

**Multiculturalism Institute class:
Church Renewal and Growth Through Multicultural Outreach**

August 2004, Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, NM

The Rev. Dr. Robert Chesnut and The Rev. Ra'afat Girgis

Editor's note: These are personal class notes taken by Rev. Todd Hester, New Hope Presbytery, North Carolina. The 216th GA Moderator, Rick Chase, was invited to participate at Ghost Ranch at the Multicultural Church Institute. He also spoke at a forum open to all Ghost Ranch attendees on Monday evening 8/9, which was to have been the start of Bob and Raafat's sessions.

Tuesday 8/10

Session One: Elder Rick Ufford-Chase, GA Moderator

Biblical Background: Acts 2:1-13; Genesis 11:1-9

These texts could be bookends—the diversification of language and the unification of language. Something important for groups of people in the texts is the power of talking to each other, speaking to one another. It must have been incredibly confusing to the people of Babel to have diversification of language. It is hard to read evil into the Genesis text; it is simply the difference between what the people plan and what God plans. The path of least resistance of the diversification of language is to simply separate. The Acts passage could be the same, but the diversity of language was unifying. The only essential difference between the texts seems to be the focus—in one text the focus is on what humanity is doing, while in the other text the focus is on what God is doing. The tension is between the power of humanity and the power of God. The texts are still basically two groups of people speaking many languages, but in one there is fear and chaos, while in the other there is unity and power.



Rick Chase

Three Dynamics of Multicultural Church

Power: We must be aware of the power dynamics even in the best of intentions. We always run the risk of a colonial attitude toward the disenfranchised.

If all persons are not in equal partnership, then multicultural ministry is at risk.

Worship and Spirit: Worship must come up from the people. “Liturgy”—the work of the people (my note). Christians must learn to worship in many varying ways, as people learn to drink from a cup they recognize.

The Focus and Goal is People: If the reason for multicultural ministry is because it is socially acceptable, it will never be an impact. If the reason is just to survive, it will be difficult. If it is to praise God and to serve people, it will change the world.

Session Two: Ra'afat and Bob

Handout: "The Biblical Foundation for Diversity and Multicultural Ministry"

God is inherently diverse. The Trinity is three and one—diversity and unity (my note). God creates diversity in the opening chapters of Genesis. God's creation of humanity is automatically diverse. Salvation is for ALL nations. NO people group has a monopoly on God. Jesus Christ is Lord of ALL! ☺ Praise God! "My house shall be



called a house of prayer for ALL peoples." (Isaiah 56:6-8) When Jesus comes back in all his glory, people of all nations will stand before him and he will judge them. (Matthew 25:31-46) Our welfare is completely wrapped up in the welfare of others; if their welfare is taken care of, then ours will be, as well. If we ignore the welfare of others, then our welfare will be ignored. (Jeremiah 29:4-8). (MLK, Jr.: "Where there's injustice anywhere, it's a threat to justice everywhere [again, my note].) Christ breaks down barriers between theology, race, culture, and gender. (John 4)



Handout: "Building An Inclusive Church In A Multicultural World: Principles For Effective Multicultural Ministry"

Wednesday 8/11

Session Two: Ra'afat and Bob

Video: "Wealth, Innovation, and Diversity" (This video is from a specifically business perspective.) Note: The Great Potato Famine of 1845 versus Incan diversification of potato genetics—when the Irish bred genetic diversity out of potatoes, one blight felled their whole food economy; but when the Incas bred genetic diversity into potatoes, their crops thrived regardless of circumstances. Land's three stages of growth: *accretion* (growth of individual—birth to adolescence); *replication* (growth in adolescence by joining with others as nearly identical as possible [four strengths: magnification of strengths, identification, communication, comfort] [weaknesses: if one is susceptible, all are susceptible; also, critical lack of innovation]); *mutualism* (growth in adulthood through diversification where groups are mutually benefited from difference).

Break for group discussion (*Wealth...*, workbook page thirteen):

Question one: Breeding out diversity leads to vulnerability. Potential strengths include short-term benefits. An interesting note is that diversity had to be bred out; the crop was inherently diverse. The breeding out process is an aggressive act.

Question two: The Incas preserved the crop; therefore, preservation is strongly linked to diversity, as opposed to the Irish incident. Short-term weaknesses exist, particularly as the learning process begins and continues. Note: Churches seem to think in the short term, leaning toward the Irish mode of thinking. The Peruvian topography is incredibly diverse; we may need to assess our sociological, spiritual, and relational topographies. Also, maintaining and expanding diversity was hard work.

Question three: Advantages of sameness are ease of communication, efficiency, predictability, and identification. The myth of success begins to occur, whereas short-term success creates illusion of sustainability. This, obviously, can only be productive as long as environment is homogeneous. Sameness depends on status quo of context. Dialogue and openness are restricted in a sameness context. The strengths of one group in a diverse context are matched with the weakness of another group, et cetera. Our churches are primarily in the second stage of Land's analysis, although more churches are regressing back to the first stage. Many Gen-X's are also still in the first stage.

Video continuation:

Cedar Creek Eco Lab in Minnesota—First, diversity deals better with shock; second, diversity utilize available resources much better; third, diversity withstand attacks from predators better; fourth, diversity is much more productive; fifth, diversity breeds stability and predictability.

All systems become more complex as long as excess energy exists to grow.

More land analysis: Mutualism, in a mathematical sense, is infinitely sustainable. Mutualism builds upon cooperation and collaboration. No species can exist for very long all by itself. The “Magnificent” (!) Ford Taurus Experiment: Ford retook the auto industry and saved money via efficiency through mutualism. The Ford Taurus dominated the industry for a decade. Singapore became independent in the 60s and faced disaster because of disunified diversity. Singapore built upon the strengths of its differences and consequently in the Singapore being the second most productive nation in the world and the fifth richest nation in the world per capita. Education played a huge role, as did multiculturalism. Mutualism is the process where the inventory of difference is transformed into wealth. (My note: Persons had to be educated about each other.)

Discussion break (*Wealth...*, workbook page twenty-one): Note the importance of humility; the majority must invite others.

Question one: Truly impacting was the sense of trust and satisfaction when the research is focused on nature; creation is built this way. “Something there is that doesn't love a wall.” (Robert Frost [my note]) As humans, we need to align ourselves with the ecological patterns and rhythms and that model of God's diverse creation.

Question two: All systems will grow more complex. Diversity is a necessary ingredient for complexity; mathematically, this is infinitely sustainable.

Questions three, four, and five: One group offsets the deficiencies of the others. No species can exist by itself for very long. Diversity is an asset, whereas most present systems see it as a liability. However, businesses are better at diversity because culture is not an issue; profit is the focus.

Video continuation:

Ongoing innovation enlarges the economic pie from which the world eats. Paradigm shifting innovations are the fundamental innovations that most create wealth. The people most likely to create paradigm shifting innovations are almost always outsiders, people who don't know the system. Ellis Island, for example, created more wealth by welcoming ‘outsiders’. Diversity gives long term vigor and it enables strength to survive attack and tragedy.

Habakkuk 2:1-4: The 'Vision Thing'. Babylon is sweeping in and Habakkuk wants some perspective. The first thing Habakkuk does is to get himself up to a high place. God gives his answer, and Habakkuk is told to write it down simply enough so that anyone can understand it. Unfortunately, desperation is often the reason for visioning.

Matthew 25:14-30: What do we have? What are we doing with it? This parable is about money, but it is about so much more than just money. The most important 'asset' we have is the Gospel; we are called to invest it, multiply it, experiment with it, get creative with it, spend it, spread it.

Session two: Ra'afat and Bob

Test for small groups: Develop a strategy for becoming a multicultural church:

- 1) Define 'multicultural' church
- 2) Ten major steps to becoming multicultural church
- 3) A vision for the future/Envisioning the future of multiculturalism

Video: "Living the Vision Of A Multicultural Church" (Contracted by Ra'afat's office; brand new, still being edited)

By 2050, there will reportedly be no ethnic/racial majority in the United States.

Definition: A church that recognizes, utilizes, and celebrates diversity; it is celebrated through worship; through diverse leadership; through evangelism as the church seeks out members of different groups. There are a number of churches pursuing multiculturalism but are not truly diverse/multicultural/cross-cultural. "Melting pot" multiculturalism ends up as majority-conformity (assimilation). Another method is for pursuing cultural particularities (pluralism). The best way—above and beyond these two methods—is $A+B+C=abc$ (integration). A multicultural church is biblically based, welcome and inclusive, diverse in governing bodies. Creating a multicultural church is hard work and challenging (but so was the Cross!). Conflict has to be embraced and dealt with; conflict and tension are inevitable. Beginning the transition to becoming a multicultural church includes being open, studying the Bible, forming a ministry team, embracing and managing conflict, and maintaining diligent faith in God.

Thursday 8/12

Session One: Bob and Ra'afat

Benefits of having a vision:

- 1) Focus
- 2) Direction and purpose
- 3) Unity
- 4) Energy
- 5) Measurement
- 6) Communication with newcomers
- 7) Inspiration and engagement
- 8) Shared identity

- 9) Gives foundation for planning
- 10) Specificity

The difference between success and failure is partly the difference between having a vapid and generic plan versus a specific and bold and unique plan. Parable of the Talents: Capital cannot be hoarded or kept; it must be spent and spread.

Video: "East Liberty Presbyterian Church" (Bob Chesnut's former pastorate)

There is a lot of eating together. There is also a willingness to accept persons regardless of whether they believe the same things on varying issues. This church has organized functions seven days a week. It also has an incredible mission activity balanced with a focus on individual and communal spirituality. Arts play a large part of the ministry; this is to help individuals 'amplify' themselves. "Friends of the church": A category whereby people can get involved without the formality of membership; this category lets people serve while investigating their own faith commitments. To get a copy of the tape:

East Liberty Presbyterian Church
116 South Highland Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
Attn: Church Business Administrator

Note to self on grant writing: Donor's Forum in Chicago: Go online to find foundations and what their focus is and what their criteria are. Also, tap into grant writers who take a fee or take a percentage.

Getting Started/Getting Specific:

Everything the church says and does should be interpreted as an opportunity for outreach. In establishing specific steps toward building a church, the steps may not be sequential, and they may not fit for every group of people. A helpful first step is to ask: *Who's not here?* This question needs to be answered in terms of age, physicality, gender, education, economic class, sexual orientation, race, et cetera. A helpful sub-question here is to ask: Are our children and grandchildren attending our church, and if not, why not? What do we need to change? Perhaps we should change it! The next question to ask after the 'left out' question is: *How are we leaving out these people?* What are we doing that is keeping them out? Some possible answers are: Music, church architecture, Sunday attire, et cetera. The third fundamental question is: *How do we get them in?* Are we hospitable to them? Are we hospitable to ourselves? Follow-up is essential here. A possibility is to form a focus group of community people (especially the unchurched) to find out what people know about the church, what they are looking for in a church, et cetera. In marketing the church, we need to ask: What do we have to offer? and What do people need that we don't have right now to offer? Consider setting specific goals for growth. One possibility is to try, in one year's time, to double the number of first-time visitors; the second step is to double the percentage of those first-time visitors who become friends/members of the church. Passing the pew pad seems to be a highly effective way of recording visitors.

Session Two: Bob and Ra'afat

Essential Gifts and Dispositions for multicultural church Leadership (*reflects group's highest priorities)

- 1) Persistence
- 2) Passion*
- 3) Risk-taking/courage
- 4) Cultural proficiency/sensitivity (self-awareness)*
- 5) Believe and trust people's gifts
- 6) Vision*
- 7) Communication (clear, redundant, and repetitive)
- 8) Sense of humor
- 9) Compassion
- 10) Creativity/imagination
- 11) Flexibility/resilience
- 12) Humility
- 13) Spirit-led and Spirit-disciplined
- 14) Connectedness
- 15) Willingness to learn and change and maintain exposure
- 16) Knowing the difference leadership and management (managers do things right while leaders do the right thing; the leader is the creative agent, while the manager is the maintenance agent)
- 17) Prophetic
- 18) Inspiring
- 19) Conflict management and navigation

Bob: "If you are going to have to fight over something, it might as well be something big."

Jewish adage: "Let us agree to disagree agreeably."

Multicultural Worship

Worship is the core of our life together. It is the most important dimension—bar none—of the church's life. Would we invite guests over to our house to eat without asking what they like? Hospitality demands that we serve something folk like. What kind of folk? When Jesus ate with people, he demanded that we invite different people to eat with us—especially people we, quite frankly, don't like.

Kathy Black's "Culturally Conscious Worship": Four levels in cultural worship

- 1) Assimilation: "You're welcome, if you do it our way."
- 2) Something new to everyone: ex. Praise and Contemporary Worship
- 3) Old and familiar to all: ex. Everyone sings 19th century missionary hymns
- 4) Assimilation for everyone: Each culture is represented. Everyone is being assimilated to everyone else's culture.

Other possibilities:

- 1) Some mixture of all of the above
- 2) Alternative worship services
- 3) Various musical ensembles

Friday 8/13

Session One: Bob and Ra'afat

Everything we do should be interpreted as serving the parishioners AND reaching out to the community simultaneously.

Community Outreach:

- 1) Know your neighbors
- 2) Build community partnerships
- 3) Share your building
- 4) No "arms-length"
- 5) Sponsor community outreach events
- 6) Welcome immigrants
- 7) Build congregational partnerships
- 8) Seek funding
- 9) Keep in touch/keep communication open

Special Events (consider using these events in conjunction with one another):

- 1) Block party
- 2) Funerals/weddings/baptisms (these are ripe moments to bring the community together in a new way)
- 3) Visiting choirs/concerts
- 4) Special dinners/food festivals
- 5) Health fair/carnival
- 6) Visitors' Sunday/Open House
- 7) Racial/ethnic celebrations

Adult Education

- 1) Sponsor forums/panel discussions followed up by group discussions
- 2) ESL/GED courses
- 3) Economic courses (ex. Homeowner's courses)
- 4) Basic Christianity
- 5) Courses in popular/current events
- 6) Courses on diversifying our community's institutions
- 7) Community's newcomer's orientation/"Welcome Basket"
- 8) Courses on cultural symbols/practices of other groups
- 9) Send our members/leadership out to other churches to build relationships and gain new perspectives

Children/Youth

- 1) VBS
- 2) Youth group
- 3) Music/arts education (consider especially a community youth choir)
- 4) Field trips to cross-cultural events/places
- 5) In-house Presbyterian camping experience
- 6) Various camps (such as computer camp, sports camp, arts camp)

Session Two: Ra'afat

Video: "Frontline—A Class Divided" (the TV news program)

The day after MLK's assassination, a third-grade teacher in rural Riceville, Iowa gives her students an experience of discrimination. The teacher divides the class according to eye color. The students are discriminated according to blue eyes and brown eyes. The blue eyed students get more recess, are first in lunch line, get to use the water fountain, and the brown eyed students are ridiculed and are not allowed to play with the blue eyed students. The day after, the roles are switched: The blue-eyed students are subordinated to the brown-eyed students. The same discriminatory "policies" are employed. The teacher reported that the students who were "superior" did their work better and faster the day they were "superior" than on the day they were "oppressed". The revelation here may be that the kids reported that when they were "superior", they felt like rulers, and they felt like they could do whatever they wanted. One little boy at the time said that all the stuff he felt inside he could just "get out" at someone else. Stanford University reported that academic abilities are being changed in a twenty-four hour period as the children learn how valuable they are. The experiment was done again years later with staff and guards of a prison in New York. The results exposed the insidious power of bigotry. What is interesting and encouraging is that after the experiment, the participants show a deeper and more meaningful relational ability that is sustainable.

Saturday 8/14

Session One: Bob

Book reports by participants and dialogue:

Stroupe, Nibs, and Caroline Leach. *O Lord, Hold Our Hands: How A Church Thrives In A Multicultural World*. (Westminster-John Knox, 2003)

Foster, Charles, and Theodore Brelsford. *We Are The Church Together: Cultural Diversity in Congregational Life*. (Trinity Press International, 1996)

DeYoung, Curtis Paul, Michael Emerson, Geo Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim. *United By Faith: The Multicultural Congregation As An Answer to the Problem of Race*. (Oxford Press, 2003)

Foster, Charles. *Embracing Diversity: Leadership In Multicultural Congregations*. (Alban Institute, 1997)

Ortiz, Manuel. *One New People: Models For Developing A Multiethnic Church*. (InterVarsity Press, 1996)

Black, Kathy. *Culturally Conscious Worship*. (Chalice Press, 2000)

Law, Eric H.F. *Inclusion: Making Room For Grace*. (Chalice Press, 2000)

Law, Eric H.F. *The Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed: Developing A Multicultural Community Through Dialogue And Liturgy*. (Chalice Press, 1996)

Chesnut, Robert. *Transforming The Mainline Church: Lessons In Change From Pittsburgh's Cathedral Of Hope*. (Geneva Press, 2000)

Session Two: Bob

Continuation of book reports
Debriefing and wrap-up



Todd Hester