

**2<sup>nd</sup> National PCUSA Multicultural Dinner**  
**July 1, 2004**  
***The New Thing God Is Doing***  
**The Rev. Dr. Susan Andrews**  
**Moderator of 215<sup>th</sup> General Assembly**

Grace and peace to you!

The biggest, most delightful surprise I experienced this year as Moderator is the growing multicultural reality of our church. It is the most exciting growing edge and changing reality in our denomination.



Amidst the doom and gloom about membership statistics, we need to remember that there is a whole group of Presbyterians not counted in the statistics - the growing number of immigrant fellowships and probes. If we count these new worshipers, we as a denomination have grown to being 9% racial ethnic in our membership (from 6% just a few years ago).

#### VISION

My journey began last July in Hawaii. There I visited the Mililani Presbyterian Church (PC) on the island of Oahu. This congregation, located next to a military base, is multicultural - not by design - but by accident - with a variety of ethnic members representing the military, interacting with the native peoples of Hawaii. At the Bi-centennial celebration of the Korean American Presbyterian Council, Jin S. Kim passionately described his multicultural new church development in Minneapolis, where second and third generation Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Taiwanese, African, African-American, and Caucasian parents with bi-racial children, worship and serve together.

In the Fall, I visited the New York City area. In the morning I led worship at Old First PC in a wonderfully rich and traditional service. But it was World Communion Sunday, and I was surprised that we worshipped in a mono-cultural style. What a contrast it was that afternoon when I participated in the installation of Arabella Meadows-Rogers as EP in New York City Presbytery. With Latino maracas and tambourines, African American rap, Ghanaian dance, Korean tinged scripture and classical European organ, we truly celebrated the multicultural church the PCUSA is becoming.

I witnessed multicultural ministry in many places that I visited:

- a ministry to Sudanese immigrants in the Des Moines area;
- Honey Creek Presbyterian Church, a small, aging Anglo congregation in New Carlisle, Ohio, (Miami Presbytery) struggling with a decision as to whether to become a bi-lingual and multicultural church in a community that is now 30% Hispanic;

- the Pasadena PC with its 4 different language worship services, and St. John's Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles, that has become multicultural overnight with the arrival of 40 new Cameroonian members;

The Valderre Presbyterian Church in Denver, where a Peruvian Commissioned Lay Pastor is serving a thriving Mexican fellowship in a congregation where the Anglo membership is 12 older Caucasian women - and the clear sense that the building will be graciously turned over to the thriving Latino community soon;

- a meeting with Racial Ethnic and immigrant pastors in Miami, and the poignant story of a Cuban CLP (attorney) who is starting a NCD for Latin American immigrants, so he can do for these new Presbyterians what was done for him when he escaped Cuba forty years ago.
- a round table conversation with pastors in Heartland Presbytery (Kansas City, where I heard stories about a dying inner city church being revitalized into an Afro-centric congregation; a new Taiwanese Fellowship led by a young woman pastor; a traditionally Italian Presbyterian Church blending with a Haitian fellowship, and a primarily Anglo congregation that decided to stay put in their changing Latino community, and by the grace of God found a Guatemalan, trained Presbyterian pastor to join with them - so that today the congregation is truly bi-lingual and multicultural.

I would love to say that this multicultural revolution is the joyful and intentional result of enthusiastic planning and vision on the part of the PCUSA. But we all know that this new thing God is doing is the pure work of the Holy Spirit flowing into our midst. And we as a denomination are still running to catch up.

All of us in this room have been saddened by the recent national budget cuts including non-English language curriculum and women's staff. But we need to celebrate the commitment of our church leaders to New Church Development (NCD), evangelism, and racial ethnic/ immigrant ministries, whose budgets are largely untouched. This is reinforced by the Hearts and Hands Mission Initiative, where \$20 million of new monies is being directed toward new church development with an emphasis on new immigrant populations. We know these are areas where we must continue to grow. We have the commitment, but we are still learning how to make the dream a reality.

## CHALLENGE

The challenge for us is to:

1. Open up this vision to parts of the churches where this revolution has not happened. It is important for people to experience what they cannot imagine.
2. Increase our polity and programmatic flexibility related to probes, immigrant fellowships, qualifications and training of Commissioned Lay Pastors (CLP), and develop ways to accept immigrant group designated leaders.
3. Learn and celebrate new cultures and contexts, rather than expect newcomers to match our culture. We are reminded in the parable of

Jesus in Luke, that the 6<sup>th</sup> hour workers who arrive later need an eager and loving welcome into the Household of God. And when we open our arms to that which is new, all of us will be the richer for it.

4. Find balance in the tension between inclusivity in racial ethnic, immigrant matters, and in sexuality, gender inclusivity. Those most vocal about one are the most opposed to the other in culture.

I have discovered this year that racial ethnic people are not monolithic in their views of sexuality and gender inclusiveness. In Ethiopia with rampant AIDS, homosexuality is not an option. In South Africa homosexuality is an issue. In the Cameroon, in some places there is polygamy that raises serious issues of ethics and inclusion when traditional practices intersect with baptismal faithfulness. We know that in this country over 300 of our congregations - many of them Korean - do not ordain women, even though it is mandated in our Book of Order. All of these tensions are inevitable, and we must continue to struggle and balance and include them all. I believe that these issues related to ordination are secondary issues in our faith, and should not be strong enough to divide us.

What we have in common is a joyful trust and obedience to Jesus Christ, a deep-seated conviction that multicultural reality is a gracious, necessary and life changing way to be the whole body of Christ. It is this call to evangelism, the Good News of Christ's love, that holds us together.

Thanks to all who welcomed me and put up with me this year, and joyfully told me their stories. As I end this year and go home, one of the real challenges will be to go back to my wonderful, white bread congregation and slowly open us up to this new multicultural reality - the new thing God is doing in the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Keep me in your prayers, as I will keep you in mine.

Thanks be to God - and to God be the Glory!