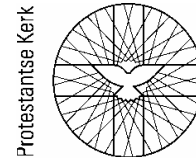


Hendrik Kraemer Institute

**'Colourful congregations – challenges in a colourful ministry'**

**Seminar on Multicultural Ministries in Basel (October 26-30, 2008)**

**Report**



Hendrik Kraemer Institute

## **'Colourful congregations – challenges in a colourful ministry' Basel, 26-30 October 2008**

### **Report**

#### *Introduction*

The CWM-seminar 'Colourful congregations – challenges in a colourful ministry' brought together some 20 practitioners in multicultural ministry. They came from the U.K., Netherlands and Switzerland, representing both 'old' and 'new' churches, and showing rich diversity in ethnicity and theological position. All came prepared to share their experience, to learn more and to strengthen the ministry. The fourth day of the seminar, prepared by the Swiss partners, was remarkable: a public symposium on multicultural ministries, the first national event of its kind in Switzerland. This day was attended by around 130 people.

The seminar was a direct result of earlier recognition within CWM-European Region that there is a need to offer training on multicultural ministry. This need for the region to focus its attention on multicultural ministry – in particular the relationship between migrant churches and mainline denominations – was acknowledged by CWM-Europe Region at its meeting in February 2004. The Regional Executive then looked at how to proceed with this task and agreed that multicultural ministry training, aimed at raising awareness primarily for key church leaders, should be developed.

A Planning Team was then convened to develop a training module. This team consisted of Francis Brienen (CWM Europe), Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (URC), JooSeop Keum (CWM), Aart Verburg and Gert Noort (both of the Hendrik Kraemer Institute, Netherlands). During the planning it became obvious to the team that rather than developing a *training module*, a first step would be to hold a multicultural ministry *consultation*. The team felt that an opportunity for experts and practitioners in multicultural ministry to gather and exchange experiences and ideas would be more helpful at this point. A consultation, therefore, would be an opportunity for those with experience in multicultural ministry to reflect together on the issues, share good practice models, and identify issues for theological training and equipping people for ministry in multicultural societies.

In 2005 and 2006 consultations on multicultural ministries were therefore convened in Utrecht, Netherlands (2005) and Derby, U.K. (2006). These consultations focussed on 'Moving Beyond Exoticism: Strengthening Mainline /Indigenous and Migrant Churches in their Multicultural Ministry'.

The discussions during the two consultations, focussed on key issues for theological education on multicultural ministries, helped to develop a course module at BA-level (level 2, 20 credits), which will be published shortly (2009). Furthermore – and probably more important – the method used during the two consultations turned out to be useful as a training model for and with practitioners in multicultural ministries ('training by intervision').

The five day seminar offered in Basel (2008) was a logical next step. HKI was requested to take the lead in both the preparatory process and facilitating the seminar as such. The above mentioned method of 'training by intervision' was developed further, used and thereby tested. The seminar was conducted in Hotel Bildungszentrum-21, the former mission house of Mission-21 (formerly 'Basel Mission'), located in the city centre of Basel.

The dates for the seminar were originally set for the Fall of 2007. The seminar was postponed by a year, however, to accommodate a request of Swiss churches and affiliated organisations: Mission21, the Office for World Wide Church in Basel (Pfarramt für Weltweite Kirche) and the Swiss League of Protestant Churches (SEK) expressed great interest to take part in the seminar. The feasibility of facilitating the seminar in Basel, instead of Utrecht, was discussed and agreed upon. The reasoning was that conducting the seminar in Basel could give a strong impetus to the development of the relatively new 'reality' of multicultural ministry in Switzerland.

In order to achieve this impetus it was decided to align the CWM-seminar with a public and national one day symposium on multicultural ministries (the latter sponsored by Swiss churches). In the end it was agreed to integrate the Swiss symposium in the seminar and to request participants of the seminar, as experts on multicultural ministries, to facilitate a number of workshops. This implied however, due to considerations on the Swiss side, that the seminar had to be postponed till October 2008.

Strict guidelines for the selection of participants were applied. In principle 18 participants were to be invited, 6 from the U.K., 6 from Switzerland and another 6 from the Netherlands. The participants should reflect equal representation from 'white' and 'black' ethnicity. In the end 20 participants were invited, as the partners from the U.K. and Switzerland suggested an extra participant. The participants represented several churches and organizations: from the U.K. members of URC, Union of Welsh Independents, the Congregational Churches and the newly appointed mission enabler of CWM European region participated. Participants from the Netherlands came from a wide variety of churches, including the Society of Indonesian Christians in the Netherlands, Global Harvest (a predominantly West-African church), the Christian Reformed Churches, the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and SKIN. Swiss participants represented a Tamil church, a Spanish speaking Latin American church, a Korean church, an international Methodist church, the Swiss Reformed Church and the Office for World Wide Church. The seminar was facilitated by Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (former secretary for racial justice and multicultural ministry of URC), and Gert Noort (HKI).

*The seminar*

The seminar as such focussed on training participants through a process of carefully guided intervision: daily presentations by participants (experts in the field and on related issues) constituted the starting point of reflections, followed by feedback in small groups, sharing experiences in the ministry, exchanging knowledge on good practices, reflecting on mission and identifying stepping stones for enhancing and strengthening the thrust of multicultural ministry. Included in the programme were meetings with some immigrant communities in the wider Basel region (exposure). The information contained in the appendices will give an idea of the input provided by participants.

### *Evaluation*

Participants highly valued the opportunity for exchange and learning about developments in the Netherlands, the U.K. and Switzerland. Participants expressed that the seminar encouraged them, especially through sharing the life stories and challenges in the ministry. Discussions in the small groups were essential for this process.

The one day symposium, fully organized by the Swiss counterparts, was attended by some 130 participants and received good press coverage. Without exaggeration it can be said that the symposium as such was a direct off-spin of the CWM-seminar. The host of the symposium, the director of Mission 21, acknowledged this specifically and publicly.

It was evident that the group of participants enjoyed the great diversity in backgrounds and experience. There was splendid diversity in ethnicity, education, profession and length of experience in the ministry, which was very enriching and mutually benefitting. It does, however, raise questions as well: some participants had expected more 'theory' on intercultural theology and research on multicultural ministry. Others were happy that the programme was not focussed on 'theological' but practical issues. The great diversity sets limits to what can be achieved. A researcher has other 'needs' than a tent making pastor, a youngster faces other challenges than a lecturer, someone who works at a national level has other ambitions than someone who is working locally, she who works in a mono-ethnic black majority congregation faces other issues than he who does community work in a multicultural, and multi-faith, neighbourhood.

Preparing the seminar with new partners was an adventure that turned out very well. There was enthusiasm about the seminar as such, the accommodation was wonderful (although lacking a comfortable, intimate 'lounge' for socializing after working hours).

### *Future*

- 1) Multiplication of the seminar is feasible. Meeting each other and the opportunity to identify good practices together turns out to be a helpful and valuable training model.
- 2) A serious interest was expressed to have this seminar at a *national* level. The aim would then be to bring together leadership of 'old' and 'new' churches and to further local processes of co-operation and cohesion.
- 3) Further development and revision of the training model is necessary. Improvement is possible where it concerns the balance of experimental

knowledge and new input by the facilitator/specialist (sharing and giving feedback – course materials/curriculum/lectures).

- 4) The issue of diversity in profession, education and experience needs further consideration (specialisation and narrow focus).
- 5) The idea to establish partnerships was raised: could exchange visits between pastors in multicultural setting be facilitated in order to discuss issues and challenges in the ministry?

## APPENDIX I

## Program MCM seminar Basel

**Sunday 26 October, 2008**

**Theme: Colourful congregations – the shape of the ministry**

Tonight the focus will be on *informing* each other about the shape of our ministry / congregation and on *identifying* issues for discussion and exchange.

14.00 – 18.00	Arrivals and registration in Hotel Bildungszentrum 21, Basel
17.00	Drinks available in the meeting room
17.50	Going to the Matthäus Church for the opening worship
18.30	Multicultural worship service with immigrants in Basel ('Miteinandergottesdienst' – 'with each other worship service'). Welcome to the participants by Rev. Annemarie Senn and Rev. Daniel Frei.
19.40	Going back to the hotel
20.00	Light supper
20.45	Introduction to the program
21.00	'Colourful congregations: what are we doing?' Three 15-minute presentations by: Sabine Jaggi Michael Jagessar June Beckx

The focus in these presentations will be on:

- 'What are we doing in the ministry?
- 'What have we learned?'
- 'What do we need to learn?'

21.50	Five minute personal reflection on the presentations
21.55	Evening devotions (Sandra Ackroyd)
22.00	Drinks

**Monday 27 October**

**Theme: Colourful congregations - foundational considerations**

Today the focus will be on *reflecting* about the foundations for our ministry and *discussing* these: how does our vision shape the praxis of our ministry?

08.30	Breakfast
09.00	Morning devotions (Wayne Hawkins)
09.15	'Colourful congregations: why are we doing things the way we do them?' Presentations on vision, guiding principles and models in the ministry. Presentations by: Roswitha Golder Cees van Veelen / Jan van der Meulen
10.00	Break for coffee and tea

10.15	Presentations by: Marla Winckler-Huliselan John Danso
10.45	Discussion in three small groups: 'Relevant issues in modelling multicultural ministry' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What model am I working with and why? (sharing)</li> <li>• Which issues are at stake in choosing or developing a model?</li> </ul>
11.45	Plenary presentation of the results from the small groups
12.30	Lunch
13.30	'Biblical and theological foundations for multicultural ministry: issues in relation to multicultural church', a lecture by Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, followed by discussion.
15.00	Coffee and tea
15.30	Visiting a leather factory and meeting with employed refugees
16.30	A walk through the multicultural district (94 nationalities)
16.45	Meeting with Rev. Klaus Fürst at the 'Miteinanderhaus' ('with each other house')
18.00	Back to the hotel
18.30	Dinner

*No activities are scheduled for the evening*

## **Tuesday 28 October**

### **Theme: Colourful congregations – challenges and opportunities**

Today the focus will be on *identifying instruments for development of the ministry*:

From vision to reality.

08.00	Breakfast
09.00	Morning devotions (Katalina Tahaafe-Williams)
09.15	Where are we in the process now?
09.25	The mission of multicultural churches: context and relevance of the International Christian Fellowship in Rotterdam. Presentation by Bram Dingemans.
10.15	Break for coffee and tea
10.30	Discussion in small groups: how does the context of the congregation influence the ministry / mission and vice versa? Sharing, discussion and feedback.
12.00	Plenary
12.30	Lunch (optional)
15.15	Coffee and tea
15.30	Identifying stepping stones for <i>further development of your multicultural ministry</i> .
15.40	<i>Sharing and feedback</i> in small groups about ways to develop your multicultural ministry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Share</i> with each other <i>one particular practical issue</i> in your multicultural ministry (obstacle, challenge, opportunity) you are wrestling with and that needs to be addressed.</li> </ul>

- Then *give feedback* to one another: How can this issue possibly be addressed? Which stepping stones can you identify (useful instruments, good practices) to work on this issue?

- 16.40 Plenary: compiling some stepping stones (highlights from the small groups)
- 17.00 Ten minute preparation for the symposium *Home in a strange land*
- Our meeting room will be used for the symposium tomorrow. Please take all your belongings with you!
- 18.00 Dinner
- 19.30 City tour of Basel: 'religions as builders of community' (expert guidance provided by Dr. Benedict Schubert)

### **Wednesday, 29 October**

#### **Theme: Colourful congregations – migrant churches in Switzerland**

Participation in the symposium *Home in a Strange Land: Migration Churches as Places of Integration?* This symposium is organized by the League of Protestant Churches in Switzerland, the Reformed Church of Basel and Mission 21. Simultaneous translation into English will be provided.

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 10.00 Words of welcome by Rev. Martin Breitenfeld (director of Mission 21) and Rev. Dr. Lukas Kundert (president of the Church Council of the Reformed Church of Basel).
- 10.30 Prof. Dr. Christine Lienemann (theological faculty Basel University): 'Theological impulses from the migration churches'
- 11.00 Joëlle Moret (Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies): 'Self-organization and networks: what is their relevance for integration?'
- 11.30 Dr. Amélie Ekué (Ecumenical Institute Bossey): 'Home in a strange land: migration churches as places of integration?'
- 12.15 Lunch
- 14.00 Intermezzo (music)
- 14.30 Workshops
1. Simon Röthlisberger and Dr. Matthias Wüthrich: 'Migration churches: a chance for society and churches: reflections on integration policies and theological aspects'.
  2. Dr. Lilo Roost Vischer: 'The contribution of migration to social integration'.
  3. Peter Detweiler, Roswitha Golder, Edith Spät: 'Current projects with migration churches in Switzerland'.
  4. Rev. Claudia Bandixen, Dr. Meehyun Chung: 'Women definitely and visibly in charge in two cultures'.
  5. Dr. Benedict Schubert: 'United in One Church of Christ – and yet strange and far from each other'.
  6. Carl Hardmeier, Peter Stäubli: 'Living and passing on the Evangelium as foreigners and Swiss'.
  7. Doris Peschke: 'Being church together – migration churches as ecumenical challenge in Europe'.

15.45 Break  
16.00 Music  
16.15 Compiling workshop results  
16.45 Conclusion of the symposium by Rev. Magdalena Zimmermann  
18.00 Dinner

*No activities are scheduled for the evening*

### **Thursday, 30 October**

#### **Theme: Colourful congregations – insights gained**

08.30 Breakfast  
09.00 Morning devotions (Lorna Barra)  
09.15 *Looking back and forward*: introduction  
09.30 *Looking back and forward*: discussion in the small groups

1. Looking back - insights gained
2. Looking forward - instruments needed
3. Looking forward - questions remaining

10.30 Break for coffee and tea  
10.45 Looking back and forward: plenary  
11.10 Agreements to be made, greetings  
11.30 Closing worship (see reader)  
11.50 Check out of your room before 12.00h.  
12.30 Lunch and departures

## APPENDIX III Presentations – a selection

### A) **Colourful congregations: The Shape(s) of Multicultural Ministry: Some Thoughts**

*Michael Jagessar, secretary for racial justice and multicultural ministry, URC*

My brief task is shaped around 3 specific questions: what are we (URC) doing in MC ministry? What have we learned? And we still need to learn? Then idea is that the presentation will serve to signpost a possible framework for further reflections on challenges and opportunities – especially identifying topics for further conversations.

- Indeed one of the greatest challenge before the church is how we live and practice the lifestyle of a learning MC community (too caught up with teaching).
- Multicultural ministry is that which intentionally seeks to recognize, celebrate and incorporate the diverse breadth of its membership in all aspects of mission and ministry – including leadership, structures and theological ethos.
  - This ministry ought to be characterised by: sharing the good news to and with all; embracing & celebrating diversity; reflecting diversity in liturgical, theological and ecclesiological ethos, sharing power; welcoming & hosting strangers and aliens; and pulling down the barriers of race and fear.

Allow to make a few preliminary and related comments to locate what I am about to share.

1. In terms of our theme, I want to play with the *full* in colourful and add a minor letter S (with major possibilities) to shape [could have been added to ministry as well]. We can have a lot of colours in a congregation while in reality only some (usually the dominant colour) that dictates the arrangement of the heterogeneous bouquet. In God's landscape all the colours are recognized and vibrant, enhancing each other, dull without the other, independent and interdependent. Here John 10:10 becomes a powerful imagery.
2. Locate myself - who am I – is also very crucial. What are the spiritual theological impulses at work in my life and on my journey? While I shall be speaking about the United Reformed Church, I am doing so as an Indo-Caribbean whose ministry as lay, then ordained and as an academic theologian happened in English, Dutch, Spanish & French speaking Caribbean and in the UK. My spirituality is also shaped by my Muslim, Hindu & Christian heritages. The politics of location is necessary in any discourse around colourful congregations and colouring ministry. This is something we need to do more of, to do honestly and do well.
3. In the United Reformed Church: Racial Justice is linked to Multicultural Ministry. This is very significant and brings to the discourse on MC ministry a particular perspective. The two are inseparable.
  - a. It is about valuing differences, recognising how prejudiced/bigoted Christian communities can be, the historicity of our MC world and

above all it underscores that MC ministry is a justice issue. The more I read the documentation, see ecclesial traditions in operation – the more I am convinced of the need to emphasise the integral link between the two. Other-wise we end up with Colourful Congregations and ministry that see ethnic churches and Christians as beating drums, playing bamboo instruments, singing lively music, dressing colourfully and cooking exotic foods. There are too many instances of cultural racism around especially in our worship! How BME's presence challenges and reshapes the dominant theological ethos and views remains a mute point and an area for more work.

4. A few developments in the URC over the last two years need consideration: URC's re-visioning of its ministry and future CTV & V4Life and the implications for a MC ministry; Development of Resource Centres for theological learning and formation in which MC learning needs to become core activity; Successful adopting of a resolution that ensures representation by BME's at all level of Church life (related to a skills audit); integration of work of RJMM along with four other significant Committees into a mission department.

What have we learned?

1. Importance of networking and conscientising – across the whole church. Racial Justice Advocates & RJMM advocates.
2. Critical nature of studying the structures of the URC and where things get done and who are key voices. How joined-up thinking and connecting work are important ingredients.
3. That the struggle for RJMM is costly and ongoing [developing a spirituality for MC ministry which I am presently working on].
4. That much can be achieved through joined up thinking, good strategising and when we get our theological bases into right perspectives - but it is a slow and difficult process.
5. The significance of re-sourcing, in-sourcing and out-sourcing for RJMM work in order to become more effective.
6. How much more is yet to be realised:

What we need to still engage with as part of our learning:

1. The issue of identity or identities in a declining church: How this is related to the wider discourse in the society on identities and integration? How do we interrogate whiteness in this regard?
  - a. "As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they function as a human norm." [Dyer 1997: p.1]
  - b. The absence/presence model of race that neglects to explore race privilege: interrogating white society & responsibility will not usher in transformation. The absence/presence model of race focuses attention only on minority ethnic people, concentrates on the oppressive aspects of race, and leaves racial power invisible.
  - c. A relational model directs attention to racial privilege & illuminates what has thus far remained obscured: -that the dominant group in our three nations also has racial identities; -and that the invisibility

of whiteness has discernible effects on the functioning of race in the social order. -The relational model clarifies how racial privilege and the ideology of white supremacy implicate white folks in racial inequality.

2. Finding ways to make RJMM core activity and at the heart of URC's work so that the theological leitmotiv and ethos of the Church can be reshaped.
  - a. For RJMM materials to play a significant part in transforming the agenda of training/church it must become integrated (not dissolved) in the core business of the Church: -it needs to be central to our theological, ecclesial and practical ethos -our way of living and being; It must become an optic to scrutinise what we already have in place; -and at the same time it has to be in a constructive dialogue that will also challenge it.
3. How do we engage with and re-read all those familiar passages we normally use to justify a MC church and ministry? For instance, I have taught and done much work in postcolonial hermeneutics. I want to encourage the use of this and other optics to re-read these texts.
4. How can MM/MC contribute to a rethinking of mission, unity and ecclesiology (our understanding of church)? Here MC church/ministry needs to reflect on its own intra-diversity and the implications for the theological underpinnings of MM.
  - a. One of the first steps of building multiracial community is the telling of stories, which not only unmask the various levels of history within a congregation but shows how the experience of an institution differs when it is told from varying perspectives. This is properly theological: for one cannot do theology for another. If theology is contextual, it must certainly be at root auto-biographical.
5. How do we move the discourse from multi [that can easily turn into ghettoisation, silo ethos style and another form of marginalisation] to a genuine inter cultural dialogue [which is more realistic in terms of cultures in dialogue and what happens on the ground]. There is something about the preservation of cultures that works well for the controlling tactic of dominant cultures.
  - i. from BME groupings to colourful churches that give agency to identities, cultures yet not locked into a static view of any of these.
  - ii. How through the dialogues of cultures that will necessarily happen in our engagement something beautiful can evolve that all can own, yet not claim
6. This is about puncturing the myth of the pure nativistic culture that actually plays into the hand of the dominant culture not wanting to really include and the new culture not giving agency to the complex nature of its own culture.
7. To reconsider the ways we are resourcing the key departments that deliver our Churches' mission and ministry, including the local constituencies, to be equipped for transformation etc
8. In our training, learning & conscientising programmes we need to be cognisant of new tools and strategies for re-visiting the complexities of migrant lives, cultural groups, multicultural communities etc.

## Questions

1. How and in what ways is the full in colourful enabling a full participation of all in the mission and ministry of the Church?
2. In what ways are the issues related to justice (especially racial/ethnic) linked to multi cultural ministry?
3. How do we re-explore identity or identities in a declining church that gives agency to the multicultural discourse?
4. How for instance is the notion of whiteness explored?
5. In what ways is multicultural ministry and its discourse can/do become core activity and is at the heart of the theological, ecclesiological and missiological ethos of the church?
6. How do we engage with and re-read all those familiar passages that we usually use to justify a multicultural church and ministry
7. How do we move the discourse from multi that can easily turn into ghettoisation, silo ethos and other forms of marginalisation, to a genuine inter-cultural dialogue.
8. How in our training, learning and conscientising programmes we can develop and work with new tools and strategies for re-visiting the complexities of migrant lives, cultural groups and multicultural communities?

## **B) Katalina Tahaafe-Williams**

*Director of Communitas – Contextual Mission and Theology*

### **'Biblical and theological foundations for multicultural ministry: issues in relation to multicultural church'**

*'After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

I am originally from Tonga in the South Pacific and this passage is very comforting to me particularly because it is a confirmation of my long held suspicion that heaven is filled with Pacific Islanders. The imagery of the multitude all dressed in white with palm branches in their hands is a very Pacific Island image...Every Sunday in the PIs our churches are filled with the multitudes all dressed in white! For some reason since the missionaries came, white dress/outfits to church every Sunday worship has become a Pacific Is norm. And palm trees are very common to our islands, so in fact I think heaven is in the Pacific... really...you'd have to agree....

My name is Katalina Tahaafe-Williams and currently I am Director of Communitas, a contextual mission and theology programme of the United Theological College of the Uniting Church in Australia, funded by the Council for World Mission in partnership with the United Reformed Church in the UK, and the Uniting Church in Australia. I have been in that post for nine months and previous to that I was the Executive Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry of the United Reformed Church in the UK (URC) – hence my role in these seminars. Most of you are not aware but one of our delegates here,

Michael Jagessar, is my successor in that job. As you heard from Michael, he has been in the job only since last month. So it was with mixed feelings that I listened to him talk about the work in the URC. It was like someone telling my story and while on the one hand it is very gratifying to hear the work that one had begun and build being taken further, it also stirred some nostalgia and sadness for I still miss that place, the people, and that particular denomination very much.

My task now is to give a presentation on biblical and theological foundations for multicultural ministry particularly highlighting some issues in relation to multicultural church. You will sense some impatience in the tone of my presentation and that is because I am getting very impatient. This is a reflection of many years of ministry in this area and knowing that there is still a long way to go. It also bears a sense of urgency that God is calling us, the Church, to a multicultural future and has given us plenty of opportunities to prepare for that future. Yet, we still drag our feet.

No one can deny that the bible is not only a rich resource for multicultural ministry, but that it is by its very nature multicultural. In addition to giving accounts from a long history of various peoples and cultures, there is a recurring theme especially throughout the New Testament of God's invitation to us to be part of this new people, new community, new heaven, new future that God is creating for humankind...where *a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, every tribes and peoples and languages* will together worship God and the Lamb in justice and in peace.

And here's the thing, God has revealed God's multicultural future for all God's peoples throughout the bible, in the ministry and life of Jesus, in the workings of the Holy Spirit through the ages. And yet the Church as we know it continues to behave as if that divine invitation is of no critical importance! I do not know about you but I am beyond having to be persuaded of the biblical and theological foundations for multicultural ministry. I need no more convincing that the Church/Community of Jesus Christ is by its very nature multicultural. I take that for granted.

From its very inception at Pentecost the Church was multicultural and multilingual. I used to make the point in the URC that being multicultural is written into the Christian DNA. It would be hard for any reader to miss the developing multicultural churches in the Book of Acts, or the challenges and richness associated with the multicultural church in the letters of Paul. And in the NT no other book addresses ministry for the multicultural church/community of Christ more proactively and directly as does the book of Revelation ... the passage above is only one of many examples from that book.

I want to focus on how to respond to the call from God to make our churches/communities reflect the multicultural nature of Christ's community as far as we can. I want to do everything in my ministry that would make real a welcoming and hospitable response to that call. For many of us in the west, we have been forced to become multicultural churches because we have no choice. We are confronted on a daily basis by the diverse multitudes and are thereby obliged to take account of that reality and mission opportunity seriously! Many

churches in the South face similar issues with increasing migration even to places that are normally not attractive to immigrants.

The question is, how much longer are we going to ignore God's multicultural invitation and purpose for us? I am personally experiencing a deep and profound sadness because I fear that the Church is at great risk of missing completely the opportunity to respond to God's multicultural invitation. I am concerned that when the Church is finally ready to respond appropriately it will be too late.

It is mind boggling that the western churches with their missionary history are still so far behind in their understanding of God's multicultural calling and in their responses to it. In the same way the mind boggles that Britain and Europe with their histories of imperialism and colonization are not better equipped to deal with diversity positively. As should all the settler societies like the USA, Canada, South Africa, Australia and NZ to name just a few! Sometimes I wonder if collective amnesia is integral to white western culture!

It is the arrogant double standard associated with power and dominance, that makes it ok for some to reap the benefits of past colonialism and imperialism, and present day neocolonialism and globalization, at the expense of the colonized multitudes. When those multitudes come looking for a share in the benefits, they meet border controls, restrictive immigration laws, racism, and rejection. As many migrants would testify, most people would rather live in their own homelands if all things were equal. But all things are not equal and people cross borders and oceans seeking a better life<sup>1</sup>...something that colonizers and imperialists should understand very intimately.

As Gonzalez would argue, the multicultural, cross-cultural and intercultural realities of our day have not taken place independent of economic and political systems. They are not just the result of cultural exchange, natural disasters, or the human desire to explore the earth. They are also the result of European conquest and expansion, of the enslavement of Africans and the trade that supported it, of colonialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, economic neocolonialism in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, and of political turmoil and civil wars that are caused in no small part by the forces of political and economic expansion mentioned above. It is natural for people to follow the flow of wealth. The classic example is the Mexican farmer/worker who illegally crosses the border under the bridge, following the tomatoes (that have taken over the crops in the fields he used to cultivate) that are crossing legally over the bridge to meet the demands of the more affluent US cousins over the border. <sup>2</sup> We in the west would do well to know our own histories and the cost to others of the lifestyle we live.

But let me get back to the multicultural vision of John in the book of Revelations. Gonzalez would also suggest that for John the question of whether there will be a multicultural church is irrelevant. It is a given. The question is more for those of us who are accustomed to seeing the gospel expressed only or primarily in terms of our dominant cultures - are we equipped to participate in the

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<sup>1</sup> See Justo Gonzalez, *For the healing of the nations*, Orbis Books 1999

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p. 83

multicultural church of Christ that is already a reality?<sup>3</sup> In the multicultural *kingdom* that God is inviting us to?

No doubt for many of us John's multicultural vision is inspiring. But many multicultural ministry practitioners today agree that there can be no authentic multicultural ministry without racial justice and equality. In other words, a truly multicultural church/community of Christ involves much more than bringing a bit of colour into our traditional worship. It involves radical changes in the way we understand ourselves, in the way we run our business and order our lives.<sup>4</sup> It involves dealing with issues of discrimination, distribution of wealth, power, access to education, housing and jobs. Indeed, any ministry that ignores these would do so at their own peril.

A truly multicultural church is one that takes for granted its responsibility to live justly in all aspects of its life and witness. From an institutional and structural perspective, how church resources are shared, how decisions are made and by whom, how it witnesses to Christ's inclusive love, these are key issues of justice that must be addressed if the church is to be true to its multicultural calling.

In Britain last year CCRJ of which I was a commissioner hosted Jesse Jackson who made a distinction between racial justice and racial equality. He said that many people now think that the job of the civil rights movement is done because racial justices have been achieved. This, he said, is a misunderstanding of what the civil rights movement tried to do. For there may be racial justice, but racial equality is still a long way away. So there is still much work to be done.

Barack Obama may become the President of the United States, but as long as the Black and Latina populations overwhelmingly represent the underclass in that nation then racial equality is still a long way away. The apartheid system has been abolished in South Africa, but as long as the overwhelming majority of the Black population constitute the unemployed, the homeless, the uneducated, prison inmates, the HIV and Aids victims, then racial equality is still a long way away.

The truly multicultural community of Christ must live and witness as a racially just community in all aspects of its life and witness. It cannot just talk about it. It must walk the talk as well. A local church here in Basel may have a multicultural membership, but as long as the power and decision making are in the hands of a particular ethnic or cultural group, then racial equality is still some way off. Such a congregation is not yet a truly multicultural community of Christ.

The point then is that no community/church can be truly multicultural without racial equality. There can be instances of racial justice where true multiculturalism does not exist, but there can be no real multiculturalism without racial justice in all aspects of its life and witness, i.e. racial equality. This is a key reason why in the United Reformed Church we insisted that this ministry must be called Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry. The two must walk hand in hand until God's will is manifested in all of the church's life.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid p. 91

<sup>4</sup> Ibid p. 92

I believe this notion of the truly multicultural community of Christ is consistent with the multicultural vision of John in Revelations. John's vision of the new people God is creating and inviting us to join is set in heaven, it is future oriented. For that reason many churches tend to think it has no relevance to our day. But I subscribe more to the view that if we are to understand our multicultural realities today and their associated challenges and opportunities, we need a vision for the future like John's.<sup>5</sup> A future where the everlasting reign of God includes saints from every tribe, language, people, and nations...a great multitude that no one can count....It is the vision of the time when the will of God is finally accomplished. Then, those who worship God and the lamb will be from every tribe, nation, peoples, and language, residents of the new Jerusalem, the new city of justice and peace.

Even more significantly for us today, this is the vision from which and out of which the church must live now in the present. As Gonzalez asserts, the church not only needs to live out of its multicultural beginning at Pentecost, it also must live out of its multicultural end as John's vision in Revelation shows. If we believe John's vision that this is the future toward which God's history is moving, then we in the church had better live out of that future. It is because we continue to refuse to live out of that future, that our witness is hardly credible today.<sup>6</sup>

This explains our slowness to grab hold of God's multicultural invitation to us. We all pray repeatedly that 'thy kingdom come'<sup>7</sup>, and yet many of us are not preparing for when God's reign does come! And we can hardly be surprised that the rest of the world won't believe us when we proclaim the reign of God, for many of us are still not living as people who are practicing and preparing for that Reign.

It is like the story of the man who talked about how he could not wait to retire so he can spend all his time fishing and living in his cabin in the woods.<sup>8</sup> But while he is still working, he spends every minute of his free time building a race car. There is some inconsistency between his professed future of living in the woods and fishing, and the way he is preparing for it. It is possible that deep down he does not really believe that he will ever live in the woods and fish. So how can anyone else believe him? It would help others believe him if his purposes are demonstrated by his actions. Further when his retirement arrives, it is more likely that he will not be ready to embrace life in the woods, let alone know how to cook the fish he catches. Likewise, if we are not working to prepare and equip ourselves for the multicultural *kindom* God is calling us to, we will surely be a sad lot when the *kindom* of God arrives.

As we practice for the future God is calling us to, we cannot build and grow multicultural churches/communities without having a deep and profound appreciation for our own cultures. Gonzalez<sup>9</sup> cautions that this is not to be

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid p.98

<sup>6</sup> Ibid p.104

<sup>7</sup> Ibid p.105

<sup>8</sup> Ibid p.105

<sup>9</sup> Ibid p.93

confused with a form of romanticization of culture that risks becoming demonic and idolatory, resulting in ethnic- racial violence and cultural exclusivism. No this is to do with being rooted deeply in the traditions and values that have sustained one's people through generations so that one can understand, value, and indeed can walk in someone else's cultural shoes.

Further we cannot prepare ourselves for God's new city of justice and peace by avoiding the needy and by building our own little suburban Jerusalems! As Gonzalez<sup>10</sup> puts it, John's vision tells us that our music and worship must be multicultural not simply because our society is multicultural, but because the future which God is calling us to is multicultural. It urges us that we must be multicultural not just so that *others* in our midst may find belonging and feel at home, but also so that we may feel at home in God's future!

We need to waken our churches to get up to speed with God's multicultural programme! The multicultural journey is not a honeymoon, but it has treasures and richness that lasts and lasts. To be frank, the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century simply cannot afford to miss God's multicultural express into the future. Let us make a commitment at this gathering to work our hardest to ensure our churches are not left behind.

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### **C) Sabine Jaggi**

*Staff Department of Ecumenism, Mission, Cooperation and Migration, Reformed Church Switzerland (Bern)*

#### **Who am I and who are WE?**

I am a social anthropologist, working for the Reformed Church of the canton of Berne, to be more precise I work for the department of Ecumenism, Mission, Cooperation and Migration.

I have personally made a long history with migrant churches: As a social anthropologist I did my diploma work at university about the subject, undertaking fieldwork of one year accompanying an Africa, French speaking migrant church. This was a very important experience to me and I learned a lot about this specific church and of course also a lot about the situation in general

My reason for choosing migrant churches as my specialism was to do with my employment with the Bernese church which had already established contacts with migrant churches. My speech will unfortunately not be in a academic, wonderful and correct English - but in my own, school-knowledge-based English. In order to make it a little bit more vivid I brought three visual aids. The three objects will help to illustrate the three steps which we were told to follow: (What are we doing? What have we learned? What do we need to learn?)

#### **What are we doing?**

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid p.109

The first object I brought with me is a **map** because a map helps us to find our way, helping us to understand where we are and it helps to orientate ourselves. This map is the map of the Canton of Berne and I will tell you later on what it has specifically to do with our work.

We have a long history of contact with new migrant churches: In the 1990's there were the first contacts established with the Korean church, also contact with one African church called La Vigne de Berne. This awareness intensified and we became aware of the diverse reality of migrant churches in our canton. We noticed that to most of our church members this new ecclesiological and sociological reality was unknown – therefore we decided to broach the issue of migrant churches on the occasion of our yearly autumn conference.

Together with the African Migrant church La Vigne, our commission prepared the Conference 2002. The title was "Africa in Berne - Mission in times of migration". Professor Walther Hollenweger delivered the main speech and 300+ participants discussed the issues in workshops. This was for many the first time they heard about migrant churches and more importantly that they entered in contact with African Christians, their faith and their daily life.

This conference was a first very important step. Several parishes established partnerships with migrant churches. Others invited the African church to participate in their church-service and visited the African church at their service in a cellar in the city of Berne. Another important step was the decision of our synod to symbolically help this specific church financially, linked to that decision was that the synod decided a policy on migrant churches. The synod charged our department, particularly my colleague Benz Schär and I with the task of developing a migrant churches policy. They want to know how to deal with migrant churches. And what does this task consist of?

On one hand we have to "raise an inventory of migrant churches in our church region;" to find out where there are migrant churches and finally who they are. This is not an easy task. This involves some detective work. The result of our investigation will be a map - not one in paper like the one I brought - but a map in the internet. The aim of this map is: 1) to make visible the variety and number of migrant churches 2) To make new contacts and establish links for signposting any enquirers. On the other hand we have to reflect on what the existence of migrant churches in our church region means to us.

### **What have we learned?**

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The second object I brought is this **rucksack**. A rucksack is something you take with you when you go on a journey. Our experiences with migrant churches are like a journey we make together. During this journey we fill our symbolic rucksack with experiences from which we learn.

We have learned for example that migrant churches actually exist; they are part of our society and our church landscape. We have learned that migrant churches contribute to the integration of their members by offering them a network and haven where they feel safe and esteemed. We have learned that migrant churches and Christians are our partners and not only receptors of social or church aid. They have a lot to offer to us!

We have also learned that the migrant church scenery in the region of our Bernese church is a very manifold, broad and dynamic one: new churches are appearing whilst others disappear, there are separations and re-unifications. We have learned that it is quite difficult to orientate oneself in this scenery and that we need to invest much more time and personal encounter would be needed than the limited time at our disposal.

We have also learned that a lot of migrant churches are looking for accommodation. There are needs, but this is only one of the reasons why they are searching for contacts with reformed parishes but it is not at all the only one. It matters to them to have some contact with the so called "established" church. We have learned that it is most important that members of our reformed churches and members of migrant churches get to know each other. If we meet, we can get to know each other, not as foreigner and indigenous person, but as Christian brothers and sisters. And the indigenous people can learn a lot about a hidden reality, a daily life which is for the most part unfamiliar to us. What does it mean for example to live without a stable permit in a country, to live with such insecurity, as it is the case for asylum seekers from Africa and other countries? We also have learned that relationships are most essential not only on a personal level, but also at an institutional level and finally within the university where new pastors train. To formalize partnerships can make things more reliable for both sides.

### **What do we need to learn?**

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The last object I brought with me is the **Holy Bible**. It is an important book to all of us, a book, which tells us not to be afraid, which tells us to get in touch with each other. It can be a tool for our contact and a source of solace and inspiration for the things we still need to learn.

The Swiss churches urgently need to learn to be more courageous. We have to learn to dare something. For example: To dare to be hospitable. To dare to let migrant churches use our rooms and our churches. Unfortunately some parishes do often not even try to show hospitality. I know of one example where the pastors simply denied the request to use a room without even having spoken to the church leaders who were searching for a room.

In this context mentioned above, the Swiss have to learn two things:

**First:** We have to learn to accept that it is okay to be afraid because we don't know each other and we don't know yet how we would get along with each other or if a partnership between us would work out.

**Second:** We have to learn that we should never let our fears and insecurities dominate our decisions or hinder us from getting in touch with each other.

There are various pragmatic ways of acknowledging our fears and not allowing them to prevent us making steps towards each other e.g. temporary room sharing agreements can be made. These temporary agreements make it possible to get to know each other better and to find out how we get along with each other. If there is a temporary agreement, members of the indigenous Swiss parish and migrant church can meet and discover that "the others" have names and faces, enjoy activities together, etc many things will be much easier. It will be much easier to consider each other really brothers and sisters.

We have to learn to take each other seriously. It is easy to invite a migrant church to sing in the church service but it is more difficult to take each other seriously as brothers and sisters. The step from dancing, singing and cooking together to taking each others for seriously is not an easy step. It is important to meet again and again and to establish a real relationship.

Mutual respect is needed in these relationships. Respect especially for the fact, that we sometimes really *are* different. Our histories are different, our faith can be expressed differently, our understanding of evangelism and some of our theological convictions is different. To disagree is not, I believe, evil. Conflicts are human. If we discuss this it can help to understand each other better and also identify the limits of the understanding for each other. If we consider each other brothers and sisters - a family - it is only normal that there are conflicts. In a family sometimes there are even fights and quarrels, but we ultimately remain a family. It's not always an easy family, but it is a family. Let's not forget about that.

I would finish with one last but very important thought: We live in a context that separates us, the context of our history, our experiences and our daily life experiences. Despite this separation there is a context that unites us - the Holy Bible. 1Corinthians 12 encourages us to see life as lived between two poles (text - context) and to stand in the tensions caused by them because there is no doubt the body of Christ is a multicultural body.

### **Issues for discussion an exchange**

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Let me finish my speech with three important issues for discussion and exchange which I believe are important.

1. When it comes to the cooperation between migrant churches and the national church important questions arise concerning the relationships between the two churches. The most common question is: How come the national church cooperates with migrant churches even though they're theology is similar to the theology of the free churches with whom the national church doesn't cooperate? How can we get involved in a serious dialogue with "charismatic theologies"?
2. What kinds of cooperation between Universities and migrant churches exist in your countries? How do you succeed in committing universities to co-operation with migrant churches? And what are the consequences of that cooperation for teaching and learning theology in Faculties of Theology?
3. Are there expressions of best practice concerning cooperation between national, established churches and migrant churches in your countries?

### **D) Roswitha Golder**

*Pastor Protestant Church of Geneva serving the United Methodist Church,*

*Geneva.*

What I am doing, how and why I do it in my ministry to the Latin American Christian Community in Geneva where I have been a pastor for the past twelve years. In 2005 I completed a D. Min. thesis on this work entitled "Open Doors. The Corporate Image of the Latin American Christian Community in Geneva." I brought a copy of the document and will pass it around. I also have it with me on a "MemStick" and you are welcome to copy all or parts of it for your own private use.

The Latin American Community has existed for over 20 years. It started as a small outreach to Spanish-speakers within the local parish of the United Methodist Church founded by German-speaking immigrants to Geneva. In 1994, at about the same time the German-speaking congregation switched to French, the language spoken in Geneva, the Latin American branch was recognized as a separate parish - called a "circuit" or "charge" in the official terminology of the United Methodist Church. Since then, we have added yet another language and are presently offering worship services as well as a whole range of activities in both Spanish and Portuguese. Let me describe some of them as they take place on an average Sunday like yesterday:

About 25 Spanish-speakers come to our Bible breakfast at 10 AM, an average of 50 participate in our 11:30 worship in Spanish followed by a hearty lunch which attracts some outsiders, friends and acquaintances of our members, and is therefore a wonderful meeting place for all generations and many nationalities. I asked my listeners yesterday what they liked best about our congregation and the lunch was high on the list! Once a month, EPER, the aid agency of the Protestant Churches in this part of Switzerland organizes a "conversation" on a subject of general interest. The last one concerned "Chagas" an illness previously unknown in Switzerland, since it is transmitted by an insect found exclusively on the Latin American continent. The Cantonal Hospital in Geneva is conducting a research program including free testing and treatment that is highly appreciated and well received. Counseling on health issues such as this forms part of my ministry.

Yesterday, a representative of the Center for immigrants in Geneva talked about health insurance which is compulsory in Switzerland and thus - at least in principle - also accessible to undocumented workers, but quite a few of them do not know how to subscribe to it. As is apparently the case in many of your migrant churches, most of the members and friends of our parish are so called "Sans Papiers," meaning that they lack the necessary permits to live and work in Switzerland. Present legislation only gives these permits to so-called "highly qualified migrants" from outside the European Union. However, the local economy would not function without the labor our parishioners provide, in the domestic sector, in restaurants and in agriculture. The cantonal authorities are eager to legalize some 5000 "Sans Papiers", who have all been in Geneva for over five years, but so far the federal government has refused to authorize such a blanket measure and public opinion in many parts of the country does not favor it.

Around the year 2000, Bolivians made up much of this work force and constituted a majority of our parishioners. Today, Brazilians are more numerous,

since they can still travel to and from Switzerland without visas. Bolivians now need visas not only to enter Switzerland, but also for all Schengen countries. The Brazilian branch of our community has grown by leaps and bounds during the past six years. At 6:30 PM every Sunday over 100 Brazilians, mostly young people under the age of 30 attend a lively worship service in Portuguese. It tends to last at least two hours. A large part of this time consists of contemporary music sung by an enthusiastic crowd led by the "praise group" playing electronic instruments accompanied by percussions. After worship, we gather again to share some food and good fellowship.

Both Spanish and Portuguese-speakers also meet in smaller groups on weeknights to minister specifically to men or women. A group of young people gathers on Saturday nights. Our community conducts special activities for the children called Sunday School in Spanish or Children's Service in Portuguese, both taking place during part of the adult worship.

Sales of used clothing are organized at regular intervals by both Brazilians and Spanish-speakers. These are much appreciated as most newcomers lack adequate clothing for our four seasons and cannot afford to buy anything at local prices. Newcomers also flock to our basic course in French language and civilization that costs 20 Swiss francs per trimester. It is taught by our only African member, an Angolan Methodist, from 7-10 PM on Tuesday nights. About forty men and women of different ages and many nationalities sign up for it.

Together with some 60 other "migration churches" in the region, the Latin American Community of the United Methodist Church forms part of a loosely connected movement called "Witnessing Together in Geneva" that networks with the "Rassemblement des églises chrétiennes de Genève," i.e. the local Council of Churches as well as with the "Réseau évangélique," a part of the Evangelical Alliance. Some "migration churches" in Geneva such as the Scottish Presbyterians dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century or the Lutherans, who just celebrated the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their church in the City of Calvin, are long-time members of the ecumenical Council. Others, mostly newer African or Latin American migrant churches have joined the Evangelical Alliance. The United Methodist Church is one of the few holding membership in both organizations, thus marking its commitment both to ecumenism as well as to its evangelistic missionary tradition.

For next Sunday, the movement "Witnessing Together in Geneva" is organizing a choir that will sing in front of the Reformation Wall to celebrate the Reformation and launch the Jubilee Calvin 09, which will include many special activities to commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of John Calvin. We also plan to hold regular prayer meetings and organize a Prayer Vigil during the night of July 10<sup>th</sup>, the actual date of the anniversary. We shall be involved in a multicultural service at St. Peter's Cathedral in the heart of the Old Town on that evening.

I believe that I have so far addressed the question "what we do" and "how we do it" but have paid less attention to the reasons why. Yesterday's Bible readings from the lectionary seemed very appropriate: While Exodus 22,21-27 exhorts us not to discriminate the stranger, the widow, the orphan, or the poor among us, Jesus teaches the Pharisees around him, and all of us today, the most important command: "Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and

intelligence... and love others as well you love yourself. These two commands are pegs; everything in God's Law and the Prophets hangs from them." I like Eugene H. Peterson's translation in contemporary language: these two commands are the fixed hooks high up on the wall from which we are to hang all our programs and take our guidelines. They determine our priorities: We do what we do because of our love for God, for our neighbors and for ourselves. We build each other up as Christians, as women, as indigenous people, as migrants and undocumented workers; we empower the powerless, take care of the needy, and try to put into practice – within our limited possibilities – the most important command Jesus gave us. I am deeply moved that without previous consultation between the two of us, Wayne chose the parallel text from Luke that followed by the parable of the Good Samaritan. It exemplifies what we are trying to do, imitating the foreigner, the migrant, rather than some of the representatives of institutionalized religion whose priorities seem to lie elsewhere.

I also agree with Michael that it is a question of justice and of human rights: as one of the few Swiss citizens in my congregation, I am ashamed to hear about the way some of my parishioners are treated by Swiss employers, including practicing Christians, who think they do not need to observe our labor laws, since they are dealing with undocumented workers. Fortunately, our courts do not tolerate such behavior: Labor unions have been successful in obtaining compensation either by bringing cases of abuse against "Sans Papiers" before a tribunal, or obtaining adequate compensation in out-of-court settlements.