



# RELIGION & RACE

General Commission on Religion and Race

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

---

## Learning from Strangers

Joys and Challenges  
of Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Ministry  
in The United Methodist Church

---

G. Derrick Hodge

First Cabinet Edition

## Table of Contents

---

Message from the General Secretary	II
Acknowledgements	III
Preface	IV
Executive Summary	1
Chapter One: Strangers Bearing Wisdom	3
CHRIST THE STRANGER	3
THE STRANGER AS TEACHER	4
IT TAKES A STRANGER	4
CHRISTIANS AS STRANGERS TO EACH OTHER	5
THE JOYS AND REWARDS OF CROSS-RACIAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRIES	7
Chapter Two: To the Cabinets	9
MOVING BEYOND “GIFTS AND SKILLS”	9
PASTORS SPEAK TO CABINETS	10
I. FRANKNESS	10
II. PREPARATION	12
III. APPOINTMENT-MAKING	17
IV. ON-GOING SUPPORT	25
Chapter Three: Cabinet Workbook	29
I: FRANK AND FEARLESS DISCUSSIONS FOR CABINETS	32
II. ENGAGE WITH CLERGY RECOMMENDATIONS	33
III. CONSIDER THE CONCERNS OF LAITY	35
IV. APPOINTMENT-MAKING RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRIORITIES	37
Methodological Appendix	39
THE RESEARCH BENEATH THE RECOMMENDATIONS	39
PHASE I: GEOGRAPHIC DATA	40
PHASE II: DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS	40
PHASE III: LOCAL PASTORS	41
PHASE IV: SITE VISITS	41
PHASE V: QUANTITATIVE SURVEY	41



# RELIGION & RACE

General Commission on Religion and Race

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## Message from the General Secretary

---

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR). We are proud to present to you: *Learning from Strangers: Joys and Challenges of Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Ministry in The United Methodist Church*.

We are excited to provide this resource on the subject of Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural (CR or CC) Appointment and Ministry at this time in the life of our church and society. We are living in a time when the need for lay and clergy leaders, who are able to embrace – and learn from – those who are different, is vitally important. The good news is that I believe more and more annual conferences and local churches understand this fact and are seeking support to live into the fullness of what it means to be the Beloved Community. Learning from Strangers is one of the ways that GCORR is offering that support.

This manual highlights the on-the-ground experiences of clergy and laity currently serving in CR or CC settings. It is intended to provide insight about the perspectives and experiences of these leaders so that more intentional and systemic steps can be taken to increase the joy and decrease the preventable challenges of these ministries. You will find that this book is not a “How to” manual on CR or CC appointment and ministry, but rather an invitation to think and dialogue more deeply about the unique nature of ministry in cross cultural contexts. We hope that cabinets will find this manual useful in their work to build stronger relationships and engage in more vital ministry. The final chapter is a workbook designed to help cabinets reflect upon these national findings in light of their local realities.

GCORR offers prayers and encouragement to all who work faithfully to build the peaceable realm in our midst, who love unconditionally and who strive to serve across lines of difference. We support you and pray God's blessings on you and your ministries.

In Christ,

Erin Hawkins  
General Secretary

## Acknowledgements

---

Although only one person compiled the data and wrote the following manual, the wisdom and experience represented comes from many different voices. The General Commission on Religion and Race extends thanks to the many dozens of bishops, district superintendents, clergy, and lay leaders who shared their stories, frustrations, and triumphs with us. We are especially indebted to the following conferences that hosted site visits: Central Texas, Florida, North Texas, and Northern Illinois.

GCORR General Secretary Erin Hawkins recognized the need for a practical manual informed by on the ground experiences across the UMC connection. An early draft of the manual was read by a group of faithful United Methodists who critically read and commented on it. Their insights improved the final version a great deal. This group includes Mr. Vincent Gonzales, Ms. Marian McCray, Reverend Dr. Claude King and Reverend William Obalil.

We thank the many unnamed faithful Christians, of all ethnicities, ages, and classes, whose continuing struggles to live together in (and into) the call to beloved community collaborate with their United Methodist communities to experiment, sometimes falter, and sometimes succeed. This manual is dedicated to the hope that one day soon, we can all respect and revere difference of every sort and to learn from it, without trying to silence it, find a least common denominator, or turn difference into tokenism.

## Preface

---

The resource is the result of an 18-month research study conducted by the General Commission on Religion and Race. From the early planning stages, we had three foundational goals in mind. First, as we traveled the country having consultations with cabinets and bishops, we discovered that there is a great need and desire for help in understanding the complexities of cross-racial and cross-cultural ministries (hereinafter, “CR or CC ministries”). We wanted to create something useful that could be understood and used by people at various levels of the connection.

Second, it was the vision of GCORR’s General Secretary, Erin Hawkins, that resources be firmly rooted in by a formal research process, using the best methods and analyses of social sciences. The theological justification is clear, the need is there, and there are thousands of experiences around the U.S. that might be useful to share. But to make it accessible, meaningful, and actionable, that experience had to be mined, organized, analyzed, and then translated into accessible language for various audiences.

Third, we knew that the research had to explore actual, on-the-ground experience of United Methodist congregations and cabinets. Thus, this manual does not summarize the vast literature on multicultural engagement in Christian congregations, nor do we engage in theological debate, nor do we mine the two excellent volumes by UMC clergy regarding CR or CC ministry in the church.<sup>1</sup> Rather, the ideas and suggestions that follow were discerned through interviews with cabinets, pastors in CR or CC settings, and laity in those same congregations. What follows is not the *opinion* of the General Commission on Religion and Race, but the actual *experience* of United Methodists as they work in their communities to make disciples and transform the world.

One final comment before we begin: this manual is a working document. Our vision is not only that it will be useful, but also that it will generate dialogue within and between the levels of the connection. This dialogue may produce new ideas and new approaches. Users might have alternate experiences to offer that require a *nuancing* of the ideas. In short, the continuing vitality of this manual depends upon the on-going participation of its users. This is only the first edition; look for new editions on [gcorr.org](http://gcorr.org). Our hope is that revised editions may have new content, and that in the process of creating that content, users will be inspired to create even more effective and faithful strategies.

We ask you to read and use this material, distribute as you see fit, and share your experiences with us. It can only be improved and updated if readers are willing to share their own experience and critical reflections. Please share your thoughts with us via the feedback form on the last page.

May the Holy Spirit guide the reading, writing, interpretation, and use of this guide!

---

<sup>1</sup> We direct the reader to: *Many Faces, One Church: A Manual for Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Ministry*, by Glory Dharmaraj, Jacob Dharmaraj, Ernest Lyght. Abingdon: 2006 and Lucia McSpadden *Meeting God at the Boundaries: Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural clergy Appointments*. United Methodist Church: 2003.

## Executive Summary

---

1. Both scriptural imperatives and Wesleyan tradition call the entire church to nurture and support both cross-racial and cross-cultural ministries, in order to enable to unique transformation potential of ministry across lines of difference. Demographic data of The United Methodist Church and of the United States clearly point to a significant growth of CR or CC ministries in the immediate future. Both theology and church data call for a significant change in appointment priorities.
2. Only a handful of conferences have engaged in systematic reflection, much less organized program, to explore the particular needs of CR or CC ministries. Yet there is no conference that is not affected by the new demographic complexities of local communities. Thus, every conference – especially those that have not, historically, felt the need to think through these issues – would benefit from thorough, systematic, and immediate CR or CC conversations.
3. Cabinets often unwittingly reproduce inequalities and inequities during the appointment-making process, because of the lack of supportive interventions during an appointment, and as a result of the the clergy effectiveness evaluation process. Intentional and unhesitating re-evaluation of processes, procedures, and habitual practices is required in order to ensure vital and sustainable congregations in the future. The sustainability of The United Methodist Church depends upon conferences' willingness to re-think and re-imagine their processes.
4. The complexities of identities and intersections in the church render familiar distinctions obsolete. The White/People of Color dichotomy cannot capture the current realities of contemporary life in the United States; simplistic distinction is not helpful conceptually or programmatically. Other and more complicated identities have rendered our understandings of race and of culture far more complex, forcing a re-evaluation of familiar UMC paradigms.
5. This new complexity means that it is not accurate to assume that clergy in CR or CC settings are people of color, nor that there is a consistent set of barriers and challenges that most CR or CC ministries confront. Identities are so complex, and there are so many combinations of clergy and congregational characteristics, that no description or analysis can accurately represent more than one patch of a mosaic. Nurturing and supporting CR or CC ministry therefore require that simple formulae, still the operational norms in the church, be discarded in favor of more contextual and nuanced understandings.
6. This complexity does not mean, however, that significant programmatic interventions cannot and should not be launched immediately, in to help ensure the success of the many CR or CC ministries of the church. In fact, the greater the complexity, the greater the need to incorporate multiple voices into every church program.
7. Even though the nature of these realities and their challenges are multiple and complex, solutions can and should begin immediately, and they need not be complicated. Conferences should and must begin to take simple measures, immediately, to increase the likelihood of ministry success.

8. When appointments are made based on an aspirational for a color-blind church, rather than on contemporary social realities, then potential challenges and burdens will be borne by the pastors only, with no conference support. Therefore, cabinets are urged to move beyond exclusive reliance on the “gifts and skills” nexus, as if difference did not matter. Rather, we recommend that cabinet remain acutely aware of every kind of difference, and what preparations and supports are needed to ensure that, rather than being a barrier to the ministry of Christ, diversity is a source of transformation.
9. Simple and immediate measures will enable cabinets to faithfully respond to the unique challenges of cross-racial and cross-cultural ministries. Systematic research conducted has identified 12 steps that a cabinet could take to help ensure vitality and sustainability of local ministries: 1 step related to cabinet-level discussions of race; 4 steps related to conference and congregation preparation, 4 steps related to the appointment-making process, and 3 ways to provide on-going support to CR or CC ministry settings.

## Chapter One: Strangers Bearing Wisdom

---

### Christ the Stranger

Even the most casual reader of the Scriptures can't help but notice that 'strangers' appear quite frequently, often knocking on a door. Throughout the history of God's people, as told in both Hebrew and Greek texts, the stranger is a frequent presence. A messenger. A teacher. A migrant in need. Maybe even an angel.

The stranger in the Scriptures is a brother or sister in need of hospitality, often in need of the most basic food and shelter required to stay alive. We in the Christian church are accustomed to interpreting the stranger as an image that commands us to provide hospitality, giving us an opportunity to serve. Jesus was a migrant and stranger, and He commanded us to serve 'the least of these, my people' as if we were serving Jesus Himself. Our care for the homeless and the immigrant are therefore faithful responses to the scriptural image of the stranger, faithful ways to contribute to the building of the Reign of God, to 'prepare the way in the desert.'

But the arrival of the stranger gives us much more than an opportunity to practice mercy and to obediently serve the least of these. Theologian Arthur Sutherland argues that hospitality is in fact the core of Christian theology. Summarizing his work, the editors of Abingdon Press wrote that:<sup>2</sup>

Arthur Sutherland places before us our fear of meeting the "other" and the "stranger" in an increasingly global, and frequently dangerous, village.... Hospitality is not simply the practice of a virtue but is integral to the very nature of Christianity's position toward God, self, and the world—it is at the very center of what it means to be a Christian and to think theologically.

The opportunity to serve the stranger is, therefore, part of the Divine logic of transformation, both personal and social. Further, as theologian Rowen Williams argues, "In Jesus we meet God not as someone safe and familiar, but as a stranger."<sup>3</sup> Further, "Because Christ's life is catholic and unbounded, he [sic] is never fully absorbed by any particular human context. He is both 'native' and 'stranger' to all social locations."<sup>4</sup> If the church sees Christ as a stranger, and if hospitality is part of God's economy of salvation, then it follows that deep and holy hospitality *is* reconciliation; *it is the healing of ruptures.*

---

2 Editors (2006) Rear cover of Arthur Sutherland's *I Was A Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

3 Benjamin Myers (2012) *Christ the Stranger: The Theology of Rowan Williams*. New York: Bloomsbury. P34.

4 Ibid 64.

## The Stranger as Teacher

But we shouldn't stop there. The scriptural stranger is seldom merely a passive recipient of charitable ministry. More often, the stranger is a messenger from God, with a mission to help God's people figure out how they have been going astray, and how to find their way back to their divine home. Consider the strangers who showed up at the gate of Sodom. They were not only messengers of God, but also agents of God's work. And not least, they were *teachers* of God, agents who taught Lot about God's justice and God's mercy.

In the Greek scriptures, too, angels/messengers/agents of God are not uncommon, and they play an important role in helping to guide God's people to the path of righteousness and reconciliation. Angel/teachers announced and facilitated both the birth of Jesus and the resurrection of the Christ. They *taught* the apostles, first the women and then the men, about God's plan for reconciliation and transformation of their broken world. According to *Acts*, God appeared a number of times to the apostles and disciples to comfort, guide, and *teach* them about the God that they could only know in part. By teaching them, they also caused them to act, which means that they caused them to change their world. So the teaching of God is never just an intellectual exercise; it is a mechanism for the work of God. The teaching of God is active and causal, and is an extension of God's own presence.

The agents of the teaching/doing were all strangers, of course, because only a stranger could stand outside the social norms of any particular community, and show it what it could not see. It takes a stranger to point out that there is another way to live, another kind of relationships with each other and with God. Like a fish in water, we are not even aware that water exists, much less that we live in it. It takes something outside the fish bowl to teach us that there is a universe of air outside the bowl. It takes a stranger to teach us that there is another way to be faithful to the God of creation.

## It Takes a Stranger

Theologically speaking, then, the stranger is much more than she may seem at first glance; she is a vital minister of God's love and reconciliation. We normally learn from, and receive nurture from, those who share our experience – members of our own communities who speak our language and reflect our own ideas back to us. A stranger is someone who emerges from an altogether different time or place – or who has been among us, but whose experience has not been valued or even heard, like the strangers in our midst. Because of this, she is not a product of the social pressures that nudge people in one direction or another. She is not bound by the prejudices and expectations that are normal in each particular community of people. She is able to see that we are in water, and to call it what it is. In short, the stranger is an excellent teacher of God. She shares with us the way that God is experienced in her place, among her people. She tells stories of reconciliation, renewal, and rebirth in ways that we would

never have imagined. She teaches us the way that her people interpret the scriptures, and the ways that her experience has manifested the love of God.

This challenges the limitations of our faith. It challenges the social norms that, before she came, we did not even know existed. Her new experiences of God force us to re-examine things we thought were self-evident. Her witness deepens our faith and calls us into renewed relationships with God. And if our relationship to God is renewed and refreshed, then so is our relationships to each other, to people near and far, to the whole of God's creation. The opposite happens as well: our testimony enriches the life of the stranger, and she is renewed as a result of having been with us. God uses the stranger to teach us, and we teach the stranger in return, and all of us emerge from the encounter closer to God.

None of which would have happened had the stranger not appeared at the city gate, which is a symbol of the threshold of humanly imagined barriers. In other words, it takes a stranger to encourage us to knock down the borders that separate and contain us.

## Christians as Strangers to Each Other

When a new pastor arrives, he is a stranger to the people of the congregation. Both clergy and laity are likely to have some apprehension, even if it is mixed with excited hope. The new pastor may want things to be different in congregational priorities, how to do worship, or how to organize the committee structure. But laity's fear is assuaged with the knowledge that, after all, they are all Christians with the same Bible and the same story to tell. 'He can't be all that different than what we have known. That's a relief!'

But what if he really is quite different than previous pastors? What if he was born in a different part of the world and was reared with different assumptions and values? What if his first language is not our first language, so he has an accent? What if we can't understand his sermons? What will the rest of the community say about our church? Will we lose people? That might mean the beginning of the end for us. Or what if the new pastor is a woman! We've never had a female pastor before. Will she be tough enough to handle the more aggressive lay leaders? Will she preach only about sweetness and love, and not about the pain and struggle of the cross that we are called to bear?

What kind of strangers are we talking about, anyway? What kind of 'difference' do we mean? Just what qualifies as a "cross-racial" or "cross-cultural" appointment? These are sticky questions, because there are no easy answers. A *cross-racial* appointment is one in which most of the congregation looks physically different than the pastor, in terms of 'phenotype,' which is those elements of the outer appearance that our society has come to associate with 'race.'

A *cross-cultural* appointment could have a much broader range of meanings. People reared in rural Idaho might be said to be of a different 'culture' than someone from Boston, for instance. Coal miners from Appalachia have a different 'culture' than college professors. A first-generation immigrant (one who was born outside the United States) certainly has a different 'culture' than a third-generation immigrant (one who

was born in the United States and whose parents were also born here). It could even be said that a 22-year-old has a different 'culture' than his grandparents; thus, if a 22-year-old clergy arrives to pastor a congregation of retirees, that appointment might properly be labeled 'cross-cultural.' Certainly this is true of a third-generation immigrant pastoring a congregation of older, first-generation immigrants, even if they have the same country of origin.

In this manual and in the General Commission on Religion and Race, we understand 'cross-cultural' broadly. Thus, any kind of *difference* that provides a new perspective on God's work in the world and on our Christian duties, falls under the rubric of 'cross-cultural.' The nature or source of such differences could be biological, cultural, or experiential. Our collective task is to consider how to facilitate and enable ministry "across lines of difference."

Obviously, all new pastors are strangers to a congregation – and vice versa. With each new appointment there is an opportunity teaching and learning and, therefore, of transformation. Experience is the lens through which people view and interpret the wonders of God. Thus, when people come face-to-face with a pastor whose lived experience is significantly different than theirs, then a new understanding of God may be at hand. The pastor may bring with her a different experience of God, a nuanced way of understanding the scriptures, a new lens on the gospel. When a congregation encounters a pastor who brings a different lens, then it is encountering an angel from God who has something new to teach them, if only they are ready to hear, and if they are willing to be changed.

The reverse is also true, of course. In Protestant theology, all Christians, not only clergy, are ministers and prophets of the gospel. Clergy learn from congregations they serve. If members have a significantly different lived experience – such as would be caused by differences in nationality, ethnicity, race, class, geography, political and theological orientation, physical ability and the like – then the congregation is the messenger of God, the stranger, who could teach the pastor.

The only problem with this rosy scenario is that – in the scriptures and in the life of the church – strangers are often not recognized for the angels that they are. And even if Christians do see the potential for transformation and are open to it, there is a problem of translation: how can an understanding of God and God's world be shared with people whose living context is different? There are myriad of other barriers, too, that might interfere with the transformative potential of ministry across lines of difference. Because of sin and, often, well-intentioned error, that difference that is the source of new wisdom, becomes the barrier to it.

This, then is the challenge: to find ways to overcome those barriers, in order to unleash the transformative potential of cross-racial and cross-cultural pastoral appointments. The difficulties might seem substantial, but the rewards are vast.

## The Joys and Rewards of Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Ministries

In the final stage of our year-long research project, we created a list of all clergy currently serving in CR or CC settings. We then invited about 1,700 of them to participate in an anonymous, quantitative survey. Four hundred responded – a very large response rate for a survey of this type.<sup>5</sup>

One of the questions asked pastors to identify the five top joys and benefits of CR or CC ministries, as compared to ministry in which the pastor does not represent a significantly different lived experience than that of the members. The chart below indicates the benefits chosen most often.

The five most-often identified joys and benefits of CR or CC ministry, according to clergy currently serving a CR or CC setting
1. Congregations could be exposed to new experiences of God that emerge from different lived experiences.
2. Clergy persons could be stretched to learn new skills related to communication, diplomacy, self-care, openness, and others.
3. The congregation might become more relevant in its neighborhood, reaching new communities of people.
4. Old prejudices and institutional segregations could be challenged and new multi-voiced communities could emerge.
5. The congregation might become more energized and creative by the arrival of a different pastor that brings it out of its rut.

In keeping with the theology outlined above, the most often chosen benefit was that “congregations would be exposed to new experiences of God that emerge from different lived experiences. Without articulating it theologically as we did above, based on their on-the-ground experience, the pastors identified a CR or CC appointment (including both clergy and laity) as a way that people can be brought into new and renewed relationship with God. The unique experience embodied by a pastor from a different part of the country or world, who speaks an unknown language or was reared in

---

<sup>5</sup> For a description of how this list was compiled, and the limitations of the methods, see the Methodological Appendix.

a different way – this unique experience, whatever the source, is the “stranger” that God sends, in order to bring communities into a new level of spiritual life.

Note that the second most often chosen joy/benefit was that clergy, too, would be stretched and learn new skills in ministry. So the benefit is not unidirectional. In a later question, 76% of the pastors confirmed that “opportunity to stretch and grow my skills” was one of the top five congregational characteristics that would make their next appointment a happy one. The data therefore points unequivocally to fact that both clergy and congregations benefit enormously from being in CR or CC appointments, despite certain challenging aspects. As detailed in Chapter 4, we recommend that cabinets consider CR or CC appointments as golden opportunities, rather than as last resorts to be discussed at the end of the appointment-making process.

We close this chapter with the words of a few of the anonymous pastors who responded to the survey:

- “I prefer multi-racial and multi-cultural ministry!”
- “I feel called to CR or CC appointments, so I am right where I belong and want to stay.”
- “I have been blessed by CR or CC ministry and feel it has helped me to grow spiritually.”
- “I am learning how to be in ministry to people who are different from me right now.”
- “My cross-racial appointment was quite rewarding.”
- “I have the skill to “cross racial barriers”, one of the gifts I have been given. I have always been appointed to a CC or CR settings, and I enjoy them.”
- “I believe God gave me the ability to relate cross-culturally.”
- “I have had a beautiful experience working with Anglos being a young, recently graduated Hispanic minister.”
- “As a second career pastor, my training, knowledge, skills and abilities have brought me to where I am very comfortable in cross-racial appointments.”

Of course, not all experiences are so positive, and the pastors we sampled do identify plenty of difficulties that impede their effectiveness and happiness. These problems are, among others, related to:

- racial history and racism;
- conference appointment-making procedures;
- authenticity and assimilation;
- loneliness and isolation; and
- the urgent need for more training, for both clergy and laity.

From their other perspective, lay leaders identify lack of training, language problems, and clergy careerism as primary barriers to effective CR or CC ministry. These and other struggles, barriers, challenges, and resistances are described in the chapter that follows.

## Chapter Two: To the Cabinets

---

Cabinets have a crucial role to play – far beyond merely making the appointment – in the success or failure of local ministries. A cabinet's practices before and after appointments season, and the specific actions or inactions of each district superintendent, can either make or break a ministry.

### Moving Beyond “Gifts and Skills”

In several ways, we have found that the difficulties faced by some clergy serving CR or CC settings are the result of the inconsistency in practice and policy from one conference to the next. Many conferences, if not most, seem to approach CR or CC ministry haphazardly. This may be the result of a well-intentioned cabinet or bishop who believes that the most faithful response to racism is to act as if neither race nor cultural difference exists (“we are all one in Christ” or “we live in a post-racial world”). But of course cultural and racial difference does exist, so if appointments are made on aspiration and not contemporary reality, then the unique challenges of CR or CC ministry will be unacknowledged and unaddressed.

Such a strategy (or lack of one) means that any difficulties will be borne by the pastors only, with no institutional support at all. If systemic procedures and conference norms never emerge, pain and failed ministry will continue to recur, and it will be blamed on individual clergypersons.

Therefore, it is in the best interests of cabinets of The United Methodist Church to expand their appointment-making process beyond the “gifts and skills” nexus. However well-intentioned they may be, cabinets that seek to foster a ‘race-blind’ appointment process -- as if difference either does not exist or does not matter – run the risk of sabotaging local ministry, harming careers, and creating even more disharmony. Rather than pretend like we are all the same, the experience of clergy and laity in CR or CC settings makes it clear that cabinets should indeed remain acutely aware of every kind of difference, how that difference might be a vehicle for God’s transformation, and what preparations and supports are needed to ensure ministry success. It is the ministry of cabinets to ensure that diversity changes from being a barrier to the ministry of Christ, into a source of learning and transformation.

## Pastors Speak to Cabinets

We asked 385 pastors currently serving in CR or CC settings what they would like to tell their cabinets, if given the chance. The following chart indicates those that the pastors most frequently placed in the top five:

Rank	The five most commonly chosen things that pastors in CR or CC settings would want to tell their cabinets.
1	Develop systematic plans to prepare congregations that might someday receive a CR or CC appointment.
2	Provide more training to clergy and laity related to CR or CC ministry, intercultural conflict resolution, and multicultural ministry.
3	Develop a conference-wide CR or CC readiness team that can visit churches, guide them, and advise SPRCs.
4	District Superintendents should get to <i>thoroughly</i> know all their churches and all their clergy before recommending appointments.
5	Consider re-thinking appointment-making priorities, in order to consider CR or CC appointments earlier in the process.

The qualitative data from DS interviews, clergy interviews, clergy focus groups, and laity focus groups, largely concurs with this survey data, but enlarges it with additional recommendations. We have integrated both sets of data, and organized recommendations into four categories:

- I. The urgency of full disclosure and frank conversations
- II. Preparation of congregations and of clergy before appointment season
- III. Priorities and the appointment making process
- IV. On-going support and DS involvement after appointments are made

### I. Frankness

This theme emerged consistently in both qualitative and quantitative phases of the research. It was not a response to a specific question, but rather a general yearning for frank and open dialogue. It seems that, in a group in which members are of mixed racial identities, some people feel constrained or anxious, so they edit themselves. When White folks talk about race in the presence of people of color, they may fear of saying the wrong thing or being misunderstood. And people of color may fear that their perspectives will not be heard, or may even be belittled. The result is that truly fruitful conversations about race seldom occur, even if everyone present is a well-meaning, faithful Christian. Consider the words of an African American female pastor:

Some of our superintendents are White, and they don't know how to talk to people of color. I think it's just the desire to be very sensitive, and gracious about how they relate to people of color. There's no ill meant, it's just they want to be very careful and loving as they talk. *But that doesn't help.*

Imagine a cabinet meeting in which there are five Whites and three persons of color. One of the White males present is fully in favor of the empowerment of people of color and of undoing the centuries of race-based inequalities in the church and in society. But he also knows that he, too, is not left untainted by racism. He wonders if, against his will, somewhere in his unconscious lurks some racist thinking that might rear its ugly head, right when he least expects it and before he can edit it. He hesitates to speak freely because he is afraid that something he says may contain a tinge of that racism, or at least insensitivity, which would be perceived by his colleagues of color. He wants to say nothing that might offend or annoy one of his sisters or brothers.

“As people of color, we need to be more direct and blunt with one another ... We need to be plain and clear, not only to support one another, but also to hold each other accountable.”

This hesitation may be perfectly understandable. But carefully couching an idea in vague language, hinting, speaking the party line, as it were, instead of one's true thoughts – none of this is very helpful. The guidance of the Holy Spirit can best be discerned when there is an atmosphere of safety, honesty, and frankness. When White folks are anxious about discussing race in the presence of people of color, there is a barrier to real understanding, learning, growing, and making cross-racial appointments. Cabinets need to find ways to talk about fear and safety openly and honestly, so that they can then talk about race openly and honestly, so that they can then talk about CR or CC appointment openly and honestly.

Because race is so seldom talked about with complete frankness and in a context of safety, and because of the twisted and violent history of race relations in the United States, 'race' is a social neurosis that contorts reality for all of us, of whatever ethnicity. For this reason, it is difficult sometimes to distinguish, during a disagreement or conflict, how much of its cause is really race, versus something else. For instance, an African American director of connectional ministries told us that, in her experience, “race is the go-to thing.” She explained that racism is sometimes used by clergy of color as a way to deflect criticism, even when the criticism has nothing to do with race.

This is likely the meaning she intended when the Black pastor, quoted above, told us that people of color do not always speak frankly, but they need to “hold each other accountable. “As people of color, we need to be more direct and blunt with one another ... We need to be plain and clear, not only to support one another, but also to hold each other accountable.”

In addition to being frank about race matters within a cabinet and between a cabinet and the pastors, CR or CC pastors wish that the district superintendent would be open

and honest with them about the hornets' nests into which they will walk on the first of July. Consider the words of two CR or CC pastors:

District superintendents should be honest about the challenges the pastor might encounter in this appointment, and provide support and advice as to how to overcome them.

Be upfront with clergy going into CR or CC appointments. There was so much information that should have been disclosed to me about this congregation before sending me there... I should have been fully informed.

Thus, the request that the CR or CC pastors have for cabinets is that they not hesitate in telling the truth, in a clear and frank way; tip-toeing around things is not helpful. Of course, in order to be frank with a new pastor about the problems of a particular congregation, the district superintendent needs to know those congregations very, very well. This is the subject of the next section.

34% of pastors who serve in CR or CC settings and who responded to our survey agree that "The conference or district does not seem to understand the particular issues and needs related to CR or CC ministry or to my particular ethnicity. I do not feel adequately supported by the cabinet."

## II. Preparation

**The need to know constituents, really well.** The consensus of district superintendents interviewed concurs with that of the clergy<sup>6</sup>: the most successful CR or CC appointments are in districts in which the DS spends a great deal of time getting to know the histories, needs, and potential of *each* congregation and of *each* clergy person. This, of course, takes a significant investment of time and energy. Unfortunately, district superintendents are probably the most overworked people in the connection. So how could it be possible, even with the greatest exertion of willpower, to find another block of time to spend with congregations and clergy?

The answer is to think about these learning times with clergy and congregations as investments that will surely provide a payoff, sooner rather than later. A DS from the North Central Jurisdiction explains:

---

<sup>6</sup> The research that produced this volume also includes the voices of district superintendents, 20 of whom were randomly sampled and 5 of whom were chosen because of their experience with CR or CC appointments. For a detailed description of the methodology, see the Methodological Appendix.

I would say that in the initial stage, the investment of time would be great but then eventually it will begin to pay off. [There will be] less conflict and less reactionary [complaining]. That is not good stewardship. All it takes is one or two conflicts in the district and 90% of your time will be zapped out.

There seems little doubt that making CR or CC appointments based on a deep understanding of the needs, vulnerabilities, and assets of a congregation and clergy, will result in less church-killing conflict and more vital ministry. A DS from the North Central Jurisdiction explains that he walks the neighborhood around a church, to help him make an appropriate appointment discernment:

When I meet with a pastor, I want to see the context in which she serves. That means walking across a community, the neighborhood. You see things, you observe things, you ask questions and so forth. I want to know not just our pastors and our congregations; I want to know the neighborhood.

Every DS surely understands that to match clergy gifts and skills with the needs of a congregation, she needs to know both of them as well as possible. But making successful CR or CC appointments requires an even higher level of commitment to an even deeper understanding of clergy and churches. This does not mean that CR or CC appointments should be avoided – quite the contrary. The data indicate that they are one avenue for the continuing vitality of congregations and the entire UMC, as we will see below. Cabinets would do well to devote more investment of time and energy CR or CC appointments, not less.

“All it takes is one or two conflicts in the district and 90% of your time will be zapped out.”

*District Superintendent,  
North Central Jurisdiction.*

**Training.** In the best-case scenario, all three parties involved in an appointment – clergy, lay leadership, and cabinets – would be trained in various forms of ministry across lines of difference: cross-cultural, cross-racial, multicultural ministry, intercultural competency, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and the like. As clergy know, the work of ministry across lines of difference involves far more than mere competence in intercultural communication. CR or CC ministry is hard work and brings specific challenges to clergy. This requires specific training before an appointment is even considered.

“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 clergypersons so appointed and for their congregations.” BOD 2016 ¶425.4

The demographic trends of the country and of the denomination clearly indicate that in the future, all conferences will be confronted with significantly more cross-cultural engagement in mission fields, congregations, and clergy personnel. Few conferences can say that they will have no need for training in these areas. And few local churches can confidently state that they will never have a need to understand how to be effective ministers of the Gospel across lines of difference. Thus, it is contingent upon cabinets to plan for this eventuality in three steps.

First, bishops and boards of ordained ministry might require all students and new clergy who seek credentialing in the conference to be trained in intercultural competency, multicultural ministry, and in cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry. Many seminaries already have such provisions, and the rest might be encouraged to do so by the bishops. Certainly, the course of study should include training in all three of these ministry areas.

Second, cabinet-level training in these areas should include a “train-the-trainer” component, so that the district superintendents are equipped to train those in their districts.

“Of course it is very important to prepare for cross-cultural appointments. I’m really proud of Eastern Pennsylvania because we do cross-cultural appointment training classes for the new churches, and [we have] support systems for the pastors who are going into cross-racial settings.”

*Bishop Peggy Johnson*

Third, congregations should be trained as well. This could be accomplished in two ways. GCORR could be invited to annual conference meetings to deliver training to lay leaders. Or, district superintendents, if they have been trained in how to teach about these specialized ministries, could go into the districts in, say, early fall, to train a handful of congregations at a time.

This kind of systematic training of all congregations and clergy is the first level of preparation that a cabinet needs in order to encourage vital congregations into the multicultural future. All of this will require time, money, and pro-active preparation on the part of cabinets, but it will pay handsomely in the form of fewer future conflicts, more vital congregations, and increased effectiveness of appointments.

**Identifying future sites.** If it is true that cabinets are tasked with thinking about the future vitality of God’s church – and not just the stated desires of current members – then it follows that cabinets will want to plan for the possibility of a future CR or CC appointment. This suggests the need for a systematic plan, a road-map for making all appointments, not least to CR or CC sites. Unfortunately, many cabinets seem to make those appointments rather haphazardly. Either a CR or CC appointment is made as a result of an accident of the gifts-and-skills nexus, as described above, or it happens at the end of the process, after the more prestigious churches and well-known pastors have been matched. One pastor phrased it this way: ‘we get the leftovers’.

Almost half the surveyed pastors propose that cabinets consider, debate, and recommend CR or CC appointments earlier in their discernment process. There are at least two reasons for this: first, as we know, the demographic shift in the country and within the UMC make quite clear that cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments will only increase with time. Second, we have already seen that cross-cultural engagement is one source of congregational vitality<sup>7</sup>; thus, intentionally increasing CR or CC appointments, even more than the demographics make absolutely necessary, could be one strategy of congregational revitalization. All signs indicate that cabinets should consider CR or CC appointments early, as an intentional missional move, rather than at the end of the process, in order to find homes for the leftover clergy or clergy for the leftover congregations.

But an objection could here be raised: didn't we argue earlier in this chapter that CR or CC appointments should not be made to congregations which have not been prepared?

Both are true: cabinets will make increasingly more CR or CC appointments into the future, and congregations should not be made a CR or CC site unless they have been previously prepared. The obvious solution to this conundrum is that local churches be prepared before the appointment season begins, before there is any hint of a CR or CC appointment next year.

Erin Hawkins, the General Secretary of the General Commission on Religion and Race, has long maintained that cabinets would do well to identify local congregations that might someday receive a CR or CC appointment, and begin to prepare them, at least a year in advance. A district superintendent could identify potential congregations based on two characteristics.

The first indicator of a fruitful future CR or CC setting is a congregation that has not changed along with its neighborhood. In a typical scenario, an aging White congregation is surrounded by a neighborhood that is no longer White. Perhaps the economic character (class) of the neighborhood has changed, and/or the arrival of new Americans has brought to the community a diversity of languages, worldviews, and experiences of God. Ample evidence proves that to be sustainable into the future, a congregation must engage with its neighborhood. Thus, a DS may decide that a congregation that neither engages nor reflects its neighborhood is a fruitful possible CR or CC setting.

(It is true that a pastor who embodies the ethnicity of the neighborhood is more likely to be able engage in it, but it is also true that culture is complex and that race is only one factor that might establish cultural compatibility. It would be an error to assume, for instance, that an educated and middle-class Black pastor would be able to easily engage in a working-class Black neighborhood, simply because they share a skin color. Nonetheless, skin color continues to be the primary characteristic that some cabinets consider.)

---

<sup>7</sup> This point is argued convincingly in GCORR's new volume, *Building Holy Relationships: Best Practices for Multicultural Ministry in The United Methodist Church*.

The second indicator of a fruitful future CR or CC setting is a congregation that has been made spiritually ready to expand its understandings of God. A few district superintendents report having received requests from SPRCs that their next pastor be a clergy of a different ethnicity (usually, a person of color). One interpretation of such requests is that congregations assumed that a pastor of color will help them to attract more people of color into the pews. The congregations themselves have said that they have discerned that ministering across lines of difference would be a boon to their understanding of God and their spiritual maturity. Perhaps under the guidance of a wise previous pastor, these local churches thirst for more understanding, a new spiritual plateau, and they are willing to do the hard work required to get there. And they know that making their congregation a CR or CC site is one way to move to the next level.

As a district superintendent gets to know her churches, she will gain a sense as to which ones should be next to be a CR or CC site. Whatever the process of preparation, the first step is to identify a handful of churches in each district that would be fruitful future CR or CC sites. These could then be discussed at cabinet meetings, so that when the need suddenly emerges, the bishop can rest assured that the congregation is ready for anything. The appointment-making process might even be a bit easier, if the cabinet has before it a list of congregations that are flexible in terms of what type of pastors they could receive. Proactive discernment and training for the future are of benefit to everyone; congregations will be more vital and sustainable, the cabinet will have increased flexibility at appointment season, the laity will be stretched in their godliness, and clergy will receive the warm welcome that they need and deserve.

**Preparing congregations.** After district superintendents have identified possible future CR or CC settings, they then should begin to prepare congregations. We cannot stress enough that *preparation should not wait until just before the arrival of a new pastor.*

The current pastor is the person most powerfully positioned to lead a congregation toward spiritual readiness. In the best case scenario, pastors themselves discern that the neighborhoods around their congregations are changing, and that cross-cultural engagement is the only faithful way to ensure congregational relevance and vitality.

If the initiative for these discussions comes from the DS, then the pastor's buy-in is essential. The DS should stress that her discernment comes as a result of her confidence in him – he is not on his way out, and being asked to prepare the church for his successor. Some pastors in some conferences have come to believe that they have an adversarial relationship with their cabinets. One manifestation of this attitude may be that pastors resist the call to prepare for ministries across lines of difference. The fact that they have to managing competing ministry visions – and competing personalities – is one of the reasons that district superintendents are among the hardest-working people in the entire connection.

Once the pastor is on-board, he could spend a year or two preparing a congregation by simply talking about race, immigration, gender, or other sources of difference, whichever is most relevant. Once those topics are on the table, and the congregation

has been shown the scriptural bases, then laity and clergy can begin to talk about the issues that arise: people's past relationships with various ideas (such as xenophobia or racism); their fears (especially economic); their reactions to current events (such as police violence against Black teenage men); and the like. It is important that the pastor create an environment in which Christians can feel open to truly share how they feel, without being judged or scolded. This process could be a year-long project of Bible study and spiritual discernment.

Then, the pastor could occasionally invite a guest preacher who presents some significant difference, so that the congregation can become accustomed to hearing the Word from a perhaps unexpected mouth. An African American district superintendent told us of one pastor who had prepared the congregation for a future Black pastor, by asking the DS to preach once every three months. This small gesture made a world of difference, says the DS.

We also urge pastors, district superintendents, and laity to request materials and curricula developed by GCORR and available on the GCORR website. One of these resources is a series of interactive video lectures, Vital Conversations, which features contemporary thought leaders, scholars, theologians and pastors diving deeper into authentic conversations about the things that divide and challenge the Body of Christ. Another possibility is that lay leadership throughout the conference could attend a GCORR training event offered in conjunction with the annual conference meeting. Finally, if the DS has been trained to be a trainer, she could conduct trainings in intercultural competency targeting pastors and lay leaders.

### III. Appointment-Making

**The Appointment-Making Process.** The standard practice in the majority of conferences seems to be that CR or CC appointments are made, we might say, by *accident*. That is, cabinets work to “match the gifts and skills” of clergy to the needs of a congregation (as discerned primarily by the SPRC). If it just happens that the ‘gifts and skills’ calculation results in an appointment, then so be it. There is no uniform practice of making inquiries to determine the readiness of the congregation to receive a CR or CC pastor, nor to determine if a clergy person has the particular skills to endure possible hostility and to guide a congregation through a transition into a CR or CC site. The “gifts and skills” nexus, cited by almost all conferences to whom we spoke, does not usually consider the unique challenges brought about by CR or CC ministry nor the skills required to overcome them.

In this model, the fact that the appointment is a CR or CC one is almost an afterthought. Perhaps in order to ensure that there will be no racial bias, cabinets tell us that they do not consider race, ethnicity or national heritage at all when making appointments. They imagine that neither race nor ethnicity matter anymore, or shouldn't matter, so they pretend that the race-less reign has already come.

Though well intentioned, this might not be the best process, for several reasons. First and most obvious is that, sometimes for missional reasons, appointments need to be cross-racial or cross-cultural. Say, for example, that an aging Black congregation finds itself in the middle of a Latino neighborhood. The members commute, and the demography of the congregation has not changed with the community around it. As the original members die, the congregation becomes increasingly unsustainable. The bishop may decide that a Spanish-speaking pastor needs to be appointed in order to minister to the neighborhood, which is the only way that the church can continue. In this instance, the bishop and the cabinet feel that the needs of the mission field and of the future viability of the congregation take precedent over the stated desires of the current members. That church will receive a Latino or Latina pastor, whether they like it or not. In cases such as these, it is reasonable, appropriate, and in fact necessary that the race and/or ethnicity of the clergyperson is a matter of consideration. Several conferences do missional CR or CC appointments in this way, and they are not ashamed to admit that race is a factor.

There is a second reason that a race-blind process, in which a CR or CC appointment happens as an accident, and might not serve the Church well. We have already hinted that this method does not take into account the readiness or specific CR or CC training that either congregation or clergy may or may not have had. This then leaves the DS scrambling, with precious little time left, to assess readiness and to get the church and the pastor up to par. This is not likely to produce the most vital and sustainable ministries.

The third reason is that that kind of appointment-making process does not take the gospel into account. Chapter One reflected upon the fact that very many times in the scriptures, *the appearance of a stranger* is absolutely essential for the salvation of God's people. The stranger's different experience, different perspective, new way of connecting the people to God enables them to hear in a way that they could not hear before.

When CR or CC appointments are only the incidental result of the gifts-and-skills nexus, then the process has lost some of its potential to be transformative by connecting strangers. If indeed crossing boundaries of culture, race, ethnicity, gender, generation, and the like, are ways to enhance and even rejuvenate and reinvigorate the spiritual life of a congregation<sup>8</sup> – if this is the case, then The United Methodist Church could be even more transformative if it made more

“The appointment-making process is about matching the gifts and graces of a certain pastor with needs of a certain neighborhood. In my district my bishop has done very good appointments, based on strengthening our presence in neighborhoods and expanding our witness. Of course we have a missional reason to reach out to new groups, but we [also] need to think strategically. A church that is not expanding to new groups is a church in decline.”

*District Superintendent*

<sup>8</sup> For a thorough demonstration of this principle, see, *Building Holy Relationships*.

CR or CC appointments, intentionally. Race does matter. And so do ethnicity, gender, generation, physical ability, and any other aspect of human beings that is an essential part of how they perceive the world and connect with God and others.

**Missional Priorities and Clergy Careerism.** During in-depth, in-person interviews with cabinet members, another factor (other than the gifts-and-skills nexus) came to light, that had not been mentioned during the telephone interviews: the need to consider the career trajectory of certain clergypersons. Several cabinet members expressed a need to provide elder (especially prestigious ones) with a stable salary from one appointment to the next. Clergy also indicated that this is important: when asked which factors would make them most likely to be satisfied in their next appointment, just over half feel that “salary stability” was one of the five most important characteristics. See the chart below.

Rank	Which congregational characteristics are most likely to lead to a happy and successful ministry?	Percent
1	A warm and welcoming congregation.	80.5%
2	Ample opportunity for missional work in the community.	77.5%
3	Opportunity to stretch and grow my skills.	76.9%
4	Salary stability.	56.2%
5	Geography (urban, rural, accessible).	44.1%
6	Potential for career development.	33.0%

There is an important subtlety here in data interpretation and analysis. “Salary stability” was included in the top five by 56.2% of respondents. This does *not* mean, however, that it is the fourth most important. It only means that, for the personal satisfaction level of clergy, salary stability is one of the top five for 56.2% of those pastors currently in CR or CC settings who responded to our survey.

“Salary stability would be great, but I don’t do this work for the money. I do it because I have been called.”

To further explore the meaning of this fact, we need to compare it to a similar question. We asked the pastors to prioritize these needs.<sup>9</sup> Notice on the following chart that twice as many pastors indicated that the needs of the mission field should come first, rather than the stated desires of the local congregation, and regardless of the size of financial power of the congregation. This opinion supports the argument above that it is necessary at times to consider race and ethnicity in order to make an intentional CR or CC appointment for missional reasons.

<sup>9</sup> In United Methodist Polity, of course, it is the bishop who establishes priorities and sets the ministry agenda. Nonetheless, we were interested in pastors’ perceptions of how much their own careers should be a priority in appointment-making.

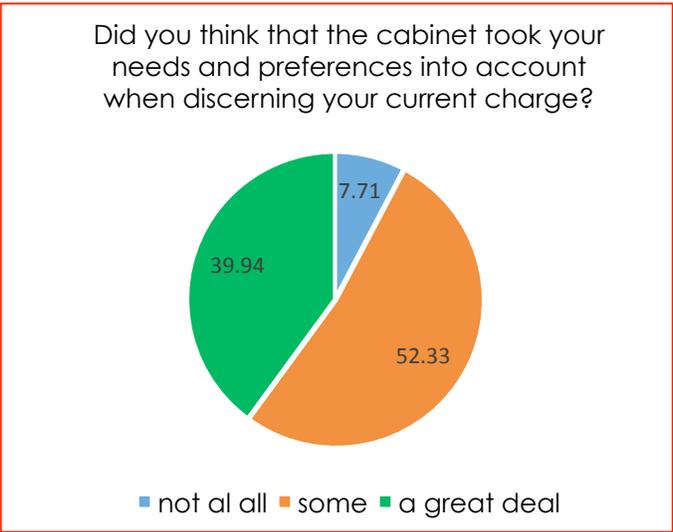
Rank	Which of these priorities should come first in the appointment-making process?	Percentages
1	The needs of the local mission field	32.3%
2	The congregation's needs and desires	16.3%
3	The wellbeing of society at large	5.1%
4	Taking care of the clergy	2.6%
5	I cannot make a choice; cabinets should find a balance.	43.7%

Notice also that “taking care of the clergy” was the least important by far; only 9 respondents believe that that should be the highest priority. Nearly 44%, though, chose not to make a choice. When forced to rank these needs, several of the “I cannot make a choice” pastors selected “taking care of clergy” as number one, making it slightly more important than the needs of society at large. Consider the following data chart.

If the cabinet cannot find a way to balance everyone's needs and desires, what should be the priorities ranking?					
	1	2	3	4	Rating Score
Local Mission Field	177	72	80	15	3.19
Congregation	108	124	92	20	2.93
Clergy career	36	98	113	97	2.21
Society as a whole	23	50	59	212	1.66

Answers to this question, again, rank clergy career needs low. And again, by a significant margin, the needs and desires of the local mission field come before those of the congregation.

Here is why it would be helpful for cabinets to keep this information in mind as they consider appointment-making. Many cabinets do consider the needs and desires of clergy persons in their appointment decision-making. The vast majority of CR or CC clergy respondents believe that the cabinet did consider their needs and preferences when recommending their current appointment, as the pie chart indicates. But what exactly is taken into account? What kinds of clergy needs? Informally, clergy and cabinet members have told us that income and prestige of certain prestigious clergy



are considered early in the process, and thus given preference over the needs of younger clergy or those ministering to small and poor congregations. In other words, for certain well-known and powerful clergy persons, careerism (i.e., high incomes and prestigious appointments) is an early cabinet consideration.

The CR or CC pastors, on the other hand, do hope that cabinets consider to take their needs and desires into account when making appointment recommendations, but they subjugate those personal preferences to the needs of the mission field and of the congregation. When they do speak of their 'needs and desires,' they tend not to be income and prestige, but rather the content of their call, their experiences, and the skills they have to offer. What they often seek is opportunity to serve, grow, and stretch their skills. Thus, for many of the CR or CC clergy who participated in the research, "career development" refers as much to growth in skills and usefulness to God as it does to income and prestige. This is not universal of course, as some CR or CC pastors do place great stock in income and prestige of the appointments; but the majority seem to indicate that usefulness to the Reign of God is even more important.

Some lay leaders express frustration that – they believe – the cabinet gives priority to clergy careerism over congregational needs. Whether true or not, this perception has to have come from somewhere, so cabinets might do well to share more with laity about how they arrive at their recommendations to the bishops.

All of this seems to suggest that cabinets might wish to reconsider the order of priorities when considering appointment recommendations. Clergy salary and careerism are not the highest priorities to CR or CC pastors. The local mission field consistently comes first when pastors talk about priorities, followed by needs of the congregation – which are not always what the SPRC desires.

In the cabinet room of the Central Texas Conference is a poster, permanently positioned so that the cabinet cannot avoid looking at it when debating appointments. The bishop has determined that the order of priorities is the similar to that of the CR or CC pastors, but with one important change: The "Kingdom of God" (e.g., the bigger picture, the needs of all God's people) is always first. In our survey we labeled this "society at large" and it was consistently chosen last. This suggests that pastors of local churches tend to focus on local needs. This is hardly surprising, nor is it surprising that a cabinet would have the bigger picture in mind. What all the data consistently supports is the view that cabinets are called to think about the health and vitality of the Church over a large distance, and well into the future. The immediate stated desires of congregational comfort zones or clergy careerism should deter a focus on future vitality of local ministries.

- 
1. Kingdom
  2. Mission Field
  3. Congregation
  4. Clergy

**Reappoint rather than move.** The average length of pastorates in the UMC is about 4 years, so the average pastor is reappointed three times. Of course there are numerous reasons why a bishop, perhaps with the advice of the cabinet, might decide *not* to reappoint a clergy person after one or two years. Only bishops and district superintendents know what is best for each congregation, and no recommendation or guideline from the general church could replace local wisdom that drives the appointment-discernment process. For this reason, we could not and would not give a number of years for the reappointment of clergy to CR or CC sites.

All that we can do is to report the findings of our research, that is, to report what CR or CC pastors themselves tell us: pastors believe that ministries in CR or CC settings would be more successful if pastorates were longer. There is some logic behind this belief, independent of personal desire. As reported above, experienced CR or CC pastors tell us that resistance to a cross-racial ministry could be countered by forming nurturing relationships with congregants as soon as possible. This is of course true for any pastor, because all Christian ministry involves the healing and transforming of broken relationships.

But relationship-building across lines of difference takes longer than building relationships with those who are similar. Thus, CR or CC relationships require an investment of time. It would be unfortunate if – just as a pastor has built the relationships necessary for a vital ministry – she is sent elsewhere. This is also true for congregations who are working to integrate into their communities; if the trusted pastor leaves early in the process, a new pastor simply couldn't pick up where she left off.

No pastor wants to be stuck in an unhappy situation, and in our quantitative survey they express trust in cabinets' discernments. But all else being equal, experienced CR or CC pastors hope that cabinets will consider the special needs of CR or CC settings when deciding whether or not to recommend a reappointment.

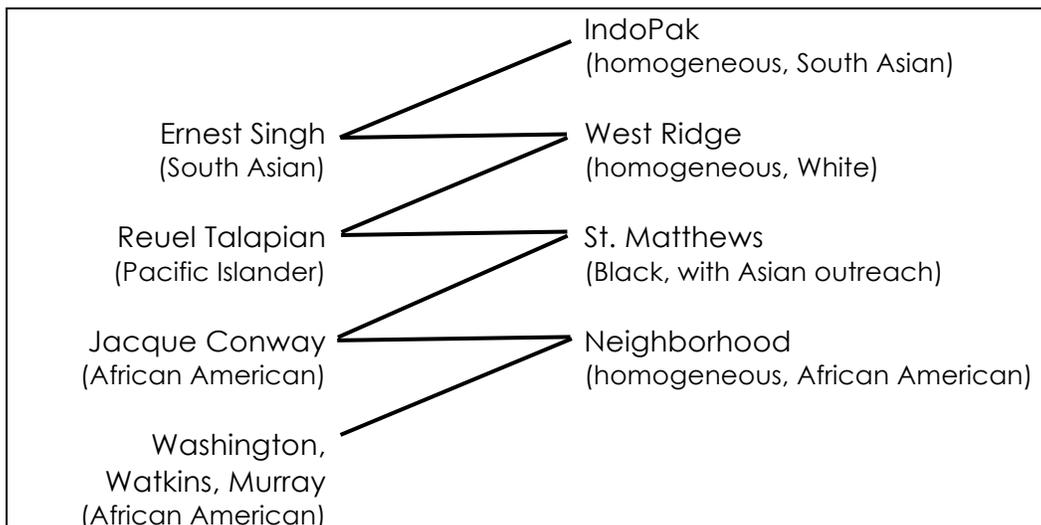
**Ministry teams.** All appointment-making is complex, multifaceted, multistaged, and sometimes requires intuition. CR or CC appointments add extra complications that can best be addressed with out-of-the-box *creativity*. One way to do this is to create ministry teams. No one pastor could serve all the constituencies of a multicultural congregation, or a homogeneous congregation that wishes to minister with diverse neighbors. Further, there are few pastors who can effectively minister across generational lines; each human being occupies only one generational location, and generational differences really do constitute different cultures.

For these reasons, there are some instances in which it makes sense to appoint two part-time pastors to a single site. It is essential that the two clergy persons get along well and that they minister together, operate on a single ministry plan, and collaborate on matters affecting both memberships. The personalities of the pastors, and the histories of the groups, will determine whether the two worshipping bodies work as a single congregation, or whether they conceive of themselves as two congregations sharing a space. But whichever be the case, the two part-time pastors must work together very well; they must form a cohesive team, not working separately and independently.

Various pastoral combinations have worked very well in different conferences. One example is on the north side of Chicago. Reverend Ernest Singh is the full-time Senior Pastor of West Ridge UMC. He ministers ¼ time to the (primarily) White and older congregation at West Ridge, that worships on Sunday mornings. He also ministers ¾ time to the congregation that he founded: the IndoPak United Methodist Fellowship. Half its 100 members are Urdu-speaking Pakistanis, and the other half are Hindi-speaking Indians. Services are in both languages and in the mixed language "Hindustani."

The White congregation also benefits from the ½ time associate pastor, Filipino-American Reverend Reuel Talapian. Reverend Talapian is also appointed half-time to Saint Matthews UMC, an historic Black church in Near North, adjacent to downtown. His appointment there was intended to help the congregation do outreach to the growing South Asian population in the Near North neighborhood. Reverend Talapian preaches every other Sunday but attends every week, immediately after he leaves West Ridge.

The Senior Pastor of Saint Matthews is Reverend Jacque Conway, an African American pastor. Although his appointment is only ¼ time, he is the senior pastor because he is African-American, and the history and tradition of Saint Matthews is as a Black church. Most of Reverend Conway's time is spent as Senior Pastor at Neighborhood UMC, another multi-staffed congregation in the Black church tradition. Finally, Saint Matthews is also served by a seminarian, ¼ time. Thus, two multicultural congregations and two homogeneous congregations share four pastors, whose combined time gives each congregation full-time pastoral leadership. Below is a graphic representation of these relationships:

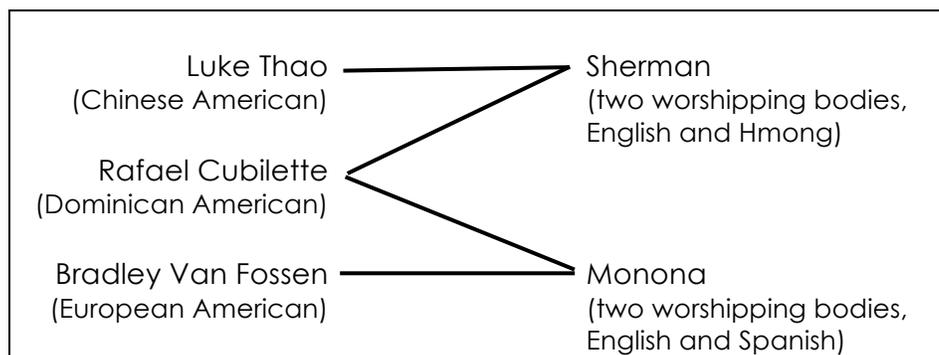


With this sort of combination of CR or CC pastors, all members receive the care they need by someone with whom they share a cultural and linguistic experience, but they also all are in pastoral relationships across lines of racial and cultural difference. Each pastor has full-time employment and the opportunity to minister with laity of different ethnicities. For these arrangements to work, each team of pastors must have positive, collaborative, and regular engagement with each other. The only other requirement for these ministry pairings to work is to have a creative and flexible DS whose imaginative problem solving makes them possible.

Similar ministry pairs have worked very well, for several years, in Wisconsin. Until June 2016, Reverend Rafael Cubilette was the ½ time Senior Pastor at Sherman Avenue UMC in Madison. There he ministered to the English-speaking worshipping body. He was joined there by ½ time pastor Luke Thao, who ministered to the Hmong-speaking worshipping body. Both groups were intentional about being a part of the same congrega-

tion; they share lay leadership committee memberships, and worshipped together once per month.

Reverend Cubilette was also ½ time Associate Pastor at Monona UMC, a White congregation, where he led the Spanish-speaking congregation (senior pastor Bradley Van Fossen led the English-speaking worshipping body). Thus, Reverend Cubilette was part of the ministry team in two congregations serving English-, Spanish-, and Hmong speaking Christians. Reverend Thao is a CR or CC pastor in relation to the English-speaking worshipping body. Reverend Van Fossen did not normally minister to the Latinos in Monona, but had interactions with Reverend Cubilette, who is a bridge between the worshipping bodies. A graphic depiction of these relationships looks like this:



There is some uncertainty around the connection, and even disagreement, about the goals of multicultural ministry.<sup>10</sup> The model of ministry teams described above might be one answer to the debate, at least in areas in which UMC congregations are near each other geographically. Teams of CR or CC pastors, each of whom serves more than one congregation, could act as a bridge between groups, even between marginalized peoples and those who have marginalized them. The interaction between congregations, across lines of difference, would facilitate the kind of wholesale transformation described in the first chapter and prescribed by the scriptures. At the same time, those who have been marginalized by various economic and social mechanisms could be empowered by hearing the word of God by those who share their lived experience, in homogeneous worshipping bodies.

CR or CC ministry teams might therefore be the most faithful way to embrace everyone and to invite the Holy Spirit into the institution of the church. The only requirement is a cabinet willing to be bold, experimental, and sensitive to the very different faces of God.

<sup>10</sup> Some envision a complete mixture and intermingling of identities within a single worshipping body, so that, eventually, all congregations will be heterogeneous. Other would point to the great value of homogeneous congregations that serve as oases for those who have been marginalized in some way. For a discussion of this, see GCORR's volume on multiculturalism, titled Building Holy Relationships.

## IV. On-going Support

**Mentoring.** One cycle of training for a pastor going into a CR or CC setting is not sufficient; it should be supplemented with ongoing support. Pastors recommend several forms that this could take. First, they need to maintain regular contact with their district superintendents. The DS needs to be aware of the dynamics of the congregation, so that if there is a conflict she will have the context in which to evaluate and interpret it. CR or CC pastors report feeling less isolated and abandoned if they have a direct pipeline to the DS.

Second and even more crucially, CR or CC pastors need mentors. This is true even if the pastor has had much experience in ministry, but is new to a CR or CC setting. Remembering their own struggles in their early appointments, experienced CR or CC pastors might well be willing to volunteer to be part of a pool of mentors. Early in the appointment-making season (as soon as CR or CC appointments are anticipated) the dean of the cabinet or the volunteer organizer of the clergy coaching program, could make assignments based on geographic location and years of experience. We recommend that the mentor and mentee meet each other as soon as possible and as frequently thereafter as they determine would be helpful and feasible.

It may be that a conference does not have enough experienced CR or CC pastors to establish and sustain its own network of mentors and mentees. In this case, GCORR could facilitate connections across conference borders.

Third, conferences with significant populations of CR or CC sites, and/or sites of multicultural mission field engagement, may choose to organize a 'cross-cultural readiness team'. This team would consist of volunteer lay leaders and clergy who have experienced the joys and challenges of cross-cultural ministry, and who are willing to share their insights with churches and pastors in need. The team could be requested (ideally) at the beginning of a CR or CC pastorate, but it could also respond years into a pastorate if tensions persist. If a conference is interested in establishing this kind of network, GCORR may be able to connect it with conference staff who have tried it successfully.

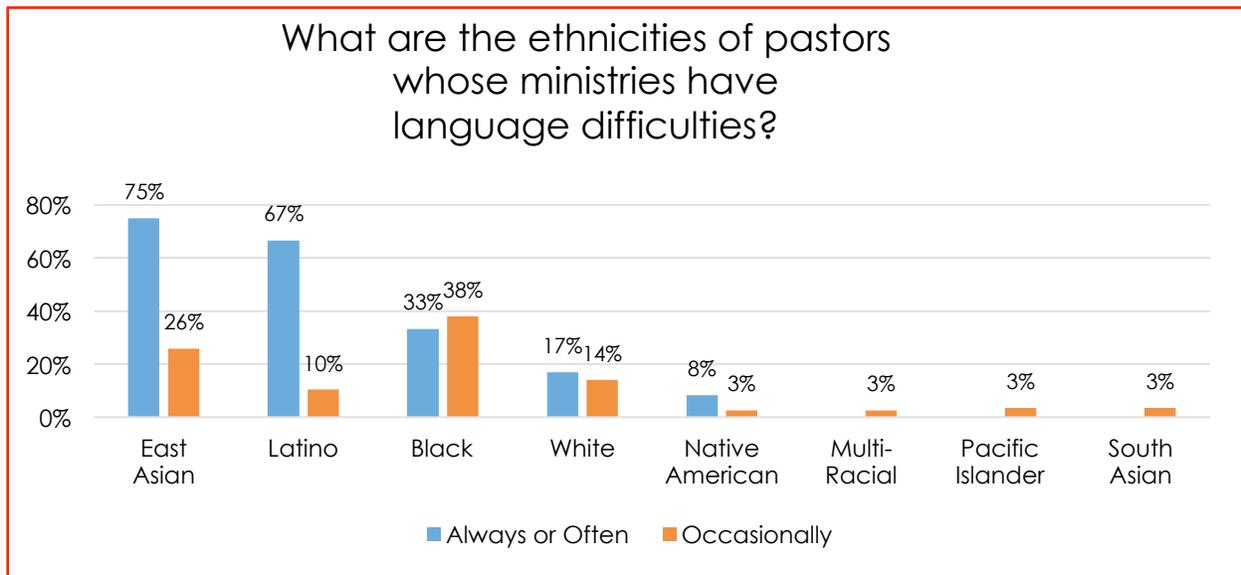
**Language training.** One of the more oft heard laity complaints about a CR or CC pastor is that the sermons cannot be understood. As we proposed in the last two chapters, such complaints may be a cover for racism or, more frequently, xenophobia.

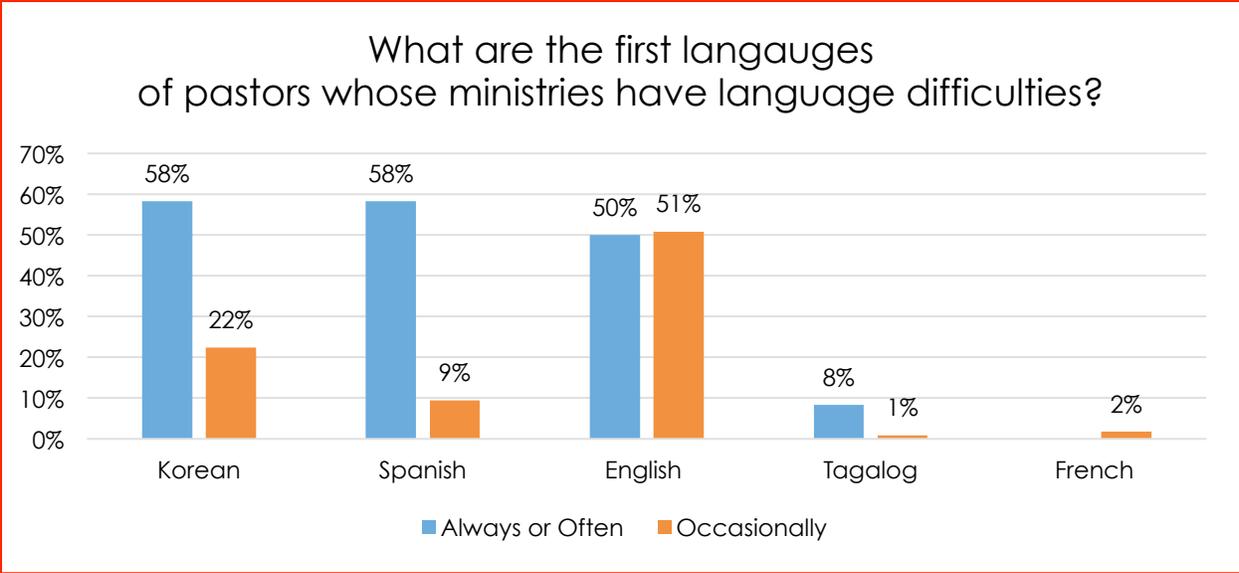
But there may be a genuine problem understanding the words of a sermon, if the congregation and the pastor were reared in a different first language. This is particularly troublesome for older worshippers, whose hearing ability is waning and who therefore have a difficult time interpreting a cadence or pronunciation different than that which they expect. Further, the nuances of theology and spirituality are easily lost if the preacher has to choose a word that does not exactly hit the mark, because she does not know the better choice.

We asked the anonymous CR or CC pastors to indicate whether a difficulty with language – broadly defined to include accents, gestures, and cadence – has ever interfered with their ability to minister effectively. We then analyzed the responses by ethnicity and by first language. The first chart indicates that clergy of East Asian, South Asian, and Pacific Islander descent have had the most difficulty; half of East Asians and two-thirds of Pacific Islanders have experienced difficulty occasionally, often, or always. This is followed by Latinos and French-speaking African immigrants.

The next chart organizes language difficulty as a function of the first language (the language spoken during infancy and early childhood). It indicates that speakers of Korean (and other East Asian languages), followed by French and then Spanish, have most frequently has some language difficulty while pastoring in the United States. Note that more native speakers of Tagalog have had language difficulties “most of the time” or “always” than speakers of any other language.

It is true that part of the congregation’s growing challenge may be to hear other cadences, or perhaps to pay more attention to visual signals that provide a supplement to interpretation. As we have argued throughout, it is this kind of engagement, and a commitment to meet the Other where she or he is, which is the possibility for personal and collective transformation. Nonetheless, most pastors do want to be well understood, and most CR or CC pastors understand that they need to improve their ability to communicate in whatever language is that of the majority of the members.





It would therefore seem contingent on conference staffs to consider language and communications as on part of their responsibility to equip the conference with qualified clergy. Some conferences do not (for the moment) have enough CR or CC pastors to justify the expense of language training, but the numbers will only increase with time. And many conferences do have a sufficient need to justify a systematized communications improvement strategy.

Such a strategy would include intercultural communications proficiency training (offered by GCORR), as well as help with accents and vocabulary for those for whom English is not a first language. There are also, of course, some CR or CC pastors who are native English speakers and who are not serving congregations whose first language is not English; although the number of these is very small as a portion of all CR or CC sites, these pastors need additional training in the language that their congregations speak. We stress that this training should be systematic and organized, with a long-term strategy in mind, rather than piecemeal and haphazard.

An example of a well-working communication improvement strategy can be found in the Chicago North district of the Northern Illinois Conference. It is best described by Pastor Ernest Singh.

A year ago, my DS offered a class for any pastors of color to improve their English. We are blessed [in this district] to have a teacher from a nearby college. She teaches acting, singing, and all the communications. She's wonderful, so she did that class free for anybody who wanted. There were several pastors who came. I took that class because even though I believe I can speak English and people understand, there is always room for me to improve.

**Conference Readiness Team.** However well CR or CC readiness is planned, conflicts do sometimes occur, as they do in all congregations, and unexpected CR or CC appoint-

ments might be necessary. In such cases, the DS will need an easily accessible resource to either solve a problem or to prevent one.

A few conferences have paid staff persons whose expertise is multiculturalism in the life of the church, and even another whose role is congregational vitality. But most conferences don't have the luxury of multiple staff positions that might help with CR or CC sites. An excellent and low-cost resource would be a "conference readiness team." This would consist of a group of volunteer pastors, lay leaders, and perhaps a retired conference staff person. They each will have expertise according to their role, such as SPRC chair, DS, pastor, clergy or lay members of the conference Committee on Religion and Race, or perhaps a seminary professor on multicultural ministry or cross-cultural ministry. They will have been trained, perhaps by GCORR, not only in the relevant subject matters, but also in how to train others. In conferences with a very large geographic area, two teams could be formed so that neither has to travel too far to visit a congregation in need.

Such a team could have several possible roles, depending on the guidance of the bishop, the needs to local congregations, and the particular expertise represented on the team. One role could be to prepare congregations that might someday be a CR or CC site. Another could be to quickly get a congregation ready to receive a new pastor, when an unexpected CR or CC appointment has been made. Another role could be to periodically visit CR or CC sites, hear from laity and clergy, and provide support as needed. Still another could be to respond in crisis situations, perhaps if there is a conflict between clergy and laity related to a cultural misunderstanding or insensitivity.

The advantages of such a CR or CC readiness team are enormous. We have already noted that district superintendents are often stretched thin in terms of workload, so this team could be a great relief. It would also contain a consortium of expertise that no individual, even the best DS or bishop, could possibly have. The team could be deployed on short notice, and since it consists of volunteers, the only costs would be transportation and supplies. Finally, such a team could be in dialogue with the CORR or with GCORR, in order to help channel ideas resources easily and efficiently. The conferences that have a similar team have been very well served.

## Chapter Three: Cabinet Workbook

---

These exercises will guide cabinets as they engage with the ideas and experiences of clergy and laity. It will provide a framework for discussion so that cabinets can discuss GCORR's research findings, decide which ones are relevant and compelling in their particular conferences, and then formulate action plans in response. *It would be best to complete this process before December, and to revisit it annually.*

The workbook has four units, each of which has two parts:

1. Having frank discussions about race, ethnicity, and other forms of difference
  - a. General discussion about race, ethnicity, and itineracy
  - b. Clergy satisfaction levels
2. Considering the recommendations of clergy
  - a. Discern and prioritize
  - b. Make an action plan
3. Considering the concerns of lay leadership
  - a. Discern and prioritize
  - b. Make an action plan
4. Re-thinking priorities for the appointment-making process
  - a. Debate and discern
  - b. Prioritize

Each unit could be completed in about 45 minutes, although some cabinets may wish to spend more or less time, depending on their schedules. We recommend that each of the four units be completed at a different sitting, for instance during the first 45 minutes of four meetings. Or, a cabinet may wish to hold a retreat and complete them all in one day. All four units should be completed well before appointment-making season begins.

Some cabinets may have already had some relevant conversations, so they may wish to begin with Unit 2. Of course, it is up to each bishop to determine the need, time availability, and priorities. This workbook is merely a guide to examining the the recent research results in light of local contextual realities.

# I: Frank Discussions for Cabinets

## Part A: Race, Ethnicity, and Itinerary

---

“Some of our superintendents are White, and they don't know how to talk to people of color. I think it's just the desire to be very sensitive, and gracious about how they relate to people of color. There's no ill meant; it's just they want to be very careful and loving as they talk. But that doesn't help.”  
– African-American District Superintendent, May 2016

Spend about ten minutes discussing each of these questions. We recommend that one persons – perhaps the Dean or the Bishop – periodically intervene in order to keep the discussion focused and on time. The more cabinets are thorough and frank in these discussions, the more benefit will come to congregations.

1. The *Discipline* states that appointments are made “without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color...” (§1425, 2016).

a. How do you understand the phrase “without regard”?

---

---

---

---

---

b. What is the *goal* of making appointments “without regard” to race or ethnicity?

---

---

---

---

---

2. The term *colorblind* is the belief that racial characteristics or ethnic identity is not relevant and should not be considered. Does colorblindness influence your understanding of the *Discipline*'s phrase "without regard to"?

---

---

---

---

---

3. When do you believe the cabinet *should* consider race or ethnicity in the appointment-making process?

---

---

---

---

---

4. What are the possibly harmful consequences of colorblindness in your cabinet's appointment-making process?

---

---

---

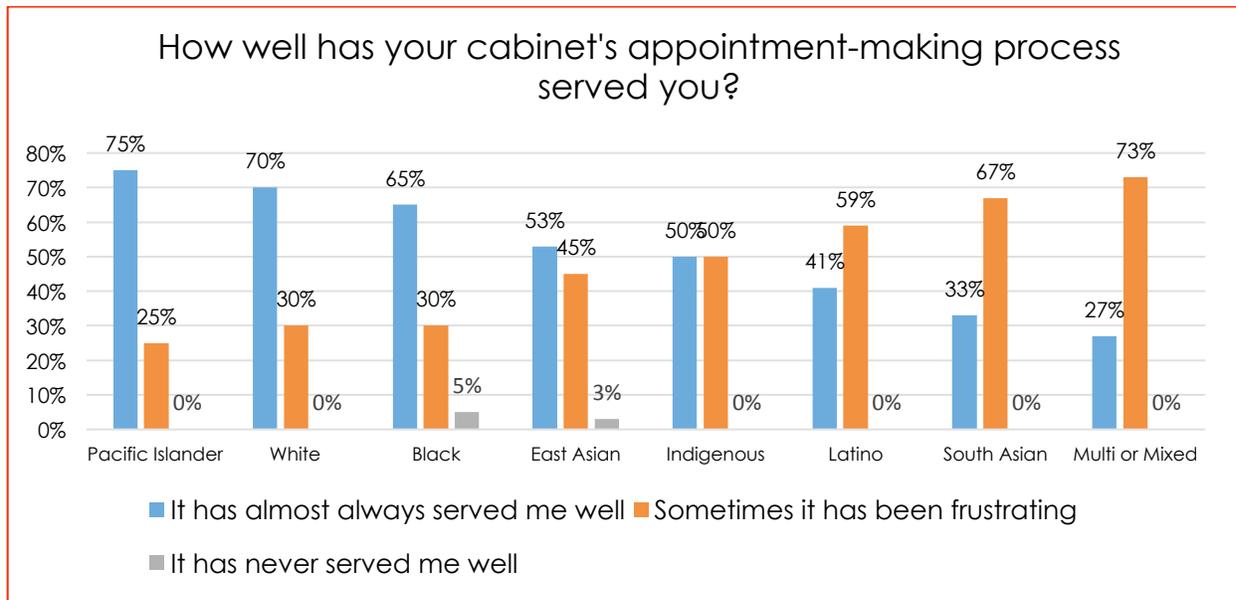
---

---

# I: Frank and Fearless Discussions for Cabinets

## Part B: Clergy Satisfaction

Consider the following chart that displays the extent to which clergy currently serving in CR or CC settings are satisfied with their cabinets. These data do not relate to your particular cabinet, but are from a national survey.



*Notice that most Pacific Islander, White, and Black clergy feel that they have almost always been well-served by the appoint-making process. East Asian, Latino, and South Asian clergy have more mixed experiences. Only tiny numbers of clergy (5% of Black clergy and 3% of East Asian clergy) feel that the process has never served them well.*

Discuss and debate these questions with colleagues and with your bishop. Spend about 5 minutes on each question:

1. Why would clergy of different ethnicities experience the appointment-making process differently?
2. How do you think clergy serving CR or CC settings in your district would answer that questions?
3. How could you improve clergy satisfaction levels, without losing site of our responsibilities to congregations, mission fields, the UMC, and the conference?

## II. Engage with Clergy Recommendations

### Part A: Discern and Prioritize

Here are some recommendations for cabinets made by pastors currently serving in CR or CC settings. Read them aloud, and come to a quick consensus about which suggestions might be helpful in your conference. Place an X in the appropriate box. You only have 20 minutes total, so spend about two minutes on each suggestion.

Clergy Suggestion	Adopt right away	Not now, but soon	Not relevant to us
1. Organize a CR or CC readiness team of volunteer lay and clergy.			
2. Identify congregations that might someday be CR or CC settings, and prepare them with trainings and conversations about immigration, race, ethnicity, & mission.			
3. Follow the Disciplinary mandate that requires conferences to specifically prepare congregations and clergy who are about to enter into CR or CC ministry.			
4. Consider CR or CC ministries earlier in the appointment-making process.			
5. Organize a voluntary language improvement group for clergy.			
6. Host trainings and train-the-trainer sessions at the conference and district levels, in order to systematically reach all congregations.			
7. For those congregations that are not yet ready for conversations, organize pulpit exchanges to accustom laity to hearing the gospel from those who are different.			
8. Consider recommending re-appointments of clergy in CR or CC settings more frequently than others, to allow more time for relationship development.			
9. Other concerns you may have heard voiced by clergy in your conference:			

## II. Engage with Clergy Recommendations

### Part B: Make an Action Plan

---

With the bishop's guidance, choose the three most helpful suggestions from the last page. Transfer them to the table below. Indicate who will take the lead on developing the idea further, and in what time frame. You will only have about 25 minutes on this exercise, so for now, leave the details to the lead persons or persons.

First Priority Clergy Suggestion	Who will take the lead?
Action Steps	Target Dates

Second Priority Clergy Suggestion	Who will take the lead?
Action Steps	Target Dates

Third Priority Clergy Suggestion	Who will take the lead?
Action Steps	Target Dates

### III. Consider the Concerns of Laity

#### Part A: Discern and Prioritize

Below is a list of concerns told to us by lay leaders around the country. Which of these do you feel are applicable to your conference, and which does the bishop feel should be addressed soon? Place an X in the appropriate box. You only have 20 minutes total, so spend about two minutes on each suggestion.

Lay Complaints	Address right away	Not now, but soon	Not relevant to us
1. "Our district superintendent does not really know us."			
2. "The cabinet is more concerned with clergy careers than with our needs."			
3. "The cabinet sends us the leftovers [clergy people who are last on the list]."			
4. "The cabinet is planning to close us down."			
5. Other lay concerns you may have heard:			

#### Discussion Notes

---



---



---



---

### III. Consider the Concerns of Laity

#### Part B: Make an Action Plan

---

With the bishop's guidance, choose one or two of these lay concerns that you feel are most important and should be addressed. Summarize them and transfer to the chart below. Then complete the table, indicating who will take the lead on developing the idea further, and what time frame you establish. You will only have about 25 minutes on this exercise, so the details will have to be developed later by the lead persons or persons.

Priority Lay Concern 1	Who will take the lead?
Action Steps	Target Dates

Priority Lay Concern 2	Who will take the lead?
Action Steps	Target Dates

## IV. Appointment-Making Responsibilities and Priorities

### Part A: Debate and Discern

---

Discuss the following 7 areas of responsibility. Record the group's consensus about each, as well as any dissenting ideas. Spend about 20 minutes on this exercise.

To God's world. *Do we have a responsibility to consider how appointments contribute to the wellbeing of all people?*

To Disciplinary mandates. *How do we understand the Disciplinary requirements that guide us?*

To the congregations. *To what extent are we responsible for satisfying the preferences of currently members?*

To mission fields. *What does the Wesleyan tradition tell us about prioritizing the needs of local communities?*

To the clergy. *Do we prioritize the desires of favored clergy persons, even when they contradict the needs of churches?*

To the conference and denomination. *Are there larger, institutional interests that outweigh other needs?*

Other priority established by your bishop. *What are the particular priorities of our bishop and/or the Council of Bishops?*

## IV. Appointment-Making Responsibilities and Priorities

### Part B: Prioritizing

---

Spend about ten minutes on each of these exercises. First, from the six or seven responsibilities on the previous page, chose the top five, and *individually* rank them in order of priority.

First Priority	
Second Priority	
Third Priority	
Fourth Priority	
Fifth Priority	

Next, as a group and under the guidance of the bishop, discern the ranking of priorities that will guide your appointment-making process this season. Display in the cabinet room for constant reference.

First Priority	
Second Priority	
Third Priority	
Fourth Priority	
Fifth Priority	

## Methodological Appendix

---

### The Research beneath the Recommendations

The *Book of Discipline* states that the task of the General Commission on Religion and Race, according to, is to "...to challenge and equip the general agencies, institutions, and connectional structures of The United Methodist Church..." (BOD 2012 ¶2002). In partial fulfillment of this mission, GCORR works to create resources to aid the church in its engagement with the multicultural realities of the world, not least the growing number of cross-racial and cross-cultural pastoral appointments in the United States. The deep engagement of GCORR personnel at the conference level has provided significant insight, but rigorous research has been enabled GCORR to anchor its resources in the *actual lived experiences* of United Methodists at various levels of the connection (not merely the conferences).

The Director of Research therefore designed a research program to accomplish the following:

- 1 . To roughly quantify of the number of CR or CC sites in the U. S. church, and to map those sites for a quick and easy visual comparison with demographic shifts in the country;
- 2 . To paint a picture of the conferences' current practices related to CR or CC appointment-making;
- 3 . To capture the lived experience of CR or CC sites, on the ground at local congregations, and from the perspectives of both the clergy and laity;
- 4 . To organize the data attained, analyze it according to the best practices of social-science, and interpret it for consumption by various constituencies; and
- 5 . To produce a series of recommendations, for every level of the connection, to enhance the quality of CR or CC appointments and appointment-making and to facilitate successful ministry.

This manual is one of the products of that research project, which ran for 18 months beginning December 2014 and ending May 2016.

In designing the methodology, we balanced two sets of opposing ideals: first, randomized sampling that could approach generalizability versus selection of key sites that had drawn the attention of conference personnel. To approximate generalizability to the entire UMC in the United States, so that the findings would be relevant and useful throughout the connection and across the country, we used a randomized sampling technique, described below. But we also wanted to learn from laity and clergy that had had some special success with CR or CC ministry; thus, to identify sites for phases 3 and 4, we relied upon district superintendents and our own experience with partner conferences to enroll sites that had a high likelihood of providing rich data.

The second set of balanced ideals was the type of data sought. We wanted to balance and integrate the insights that could emerge from qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies, and then to add to this a graphic representation using geographic information systems. Thus, in addition to this manual and two formal project reports, we produced an interactive map of CR or CC sites, titled the GCORR Diversity Map. It is available on the agency website.

The results of the study therefore combined analyses of data collected using various methods; the benefits and detriments of each are described below.

## Phase I: Geographic Data

The first task was to produce an inventory of CR or CC sites. This was done so that we and anyone else in the connection could see the concentrations of sites geographically, and so that we could send an invitation to take the phase IV survey to all CR or CC pastors in the country. We quickly discovered that this inventory would be both very difficult, but also very useful, because no one else in the connection had ever produced such a list. It took over a year of repeated entreaties to the conferences to help us produce a database. As of the formal close of the study on 31 May 2016, approximately 40% of conferences had cooperated. The lists of CR or CC appointments in the other 60% had to be estimated based on old and unreliable data that we acquired from GCFA.

With this data, we created an interactive, web-based map, using the most sophisticated GIS software available, ArcGIS. But before geocoding and inserting the address of CR or CC sites, we first had to construct the basic maps. We therefore spent six months creating maps of all conferences, jurisdictions, and many districts. We then integrated these UMC map files with census data, so that demographic trends could be followed in one particular UMC geographic scale, like a conference or district. This was an arduous task, because again, no one in the entire UMC had ever bothered to create such a map. Only those boundaries that coincide with a state line were exact; almost no conference map and no district map were based on actual satellite data points. The map that we created for this project, therefore, is a resource that can have multiple uses for various agencies of the church.

## Phase II: District Superintendents

In order to achieve a wide geographic representation and to approach generalizability, we produced a sample of 20 district superintendents using a standard randomized sampling strategy: multi-staged, non-stratified cluster sampling with probability proportional to size. First, we randomly selected conferences, distributed proportionally according to the number of conferences per jurisdiction (PPS). Using this method, jurisdictional distribution of the sample was: 2 conferences from Western, 6 from Southeastern, and 4 from each of the other three jurisdictions.

The next operation was to randomly select one district superintendent from each of the 20 conferences. All 20 granted an interview. The interview method was: 30-minute telephone interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using standard qualitative data analysis software (AtlasTI). This analysis, and its interpretation, produced several preliminary rec-

ommendations for appointment-making, which were described in a report sent to all cabinets on 15 December 2015. District superintendents were asked to identify CR or CC ministry sites that have had significant experience and thus were likely to produce useful data.

### Phase III: Local Pastors

Largely from and DS interviews and from our own experience, a list of 24 local churches was drawn: 4 in Dallas, 4 in Fort Worth, 6 in Chicago, 4 in Portland, and 6 in Tampa. Of those, 17 were willing and available to be interviewed. Again, the 30-minute telephone interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. Rather than questions related to trends and conference procedures, questions of local clergy had to do with their specific experiences in their mission fields, successes and failures, barriers, needs, frustrations, lay-clergy relationships, and recommendations.

In the course of these interviews, we identified CR or CC ministries that have significant experience and wisdom to share with the rest of the connection. So we planned a series of site visits to talk further with the pastors and with laity. Four cities were chosen for sites visits: Tampa, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Chicago.

### Phase IV: Site Visits

The site visits occurred in March and April of 2016. GCORR's Director of Research traveled to the cities, visited congregations, observed worship services, and conducted more data collection. This consisted of two forms: in-depth interviews with cabinet members, laity focus groups, and clergy focus groups of lay leaders. These site visits produced another 14 interviews and focus-group discussions, which were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using Atlas.

### Phase V: Quantitative Survey

The qualitative data from phases II, III, and IV – analyzed and interpreted using the best practices in the social sciences – produced a number of recommendations for cabinets, and best practices for local congregations. The next task was to test the findings by comparing them to experiences in areas other than those visited. If the findings were confirmed by a preponderance of clergy serving sites with a wide geographic and demographic distribution, then they could be interpreted to be relevant and appropriate for the entire domestic connection. To conduct this test, we wrote a quantitative survey consisting of 38 questions, organized around the following topical areas:

- 1 . Demographics
- 2 . Current CR/Cc appointment
- 3 . The appointment-making process
- 4 . Clergy career
- 5 . Next appointment hopes
- 6 . Joys and benefits of CR or CC ministry
- 7 . Challenges and frustrations of CR or CC ministry

- 8 . Advice to clergy
- 9 . Advice to laity
- 10 . Advice to cabinets

Our phase I inventory indicated that there are currently as many as 2,468 CR or CC sites in the United States (there are about 150 less pastors, because that many have two-point charges). Of those, we manually searched for and located email address from 2,034 pastors. From that number, we examined each name and deleted:

- clergy who had participated in some other phase of the CR or CC study;
- clergy who had participated in GCORR's multiculturalism study some months prior;
- clergy who were on the Board of GCORR or who had some other connection to the agency.

The final list consisted of 1,799 email addresses to which we sent an invitation to participate in the survey.

But the data on the larger list of 2,468 sites was not all recent and confirmed data; only 40% of conferences had provided us with updated and current lists. To compensate for this, we then sent the invitation to participate, along with a letter explaining the goals of the study, to all district superintendents in those conferences that had not responded to our requests for updated lists of CR or CC sites. In the cover letter we asked the district superintendents to forward the invitation and Survey Monkey link to any CR or CC pastors in their districts. This second mailing was sent to 248 district superintendents. Within a few days, this appeal to DSs had brought a new wave of clergy to the survey.

By the closing date of 31 May 2016, 393 pastors had completed the survey, out of approximately 1,800 who had had the opportunity to participate. This represents a very respectable response rate of approximately 22%. Of those who began the survey, the completion rate was an excellent 78%. After the standard scientific practice of cleaning the data was completed, data from 360 discreet pastors were analyzed.

Thus, the portion of CR or CC pastors who completed the survey was at least 10%, far more than are needed in order to claim generalizability. However, the survey was sent to all known CR or CC clergy, rather than to a smaller *randomized* sample. Thus, a strict statistical interpretation would not claim generalizability; nonetheless, because the number of completed surveys is such a large proportion of the known total number of CR or CC clergy (more than 10%), we believe that the findings described herein are indeed representative of the experiences of clergy and laity in CR or CC sites throughout the United States church.

In other words, we believe that the analysis and conclusions reported in this manual does indeed represent the experiences of a wide range of pastors and cabinets; for programmatic purposes, GCORR suggests that the data be considered a generalizable experience that describes CR or CC ministry throughout the United Methodist connection.

## Help us improve *Learning from Strangers*

---

Your feedback on this first edition will enable us to make improvements for the next edition. All feedback is anonymous.

1. What are the strongest sections or topics? The weakest?

---

---

---

2. How helpful do you feel this resource will be for your conference?

---

---

---

3. What *additional* topics should be addressed in the next edition?

---

---

---

4. Are there any recommendations or conclusions that are *not* consistent with your experience – anything we should change?

---

---

---

Send electronically to: [info@gcorr.org](mailto:info@gcorr.org) or mail to: GCORR, 100 Maryland Avenue Northeast #400, District of Columbia 20002. Submissions are anonymous, so email addresses will be deleted before the document is opened.