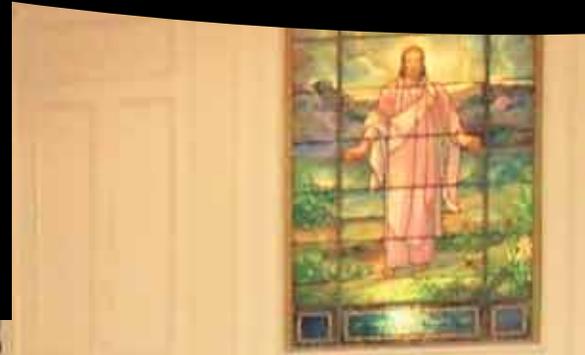




Volume 21 • Issue 2 • Fall 2011



# The Racial Ethnic TORCH



**Grow, transform,  
lead and develop**



# The Racial Ethnic TORCH



## A message from the director, Rhashell D. Hunter

Some of us cross cultures every day when we go to work or to school or enter our own households. To cross cultures in our religious context is to reach outside ourselves and enter into another person or group's experiences and understandings of life and faith. In doing so, new experiences emerge and opportunities arise to gain greater understandings of one's own culture.

Cross culturalism is not merely spending time with someone of a different race or culture. It is being open to and appreciating a person's racial and cultural differences. In Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/Presbyterian Women, we're called to engage the church in its mission to become more diverse and inclusive of all racial, ethnic, cultural and language groups, and to equip women for leadership in all ministries of the church. That is why I am especially excited to share with you about one of our newest initiatives, Cross Cultural Ministries.

A new mission field for us in the church is to engage in "mission in reverse" by consulting with European American congregations and mid councils and assisting them in their efforts to become diverse. The office of Cross Cultural Ministries acts as a resource to congregations and mid councils and works with the General Assembly Mission Council offices and other groups to provide leadership in developing strategies and ministries and in coordinating efforts for cross cultural ministry. By doing so, we assist the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in its efforts to become God's beloved community—building multiracial, multilingual and multicultural communities of faith and empowering congregations and mid councils as they seek to claim, celebrate and appreciate all of God's children of every race and culture.

In this issue, you will read more about cross cultural ministries, including learning about some churches that do not have a majority of any one culture in their congregations, and that instead have a balance of many diverse peoples.

We hope you will consider reaching outside yourself and entering into another's cultural experience in the church, for in doing so, some have entertained angels without knowing it.

## In this issue

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>The Newlink</b>                                  | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>Spotlight on Ministry</b>                        | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>Trusting God to do abundantly more</b>           | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Ethnic identity important part of God's call</b> | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>A glorious time under the Big Tent</b>           | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>National Multicultural Church Conference</b>     | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Cross Cultural Ministries</b>                    | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Who We Are</b>                                   | <b>13</b> |



6



8



4

## Save the date

**New Immigrants Theological Program**, December 9-11, Stony Point, N.Y. Classes continue for new immigrant laypeople who are leading ethnic worshipping groups or new church developments (NCDs). Contact for next group to start in January 2012: Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico, Dr. Guillermo Ramirez, drgramirez2@gmail.com.

**Sudan Mission Network**, December 5-6, Louisville, Ky. Annual meeting of Presbyterians supporting ministries in Sudan. Registration and information: Shary Getway at (724) 528-1612, or Miriam Gwin, wlgwin@worldnet.att.net.

**13th Annual National Multicultural Conference**, April 25-29, 2012, Charlotte, N.C. Co-sponsored by the Multicultural Congregational Support office, the Presbyterian Multicultural Network, the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic and its North Carolina presbyteries: Charlotte, Coastal Carolina, New Hope, Salem and Western North Carolina; and national and regional multicultural congregations. This conference will provide cutting-edge training led by motivated and experienced church professionals and practitioners in the field of multicultural church growth, innovative resources in the area of communication and cultural proficiency, and models of vital and growing multicultural congregations. For information visit: [www.pcusa.org/ministries/multicultural](http://www.pcusa.org/ministries/multicultural).

**National Taiwanese Presbyterian Council (NTPC) Annual Conference**, May 17-20, Washington, D.C.

The speaker will be Dr. Leong Seow, Old Testament professor from Princeton Seminary. The annual meeting of the

**On the cover:** For the members of Old Bergen Church, cross cultural ministry is an everyday way of life.

NTPC will be followed by a three-day study program with the theme “Biblical Survival Guides for Life: Wisdom Literature as Practical Theology.” For information contact Mei-hui Lai at [mei-hui.lai@pcusa.org](mailto:mei-hui.lai@pcusa.org).

**Southeast Asian Lay Training 2012**, May 27 - June 1, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Austin, Texas. Courses offered will be “Women & Ministry” and “Christian Ethics & Theology.” For information, contact Rev. James Oudom, [joudom@corfpc.org](mailto:joudom@corfpc.org), or (706) 969-2888.

**The 2012 Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women** will be held July 18-22, 2012, at the Gaylord Palms in Orlando, Fla. Contact Ann Ferguson at (800) 728-7228, x5365, or email [ann.ferguson@pcusa.org](mailto:ann.ferguson@pcusa.org) for more information. Check for updates about the Churchwide Gathering at [www.presbyterianwomen.org/gathering](http://www.presbyterianwomen.org/gathering).

## Barbara Campbell Davis retired in June from her position as executive presbyter

Barbara Campbell Davis retired in June from her position as executive presbyter of the Presbytery of New Hope in North Carolina. Prior to New Hope, she served as associate executive for the Synod of the Sun for sixteen years.

Campbell Davis has enjoyed a diverse career not only with the PC(USA), but

in the education and medical fields as well.

She earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Texas Southern University and a master's degree in science education from Tuskegee Institute. She also completed further study at Texas A&M, Texas Southern University, the University of North Texas and Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology.

Campbell Davis worked as a teacher for ten years in Texas and worked in medical research both in Texas at the Baylor College of Medicine and in Indiana.

Campbell Davis has also served in a variety of other ways throughout the Presbyterian Church including as chair of the General Assembly Mission Board, chair of the Stewardship and Communication Development Ministry Unit, delegate to the World Council of Churches in 1975 and to the World Alliance of Churches in 1997, and moderator of the Synod of Red River. She is also an elder at Faith Presbyterian Church in Goldsboro, N.C.

A celebration honoring her retirement was held by the Presbytery of New Hope on June 7.—*Toni Montgomery*



**Barbara Campbell Davis** retired in June from her position as executive presbyter of the Presbytery of New Hope in North Carolina.

# Spotlight on Ministry

## COTE Pentecost 2011 letter to the PC(USA)

By Lee Hinson-Hasty

*Coordinator for Theological Education and Seminary Relations*

Whenever I begin to get discouraged about the future of the church, I stop and think about students I have met in our Presbyterian seminaries over the last decade. These globally aware, missional, bright and energetic students are part of what the Committee on Theological Education (COTE) highlights as “a new generation of amazing candidates for ministry” that the church in many forms has, over and over again, recognized as called to ministry. “Who will lead our church?” is always a question, but not as pressing as “Where will they serve?”

In an open letter to the PC(USA) this Pentecost, the COTE invites the PC(USA) to seize this opportunity to serve Jesus Christ in visionary ways in a context that is rapidly changing socially and culturally. We encourage the church to ask, “Why not?”

Why not . . .

- Imagine more pastoral residencies?
- Train persons for new church development or church transformation?
- Sell more properties and put the proceeds to work on something new or renewed?
- Deploy a newly called pastor to begin a faith community or revitalize an existing one?
- Take a risk and start a new ministry today in your community?

The COTE is working on these questions and more that others are asking. We are praying that in this season of Pentecost and in the days and years ahead, the Holy Spirit will renew the church through this generation of candidates for ministry so that just as on that first Pentecost, everyone is heard, no matter what their native language, and understood. We would like to hear your ideas. Email us at [cote@pcusa.org](mailto:cote@pcusa.org) for more information and sign up for our monthly e-newsletter, or visit the COTE website at [www.pcusa.org/cote](http://www.pcusa.org/cote).

## Race and ethnicity in church and society

By Jack Marcum

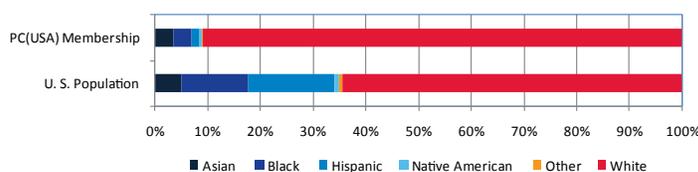
*Coordinator, Research Services*

In 1996 the General Assembly set two diversity goals for the PC(USA): increasing the racial ethnic (“nonwhite”) membership share to 10 percent by 2005 and to 20 percent by 2010. While neither goal was achieved, the racial ethnic membership share has steadily grown, from 6.9 percent in 2000 to 9.1 percent in 2010. African Americans (3.5 percent) and Asians (also 3.5 percent) are the largest groups, followed by Hispanics (1.5 percent), Native Americans (0.3 percent) and “other” (0.3 percent). Numerically, racial ethnic Presbyterians total 183,194, up 10,000 over ten years.

We should celebrate this growth, even while acknowledging the much more rapid pace of change in American society where the racial ethnic population grew by 25 million, to 36 percent of the total, over the past decade.

At current rates, the United States will be a “majority minority” country in 30 years, while the PC(USA) will not reach its 20 percent racial ethnic goal until 2064. To more closely mirror diversity in the United States will be challenging for the PC(USA), as most racial ethnic Americans already have a religious affiliation and the PC(USA) is not the only largely white denomination seeking a different profile. Focusing new church development efforts among immigrants, especially immigrants who come to the United States as Presbyterians, provides promise for increasing diversity in the PC(USA).

**Figure. Percent racial ethnic distribution, 2010:  
United States population and PC(USA) membership**



# Fast facts

## Partnership of Calling for the Order of the Day

### A collaborative venture proposed to create an African American Theological Education Institute

The purpose of the African American Theological Education Institute will be to equip clergy, elders, deacons and lay persons interested in leadership in the church as they seek to build and form more healthy congregations and communities and prepare more effectively as leaders.

The institute will be staffed by A/A theological faculty and other African American leaders within the PC(USA).

It will also provide a national forum for sharing information on mission opportunities, and will offer continuing education workshops on leadership and development and other needed skill-building workshops.

It is hoped that with the completion of some established guidelines, certificates can be issued for continuing education.

The collaboration of PC(USA) African Americans concerned about the health and vitality of A/A congregations has previously sponsored events held at Union Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and a congregation in the Washington, D.C., area.

The group, under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Katie Cannon and Rev. Dr. Warren Dennis, seeks opportunities to partner with other concerned organizations such as the National Black Presbyterian Caucus, the General Assembly Mission Council's office of African American Congregational Support and mid councils.

The proposal is in the draft stages and can be reviewed on the National Black Presbyterian Caucus website, [www.nationalnbpc.org](http://www.nationalnbpc.org). Look for the link to "Partnership of Calling for the Order of the Day." Comments and suggestions are invited.

## Did you know?

Of the 10,560 PC(USA) congregations, more than 13 percent are racial ethnic congregations, and when new church developments (NCDs) and Bible study fellowships are included, more than 15 percent of Presbyterian communities of faith are racial ethnic.

In 2000, there were 1,201 racial ethnic congregations in the PC(USA). In 2010, there were 1,380, an increase of almost 15 percent in ten years.

In 2010, the membership of the PC(USA) was 9.1 percent racial ethnic, and when NCDs and Bible study fellowships are included, the percentage rises to 10.1.

*Sources:* Stated Clerk's Annual Statistics, PC(USA) Research Services, and Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/PW. Note: The Clerk's Annual Statistics relies on information reported by congregations. Research Services' statistics also rely on data provided by congregations and include congregations that identify as having at least 20 percent and up to 100 percent racial ethnic membership. While the Stated Clerk's Annual Statistics and Research Services figures do not include Bible study groups and fellowships, Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/PW's statistics do include these new communities of faith.

## Newly elected council and caucus leaders



Samson Tso, newly elected moderator of the National Asian Presbyterian Council



Rev. Dr. Arlene Gordon, newly elected president of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus



Rev. Dr. Tae Hyung Ko, newly elected moderator of the National Council of Korean Presbyterian Churches

# Trusting God to do abundantly more than we can do ourselves

## An interview with Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II

As the showdown over the national debt ceiling and deficit came to its crisis in late July 2011, PC(USA) Director for Public Witness, Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, was arrested in the U.S. Capitol along with ten other faith leaders. Rev. Nelson participated in an act of nonviolent civil disobedience along with partners in prayer, calling on members of Congress to protect the poor and vulnerable as they debated the federal budget.

Since Rev. Nelson's arrest, the U.S. Attorney agreed to dismiss the misdemeanor charge—"Intention to Disrupt Congress"—if each religious official stays out of the Capitol Building for the next six months. If that and a few other conditions are met, all charges will be dropped in April 2012.

### *What led to your decision to engage in nonviolent civil disobedience?*

For years, the faith community has been calling on Congress to make budget decisions that reflect our communal commitment to each other—our command to love our neighbor—and to ensure that our fiscal policies protect those who need it most. During the poisonous political debates last summer, we gathered daily for interfaith prayer vigils, wrote letters to decision makers and met with members of Congress and their staffs.

After these meetings on July 26, we saw no hope for a deal that would both prevent default on the national debt and protect the most vulnerable. In other words, we saw no hope that justice would prevail. We prayed together, agreeing to support one another in our personal decisions of conscience. Two days later, on July 28, we entered the Capitol and knelt down to pray.

### *How do you define "justice"?*

The prophet Isaiah calls us to be "restorers of the streets to live": a direct challenge to employ a theology that turns powers and principalities on their heads for the liberation of God's people. We cannot stand idly by while our congregants lose their homes, live in fear that Social Security checks will not be delivered,

search fruitlessly for jobs to support their families and watch their children grow up without opportunity. To me, "justice" means being the "restorer of the breach" and working to bring about the kingdom of God on earth.

### *How does breaking the law create justice?*

Today we were guilty of one charge ... *the promotion of social righteousness*. Our nation is in a political morass. Our communal well-being is compromised by the self-interest of our political leaders. Simply put, these men and women are conduits for corporate power, and many vacillate between God and mammon. Acts of nonviolent civil disobedience require decision makers to take notice and urge these politicians to rethink their priorities.

### *What do you think is at the root of our nation's political troubles?*

In our political process, the American people and others all over the world are left to suffer and fight over the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table, while corporations and wealthy people are protected by tax loopholes. In a word, the problem is greed.

### *Ultimately, what are your hopes for this movement?*

My prayer is that others will take on leadership roles in their communities to challenge the fallen structures of our day. Our challenge begins by rethinking and discerning our call—we are called to a public witness. This call requires that we commit to the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness through government policies that promote the common good and [commit to] loving our global neighbors. Our national policies and practices must be consistent with this vision to reclaim the moral authority of our nation and world.

As religious leaders, we cannot stand idly by and watch while the mandate of our gospel—to love our neighbors—is trampled by a selfish few. I do recognize the potential fallout from this action, and I am trusting God to do abundantly more for this situation, through me and the others who are making this sacrifice, than we can do ourselves.



Director for Public Witness, Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, was arrested in the U.S. Capitol along with ten other faith leaders earlier this year.

## Apply for an internship for Public Witness: Work with J. Herbert Nelson and his staff!

The PC(USA) Office of Public Witness (OPW) in Washington, D.C., is seeking applicants for its internship program. The OPW believes that formation of servant leaders and advocates is vital to the public policy ministry and witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The internship for Public Witness seeks to provide substantive, formative work and guidance for persons seeking experiential learning and vocational discernment in the church and in the public square.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Currently, applications are being sought for spring 2012 (January to May) and summer 2012 (June to mid-August). For more information, please visit [www.pcusa.org/washington/internship](http://www.pcusa.org/washington/internship).

# Ethnic identity important part of God's call

By Vicki Fogel Mykles

**A**s a second-generation Armenian American woman, **Rev. Christine Chakoian** doesn't think of herself as a racial ethnic person. "Nobody would consider me 'ethnic' by just looking at me," she says wryly. However, it doesn't take long to see that her Armenian heritage informs her call, exercise of ministry and way of life.

Chakoian's country of origin is positioned at the culturally challenged crossroads of the Ottoman Empire. Prior to the 1915 Armenian genocide, her grandparents fled to the United States. "When my grandmother's father died at a young age, her brothers arranged a marriage so that she would be cared for," Chakoian recounts. "Her Reformed faith was so important that she put her 16-year-old foot down and refused the match until her intended agreed to raise any children in the Protestant tradition." Good thing she did. Chakoian is the beneficiary of her grandmother's determination to instill her faith in subsequent offspring.

Reared in a suburban Chicago Presbyterian church, Chakoian knew from an early age that she wanted to enter ministry. Along the way, women engaged in cutting-edge theology and alternative perspectives influenced her perspective.

Following graduation from Yale Divinity School, Chakoian accepted her inaugural pastorate at a severely conflicted Ohio church. "Thank goodness for (my supportive) colleagues in ministry!" she laughed—in that way that expresses both the joy and pain of young ministry.

She was next called to Chicago's Fourth Presbyterian Church. "When I arrived, I was pretty disillusioned with the church," she admits. "Fortunately, I had the chance to figure out what I was called to and not called to in an environment that supported both my successes and failures. I was granted the chance to grow up."

After marriage and the birth of her daughter, Chakoian transitioned from the fast-paced life of a pastor to the work of a stay-at-home mom. Again, she thought deeply about the meaning of her "call to ministry." She was considering a head-of-staff position when a colleague advised that parenthood is also a calling. Girded with this discovery, Chakoian accepted a job-share position.

Eventually, Chakoian returned to Chicago and full-time work as head of staff for Community Presbyterian Church. "I just fell in love with this congregation. The timing and work/family balance was perfect." In 2005, she was called to the First Presbyterian Church of Lake Forest. "This was the second time that I fell in love with a congregation! A feeling of the Spirit washed over me during the interview. It was clear that what I brought to the table could be used."



**Rev. Christine Chakoian**, a second-generation Armenian American woman, claims her ethnic heritage in her exercise of ministry and way of life.

How does Chakoian's ethnicity influence her sense of call? While never deeply immersed in an Armenian American community, she absorbed the culture in profound ways. Under the tutelage of her grandmother, she learned how to listen for undercurrents embedded in kitchen arena banter. "Through her experience, she taught me how to hear whimsy, wry voices and the alternative perspectives of those who were not being heard," Chakoian reflects.

By claiming her ethnic heritage, she accesses her grandmother's wisdom and exodus experience, reflects on her own faith journey and puts it all into practice. Through it, Chakoian brings a unique global perspective to her work in ministry: "I see the struggles of different groups around the world with an acutely critical eye and compassion. Being half Armenian helps me see all people as multidimensional. What one sees on the surface is never the depth of a person. If we learn how to listen, we can all be made richer by the multilayers that people bring to the Body of Christ."

Because of her grandparents' diaspora experience, Chakoian has a particular interest in the intercultural, political and interfaith issues of the Middle East. She puts this to work by serving as a board member for the Presbyterian-affiliated Lebanese American University to address education issues for Middle Eastern girls.

Now in her mid-50s, Chakoian advises that in seeking any calling, one must feel a deep compatibility and trust that the depth of the call is stronger than any difficulties that will follow. Over the years she has discerned that her callings are informed by a variety of components, including the ethnic and cultural heritage that shapes her particular viewpoint. "Honor all the pieces of your identity including gender and ethnicity (because) it is this particular combination that makes you who you are. God will use it!"

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*Rev. Vicki Fogel Mykles, a PC(USA) minister-at-large, works as a freelance writer.*

## A glorious time under the Big Tent

From near and far, more than 1,700 Presbyterian believers sojourned and gathered under the second Big Tent, held in Indianapolis, Ind., June 30 - July 2. Of the nine partner conferences plus the numerous affiliated events that inspired and equipped participants through worship, education and fellowship, the Racial Ethnic and Immigrants Convocation was the largest in attendance. Such rich diversity contributed greatly to the event's impact and success, making it a place where God's beloved people of every race and culture were welcomed and celebrated.

Despite the delayed registration period during the discernment about the meeting place, all 16 synods and approximately 139 presbyteries were represented, a testimony to the indomitable will of the faithful and the power of God at work.

Under the banner of "Grow Christ's Church Deep and Wide," nine partner conferences were offered: Evangelism and Church Growth, Healthy Ministry, National Elders, Peacemaking, Presbyterian Communicators Network, World Mission Matters, and, from the Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/

Presbyterian Women ministry area, National Multicultural, Clergywomen's Leadership Institute/Young Women's Leadership Development, and Racial Ethnic and Immigrants Convocation. These three partner conferences, under the guidance of Rev. Raafat Girgis, associate for Multicultural Congregational Support; Rev. Nancy Young, coordinator for Women's Leadership Development/Racial Ethnic Schools and Colleges; and Rev. Sterling Morse, coordinator for Cross Cultural Ministries and Congregational Support, accounted for almost one-third of the registered participants.

The National Multicultural Conference, under the guidance of Rev. Girgis, celebrated 10 years of ministry. One of the many testimonies shared was by Rev. Robert Chestnut, retired pastor of East Liberty Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, who praised Rev. Girgis for approaching the ministry with "energy, imagination and love."

In a panel presentation, diverse models of multicultural communities were shared. One church, Westminster of Trenton, N.J., formerly was a predominantly European American congregation. Today,

it is 12 percent European American, 24 percent Latino-a, and 64 percent African American. Its present pastor is Rev. Karen Hernandez-Granzen.

The Clergywomen's Leadership Institute/Young Women's Leadership Development Conference was the first of its kind. Clergywomen/leaders explored issues related to tolerance and cultural diversity; how to create "Womenspace"—a sacred place to reflect, regenerate, nurture and empower on college campuses and in congregations; and the opportunity for young women to have a life-changing experience by attending the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

A highlight of the conference was a panel discussion featuring Rev. Theresa Cho, Rev. Sarah Reyes and Rev. Cynthia Campbell, during which they shared vocational experiences from their respective journeys.

The Racial Ethnic and Immigrants Convocation opened with a welcome from Rev. Rhaskell D. Hunter, director of the Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/Presbyterian Women ministry area. Rev. Jin S. Kim, pastor of Minneapolis-based Church of All Nations, shared a new initiative, Korean English ministries. As field staff, Kim assists in providing leadership development and networking opportunities for 1.5- and second-generation clergy and leaders.

The keynoter, Rev. Sterling Morse, coordinator for Cross Cultural Ministries and Congregational Support, passionately shared his vision for Cross Cultural Ministries which, according to *Presbyterians Today* magazine's editor, Eva Stimson, "prompted a noisy standing ovation from more than 200 people from many cultures filling a hotel conference room."

The workshops were well attended, covering issues such as immigration, the New Form of Government, Climate for Change, alternative church models, and stewardship. It was a glorious time for all in attendance.



Exuberant participants in the Racial Ethnic and Immigrants Convocation filled a hotel conference room at Big Tent.

# God's Door Is Open: Who Are We to Stand in the Way? (Acts 10 and 11)

## 2012 National Multicultural Conference

By Raafat Girgis

*Associate, Multicultural Congregational Support*

**G**od's Door Is Open: Who Are We to Stand in the Way?" is the theme of the 2012 National Multicultural Conference to be held April 26-29, with pre-conference events April 25-26. The conference will be held at Hilton Charlotte University Place in Charlotte, N.C., and will be sponsored by the office of Multicultural Congregational Support, Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/PW area and in partnership with the Presbyterian Multicultural Network, the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic and the presbyteries of North Carolina.

The conference, which started in 2000 with fewer than 80 participants, has grown to be a major event with 500 attendees. Throughout the last decade, more than 7,000 pastors and lay leaders have been trained at this conference in the areas of multicultural church growth, mission, evangelism and community outreach. Providing spiritual empowerment and innovative tools for leadership development, creating partnership opportunities and networking have been the main goals of each event.

The 2012 conference will take into consideration the challenges and opportunities facing our churches and our society today, the growing diversity in our communities, immigration and population shifts, with an emphasis on "God's Door," which is always open for all. The conference seeks to communicate to the church and to the country that while demographic changes and working with people unlike ourselves can be challenging, that is what God called the church to do from the start. God called on people who were considered outsiders and outcasts, people from many nations, tribes and

language groups who were together in one place when the church was started.

We know that the issue of "others" coming and joining us is not new. It goes back to the first century of church life when the church struggled with the issue of diversity. The question raised by the church in Acts 15 was, should we accept people other than the Hebrews to be part of the church or not? Could Gentiles be

*Providing spiritual empowerment and innovative tools for leadership development, creating partnership opportunities and networking have been the main goals of each event.*

partners and sharers of the promise, or would they have to become like us first, that is, to memorize the Hebrew law, to learn the Hebrew language and to be circumcised—all specific cultural elements that describe a Jew.

The church that was about to be divided because of this issue of diversity was ultimately united after Peter went through a transformative vision (Acts 10) and after he declared that "God has no partiality"; if "God opened the door" for the Gentiles and others to be part of the same church journey, "who are we to stand in the way?" The hope is that the conference will convey the message that diversity and not sameness, heterogeneity not homogeneity, are characteristic of the Pentecost and should be characteristic of the church in all times and places.



**The National Multicultural Conference**, which started in 2000 with fewer than 80 participants, has grown to be a major event with 500 attendees.

The speakers at the 2012 conference are among the best nationally acclaimed leaders and include Joel Barker, best-selling author, futurist and filmmaker; Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, dean and vice president of education at Esperanza College of Eastern University; and J. Herbert Nelson, II, director of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of Public Witness in Washington, D.C.

The 2012 conference includes 12 major tracks to choose from: Multicultural 101 (from A to Z); Innovative Multicultural Worship; Power and Justice; Leadership for the 21st Century; Cross Cultural Relationships; Models of Multicultural Ministries; Christian Education in a Diverse Setting; Presbytery Strategic Outreach; Holistic Evangelism and Church Development, in addition to the youth and young adult track. For the first time this year, we will have the honor of adding a new track on World Mission.

The conference will be preceded by several pre-conference training events including Theological Education in a Multicultural Setting; the Church and Immigration Issues; Multicultural Presbytery Team Training; Cross Cultural Allies of Ministry (CCAM) and Music and Worship in a Diverse Setting.

For more information, please visit [www.pcusa.org/multicultural](http://www.pcusa.org/multicultural), call Leigh Meers at (800) 728-7228, x5385, or email [leigh.meers@pcusa.org](mailto:leigh.meers@pcusa.org)

# Sharing the gospel in an increasingly diverse culture

By Rhashell D. Hunter

When I was growing up, my parents taught me to welcome persons as friends into our home regardless of their color or their economic class. As we were the only African American family in our neighborhood, it made sense to be welcoming and to have a cross cultural perspective, as everyone who lived around us was very different from us.

Our church was a multicultural Presbyterian church. One of the best parts of church as a child was hearing the adults debate Scripture and social issues in the “Sermon Talk Back” class that was held after worship. There, church members would debate with either the European American or the African American pastor who preached that week (the African American pastor was my father). The dialogue was rich, passionate, engaging and a lot of fun for younger members to overhear as we passed through the fellowship hall on the way to our own Sunday school classes. Members of our church learned from each other, and we loved one another. Many of these

members still gather together and many have remained close; and in some cases, they have maintained long-distance friendships nurtured by their shared faith and connection in a deeply enriching church family.

**I greatly value cross cultural experiences, and it makes me wonder why my parents, my family, my church community, and I love diversity while others fear it.**

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is richer because of the many diverse people who worship, sing, tell stories, engage in mission and share sacraments together throughout the United States and with our global partners. Most of us are aware that we now live in a pluralistic society and that many of the places where we live and work are becoming increasingly cross cultural. It makes sense that our churches

should become more cross cultural as well. Even among racial ethnic congregations that appear to be monocultural, churches are becoming more cross cultural. There are Asian congregations that are becoming Pan-Asian, with members from Taiwan, China, Korea and the Philippines, for example, all gathered together in one church community. And in some Latino-a congregations, there are often many cultures present, including those from Puerto Rico, Cuba, Mexico and Colombia, for instance, in one congregation. I visited an African new church development where many cultures were represented. Members of that church are from Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and other nations from the continent of Africa.

I have also visited predominantly European American congregations that have become more cross cultural. Many of them have a strong sense of mission and an appreciation for diversity. Some of them seek to better reflect the communities that surround their churches. Some are reminiscent of the early Pentecost church, where there were folks from all nations participating in the community of believers.

I greatly value cross cultural experiences, and it makes me wonder why my parents, my family, my church community and I love diversity while others fear it. As the only African American child in both my elementary and junior high schools, I guess I was forced into this love of cross culturalism because of the variety of people who surrounded me. I wonder what it would have been like if my parents had not insisted that I welcome persons as friends in our home, regardless of their race or class. I have loved being with dear persons who have few or no financial resources on the one hand, while I've also enjoyed opportunities to visit with other faithful friends who have large



**A very diverse meal**—hot dogs, curry, and lumpia are all favorites at Old Bergen Church's Sunday school picnic where members share fellowship and food.

homes and many possessions. There are, of course, justice issues involved in living in a society where some receive minimum wage and have no health insurance and others seem to have so much that they can almost throw money away. Certainly not everyone has the privilege of traveling in different circles, and many are relegated to associating only with those who are in their same economic situations or cultural contexts. But most of us have choices and can determine what communities we will frequent, what churches we can worship in, what mission we will engage in and, fundamentally, who our friends will be.

What I hope some of us will do is risk being around others who are very different from ourselves. Why? Because we may have both the opportunity to learn and discover new things and the opportunity to experience friendship and love for others who we may otherwise have never had an opportunity to meet—unless we step out in faith and just say “hello.”

While the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is largely European American, the newest growth in the church is among immigrants and in some racial ethnic congregations. And, there are some Presbyterian communities of faith engaging in cross cultural ministries that do not have a majority of any one culture in their congregations and instead have a balance of many diverse peoples. One of these congregations is **Old Bergen Church** in Jersey City, N.J., where Rev. Jon Brown is the pastor. This congregation was established in 1660 and has been successful in welcoming new neighbors in the Journal Square neighborhood of Jersey City. Old Bergen Church has also made room for new members who expressed their faith and their worship of God in new ways.

**Church of All Nations**, where Rev. Dr. Jin Kim is the pastor, is another worshipping community with no racial majority. Located in Minneapolis, Minn., Church of All Nations is a relatively new congregation, founded in 2004. When I visited



**Worship service at Church of All Nations**, where Rev. Dr. Jin Kim is the pastor, is another worshipping community with no racial majority.

recently, a young Portuguese-speaking visitor was happy to meet others in the church who also spoke Portuguese. There are children in worship and persons from a variety of backgrounds; thus diversity exists in this church on many levels.

Finally, in the pages that follow, you will also read about the newest chartered congregation in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), **Neema Community Church**, near Kansas City, Kan. Neema began as a Bible study with six to eight people in the home of Rev. Dr. David Nzioka and his wife, Dorothy Nzioka. In 2008, the church was chartered as a new church development with the help of Village Church, Heartland Presbytery, and the office of New Immigrant Congregational Support in the Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/Presbyterian Women ministry area of the General Assembly Mission Council. Rev. Tom Are, Jr., the pastor of Village Church, later said that only after

building this new faith community did they know that they were starting a new church. They trusted in a relationship that was formed with Rev. Nzioka and were seeing where it would lead.

The challenge to all Presbyterians is to open ourselves up to exploring faithful relationships with diverse people of faith (and those who are seeking faith relationships) and seeing where they may lead. We are also challenged to discover how to share the gospel in an increasingly diverse cultural context. This may be just the reason that we need to work toward cross cultural ministries: so that we can get to know other Presbyterians from a variety of races and ethnicities and discover our commonalities and our differences. In doing so, we have a greater chance of living out the biblical vision of a world where the humanity of everyone is valued and where God's love is spread to every race and class, culture and people.

## Old Bergen Church—making a space for grace in the heart of Jersey City

Worshippers gather to a gospel jazz rendering of “Just a Closer Walk with Thee,” a small choir leads the congregation in a South African call to worship, children sign and sing “Be Still and Know That I Am God,” the offertory is a Handel sonata played by a Filipino middle school student, the anthem is a solo sung in Spanish, the Old Testament lesson is read by a woman from Kenya, and the closing hymn is an African American spiritual, a call-and-response song led by a high school student from Trinidad. This is not World Communion Sunday—it is just summer worship at Old Bergen Church. But what may surprise you more is that this is not an experiment in the emergent church or a new church development. It is, in fact, the oldest continually worshipping congregation in New Jersey.

Old Bergen Church was established in 1660 by a group of Dutch immigrants. For over 350 years it has been serving that same community now known as Jersey City. These days it is home to a handful of descendants of those Dutch Reformed settlers; 24 percent of the congregation is

Caucasian. It has also become home to numerous individuals and communities that include a new generation of immigrants who now reside in the Journal Square neighborhood a short train commute from Manhattan.

In a confirmation class discussion, all 12 students disclosed that they were born in Jersey City or New York City. However, all but two of the students said that their parents were born outside of the United States. For this community, cross cultural ministry is not a concept or a goal—it is an everyday way of life. At some point, this congregation welcomed the new neighbors flowing into their community and started making room for the variety of traditions, gifts and perspectives that would be woven together into the household of God. Three other immigrant fellowship groups use the church facilities at various



The Old Bergen Church's Sunday school picnic where members share fellowship and food.

times during the week.

“We try to cultivate something we call ‘sacred curiosity,’” says the current pastor, Rev. Jon Brown. “That is, before we jump to conclusions about what is the right tradition, practice or perspective, we try to prayerfully ask, ‘Hmmm, I wonder what the Holy Spirit is doing here? Where is the Spirit leading us and how do we, as Paul put it, get in step with the Spirit?’” The Spirit has led the congregation to opening a food pantry, a preschool and an adult literacy program. The young people recently helped test a new educational seminar at the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations aimed at confirmation groups exploring the call to global discipleship. In all of its mission, ministry, worship and life, Old Bergen Church is seeking to make a space for grace in the heart of Jersey City.



Service of installation for Old Bergen Church's current pastor, Rev. Jon Brown (at far left).

# Life together at the Church of All Nations

By Jin S. Kim

Senior pastor

I am privileged to serve a congregation that aims to be a “high-risk, low-anxiety” church. I can’t imagine a more dynamic, liberating and challenging place to do ministry. We are serious about discipleship in order to live with joy and abandon in Christ. We continue to push ahead with a commitment to communal discernment, to speaking prophetic truth in love, to taking new risks in the ministry of reconciliation and to communicating the good news of God’s love as a living parable of reconciliation.

Recently, our board of deacons reflected on our life together and came up with these 10 descriptions about who we are:

We cultivate a non-anxious relationship between the people and the church.

We are committed to intimate fellowship as family.

We are a church with a big heart, and seek flexibility in nonessential matters.

We are a discerning community rather than one that relies only on rules, regulations and formulas, even if that makes us look odd, eccentric or inconsistent.

We seek to be vessels of God’s illumination by embracing unconventional approaches.

We are comfortable with paradox as a central way by which Jesus taught.

We are prophetic and critical, and not attached to any ideology.

Our critical faith does not, however, lead us to cynical detachment, but to passionate engagement with God and with one another in fresh ways.

We are not afraid to grow and change theologically, for all theology is provisional.

We are not afraid of personalized authority, but are continuously disclosing, discussing and renegotiating the nature of that authority.

Over the years we have become even

more trusting and vulnerable in our practice of testimony, living into the promise of becoming a truly healing Christian community. We roll up our sleeves and serve countless meals, improve the building, and even construct a concrete parking lot and a long, two-story wall with our bare hands! We celebrate each other’s cultures, languages, nationalities, accomplishments and breakthroughs, and grieve together through pain, loss, tragedy and injustice, no matter who among us endures such hardships. As it says in 1 Corinthians 12, those who seem to be weaker we see as indispensable, and those who seem less honorable we clothe with greater honor, for the logic/Logos of the kingdom is not of this world. For us, what it means to be the church is this: when one member suffers, we all suffer together; if one member is honored, we all rejoice together!

Founded in 2004, we are still in our

youth as a congregation. We have much yet to learn, but I do sense God’s pleasure not because of any merit on our part, but because we choose to trust God every day. Faithfulness to God is a fragile thing when we look at human nature and history. We are just as prone to relying on our own wits, efforts and resources as did ancient Israel and the contemporary church, so we’re ever dependent on the Holy Spirit and ever vigilant as the bridesmaids in the parable of the coming bridegroom, Jesus our Lord.

We’re grateful to share a common commitment “to engage the Church in its mission to become more diverse and inclusive of all racial, ethnic, cultural and language groups, and to equip women for leadership in all ministries” with our denomination’s Racial Ethnic and Women’s Ministries/PW. Together, we can build redemptive, cross cultural communities of faith. Praise be to God.



**The Church of All Nations** shares a common commitment “to engage the Church in its mission to become more diverse and inclusive of all racial, ethnic, cultural and language groups.”

## 'Neema' means grace

The newest chartered congregation in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is Neema Community Church, a Swahili- and English-speaking congregation near Kansas City, Kan. It began as a Bible study group with six to eight people in the home of Rev. Dr. David Nzioka and his wife, Dorothy Nzioka. The Nziokas moved from their church home in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa so that David could continue his studies. They were welcomed to worship by Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village, Kan.

Within a year, the Nziokas began to form an African worshiping community in a space in Village Church. "David befriended us. We befriended David. We did not think we were starting a new church. This was trusting our friend and saying, 'we will walk with you, and we'll see where this leads,'" said Rev. Tom Are, Jr., pastor of Village Presbyterian Church. "We began to see that there really are people speaking Swahili who want to be faithful to Jesus Christ, who want to be Presbyterian, even," Rev. Are said.

In 2006, Heartland Presbytery welcomed Neema as an immigrant fellowship. The Office of New Immigrant Congregational Support in the Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/PW ministry area provided support and coaching to this new immigrant fellowship. "The Holy Spirit provided the opportunity [for Neema, Village Church and Heartland Presbytery] to do mission together," said Rev. Dr. Angel Suárez-Valera. In 2008, the church became a new church development (NCD).

Also in 2008, Rev. Nzioka went back to the village in Kenya where he was born. When he returned to Kansas City, he told stories of people in his village who walked a mile and a half to get water from a river that was drying up. Heartland Presbytery became involved, helping to build a health clinic and working to provide a well, powered by a solar generator, as part of a current mission project.

Rev. Dwight Tawney, administrative pastor of Village Presbyterian Church, said, "We've learned a lot about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ from David and from the Neema congregation. . . . Their faith is fully integrated into every aspect of their lives. Morning, noon and night, they celebrate the positive experience they have and their faith in Jesus Christ."

Giving more than enough to meet their mission budget every week, Neema Community Church had 150 members sign their new church charter. Many of these immigrants are fellow Presbyterians from Africa.

While the global mission work of the church occurs through its mission workers overseas, global witness is also a part of national mission work in the church through ministries with new immigrants in the U.S.A. By welcoming new immigrants, it has been estimated that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) could grow by as many as one million people in the next 10 years.

## Who We Are

The Ministries of Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries/PW:

### Racial Ethnic and Cross Cultural Ministries

- Asian Congregational Support
- African American Congregational Support
- Cross Cultural Ministries
- Hispanic/Latino-a Congregational Support
- Korean Congregational Support
- Middle Eastern Congregational Support
- Multicultural Congregational Support
- Native American Congregational Support
- New Immigrant Congregational Support

### Women's Leadership Development and Justice Ministries

- Gender and Racial Justice
- National Network of Presbyterian College Women
- Racial Ethnic Schools and Colleges
- Racial Ethnic Young Women Together
- Women's Leadership Development
- Young Women's Leadership Development

### Presbyterian Women



### *The Racial Ethnic Torch*

Emily Enders Odom, *Editor*

Shellee Layman, *Designer*

Kati Cannon, *Production Manager*

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General Assembly Mission Council

Linda B. Valentine,

*Executive Director*

Roger A. Dermody Jr.,

*Deputy Executive*

*Director for Mission*

Rhashell D. Hunter,

*Director of Racial Ethnic & Women's*

*Ministries/Presbyterian Women*

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**The members of Neema Community Church**, a Swahili and English-speaking congregation, say Karibu! (Welcome!) Njooi tumwabudu Bwana! (Come, let us worship God!)

# PW's commitment to racial ethnic diversity

By Catrelia Steele Hunter

**P**resbyterian Women (PW) has had a continuing commitment to racial ethnic diversity. The first Churchwide Coordinating Team of Presbyterian Women (CCT/PW) intentionally included members-at-large representing each of the racial ethnic caucuses recognized by our denomination, and the PW Racial Ethnic Dialog was established in 1989 to give presence to the voices of racial ethnic women throughout the denomination. The Dialog meets annually and includes representatives from Asian, African American, Hispanic/Latina, Korean, Middle Eastern, Native American and New Immigrant Women.

In 1998, the Justice and Peace Committee of the CCT/PW made combating racism a priority and began an antiracism initiative that now provides resources and training for individuals throughout our denomination. PW's commitment to racial ethnic diversity grows out of a purpose that emphasizes "working for justice and peace" and "building an inclusive, caring community of women that strengthens the PC(USA) and witnesses to the promise of God's kingdom."

Other major initiatives are:

- The PW Global Exchange program, through which women visit countries around the world to address issues affecting women and children. Recent Exchange groups have visited Eastern Europe, Brazil, Ghana, Kenya and the Middle East. The 2011 Global Exchange to India will focus on human trafficking. Women from the host country come to the United States for the Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women following each Global Exchange.
- The Sisters Stand and Walk Program, initiated in the Synod of the Northeast in the New York and New Jersey area, to provide leadership training for New Immigrant Women. This program is now being replicated in the Synod of the Pacific,



**The PW Global Exchange program**, through which women visit countries around the world to address issues affecting women and children.



**The Sisters Stand and Walk Program** provides leadership training for New Immigrant Women.

San Francisco area; the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic in the Washington, D.C., area and the Synod of South Atlantic in the Atlanta area.

- The USA Mission Experience, which focuses on issues within the United States. Groups traveled to El Paso, Texas, and Juarez, Mexico, in 2008 to focus on immigration, and to the Dakotas in 2010 to visit with Native Americans.
- Since 2006, working with the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations to sponsor a delegation to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.
- Supporting special gatherings of Racial Ethnic Women's Groups, including Encuentro for Hispanic/Latina Women; Native American Women's Gatherings; Asian Presbyterian Women; National Korean Presbyterian Women; Black (African American) Presbyterian Women; Middle Eastern Women; Tumekutana, the first Gathering of African Presbyterians, held in 2007; and the Kenyan Women's Gathering, held in Atlanta in July 2011.

In addition to the various programs, PW has published the following resources:

- "Building an Inclusive, Caring Community through Dialogue"—A resource for Presbyterian Women to engage in dialogue and action to dismantle racism,
- A Guide to PW's Becoming the Beloved Community: People of Faith Working Together to Eradicate Racism, DVD (with study guide).

Both resources are available through Presbyterian Distribution Service.



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