

Principles for InterCultural Ministry Development



Office of
InterCultural Ministry Development
Episcopal Church in Province VIII

Terminology

Culture

Culture is the shared set of assumptions, beliefs, values, behaviors, rituals, symbols, language and practices that give identity and solidity to a people. Culture is an on-going process, evolving and adapting to new challenges. It is not explicitly taught nor is it effortlessly learned. It is absorbed in the process of socialization, and strengthened and amplified in the course of lifelong incidental learning. At one level "culture" exists only in the abstract. We look to the individual to see how her/his culture is integrated into their life. It is the human-made side of the environment.

- Jerry Drino,
from *A Resource on Cultural Sensitivity in the Ordination
Process*

In the most elementary form we can describe culture as *the way we do things around here*.
Jon Townsend, *Ibid*.

Ethnic

Ethnicity is the lived cultural identity of a large population base, which has been formed over hundreds, if not thousands of years. Within an ethnic group there are subcultures, which demonstrate one of the following cultural dynamics.

Mono-Cultural

A culture that is isolated from all other cultures. In reality such cultures rarely exists except in the most isolated regions of the world and even there the encroachment of the global villages has already touched them.

Cross Cultural

A cultural dynamic where persons of two or more cultures intentional "visit" each other's culture and then leave with varying degrees of being effected.

Multi-Cultural

The co-existence of several cultural groups in the same space with little or no intentionality for mutual enrichment and development.

InterCultural

A cultural dynamic where communities of several cultures heritage intentional coexist drawing the strengths from the other cultures while retaining their own cultural identity. Because each healthy culture evolves, the interaction of these cultures with each other will cause changes to occur in each community. The generational dynamic in each family are the most common experience of inter-cultural development.

Race

Race is a cultural construct that defines which ethnic group is superior and which groups are inferior. It was initiated by European and later US American colonial powers in order to maintain the dominance of their cultural positions and justify genocide, slavery, discrimination and oppression. Continued use of the term *race* is no longer appropriate because there are no biological/psychological/cultural/ethnic foundations for such a concept.

Principles

Mission as Reciprocal Relationships

The Hawaiian language does not have a term for the teacher-student relationship. Rather the concept is communicated in the phrase *a'o aku a'o mai*. *A'o* is fire, *aku* is to send, *mai* is to received and send again. Learning occurs as the *a'o* is sent, received and returned. InterCultural Ministry will only succeed if the participants

anticipate and embrace the possibility that every encounter will be reciprocal, *tat a'o' aku a'o mai* will occur over and over again. **Theologically**, God is found in the *a'o*, that which passes between people. This is the place where mission is discovered.

Lund Principle

In the spirit of collaboration, ministry should be guided by not doing separately what can be done together in the community of faith.

InterCultural Coalition

For the Church to engage in the demographic opportunities of the 21st Century it must act to gather communities and persons of different cultures, structures and religions for mutual mission and ministry development.

Common Ground

It is essential to find the common ground that links persons of various cultures, religions and ethnic interests to meet, mingle and define them.

New Majority – No Minorities

The use of the term “**minority**” is a part of the **racist** inheritance of our common history. It relegates a person or group to a permanent category that prevents them from emerging as an equal in society and the culture. Likewise, the term “**majority**” perpetuates the position of privilege, usually held by people of Euro-American descent. The reality is that the “**new majority**” in the streets of many of our towns and cities are not of European ancestry. In the Church the **New Majority** is made up of people from the rich ethnic diversity of our communities who embrace life described in the principles of this document. The **Old Majority** is defined by the White patriarchal culture that has driven American society since colonial times. The Gospel calls us to transform such attitudes for both the liberation of those who have benefited but are imprisoned by this illusion and for those who have been the victims of its existence.

Power Management

The Common Ground includes the issue of power and its management which offers the means whereby different cultures, structures and religions can connect and develop mutual ministry. Since the issue of power is often unconscious in the life of the church, and intentional effort must be sustained in order to work towards the goal of shared power in the life of the faith community. A particular difficulty arises when differing traditions of power are engaged in an inter-cultural situation that may include patriarchal, matriarchal, hierarchical, and egalitarian systems of authority and power.

Critical Mass

At least a third of the congregation must come from a second ethnic group before a reasonable degree of joint ownership of ministry and honesty in communications can be accomplished. Where the English-speaking congregation is the largest, this condition is necessary to ensure commitment to shared ministry development.

Leap of Faith

The inter-cultural adventure of faith is more easily undertaken by those who are searching for the Kingdom than by those who think that they have arrived. For the migrant or immigrant there is no choice but to risk trusting the unfamiliar in order to survive. The native has two options: react to the unfamiliar as a threat and will resist the adventure of faith, or recognize the opportunity to embrace the unknown and respond to the invitation to venture into a new land.

Hospitality

The Judeo-Christian tradition believes that the new comer may be the carrier of unique gifts, which only they can give to the community for the renewal of life. It is the reception of these gifts, their affirmation and nurture that become the basis of any inter-cultural ministry.

Need and Want and Note PC

Inter-cultural ministry development will happen because you **recognize the need** and **want it** for renewal of ministry. It will not happen because it should happen because it is politically correct.

Death and Resurrection

Ministry development happens when leaders acknowledge that their ministry only will go forward when the old structures and attitudes that support it die. They can affirm this because they know that change requires this as an ongoing part of the transition that leads to new life.

Baptismal Formation

The Baptismal Vows (BCP pp. 304-305) set before us the nature of our covenant with God and the means to be the extension of Christ's servant ministry.

Linking Mission and Ministry: Core Values

InterCultural Ministry will inevitably bring communities face to face with the mandate for relevant social action, both within the church structures and society. All present structures are based at some level on the power dynamics of exclusion. No ministry can survive unless the structures of power are changed. At the heart of such ministries are the **core values of liberation, healing and justice**.

Bridge Building Leadership

An inclusive, healthy and hopeful future for the Church and society depends upon lay and ordained persons who can build bridges of understanding and celebration between and among different cultures and religions. Such gifts need to be encouraged and nurtured in persons where the integration of the InterCultural Principles is obvious.

Incarnational Education and Training

The context and component by and in which persons are educated and trained for inter-cultural ministry needs to be related to the environment in which they intend to live and work.

Empowerment

Local leadership is empowered by the Church when at all levels ministry development requires:

- 1) Intentionally to be inclusive and inter-cultural
- 2) Long-range planning, strategy and evaluation
- 3) Shared leadership and authority among all cultural groups.

Unifying Symbols

The faith community must have a clearly formed and owned consensus that carries all activities forward towards incarnation the vision. Such a consensus will be carried by specific symbols and working metaphors that engender life when they are used. Without this the leadership will burnout and the vision will fail.

Multi-Congregation Strategy

Where possible three distinct ethnic-cultural congregations should negotiate to move towards a shared ministry development in a single parish. This strategy lessens the "outsider/insider," "old/new" power dynamics and has a greater opportunity for mutual accountability.

Inter-Generational Ministry

In local congregations is essential to plan for three generations and their particular needs. In First Nations (Native American-Indigenous) and original Hispanic communities, such as in the Southwest, these categories need to be considered through different lens. However, for the immigrant communities the following can be more clearly seen:

- The **first generation's** primary focus is on survival with marked conservatism. Often there are language barriers that reinforce these cultural dynamics. A minimal amount of change being will be desired. Ministry development will probably necessitate a separate worship time for linguistic, liturgical, cultural and leadership considerations.
- The **second generation** will often distance themselves from the first generation, wanting to not be seen as *different* from the rest of American society. However, because of racism they may very well seek an InterCultural faith community where there are people from many ethnic backgrounds that allow them to blend and not stand out. Youth tend to distance themselves from the first generation identity unless the school or church community affirms the values of their ethnic heritage. They are often called the **1.5 generation**.
- The **third generation** will often desire to have some contact and a sense of cultural roots with the first generation. They will not so much want to participate Sunday by Sunday in the ethnic community, but know that it is there to return "home to."

Regaining Cultural Roots: Native and Immigrant

Many Americans of European ancestry have no differentiated sense of what their own culture. The discussion of Inter-Generational considerations place many Euro-Americans within the dynamics of the third or fourth generation. However, it is essential for Euro-American discover their own European cultural roots if they are to enter into joint ministry and mission with people of other distinct cultural origins. If they fail to transcend "being

American," conflict will be inevitable. **Essential to all Euro-Americans** is the commitment to taking ownership for their inherited *racism* and to work at its transformation at the personal, social and institutional levels. The cultural identity with being native to the culture that was structured through genocide and slavery is an inheritance that must be transformed if the attitudinal seeds of privilege and power are to be set aside. The advantage of an inter-cultural faith community is that individuals must confront their unexamined inherited assumptions with the frequent interaction with other human beings who do not come from the same positions of privilege and yet make up the faith community and the neighborhoods in which ministry is exercised.

Patience in the Vision for Change

Sociologists point to the fact that it takes at least 10 years for change in a system to become permanent. Communities are dealing with the transformation of centuries old patterns and perceptions such as racism and classism. These are often buried deep in the unconscious. If not intentionally brought to the surface any change will be resisted. If the vision and strategic planning for change does not include a half-generation for real transformation then the endeavor will collapse under the inertia of the past.

Icon of Diverse Leadership

It is essential that liturgical leadership and staff ministry leaders represent the diversity that is desired in the faith community. Liturgically these leaders become icons affirming the universal nature of the Divine in all peoples, times and places and the authority that has been given to them by their Creator. This is a most important non-verbal aspect of ministry development.

Liberation of the Gospel: No Culture has the Gospel

It is impossible to understand the Gospel if it is held captive by one culture. All cultures are inclined to dogmatize religion since it is the core of any culture. This cultural dynamic is for the sake of stability and preservation. The Gospel is meant to transform and keep fluid any cultural dynamic, lest the religion of that culture be elevated to the level of an idol. The present situation in the Pacific Basin holds the promise of freeing the Gospel from a single cultural norm.

Spiritual Growth of Individuals

Experiencing people who are culturally different evokes conscious projections stemming from the vast diversity of our individual souls. If these projections are worked with then the richness of our inner life will have a new spring of renewal and insight. If these projections are not worked at religiously then two things will occur:

- 1) The individual will lose the richness of his or her own soul, or
- 2) The outer reality will be perceived either through a positive or negative distortion.

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