious activities to save a few some bodies, someday in Saint Elsewhere” (2008, p. 51). An appreciation for cultural diversity engagement, not abandonment of it should be the watchword.

Unity in Diversity: A Theological Reflection on Gen 11:1-9

The story of the tower of Babel as recorded in Genesis 11:1-9 presents quite an interesting picture of the transformation from mono-linguistic community to multi-linguistic communities. Blough described it succinctly in these words: “Babel is the culmination of the story of primeval rebellion against God; it is a cultural and civilizational project in which human cultural and political efforts seek to reach or replace or exclude God” (2002, p. 9). As to how many languages constituted multilingualism in the end the narrative does not say. It simply informs us that the Babelites started their project of building the tower speaking one language and ended up speaking tongues unknown to each other. This narrative demonstrates how God engaged cross-cultural intervention (different languages) to spread His influence across the earth.

The common notion among some theologians is that God visited the builders of the Tower with divine retribution in the form of language confusion. This view is quite popular especially among those who possess an extremely strong emphasis on judgment. On the other hand, there are those in the minority, perhaps, who take a very different perspective on the matter. Wagenaar noted that “diversity in language, and thus culture, is given in order that people may be free and develop themselves according to their own dreams” (2003, p. 411). Other scholars contend that the languages God issued were more of an act of mercy, which coincided with His diversity plan for mission. In agreement, White wrote, “In mercy to the world He defeated the purpose of the tower builders and

overthrew the memorial of their doings.” To strengthen her argument she added, “In mercy He confounded their speech, thus putting a check on their purpose of rebellion” (1958, p. 33).

Hiebert supported White’s position. He observed that “the story of Babel in Gen 11:1-9 is exclusively about the origins of cultural difference and not about pride and punishment at all” (2007, p. 31). As he distinguishes the two parts of the narrative Hiebert reiterates his argument by noting that “God’s response is not an act of punishment or judgment, but an intervention to introduce cultural difference” (2007, p. 42).

Now, it is important to point out that even though God used languages as his intervention in the destruction of the tower, one cannot view this as the origin of languages. That would be unscriptural since Gen10:5 reads, “From these the maritime peoples spread out into their own territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language.” Whether or not the languages of these two accounts were similar is debatable and Scripture appears silent on the matter. Turning to the passage in reflection, we observed that people journeyed from the east and came down into the valley. White (1958) makes the point that when the population increased, apostasy came in and led to division and those who wanted to cast off restraint decided to separate themselves from those who feared God. The spiritual notion here is that they departed from the source of spiritual warmth and light and took up residence in the low region of self-centered living and thinking. By seeking to make a name for themselves through their own efforts, the Babelites were hoping to regain their former elevation (Isa 65:2). In order for the pastors to experience unity, spiritual connectivity must come before cultural satisfaction.

Once the Babelites were down on the plains, they began construction of the tower in the interest of self-sufficiency and for the wonder of the world. Hiebert pictures it this way: “Human experience between identity and difference, between the power of cultural solidarity, on the one hand, and the reality of cultural diversity, on the other . . . in spite of the human desire and need for identity and cultural solidarity, the world is actually characterized by extraordinary cultural diversity” (2007, p. 56). These people were certainly ambitious and quite busy, but they were obviously occupied contrary to the will of God for their lives (Gen 9:1).

Commenting on the issue, White wrote, “God had directed men to disperse throughout the earth, to replenish and subdue it; but these Babel builders determine to keep their community united in one body, and to establish a monarchy that should eventually embrace the whole earth” (1958, p. 33). Could the conflict among the pastors be the symptom of self-sufficiency? This quotation seems to suggest a response in the positive. With the Babelites, self-sufficiency was a substitute for trust in God. White stated, “One object before them in the erecting of the tower was to secure their own safety in case of another deluge” (1958, p. 33).

In addition to the ambition of a new name for themselves, the Babelites were also seeking to have national security and stability. Clearly, one can see in their ambition independence from God, and interestingly their chief engineers’ name (Nimrod) means, “he that rules” (Lockyer, 1958, p. 260). To have such a character at the helm gave credence to the people’s ambition.

Things do not define people and therefore, the tower was in itself an effort in futility with respect to defining the people. At the point of their greatest defiance, God

met with them and the result was a change from monogenesis to diversification of language. There were no bilingual workers among them to facilitate further communication and consequently, the linguistic differences (Gen 11:5) thwarted their dreams, but it fulfilled God's mission.

Our text put it very succinctly: "The Lord scattered them from there over all the earth" (v. 9). Commenting on the verse, White propounded that, "This dispersion was the means of peopling the earth, and thus the Lord's purpose was accomplished through the very means that men had employed to prevent its fulfillment" (1958, p. 33). She further added, "It was His purpose that as men should go forth to found nations in different parts of the earth they should carry with them knowledge of His will, that the light of truth might shine undimmed to succeeding generations" (1958, p. 34).

In the Greater New York Conference, according to the researcher's observation, some pastors are uncomfortable with cultural diversification, while others seek to use it to benefit their own sector without the consideration of others. Neither of these two positions is healthy for the Conference and the mission. From the story of the tower of Babel, it is clear that the Babelites had their fears of separation which they sought to address by encasing themselves from the rest of the world. In other words, they feared that diversification would disrupt their unity. Eventually, in consequence to their self-serving plan, they discovered, through God's intervention, that diversification is not disunity or insecurity, but opportunity for ministry (v. 8). Diversification within the Conference should be seen as an opportunity to come together to advance the gospel. It should not be seen as a threat to some or a political tool for others.

In conclusion, the following quotation is very appropriate considering the time and the nature of this subject. “The time of God’s investigation is at hand. The Most High will come down to see that which the children of men have built” (White, 1958, p. 34). Therefore, the building that the pastors should seek to construct is one of togetherness. Building a togetherness structure can be an asset in the pastors’ pursuit to fulfill the mission of the conference.

Addressing Community Negligence: A Theological Reflection on Acts 6:1-7.

In the attempt to address the subject as noted above, I find it appropriate to quote Pearce and Littlejohn who, in talking about when social worlds collide, made the point that “moral conflicts are vexing disputes that ordinary discourse will not resolve” (1997, p. 5). The same can also be said about cultural conflicts, which this paper seeks to address by promoting engagement. Whenever there is a constituency meeting at the Conference the atmosphere becomes charged with vexing disputes that are divisive and competitive. Admittedly, the powerful influence of culture dominates our lives; regardless of the circumstance, we remain cultural and any divergence is painful. Therefore, with cultural diversity should be the effort to coexist for missionary purposes.

It is unfortunate that, at times, we handle cultural diversity by demanding that things be done our way. In agreement with this thought, Cahn wrote, “Ethnocentrism frames the way we view our culture and that of others” (1992, p. 40). Certainly, we are cued in to certain driving forces. However, belief in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit affords us the ability to override ethnocentrism for the glory of God. In fact, conflict management and resolution in intercultural communication demand that

everyone come to grips with their own ethnocentric views and that of others according to Cahn (1992, p. 40). Therefore, to bring about harmony to the Conference, pastors owe it to themselves and those of other cultures to be conscious of cross-cultural interactions that begin with self-addressing.

What is appropriate and desirable behavior differs from culture to culture, and can affect worship style (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997). The American society is an evolving culture and in spite of one's particular culture, prudence suggests that they adapt this evolution to some extent or it will become obsolete like some electronics that are rapidly falling off the shelves. By limiting our socializing contact, we automatically expand the gap for intercultural harmony. From the narrative, it is evident that the apostles had the opposite approach and so should ministers in the Conference.

The problem of harmony and tension between cultures as a dream and the cultures within which the dream is lived out is longstanding. We have to move beyond our cultures in order to embrace diversity. Jesus challenged his hearers to reach beyond themselves, that is, beyond their particular cultures (Matt 5:48). Again, we see the apostles doing exactly that as they sought to rectify the cultural negligence experienced by the Hellenistic believers (Acts 6: 2-5).

From an expository point of view, the passage does show the problem of neglect of the Hellenist widows. The solution to the conflict came in the choices of the seven deacons, which followed a discussion with the community and its resolution by the appointment of the deacons. The understanding is that this problem came about as the mission expanded its borders from Jerusalem to its surrounding areas through the preaching of the Hellenists themselves.

“The conflict reported is intrinsically plausible,” according to Ludemann (2005, p. 93) and the researcher concurs. He believes that Jews, in their later life, returned to Jerusalem in order to be buried in the Holy city and leaving their widows behind was often a problem (Ludemann, 2005). Thus, the “Twelve” and the full assembly were in conflict. Consequently, the leaders summoned the assembly and made a proposal to them which outlined the description of the task to be done. Ludemann (2005) also believes that the conflict suggested employment of tradition and the majority of the names chosen for the deaconry were from among the Hellenists. It appears that the selectors chose their own, giving credence to the proverb “to each his own.” Those closest to the widows would handle their needs best.

It is interesting to note that what the “Twelve” said pleased the assembly (v. 5). The unique job description was open to all, yet it turned out to be in favor of one ethnic group, that is, they were Greek names. They clearly demonstrated an attempt to follow tradition while fulfilling the necessary requirements. In other words, the assembly made a cultural response to the situation of choosing the deacons. Here is a practice worth emulating by the workers of the Greater New York Conference.

Christ used the Twelve (disciples) to feed the people (Matt 14:19; 15:36). Here in Acts, the “Twelve” introduced a new department in the structure of ministry. This added structure (deacons) was not foreign to the affected group. Malina and Pilch wrote, “In the Hellenistic world, the word *diakonos* normally referred to a person who functioned as an agent of a higher ranking person, either as an intermediary in commercial transaction or as a messenger or a diplomat” (2008, p. 53). Here the deacons were to be in the service of the supervising managers of the Jerusalemites (the Jesus group), according to Malina and

Pilch (2008, p. 53). Taking a closer look at the Hellenists, we find a distinct cultural picture painted by Malina and Pilch who observed that “the Hellenists were Israelites cultured in Greek values, language, and customs while the Hebrews were Israelites fully devoted to the piety and customs of Judaism” (2008, p. 54). This division obviously played a great part in the community negligence that could have been prevented had the Hebrews been more open to cross-cultural engagement for ministry.

Real ministry begins when we put others in touch with more than they put themselves. Bring them to the center of being, the reality of the unseen, God the source of everything (Finger, 2007, p. 11). Finger believed that participants in the Jesus movement know that the call to service means the call to discipleship (2007, p. 108). The members of the new church ate a common meal daily. Yet we find this account of a stunning division among the women folks in the community organization in which two distinct groups were identified. They were Hellenists and Hebrews who shared the same beliefs, but received different treatment. The Hellenists complained about the Hebrews concerning the neglect of their widows in the daily table ministry.

Discipleship incorporates openness to service, which the Hebrews apparently missed and from verses 2 through 6, of Acts 6 a plan was revealed by the apostles that entailed distribution of labor that should have led to equity, while at the same time allowing their tradition to continue. Here is an example of promoting cross-cultural engagements for the purpose of ministry. Eating the common meal symbolized the spiritual unity among the nascent believers and the practice of commensality, argued Finger, was indicative of the household community (2007, p. 6). The problem was not a lack of provision. We read in (Acts 4:34) that “there was not a needy person among

them.” The Hebrews appeared to have taken ministry in a nationalistic context.

To further the Hellenists case, Finger wrote, “We must look through the eyes of the poor in order to find additional insight into the question of communal meals in the earliest church in Jerusalem” (2007, p. 10). What comes through to me from this quote is association for intervention. There are those who believe that the Hellenists in the early church were pushing for more freedom in relation to the law, so the Hebrews in charge of the distribution to the poor were opposing them by neglecting to care for their widows who were the most vulnerable group in the community (2007, p.11).

The narrative does not appear to support this argument; however, it is clear from every angle that there was cultural conflict between the two groups of believers. The Hellenist widows’ status was already compounded by their own husbands’ neglect which Finger carefully documented. He wrote, “Hellenists widows were numerous because many Diaspora Jews settled in Jerusalem for their final years and left their wives without relatives to care for them” (Finger, 2007, p. 84). This, of course, worsened their situation. According to the narrative, the community was comprised of ethnic groups with different languages and cultural background, that is, Galileans mixed with native Judeans, along with Jews and proselytes from 14 other regions of the then-known world.

The Hebrews and the Hellenists were both Jewish with only linguistic distinction. The Hebrews were Greek-speaking, whereas, the Hellenists were Aramaic-speaking Jews who may have been bilingual (Finger, 2007, p. 253). The question, therefore, is whether there could have been language barriers and/or meal preparation differences to exacerbate the situation. Hellenists, male and female, ate together. Could this have been part of the reason for neglect? In ancient Mediterranean culture, women were responsible for

preparing and serving meals. Were these widows allowed to prepare but not to serve or were they allowed to serve and not to prepare or were they debarred from the entire process? The text does not say. What we are told is that they were neglected in the daily ministry. Based on the reference to nationality (v. 1), it can be deduced that ethnicity was involved. Nevertheless, the apostles were able to resolve the issue and so could the pastors of the Conference if they make the path of ministry a priority and determine to dislodge neglect of every kind. This, I believe, warrants an appreciation for cultural diversity.

Finger's view on the conflict is that the contention of the Hellenists and the Hebrews hinged on linguistic differences between the widows (2007, p. 264). Going along with this author's point of view does not make the problem more solvable. In fact, it immediately raises the question of what happened to the multilingual phenomena that occurred on the day of Pentecost. While Finger's observation lies in the halls of debate, it certainly resonates with the situation at the Greater New York Conference. Language barriers do interfere with the ministers' fellowship, compounding the cultural conflict in the process. However, these challenges can be addressed should each minister take the view of being responsible for resolving this form of negligence in the Conference following the suggestion of the previous paragraph.

Embracing the Vision: A Theological Reflection on Neh 1:1-7

Jerusalem lay in ruins and its people were scattered. The less fortunate were left in the land while others ended up in exile in Persia, far away from home. The second generation grew up in foreign lands knowing only that their real homeland awaited them. Years passed and every attempt to restore this land ended in futility. The walls, which

stood as the first line of defense, were thrown down. Consequently, without security there could be no prosperity for those who dwelt in Israel. The nation needed a visionary to rescue them from oppression. The text under consideration shows Nehemiah fitting the profile during this depression.

According to the narrative, Hanani and a representation from Judah visited Nehemiah at Susa and informed him of the dilapidated state of the Holy City and the affliction and reproach of the people (v. 3). There is no evidence that Nehemiah had previously visited his homeland, yet he seemed to have the spirit of national pride (v. 2) that burned within him when he received the nauseating briefing from the Judean delegation. In view of my subject, “Embracing the Vision,” it is important to recognize the profile of the “would be” reformer (Nehemiah) in passing. His name means “Jehovah has consoled.” Although he was born in exile, yet he was nurtured in the Hebrew faith. He held a high place of honor in the palace of Shushan as cupbearer to King Arterxerxes (Neh 1:1). His Persian name was Sheshbazzar, according to (Ezra 1:18). Nehemiah, though foreign born, was patriotic and inspired by his people’s place of origin. Although he lived a privileged life (one that is not generally favorable to piousness), he maintained his spiritual focus without prejudice.

Under the given circumstances, Nehemiah has shown us a very good example of cross-cultural living. He served the king with distinction without doing violence to his conscience or deviating from the Jewish hope. Instead, he used his Persian collaterals as a means of embracing his vision to carry out the mission of God in Jerusalem. In his position, court morals were an enticement to corruption. Wolfendale, Jones, Booth, Goodman, and Gregory put it succinctly by stating, “When wealth to purchase is united

with authority to command, selfish ambition and sensual indulgence too often ensue” (1996, vol. 9, p. 9). Without question, Nehemiah was surrounded by an atmosphere of self-gratification that tended to reduce spirituality to secularism. Regardless of these enticing amenities and intoxicating privileges, Nehemiah was able to identify with the suffering of his people and embrace the vision of restoration for the nation of Israel by first rebuilding the wall for security.

From his privileged position and Israel’s unfortunate lot, Nehemiah may have raised the question, “What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul”? (Mark 8:36). To embrace the vision, he made choices. Would it be temporal or eternal? He could follow Lot who chose the fertile plains of Sodom and, by preferring temporal gain, lost all or he could follow Moses who chose “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb 11:25). By choosing the latter, Nehemiah fulfilled the need to build up the Kingdom of God. Nehemiah was a classic example of cross-cultural living. The thought that surfaces from this is that God’s mission should always take precedence over our personal aspirations.

From *The Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary on the Old Testament* on the book of Nehemiah come the following words: “He who places the world first and heaven second will soon make ambition everything and religion nothing” (Wolfendale, Jones, Booth, Goodman, & Gregory, 1996, vol. 9, p. 11). Nehemiah’s position was restoration of the Holy City before the coveted assignment of being Artaxerxes’ cupbearer. The point here is that the right priority is important for reclaiming the vision.

This cupbearer, acting out of the spirit of benevolence, was prepared to tender his resignation to the king when he heard that his people desperately needed help. His

sacrificial approach to the briefing received from the Judean delegation seemed to parallel the words of Scripture: “He came not to be ministered unto but to minister” (Matt 20:28). Nehemiah must have concluded that he could not relieve his brethren’s suffering without his own personal involvement and sacrifice. Therefore, by coming to his people’s rescue, he was embracing the tried and failed, the neglected and, perhaps, the “given up as impossible.”

From his communion with God in the following days (v. 4), it is clear that Nehemiah’s love for his brethren was connected to his faith in God. Therefore, he had the courage to face the challenge of rebuilding the well-needed wall with the confidence that “what is impossible with man is possible with God” (Luke 18:27). In addition, before making any rash decision, Nehemiah took the matter directly to God. “By prayer and supplication let your request be made known to God” (Phil 4:6). Nehemiah understood at the beginning that the mission was God’s and therefore it made sense to seek God’s will before attempting anything.

By embracing the vision, Nehemiah also showed how one’s personal ambition should fade into public good. He demonstrated this with the use he made of his royal distinction to advance his brethren’s interests. Though exile, through personal merit, he won the honor of the king and became his cupbearer. Nehemiah apparently knew how to embrace cultural diversity for mission. He appeared to be equally at home serving in a Gentile community, as well as in Israel, his ethnic origin. Social capital and social space were opportunities for him for mission, whether it was in Babylon or in Israel. A typical example of this is the use of his position and privilege of royal connection to advance the interests of his oppressed people.

It is important to note that Nehemiah won this privileged position without sacrificing his Jewish heritage or allowing the demands of the monarch to override the dictates of his conscience. He did not color truth to give way to expediency. The golden calf was not recognized in spite of the threat of the fiery furnace; neither did he bend his knees to Baal. Royal favors were not in exchange for compromising principles. Nehemiah remained true to his civic duty and loyal to his God (Wolfendale et al., vol. 9, p. 6). What an example for facing cultural temptations!

His position afforded him a great amount of influence at the court, which he used very prudently. How could this be except that Nehemiah had a deeper sense of cross-cultural appreciation! Like Joseph and Esther, he took the opportunity to turn decrees in favor of the Hebrew children. With the conviction that everyone is responsible to God for his personal influence, Nehemiah has shown us how to make full use of privileged position, not for self-gratification, but for the greater good and the glory of God, even though it came with much commitment.

Nehemiah appeared to have committed himself to serve his brethren, whether it was in ease or luxury at the court or in want and drudgery in Jerusalem. His self-denial made it all possible for the association of personal honor and oppression of the Hebrews. One thing was certain: he could not serve two masters at the same time. Nehemiah's commitment to the oppressed meant that, like Isaiah, he was willing to give his body to be ripped apart; like Jeremiah, to be cast in a dungeon; or like Daniel, be cast in the lions' den. One may also assume that Nehemiah adopted the notion that he who loses his life for Christ shall find it (Luke 9:24).

Embracing the responsibility also meant embracing the people to Nehemiah. Serving without loving is merely performing or working as a hireling who flees with the appearance of the wolf. In spite of being prosperous, wealthy, and serving in a high office, Nehemiah still felt a deep interest in his brethren and was sympathetic towards them. He identified and included himself in their failure and disobedience to God when he prayed, “Both my father’s house and I have sinned, we have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments” (Neh 1:6, 7). For Nehemiah, the people’s failings were also his own. Nehemiah’s all-inclusive approach went a long way in bringing him to the people and the people to him. This created a path to incorporation of the vision in building the old waste place (the wall of Jerusalem).

So, too, can the ministers of the Conference embrace the vision by putting mission before personal ambition. Nehemiah’s situation teaches us that we can embrace cultural diversity without fearing the loss of our identity and we can serve with dignity anywhere providence places us.

Peace-building: A Theological Reflection on Ezek 11:19, 20

“I will give them one heart” (Ezek 11:19). This was part of the promise made to Israel in exile in Babylon. Their unfixed and disunited hearts became the habitation for idolatry and estrangement from God and eventually economic hardship and oppression—just the complete opposite of what God intended for them became their plight. Here we see God extending mercy to Israel in exile. He promised to give them a new heart and a new spirit by taking away their heart of stone. Their heart of stone was in reference to their idol worship whereas the new heart of flesh, the new spirit, had to do with the worship of the true God. The people had taken an unnatural position from flesh to stone

so God endeavored to return them through divine intervention in order “that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them” (v. 20) the text reveals.

To return to the land of the promise from exile in a depraved state would only lead to a repetition of their bad behavior. The same folks with the same spirit returning to their land would have proven nothing but the continuation of rebellion and, of course, that would have been contrary to the purpose of God for their lives. On the other hand, renewed prosperity was not possible without renewed righteousness.

Barlow, Watt, and Leale said, and I fully support them, “The people must become a right people, must have a right heart and a new spirit, or prosperity is out of the question” (1996, vol. 24, p. 127). National character and a nation’s welfare go hand-in-hand. The wisdom of Solomon authenticated this fact when he stated, “Righteousness exalts a nation” (Prov 14:34). Israel’s prosperity depended upon a true relationship with Jehovah and the same is true for the ministry of the pastors in the Greater New York Conference. Obedience to the purpose of God led to peace and tranquility for Israel. Disobedience brought them servitude and exile.

Israel’s stoniness was apparently standing in the way of God’s impression of repentance and, therefore, robbing them of the opportunity for clannish unity so that Judah vexed Ephraim and Ephraim vexed Judah (Isa 11:13). It was to stimulate their minds to hunger for inclusion, rather than their practice of exclusivity. Oneness of purpose instead of subdividing individualism was an urgent necessity. That was possible only by the action of God to change their hearts. In the Conference, the pastors must have oneness of purpose, which may mean reevaluating their cultural demands.

In the New Testament, Paul was frank concerning a false heart. He wrote,

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:7, 8). This text shows us how to put in perspective Ezekiel’s vision of God’s renewing his people by changing their heart (spirit). From this new heart or new spirit would occur a new life of obedience and love. Peace-building among the ministers should begin with heart adjustment rather than cultural demands, even though that is important.

In his peace-building effort, God seeks to renew the very center of Israel’s being. It is what David prayed for (Ps 51:10) and what Jesus recommended to Nicodemus (John 3:3). Internal discord only gives way to divided affection and social unrest. A heart of stone is a dead heart and, therefore, unable to provide anything but what is undesirable. A heart of stone becomes too cold to sense its need and too dead to seek or respond to advancement. The cultural deadlock among the pastors, if not addressed, may well lead to insensitivity to the mission of the Conference and further retard its progress. Perhaps the promotion of cross-cultural engagement may be the means of softening hearts and getting pastors to use diversity for ministry rather than it using them to become enemies.

Stones, by nature, are cold, unsympathetic, and inactive and therefore can only contribute to discord, rather than harmony. In order to live together and follow the will of God, Israel’s deadness needed to be replaced by a liveliness, which they themselves were powerless to effect even though their spiritual transformation was an urgent necessity. The children of Israel were responsible for their actions, but were powerless to bring about any remedial plan. The offended God therefore took the responsibility for building peace with them. To do so, He directed his attention to their hearts. The heart is an appropriate starting point because out of it come the issues of life.

With the cross-cultural conflicts looming among pastors in the Greater New York Conference, peace-building lessons can be gleaned from this passage showing that God is dealing with his stubborn people of Israel. Certainly, the pastors are not in exile as Israel was, however, the problems we face stem from the same source: the heart. Corporate ministry is hampered by ethnic individualism and fear of losing positions to other ethnic groups. Like Israel's hardness of heart, the pastors' cultural biases prevent them from seeing the opportunities in cultural diversity. Consequently, their positions are hardened and the result is cultural exile, yet there is a desire to advance the mission of the Conference, which can only be done by a united force. Of course, the pastors come together for workers' meetings, but the cultural divide remains and the solution can only come with a change of heart. To provide education in cultural diversity without a heart prepared to receive it would be like Israel's stony heart status—unable to respond.

Heart intervention is the foundation for peace-building. Beginning at this point allows the pastors to have a common point of appeal in their negotiation towards peace-building and allows them the freedom to self-sacrifice, which is essential to cultural harmony. In the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, the editors wrote, "It is because the heart stands for human personality that God looks there rather than at our actions, to see whether we are faithful or not" (Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman, 1998, p. 368).

Through our hearts as leaders, we understand and connect with culture in peace-building. McNeal put it succinctly when he wrote, "Leaders with the courage and commitment to engage culture want to be culturally relevant" (2000, p.78). Cultural relevancy is a heart issue that will, if correctly addressed in the Conference, serve to alleviate conflicts among the pastors and facilitate integration. Promoting cross-cultural

engagement is certainly a step in the right direction for genuine ethnic diversity benefits.

Conclusion

Cultural diversity is, perhaps, the new wave of ministry in the Conference and therefore, it is in the pastors' interest to get involved in promoting cross-cultural engagements in their environment. They should not politicize or neglect cultural diversity. To do so will only serve to impede the progress of the mission of the Conference. Each pastor has to commit to the common good of the ministry instead of demanding proportional, ethnic representation, more evangelism funds, ethnic representation speakers for camp meetings, etc. while at the same time seeking to maintain cultural sensitivity and balance in the interest of conflict resolution. In other words, there is a need for mutual submission, which means passing up preferences to function together without one culture becoming the other.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW: ADDRESSING MULTICULTURAL DIVERSITY

Introduction

Chapter three is a literature review that gathers information from scholarlybooks, articles, journals, and so on to address the challenges of multicultural diversity in the Atlantic Union Conference and sociological and psychological dynamics of cultural exchange, cultural integration, and cross-cultural pulpit exchange preaching. It is hoped that this information will aid in part of the development of pastoral unicity in the GNYC.

The Challenges of Multicultural Diversity in the Atlantic Union Conference

The structure of the Atlantic Union Conference renders it susceptible to the effects of whatever is going on in any of the conferences or mission fields within its jurisdiction. Therefore, the cultural conflict among the pastors in the GNYC is also its concern. However, its response to the issue has a much broader scope, but perhaps not as timely as it should be. The first diversity summit was held in September 20-21, 2002. It was entitled “Bind us Together With Love.” The idea was to develop a better understanding and a more harmonious relationship among the constituents, which include Bermuda, GNYC, Northern New England, New York, and the Northeastern Conferences (Davison, 2002).

The concern of the summit was how to deal with differences in an increasingly diverse church. Some of the solutions that emerged were to recognize the diverse groups within the union's territory, to allow the Holy Spirit to bind us together with love and establish unity and understanding, to create a cohesive environment that would exemplify unity and acceptance, and to identify a Christian model for resolving diversity conflicts and preventing cultural tension. The attendees were encouraged to cultivate unity in spite of cultural heritage (Alvarez, 2012).

A special issue of the *Gleaner* following the 28th Quinquennial session of the Atlantic Union in 2006 refers to the information of the 2002 summit. The special issue of the *Gleaner* also notes that God has placed in us the need for relationship and empowered us to relate with others. Therefore, we reveal how close we are to God through our relationships (Davison, 2002). The Holy Spirit uses human relationships to create a community that accommodates diversity. There are 24 ethnic groups within the union. Consequently, the value of unity is very important for worship and, therefore, the growing challenge of cultural diversity warrants greater awareness of the issue.

At the 2007 NAD diversity summit, the Atlantic Union advanced the diversity issue by seeking to establish a pulpit interchange day, creation of a database for sermon outlines on cultural diversity and the consideration of diversity resolutions. The information in the Atlantic Union's database on cultural diversity is somewhat limited and there is no evidence, however, that these suggestions referred to have been implemented.

The special issue concluded with a quote from White which says, "Unity in diversity is God's plan. Among the followers of Christ there is to be the blending of

diverse elements, one adapted to the other, and each to do its special work for God. Every individual has his place in the filling up of one great plan bearing the stamp of Christ's image" (1961, p. 169).

Sociological and Psychological Dynamics of Change

The evolving demographic shift and changing landscape of the state of New York present cultural challenges for the GNYC in its missionary pursuit, particularly in the five boroughs of Queens, Staten Island, Brooklyn, Bronx, and Manhattan, as well as in nearby counties. These cultural challenges are perhaps due, in part, to the flight of the once predominant ethnic group (Caucasian) and the influx of others taking advantage of the United States immigration policy and the opportunity to share in the American Dream. This unfolding cultural diversity, according to Bramadat (2005), is not relocated culture, but culture recreated through a combination of contemporary and ancient resources. This new creation is never entirely novel, nor simply a reiteration of traditions transported from another era and locale. Without question, the conference has become a new creation somewhat contrary to Bramadat's Cultural Revolution. It is a mixture of relocated and recreated cultures dominated by ethnic diversity.

From a geographical point of view, the GNYC is uniquely positioned in what many New Yorkers refer to as the "Greatest City in the World." The United Nations headquarters, the Dow Industrial Trading, and NASDAQ on Wall Street, entertainment attractions, financial enterprises, and a wide range of amenities attract international immigrants who choreograph the city. Believing that spiritual landscaping—promoting the gospel—is the mission of the conference in this great city, manicuring the topographies that formulate the constituency, remains its expected enterprise. The

topographies to which I am referring, according to Hammett, “are simply, an accurate description of the features of a place behind which are a multitude of processes shaping and molding the place into its current (but continually changing) form”(2009, p. 407).

Through the work of Pwono (2010), we understand that there are varied shareholders that comprise the terrain of the place—the territory of the GNYC. He mentions two specific classes: cross-cultural diplomats and cross-cultural stewards. The diplomats, he points out, are those whose interest is policies, whereas, the stewards seek to manage resources and maintain infrastructures. As in the business world, these cross-cultural shareholders would most naturally expect some measure of payment in the event of any negotiation with other parties and, of course, one’s position in the group carries the potential to affect opinions. Therefore, from a cultural prospective, it would be futile to intervene morally in the pastoral conflict without recognizing those that possess this cultural currency.

Kang and Glassman (2010) pointed out that moral thinking has the ability to affect moral action and, therefore, it poses serious complications between one’s theory and practice of morality. The differences, they believed, follow a parallel part of similarity between social capital and cultural capital. Social capital, in the authors’ view, is relationship driven with the purposeful intention of solving current social problems; cultural capital is an abridged indicator for consideration and acceptance into a particular community. Bourdieu acquiesced to this sentiment. Silverman described social capital as “a bond of mutual trust emerging from shared values that are embedded in parochial networks” (2010, p. 244). Dekker and Uslaner (2001) held that social capital conveys the idea of a type of networking in which similar people bond together and diverse people

build bridges between themselves. Social capital is also about relationship, goodwill, and symbiotic benefits for those within a particular community. Bell (2009) posited that social capital encourages community members to address their problems more effectively and it allows the people, both individually and collectively, to gain resources through their interactions. An additional comment is that the benefit to the community increases when the social capital rises.

Kelly (2008) made a rather interesting observation regarding social capital by noting that the United States population is rapidly expanding bringing with it a rich embroidery variation of cultural capital. Kang and Glassman(2010) showed how these two capitals operate. Similar to moral thought and moral action, social capital and cultural capital are somewhat related and, at times, co-dependent, yet they are dissimilar and work towards singular ends. According to these authors, the ability to use the USA Bill of Rights during the discussion of freedom of speech is an indication of one's cultural capital. In addition, to them the willingness of teachers to permit students to introduce difficult and controversial subjects in class constitutes a form of social capital. Cultural capital relates to habit, where as social capital denotes acceptance as part of a vital experience. Kang and Glassman concluded their discourse by stating, "Moral thinking exists as social capital and it offers us the opportunity to witness others assessment of situation and to discover we are capable of working corporately to accomplish certain types of goals" (2010,p. 33).

According to Hodsoll (2010), this topological framework that encompasses the conference finds further complication in the technological explosion that has dramatically affected our ability to communicate globally. In addition, the crumbled and tumbling

barriers of apartheid, the Berlin Wall, political changes in the Middle East, and international travel help to integrate the world by making it more culturally compact. This globalizing effect comes with an increase of information flow and an avaricious need for people to communicate (Pwono, 2010). Addressing the prospective of living at the crossroads of east and west, Kumar and Maehr wrote, “This increasingly interconnected world draws people from different cultures into close relationships, and globalization makes it imperative that we understand the implication of differing cultural world views for many aspect of human functioning”(2007, p. 55). Take, for example, collectivists immigrating to individualist’s culture: the result is an interweaving of cultures. The host culture blends with the incoming culture and creates a new culture.

The composition of this ongoing development (cultural diversity) certainly makes it quite complex and demanding to address which, perhaps, is why it has not gotten more attention among pastors and administrators in the Conference. Pestieau and Wallace appeared to be aware of the quandary of civic leaders concerning this matter and, consequently, they wrote, “Many planners continue to believe that they do not need to consider the ethno-cultural character of the population they serve or the existence of immigrants within this population” (2003, p. 256). The church cannot claim immunity to this community phenomenon which Sahlin referred to as the “transitional neighborhood” (2004, p. 22). This phenomenon does not appear to have the potential to self-destruct, at least not in the near future.

By observing the cognitive stance of humanity, Berreby raised our hopes that the issue will eventually receive due attention. He writes. “The map of human mind is knit together with a sense of well being and morality, feeling right and doing right” (2008, p.

45). That is, the moral mindset of humanity as a motivating factor will appropriately propel the community drive to override resistant urges towards cross-cultural engagement. From Salili and Hoosain (2007) came a statement that trumps diversity respect in the pursuit of education. On the subject of culture, motivation, and learning, they contend that diversity-conscious education promotes inclusiveness and friendly surroundings, as well as opportunity for students' motivation. They also believed that culture is part of us and it should not be sacrificed for progress or acceptance. In other words, acceptance by others and progress should not be at the cost of one's culture. Korkut's (2010) counsel was that the approach to culture should be to make it explicit, not redundant.

The point here is that cultural identity understanding and celebration—cross-cultural engagement—ensures cultural safety. This submission stands on the grounds of an earlier point the authors made concerning the potential for someone to influence the culture of another while that person modifies his or her culture. Priest put it succinctly by stating, “Studying other cultures causes one to reflect on and analyze one's own” (2008, p. 114).

Because of their study of cross-cultural employment, Sanchez-Burks, Lee, Nisbett, and Ybarra also recognized the complexity cross-culturing brings. They asserted that “people working across different cultures face a common challenge of navigating through deep-seated cultural variations in cognition, values, and relational styles” (2007, p. 257). They acknowledged, further, that cultural differences could have negative effects on promising working relationship. Combining the thoughts of Salili and Hoosain (2007)

and Sanchez-Burks et al., it is, therefore, reasonable to say that dissonance is an expected outcome during cultural interfacing.

The argument of Sanchez-Burks et al. (2007) concerning cross culturing, as previously stated, expresses precisely the current situation among the pastors of the GNYC, thus giving impetus to further reason, I think, for promoting cross-cultural engagement, especially in the light of the need to advance the mission of the Conference within the community. The word “community” raises the question of Adventist demographics, which Sahlin looked at and concluded that the SDA church is not generally community-based. His finding suggests, therefore, an additional complication for mission fulfillment by the church. Nevertheless, given our present pastoral posture—new primary identity—as noted by Penno (2011), we are faced with the moral obligation of accomplishing our mission; some prefer to use the phrase “finish the work.”

In order to accomplish our mission or to finish the work, we need a corporate effort from the pastorate, as opposed to the present cultural divide that is retarding our progress. Lwin, Stanaland, and Williams (2010) raised an interesting point of global- or locally-appropriate messaging with respect to mission. They talked about a standardized or customized intercultural communication message approach and its appropriateness for intergroup relations and conflicts. The cultural conflict in the pastorate places us in a position where we need both harmonized and personalized communication intervention because of our widening diversity.

Eller used a term which he labeled “the group effect” (2008, p. 15) to express the buoyancy of violence. Of course, the issue here is of a different nature; however, his observation of the term is inclusive enough to relate to cultural grouping. Eller’s opinion

was that groups, rather than individuals, tend to give credence to certain behaviors. He went on to strengthen the issue by stating, “It goes without saying that only groups can meet the criteria of diffusing of responsibility, division of labor, and separation of leaders from ground level” (2008, p. 15). He advanced the opinion further by pointing out that groups lessen the feelings of moral responsibility, and liability because of the potential to produce involuntary actions. Within each group, the author said, there are those who only carry out orders, and those who only give orders. Through their concept of the division of labor and detachment, the group effect enhances the ability to carry out actions by dividing them into more doable sizes. It provides for the members’ lacking moral authority, increases antagonism, self-serving, opportunity for blind obedience, and reinforces their mission. By adopting the notion that “the group effect” is not limited to violence, one can, therefore, assume that cross-cultural engagement can embrace this philosophy by making use of its positivity.

Eller (2008) also talked about “the will to differentiate,” the need and want of humans to be an “us” rather than a “me,” the “them” because of the “us” problem. How we see them, the author contended, determines how they are treated. The problem is solved, Eller (2008) noted, through cognitive dissonance, by which the perpetrators rearrange the thinking of themselves, or how they think of their victims. This action on the part of the perpetrators appears to be changing the players while the game remains the same and may not necessarily be suitable for cross-cultural engagement. It would mean, therefore, the need for amendment to the cognitive dissonance. We may have to move from sensitivity to desensitization and to do that may mean changing one’s reference group. The group effect from a violence point of view allows individualism to be fulfilled

in collectivism. The notion is that individualistic cultural customs warrant its adherents to consider individual rights of greater importance than the rights of any particular group of which they are members. Conversely, the collectivistic cultural customs are group loyalty, for example, the extended family, and group loyalty has precedence over individual loyalty. “I” and “we” pronouns demonstrate the distinction between the two groups.

From Webster and Rashotte (2010) comes another view of the group dynamics that joins the challenges for cross-cultural engagement. Their submission is that within a group exist the characteristics of task force and collective orientation. The task force members are primarily problem solvers, with the posture of a committee member focused on assignment, rather than banquet guests whose focus is on enjoyment. Task focusers are not necessarily interested in the enjoyment of their engaged process. Collective orientators, on the other hand, function with the understanding that an individual’s views and contributions are important. Collective orientators oppose working independently. This observation is further evidence of the delicateness of cross culturing.

Hammett (2009) wrote an article entitled “Local Beats to Global Rhythms,” which seems to resonate, to some extent, with the struggle of individual identity blending in with the universal design of the Conference. This situation has created a need to provide a framework for tolerance and encouragement of intercultural dialogue with the hope of reducing friction among the pastors (Hodsoll, 2010). This thought stands in support of the promotion of cross-cultural engagement as a step in the direction of togetherness, rather than isolation for safety reasons.

In his theology of engagement quest in the American context, Park (2003) briefly

recalled three group theories—assimilation, amalgamation, and cultural pluralism—that are the result of the pens of sociologists. These theories, though they are wonderful expressions of various groups, unfortunately do not resonate well with the intent of promoting cross-cultural engagement in the GNYC. On careful assessment, these three theories, in the context of American society, are deemed inadequate because (a) assimilation tends towards Anglo-American unilateral acculturation, but not structural assimilation, (b) amalgamation (the melting pot) stressed American oneness of identity and giving up past ethnicity, and (c) cultural pluralism fosters ethnic disunity and the acceptance of other ethnic cultures as minors.

Park's theology, notably, did not seek unity as an outcome, but instead, it sought enough respect for other cultures to seek self-improvement through engagement. This enhancement however, has to be mutual. The author puts his audience on notice that "without mutual enhancement, diversity turns into separation and unity turns into uniformity" (2003, p. 16), neither of which would be desirable among the clergies in the Conference. Park advanced his argument by stating that "in the midst of mutual enhancement through transformation, affirmation, and celebration, we find our own ethnic identity" (2003, p. 17). The thought here is for each person to use his "ethnicity" to flavor others as they themselves are flavored by others and, in the process, everyone finds his blend of identity. It also enhances a type of flavoring that results in mutual identity revelation. Park's argument alluded to the notion that cultural imposition and moral principle dilution are exclusions from the scheme of cross-cultural engagement.

Cross-cultural engagement aims at inclusiveness regardless of one circumstance or position. White expressed this idea very convincingly in her comments on Jesus'

cultural approach to ministry in Tyre and Sidon. Please note that while the date of this authorship is distant from the present array of references, the message is certainly current and adds a bit of institutional balance and to the reference list. The author wrote, “This was the only miracle that Jesus wrought while on this journey. It was for the performance of this act that He went to the borders of Tyre and Sidon” (1940, p. 402). What was the act and how did it fit in with cross-cultural engagement? White answered, “ He wished to relieve the afflicted woman and at the same time to leave an example in His work of mercy towards one of a despised people for the benefit of His disciples when He should be no longer with them. He wished to lead them from their Jewish exclusiveness to be interested in working for others besides their own people” (1940, p. 402).

The author made the case that social currency is not for the use of cultural power, but for cross-cultural fellowship, while at the same time opening up communication to other distinct ethnic groups. Hill made an observation that ratifies White’s argument. He saw exploring spaces between groups as enhancing tolerance and mutual improvement. Indeed, he sometimes noted that “the space in between . . . can be an anchoring point or a productive site for addressing the instabilities of social and cultural life” (2010, p. 313). Redman (2003), in his case for diversity exploration, added a poignant twist, which suggests that diversity is beneficial because it provides opportunities for cultural integration. He supports understanding and developing an appreciation for everyone’s potential. What echoes from Redman is that isolation or avoidance is not the answer for differences or misunderstandings of culture, but inclusion, which should rise to the level of a philosophy to embrace cross-cultural engagement. It will be argued, therefore, that

resorting to exclusivity in order to avoid disagreements will lead to self-imprisonment as one of many possible outcomes.

Zion, Kozlowski, and May (2005) borrowed words from Bates and Plog (1976) to support Redman's view. They stressed the need for understanding and celebration of differences in cultural diversity. They held the view that understanding our culture and that of others allows us to create a learning space for integration that would lead to the development of stronger communities. In order for us to celebrate our differences, it would be necessary for us to be aware of what influences our cultural orientation. To be aware is to acknowledge what Zion et al. termed "cultural responsiveness." Cultural responsiveness, according to them, refers to the ability to learn and to relate respectfully to people within one's own and other cultures, as well as to adjust one's own behaviors based on things that he or she learns about other cultures. Priest (2008), in his cultural empathy discussion, believed it was important to learn to know others as you want them to know you. Priest appeared to adopt a position that is a cross between Jesus' "Golden Rule," which means dealing with people from your perspective (Matt 7:12), and Alessandra and O'Connor's (1998) "The Platinum Rule," which is to understand and deal with people from their point of view. An additional comment from Priest (2008) about cultural empathy suggests the creation of cultural shalom within the diversity.

The Dynamics of Communication

To follow through with what Zion et al. suggested about cultural responsiveness would necessitate intentional communication with others. The dictionary defines "communication" as "the imparting, or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs" (<http://dictionary.reference.com/>). Snarr (2009) appeared to

amend this definition when he asserted that cross-cultural communication is not simply a transmission of information, but also a relationship-forming that calls for trust. Hill (2010) takes the definition to another level by calling for more than tolerance in cultural exchange. He argued for respect of differences and ethno-culturality as aids to social interaction.

Rose-Redwood agreed to some extent with Snarr's (2009) element of trust in communication. However, she believed it was also possible for the opposite effects to occur in the process. Her understanding was that "closed social networks that characterized some of the nationality associations suggest that these types of associations, which acted as social support systems, also encouraged social segregation tendencies among some international graduate students" (2010, p. 37). Rose-Redwood's submission was the deduction of an international student's interaction program which shows another angle of cultural behavior, but does not negate the importance of trust in cross-cultural communication. In fact, the students' segregation may have been because of the trust they had in those students from their ethnic groups. This behavioral trend is noticeable within the pastorate of GNYC. The pastors generally confine their social support activities to their ethnic groups and that tends to isolate other pastor groups within the Conference.

In her study of Muslims in America, Ewing made this revelation: "Although hostilities have generally increased group solidarity, it has periodically sharpened religious and ethnic boundaries" (2008, p. 110). She observed further that during conflict and tension, national and religious diversity reduces cohesion. Ashby and Browning (2003) seemed to have an opposing view of Ewing's religiosity. Looking at racial-ethnic diversity and church-related colleges, his view was that church membership was the

principal factor supporting racial-ethnic diversity in church schools. Greater diversity in the church meant a corresponding effect in church-related schools. His argument is that religiosity plays a vital role in the lives of adherent students that translates into encouragement of the affirming of cultures. “Those bonds,” he noted, “can nurture Christian unity in the midst of cultural diversity” (Ashby & Browning, 2003, p. 12). This statement certainly reflects the hope of many that I have spoken to in GNYC concerning the conflict among the pastors.

The diversity make-up in the Conference is notably skewed in the direction of ethnicity, which caused the Conference to embark upon a policy of ethnic grouping to take advantage of the growing phenomena and enhance the ministry. To engage culture among the pastors, therefore, one has to consider ethnicity because the diversity for consideration is mainly an ethno-cultural issue.

The Dynamics of Trust

Emerging clearly from the previously mentioned definition of communication are the elements of trust, transmission of information, relationship, and respect. One might ask what trust is in the context of cross-cultural engagement is. Kujawa-Holbrook (2002) attempted an answer, not by defining the term, but by explaining its use. He noted that trust entails an appreciation for diversity and a process of deconstruction to eradicate prejudice and misinformation through cultural relationships. Snarr also explained trust. He wrote, “While trust is most often developed based on lifestyle enclaves, educational, and employment experience, religious organizations provide important alternate pathways for trust cultivation” (2009, p.37). Snarr based his argument on his own beliefs that religious leaders are well qualified to deal with cross-cultural engagements because

of their seminary training. This involvement of religion as pointed out by him offers the GNYC pastors a common perspective for building this bridge of trust that is important to cross-cultural communication. Bridge builders, consistent with Snarr's thinking, support those with complimentary beliefs in their collaborative efforts.

The Dynamics of Respect

Sitting alongside trust, as an element of cross-cultural communication, is its complement respect, which (Hill, 2010) promoted. In particular, he contended for respect of differences and ethno-culturality as aids to social pursuits. Mackenzie and Wallace added another dimension to the cultural interplay of respect in communication engagement. They submitted that "culture has a profound influence on perceptions of respect, and the ways in which respect is communicated across cultures can take on a variety of forms" (2011, p. 12). Zyga (2011) supported Mackenzie and Wallace's idea of respect as an element of cross-cultural communication. However, Mackenzie and Wallace (2011) pointed out that moral judgment and flexibility in cross-cultural communication come via the cost of personal risk because of the varying differences in cultural beliefs and values. Their submission is recognizable among the pastors and in the wider community. A case in point is the simple use of words. For example, the word "crusade" to protestant Christians is simply a religious activity for the spreading of the gospel; however, to the Islamic community the word "crusade" means literal war.

Hall (1976, 2000) gave us another angle of communication risk that also complicates cross-cultural engagement. He labeled it High and Low Context communication. The difference between the two contexts depends on the extent of the meaning involved. Of course, this statement takes into consideration the fact that culture

plays a role in one's use of words and how he or she processes the words of others. High-context is implicit, uses symbols, and the listener has the responsibility for understanding the message which is indirect, general, and ambiguous. Low-context, on the other hand, uses explicit verbal communication and depends heavily on words; there is specificity of language and the message is direct. Hall's prospect leaves one to conclude that intercultural communication between high and low context folks necessitates the removal of some cultural barriers. That would mean up-front folks would have to give up their assumption that other folks are evading the issue and others would have to stop viewing up-front folks as being impolite.

Culture Symbols and Interpretation

Priest said, "A culture is a system with parts, like a body or a motor. To understand your new friends, you need to study the system that frames their lives" (2008, p. 125). Palmer, Samson, Triantis, and Mullan, during their discussion of the importance of cultural communication for breast cancer treatment, suggested, "Culture is very complex with many different sub cultural variations within groups, which contributes to a mosaic of different norms, attitudes, and behavioral beliefs" (2011, p. 3). Metro-Roland (2010) observed that culture absorbs everyone and dictates the shaping of one's experiences as well as one's interpretation. Culture, to Metro-Roland, was the context for universal understanding.

Bourdieu believed that culture is unifying, but without hesitation, noted that "cultural uniformity is imposition" (2010, pp. 45, 46). Zion et al. defined culture as "the system of shared values, customs, behavior, and artifacts that the members of society use to interact with their world and with one another" (2005, p. 3). Culture, they argued, is

dynamic and expansive, including a combination of birth-related groups and those people who choose to join. Klyukanov (2005) held that culture is a system of symbolic resources shared by a group of people. Xinli and Ling (2009) found it recognizable but not readily definable; in fact, they declare culture to be precisely indefinable.

Therefore, culture is fluid, delicate, and dynamic. It affects perception, influences, relations, and worldviews (Klopf & McCroskey, 2007). Simply put, culture is as diverse as it is universal. Consequently, cross-cultural communication as a form of engagement will present a challenge as much for the pastors as for cross-cultural students. Klyukanov (2005) appeared to tie culture to symbols which, coincidentally, provides a key to cross-cultural engagement, thus allowing the pastors to become “symbolists.” The key aids the ministers in acquainting themselves with what gives meaning to other ethnic groups. Furst and Denig (2005) endorsed Deal and Peterson’s (1999) claim that symbols play a powerful role in the transmission of the culture of human society. Armed with this key (symbol) to open up cross-cultural communication, the “symbolists” (the pastors) can move on to the issue of interpretation. Xinli and Ling (2009) told us that cultural symbols create the foundation and boundaries for cultural thinking. Their opinion was that symbols generate cultures and make them readable. In fact, they argued that in order to understand culture, one has to understand cultural symbols.

VanWijk and Finchilescu subjected the meaning of symbols to interpretation when they noted that “understanding symbolic meaning is a matter of interpretation” (2008, p. 249). Mackenzie and Wallace (2011) addressed this interpretation issue by arguing that cross-cultural communication should be flexible to incorporate alternative meaning and value that can be useful for healing and strengthening relationships. Their

submission is a call for change from what one considers meaning in life to an open-mindedness of what might be other than the familiar. In the context of the church, Ford addressed the interpretation issue by making a case for the birth of a new language that will be inclusivity, not detachment. She wrote, “Local congregations are in danger of becoming progressively more detached from direct engagement in cross-cultural mission” (2004, p. 4). To address this matter, Ford recommended recreating the missiological language to embrace the inherent interdependent varied meanings. The idea here is to develop cross-culturally appropriate language for effective communication among diverse cultures.

Culture Conscience

Cultural conscience is another link in the engagement chain that is worthy of exploration. “Cultural conscience,” Zyga acknowledged, “refers to the process of active growth and application of suitable and sensitive strategies and to the skill to interact between culturally different people” (2011, p. 1). Cultural conscience requires everyone in a given situation to be sensitive and to respect cultural diversity. Zyga (2011) brought the picture closer by observing that nursing staff who have cultural conscience use their patients’ cultural domain to serve them adequately. In his article on cross-cultural teaching, Schlein (2010) expressed a somewhat similar position when he observed that having cultural conscience can aid in delivering appropriate services to special cultural and social groups. This cultural conscience is synonymous with Kujawa-Holbrook’s (2002) cultural sensitivity which, he asserted, is the result of prejudice reduction.

From Maddalena (2009) we get the principal reason for the need of cultural conscience, which is the creation of a form of communication that can transcend cultural

barriers. To transcend cultural barriers would necessitate some measure of recognition that would include a broader intervention of diversity and allow the adjustment of one's behavior to accommodate possible new attitudes and understanding. This appears to be the view of Sanchez-Burks et al. who asserted that "the central aim of cross-cultural training programs and training interventions is to teach people to bridge cultural differences more effectively" (2007, p. 258).

This value, according to Korkut, is to be made explicit not replaced. He wrote, "It is not the purpose of teaching to try to change learners' values, but to make them explicit and conscious in any evaluative response to others" (2010, p. 5).

Metro-Roland(2010), following up on Xinli and Ling's concept of understanding culture, took the view that cross-cultural understanding occupied a paradoxical place in the field of multicultural education, but was under-defined and theorized. Pillay (2002) viewed understanding as a natural occurrence of humanity. Continuing with the trend of his thought, Metro-Roland (2010) felt that our exploration of cross-cultural understanding reveals that cultures and their members are the products of cross-pollination and cultural exchange, as well as cultural conservation and continuity. Cross-cultural understanding, he thought, included dialogue and risks. For dialogue to take place he believed, having a disposition of charitableness towards what his/her interlocutor had to express was important. In addition, he contended, dialogue must allow assumptions and prejudices to work in the process so as to makes it possible for all participants to leave the conversation changed in some way.

Metro-Roland (2010) made this observation in a previous argument; cross-cultural understanding possesses a hybridist nature of culture somewhat like the art of rap music,

which is a mixture of recognized musical traditions and genres. Cross-cultural understanding likewise, operates based on a combination of continuity, change, tradition, and innovations. Considering the pandemic cultural diversity evolution, Hutchins, Jackson, and McEllister (2002) futuristically recommended the consideration of global labor and multiculturalism to aid students in achieving cross-cultural understanding. The reason for their recommendation was that labor markets were becoming internationally mobile; consequently, job seekers would need to be multifaceted, cosmopolitan, and bilingual in order to compete. They borrowed the following line from Schneider and Barsoux: “Across national borders somewhat like James Bond” (1997, p. 69).

With respect to the idea of global interaction, Wimberly (2004) followed through with a rather interesting concept of cross-cultural engagement. He compartmentalized cross-cultural education into a host, guest, and kingship circle. The student performs the role of the guest and the faculty acts the role of host, while the learning environment represents the kingship circle. The article is entitled “Hospitable kingship in theological education: cross-cultural perspective of teaching and learning as gift exchange” and focuses on foreign students in America.

In the learning environment constructed by the professor, the faculty provides resources that allow for guest flourishing. The guest also brings resources to the environment, which results in a symbiotic relationship that facilitates the exchanging of gifts. “The goal,” according to the Wimberly, “is for the class to enter into a communal welcome and to embrace a commitment to one another for mutual discovery—to struggle with our different perspectives as well as to affirm our commonalities” (2004, p. 7). His

idea was to create what he called co-presence—“a caring community—and kingship, where by achievement of their goal would mean embracing their diversity.

Wimberly insists that “attentiveness and hospitality are essential for creating an environment where by teaching and learning can facilitate an embrace of diversity of background, thoughts, life perspectives, and styles of engaging the academic process” (2004, p. 11). In his consideration of globalization awareness, Saito reflected on Emerson’s works and wrote, “We must settle ourselves and leave home in order to find home again” (2006, p. 141). The idea is to be courageous and venture out into the unfamiliar with openness for growth. Saito believes that this principle will be enrichment for the cross-cultural explorer.

Berreby concurred with Saito’s principle. He noted, “It is not what people are that matters: it is what they are persuaded they are. Sometimes what you’re sure you know is not what’s really going on, it is not just what you are that causes you to think, feel, and do things; it’s where you are” (2008, p. 5).

Lam and Zane (2004), in a cross-cultural study of coping, found that Asian American college students coped with interpersonal stressors by using more strategies to change themselves by adjusting to others and fewer strategies to change the environment or stressors than their White American counterparts did. The divergent self-analysis, meaning interdependence of Asians and independence of Whites, accounted for the differences between Asian American and White American coping patterns.

While pursuing the subject of literary appreciation, Sugiyama (2003) also recognized the human imperfectability in cross-cultural understanding, but took a slightly different angle in approaching the discussion. Instead of following through with Saito’s

human mobility from the known to the unfamiliar, Sugiyama called for a more, direct cognitive path of context sensitivity by stating, “The principle of context-sensitivity is an important stepping stone on the path to understanding cross-cultural differences in literary interpretation” (2003, p. 386). There is certainly the tendency to localized solutions to adapt to problems. For example, in industrialized nations, the need for something to eat would be satisfied by a trip to the kitchen or a restaurant of choice; in an underdeveloped country, the need to eat may mean a very different set of solutions like fishing, hunting, or finding fruit trees.

The Need for Cultural Competency

As we turn to the discussion of cross-cultural competence, it is important to point out that our global habitat is comprised of people who perceive the world quite differently from us; in order to promote cross-cultural engagement, the issue of competence can certainly be beneficial. In general, cross-cultural competence suggests the ability to communicate successfully with various groups of people from diverse cultures. A cross-cultural competent person is knowledgeable and skillful in dealing with other cultural groups. Korkut (2010) believed that a cross-culturally competent person will be curious about other cultures, sensitive to cultural differences, and willing to modify his or her behavior as a sign of respect for other cultures.

If I am cross-culturally competent, I will be able to see relationships between different cultures critically. Korkut (2010) asserted further that people who acquire this ability are conscious of their own perspective, of the way in which their thinking is culturally determined, rather than believing that their understanding and perspective is just natural. Competent folks are border-crossers and mediators for other cultural groups.

In addition, he submitted, there is a foundational attitude of willingness to relativize one's own values. Korkut's submission was based on his article of acceptance and recognition of diversity in foreign language teaching; however, his argument fits the profile for promotion of cross-cultural engagement.

The inability to communicate effectively to a diverse group such as the pastors in the GNYC will most likely lead to further conflict by fostering barriers, further mistrust, perceived discrimination, and possible reduction of corporation among the pastors. Haddad made an interesting comment concerning corporation. He observed, "Working together involves communicating, building, and developing a mutual understanding between all actors" (2010, p. 566).

Cross-cultural competence in communication and mutual understanding can, therefore, lead to enhancing corporation by reducing friction and perhaps, by increasing our mission's cost-effectiveness. Cross-cultural competence allows me to relate appropriately to other cultural groups.

Howitt wound down the review with the following counsel: "In thinking about the practices of cross-cultural engagement . . . we are often confronted with circumstances that are somewhat distant from social theory's complex abstractions of relationships between abstract selves and abstract others" (2005, p. 209). Howitt thought that Western philosophical differences and alterations have produced social science debates ranging from exciting to frustrating: "Yet it is the performance rather than theorizing of cross-cultural engagements that constitutes and reconstitutes societies and the social and environmental relationships within and between them." In addition, he said, "It is also the

performance of these engagements that challenges societal assumptions of how things are, can be and should be” (2005, p. 209).

Cross-cultural engagement calls for an appreciation of diversity. Park noted, “It is possible for us to appropriate diversity, yet improve the quality of diverse cultures without sacrificing our true unity” (2003, p. 15). He would like to see a Christian model of multiculturalism of diversity appreciation that, as he puts it “would truly be valued in unity” (2003, p. 15). Cross-cultural competent pastors will possess the ability to make Park’s dream a reality.

Cross-cultural Pulpit Exchange Preaching

This aspect of the chapter seeks to investigate the path of pulpit exchange with the intention that information gained might help to inform a cross-cultural pulpit exchange project for pastors in the conference.

Dunn (2000) makes a rather sobering observation concerning pulpit exchange and racial harmony. In the *AthensBanner-Herald*, Dunn informed his readers that the mid-day church service on Sunday is the most segregated time in America. Millions of blacks and whites come together in the name of Christianity, but go separately to places for worship even though they use a similar Bible, recognize the same God, and believe in the same Jesus. Yet they seldom attend the same churches because of their race. Dunn’s (2000) observation echoes a somewhat similar practice in the GNYC. The article noted further that this separatism overflowed into the work place, school, and life, in general. In Clarke’s County, a number of predominantly White churches and Black churches sought to address the cultural divide by swapping pastors. Whites ministered to predominantly Black congregations and vice versa. The pulpit exchange was the result of Blacks and

Whites in the community who saw the need to heal the racial divide between them (Dunn, 2000). I used this information in spite of its date because it speaks directly to the pastoral conflict in GNYC.

Pulpit exchange is both a local and international church event that takes place within similar faith communities as well as inter-faith communities. The intent in similar faiths is to unify community through faith and reality (“Pulpit Exchange with Davidson Presbyterian Churches,” 2011). The Presbyterian Church values this event greatly to the extent that they have a built-in structure for pulpit exchange ministry. In one particular community, a Presbyterian Relational Support Committee is using pulpit exchange to improve race relations (Dunn, 2000). Consequently, from an inter-faith perspective, there are exchanges between Presbyterians and Baptist, Presbyterians and Jews, Presbyterians and Methodist, and Presbyterians and Anglicans.

While Presbyterians seem to be open to inter-faith pulpit exchange, there are dissenting voices. Among the voices is Parnell McCarter who cites Proverbs 14:12 (“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof [are] the ways of death”) in an attempt to show disapproval of pulpit exchange with the Dutch Reformed church. He based his objection on the argument that the latter church supports popish feast days like Christmas and Easter, where as the former rejects them on biblical grounds.

There are two tracks for pulpit exchange, one in which the pastor do their exchanges on the same day and therefore they are not on the spot to share fellowship and presence. The other track calls for exchange at different times so that the host pastor and the co-pastor (pastor exchanging pulpit) can be together. This chapter takes the approach

of the latter track, which seems to favor inter-faith exchanges as observed with Presbyterian and Jewish faiths. On January 20, Reverend Chris Chakoian of the First Presbyterian Church of Lake Forest delivered the sermon at Congregation Sole at the 7:30 pm service. The following Sunday, January 22, Rabbi Moffic delivered the sermon at First Presbyterian Church both at the 9:00 am and 11:00 am services (Dunn, 2000).

In conclusion, pulpit exchange comes across as an entering wedge for cross-cultural engagement that warrants pastors leaving their church signs outside and coming together as brothers and sisters in Christ. Pulpit exchange also makes congregations either happy with what they have or makes them want someone else. Time may limit what the pastors bring to the congregations and what they receive from the congregations; nevertheless, the venture comes across as a worthwhile voyage of cross-cultural interaction and racial harmony.

Conclusion

Cross culturing means facing ethnic diversity since it is understood that culture forms us. The ability, therefore, to adapt or to meet these demands that come with the demographic environmental and social evolution certainly requires our attention. Of course, maintaining a sense of belonging and meaning should be maintained regardless of our social change, whereas cultural diversity should be viewed as an opportunity for promoting unautocratic interaction.

In order to promote cross-cultural engagement in the Conference, some people may use different approaches; however, regardless of the approach taken, communication would be a necessity for effective engagement. The communication referred to here goes beyond dissemination of information and embraces relationships. In order to develop this

relationship, however, mutual trust, respect, and understanding among the cultural groups will be necessary. In addition, there is also the aspect of cultural conscience, which is an overlapping of the three elements—trust, respect, and understanding. Though it may be overlapping, cultural conscience brings in the idea of sensitivity for other cultures. This will obviously mean pastors studying the cultures of fellow pastors.

There is also the question of competence. A cross-cultural pastor has the ability to induce cross-cultural camaraderie. The promotion of cross-cultural engagement is to encourage unicity. Coming out of this review are the following: recognition for people groups, homogenous unit self-encouragement, mutual understanding, and cross-cultural exploration.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Cultural diversity conflict among the pastors in the GNYC causes fiscal duplicity and distraction of mission. Therefore, this chapter seeks to implement a program of promoting cross-cultural engagement intentionally designed as a path towards conflict reduction. It is hoped that this project will (a) help to strengthen the vision and structure of the conference, (b) encourage pastors to embrace unity in diversity, (c) help the pastors to develop greater harmonic relationship, (d) increase efficiency of resources, and (e) improve the researcher's leadership skills and understanding in cross-cultural communication. Accordingly, the chapter will look at the cultural profile of the conference and describe a research design appropriate for the intervention intended, which includes the sample population, cultural innovation, and journal reflections for evaluation purposes. In addition, the path provides a logical development of the project, incorporating insights gained from theological and literature review; a narrative intervention implementation; and a concluding thought.

Cultural Profile of Greater New York Conference

It is certainly a delightful moment when the constituents of the Conference gather for a joint camp meeting. There seems to be a general sense of belonging that would

entice one to remark like David, “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Ps 133:1)! What a collage of cultural diversity! Regrettably, however, the experience is not the same during constituency meetings when officers are elected, especially for the administrative positions and, to a lesser extent, during executive meetings when appointments are made. The apparent homologous posture dissipates and ethnic polarization takes center stage. A spirit of ethnocentrism seems to prevail and collide with each other.

This cultural collision results in a charged atmosphere, causing heated debates, and parliamentary meanderings. The three major groups—multiethnic, English, and Hispanic—tend to dominate the debates on issues raised on the floor to make their voices heard while hoping to influence votes in their particular direction. This is evident in the spirit of cultural passion exuded in the speeches made by those who take the floor to address issues, as well as by certain sections of the audience who become very vocal, and at times, disruptive with their feedback in favor of or in opposition to debating issues.

This cultural conflict became noticeable at the constituency meeting held at camp Berkshire in 1991 during the presidency of George M. Kretschmar (1979-1994) in the form of a demand for wider cultural representation in the administration of the conference. At that meeting, the nominating committee recommended an English (Black) pastor to be the executive secretary of the conference. That recommendation triggered a cultural storm that raged chiefly among the Hispanic and Caucasian pastors. More than two decades have passed since that time and several compositions of administrations, including presidents, have come and gone, yet the storm has not relented.

Charles Griffin succeeded Kretschmar as president of the conference in 1994 with

a profound sense of concern for the furtherance of the mission of the conference; he immediately piloted a sectoral plan in an effort to address the looming cultural conflict chiefly among the pastors with the hope of avoiding further deterioration of the mission of the conference. However, the predominant but dwindling group (Whites) did not fully endorse the venture; therefore, the effect of the Griffin's cultural diversity plan fell short of abating the storm.

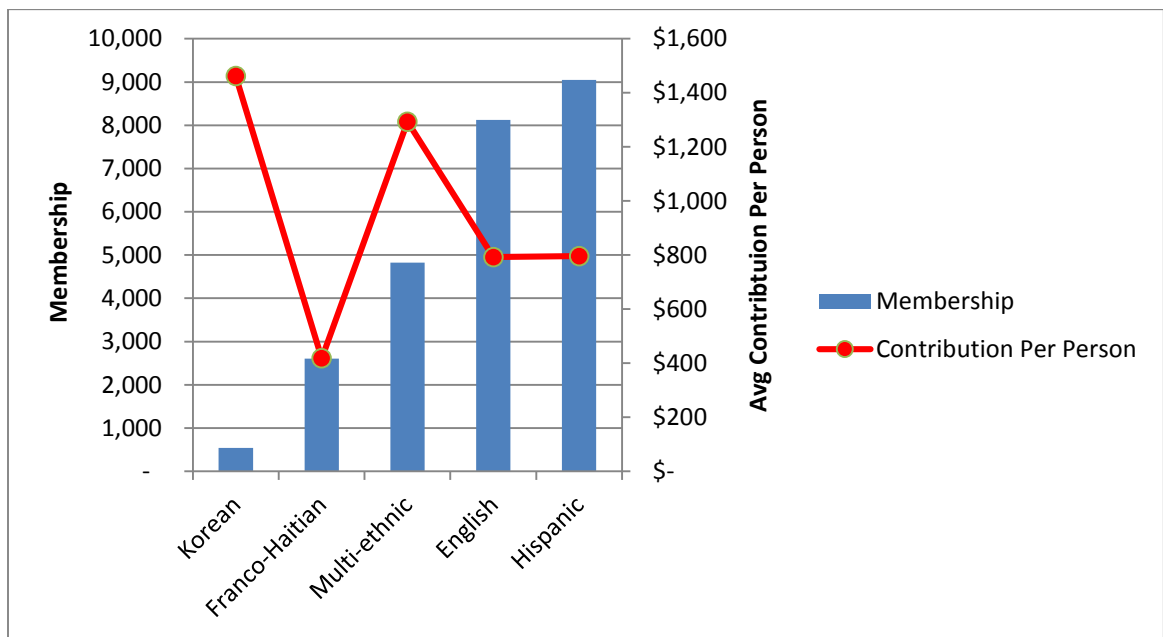
Shortly after succeeding Charles Griffin as president at the 1997 constituency election, Dionsio Olivo (1997-2006) began reformulating Griffin's plan, emphasizing the need for ethnic grouping. By then, the dominant group (Caucasians) no longer possessed the political and social capital influence they enjoyed under president Kretschmar. Consequently, they formed part of the so-called multiethnic group which was comprised of several other ethnic entities that were not significant enough to be recognized as a sector. Olivo's revised sectoral plan went into effect without the inertia Griffin experienced when he (Griffin) proposed sectionalism among the pastors changing the ministerial secretary position previously held by Stan Patterson to a multiethnic leader. Olivo's plan placed greater responsibilities on the ethnic division leaders/coordinators.

Olivo's plan apparently solidified the ethnic grouping, but failed to produce any measurable cultural integration, in fact, it helped to foster a sort of cultural distancing. Two presidents—Richard Marker and Gladstone E. Knight—served after Olivo, nevertheless, the sectoral structure remains unchanged. Conscious of their sectoral value, each group continues to translate its value into political capital as deemed necessary during constituency meetings or conference executive meetings to influence decision-making.

Two of the issues that feature prominently during election among some groups more than others, are proportional representation and per capita remittance. Tables 1 and 2 depict the conference remittance and membership according to the first quarter of the 2012 treasury report of the conference (Greater New York Conference, 1987- 2012).

Table 1.

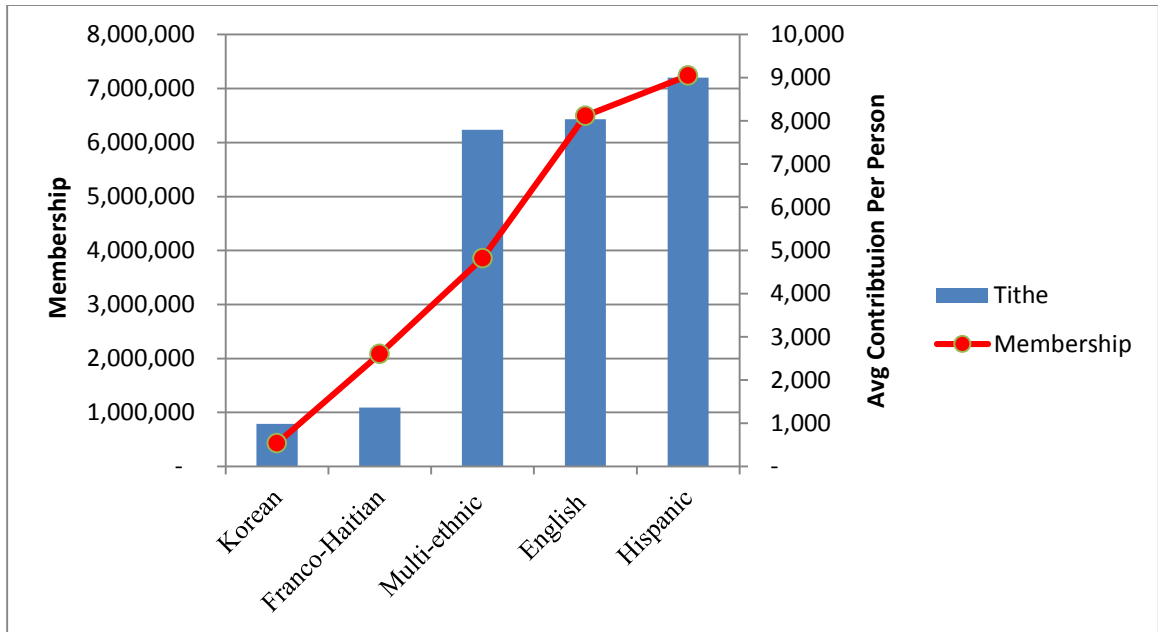
Membership vs Average Contribution per Person



The graph above describes a path within the confines of the constituency that indicates a pattern of remittance versus membership. It also depicts the tug of war between those who seek to use their membership or tithe remittance as an influential force for decision-making.

Table 2.

Tithe and Membership by Sector



Based on the data above, majority membership certainly does not necessarily translate into majority conference remittance per capita. A classic example is the Hispanics with the majority membership, as opposed to the Koreans with the least. The Hispanics have a membership seventeen times that of the Koreans, but the Koreans have a conference remittance per capita of almost twice that of the Hispanics. The ratio of pastors to members in the Hispanic community is one to three hundred, whereas in the Korean community, there is one pastor for every one hundred members.

Assuming that membership is an indicator of pastoral workload, it means, therefore, that the Hispanic pastor's workload is three times that of the Korean pastors' getting the same salary. Not only does the Hispanic pastor have to work harder, but his work expenses could also be much greater than that of the Korean pastor. While the

Korean members are contributing more per capita, their pastor's workload is significantly lighter compared to the Hispanic and English pastor's. One may argue that for a salary of seventy thousand per year, Korean pastors are justified based on conference remittance. Therefore, taking advantage of their remittance position may be deemed a reasonable response. The Hispanics, on the other hand, take advantage of their majority membership.

Notwithstanding the disparity in the pastors' workload, the issue of remittance and membership continue to play a great part in the cultural conflict among the pastors in the conference. Interestingly, however, during constituency meetings, there is always that re-echoing thrust for proportional representation based purely on membership. The Koreans, though small in number, play a significant role with their votes. During the debating process, they take the position of the silent minority. This approach appears to have a positive correlation with their cultural practices and would tend to lead anthropological minds to conclude that they are high context people. The French are also small in number; however, unlike the Koreans, they are more visible and engaging. Unfortunately, because of the limited meaning applied to proportional representation, one or more groups benefit while the others are dis-enfranchised. This is somewhat like the Indians in Trinidad that had 25% of the membership, 1% in the pastoral staff but no representation in the leadership of conference office. While the present structure appears to be benefitting some pastors temporarily, the gift that cultural diversity delivered to the conference stands unwrapped (Greater New York Conference, 1987-2012).

Cross-cultural Engagement Opportunities

Three occasions in the conference provide the opportunity for cross-cultural engagement. One is the joint camp meeting that occurs once per year in the month of September when all the sectors come together for Sabbath fellowship at Camp Berkshire. Except for the few cross-culturally minded folks who take the time to mingle, the vast majority sit in their groups and miss the opportunity for cultural exchange fellowship.

The second is the quarterly workers' meetings at the Conference office when all the sectors come together in the same room for at least three hours. This is the closest the pastors come in terms of cultural interaction and even then, there is the tendency to sit in their particular groups. In addition, the tightly packed agendas limit the possibilities for pastoral interaction. Lunchtime, perhaps, provides the best chance for interaction; however, during this time, the pastors are more inclined to leave the meeting rather than to fellowship.

The third opportunity is the occasional workers' retreat, which certainly offers the best opportunity for cross-cultural engagement. Unfortunately, since there are no structured cross-cultural plans, the pastors, like flowing streams, follow the path of least resistance. They gravitate to their comfort zones—ethnic groups. Interestingly, many of the pastors are aware of the cultural conflict among themselves and its negative effect on the mission of the conference. However, the conflict continues to rage and the hope is that the following project will prove a useful tool that can stimulate the kind of cross-cultural atmosphere that would aid in the advancement of the Conference mission.

Without question, culture dominates both constituency and executive meetings in the GNYC and this domination complicates the electoral process by putting ethnicity before proficiency. This cultural conflict, which never fails to erupt at every constituency

meeting, continues to impede the progress of the ministry in terms of time and fiscal responsibility debates at the expense of progressive mission. Consequently, the heavy emphasis on ethnicity has first led to the selection of persons less experienced, thus impeding the ministry and the mission. The hope is that this project will demonstrate that cross-cultural intervention, appreciated as a corporate asset rather than an ethnic liability among the pastors within the Conference, can be a rapid catalyst for mission expansion.

Research Design

The objective for implementing this project is to promote cross-cultural engagement among the pastors in the Conference and the research question is whether monthly social gatherings and pulpit exchange preaching reduces conflict among the pastors. I find the research question important since it deals with issues that relate to unity in the ministry. It is simple and answerable, given its population of concern. As a worker in the conference, the researcher has pondered the said issue for many years.

With the understanding that a research design has to do with the strategy for cohesive and coherent integration of the different parts of a particular study, this intervention, in order to address the conflict mentioned previously, adapted a sequential exploratory research approach. The research design, in part therefore, seeks a deep and rich insight into the pastors' experiences through their voluntary participation in the two-prong strategy of the project. The study is intended to be a process, not just to gain knowledge, but also to bring about transformative action (Swinton & Mowat, 2006).

The participants will be encouraged to foster a community of practice which, according to Lave and Wenger (1991), consists of a group of people who share a common concern or passion for doing something and becoming better at it with practice

while they interact. This, therefore, necessitates the pastors' having a cognitive presence which Garrison, Anderson, and Archer portrayed as "the extent to which the participants in any particular configuration of a community of inquiry is able to construct and confirm meaning through course activities, sustained reflection, and discourse" (2000, p. 89).

Cognitive presence is considered vital to the educational pursuit of this project.

Monthly Social Gatherings

The first part of the two-prong approach in the design was the monthly social gatherings. The aim of these gatherings was to engage each participant socially in a manner that would allow them to experience a non-threatening environment that encouraged involvement in whatever the group agenda or activity required.

Pulpit Exchange Preaching

The second aspect of the two-prong was a pulpit exchange program. This program provided an opportunity for the participants to minister outside their sectoral comfort zones and experience cross-cultural engagement from the guest-preacher's point of view.

Research Method

The determination of the research method for this project got a helping hand from Swinton and Mowat who, in dealing with the selectivity of method, wrote, "Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical material- interactional and visual texts- that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives" (2006, p. 63). Therefore, given their observation about qualitative research, the ministerial nature of the project, and the need for a friendly respectful approach to the research question, journal reflection was chosen as the method.

Participation Criteria

The conditions established for this study are that participants meet the inclusion requirements to attend the monthly social gatherings voluntarily, preach a sermon at Crossroads Church, and submit a journal reflection to the researcher at the end of the project.

Sampling Frame

The sampling frame has to do with the representation of the population of 87 pastors employed in the conference. The frame reflects the result of the sampling plan, which in this case happens to be on a volunteer basis by the pastors who attended the diversity seminar. Therefore, no representation by one sector (Koreans) coupled with the unequal representation by the multi-ethnic spoke to the fact that the sample was uncontrolled. It also raised the question concerning the disadvantages of volunteering for sampling purposes. There were representatives from four of the five pastoral groups with the multi-ethnic having a ratio of four to one of the groups represented.

In addition, the sample size of seven represents a ratio of one to 12 of the pastors in the Conference. However, one may consider the sample size adequate based on the submission of Onwuegbuzie and Collins who contend that “small samples can be used in qualitative research that represents exploratory research or basic research” (2007, p. 288).

Demographically, the sampling frame consisted of the three categories (youth, middle age, and senior) that were all male. The ethnic composition of the sample included two Whites, two Blacks, one Hispanic, one Indian, and one Chinese-Filipino

who span the domain of the general pastoral population in the Conference. Accordingly, the diversity of the sample enriches the data.

Measuring Instrument

The seven journal reflections collected from the participants at the end of the experiment will provide the means for evaluating whether or not promoting cross-cultural engagement through social gatherings and pulpit exchange can positively affect the conflict among the pastors in the conference.

Journal Reflections

The journal reflections are a written one-page insight of the participants' thoughts concerning the project. Each participant has the responsibility of submitting a personal copy following the conclusion of the project.

The Evaluating Process

Assessing the project would take into consideration key ideas, agreement, suggestions, and conclusions expressed in the participants' journals. These journals will also be interpreted and a conclusion drawn (see chapter 6).

In addition, direct quotes from participants would be used to support and clarify projected thoughts. Note, however, that because of the subjective nature of the measuring instrument and the potential for researcher bias, a conscious effort will be made to avoid over-generalization or to do injustice to context and to maintain as accurately as possible the focus of the participants' perspectives and experiences. Overall, this study does not intend to address or analyze the following issues: (a) existing cross-cultural management and administration policies and (b) whether any of the pastors took on an additional

culture while participating in the project. Such issues lie beyond the scope of this pilot study.

Theological Reflection and Literature Review Perspectives

Earlier in the chapter during the discussion of the cultural profile of the GNYC, certain issues surfaced which are contributors to conflict among the pastors.

Notwithstanding the purpose of this project design, a theological perspective and literature review help to sharpen the focus of this experiment by rendering alternatives and support roles as deemed necessary for the operation of the project.

Theological Perspective

Smith and Ayers (2006) suggest a positive correlation between theology and culture by observing that culture is largely responsible for shaping the way one makes meaning of his experience in the world. Taking this thought into consideration, the components of the project allowed the participants to interact, at least for the moment, in a way that theology and culture inform each other. In the context of the spiritual elements of the study, Smith and Ayers' thought evokes the kind of theology that involves truth in action. Their thinking raises the familiar questions which each participant most likely voluntarily processes as he interacts: What is this world? Who am I? and Who are you? (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p. 196).

This tripartite questioning, no doubt, awakens the consciousness of individualism and community. The participants can choose to individualize cultural diversity and inhibit mission growth or embrace cultural diversity as community and hope for the opposite effect. This could mean an approach to the nagging question of proportional

representation at constituency meetings that would focus the bigger picture (mission) rather than having the sector take an interest in the whole rather than the part. From a stewardship point of view, the whole rather than the part suggests that the member (pastor) serves the body (constituency) rather than the member having a function as a ransom, thereby impeding any progress the body attempts to make. The outcome could then lead to incorporating both membership and remittance per capita that would ensure a more equitable approach for mission and, at the same time, lessen the possibility of disenfranchising any of the sectors. Inclusivity, therefore, not privileges, is what this project emphasizes in part. The implementation of the deacons as a solution for the neglected widows in the narrative of Acts 6:1-6 corroborates this argument.

Dude (2007) informs us that social location defines one's experience which, in turn, influences how he views others. From a biblical perspective, this thought may have been the case within the early church with one group—Jews—taking the position that they were the favored, whereas others—Gentiles—were “the excluded” (John 8:33), hence the push for Gentiles to be upgraded to Judaism. The other angle of social location is to follow the notion that others are just as important. The apostles, in their dealing with the circumcision issue at the Jerusalem council, demonstrated this idea by allowing the Gentiles to be themselves. By this intervention, the Jerusalem counselors demonstrated their abhorrence for class consciousness and a willingness to recognize that others also belong to the picture that is bigger than ethnicity.

Cross-cultural engagement will mean stepping out of cultural confinement by the pastors. The Babelites' prosperity came through internationalization, not in the security of the exclusiveness of other people (Gen 11:1-9). Certainly, prosperity depends on

security; however, the visionary pastor will recognize that intercultural living can be beneficial to the mission. Nehemiah used his intercultural connections to foster Israel's redevelopment (Neh1:17). Of course, the intent here is for the pastors to experience the heart-change that focuses on the many, rather than the few.

Literature Review Perspective

Communication influenced the intervention because of its potential to weave connectedness among the participants, preacher, and congregants as an element of the experiment. The interaction among the participants made it possible for trust building and competence suggested in the review as beneficiary for cross-cultural engagement. Further, being able to communicate effectively across cultures is paramount in achieving intercultural competence (Liaw, 2006). The idea of high and low context of intercultural communication discussed in chapter three provided a part of conflict resolution through its implementation, but not without the appreciation of the concept by the participants. This, of course, raised the question of practice. In part, the project sought to influence the participants to foster a community of practice through various interventions as was necessary. Lave and Wenger (1991) said that a community of practice constitutes a group of people who share a common concern or passion for doing something and becoming better at that thing with practice during interaction. The appreciation of community of practice meant that the pastors needed to have a cognitive presence which Garrison, Anderson, and Archer defined as "the extent to which the participants in any particular configuration of a community of inquiry is able to construct and confirm meaning through course activities, sustained reflection, and discourse" (2000, p. 89).

As a community of enquiry, the participants associated and engaged intellectually with each other. This particular action showed the relevance of cognitive and social presence. Garrison, Akyol, and Nordstokke's (2011) idea of social presence has to do with someone's ability to identify with a particular group, intentionally communicate in a safe environment, and be meaningfully progressive while extending one's personality. The project design made allowance for the participants to exercise a social presence both from the pulpit and in the social gatherings.

The notion of social presence brings into focus another concept that figured prominently in the study. This concept is called social location which Dube (2007) referred to in his comment on Mk 8:27-30 in the previous chapter. Without question, social location is a complex issue and Dube pointed out that "it involves gender, ethnicity, race, national, international, class, and health status" (2007, p. 347). In addition, Dube contended that social location also included various forms of institutions. These institutions, coupled with the factors previously mentioned, served to define a person by empowering the individual or reducing his or her authority depending on the circumstance and or association the person happens to be with at a particular time.

In further corroboration of this concept, Stodel, Thompson, and MacDonald (2006) argued that encouragement of social presence may just be the precursor to meaningful discourse. This may have been the case during the intense deliberation at the Jerusalem counsel among the apostles and the other representatives that resulted in an acceptable resolution of the problem of cultural practice discussed in Acts 15:1-29. Social presence in the context of the pastoral environment, if exercised in the spirit the apostles displayed as they deliberated in the Jerusalem council, can help to create that certain

climate that would support and encourage cultural integration as opposed to sectoral domination that obviously adds to the mission's inertia.

Through social gatherings, pastors have the opportunity to listen and learn about each other feelings and opinions with respect to their views on cultural diversity in the conference. Here is a reflection of the Jerusalem council when selected brethren come together to discuss customs in ethnic diversity.

Concerning the journal reflection and its evaluative use, Chase, Macfadyen, Reeder, and Roche made an interesting comment regarding cultural differences and self-disclosure when they wrote, "Significant cultural differences become apparent in the ways in which participants write about their own identity in online postings, the degree of 'self-revelation' they display" (2002, p. 9).

A somewhat similar project aid came from Swinton and Mowat (2006). Assuming that they were right in their observation that personal reflectivity amounts to an autobiography, one may conclude as previously noted that the pastors' journal reflection represents, to some extent, a type of self-revelation. To have self-revelation surfacing within the journal reflections would be to aid the researcher with the process of interpretation and observation. In other words, through those self-revelations, the participants would automatically provide the researcher with a window for viewing their interaction with the other participants and the Crossroads' congregation.

Perspectives from the review of the theological literature have helped to crystallize the design of this project through relativity and need. These perspectives lend the participants an ear for the sacred in ministry, as well as a cognitive challenge for the pastorate.

Narrative of Intervention

Upon approval of my proposal, I approached the Conference President (G.E. Knight) in October 2011 and discussed with him my academic pursuit, including my need for a cultural diversity seminar for the pastors. He willingly offered his support and arranged for the seminar by incorporating it into the upcoming pastors' meeting agenda. The intent of the incorporation was for cost effectiveness and the possibility for greater attendance since workers' meetings are mandatory and therefore attendance would be higher than at other meetings.

The purpose of the seminar was to increase the pastors' awareness for cross-cultural appreciation with the hope that it would generate an interest for pastors to volunteer to participate in the experiment to promote cross-cultural engagement among the pastors in the conference. The seminar provided the forum at its conclusion for the researcher to appeal to the pastors to volunteer to participate in the project and collect contact information from them.

Dr. Carlyle Simmons, executive secretary of the Atlantic Union Conference, presented the seminar on February 2012 at the Old Westbury SDA church to accommodate the workers adequately. The seminar focused on integration and unity and more than nine-five percent of the pastors attended. Dr. Simmons mentioned the project in his conclusion and introduced the researcher to provide further information.

The researcher explained the nature of the project, including the criteria for participation, which were to attend monthly social gatherings, preach a sermon at the Crossroads Church, and write a one-page journal reflection at the end of the program to

be used for evaluating the project. The researcher appealed to the pastors for volunteers to participate, passed out sign-up sheets, and collected the responses.

The respondents were three multiethnic, one Hispanic, one Franco-Haitian, one Korean, and one English. The volunteers were contacted by phone and email the following day, thanking them for their willingness to participate in the project. During that initial contact, the researcher sought approval from each individual for a date for the first gathering. They agreed to meet immediately on the first Monday in March 2012 at the church.

Arrangement for Monthly Social Gathering

At the first gathering held in March, the researcher explained the program in more details to the attendees and got them to read and sign the consent form, which contained the agreement for participation in the project. The participants agreed to meet once per month on Mondays from 10 am to 12 noon for the social gathering for the next four months. The final gathering called for a different forum and was scheduled for a Saturday evening at a Chinese vegetarian restaurant in another borough.

Arrangement for Pulpit Exchange Preaching

Formulating a preaching roster for the pastors came with a price. Even though the project lasted for six months, the pastors had great difficulty committing to a particular date. The preaching roster design represented the availability of the pastors and the coordinators with the understanding of each pastor's own preaching itinerary. The schedule took into consideration the presence of the coordinator (pastor) of the project while the pastors preached at Crossroads Church.

Before moving on to the open forum which characterized all the gatherings, I tentatively scheduled the participants for their pulpit exchange preaching assignment at Crossroads Church. The schedule became official two weeks after the pastors were able to consult their own preaching rosters.

Two-Pronged Approach

Six monthly social gatherings were planned to run from March to August. The gatherings were held at the church except that the international night took place in the borough of Queens. The first gathering, apart from the time spent in logistics and program clarity, set the tone for the other gatherings. This experiment was the first of its kind in the Conference, bringing pastors together specifically for cross-cultural interaction.

The gatherings were to be informal and focus on the participants rather than on the researcher; they provided the opportunity for the participants to operate within a safe space to be themselves without reservations or differences. This was to allow them to engage cross-culturally on an intentional basis without encroaching on one another's right to be otherwise.

The pastors received a post-gathering phone call and email the following day thanking them for their continued support and reminding them of the next gathering. Absent pastors also received a call briefing them on what had transpired at the gathering. One week prior to the next gathering, each pastor received another reminder by phone and email of the coming appointment. These interim contacts were intended to maintain and encourage participation throughout the project.

The second aspect of the project focused on the participants' fellowshiping at Crossroads SDA Church. The components of the church program included the seven pastors, a preaching schedule, and fellowship lunch. Once a month, except for the last month, one of the participants delivered a sermon at the church and socialized with the members in the fellowship hall during lunch.

In anticipation of the project, the researcher informed church members about the pulpit exchange that would run through the month of August. Interestingly, Crossroads Church has an inviting Sabbath services arrangement. This arrangement revolves around a two-part tradition of sacred worship beginning at 12 noon followed by a fellowship lunch at 1:30 pm. The first part of the service takes place in the sanctuary where it culminates with the spoken Word.

Fellowship Lunch

The second part—the fellowship lunch—occurred on the first floor in the fellowship hall. It usually ran for about two hours during which time the members and guests interacted with each other in unplanned discussions and information sharing. The lunch was comprised of menus that represented the cultural mix of the congregation. The pastor and his family had the opportunity of experiencing food from other cultures. As part of the tradition, the pastor's table was intentionally situated in the middle of the floor for accessibility between the members and the pastor and family.

The Seven Preachers

The pulpit exchange program catered for the pastors to preach one sermon at the church with the researcher present. The pastors were not required to be present when the

researcher preached at their churches. The pastors had the liberty to choose their subject to preach. Learning about the Crossroads audience was also the responsibility of the seven pastors who came to preach each month. Because there were seven persons in the program, the sixth month had two preachers, one on the first Sabbath and the other on the last Sabbath.

The pastor appeared very comfortable in his delivery and arrested the attention of the members. He preached a general message for thirty-two minutes, which the members appreciated. After the church service, the usher escorted the pastor and his family from the sanctuary to the fellowship hall and seated them at the pastor's table.

Concluding Elements

The project began its conclusion with the international night out previously mentioned. The concept of the international night out came from the New York Police Department. In an attempt to regain control of the streets from drug dealers, gangs, and other crime elements in the city of New York, the NYPD adapted the idea of community policing during the mayoral reign of Giuliani. The aim was to take back the streets from various criminal elements. Once per year each precinct sponsored an evening program that brought the community and the police officers together to demonstrate a united front of the precinct and the community working together in the fight against crime. The coming together of the pastors aimed at a collaborative cultural embracing.

This gathering was unique in the sense that the participants had the privilege of allowing their spouses to accompany them for the occasion. The event took the form of an Asian cultural dinner at no expense to the participants or their spouses. The dinner,

except for the formal blessing of the meal and the welcome, followed a similar format of open forum that the other gatherings did.

The thank you information and the collection of journal reflections were the last elements of the project. The day after the dinner, the participants received a final phone call and an email thanking them for their support of the project. They also received a reminder of the importance of the journal reflection and the need to forward it to the researcher in a timely manner. The researcher received all the journal reflections within two weeks and the evaluation of the project began.

Conclusion

The cultural wars in the GNYC have certainly given me cause for concern. Looking through the window of pastoral stewardship, being aware of the negative effect that cultural conflict has on our mission, and choosing to remain inactive about it amounts to a dereliction of duty on my part. Consequently, the above information expressed the researcher's positive response for an intervention that might address the conflict problem.

Therefore, this particular project was designed to foster a constructive diversity relationship among the pastors for conflict resolution. It included the use of a seminar for cross-cultural interaction stimulation and accessing volunteers for experimenting with social gatherings and a pulpit exchange program. A profile of the conference was also given describing, to some extent, its complex nature in terms of diversity and the inertia the mission faces. The participants were all volunteers and, therefore, the program took into consideration the sacrifice they faced in order to make the project a reality.

Within the design of the intervention came the reason for the choice of method (qualitative), a relevant sample frame and sampling domain that represented four out of five of the established groups in the conference, and concluded with a narrative intervention that characterized the ebb and flow of the project.

In summary, this study was designed to be a fact-finding mission very much dependent upon the journey, which comprised the different facets of the project in order to dictate the destination they played in the experiment.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT ASSESSMENT

Introduction

From the perspective of the researcher seeking information and the research participants who were willing to share their experiences and knowledge, (Swinton & Mowat, 2006), this chapter assumes the prerogative of examining the machination of the intervention designed to address conflict among the pastors in the conference.

Accordingly, the chapter considers the method used, justification for it, and renders a fair and balanced judgment of the intervention. In addition, an analysis of trustworthiness and limitations of the qualitative data gathered from notes taken at the meetings and from the journal reflections are discussed.

Profile of Participants

In the interest of anonymity, the pastors in the study will be referred to as participant 1, participant 2, etc., followed by a limited profile of each pastor who participated in the execution of the intervention. The pastors are all family men with academic status ranging from masters' degrees to doctoral degrees. Participant 1 is multi-ethnic from Europe and middle aged. He pastors three small churches outside the boroughs of New York City. Participant 2 is also multi-ethnic, but from the Philippines with Chinese heritage. He pastors two Filipino congregations and is part of the senior

pastors' group. Participant 3 is Hispanic from the Dominican Republic and is presently the Youth Director in the Conference. He belongs to the junior segment of the pastorate. Participant 4 is a constituent of the English sector and of Caribbean origin, with the dual responsibility of pastoring a church and serving as the Communication Director for the Conference. He is part of the junior pastors' clan. Participant 5 also hails from the multi-ethnic block. He is Caucasian and has the responsibility of three churches in Long Island. Participant 6 is another member of the multi-ethnic group. He is of East Indian descent and is middle aged. He pastors two churches and conducts worship services in the Punjabi Indian dialect. Participant 7 is from the French group; he is Haitian and is in the senior group of pastors in the conference. He pastors two churches that have worship services in the French Creole culture, in addition to his duties as coordinator of the French sector.

Incidentally, one participant is a New Yorker. He began his ministry in Europe and has the fewest number of years of service in pastoral ministry with the Conference. The other pastors have experience ranging from twelve to thirty years with the GNYC. Three middle aged and two senior participants have international pastoral experience, unlike the two junior pastors whose ministry is confined solely to the GNYC (1987-2012).

Observation

The information above indicates a balanced representation of the focused population. It covered a diversification that incorporated age-related inclusion, sectorial representation, hemispheric locations, and ethnicity. This configuration of diversity substantiates the wealth of experience the participants brought to the study, which was confirmed by their journal reflections.

The data also revealed a combination of pastors who represented a completely opposite configuration to what proportional representation (part of the pastoral conflict) would look like. Multi-ethnics were four times the number as the other sectors represented in the study. Under the present representational policy practiced by the conference, a combination of seven pastors' would have a compromising composition of two Hispanics, two English, one multi-ethnic, one Franco-Haitian, and one Korean. Among the many inferences that one can draw from the study sample is that the multi-ethnic pastors are more interested in cross-cultural engagements than the pastors of the other sectors. Participant 5 appears to support this observation. He believes that cross-cultural engagements among the pastors should be a mandatory endeavor. One may argue, therefore, that their cultural diversity exposure at their churches accounts for their interest in the project. Would this imply that there is a positive correlation with the multi-ethnic pastors' exposure and their interest in cultural diversity?

The ethnic composition of the sample included two Whites, two Blacks, one Hispanic, one Indian, and one Chinese-Filipino that span the domain of the general pastoral population in the conference. Demographically the sample covered the three age groups (youth, middle aged, and senior) of pastors in the conference. The group was comprised of all males—four westerners and three non-westerners. Sanchez and Gunawardena's (1998) made the point that non-westerners' religion permeates culture while westerners separate religion from culture. Their observation appears to have played out remarkably in the participants' journal reflections. To those pastors whose religion informed their culture, the journal reflection suggested looking beyond our diversity towards the utopia of God. Smith and Ayers' (2006) expressed a similar idea by

observing that culture is largely responsible for shaping the way one makes meaning of his experience in the world. The inference here is that the participants' worldviews influenced their journal reflections.

There is an old saying that "you don't know what you know till you have written it down." Several research studies have found this to be true. Without question, documenting information does allow individuals to track their progress and to be aware of areas of ignorance in a given subject. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the participants were the primary beneficiaries of their journal reflections. In other words, their journal reflections were self-revealing; while they provided information for the researcher, they also informed themselves.

With respect to the scheduling of the meetings and the preaching assignments, it was indeed a challenge due to pastoral occupational hazards (over-bookings and difficulty prioritizing). Carrying workloads that allow for very little extra-curricular activities coupled with constantly changing priorities amount to a difficult proposition. Furthermore, pastors are a unique group of professionals who operate within a working latitude that demands their attention most of their waking moments. This unique focus governs their prioritization of ministry; consequently, it posed a challenge for additional activities such as this study warranted. Notwithstanding their complicated job responsibilities, they satisfied the project's requirements.

Monthly Social Gathering Observation

Through the monthly social gatherings came the opportunity for pastors to listen and learn how they all viewed cultural diversity in the conference. Furthermore, the friendly atmosphere of the gatherings afforded the participants the opportunity for a

focused exploration of the intervention, and the awareness of their own feelings and opinions about cultural diversity (Swinton & Mowat, 2006). The primary aim of these social gatherings was to engage each participant socially in a non-threatening environment that encouraged full involvement in the study as a strategy to provide the best information for analysis. Consequently, when the gatherings occurred, they were highly participatory and occasionally took the approach of an open forum, allowing the pastors to engage each other culturally in a promotional fashion.

There were also times during the monthly social gatherings when the participants operated like a focus group. They listened and learned from each other by playing the dual role of tutors and students while they communicated cross-culturally. Morgan (1998) believed that focus groups aid in understanding the dimensions of diversity that extend beyond the ethnicity and language of the participants' comfort level during discussions. His belief appears to be evident in the mind of participant 7 who wrote, "This group helped to build relationships, gave opportunity to minister to each other, provided time to explore and deepen spiritual awareness." Participant's 7 confirmation of Morgan's argument leads to the perception that working together with this duality (focus group and role play) allowed them to broaden their individual and group understanding of cultural diversity. Participants 2 and 7 confirmed this observation.

Dialogue took the central position during the monthly social gatherings with great interest. Ariarajah (1998) made the case for dialoguing in order to find common ground or to be able to relate to other peoples' views in the religious world. In part, the intent of the project was to engage in dialogue for consensus with respect to cross-cultural appreciation, including the pastors' religious thinking.

Pulpit Exchange Preaching Observation

The pulpit exchange provided the opportunity for expressing pastoral commitment as it related to cross-cultural diversity. From a congregational perspective, the pulpit exchange enabled the pastors to extend themselves cross-culturally to the Crossroads congregants who willingly allowed them to get a first impression of the church's cultural brand of corporate Adventist worship. Conversely, the pastors, through their ministering, exposed the congregants to hearing the message from a different cultural perspective. Participant 7 expressed his apprehension of coming to preach due to language fluency, but had quite the opposite experience after preaching. Participant 2 observed that he was pleasantly surprised at the receptivity of the congregation (see Appendix).

Highlights of Journal Reflections

Participant 1: experience in ethnic diversity churches as reason for participating in project, believer in multiculturalism, commends the project, thinks it's a challenge to get churches to form mono-cultural to multi-cultural environment, noted cultural difference in welcome and feelings of acceptance, sermon prepared specifically for audience, supports the idea that cross-cultural engagement absolutely necessary.

Participant 2: New York City culturally diverse, believes the local church has the answers for cultural diversity, meetings generated beneficial ideas for dealing with ethnic diversity, VIP treatment, and great fellowship and desire for more, the expanding the fellowship to the wider faith community, cultural dinner revelations, new perspective of fellowship and worship barriers removing, the house hold of faith. Participant 3: personal

benefits from individuals' perspectives, use of generational representation, relationship building, and ministering. Participant 4: open discussion, shared personal journey, the use of technology in ministry, the fellowship lunch, ministering together, opportunity to reduce ethnic isolation, polarization, political, and project significance. Participant 5: familiarity with cultural mix, group discussion unfocused, sermon consideration, desires that intervention be mandatory. Participant 6: expresses appreciation for being in the project, honor given to pastors' spouses in India, unity among workers through cross-cultural exchanges, intervention proven beneficial to group, and important for mission advancement. Participant 7: cultural discovery, ethnic food revelation, pastoral unity important for improvement in ministry, different cultural interpretation, cosmetic differences, common denominator Jesus, appreciating different cultures, the purpose of God in cultural diversity, language reservation and church fellowship, and personal enriching experience.

The participants' journal reflections seem to emanate from their rich cultural heritage, which included their professional and personal experiences. Collectively, the information they provided resembles Swinton and Mowat's (2006) notion of descriptive, prescriptive, and theoretical segments of written report. As noticed, the reflections were descriptive in the sense that some of the participants made efforts to explain the operation of culture. Participant 1 particularly noted that institutions tend to preserve culture, whereas movements tend to create it. Prescriptively, the majority of the participants suggested a solution to treat the pastoral conflict. Some of the suggestions are as follow:

Participant 1, preparation for the culture of Heaven in spite of our backgrounds;

Participant 7, listen to, respect, and value the culture of others;

Participant 2, embrace each other as the household of faith;

Participant 4, inspire and encourage togetherness by sharing personal journeys;

Participant 3, embrace diversity.

The theoretical ideas proposed were somewhat limited; in fact, only two of the pastors ventured into this arena. Participant 2 believed the local church is the launching pad for cross-cultural mission advancement and participant 7 observed that differences in language, life style, labor, and worship are essentially cosmetic.

The reflections focused on individually-oriented responses, rather than collaborative reflection. Each pastor wrote from his own perspective based on his interaction with the group and the church-related activities. Their individualism served to strengthen findings by providing more, rather than less information for comparison. In addition, from their journal reflections, one can infer that the pastors provided a window for viewing their interaction with the other participants and with the Crossroads congregation.

Formulated Themes

From their journal reflections, themes emerge which represent the importance the participants place on promoting cross-cultural engagement in the Conference. These themes provide insights into the investment of cultural integration in pastoral ministry. Morgan mentioned sacrificing individuals' details in favor of comparison of opinions and experiences (1998, p. 33). Based on this consideration and coupled with the purpose of the research question, two common and connected themes—cross-cultural capacity improvement and culturally diverse ministry—are drawn for development. As a qualitative research approach, these two themes will bring to view certain issues that

address cross-cultural engagement for the pastors, while also reflecting the collective thoughts of the participants.

Cross-cultural Capacity Improvement

This theme resonates with the original problem (pastoral conflict) in the Conference, which each participant alluded to in different ways. It suggests insufficient, rather than a lack of cultural competence which Adams (1995) believed amounts to cultural knowledge, cultural sensitivity, and cultural awareness. Cultural competence means the pastors, as professionals, harmonize in their attitudes while working effectively in diversified cultural circumstances (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989).

Davis (1997) sees competence as improving cultural relations. He thinks that cultural competence is integration and transformation of individuals' and groups' information to particular areas that would increase the quality of life. Cultural competence, therefore, could mean the ability to operate efficiently in given cultural contexts. Included in Davis' argument for cultural competence is the idea of having genuine concern for what is important to others. The discussion of cultural competency, as Adams (1995) pointed out, raises the question of cultural knowledge, cultural awareness, and cultural sensitivity. Cultural knowledge is acquaintance with certain information of an ethnic group. Cultural knowledge may rest at the cognitive level of the pastors and, therefore, it may stimulate them to be highly theoretical; however, with the association of practice—awareness and sensitivity—comes the living experience of competence (Adams, 1995).

Cultural awareness is developing sensitivity and understanding of other ethnic groups, which usually involves internal changes in terms of attitudes and values (Adams,

1995). Cultural awareness, therefore, informs the pastors' ability for community interactions. It also expands their understanding of others because of the healthier climate (Kneebone, 2007). To be culturally sensitive, on the other hand, is to be aware that cultural differences and similarities exist and refrain from assigning any value to them.

Cultural sensitivity incorporates both knowledge and awareness according to Adam's (1995) definition. Awareness and sensitivity also refer to the qualities of openness and flexibility that people develop in relation to others (Adams, 1995). Vested with these aspects of cultural ingredients, the pastors would find themselves in a position of being more efficient while working in churches that are becoming more culturally diverse. Participants 1 and 6 attested to this fact. Participant 1 spoke about his experience and appreciation for culturally-diverse church pastoring. He wrote, "As a pastor that worked his entire ministry in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual churches, I jumped on the call to be part of Pastor Thomas' project. I am a believer in multi-cultural churches." Participant 6 comparing himself with the subject, also acknowledged his experience working in Korea as well as in multi-ethnic churches in GNYC.

Identified Barriers Removal

One participant expressed his reservations of churches changing their cultures. He failed to justify his submission, but one can conclude it is a barrier issue. The barriers in consideration here are specific to ethnic profiling (to analyze and classify a person based on personal information) and labeling (a way of describing a person or group). The participants identified these barriers and they are liable to impede cultural integration, which is a step in the direction of conflict reduction among the pastors. The ethno-

cultural grouping within the conference may conceivably need reconstituting in order to reflect the notion of barriers removal.

In attempting to remove these barriers, pastors must first recognize the differences among the cultures as well as the differences that exist within cultures in their churches. Second, they must value diversity by respecting certain differences observed in other pastors, including customs, behaviors, thoughts, traditions, style of communication, and institutions. Third, pastors should be aware of their own cultural values and draw possible parallels. They should look within themselves for prejudices and stereotypes that may inhibit their effective communication with other pastors and members from different cultures.

Three of the participants specifically referred to barriers removal. Participant 2 welcomes the thrust for their elimination. He wrote, “What a sight! It is surely a glimpse of heaven on earth.” Participant 1 supports their removal. He said, “We need to prepare for the time when none of the subcultures will matter but the culture of heaven and the oneness of Christ’s followers regardless of their background.” Participant 4 pinpointed them as isolation, ethnic and political polarization.

Pastors’ Professional Growth

Professional development is the responsibility of each pastor. It is self-stewardship to stay abreast of the rapidly changing circumstances in ministry. The support of continuing education for pastors by the Conference emphasizes the importance of professional growth, especially in this rapidly changing society. Pastors can attend seminars and workshops on diversity outside the organization for personal growth. The Conference can organize training programs for workers’ meeting.

Each pastor should have a professional growth plan that would guide him or her through his or her development. In the areas of specific need should be cultural diversity that may be approached as a community of inquiry. To follow the path of community of inquiry would bring into focus both social and cognitive presence. Social presence, Garrison pointed out, is “the ability of participants to identify with a group, communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop personal and affective relationships progressively by projecting their individual personalities” (2011, p. 23).

In corroboration with the concept of social presence, Stodel, Thompson, and MacDonald (2006) believed that nurturing social presence could be an indispensable antecedent to meaningful discourse. Social presence in a pastoral environment such as GNYC would be to create a certain climate conducive to the support and encouragement of inter-cultural growth (Garrison 2011). By sharing themselves personally and professionally, the pastors promote a climate of trust and camaraderie. This climate encourages freedom of expression, thereby contributing to building understanding that is crucial for cultural integration. Trust also stimulates interaction (Garrison 2011). Commenting on interaction, participant 3 wrote, “This group helped me to build relationships, gave opportunity to minister to each other, provide time to explore and deepen spiritual awareness and provided participants a safe place to share needs and concerns.” It is thus prudent to conclude that social presence is the pretext for cognitive presence.

Through Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) comes the idea that cognitive presence has to do with learners who, through sustained discourse, are able to develop and confirm meaning while working in a critical community of inquiry. Garrison (2007)

later expressed cognitive presence as a process of deriving meaning through mutual investigation. Accordingly, the pastors adopting the position as a community of inquiry would gain better understanding of their diversified peers through sustained reflection and discussion (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000). The point of focus here is community-building aided by cross-cultural relevancy. All the participants expressed this idea in different ways.

Culturally Diverse Church

Church fellowship, which forms the major part of pastors' ministry within the GNYC like many other protestant dominations, has been operating along a segregated path from its inception. The demographic shift from Caucasian adherents to rising minority groups has reconfigured segregation at the present time from race-related to language-oriented worship for the most part. This brand of fellowship supports the isolationistic approach for ministry. However, this worship style does have its benefits for a particular body of people; given the present societal changes negating integrated worship and failing to be community-oriented may be deemed counter-productive. The cosmopolitan nature of New York City is certainly reason for mission upgrade in the churches if it must extend the gospel to everyone as our agenda dictates. Therefore, the following are a few suggestions intended for addressing this issue:

1. Integrated up-grade: Given the fact that the church is committed to preaching the gospel to everyone (which includes languages and communities), there is a need for upgrade from mono-cultural to integrated worship as participant 1 alluded to when he spoke about preparing for the culture of heaven.

2. From monolithic to bilingual: Some churches, including French, Hispanic, and

Koreans that conduct worship in their ethnic languages can move to a bi-lingual (English included) form of worship for diversity reasons. Since most of the pastors speak English, which is the official language, the possibility for wider fellowship will be greater. In addition, the pastors who are the focus of this study would have opportunity to access one another's pulpit with fewer reservations, thus narrowing the conflict gap among them.

3. Vision for Mission: The church must adjust its vision for today's mission environment. Technological advances are reformatting communication in the corporate world as well as in the church, leading the congregants to embrace change. Therefore, for the benefit of those who access the church technologically, it would be prudent to embrace the widest media coverage for the widest audience possible. Participant 4 singled this out as one of the integrative measures for pastoral communication and church growth.

4. The church as foundation: Participant 2 thought that the church is the nascent point for the development of cultural integration. The church is the foundation of the Conference and its general posture helps to determine the pastors' agenda. An integrated church will necessarily lead the pastor into a similar conversion (providing he is not yet persuaded) by affecting his mind-set because of his work environment. Perhaps a simple way to initiate this process will be to use small groups within the church to infuse the congregation. This can be done in segments. Participant 3 praised this idea and expressed his gratitude for the experience he gained. He intends to incorporate the idea in his responsibility as Youth Director in the conference. He specifically noted, "This group helped me to build relationship." This, of course, is the essence of reaching outculturally.

5. A health care chaplaincy rule: Chaplains in health institutions, regardless of their religious persuasions, are committed to ministering to everyone within the facility they serve, regardless of people's faith. Like chaplains, the church should adapt such an approach towards the community, which of course would mean the incorporation of cultural diversity.

6. Food Fellowship: The use of food figures very prominently in both the corporate and the religious world. It is common knowledge that business deals are made over dinner and social dining is an act of fellowship and, at times, is used for courtship. In the biblical enclosure, there are several references relating to food being used for cultural fellowship. For example, the king of Babylon attempted to use food as a mode of integration for the Hebrew boys into the Babylonian culture (Dan 1:5-16). We have Abraham extending hospitality to divine beings by sharing a meal with them (Gen18:1-8). In the New Testament, the common meal served as the point of intersection for the Jews and Gentiles (Acts 2:46; 20:7-11). The researcher's visit to Punjab, India alarmed his cultural sensitivity when mingling with the Punjabis. In every home or business place, tea and biscuits were offered. In some cases, a full meal took the place of the snacks. Having eaten ten minutes before arriving at a home or business place was not excusable; one was expected to partake according to their custom. To refuse drink or food meant spurning their welcome and offending their hospitality.

7. Church realignment: The structure of the churches within the Conference poses a tremendous challenge for culturally diverse fellowship by catering to ethnic ministry as opposed to community ministry. The churches are divided into five basic divisions and each division except one conducts worship in its particular ethnic traditions. One of the

divisions has subdivisions, each worshipping in a different tongue or culture. Adding to the complexity are the pastors themselves with language issues. According to the secretariat office, there are 84 pastors in the field. While they all speak English, 50% of them prefer to communicate in their native tongue. This language barrier both in the pastorate and in church worship makes it difficult for pastors and members seeking to promote intra-cultural fellowship. Participant 1 who identifies himself as having experience in intercultural ministry and awareness of the ethnic structure wrote, “It will be quite a challenge to change the single cultured or one race based church into a multi-cultural environment.” To address this challenge it would be necessary to realign the churches where possible from language-based to community-based.

Realignment raises the question of homogeneity (being the same) and cloning (being identical), which, of course, are forms of segregation. While sameness and being identical makes good vegetable sense presently, the cultural diversity tidal wave currently sweeping across old landmarks of ethnic majority and minority in New York City calls for a form of cultural accommodation, not to stem the tide but to ride with it. Certainly, there are those who would argue that homogenous and clone worship has its benefits and should continue. The idea of realignment is not to destroy one’s culture, but to integrate it into the wider spectrum of worshipers. In such cases, the pastors can provide different services to cater for the segregated and the accommodated worshipers.

Without question, approaching diversified cultural worship presents challenges; nevertheless, in the interest of its inclusive mission, the church can rise to the occasion. To embark upon this cultural pathway, it would be prudent for the congregants to be encouraged to value their cultural heritage and to strengthen their communities. They

must understand that their integration is to come together intentionally to compliment and support one other. In order to achieve this goal, the members must be confident enough in their faith venture so that they do not have to be defensive nor authoritative in the quest for intercultural worship. In addition, there should be a willingness to understand the dynamics involved and a readiness to handle the responsibilities (Edberg, 2009).

This theme poses a serious challenge for the pastors because of the structural dynamic of the pastorate in the Conference. The ethnic division and language barriers are perhaps the major contributors to this challenge as previously mentioned. This brand of ministry is too member-focused with very little, if any, community-direction, hence the need for cultural integration. Participant 7 articulated it this way: “We need to learn to see the beauty of all cultures. We are to respect and value people who look, worship and eat differently than we do.”

Being cognizant of the fact that ministry goes beyond the congregation (e.g., health intuitions, educational facilities, incarceration systems, and civic organizations), it would be prudent for the pastors to adopt the practice of officiating interculturally. Therefore, a contemporary and traditional mix with a cultural packaging would be appropriate for receptivity by those in the pews, as well as those in the communities where the pastors minister.

Interpretation of Reflections

Swinton and Mowat noted that “qualitative research draws our attention to the crucial fact human experience is inherently interpretive and polyvalent” (2006, p. 255). This argument is encouragement to the researcher seeking to deal with highly subjective

data. While the participants' obviously had dissimilar experiences during the intervention, it is evident from their writings that they believe that the intervention can be beneficiary for the pastors in the conference. The majority of them further indicated their willingness to support similar aspirations. Smith and Ayers (2006) made a valid point concerning the interplay between culture and experience by observing that culture is largely responsible for shaping the way one makes meaning of his experience in the world. However, this resonates well for the vocation of pastors and the philosophy of cultural integration. In addition, this submission, rightly applied within the circle of the clergies as cross-cultural engagement, promises understanding, appreciation, and consequently, less friction among the pastors. Participant 7 mentioned something of a paradoxical nature. He seemed to think that pastors have conflict, not for conflict sake, but because of their cultural insensitivity and pastoral occupational hazard (jack-of-all-trade syndrome). His opinion is further reason for meaningful consideration of cultural diversity.

Analytical Considerations

This model of assessment, though appropriate for the project under review, comes with the possibility of the researcher's bias or interpretive predicament due to its subjective nature. Swinton and Mowat (2006) compounded the issue by arguing that, in reflective qualitative research, the researcher influences the research and the research influences him or her. Acknowledgment of this crisis, especially while attempting to analyze the thoughts of this culturally diverse group, raises the question of accuracy of representing the participants' intentions. As though to encourage the researcher to take a positive approach to the crisis, Swinton and Mowat also stated, "Qualitative research

draws our attention to the crucial fact human experience is inherently interpretive and polyvalent” (2006, p. 255). Accordingly, the researcher’s theoretical sensitivity—ability to discern incite understanding separating pertinent from what is not the researcher self-awareness and ability to function effectively (Swinton & Mowat, 2006)—aided his decision. In short, a conscious effort was made to avoid over-generalization and prevent losing focus of the participants’ perspectives and experiences and to contribute to a fair and reliable conclusion

The responses from the pastors were individually oriented, rather than collaborative. That is, each pastor wrote from his own prospective based on his involvement in the project. The resulting effect was the provision of a window for viewing the theological implication of cross-cultural engagement. The kind of theology referred to by Swinton and Mowat is that which involves truth in action and a sense of the spiritual that comes down to the familiar questions of who am I, who are you, and what is this world (2006, p. 196). The answers to these questions come as revelations and discoveries which the authors consider the importance of practical theology (p.211)—reaching and eating the theology of Jesus (Luke 7:34).

Participants 1, 2, and7, in particular, subscribe to the view that cross-cultural integration should be embraced with an eschatological anticipation of the grand amalgamation of all cultures. With respect to the effect of the intervention, some participants excitedly conveyed their feelings into their reflections as a critical incident report. They described their learning experience as ranging from good to excellent. Because of the project, they experienced varied measures of conversion and are more equipped for ministry. On a scale of significance, they considered the intervention very

important personally and, in addition, they were able to enforce a togetherness among themselves that will strengthen their working relations in the future. Very noticeable in their writings was the question of practical inquiry. They commented on the practicality of the experience gained and its application towards their ministry.

Further, the environment promoted a sort of collaborative learning in addition to fostering high levels of interaction. Participant 3 put it very succinctly when he wrote, “The topics were relevant in such a way that many engaged in the conversation and we learned from everyone’s contribution.” Chase et al. wrote that “significant cultural differences become apparent in the ways in which participants write about their own identity in online postings, the degree of ‘self-revelation’ they display” (2002, p. 9). This observation is remarkably evident in the pastors’ journal reflections; even though there were focus discussion, intentional interaction, and collaborative learning. The two Caucasian pastors made known their culturally diverse background (the group with whose activities, beliefs, and customs they most strongly identified) and expressed themselves with a sense of assertiveness, whereas the other five pastors took a more subdued posture as students who are willing to learn. One of the Caucasians assessed most of the discussions as “shop talk,” while the five non-Caucasians drew a completely opposite conclusion.

Nevertheless, the personal experiences and challenges of the participants in dealing with diversity give indications of a positive correlation with cross-cultural engagement and pastoral togetherness within the Conference. By practicing cultural flexibility, the pastors can increase their relational support with each other. Cultural flexibility allows one to value another’s world views. It supports the development of

better relationships, discourages stereotyping others, and leads to the review of one's own values (Scott, 2007). Carter put it very succinctly: "Cultural flexibility encompasses the individual's ability to cross different social and symbolic boundaries" (2010, p. 3). The notion of flexibility brings into question the idea of the pastors' becoming cross-cultural. This journey begins with each pastor seeking to share one another's environment in an attempt for pastoral harmony.

This study, therefore, continues the exploration of the interaction of the participants with occasional use of guided discussion for understanding the participants' experiences and their beliefs on cross-cultural engagement. What emerged is that promoting cross-cultural engagement among the pastors is important for effective ministry within the GNYC and that it should be incorporated in their professional growth plan. For the culturally diverse pastors, the study served to confirm and reinforce their position. Overall, the participants either called for attention to or suggested an obligation in their responses for cross-cultural engagement among the pastors in the Conference in the interest of effective ministry.

This study was based on a sampling domain that represented the pastors in the Conference, though the general focus was on ethno-culturality. The findings are limited in the light of a full discussion on cross-cultural conflict. The quality of the participants' journal reflections indicated the interest and time they put into the study. The findings, however, are as follows: (a) embracing cultural diversity strengthens relationships and therefore, lessens conflicts; (b) time gained from conflict reduction coupled with fiscal responsibility means more resources for ministry—the mission of the conference; (c) more cross-cultural ministry will lessen duplication of services and appeal to broader

cultural diversity; (d) cross-cultural competency will aid in accelerating ministry growth.

This study has certainly demonstrated the sensitivity of the issue and sounded an alarm for needed attention during this time of accelerating growth and the complexity of the phenomenon. It has implications for further studies. This project has certainly benefitted the researcher by increasing his knowledge of cross-cultural competence and strengthening his leadership skills.

Conclusion

Considering the diverse collage of the pastors in the Conference, the complex, dynamic, and continually evolving nature of cultural diversity in the wider community, coupled with the limitations of this study, it is clear that further exploration will be prudent. Because this subject is understudied within the conference, replication is recommended using an additional measuring instrument that would render judgment that is more accurate. This study was instructor-focused, as opposed to being pastor-focused; therefore, the decision to obtain participants from within the conference to enhance the interpretation of the data may also have limited the study's applicability to other organizations. Nevertheless, it may be of interest to other SDA conferences that are experiencing similar challenges of cultural diversity.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY

The implementation of promoting cross-cultural engagement in the GNYC was an effort to reduce the conflict among the pastors through intentional relationship-building. It was an interesting ethnic voyage discovering how the Conference transitioned from majority (Caucasians) control to minority (other ethnic groups) control. The study utilized an approach of social gatherings and pulpit exchange that strengthened the pastors' cultural diversity experience to relate better to one another. The research is important because it enhances relationship-building, which will encourage pastors to work more closely together and, consequently, expand the mission of the Conference notwithstanding the difficulties involved.

Cognizant of the sensitivity of the issues involved, the researcher approached the study, finding courage in the famous words of Frederick Douglass who so pointedly declared, "Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation, are people who want crops without ploughing the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning; they want the ocean without the roar of its many waters." I take this statement to mean that there will be a cost attached to whatever is desirable and we should not forego it because of the cost. He gives us a good reason to pursue, rather than back down from unfavorable challenges when he states, "The struggle may be a moral one, it may be a physical one, or it may be both. But, it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing

without a demand; it never has and never will.”

Douglas’ thought reminded the researcher of his introductory visit as the new pastor of the New Life Seventh-day Adventist church to Dian Foster, Counsel Woman for the South Bronx district in the Borough of the Bronx. During the protocol exchange, she remarked, “While everyone is taking a seat as leaders, we must take a stand.” Admittedly, the language of these two civil servants (Fredrick Douglas and Dina Foster) motivated the researcher to pursue the subject. The intention of the investigation was to be educational and sociological, not confrontational.

This study is valuable because it encourages the pastors to understand and appreciate cultural diversity in a way that causes greater bonding among them and the simplicity of it makes it easy for the pastors and administrators of the conference to understand and implement its principles. The research stresses the practicality and indispensable ideal of relating culturally with each other. The researcher believes that cultural integration is valuable for advancing the work in the Conference, which the participants also demonstrated

The goal of this project was to stimulate pastoral togetherness by promoting cross-cultural engagement. A string of six social events coupled with a pulpit exchange schedule for each participant provided opportunities for intentional intercultural interaction, assessment, and valuable lessons learned. The focal point of these interventions was largely to assist the pastors in developing meaningful diversity relationships with one another. The objective of this research, to a significant extent, was accomplished. However, the duration and regularity of the social gatherings may not be sufficient to rate the findings as significantly important.

Conclusion

Cultural diversity, perhaps, is the new wave of ministry in the conference and, therefore, it is in the pastors' interest to stimulate the atmosphere by becoming involved in the promotion of cross-cultural engagements in their environment. Cultural diversity is not to be politicized or avoided, whereas the pastors need to commit to the common good of the ministry and seek to maintain cultural sensitivity and balance towards conflict resolution. That would necessitate mutual submission to forego preferences to function together without one culture becoming another.

The ability, therefore, to adapt or to meet these demands that come with the demographic environmental and social evolution certainly requires the pastors' attention. Whereas maintaining a sense of belonging and meaning should be important regardless of our social change, cultural diversity remains an opportunity for promoting unautocratic interaction.

Promotion cross-cultural engagement in the Conference may take different approaches, however; regardless of the approach, communication would be necessary for effectiveness. This communication goes beyond the dissemination of information to embrace relationships. In order to develop this relationship, mutual trust, respect, and understanding among the cultural groups will be necessary. In addition, there is the aspect of cultural conscience, which is an overlapping of the three elements—trust, respect, and understanding. Though it may be overlapping, cultural conscience brings in the idea of sensitivity for other cultures. This will obviously mean pastors studying the cultures of fellow pastors.

There is also the question of competence. A cross-cultural pastor has the ability to

induce cross-cultural camaraderie and to encourage unity. The literature review underscores the importance for the recognition for people groups, homogeneous units, self-encouragement, mutual understanding, and cross-cultural exploration.

The cultural wars in the GNYC have certainly given the researcher cause for concern. Looking through the window of pastoral stewardship and being aware of the negative effect that cultural conflict has on our mission and choosing to remain inactive about it amounts to a dereliction of duty. Therefore, this project was designed to foster constructive diversity relationships leading towards conflict resolution among the pastors. It included the use of a seminar for cross-cultural interaction stimulation and accessing volunteers for experimenting with social gatherings and pulpit exchanges. A profile of the Conference was also given, describing to some extent its complex nature in terms of diversity and the inertia the mission faces. The participants were all volunteers and, therefore, the program took into consideration the sacrifice they needed to make in order to make the project a reality.

Within the design of the intervention came the reason for the choice of method—qualitative—a relevant sample frame and sampling domain that represented four out of five of the established groups in the conference and concluded with a narrative intervention that characterized the ebb and flow of the project.

This study has been a fact-finding mission very much dependent upon the journey, which comprised the different facets of the project that dictated the destination while they played out in the experiment.

This study was based on a sampling domain that represented the pastors in the conference proportionately, but not ethnically and, therefore, the findings are

inconclusive in the light of a full discussion on cross-cultural conflict. The depth of information from participants was limited by the amount of time they wished to invest in the study, including their level of commitment to writing their journal reflection in response to the research question. The findings, however, are the following: (a) embracing cultural diversity strengthens relationships and lessens conflicts, (b) time gained from conflict reduction coupled with fiscal responsibility translates into more resources for adventure—improving the mission of the conference, and (c) More cross-cultural ministry will lessen duplication of services and appeal to broader cultural diversity. As the researcher, my involvement in the project has certainly benefitted my leadership skills and increased my ability to communicate cross-culturally.

Considering the diverse collage of pastors in the conference, the complex, dynamic, and continually evolving nature of cultural diversity in the wider community coupled with the limitations of this study, it is evident that further exploration will be prudent. Because this subject is understudied within the Conference, replication is recommended using an additional measuring instrument that will render more accurate judgment. This study was instructor-focused, as opposed to being pastor-focused; therefore, the decision to obtain participants from within the Conference to enhance the interpretation of the data may have also limited the study's applicability to other organizations. Nevertheless, it may be of interest to other SDA conferences that are experiencing similar challenges of cultural diversity.

Recommendations

This project benefitted the researcher and the participants by building relationships through cultural integration. However, there are implications that call

attention to or perhaps an obligation for cultural diversity integration among the pastors. Whereas this study did not bring significant additional knowledge to the wealth of cross-cultural education, it has certainly demonstrated the sensitivity of the issue to the GNYC by sounding an alarm for needed attention during this time of accelerating growth and the complexity of cultural diversity within the constituency of the Conference.

In addition, because of the insights gained from this study, the awareness of the cultural conflict among the pastors, and the need to expand the mission of the Conference, the researcher recommends the following:

1. That pastors get more face-to-face interaction with different ethnic pastor to improve cross-cultural competence.

2. That pastors incorporate approaches in their ministry that are supportive of cultural diversity.

3. That pastors seek to be culturally appropriate by seeking to practice interculturally-based ministries.

4. That pastors practice a balanced ministry between cultural gentrification and the emerging intercultural congregation.

5. That pastors develop programs to increase cross-cultural understanding among their members.

6. That an atmosphere be created to appreciate and celebrate cultural differences through cultural sensitivity and awareness.

7. That the GNYC encourage cross-cultural competency for pastors through seminars and emphasis on professional growth at workers meetings.

8. That pastors be encouraged to become culturally diverse learners by providing them with educational opportunities and access to financial support.

9. That the necessary support and structure be provided for the pastors by group mentoring that would aid in refining their experiences.

10. That communications be promoted that encourage appreciation of differences.

11. That pastors be provided with opportunities to demonstrate their cross-cultural competence by conducting yearly pastors' evaluation.

Finally, the recommendations and limitations may be considered as areas for further research on cross-cultural engagement, whereas the pastors' perspectives and challenges as they relate to cultural diversity would be valuable for information in cultural diversity.

APPENDIX

PASTORS' JOURNAL REFLECTION

Participant (1)

As a pastor that worked his entire ministry in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual churches, I jumped on the call to be part of pastor Thomas' project. I am a firm believer in multi-cultural churches and I do commend this research into the field. However, I believe based on my experience in the endeavor it will be quite a challenge to change the single cultured, or even one race based church into a multi-cultural environment.

I attended the Crossroads SDA church with my whole family. We were greeted in a Christian way and beside some curious looks, we felt pleasant in an environment where we were the only Caucasians. The spirit of worship and praise filled the whole service, and I really enjoyed every minute of it and I hope the Lord did too. Until it was "my turn," I was not really talked to or welcomed by an elder or anyone else – I believe because it is the culture of the church and people who attend. Though in my churches and cultures we would pay attention to any guest speaker or a visitor regardless what is his/her background...

The sermon was accepted well, so I was told, even the children paid full attention. It is worth noticing that I had in mind my audience and culture when preparing the sermon, because I could have lost them easily of the type of the sermon and its delivery wouldn't have been accepted or boring to them, regardless of message.

I suppose the message made people more comfortable talking to me after the service. So the lunchtime was quite dynamic and I didn't felt any division on any level between the church family and me. As the entire volunteers agreed a cross-cultural engagement is absolutely necessary. Those who "inherit the earth" will be of every "nation, kindred, tongue and people" (Rev. 7:9) we need to prepare for the time when none of our subcultures will matter but the culture of heaven and the oneness of Christ followers regardless of their background. I would like to finish with one thought form a contemporary Christian writer Erwin R McManus: "The distinction lies in the fact that institutions preserve a dissipating culture will also join it in its ignoble demise... The church must raise her sail and move with the spirit if we are not to be left behind. It is not enough to simply hang on; we must move forward." –An Unstoppable force- p.34. Are we still a movement?

Participant (2)

New York City is a place of cultural diversity. A subway ride will tell you that you are surrounded with people from varied ethnicity. As a minister commissioned to preach the gospel to all the world, I can't help but ask myself, how can I reach out the multitudes? The local church setting is I believe the best place to start looking for answers.

A few months back, Pastor Oriel Thomas, presented his request to help him in completing his dissertation project on this subject. He invited some pastors representing ethnic churches to participate in this study in this study.

Meetings were helpful in discovering suggestions and ideas coming from personal experiences in dealing with diverse ethnicity. We discussed cultural similarities and differences and how to deal with cross-cultural problems.

I was invited to preach in his church in Manhattan. Upon arrival, members were so warm and accommodating. I was treated like VIP and I was tempted to think that maybe the pastor coached them to behave that way for some reasons. The time came for me to preach. There were some slight variations the way we worship so I have refer to the program bulletin once in a while. As I preached they were so attentive and responded quite well. I did not find someone sleeping maybe because this is the first time a Chinese-Filipino preacher is in their pulpit. The fellowship lunch was like a wedding reception with a wide variety of food. There was an “exclusive” birthday celebration in one part of the hall and the rest didn’t seem to mind. The blessing of a warm Christian fellowship made me long for more cross-cultural interaction among churches and faith communities.

Then, there was dinner at a vegetarian restaurant in Flushing. Wives were invited and most of them have never had a chance to get acquainted with each other. We talked about ethnic foods and how our own people eat. We learned from each other. The menu has crab, lobster, shrimp, eel, you name it and they have it but all are completely vegan.

Worship and fellowship display a new perspective when the cultural barrier is taken down, when we embrace each other as one household of faith. What a sight! It is surely a glimpse of heaven on earth.

Participant (3)

It is great pleasure to present the wonderful experience that we shared in Pastor Oriel Thomas’ monthly social gatherings, and pulpit exchange preaching. There are two things that I would like to highlight, Diversity, and the Small Group concept, which have brought enlightenment in to my ministry. First, this group was very diverse and Diversity brings a wide-range of perspectives that I needed in my personal life. It was multi-generational, which provided an assortment of benefits that can enhance my Youth Ministry.

Second, the Small Group concept allows me to maximize my talents and also maximize the potential of my ministry. The topics were relevant in such a way that many engaged in the conversation and we learned from everyone’s contribution. This group helped to build relationships, gave opportunity to minister to each other, provided time to explore and deepen spiritual awareness, and provided participants a safe place to share needs and concerns.

Participant (4)

I had the privilege of being a part of a group of colleges with Pastor Oriel Thomas as our moderator. We met on several occasions, in open discussions. We had the

opportunity to discuss ministry challenges as well as share our personal journey as a way of inspiration and motivation to others in the group. For me, it was not only the professional disclosures but the personal that made this experience beneficial. One such example includes when a pastor shares how we could use technology to enhance our family time when away or overseas with skype, magic jack or a new phone system that you can assign to your church phone number and it rings your cell phone anywhere you are without use of the call forwarding feature. Now that's cool.

I had the privilege of preaching for Pastor Oriel Thomas at Cross Roads Seventh-day Adventist Church. There we had the opportunity of sharing ministry together. We conducted a baby blessing and a prayer of anointing on a woman who found out she had what could be cancer. It was a spiritual time of healing as we held hands together, sang together and as the lady shed tears, we offered silent, as well as physical and spiritual comfort to her.

Both Pastor Thomas's family and my family had lunch together and spent time binding as pastoral colleges. The entire day was filled with fellowship and I was privileged to do a seminar in the afternoon on how to study the bible and enjoy it. The national night out also brought out some cultural differences in or eating which we celebrated.

I believe the time we spent together was of great benefit in helping us to breakdown the isolation we experience as pastors and build friendship and trust among us. This is especially significant since the group was ethnically diverse in a conference that is ethnically and politically polarized!

Participant (5)

I participated in thereof the four cross-cultural events sponsored by Pastor Thomas in conjunction with his program: the monthly pastors' meetings; the international night out; and the pulpit exchange. (In fact, I may have attended the diversity presentation as well but have no recollection of it at this time.) I will comment on these three in order.

I attended all of the monthly meetings held at the conference office, and if I had to be honest I would say they were not so out of the ordinary. I am a native New Yorker who has lived in cosmopolitan settings all my life, including a nine-year term in the mission field (in Southeast Asia) before coming back to the states in 2003. In addition, as a pastor within the "multi-ethnic sector" of the Great New York Conference, my churches are already ethnically diverse. But I mention all this just to say that spending time with people of other races and cultures is nothing new to me. The monthly pastors meetings were routine. And while we would occasionally discuss and area in which our area cultural perspectives differ, by and large we all just talked shop.

The night out with our wives was fun, of course. It is always fun to go out to eat, relax and have a good time with friends and church brethren. The meal was made doubly interesting by the fact that we ate at a strictly vegetarian Chinese restaurant, a combination that is about rarified and narrowly sub-cultural as you can get. In addition, it

was evident that some of those who attended clearly had time with the food. One pastor even said humorously, “next time we’ll go to and Italian restaurant.”

The thing is, I do not suppose there will ever be a next time. Moreover, therein may lie the value of the evening. However, I do not believe there were any real barriers to be broken during the meal – except the usual dynamic of getting to know new people – we will probably never go out like that again. For one thing, I do not know how many pastors take time to go out with other pastors in the first place, even of their own ethnicity. However, if some do, it’s highly unlikely that they would deliberately arrange a time when pastors from three or four of the other ethnic sectors would go out together at the same time. So in that regard our evening out was very special. (In fact, of the three exercises I participated in this was the most beneficial about strengthening relationships between pastors from different cultural backgrounds. In addition, strange as it may sound, it may not be a bad thing to make events like this mandatory in multi-ethnic settings like ours in Great New York.)

As for my preaching engagement in Pastor Thomas’s church, again I would have to say it was not unusual. Within the Great New York Conference, many of the multi-ethnic sector churches are diverse, and some have a high percentage of people from the Caribbean anyway, including my two of my three churches. Therefore, it was not a new setting for me. However, I will mention one interesting thing. Since I was aware of the fact that Pastor Thomas was doing an intercultural study I decided to present an extremely progressive sermon, something that might appeal to people to people like myself (a white, fourth generation, Italian-American). In fact I pushed the envelope quite a bit. As a result, I think I put Pastor Thomas in the awkward position of having to “cover” or clarify what I said, which he did for about ten minutes after I spoke. I did receive good feedback on the message, however. So maybe it was not so shocking after all. Moreover, I had a good time talking with people at my table during the potluck lunch.

Participant (6)

I ----- Pastor of the New York southern Asian Seventh - day Adventist church express my deep appreciate and thanks to Pastor Oriel Thomas for accepting me to participate in his project. I attend the monthly social gathering and shared in the activities, discussing the promotion of cross-cultural engagement among the pastors.

During our discussion, we were able to learn more the cultural background of the people of different nations. We found out that in a different culture, pastor’s spouse is treated differently. In my culture, (Indian) Pastor’s spouse is given the highest honor in the society.

In our monthly social gathering, we have discovered that exchanging cross-cultural ideas bring unity among the workers. Moreover, that further helps to boost work in Great New York Conference. Therefore our monthly pastor’s meeting, pulpit exchange preaching, and national night out proved beneficial and brought us more closer as Ministers of God to win more souls for his

Participant (7)

I participate in the monthly social gatherings with Adventist pastors from various cultures and I was amazed to see how our shared experiences were interpreted within each culture. Our first discussion was based on the culture complexities among the members of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The Church is comprised of a multitude of different cultures; we are to be able to create a system of integration, allowing each culture to find room in the Adventist faith for the salvation of all. Whatever one's culture, as Christian, we share the same set of values, and our culture lends a special flavor to our faith. Member in Haiti, Korea, Panama, and Africa may worship in different ways than those in France and Italy but the same Savior Jesus Christ saves us. We have different things we do in different ways, but we concluded that these differences in how we speak, live, eat, work and worship our God is essentially cosmetic.

In our multi-cultural, we have to do better at listening to each other. We need to learn to see the beauty of all cultures. We are to respect and value people who look, worship and eat differently than we do.

Our experience at the Chinese restaurant in Flushing, Queens was one of the most interesting for me. There were four or five pastors and their spouses, from various cultures. It was fun to sit and talk unguardedly about the differences in our cultures. It was the first time I had attempted to eat with two sticks of wood. I had a difficult time with the chopsticks. It was an exciting and humbling experience. That day I concluded that our God is truly a great artist. All He does, He does for the happiness of His children.

The preaching experience in Cross Roads Church, in Manhattan, was the pinnacle of my experience. The church is multi-racial and multi-cultural. I had some reservations about preaching there since English is not my arterial language but with Pastor Thomas insistence, I agreed. Though comprised of different cultures, I found the congregation to be very warm and open embracing my wife and I with joy and dignity.

The sermon was well received. I found them to be quite responsive, echoing each point with a resounding "Amen! Amen!" The experiences have undoubtedly enriched my ministry and my wife and I will forget.

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VITAE

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Education

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