

Multiculturalism Matters

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA | PRESBYTERY OF SOUTH MORETON | 12 OCTOBER 2015



South Sudanese rejoice together



'BUILDING Bridges of Hope' was the theme and spirit of the colourful inaugural South Sudanese UC National Conference, hosted by the Nuer Faith Community at St David's, Coopers Plains, on September 25-27.

In the wake of 20 months of devastating, wide-scale tribal fighting in South Sudan, about 60 Dinka, Nuer and others from Perth, Darwin, Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane gathered to celebrate their oneness in Christ.

Keynote speaker was Rev. James Choul of the Presbyterian Relief & Development Agency in South Sudan, brought by UnitingWorld. UCA Assembly leaders also attended — President Stuart McMillan, UnitingWorld director Rob Floyd, and new Multicultural & Cross-cultural Ministry director Rev. Dr Apwee Ting — as did the UC's first ordained South Sudanese minister, Rev. Amel Manyon, with members of the Dinka Faith Community in Adelaide.



(Top) Rev. James Choul (front in blue suit) and some of the conference participants; (above left) Stuart McMillan preaching on 'Blessed are the peacemakers' at the opening service; (above right) some of the women who sang and spoke.

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Multiculturalism Matters is published bimonthly and emailed with the Presbytery Newsletter. You are welcome to email, or copy and distribute. Each issue can also be downloaded from the Presbytery web site: <http://www.southmoreton.org.au>. Please email David if you would like to receive the newsletter directly by email. Submitted photos and stories reflecting the cultural diversity of the South Moreton Presbytery are welcome.

A day to explore and celebrate the call to be a multicultural church

SYNOD and Presbytery leaders and UC people from many cultures explored and celebrated the church's cultural diversity at an all-day forum and evening worship at Broadwater Rd UC on June 19.

Called ***One Body, Many Cultures: Make It Happen!***, the event marked the 30th anniversary of the 1985 Assembly statement, ***We are a multicultural church***, in which the UCA committed itself to welcoming and empowering people from all cultures.

Through personal stories, discussions and breakout groups, interspersed with singing and cultural sharing, the forum reflected on how well the Qld Synod had embraced that commitment, and the key challenges ahead.

The event opened up an important conversation which the Synod's Multi Cross Cultural Reference Group is following up with a series of community-based gatherings.

The day concluded with an evening worship celebration organised by next-generation leaders, with a variety of cultural groups participating.



PHOTOS show (clockwise from above): Stella Miria-Robinson of UnitingCare; Moderator David Baker and Synod Reference group convener Terani Lima cutting the 30th anniversary cake; the closing Communion service; Rev. Hohaia Matthews explains his 'pineapple theory' of mission; work groups under way during the forum.



First Matariki Day at Logan Central Multicultural UC



Rev. Hohaia Matthews of Logan Central Multicultural UC, wearing a traditional *korowai*, welcomes special guests at the start of the church's first Matariki Day celebrations in June. Matariki celebrates the start of the Aotearoa Pacific New Year, and has become a focus for revitalisation of Maori language and culture. The full day's program of cultural presentations, entertainment and food was organised by the church's Maori group in conjunction with local Maori cultural organisations. The church now hosts a Maori language service and *kapahaka* every Sunday at 5:00 pm.



Fijians return to Annerley, prepare for *koniferedi*

BRISBANE Fijian UC have returned to their Cracknell Rd, Annerley, site, eight months after it was substantially damaged in a freak storm that swept across Brisbane on November 27.

The Congregation had been generously hosted by Holland Park UC at their two properties while repairs were being undertaken.

The hall has been completed and is now being used for worship, but major work continues on the church.

Meanwhile, Congregation leaders are progressing plans for the biennial Fijian UC national conference, or *Koniferedi*, which will be held at Mt Tamborine on 7-10 July 2016. More than 500 people are expected.

It will be third UC national conference to be hosted by South Moreton presbytery in three years, with the Korean conference in 2014 and the South Sudanese this year. The Niuean national conference may also be held in Brisbane in October 2016.



October 31 is next multicultural meet

KENANI UC Community Church in Earnshaw Rd, Banyo, will host the next multicultural gathering, sponsored by the Synod's Multi Cross Cultural Reference Group, on Saturday, October 31, from 10:00 am.

The event aims to bring together people of all backgrounds to share hospitality and diverse cultures, forge relationships and share experiences and learnings about being a multicultural Congregation in the UCA. Two such gatherings are held each year in a different venue.

Kenani is a culturally diverse Congregation, led by Ps Gabriel Manuelli of Rotuman background.



Taiwanese church celebrates 25 years

BRISBANE Taiwanese UC celebrated its 25th birthday with a packed special service in August.

The church was founded in November 1990, but because many of its members visit Taiwan in November-December the celebration was brought forward.

This year also marks the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the first Presbyterian Church in Taiwan by medical missionary, Dr James Laidlaw Maxwell, who also built the country's first Western-style hospital, and the service paid tribute to his work and legacy.



(Above) The Kuo family, a three-generation family who belong to Brisbane Taiwanese UC: Shirley and Cecil (left) grand-daughter Irene (middle) and Irene's parents William and Sarah (right); (below right) young stewards model the special anniversary T-shirts outside the church; (below left) youth group members act the story of the first Presbyterian medical missionary to Taiwan, Dr James Laidlaw Maxwell; (left) the anniversary poster.



How one church met the challenge of its growing multicultural context

A story from Auckland, NZ. Does it raise questions or ideas for your Congregation?

COMMENT: PETER BRISTOW

From SPANZ magazine
Presbyterian Church of
Aotearoa New Zealand
Summer 2014

See, I made a place for you

“Wow, what’s happened to the church? I love how it’s so Asian!” Barb exclaimed having returned to our church from five years in the mission field. These are the changes she saw: People of varying Asian origins at morning worship, mixing with white-middle-class North Shore Kiwis.

As the congregation slowly gathered, it was obviously culturally very diverse. Greeting people as they arrived was a youth leader of Indonesian background, and a young Malaysian woman. The worship team has Samoan, Korean and Chinese singers, an Indonesian guitarist, a white middle-aged pianist, all led by a music leader of Irish origins. This is Forrest Hill Presbyterian Church in the 21st Century.

How did this happen and what are the values that have driven this change?

Out of a common ‘church catastrophe’ came a sense of mission that changed us forever - and for the good. Our neighbourhood changed. We noticed our new Asian neighbours were struggling with language and customs, and in this we saw our mission staring us in the face. Out of this mission arose values that have grown within us and guided us:

Hospitality: Is offered both informally and programmatically. People have become great at inviting one another to dinner, quite deliberately across cultural fences. Preparing for our church events means making sure people of different cultures are invited and included.

Helping: Encouraging our new members in conversational English is a part of an exercise - conversation is an often disregarded spiritual gift. This leads us to our programme called SpeakEzy where people from many language groups interact. Staffed by Forrest Hill volunteers, this programme often leads people to try both worship and social events. We have found personal invitations to join in to be a very important part of this.

Proclaiming: Or sharing the good news requires some thought as to language, use of images and delivery. Not just in preaching but also in home groups. People

feel welcomed if they are able to follow and contribute to the conversation. We also have a group who before the service study a Korean translation of sermon notes, this is apparently very helpful.

Inviting: I have discovered that our Korean people do this naturally. “Come and try worshiping with this bunch of friendly Kiwis - they are really loving and patient with us,” they say. The rest of us are catching up, but as yet it is a more aspirational value. The importance of inviting in an intentional way is important for our Mainly Music and CAP Money programmes as we deliberately include and make room for Asian cultures.

Including: After a few years of this wonderful cultural richness we realised we had no one to talk to about cultural issues at either managers or Session, so we went looking for people from our growing Asian membership to take leading roles. We found that the democratic way did not always work. Listening for who it is that is respected was a better key. Now we have elders and managers, musicians and worship leaders, youth leaders, welcomers and hosts from all of our widely varying cultures.

Theologically we are inspired by Isaiah’s vision of people coming from all points of the compass and by Pauline passages about unity in the diversity of gifts - applied to cultures. And as a culturally diverse community, we have chosen not to provide language-based services. We have rejected both the Homogeneous Unit Principle and assimilation as inconsistent with the Gospel and much of the Bible. Rather, we see and celebrate that Jesus crossed cultural boundaries to reach others with his story.

And now, 11 years along our journey, we regularly see Asian people make up 40 per cent of our worshipping congregation. When I tried greeting our congregation in their own languages I spoke English, Maori, Samoan, Cook Island Maori, Tongan, Korean, Mandarin, Indonesian, Gujarati, Filipino, Gaelic, Basque and Afrikaans!



Peter Bristow

“Out of a common ‘church catastrophe’ came a sense of mission that changed us forever - and for the good.”

In September 2014 the Rev Peter Bristow, senior minister at Forrest Hill Presbyterian Church, presented at the ‘Migration, Cultural Diversity and the Church’ conference held at Carey Baptist College, Auckland.

This article might also invite some questions or offer ideas for your Congregation. It comes from *Many Voices* (June 2015), the newsletter of the Intercultural Unit of the Commission for Mission, Victorian-Tasmanian Synod.

Creating an Intercultural Space

by Dev Anandarajan

Walking into an intercultural space is like walking into a land laid with landmines. I wonder how many have had the experience of walking into an uncleared ground of landmines. Having come from a war torn area where landmines were used extensively to deter the land movement of troops I am able to not only imagine but have real experience with it. In 1990 when the war intensified between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan military; travel between the North and South became very dangerous. Most people travelled by night so their movement would be more difficult to detect by the military who would suspect it to be the LTTE.

One night I was travelling with my wife Dushy and my sister and her husband. We had crossed a lagoon by boat with our Indian-made Bajaj scooters. We were riding along the main road to a place called Paranthan when we came across a big crater created by a land mine explosion. We had a choice either to go around it or find another route.

Being unfamiliar to the territory we did not know another road to take. I decided to walk around the crater to check if it was safe to ride our scooters. So in the dark with the scooter lights providing the visibility I took cautious steps as the others looked on with much anxiety. After each step I would pause and sigh a big relief. A distance that would have taken a few minutes took so much longer as I walked around the crater hoping I would not step on a landmine. It was scary.

Living in an intercultural space is definitely is not as scary as walking into a mine field. But there are similar dynamics.

1. The unexpected: It is easy to travel on a familiar path. But choosing to travel with the adventurous spirit to navigate through the unknown path is the challenge of entering

into the intercultural space. One will never know the safe path unless one is willing to step on the way. If we do not attempt it we will never begin the journey.

Many cultures are comfortable in their own little corner. We must learn from the early Christian communities who were nudged by the Spirit to choose an unfamiliar path of crossing cultures to embrace the other. It was not an easy journey. There was vicious opposition from within. They were comfortable in their familiar Jewish settings until the Spirit shoved some of them to step on the unfamiliar path to reach out to the gentiles to share the good news. What a turn the movement took from then on that made all the difference. They thought they would be safe in their own comfortable zone. But the adventurous path the Spirit took them on revived and renewed their spirits and they exploded creating such an impact in history.

2. "Be bold to sin": Sound familiar? No adventure is going to be picture perfect. The journey is not for those who want to get it all right at the first go. It is not for those who do not want to feel embarrassed. It is not for those who do not want to make mistakes. It is not for those who do not want to be disturbed. It is for those who are not only open but are also intentional about walking into that space. It is for those who are willing to make mistakes and learn from it. It is for those who are willing to explore the uncomfortable space.

No theoretical knowledge, however sound it may be, can prepare you for a perfect encounter in the intercultural space. It is through experience you can test your knowledge and improve your understanding in navigating that space.

3. It is not the finish but the journey: It is natural for people to want to know the end/goal of the journey. They would not embark on it without a certainty of the intended place of arrival. In the gospel of John, the disciples of John the Baptist followed Jesus without knowing where he was going. When the disciples asked Jesus where he was staying his response was, "Come and see". It was the beginning of a journey not knowing the end. The only thing they hoped for was a journey with a purposeful end. They stuck through with him and found a higher purpose, totally different to what they had hoped for.

Becoming an intercultural congregation is a journey. We will never arrive there. However, if we embark upon this journey we will build a community of God where new life will be found.

Here are some practical suggestions to help your congregation on your journey ~

Becoming an Intercultural Congregation

(Adapted from the United Church of Canada Intercultural Ministries)

What Can Church Communities Do?
It will take faith, trust, and openness to become more intercultural.

Worship

Regularly let different cultural groups influence your style of worship. Many cultures do not respond to a general invitation. They would value if they are personally invited.

It's not enough to do this once a year on a special occasion. Make this part of the DNA of your worship.

Here are some suggestions:

- Learn a song from another language
- Learn symbolic gestures from the cultures in your congregation
- Display cultural symbols in the worship space
- Have the Bible read in a cultural language
- Do whatever is possible to ensure everyone has a chance to use their own language.
- Try to express yourself in plain English, not academic English.
- Consider providing simultaneous interpretation and written translations.
- Invite people to pray in their own language—God does not require English!
- Preach about anti-racism
- Talk about our call to be an intercultural congregation/church
- Use diverse imagery to describe God. In the Bible, God is described as being like
 - > an eagle
 - > a loving father
 - > a protective mother hen
 - > a rock
 - > a roaring lion
 - > a potter
 - > a judge
 - > a jealous husband
 - > a woman giving birth
 - > a good shepherd
 - > a persistent widow
 - > and many more

Leadership

Share leadership among racial, ethnic,

and cultural groups. But be careful: Don't assume any one person speaks for their whole group.

In meetings and decision-making, ask: Who is present? Who speaks? Does everyone feel included?

- Make sure leaders learn how to work with different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups:
 - > Provide opportunities for meaningful encounters with other cultural communities.
 - > Ask leaders to attend workshops to increase their understanding of other cultures.
 - > Hire a consultant to teach cross-cultural communication.
 - > Organize exposure trips to other countries.
 - > Provide leaders with anti-racism training.
- Create opportunities for different cultural groups to mix as equals. Don't let anyone culture dominate. Everyone contributes and everyone's cultural traditions are celebrated.
- Look at the ways the community interacts. Whose voices are heard? Whose voices are not? Keep working at it.
- Learn what languages people are most comfortable with. Can everyone understand what is being said? Is everyone able to contribute?



In intercultural interaction no one is left unchanged. All of us by examining our own cultures, biases, and prejudices begin to change to create a new community.

Becoming an Intercultural congregation is not about survival. It is the nature of a Christlike community. It is a journey and a process. We will not arrive but it is important to start the journey

For all white congregations or predominantly Anglo congregations:

The question that is asked is why should we worry about becoming an intercultural congregation? We are all white. We do not need to think about being intercultural.

The question that needs to be asked is: Why is the congregation all white?

Saying we are all white is not an excuse to not embarking on the journey.



At the June 19 forum, participants created a huge Tree of Diversity, writing a message on different coloured hands. Here is the finished tree and just some of the many affirmations.



“One Body, Many Members: Living Faith and Life Cross-culturally”

In consultation with Pastor Gabriel Manuelli and the Kenani Community UC, the Multi-Cross-Cultural Reference Group of the Synod has much pleasure in inviting you and your church community and friends to a Community Meeting to share hospitality and diverse cultures, forge relationships and empower one another in the sharing of our stories and experiences in **What It Means To Be A Multicultural Congregation In The UCA?**

WHERE: KENANI COMMUNITY UNITING CHURCH,

425 EARNSHAW ROAD, BANYO

WHEN: SATURDAY, 31ST OCTOBER 2015 FROM 10am-12pm

(This event is of no charge. Lunch is kindly provided by the Kenani Community Church.)

For further information contact:

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