

Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Ministry

Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are made as a creative response to increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the church and in its leadership. Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are appointments of clergypersons to congregations in which the majority of their constituencies are different from the clergyperson's own racial/ethnic and cultural background. Annual conferences shall prepare clergy and congregations for cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments. When such appointments are made, Bishops, cabinets, and boards of ordained ministry shall provide specific training for the clergy persons so appointed and for their congregations.

(¶430.4)

Assumptions

- The United Methodist Church will continue to face the challenges and wonderful opportunities for mission and ministry presented by a multiracial and multicultural society
- Whereas, for many years, cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments were exceptions to the rule, it is likely that such appointments will be the norm by the middle of the twenty-first century
- Racism is a reality within society and within the church
- Racism is a sin
- As Christians we are called to resist sin and evil in whatever forms it presents itself
- Dismantling the sin of racism and building healthy relationships requires our ongoing, intentional effort
- The astronomic growth of the Hispanic population coupled with the immigration from non-European nations will change the face of the United States in the twenty-first century
- Boards of Ordained Ministry are charged with the sacred responsibility to bring into ordained and licensed ministry a new generation of women and men capable of fulfilling the mission of the church among all God's people
- In order to fulfill its responsibility each Board of Ordained Ministry will need to consider how demographic changes are impacting the leadership needs of the church.
- Boards of Ordained Ministry should examine the assumptions inherent in their processes for interviewing candidates as they relate to racial and cultural differences.

Examination of Assumptions Inherent in Processes and Practices of the BOM

Review the assumptions at the beginning of this chapter. Do they accurately represent those of your BOM?

What assumptions and expectations, both tacit and explicit, exist with regard to what is appropriate behavior in interpersonal relationships? (Eye contact, relationship to elders, authority in the family, the use of power in the community, cultural boundaries, space between people, relationship to the opposite sex.) How do these assumptions and expectations vary from one culture to another? How does this inform the way the board relates to ministry candidates?

Name and discuss other assumptions/beliefs about culture and race inherent in your board's practice. Are these assumptions faithful to the gospel? In what ways are the board's practices congruent with its assumptions about culture and race? What assumptions need to be re-examined? What practices need to be changed to reflect the BOM's beliefs?

BOM Education and Training and Monitoring Regarding Issues of White Privilege and Racism

How does your board learn about its practice of ministry with regard to issues of white privilege and racism? How does it seek feedback and from whom? Is anti-racism training required for your BOM members?

Invite trained leaders to guide the board in reflecting on its theology and practice in matters of race and culture.

Implement processes for receiving feedback about the board's practice from a variety of sources. Consider assigning a monitor for board meetings - someone who will pay particular attention not only to what is said, but what is left out of discussions in the board proceedings with regard to issues of race and culture. Let the monitor's report help the board members to engage in dialogue about these issues.

Invite a person who is licensed to administer and interpret the Intercultural Development Inventory for members of the Board of Ordained Ministry. (The IDI is an instrument which measures peoples' orientation toward cultural difference.)

Communicating BOM Values and Expectations to Ministry Candidates

Does the examination of candidates consider a person's ability to work effectively in cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments?

What expectations exist with regard to proficiency in the English language for individuals whose first language is not English? Why? How is this communicated to potential candidates?

Every community has unique characteristics. Does the BOM consider a candidate's ability to understand different community contexts and the

implications of demographics for ministry as a part of its assessment of readiness for ordination?

Racism is a current reality in the church. What support systems are available to help persons to challenge and to cope with this reality? What support systems might the BOM sponsor or advocate to assist clergy and churches in addressing issues of racism?

Resources

Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). Licensed persons who may be contacted to administer and interpret the IDI included the following:

- Kristina Gonzalez, kgonzalez@pnwumc.org
- Keith Andrew Hwang, revkahwang@hotmail.com
- Barbara Isaacs, bisaacs@gcorr.org
- Lucia Ann (Shan) McSpadden, lmcspadden@psr.edu
- Craig Parrish, cparrish@pnwumc.org

Lyght, Ernest S. and Glory E. and Jacob S. Dharmaraj. *Many Faces One Church: A Manual for Cross-Racial and Cross Cultural Ministry* (Abingdon: Nashville, 2006)

McSpadden, Lucia Ann. *Meeting God at the Boundaries: Cross-Cultural Cross Racial Appointments* (General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2003)

McSpadden, Lucia Ann. *Meeting God at the Boundaries: A Manual for Church Leaders* (General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2006)

An extensive bibliography and other resources can be found on the General Commission on Religion and Race, United Methodist Church website

www.gcorr.org