

**WORSHIP AS AN ILLUMINATION OF THE ETHNIC AND  
DEEP CULTURAL CONFLICTS THAT OCCUR WITH  
PASTORS SERVING IN CROSS-CULTURAL  
PASTORAL APPOINTMENTS IN THE  
NEW YORK CONFERENCE OF THE  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

A Doctoral Project Submitted to the Faculty of Drew Theological Seminary

by

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In partial fulfillment for the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

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## ABSTRACT

Worship as an Illumination of the Ethnic and  
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This autoethnography gives voice to my personal experience as it compares to the experiences of the representative sample of interviewees and as it enables an anthropological understanding of some of the issues involved in serving in a cross-cultural pastoral appointment, and particularly as it pertains to worship. The United Methodist Church implemented cross-cultural appointments in 1968. This project examines the anxieties, cultural and cognitive dissonance, and ethical analyses of the personal/pastoral dissonance which other pastors and I have experienced in these appointments. It deals first with my own personal experiences, and then examines those against the ongoing experiences of some of my pastoral colleagues who are serving in similar settings. Issues such as ethics, culture, race, and ethnicity will be considered. The use of an autoethnographic method offers an opportunity to examine how the personal and the societal or community base intersect from the vantage point of social science and contemporary sociology.

Narratives told of the experiences of members of cross-culturally appointed clergy will be used as stories in which meaning, and identity are tested. The characters that the

stories feature, the roles that they play, and the connection of those stories to the larger social context reveal the ways in which each contextual story can be an avenue into a realm of greater sociological understanding. Rather than just the analysis of accumulated data, I will be exploring issues of personal importance within the acknowledged social context and consider my own thoughts and reactions therein. I will be reviewing other existing literature on topics of similar contextual significance.

The study explores the concerns that are foremost in the minds of these pastors who are serving in cross-cultural appointments. It includes expressions of pain and frustration deeply internalized in the hearts of the subject clergy. This paper voices the feelings held by the subject clergy and offers them as concerns to be explored by those who are in a position to respond in a meaningful way. If indeed these feelings are valid, as I believe they are, the study identifies a clear opportunity to capture firsthand experiential data which, if acted upon, could produce a more effective approach to the issue of cross-culturalism in the church and a remedy to combat the malady of racism and de facto segregation which permeates the broader society and unfortunately is reflected in our churches. The study exposes the need for more effective approaches. Adequately addressing these issues could benefit both the UMC and other denominations within the body of Christ as a whole.

## DEDICATION

To my wife, Tani, who has been my partner and support through every sacrifice that had to be made in the process of building each element of our ministry. To my children, who held me accountable, and in their innocence and much to my chagrin asked repeatedly, “Dad did you finish the paper yet?” To all the people who made every accommodation to ensure that I put in the time and remained encouraged and motivated to achieve this objective. To the memory of my mommy (Elsie Sylvester) who prepared me for life and for ministry and taught me to love the God who has always brought us through. With great humility I offer unlimited honor to the Drew faculty who has been a transformative force in formulating the person and minister that I am and yet aspire to be.

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Certainly, every person that has contributed to the success of this journey cannot be mentioned, as there will not be room for the names; however their contribution is by no means unappreciated or diminished because their names do not appear in this document.

I would first like to thank Dr. Susan Kendall and Dr. Althea Spencer-Miller for the supportive confidence that they showed in me. They kept me focused on what they considered to be my strengths. Their continuous coaching and demand for excellence has brought out the best in me, even when I did not believe that excellence existed. I thank them for seeing my capabilities and for showing me the way to discover them for myself. Dr. Spencer-Miller's quiet demeanor would disarm even the most intuitive of us from discerning the powerhouse of wisdom and depth of understanding that is contained in her. From my MDiv. Journey to this present juncture, I have found Dr. Spencer-Miller's classes to be thought provoking and inspiring. My scholarship and ministry have been enhanced by her counsel and by the knowledge she imparted.

Where would I be without my cohort? Their encouragements and advice were priceless. The insights that I gained in our classes together, the challenging thoughts that were expressed, the controversies with which we grappled, and the stress-relieving laughter that lightened each moment were all priceless contributions to how I have enjoyed this journey. When I was distracted by life and ministry issues, and I lost my way in class, the guidance that they gave was redeeming and corrective. I give God thanks for them all.



I thank my Local Advisory Committee who stood with me and held my hand to the task and my feet to the fire. I would like to especially acknowledge Sis. Rose Walker, Sis. Angela Pratt-Barrett, Dr. Judith Abiodun, Dr. Ade Abiodun, and Sis. Destine Gooden. I am thankful also for the supportive work of Brittney L. Chase, our Administrative Assistant whose efforts lightened this burden tremendously. Here we are, at the other end of this effort, and I want to thank them all for all their sacrifice in working with me over these months.

Thanks to all my clergy colleagues who so willingly contributed to this effort. Their candor and forthright contribution will certainly make an impact in the ongoing dialogue on this subject. I trust that they all will continue to serve with courage and fortitude. I do believe that God is able to take us through every challenge in ministry that he brings us to. My clergy colleagues' diligent service in the face of the cultural antagonisms that they face is a testimony to God's continued presence with us, and a confirmation of the fact that God has selected and empowered us for service. Hold on! Joy comes in the morning. If this small contribution to the discourse on the challenging issue of cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments makes any bit of an affirmative difference, then our efforts were well worth every sacrifice. All praises be to the Lord!

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Autoethnography:** Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural practices.

**The Book of Discipline:** The Discipline is the instrument for setting forth the laws, plan, polity, and process by which United Methodists govern themselves.<sup>1</sup>

**Colonialism:** A practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one group of people by another group. Particularly, a political-economic phenomenon whereby various European nations explored, conquered, settled, and exploited large areas of the world.

**Cross-culturalism:** Dealing with or offering comparison between two or more different cultures or cultural areas. Combining, pertaining to, or contrasting two or more cultures or cultural groups.

**Cross-racial and cross-cultural (CR/CC) appointments:** Appointments of clergypersons to congregations in which the majority of their constituents are different from the clergyperson's own racial/ethnic and cultural background. In Cross-cultural relationships one culture is often considered "the norm" and all other cultures are compared or contrasted to the dominant culture.

**Ethos:** The characteristic spirit of a culture, era, or community as manifested in its beliefs and aspirations.

**Ethnocentrism:** The belief in the inherent superiority of one's own ethnic group or culture. A tendency to view alien groups or cultures from the perspective of one's own. The belief that one's own culture is superior to all others and is the standard by which all other cultures should be measured.

**Intercultural:** Describes communities in which there is a deep understanding and respect for all cultures. Intercultural communication focuses on the mutual exchange of ideas and cultural norms and the development of deep relationships.

**Multicultural:** Refers to a society in which there is cultural pluralism or diversity. It is a society where several cultural or ethnic groups live alongside one another. It refers to a social situation, doctrine, or policy that promotes or advocates such a state with racial and ethnic diversity.

**Normative Model:** A model used to evaluate change or performance, it searches for alternative answers to the question, "what's going on?". As such, it attempts to provide a standard of how things or tasks ought to be done.<sup>2</sup>

**Omnicide:** The destruction of everything; that is, all living creatures, and all of human society.

**Pastor:** The appointed leader of a congregation or multi-congregation charge.

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<sup>1</sup> United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 2016), Kindle.

<sup>2</sup> The Law Dictionary *Featuring Black's Law Dictionary Free Online Legal Dictionary 2nd Ed.* (As appeared on (4/9/2020))

**Pneumatological Liberalism:** Moving freely under the influence of the Spirit.

**Post-colonialism:** The historical period or state of affairs representing the aftermath of Western colonialism; focusing on the human consequences of the control and exploitation of **colonized** people and their lands.

**RiM: Residents in Ministry.** These are persons who are in the consideration process for full diaconal or Eldership credentials. The title is held during the interim phase between commissioning and full ordination in the United Methodist Church.

**Seniority:** The number of years from a clergy member's first appointment to a congregation.

**Socio-cultural:** Related to the different groups of people in society and their habits, traditions, and beliefs.

## INTRODUCTION

### **Statement of the Problem**

Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are now indelible parts of The United Methodist Church's policy. This policy is a noble effort on the part of the denomination as it assumes its prophetic role to offer redress for its historical errors. The nobility of the effort though admirable would only be a platitude if it were to fail to accomplish its objectives. The policy then needs to be continuously re-examined by the General Conference in its objectives, and to readjust all the building blocks of the church's superstructure towards accomplishing this goal. Worship is one such building block where tweaks and readjustments are critically necessary. It is the chief element of our commonality, but it is also the area where our strength of racial and cultural diversity could manifest our most divisive divisions. That worship is the most indispensable part of the life of every Christian church, including the United Methodist Denomination, is an unalterable fact. Worship is required to fulfill a deep-seated need in every congregant, including itinerant pastors and their families. Worship is an expression of the personhood of individuals and by extension, the personality of the congregations in which these individuals engage in the traditions of worship.

The extent to which the worship space, modality of worship, the texture and tenor of the worship experience should embrace ethno-cultural themes, liturgical styles, and cultural relativity is the issue that begs further exploration. The openness to culturally relative worship within church denominations deserves examination. Particularly, within the superstructure of The United Methodist Church (UMC), worship modalities and

cultural expressions bear heavily on the potential success that can be realized in the effort of the denomination at making successful cross-racial/cross-cultural (CR/CC) pastoral appointments in its system of clerical itinerancy. This practice of the church is a stated part of its efforts at maintaining its historically fractured unity and strengthening the future delivery of its overall mission and the fulfilling of its own expressed prophetic mandate.

Itinerant cross-racially/cross-culturally appointed pastors and their families also need to find space for a truthful expression of their worship in the congregations where they are appointed to serve, even against the forces that evoke resistance to that end. While a congregation is not required to adjust itself just to accommodate the worship needs of the pastors and their families, the resultant flavor of the worship experience will inevitably be altered by their very presence and influence. The dynamics and intricacies of this adjustment process are the core of the issue that this document seeks to address.

This thesis explores the concerns that are foremost in the minds of pastors in cross-cultural appointments, including the expressions of pain and frustration deeply internalized in the hearts of the subject clergy. In this autoethnographic project I offer my experiences of CR/CC appointments to access and expose deeper problems inherent in the practice of CR/CC appointments. By illuminating the issues of race and worship within the CR/CC exposure, I will enhance and deepen the ongoing dialogue on the matter of cross-cultural appointments within the UMC. After further discussing the nature of CR/CC appointments, I write autobiographically of my cultural history as a way of explaining the ways in which worship engenders a clash of cultures and theologies. It begins the exposure of the connection between the UMC's liturgical history and

Eurocentric antipathy toward cultures of color. It also lays bare that cultural differences are not only about race. As persons of color serve the UMC as pastors, some, like me, bring different worship histories that are equally attached to issues of race. Both the race and the styles of worship of some of us pastors of color have suffered from the derogation, caricaturing, sidelining, and subjugation to racialized historical dynamics that have muted, and subjected our practices to those that derive from European liturgical histories. Yet, as I will show later, my Afrocentric Pentecostal background that is part of my worship expression and informs my theology of worship have not found a place in my CR/CC appointment. This discord most finely articulates an element of the stressors in CR/CC appointments when unmitigated racial tensions are substrata to the coerced cross-cultural contact.

Worship in its truest form reflects a naked gentility of the worshipper before God. It reflects everything that the person is. This is demonstrated through a modality of cultural expressions, liturgical regimens, vocal intonations and expressions or non-expressions, bodily movements, or even the lack thereof. In the company of believers, norms of these expressions develop over time. These norms reflect the ethnicities of the congregation; the pathos of the general congregation; the prodding of the most influential personalities within the group; interdenominational impacts; and the general atmospherics that come from the broader society in the form of politics, pop culture, and other influences. This idea is expressed in the UMC's *Book of Worship*, which states: "When the people of God gather, the Spirit is free to move them to worship in diverse ways, according to their needs. We rejoice that congregations of large and small membership, in different regions, in different communities, of different racial and ethnic

compositions, and with distinctive local traditions can each worship in a style that enables the people to feel at home.”<sup>3</sup> So then it is clear that methodism does allow for a measure of cultural expressions which is suitable to local taste and appeal. This document voices an understanding of the issues that arises as the merger engages with pastors serving in a CR/CC pastoral appointment as this is expressed in worship and in varying pastoral experiences by the subjects of these appointments. This autoethnography gives voice to my personal experiences as they compare to the experiences of the representative sample of interviewees and as they enable an anthropological understanding of some of the issues involved in serving in a cross-cultural pastoral appointment with particular focus on the worship experience. The use of an autoethnographic method offers an opportunity to examine how the personal and the societal or community bases intersect from the vantage point of social science and contemporary sociology.

The project examines the anxieties and the cultural and cognitive dissonance of pastors in CR/CC appointments. It analyzes the personal and pastoral internal conflicts which I, and other pastors in these appointments, have experienced. It includes some of my own personal experiences and examine those against the ongoing experiences of some of my pastoral colleagues who are serving in similar settings. It examines the personal experiences of the sample group in the light of ethics, culture, race, interdenominationalism, and ethnically based practices. The UMC’s CR/CC policy is explored through the vocalized actual experiences of the subjects of this study to examine worship as an illumination of the ethnic and deep cultural conflicts that occur with pastors serving in CR/CC pastoral appointments in the New York Conference of the

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<sup>3</sup> United Methodist Book of Worship Committee, *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 2002), 13.

UMC. An exploration of some of the theological issues that affect this matter will be explored in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, we will examine the statements of the interviewees and glean the common themes which develops in the concerns that they expressed. The conclusion will offer final thoughts which suggest other ways that the conference could further engage the CR/CC policy to make it even more effective in meeting the stated objectives. At the end of this reading the reader should have an appreciation of the difficult feat that the conference is attempting to bring people into the same space of genuine worship and full fellowship. They will be made aware of the intricate and elusive objective of teaching people to transcend their basic human instincts of cultural domination towards the greater interest of unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. They will recognize the reality of what pastors who are in these CR/CC spaces are grappling with in the struggle for the church to fully realize and deliver on its prophetic mandate to do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

### **About the Problems of Cross-Cultural Worship**

Methodism espouses a particular structure of worship,<sup>4</sup> yet it allows for cultural relativity when it comes to congregational worship styles. Each congregation displays its uniqueness as compared with the others. The differences between congregations become more acute as they reflect the ethos of the communities in which they operate. Geography, social standing, race, ethnicity, gentrification, along with many other factors all affect how each congregation carries out ministry to its parishioners. As congregations develop their uniqueness reflecting these geopolitical influences, a particularly interesting

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<sup>4</sup> UMPH Methodist Publication, *The United Methodist Book of Worship Regular Edition Black* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2016).



dynamic develops. Clergy assigned to these congregations, who originate from other geopolitical worship experiences, find themselves with a poignant problem in the transition from one socio-cultural setting into the other. The worship experience is different, and quite often the established norms of worship in the new space neither cater to nor are amenable to an accommodation of the pastors' contributions, or to their efforts at finding a place for their own true worship expressions.

This has been and continues to be an area of great challenge for many congregations who receive a CR/CC appointed pastor, as well as for the New York Annual Conference (NYAC) of the UMC<sup>5</sup> with which we are particularly concerned in this document. Many congregations are demanding that the conference send them the pastors who they say would best serve the needs of their existing demographic. But, amidst these calls, the conference is pursuing a latent function. This function is endeavoring to shed its historical compromise with racial injustice, and it is picking up its prophetic mandate to be the change agent that the Lord has called it to be.

A resultant dynamic plays itself out as pastors become the frontline leaders of the policy experiment. The resultant dynamic in this transformative movement with which the conference is engaged is the surfacing of the issues of competition for prominence between races and ethnic cultures. Certainly, if the church intends to be of significance in a fast-changing world, it will have to reinvigorate its lagging evolution to keep pace with all the rapid social changes and the consequential needs that the broader society demands of it. The conference's dilemma is that operating in an increasingly multicultural world demands quick change, but the prevailing culture in many of the local churches reflects

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<sup>5</sup> The New York Annual Conference is the Governing body which controls the administrative affairs of the United Methodist Church in the southeastern section of New York.

the vestiges of past attitudes; as a result, time and careful management are needed to bring about the overdue and crucial change. How worship is experienced or achieved in the ensuing adjustment period is the subject of this thesis. The hope is that it will shed some light on the issue at hand and exemplify the need for remedial action in this area of the conference's operations, and in the general prophetic witness of our denomination.

### **An Abbreviated History**

The UMC is the product of a 1968 merger of two antecedent Methodist denominations. With the challenge of merging the worship cultures of the two denominations was the even greater challenge of merger between the ethnocultural idiosyncrasies of all of its peoples. Certainly, the success of the merger would be of paramount importance, and most of the human and other resources would be focused on that success. But other priorities also existed with regard to the dissolving of the infamous Central Jurisdiction, and the moving of blacks in general into formerly white spaces. Even more challenging was the sending of black clergy into white churches. The abbreviated history of the practice is as follows. In 1968, The Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) and The Evangelical United Brethren united into one organization. There were many issues with which they had to contend. Not the least among these issues was the inequity in the treatment of black churches and clergy and their assignment into the segregated Central Conference within the MEC. Methodism's effort to unite itself came at a price to the antecedent organizations that consented to unify. While this move responded to a long-held Methodist dream of re-unification of its splintered groups, some of the heritage and the uniqueness developed by each organization were lost in the

transitory process. The antecedent organizations all claimed legitimate heirship to the Methodist Episcopal Tradition. Certainly, they resembled each other in terms of their doctrine and their Wesleyan heritage, but there was much that wedged their efforts at coming together. Two huge wedges were the albatross of segregation and the issue of full integration of Blacks into the whole denomination. Other sticking points were doctrinal standards, the forms of episcopacy, ministry, and superintendency that they would commonly follow. Some of these issues not only obstructed their unity but were the cause of their separation in the first place.<sup>6</sup>

The groups referred to as antimodernists in the antecedent churches voiced concerns about many issues. Among these issues was their concern about the giving of integrative privileges to blacks more rapidly than the rate at which the fledgling denomination would be able to adjust. The strong positions held by antimodernist forces within the movement resulted in what is termed “the holiness exodus,” where many progressive thinking persons left the new denomination. This resulted in a rise in the strength of the antimodernists, who continued to passionately make their case within Methodism. The multiplicity of the issues with which they grappled were all factors that challenged the unity of the diametrically opposing viewpoints. Nevertheless, the varying interest groups were convinced that the passage of time and the effects of social evolution had occasioned a converging point, from where they could find common ground. This common ground, in their minds, was sufficient to accomplish the desired reconciliation.

The merger took place between the previously merged Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren to form the new organization called The United Methodist

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<sup>6</sup> John Galen McEllhenney, *United Methodism in America: A Compact History* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1992).

Church. This new denomination, in disdain for its past, has from its initiation in 1964 taken on the issue of segregation and cross-cultural mergers within the denomination. They have made a very deliberate effort to mount a prophetic response to this matter. The present policy of the UMC's General Conference, which has evolved from its adopted position taken from the 1968 General Conference, charges the local conferences with the responsibility of preparing clergy and congregations for cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments. It also charges that they shall provide specific training for the clergypersons so appointed and for their congregations.<sup>7</sup> The resolve is a deliberate effort towards racial and cultural unification and tolerance. This is today the official policy of the denomination, and now the task is in the implementation of the procedures to achieve this end.

The desire for Methodist re-unification was strong, and it took many stages to get to the organization that we have today. Prior to the last merger between the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist Church, three different organizations previously merged. These organizations were the MEC, The Methodist Episcopal Church South, and The Methodist Protestant Church. They merged to form the new Methodist Church. To deal with their contentious and contradictory views with regard to segregation of black people in the church, the infamous Central Jurisdiction was formed, including all black congregations nationally regardless of their geographic location. The groundswell of controversy over that decision and the lamenting of its black members over the years caused the Evangelical United Brethren to demand that as one of the conditions of the merger, the Central Conference would be disbanded, and that blacks would be given full

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<sup>7</sup> United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline*.

integration into all conferences of the newly emerging denomination. This was agreed to and implemented. In the ensuing years after the second unification, robust efforts were made to advance the conferences' agenda in improving race relations and integrating the church at every level. The emerging denomination had decided to correct some of the faulty positions that its antecedent organizations had taken historically. The ambition to fully embrace the UMC's prophetic call to justice had now found its place of paramount priority with the emergent UMC, and it was deliberately intent on fulfilling that prophetic call.

Some early examples of their successful efforts are as follows: The South Carolina Conference celebrated the assignment of a new episcopal leader, Joseph Bethea. Bethea was the first black bishop assigned to South Carolina since the dissolution of the former Central (all-black) Jurisdiction, and his appointment of the conference's first cross-racial appointments to local churches. Two black clergymen were appointed senior pastors of predominantly white churches and three white ministers, likewise, were appointed to predominantly black churches. South Carolina's first steps were mirrored in actions in other conferences that summer of 1969. Efforts towards prophetic justice continued, and in 1996, the General Conference adopted the resolution "Racialism: The Church's Unfinished Agenda," and the church launched two related programs, "Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century" and "Holy Boldness—A National Plan for Urban Ministry."<sup>8</sup> The current position of the General Conference is as follows:

Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are made as a creative response to increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the church and in its leadership. ...

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<sup>8</sup> Russell E. Richey, *The Methodist Experience in America Volume I: A History* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), locations 11628-11634, Kindle.

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.<sup>9</sup>

The NYAC of the UMC (the administrative body which governs the activity of United Methodist churches in the southeastern region of New York State and a part of southwestern Connecticut) continues to engage the broader denominational vision. It is proactively engaged in making CR/CC appointments of pastors. The conference holds the hope that such appointments will increase opportunities for congregations to engage in dialogue about race relations. The conference's vision is that pastors would be able to effect changes in these congregations. These conversations will yield an atmosphere where Christian men and women, of good conscience, could share space with cultures other than their own. There is, however, an insidious resistance to these efforts. Given the challenges that CR/CC appointments continue to face, it is evident that there is discomfort about them. Based on my own experience and drawing from responses given in my interviews with CR/CC pastors, the conference continues to make CR/CC appointments, some of which occur in contexts where clergy of color are bitterly unwelcome. These pastors are often left to fend for themselves, relying only on their training, and the Spirit-given wisdom of God, to navigate the many difficult pressures that they endure in these appointments.

### **Cross-Racial/Cross Cultural Appointments: Some Considerations**

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<sup>9</sup> United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline*.

A CR/CC appointment is defined as the appointment of a pastor to a congregation whose predominant ethnic or racial culture is not his or her own. The cultures' properties may be defined in terms of the values, norms, expectations, hopes, food, dress, priorities, practice, preferences, etc. which govern the outcomes of all the circumstances in the lives of the people that fall under that cultural influence. The pastors I interviewed and I, having served in cross-cultural appointments, found ourselves having to make choices between the things to which we are accustomed, and the things favored by the communities that we have been called to serve. Park described this situation as follows: "CR/CC appointments intend to create a community of 'shalom' that pursues wholeness by promoting unity and peace among different people. . . . CR/CC appointments are initiation of a faithful covenant relationship with people who are different from each other."<sup>10</sup> These attempts quite often fall short of their aims, producing reason for contention between the parties, rather than sources for mutually beneficial experiences. The pastors, as the professionals, find themselves having to make unusual or even extreme adjustments to accommodate the cultural expressions of the congregation, rather than them feeling free to enjoy their own cultural worship expressions in the new space.

The increase in the frequency of CR/CC is inevitable given the statistics that follow. As the racial diversity of the clergy increases in CR/CC appointments within the UMC in general and the New York Conference in particular, cross-racial experiences will become more common and cross-cultural tensions will need progressively more attention. According to 2014 numbers from the General Council on Finance and Administration

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<sup>10</sup> HiRho Y. Park, *Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Appointments: Training Resource*, 2014, [https://www.bomlibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Cross\\_Racial\\_and\\_Cross\\_Cultural\\_Appointments\\_Orientation\\_Material-min.pdf](https://www.bomlibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Cross_Racial_and_Cross_Cultural_Appointments_Orientation_Material-min.pdf).

(GCFA), 83.25% of all clergy are white, while 12% are people of color. The largest of these ethnic minority groups is African American/black at 6%, followed by Asian (2.6%) and Hispanic/Latino (2%). All other race/ethnicity categories together total less than 1%. The remaining 4.8% did not give their race/ethnicity. When comparing United Methodist churches with United Methodist pastors, the clergy are more diverse overall than United Methodist churches. Ninety percent of United Methodist churches are white, compared to the 83.25% of all clergy who are white; 7% who are African American/black; 1% who are Asian; 1% who are Hispanic/Latino; and fewer than 1% who are multi-racial, Native American, Pacific Islander or “other.”<sup>11</sup> These statistics show that the general membership of the church continues to be predominantly white. Consequently, pastors of color are by necessity increasingly being assigned to predominantly white churches.

Among the pastors interviewed for this project there were concerns. The pastors were wondering if the NYAC hears the concerns that they express. To many pastors, it seems that their concerns are not being heard when they appeal to the conference for relief or assistance. The challenge of serving in some of these churches is daunting to those entrusted with the responsibility of service, because it seems that the churches are completely unprepared to enter that level of transformative cross-cultural experiences.

As required by the General Conference, all conferences, including the NYAC, has the obligation to adequately prepare pastors for the effort;<sup>12</sup> however, are the receiving congregations equipped to aid in that challenging enterprise? In my training, the basic M.Div. requirements included mandatory courses in cross-cultural studies and ethics, as

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<sup>11</sup> Statistics taken from Paul Taylor, *The Next America*, Pew Research, 2014, <http://www.pewresearch.org/next-america/>.

<sup>12</sup> United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline*.



well as courses designed to increase cross-cultural awareness. It is reasonable to assume that given its mandate, the conference draws its clergy from seminaries which offer similar training. The NYAC also requires pastors and church officers to go through cross-cultural training at least once every two years. While the adequacy of this effort may be in question, it is in fact the denomination's attempt to ensure that pastors are particularly ready to face what may befall them in these appointments. On the other hand, many of the local Eurocentrically influenced churches are yet unconvinced of the necessity for such arduous adjustments in their congregations. As pastors engage with these congregations, both are faced with surprises, and the experience for both parties could be traumatic and even damaging. The pastor most likely expects some culture shock, but perhaps not to the extent that it is manifested. The church anticipates some adjustments, but neither the church nor the pastor foresees that the very presumptions that they hold of each other may be quite unrealistic. Cultural norms produce different assumptions and expectations. The learning curve of the adjustment period between the two players is where the stresses occur, and where a focus on nurturing care is essential. Here following is a scenario which is typical of the positioning, assumptions, and reactions when CR/CC worlds come together, and the delicate balancing act required to produce the desired best outcome between the parties.

### **Vignette of The Dilemma**

July 1 is the first day that the pastoral appointments begin in the NYAC. As this day approaches annually, a typical scenario would be as follows: The new pastor is coming! Congregations are ripe with anticipation. In some cases, the red carpet is rolled out, and the fine china is displayed. Everyone is doing their homework to get the scoop

on the newly appointed pastor. Whether the information on the incoming clergy person is good or bad, any and all information is welcomed.

Generally speaking, new pastors are flush with all the anticipations expected of an itinerant pastor who is arriving in a new and unfamiliar space. Pastors approach their new appointments with many anxieties. However, new pastors hold a firm resolve to do their best to make a real, positive difference in the new appointment. Pastors are determined to confront all the issues which they may encounter, yet they possess the hope that those issues will be few, and manageable. They aspire to love God's people into heaven, and they hope that the people would reciprocate the sentiment. More often than not, however, that is not the case in CR/CC appointments. In my inquiry of colleagues, and from personal experience, it seems that pastors who are sent to cross-cultural appointments can quickly have their ambitions sobered by the realities that they face within the local churches.

Immediately upon arrival, CR/CC pastors quite often find themselves facing rigid cultural barriers, which are obstructive to their legitimization. These barriers manifest themselves as inflexible resistance which are played out along socio-cultural lines and are often displayed in racial overtones. All of the interviewees with whom I have spoken have concluded that this seems to be an inevitable issue in cross-cultural appointments. Most of them have formed negative opinions about CR/CC. Some of the pastors would prefer never to receive such appointments in the future; however, all of them see it as an essential action in which the church must engage in the process of its social and prophetic evolution. The story that follows is a demonstration of the socio-cultural lines of resistance just mentioned. It reflects the overtone of racial insensitivity that may exist on

the part of some local church officers. It also shows the need for proper preparation of these officers in the skill of engaging in the CR/CC appointments process. The story flags the lack of awareness of some mutual boundaries that we must hold inviolate simply in order that we may share the same space. The story shows how basic respect can easily be neglected and disregarded, much to the peril of the fledgling relationship. The need for training in careful early engagement so that we would not cause the abortion of the fetal pastor/parishioner relationship is seen to be evident here, because from this and stories in later chapters it seems to be barely existent among many of our receiving predominantly white congregations.

This anecdote is an actual conversation that I had while speaking with a senior officer (Br. H. T.)<sup>13</sup> at a former appointment. It is a conversation that took place in the second month of my pastoral appointment as a RiM (Resident in Ministry) in a cross-cultural setting.<sup>14</sup> Br. H. T. is a senior officer of the church. He is a lifelong member and traces his church heritage to his parents who were married in the church and had been diligent members for most of their lives. He is very influential in the congregation, and to the members he had been the go-to person to get anything done, good or bad. The conversation between us was as follows:

**Pastor Elon (P. E.):** Hello, Br. H. T. This is pastor Sylvester. How are you?

**Church Officer (H. T.):** I'm fine, pastor. How are you?

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<sup>13</sup> The initials H. T. are fictitious and are not the true initials of the church officer who was actually involved in this conversation.

<sup>14</sup> Conversation held in August, 2016 between myself and a church officer/parishioner.

**P. E.:** I'm good, my brother. I know that you're busy, so let me get to the point. I am reaching out to some of the older members in the church who have not been here for a while, just to introduce myself and find out if they would like me to visit with them or if they need anything from the church. But I cannot find any information on your mom. We have nothing on the records. Is there a way I could contact her, to pray with her and to talk to her a bit?

**H. T.:** Oh no, pastor, she has a phone, but she does not answer it. She has no TV or nothing like that. She is a kind of recluse, and she has some serious dementia. As a matter of fact, if you want to visit her, you should arrange with me so that I could go with you, because I was raised by a pack of wolves, pastor. You might go there, and she would be wondering "What is this 'N-word' doing in my living room?"

Yes, this conversation actually happened. And at this point, I was livid. I questioned in my thought, "did he actually say that?" I was quietly trying to mount an adequate response. Should it be a rebuke? Should I hang up? Is this one of those teaching moments that they taught us about in seminary? My analysis paralysis silenced me in the confusion of the moment. The awkward and prolonged silence elicited an explanation from the officer. "Don't be offended, pastor, but that's just the way it is." I chose to ignore that offense, but two weeks later, his mother died. He and his two brothers sat across the desk from me in the office as we reflected on their mother's life and planned her homegoing service. The conversation again came up about my attempted visit. Then H. T. again proceeded to make the same statement as he reported to his brothers my

attempt to visit with their mom. Fortunately, as he got to the horrible punchline, there was silence in the room. His two brothers shared the same background as H. T. One of them still held his membership with our church, and the other attended another Christian congregation. They looked at him in disgust, and they immediately rebuked him. I was happy for their prompt response. It relieved me from the awkward position of having to chastise a bereaved brother. I quickly reasoned in my mind that if I'd challenged him on this indiscretion two weeks earlier, then I would not have had to relive this feeling of anguish, or I would not have to deal with this uncouth conduct again. I sank into my chair, trembling inside with mixed emotions. It was clear that it was not the mother that had the problem with my social location, because she also raised these other two brothers who immediately detected and admonished the offense in H. T.'s insensitive quip. The bigotry was in him, not in "the wolves" (his parents) whom he blamed, and he could not conceal it from me or from his brothers. Such are the interpersonal dilemmas that pastors face that contribute to the stresses of adjustment in the new space. Multiply this event by a factor relating to the size of the congregation, and it will reveal the barrage of situations, both subtle and blatant, with which CR/CC pastors are forced to grapple. In these situations, they must draw every iota of temperance in their being to make good in the variety of such situations that befall them.

### **Spotting the Cultural Divide**

The above scenario is not one that is typical to most congregations, though. Those with influence in the local churches, and by extension, in the worship space, make de facto policies that become the rules by which the congregations are governed. They

become indelible unspoken rules which morph into a part of the cultural fabric of the local church. The de facto policies are enforced in many ways, including by financial contributions, appropriations, and disbursements. Quite often, these de facto policies reflect the practices of the broader secular society. They are fraught with secularity, bigotry, bias, and, at times, pure racial animus. They operate in congregations in insidious ways with nods, winks, and dog whistles. They decide outcomes and make determinations on issues in a meeting before the official meeting, or even sometimes after the official meeting has taken place.

Pastors in general, quite often, are viewed as intruders from the outside. But pastors of color, and particularly black pastors, are viewed with immense suspicion, skepticism, and at times even disdain. Said Korie Edwards (Ohio State University associate professor of sociology), who calls CR/CC pastors “estranged pioneers”:  
“You’re first dismissed and then you are dissed. You’re not included in white circles as peers or you’re not included in white circles as a leader; you’re not respected as a leader,”<sup>15</sup> So the pastors who are serving in CR/CC appointments have not just the task of familiarity with the congregation, but also the additional burden of winning trust and respect from people who are not easily inclined to give these benefits.

While I served in that appointment, which was one world, my religious history harbored a second world. So, I existed in two worlds. These two worlds are: firstly, the world in which I conducted ministry as a UMC probationary elder, and secondly, the world of my upbringing where I received the foundation of my Christian faith and

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<sup>15</sup> As cited in Adele Banks, “More Multicultural Churches Led by Black, Hispanic Pastors,” Christianity Today, January 17, 2020, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/january/more-multiracial-churches-black-hispanic-pastors-mosaix.html>.

practice. These two worlds are very real and indispensable parts of myself—neither could exist without the other. Interestingly, however, these two worlds are infinitely different. They have collided inside of me. These worlds, though their coexistence within me is tenuous, have produced the human being that I am today. They will continue to be a part of me probably until my earthly end. As pastors, the leading of God’s people into the act of worship is a huge part of our ministry with the congregation. Pastors and congregations worship our God together by expressing our love for God, and our consequential love for each other. We bring the whole of our beings to that expression. Truth is demanded as a condition of our attitude in that worship. This means that being fully in touch with oneself is a necessary condition of bringing one’s fullest and richest worship to God. No expression of love for God that enriches that worship should be forced out or suppressed. The critics are not the priority of praise. God is. Therefore, pleasing God in one’s worship takes priority. By definition, my UMC faith community holds the following position, “Our worship in both its diversity and its unity is an encounter with the living God through the risen Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>16</sup> Our objective in the worship experience, according to the *Book of Worship*, is that “The Holy Spirit will make us: One with Christ; One with each other; and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.”<sup>17</sup> As Methodists, we believe that our worship is a part of the universal responsibility of all creatures to praise God. Says Hickman, “In this is an act of worship in which the continuing call of the Creator is answered by the continuing response of the creation in a

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<sup>16</sup> Hoyt L. Hickman, *Worshipping with United Methodists*, Rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> *Book of United Methodist Worship* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989).

communion of Creator and creation.”<sup>18</sup> If, therefore, the scriptures call for all of creation to worship God through the risen Christ, it is the incumbent responsibility for all of humanity to engage in this expression of adoration.<sup>19</sup> And if all creatures must do so, then it stands to reason that there is no specific liturgy, format, or language for this universal acknowledgement of God’s sovereignty. None of these creatures has the same expression of that worship, or the same format for that experience. The howling of a wolf is different from the chirping of the eagle. The rustling of the oak tree is different from that of the evergreen. Yet the only collusion that all creation holds in common is the clarion cry of, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty! Who is like unto thee oh Lord among Gods?” God is not upset with the diversity in nature. She is pleased only with the fact that God’s sovereignty and uniqueness is exclusively and irrefutably acknowledged and upheld by all creatures, great and small.

Within the human community, the same diversity is manifested as with each other grouping of creation. Because of our variety in preferences as human beings, our diversity is even more infinitely vast. And so, as with the rest of creation, God would bear no inhibition to embracing our unique and diverse expressions of worship. Any worship that is brought in earnest fulfilment of the divine purpose of our created existence is acceptable to God. Our worship is contingent only on “An encounter with the living God through the risen Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>20</sup> If, therefore, our varying human expressions of worship to God meet God’s bar of acceptance, then, as in

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<sup>18</sup> Hickman, *Worshipping with United Methodists*, 11.

<sup>19</sup> Rev 5:13, Psalms 150:6, 19:1, 148:3-5 KJV. Basic thought taken from Hickman, *Worshipping with United Methodists*, 10-11.

<sup>20</sup> Hickman, *Worshipping with United Methodists*, 9.



nature, all Christian worship meeting this divine criterion should be given a space at the table, a voice in the broader Christian community, and a respected place in the field of Christian labor.

God welcomes diversity in the Christian community, whether that diversity is in ways that are culturally unique or racially diverse. In the Acts of the Apostles, the embrace of God for all people is made emphatically clear<sup>21</sup>. Further, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul tells us of God's purposeful desire for diversity in the body of Christ. In fact, God sees it as an asset of the church, and something that profits God's ministry here on the earth.<sup>22</sup> These passages demonstrate God's desire for diversity. They speak of diversities of races and ethnicities, along with diversities of gifts, differences of administrations, and diversities of operations all given by the same Spirit. Extrapolating from these passages, it can be concluded that our previous statements of divine embrace of a multi-cultured form of worship is not just embraced, but encouraged by God, and promulgated by God's Spirit. It could be further concluded that tensions that exist among the diverse gifts, administrations, and operations are not of God; rather, they are contrary to God's will.

God's one directive regarding diversity is stated as follows. "But let all things be done decently and in order."<sup>23</sup> The pertinent questions now are: Why, among both clergy

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<sup>21</sup> Act 10:34-35 KJV: 34 Then Peter opened [his] mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

<sup>22</sup> 1Co 12:4-7 KJV: 4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

<sup>23</sup> 1Co 14:40 KJV.

and laity, is there such aversion to this diversity in worship? Why is the expression of one form of the worship experience given more worth than the other? Why is a structured liturgy in the high church assigned more meaning and value than the free-spirited, apparent disorder of the low churches? Why are some forms of ethnic worship adjudged to be “devilish” though they are directed to the same God; empowered by the same Spirit; and done in the name of the same risen Christ, as those in the dominant edifices? While the argument could be made that our worship template reflects our Wesleyan history and tradition, A prompt rebuttal position may state that Wesley was all but conformant to the tradition and orthodoxy of the Episcopal church to which he belonged. Essential innovation for successful ministry was his *modus operandi*. Maybe his greatest example to us was doing what was practical and necessary. Is that not a stronger Wesleyan tradition than strict conformity to particular liturgical formats? Why in our human logic is one acceptable and the other is not? More specifically, why are Eurocentric worship ritual models considered to be of higher intrinsic spiritual value than other ethnic models? Herein lies the source of my great dilemma. It produces the titanic clash of the two worlds that exist within me: the world in which I conducted ministry as a United Methodist cross-culturally appointed elder, and the world of my upbringing. These two worlds are not welcomed in each other’s spaces. Though they worship the same God, they fiercely resist each other. This resistance comes most likely because of the ethno-cultural biases which reside in some of the people who subscribe to each of these two separated worlds.

In the following chapter, we explore whether the ethnocultural worship experiences of various groups in our conferences could be a source of illumination of the

ethnic and deep cultural conflicts that occur within the conference, and what impact these conflicts have on pastors serving in CR/CC pastoral appointments in The New York Conference. The next chapter will further clarify the issue and expose us to the depth of the problem. Later we shall see the historical evolution of the problem and the conferences' efforts to combat it. It will also show what historically has created the obstacles to these efforts. Finally, we will explore objective solutions that come from a re-embrace of elements of our collective history which, if reclaimed, would not be a panacea to all our problems but could potentially be a significant part of the solution we seek.

## CHAPTER 1: CROSS-CULTURAL MATTERS

### **Challenges of Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Appointments in the United Methodist Church**

Methodism struggles with all the vexing issues that plague the broader society. The church historically, and to this present time, has been an important platform in the effort to address and to bring solutions to many societal issues. Recognizing this, there is a major effort afoot towards improving relations between peoples of different racial and ethnic backgrounds in the UMC. The UMC's website explicitly states that the church is engaged in "building the capacity of the United Methodist Church to be contextually relevant and to reach more people, younger people, and more diverse people as we make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."<sup>24</sup> Consequently, the church is in a constant state of self-examination and change as it seeks to ascend to its highest call to build the kingdom of God and to make a contribution to the infrastructure of peace and justice in the world. To this end, the church implements policies and practices. All the church's policies, as they are implemented, require time and patience to develop and bear fruit. In keeping with its practice of institutional self-examination, the UMC reviews and revises its policies and practices to ensure that they are on track to meet their objectives. As time progresses, these policies need renewal and reinvigoration as the stresses of time and other forces work to contort and disfigure the policies, rendering them less effective as means towards their original objectives.

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<sup>24</sup> United Methodist Church, General Commission on Race, Statement, accessed September 25, 2019, <http://www.gcorr.org/>.

Presently, cross-cultural appointments are only but one of the policy responses of the UMC towards combatting its many years of acquiescence to the practice of structural racism in the broader society. In times past, the church, for very practical reasons concerning its own survival and the peaceful conduct of its affairs, has been forced to accommodate unsavory practices which originated in the broader society. Practices such as slavery, segregation, and the cultural and resource misallocations that accompanied these practices were formerly part of the culture of the Methodist movement. Other contentious issues were: cultural allegiance, social heritage, racial intolerance, and the troubling denial of black people's humanity and the experience of dehumanization at the hands of whites. Grappling with these issues, amongst others, has left a scar on the history and institutional conscience of the UMC. The Methodist movement has borne and weathered contention, from its inception. As written by Heitzenrater, "A period of turmoil within Methodism generally, it was heightened by increased tensions between the Wesley brothers themselves. Most of the points of contention seemed to pertain to the matter of separation from the Church of England."<sup>25</sup> So, like any other movement, controversy has been a part of the very fabric of Methodism from its beginning. There were other later similar conflicts in the movement, like the issues between Francis Asbury and John Wesley and the many other conflicts that are part of U.S. Methodist history. The social evolution of the church continued, and as the broader society developed tolerance for discussing racial matters which were hitherto intolerable, dialogue on the troubling issues of race emerged to be more passable even within the organization.

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<sup>25</sup> Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013), locations 11628-11634, Kindle.

Aspirations for change were being realized at the General Conferences of 1968. The UMC, emerging from its antecedent organizations and having now seen the opportunity to correct the unjust compromises that it had historically made, eventually decided to be much more proactive in its efforts to correct its historical wrongs. Russell E. Richey questions the meaning of unity and offers a challenge that the church was facing: “And what would unity mean with respect to its various distinctive populations, within the U.S. and beyond? Diversity and pluralism would be the new church’s first big challenge. Agenda item one: race!”<sup>26</sup> Over the course of many General Conferences, the UMC resolved to be more intentional and purposeful in delivering and living up to its prophetic call and mandate. While the call for transformation was ever present to the church, the mechanisms of organizing and skillful advocacy by various caucuses made it politically expedient that the nascent denomination should act. To get the Methodist household in order, the General Conference of the UMC responded by establishing a Commission on Religion and Race. In 1984, jurisdictional conferences in South Carolina elected to the episcopacy the church’s first woman of color, Leontine Kelly; its first Hispanic, Elias Galvan; another Asian American, Roy Sano; another woman, Judith Craig; and several additional African Americans.

These efforts, among several other initiatives, demonstrate that the church was serious about attempting to solve these racial and diversity issues, once and for all. The church is now resolute in combatting the vestiges of structural racism. The denomination promulgates this challenging and affirming principle:

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<sup>26</sup> Richey, *The Methodist Experience*, locations 10218-10222.

That our strength lies in our racial and cultural diversity and that we must work towards a world in which each person's value is respected and nurtured; and... to create opportunities in local churches to deal honestly with the existing racist attitudes and social distance between members, deepening the Christian commitment to be the church where all racial groups and economic classes come together.<sup>27</sup>

One of the methods the denomination employed in response to this mandate was the policy of cross-cultural and cross-racial appointments. Cross-cultural appointments began in 1968 and have continued until the present. The history of this ongoing practice reveals the effort of a church that genuinely desires to challenge the racial divide to which it had hitherto acquiesced, if it did not actively participate in this injustice. The next chapter will show how a small part of the church's efforts play out in the real experiences of those of us who are called upon to be the foot soldiers and captains who engage the endeavor on the front lines. The firsthand reports will further the dialogue and suggest changes that could benefit the effort as we go forward.

### **The Realities of CR/CC Appointments**

CR/CC pastoral appointments are now an established practice in all Annual Conferences of the UMC. The implementation of these appointments was one policy decision that was set to work towards addressing racial and cultural issues. Specifically, as stated in the *Book of Discipline 2016*,

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<sup>27</sup> United Methodist Church, *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Methodist Pub. House, 2016), 463-64.

Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are made as a creative response to increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the church and in its leadership. Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are appointments of clergypersons to congregations in which the majority of their constituencies are different from the clergypersons' own racial/ethnic and cultural background.<sup>28</sup>

The pastor's appointment is usually as the senior pastor. The rate of change in the racial makeup of the clergy has far outpaced the rate of change of parishioners in the UMCs. As the number of ordained clergies of color increases, congregations that are still predominantly white are assigned pastors from different races. Because of this, there is a likelihood that pastors and their congregations may not be of the same prevailing persuasion – whether racially, politically, culturally, or otherwise. Consequently, as the need arises, many congregations which were historically predominantly or totally white are finding themselves linked with a pastor of color.

It requires no stretch of the imagination to anticipate that, given a fast-changing church and world, communities of faith trying to keep pace would find that many fears would be exacerbated, norms would be challenged, and expectations would be disappointed. The need for sudden change would be imposed on both the incoming elders and the congregations. Both parties would have to make uncomfortable, possibly tenuous, accommodations and adjustments. There is no doubt that given the long history of racial animus in this country, and because of the vestiges of institutional racism, that cross-cultural appointments would be inherently challenging for both pastors and congregations alike.

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<sup>28</sup> United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline*.



### **Cross-Racial/Cross Cultural Appointments Explored**

Cross-culturalism is a very broad concept that at minimum entails dealing with or offering comparison between two or more different cultures, or cultural areas.<sup>29</sup> It is the interplay of disparate groups whose predominant ethnic, social, or racial practices, though dissimilar, are brought into the same space. Each of the cultures' properties may be defined in terms of their values, norms, expectations, hopes, food, dress, priorities, practice, preferences, etc. These unique identifiers govern the conduct of their affairs and impact the outcomes of all the circumstances in the lives of the people belonging to each cultural matrix. Most times, in spite of being under the supra-ethnicity such as nationality, each subcultural group continues to preserve its uniqueness or its homogeneity. Often, the conservative members of the group struggle to retain the group's fidelity to its own orthodoxy, and they may resist assimilation or acculturation into other groups as compromising. Some cross-cultural strategists assume or hope that assimilation and acculturation will naturally result from sharing space with other groups; however, it seems that neither outcome is readily the case. Kathy Black posits:

Since the 1960s and the 1970s . . . many persons who belong to cultural and linguistic minority groups are trying to reclaim or maintain their ethnic histories, languages, and cultural practices. The "melting pot" image has been replaced by the "salad bowl" image, where we are all in the same bowl, but our uniqueness is clearly visible.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "cross-culturalism," accessed March 21, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>.

<sup>30</sup> Kathy Black, *Culturally-Conscious Worship* (Nashville, TN: Chalice Press, 2012).

Black's position is that there is an emerging trend towards cultural affinity and reclamation of ethnic uniqueness. This poses a challenge to objectives of cross-cultural appointments.

There are some shortcomings with cross-cultural relationships. In the UMC's cross-cultural appointments, the pastors are expected to hold the norms and standards of the dominant culture. They are expected to suppress their uniqueness and heritage to embody the ideals of the culture which is held in that space to be the normative culture. The term "normative culture" is an expression that describes a group's particular and specific ways of living together. Robert Neville posits the following:

At the very minimum human achievement requires competence in the conventions of one's own civilization. To be human is to participate in a conventional culture, and the normatively human conventional cultures are different... Without commitment to some conventions of civilized humanity, no one can be human; yet the conventions are different, perhaps even opposed.<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, the pastor's position, status, and efforts are all adjudged in the light of the normative model of that congregation. More importantly, the CR/CC appointment can be stage-setting for conflict between two sets of cultural conventions. In a society that is racist, the sacredness of the worship practices of pastors of color are assaulted as their presence and practice are judged by criteria extraneous to pastoral competency. The pastor is compelled to acquiesce to the derogation of their own history, race, and ethnicity. Everything the pastor does is evaluated on that basis, and other expressions of ministerial initiative are deemed a violation or a mistake. At best, the pastors' initiatives

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<sup>31</sup> Robert C. Neville, *Normative Cultures* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

may be seen as a temporarily tolerable diversion. So, the pastor's cultural origin is contrasted to the normative model, rather than anticipated as another way of doing the same thing. This diminution of the pastors is excruciating.

In their article in the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Yara Mahfud, Constantina Badea, Maykel Verkuyten, and Kate Reynolds explain congregational reaction to cross-culturally appointed pastors in terms of three concepts: cross-culturalism, multiculturalism, and interculturalism.<sup>32</sup> In the interest of clarifying these concepts, we will explain them as follows. Cross-culturalism involves the comparison of cultures. In this arrangement, differences between groups are understood and acknowledged, and individuals may realize some moderate change, but there are no broader collective transformations. One culture is often held as “the norm,” and the other cultures are compared and measured against that normative culture. Multiculturalism, on the other hand, refers to societies where there are many cultural or ethnic groups. People in these groups live alongside one another; however, cultural groups do not necessarily interact engagingly enough to change one another. They coexist sometimes tenuously, but they still maintain a measure of isolation. Then there is interculturalism. This is the relationship among communities where there is profound understanding and deep respect for all cultures in the relationship. There is mutual exchange of cultural norms, and ideas are contributed from all cultures towards the development of meaningful relationships and experiences. In intercultural communities, everyone is impacted and transformed because each person learns from the others and all persons grow together. In the context

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<sup>32</sup> Yara Mahfud, Constantina Badea, Maykel Verkuyten, and Kate Reynolds, “Multiculturalism and Attitudes Toward Immigrants: The Impact of Perceived Cultural Distance,” *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 49, no. 6 (2017): 945-58.

of this project, we can see that in cross-culturalism, the CR/CC pastor's cultural difference is acknowledged, and, in some cases, it is even understood. However, it does not bring about significant transformative change to the existing conventions of the congregation. This transformative change is essential for full fellowship in the worship space. A few individuals may acquiesce to the pastor's cultural difference, but there is no real collective shift in the psyche of the congregation to give place to the pastor's contributive efforts. Should such a shift ever occur, it would in effect constitute true fellowship. The impact of the pastor's cultural contributions could enrich the entire congregation if allowed the opportunity to do so. It could bring a refreshing vibrancy to the accustomed rituals of worship. If, however, the pastor's cultural contributions are adjudged to be foreign and unwelcomed, then the congregation is denied the benefit of all that his contributions offer.

### **The Basic Dilemma: Worship as the Commonality and the Conflict**

I embody the cultural conflicts identified earlier. There is a conflict of two worlds within me, and it is burdensome. The first is the one in which I live, function, and do ministry as a pastor. This is the world of my CR/CC appointment. The second world is the one of my youth, which has piloted me to this point of my life and ministry. My two worlds are both very complex, and they intersect with and diverge from each other in ways that makes them tenuously amicable. Further, the superstructure of the broader politics of our time reinforces the acute differences of these worlds and accentuates the already burdensome binary in which I live.

The commonality between my two worlds is the worship of God through his Son Jesus Christ. The worship of my youth is the vehicle that conveyed me into my pastoral ministry today, and it is the experience from which I draw to lead, orchestrate, and enjoy the worship space of my present ministry. For most of us, however, worship is an indelible part of our lives. It is the commonality that draws us to the God that we share in common. We are commanded to give honor and veneration to our beloved deity. Worship allows us to bring our brokenness to this our mighty creator, and to surrender our whole selves in God's presence so that God can transform us into God's image. Thus, worship fulfills us as creatures of God. We all hold the common view that this great God deserves our devotion, love, and the imposition of the full energy of our being into the adoration expressed in worship. So then, the love of God is the basis upon which we come together. Worship is the expression of that love, and our complete sincerity in worship is the main ingredient that makes that worship acceptable to our God.

As clergypersons, we have a certain level of accountability to the community where we practice ministry. This accountability hinges us to the orthodoxy of that group. In the UMC context of ministry, that orthodoxy has developed over the century-old history of each congregation. The accountability strongly demands our fidelity to the Eurocentric model of doing church, which is indelibly imprinted in the cultures of those communities.

In my personal circumstance, I recognize that I am the newest variable in the worship equation. For me as a latecomer into this space where the people have derived meaning by means of their ethno-cultural experience of God, to effectuate rapid change could be to inflict a level of violence, and maybe even some agony on the experience of

this group of believers. I am called to lead this group. I do so in the full knowledge that historically their worship modality is the same as has been used while the practices of racial hate, inhumane oppression, and cultural animus towards people like myself was the norm. While much has changed over time, there are yet vestiges of that legacy. I occasionally stand in that worship environment and consider the faces of my parishioners. On some of their faces I can discern the contempt that many of them feel towards me as their very first (black) African-Caribbean pastor. Still, as an itinerant pastor, I am called to lead them. We must all enter that space of mutual vulnerability together, to worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth.

The history of this congregation to which I am appointed is well preserved. I read the history and saw clearly that in its past, this body of believers allowed the Ku Klux Klan to hold meetings in the basement of the church. They have had a congenial relationship with them and have cheerfully received gifts from that hateful organization. It would seem that the spirit of hate still insidiously lingers in this incubated subculture, because there have been so many outward expressions of discontent with my mere presence among them. Within the first three months of my arrival, I have been referred to as an “N-word” by a senior officer of the church. Some parishioners left the congregation upon hearing of my appointment. A few others had the courtesy to stay a week or two before departing. I am aware of this, yet I am called to lead these flawed but endeavoring people of God. I must operate in the ambiance of this culture and summon the discipline of my profession, and the fidelity to my calling to serve God’s people in the liturgical form of worship to which this congregation staunchly holds; they believe that anything else is sinful and anathema to the worship of their God.

Professor Althea Spencer-Miller asked, “How far ahead of the community should the prophet walk in providing the exploration of reforming truth, and in effectuating change?”<sup>33</sup> What a question! To what extent do leaders expose themselves to the slander of innovating change? How do we strike a balance among all the competing interests that are vying for place in this limited space? Varying interests that affect this delicate balance include people’s erratic realities, evasive and/or inconvenient facts needing to be told, God’s call to prophetic fidelity, family security in living in this strange new and somewhat unwelcoming place, and the need for making radical or incremental change. To make this arrangement work for everyone, something’s got to give way in the mix. As the pastor and a central player in this dynamic, one just has to hope that it won’t be one’s sanity, because this is a strange world to the new pastor, and many of us have found this worship model runs contrary to that which satisfies our spirit, soul, and body.

My personal experience is that in this CR/CC appointment, the racial difference of myself from the congregation and particularly its entrenched leadership is obvious, but the cultural difference is more insidious, and the contentions surrounding both differences are intangible, but no less present. I can recall the voice of my finance chairperson and his wife as they cautiously advised me at the beginning of my pastorship of this church, “Don’t bring that seminary stuff here, it won’t work. We had one pastor who did that, and she near destroyed the church.” I have heard that complaint before from a few other well-meaning people in the congregation. It seems to be an indelible fear in the pathos of this group. The officers told me that a former pastor, who brought “that seminary stuff” to this church, insisted that for every two men on the church council, there must be one

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<sup>33</sup> Althea Spencer-Miller, Lecture at Drew University, October 18, 2017.

woman. “She did that and put these women into office, who did not even want to be there,” they told me. “Why would she do that?” They asked this question without any inkling of the idea that they may be involved in the perpetuation of the patriarchy, sexism, and other maladies that plague our society and the church.

I often wonder about how I can bring my present congregation into the full awareness of the justice aspects of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Would they be open to listening, or would that be just another part of the “seminary stuff” against which they are so desperately fearful and resistant? It is easier to leave them where they are in their Christian walk and go along to get along. But how does that help any of us to rise to the challenge of attaining full fellowship and unity in the beloved community? Then, as pastor, it is my conviction that I am responsible for their souls, as I am accountable to God ultimately for those entrusted to my spiritual care. To whom much is given, much is required, and much responsibility is given to me here. I must ensure that I am not one of the misleading shepherds spoken about by the prophets Jeremiah and Zachariah.<sup>34</sup> This is the dilemma of my first world. Sadly, I am in it, but I am probably not of it.

The second world inside of me is the one of my youth. The world that I enjoyed in my youth gave me an energy that I wish that I now had. I almost never got sick, and I pursued all my interests with relentless enthusiasm and vigor. I got the most out of my pursuits until I either got bored or some new activity or thought would overtake my

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<sup>34</sup> Zec 11:15-17 KJV: 15 And the LORD said to me, “Next, take for yourself the implements of a foolish shepherd. 16 “For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land [who] will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand. But he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces. 17 “Woe to the worthless shepherd, Who leaves the flock! A sword [shall be] against his arm And against his right eye; His arm shall completely wither, And his right eye shall be totally blinded.”

[Jer 23:1 KJV] 1 “Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!” says the LORD.



youthful mind. As a child growing up in the hinterlands of Trinidad, my experience with worship was that since it was forced upon me, I was compelled to follow. Having no other alternative, I enjoyed it for what it was. To me then, in my early childhood, worship was something to laugh at. I was entertained when I saw the flamboyant costumes of the various leaders, and the dances and ritual performances; when I listened to a congregation where no one had formal musical or instrumental training, but they could construct a melody simply by using their mouths, feet, hands, and any other delightful accoutrement reachable, as they performed a unique art form which they referred to as “pulling doptions.”<sup>35</sup> The melody would attract the most aggressive scorners, make them take a second look, and undoubtedly love the rhythmic product. Worship to me then was a grinding experience, especially because it seemed unending and monotonous. Activities that could be completed in five minutes, would take an hour to complete. In anger, I used to think to myself, “Why would it be necessary for them to call mother Minshell to pray, when they know that she would take a half hour to go over those tired repetitious lines that she always recites?” or “Why would they follow up with mother Hidra who is always in competition with the previous prayer? This, only so that she could go outside the sanctuary, light up her cigarette and say, “yuh hear prayer in yuh #@!!&\*?” I laugh now at these things, but back then, it was an embarrassing and bewildering experience that I wished I could have skipped. Many of my friends will proudly speak about their religion, but not me. I was ashamed to tell folks that I was a Spiritual Baptist.

After my parents split up, my mother became angry and left the church. The years away from church made me realize how much a part of me that worship experience had

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<sup>35</sup> “Doptions Pulling” are unique non-verbal rhythmic guttural vocal musical tones made by mouth which is practice by the Spiritual Baptiste faith in the nation of Trinidad and Tobago.

become. To a young boy of 11 years old, the worship experience taught a lifelong lesson. I missed the church rituals that I had previously hated and was embarrassed about. Now, I was envious of my friends, who spoke fondly about their religious encounters. I longed for the six-hour frenzied mass of mournful prayers; the jubilant singing; the dancing, and “doptions pulling.”<sup>36</sup> I craved for the times when one sweet song could be sung for thirty minutes and end with women passed out on the ground, and men with sweat-soaked garb running outside to cool off. I desired to see more of when the men with their hoarse voices would call the Spirit-intoxicated house to order again. Mother Hidra and Mother Minshell became so much more valuable to me then, because they were no longer a part of my worship encounter or maybe even perhaps a part of my weekly comic relief. I thought fondly about the few times when as a child, we would receive the “God-bread” at the end of that six-hour communion service. Not to mention the only time that we got to sample that nice wine with the alcohol in it— “The one that Jesus drank!” as Elder Clunos would say. Being away from my early Christian experience precipitated in me a feeling of loss and bewilderment, even in my youthful naivety.

Often, we do not appreciate what we have until we lose it. As a youth, worship was in my blood. Certainly, I hated the long hours that I had to give up every Sunday afternoon when I would rather be playing with my friends. I detested the poor administrative capabilities of the leadership. The disorder of the service and ministry was compounded by a lack of education and basic knowledge. These deficiencies permeated everything that was said and done. As a child, I disliked the fact that nobody could give me a plausible explanation for why we did things in the way we did them. The religious

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<sup>36</sup> See footnote 34.

encounter was based on more of a spiritual and emotional experience of God, rather than a theological construct. This was fine for the people who came to church every week, but as an aspiring rationalist, I needed more explanation. I knew intuitively that there was something more in that weekly shouting frenzy. It was something that gave my mother a fortitude that kept her going daily, as a single parent, with ten children. It was a vital force to Mom and gave her a vigor that made her face the most difficult of hardships. It was something that gave her a resilience that made her bounce back after every hard knock, and after every socially oriented body-slam that she received, and there were so many. Yet I watched Mummy; she never abandoned us and stood by us, her children. Although unable to assist us with our schoolwork, she was able to encourage us with her words, “Go ahead popoe, raise mih nose.” That is Trinidadian for “Make mommy proud, baby. That’s all I want.”

### **Consequences and Implications**

Out of that messy religious experience, I emerged as the man that I am today. Out of that religious hodgepodge came my many childhood colleagues who are now pastoring churches in many countries. Out of that mayhem emerged men and women of God who hold various degrees—clergy people who could articulate the theology of anything. Yet, they all draw from the same experience-based religious foundation that gave us all the depth of spiritual understanding, and an uncompromising love for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is that experience of God that is engaged in the transformation of the lives of so many people, all over the world.

I live with euphoric reflection of my past worship experiences. It helps me to recall the words of Hendricks, who reflected on his own early religious experience:

It gave us the sound of a comforting Jesus, yes, but also a sound of the defiant, empowering Jesus; songs that helped us to stand boldly and unbowed before the most efficient engine of oppression and dehumanization ever conceived to declare, Ride on King Jesus! No man can hinder me!<sup>37</sup>

As crazy as I perceived my childhood religion to be, since it came out of the illiteracy of my slave ancestors, and out of their resilience and dedication to survival, it was potent enough to keep me grounded in Christ for all my life. In that worship experience I see so many similarities with the black ecclesial experience all over the world, whether it be in the hinterlands of Trinidad, or in the Maroon Hills of Jamaica; or whether it be in the rivers and streams of Geechee and Gullah country in South Carolina; or the heated cotton fields of Georgia, Alabama, or Mississippi. I see it in the rough projects of Brooklyn and Bronx, New York. That black spiritual temperament transcends all earthly knowledge. It brings people into an experience with and of God that truly surpasses understanding. It is a spiritual experience rooted deep in the history of my people's oral traditions. It gives us a faith in a transcendent force, which powers our survival, no matter what is thrown at us. It comes out of an ancestral gift to us all as black people. Yet, I am sure that this same force manifests itself uniquely in the worship experiences of oppressed cultures all over the world, and in God's people wherever they may be on this terrestrial ball.

My conflicted worlds pose the dilemma which confronts me in my cross-cultural pastoral practice, because many things about me as a black man seem to be problematic

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<sup>37</sup> Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., *The Universe Bends Towards Justice*. (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 2007).

to the congregation that I serve: the color of my skin; the accent with which I speak; the non-submissive attitude of my personhood; the inability of my credentials to be challenged or berated. All these things challenge and belie the presumptions of the culture into which I have been called to serve. It forces my parishioners to re-evaluate their concept of what someone like me is supposed to be. Am I not supposed to fulfill the stereotypical image of a black man of my ilk? Should I not be lazy; unskilled; unmotivated; childlike; low achieving; and needing to be instructed or directed in all matters, public or private? If this is what my parishioners assumed that I would be, then what is to be expected when I am sent to engage in the ministry in that environment, and they are faced with the reality of who I really am?

### **The Lamentations**

Often, lost possessions are valued after the fact. The loss is caused either by our own negligence, or by the situational circumstances of our lives. In this case the loss of my familiar worship experience, and the situation is the result of the requirement of itinerant ministry. Now, as in my childhood, I find myself longing for a lost worship experience, and this is what has brought me into the aforementioned internal conflict of the two worlds of worship experiences. This worship dissonance is shared also by my family along with me. It seems also to be a sentiment shared by my other clergy colleagues who are similarly situated. The worship nuances and modality of this congregation is culturally different from that which I am accustomed, and it seems inadequate to my worship taste and desire. Yet, I must participate. I am called to lead in this unfamiliar place. Often, I see the boredom on the faces of my children, because they

evidently find the new worship style unappealing. I hear in the singing of my wife a bit of disappointment in the routine and a yearning for something more and different because, to her, something seems to be missing in this worship. I can also discern that there are some other parishioners who wish for a more animated and free-spirited worship which is not welcomed here and would seem alien to the sensibilities of the authorities in this present space.

The same cry is echoed in the stories of some of the pastors in the cross-cultural appointments. Pastor 07 passionately described her area of particular challenge. She said that because she has been serving white churches for so long and has been out of her own social location for so many years, she feels that she has been impeded from the style of worship that truly satisfies her. Cognitive dissonance is produced by the disconnection from the pastor's cultural origins. That dissonance is experienced by the pastors and their families in cross-cultural appointments. Said Pastor 07:

The fact is that I also go to church to worship. And when I worship in these settings, not having that true authentic worship that relates to me, is particularly a challenge to me. To the congregations I serve, this style of worship is good for them. But coming from my background, my need in the worship experience is different and it is not represented in this new space. That is the challenge that I must learn to live with. But it is a huge challenge. I have now been going without the worship experience that I am used to, and find authentic, for a long time. The intellectual challenge is good for me in these churches. But the form of worship,

where my needs are met is not present, is a challenge to my very experience of God.<sup>38</sup>

How, then, do we ensure that the worship needs of all are satisfied in the worship space? In antiquity the ancient nation of Judah had a similar feeling which caused their lamentations while under Babylonian captivity. They cried “How can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?”<sup>39</sup> This sentiment is shared by all the newcomers to the cross-cultural appointment experience: both clergy and those that must follow them. There is a sense of loss for which the only cure is a worship in which they can genuinely feel a sense of fulfillment, belonging, and ownership. Until their current worship experience responds to that need, they will always have an unwelcome feeling of alienation.

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with Pastor 07. All Interviews were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of the interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement.

<sup>39</sup> Psalms 134:1 KJV.

## CHAPTER 2: THEOLOGICAL ISSUES INVOLVED

### **Tension of Cultures**

Do cross-cultural appointments compel us or at least ask us to tamp down the authentic and real experience of worship and ministerial practice in the name of the United Methodist institution; or, are we called to a prophetic moment of claiming anew God's call to us and our ministry to be fully participating in the transformational changes necessary for all of our mutual coexistence in the worship space? We analyze the worship experiences of both the pastors and their congregations through various socio-theological constructs such as race, power, class, Afrocentrism, and spirituality. These areas will be considered, developed, and thought through in relation to the community of faith and the ethics of worship, so as to inform our understanding of the impact and the outcomes of cross-cultural appointments on both pastors and their subject congregations for better or for worse. My experience of leaving a familiar worship environment and entering into one that was unfamiliar in many ways has aroused me to challenges concerning ethnicity and related liturgical experiences, and the interplay of socio-theological categories like race, power, class, religion, as they relate to Afrocentric spirituality. These all came into focus as I reflected on my experiences. How can we respond to the issue of ethnic dominance in CR/CC appointments? One way to do this is by highlighting, discussing, and demonstrating the workings of ethnic difference in the worship modes of Protestants and Pentecostals in general. We can do so using historical narrative with the intent to show that within Methodism the two share a common heritage. Most importantly, it will demonstrate that much that is Pentecostal today had its beginnings in the doctrines and



spiritual experiences of early British Methodism. Thus, this chapter makes the case for including a Pentecostal ethos in the liturgical practices of the UMC. This can contribute to a better experience for Afrocentric Pentecostal-oriented pastors of color in CR/CC appointments, and for the membership which is so inclined to embrace this type of worship. Additionally, this demonstration of connection offers another opportunity for responding to race-based liturgical dominance and the development of principles of cultural translation in the worship life of the UMC's CR/CC appointments. Lastly, it nudges the UMC in the direction of interculturalism as paradigmatic for the goals of CR/CC appointments.

To achieve these goals, the chapter will analyze some reasons offered in consideration of the UMC's ongoing struggle in the area of cross-cultural and cross-racial integration in its worship culture. It looks at some of the factors that constitute its struggling efforts at this noble prophetic endeavor which it advocates. The chapter examines the impact of historical philosophical and theological concepts from thinkers such as Hegel, in his treatise *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, among others. We assess how these thoughts influenced our present assumptions. It looks at Carol Anderson's analysis of white rage, which poses as a resistant force to the CR/CC effort. We look at Robinson's analysis in her article on white rage as a resistant force to the CR/CC effort. We inquire of Harvey as to her thoughts on racial reconciliation through her book *Dear White Christians*. We ponder the position taken by the World Conference of Churches on the issue of racial reconciliation and interculturalism in all denominations. It traces historically the question of the worship templates coming out of Methodism, and such worship templates as practiced in Pentecostalism. The chapter traces the Methodist

origins of Pentecostalism and how that denomination took on a fervor because of its willing embrace of intercultural worship experiences which had an appeal of greater potency in reaching the post-modern world. That movement used its Methodist foundations and followed the very same geographical pathways as Methodism. The movement has moved forward and bourgeoned into prominence, while Methodism experiences decline. The chapter seeks to propose that Methodism should take the example and embrace the modes of Afrocentric Pentecostalism. It asks whether Methodism should pursue an intercultural approach in its general worship template. It finally posits that, should Methodism embrace a deliberate, concerted, and diligent effort at educating its rank and file on how to be more accommodating of other worship experiences in its spaces, then quite assuredly it could reverse its decline and experience the robust revival which it craves—the same revival manifested by other groups that have previously pursued this course.

### **The Issue of Ethno-Cultural Liturgical Dominance**

Can my two worlds' worship experiences coexist? These two worlds have the same objectives but are separated by two different histories, and perhaps differing interests in the present. The world of my upbringing and youth, where I was raised in an Afro-Caribbean lower middle-class setting, is where I made meaning of the Bible and its symbolisms and where the experience of the Lordship of Jesus Christ became real in my life. It is where the worship of God took on meaning to me and where it became a part of who I am and all that I aspire to be. My second world is the one that I have entered as a convert to Methodism. It is the world which has impressed me by its structure and

discipline in bearing the witness of our common Lord. It is a world whose history of faithful witness and diligent service to the cause of Christ spoke to my mind and my sense of call. I relish its accountability structures and the high ideals to which it aspires. My view of this second world is that it is malleable and possesses the potential to be quite adaptive. Methodism has survived many challenges in its history as it has faithfully borne its prophetic mantle. Today, there are many challenging issues facing it—issues such as human sexuality; declining appeal to certain demographics and the resultant decline of these population within its ranks; sustainability for its connectional superstructure given the pressures exerted by internal interest groups; a vast network of disintegrating older edifices like church, conference, and other buildings; and declining and rapidly aging memberships. There is also the issue of a worship model that seemingly does not appeal to millennials and later generations as it did to multiple generations in the past. The challenges are many for my second world, but it has weathered the storms for nearly three centuries, and it is resolved to withstand all the challenges that it presently faces. The church has confidence that this too shall pass, after which we will still be here by God's grace and mercy.

In addressing the aforementioned worship model demonstrated before in this document, here are some facts. The demographic of US Methodism continues to be over 90% white. To a great extent, the vestiges of its Eurocentrically dominated past embrace a very formal and Europeanized worship model. Within the great network of churches, many of the local churches which adhere to this traditional model have resisted significant change to the same. The model seems to be one of the obstacles that diminishes its appeal to the fast-changing American demographic. The appeal of its

worship model evidently has a decreasing audience given the changing palate of the emerging America, as evidenced by the decline in membership over the recent decades. The world is rapidly changing; businesses from mega industries to coffee shops all are making adjustments to reach the evolving America, which is increasingly multiracial, multicultural, and multigenerational in its outlook. A strong Methodist orthodoxy has not fully caught on and embraced this fact.

For these reasons, the Eurocentric dominance and resistance to non-Protestant worship experiences which prevails in our worship must also be re-examined. We need to analyze the various reasons offered for the ongoing challenges to cross-cultural and cross-racial integration in the UMC's worship culture.

The question of this chapter is: Can these two worlds' worship experiences ever coexist in the UMC? This question gives rise to another troubling theological question: Should any single cultural liturgical template dominate worship? I venture to yell: "I think not!" The sole proprietorship for the interpretation of the worship experience belongs to no one, neither individual nor culture, as a monopolistic norm. Pernicious patriarchy, in relations to the dominant racial ideology, will contradict this. However, I beg to differ. The writer of the Second Epistle of Peter tells us that no private interpretation of scripture is warranted.<sup>40</sup> Should this statement about the "private interpretation" of scripture be taken to mean that scripture should retain its universality rather than be manufactured to fit the need of a single cultural enclave, then the text may be a counsel against the elite Euro-masculinist patriarchal interests which have dominated Christian history and continue to dominate the UMC. That interest has in the past

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<sup>40</sup> 2Pe 1:20 KJV: 20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

strapped the church with its versions of the interpretation of the scripture. In turn, that biblical interpretation has served to embrace the then-prevalent racist patriarchal ideologies. Explaining how racial difference becomes a fulcrum in the machine of an unequal society, Darrel Moellendorf stated: “In systems where social roles are used to distribute the goods and ills, benefits and burdens of society unequally, natural racial differences are often said to justify different social role assignments. In the nineteenth century, slavery and racist colonial policies were often justified in this fashion.”<sup>41</sup> Here Moellendorf lays strong charges to our historical patriarchy. Exemplifying this also are the ideas of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), philosopher and theologian. Hegel was prominent among those who formulated the idea of the inferiority of people of color. Hegel was a lecturer at both Heidelberg in 1818 and at the University of Berlin in 1822, 1828, and 1830. In his appointments he was involved in the training of pastors for ministry. Through his teaching and writings, his philosophy was transmitted to successive generations of students. Even now, seminarians and scholars in other disciplines are exposed to his writings. Hegel’s philosophical and theological positions also influence politics, philosophy, and several other fields of study and professional formation and training. Hegel’s opinion has permeated all of Christendom, given the historical intersection of its secular and ecclesial powers. Hegel’s mindset has filtered into both secular thought and certainly Christian theological positions. Ufemi exemplified this as he stated:

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<sup>41</sup> Darrel Moellendorf, “Racism and Rationality In Hegel’s Philosophy Of Subjective Spirit,” (Pomona: California State Polytechnic University, 2013), accessed March 31, 2020, [https://www.fb03.uni-frankfurt.de/58976054/Racism-and-Rationality-in-Hegel\\_s-Philosophy-of-Subjective-Spirit.pdf](https://www.fb03.uni-frankfurt.de/58976054/Racism-and-Rationality-in-Hegel_s-Philosophy-of-Subjective-Spirit.pdf).

I submit that one source for the birth certificate of this false universal is to be found in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's *The Philosophy of History*. The architectonic of exclusion that is the history of Western Philosophy...Hegel is dead! Long live Hegel! The ghost of Hegel dominates the hallways, institutions, syllabi, instructional practices, and journals of Euro-American philosophy. The chilling presence of this ghost can be observed in the eloquent absences as well as the subtle and not-so-subtle exclusions in the philosophical exertions of Hegel's descendants. The absences and exclusions are to be seen in the repeated association of Africa with the pervasiveness of immediacy.<sup>42</sup>

The effect of Hegel's philosophical thinking permeates the superstructure of modern scholarship and prevailing thought processes. His views on racial groups' stratification, which were unquestionably racist by today's standards, served the thought processes for the ethos of his time, but they certainly left residual adverse, present, lingering consequences.

Hegel in his philosophy of human development stated:

The first step was to make the transition from a natural life of savagery to a state of order and law. States had to be founded by force and violence; there is no other way to make people law-abiding before they have advanced far enough mentally to accept the rationality of an ordered life. There will be a stage at which some people have accepted the law and become free, while others remain slaves.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Olufemi Taiwo, "Exorcising Hegel's Ghost." *African Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (1998), <http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v1/4/2.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Reason in History: A General Introduction to the Philosophy of History*. Translated and introduction by Robert S. Hartman. (New York, NY: Liberal Arts Press, 1954).

By this logic, one could reason that in this day of possible Omnicide and mutually assured destructive warfare, the idea of the use of war to advance savagery into statehood will not work so well in international conflicts. If, then, Hegel was inaccurate on that idea, I wonder if he might be in error on his theory of inferiority of people of color in which he stated, the following:

From these various traits it is manifest that want of self-control distinguishes the character of the Negroes. This condition is capable of no development or culture, and as we see them at this day, such have they always been. The only essential connection that has existed and continued between the Negroes and the Europeans is that of slavery.<sup>44</sup>

By any standard today, these racist statements would cause racially mindful conservative Christians to recoil in disgust, yet these were among the ideas espoused by the thinkers and progenitors of the recent past of our faith. We are all guided by the doctrines, spirit, and the attitudes that they transferred to us, and we guard these ideas and attitudes with zealous care. They are now the fundamentals of our faith. They are embodied in our attitude and emboldened in the erudition of our faith traditions as United Methodists. Few of us really take the time to examine how these attitudes linger in our worship traditions, or how they continue to inform our conduct and our approach to worship modalities and experiences. But these attitudes give the instinctive hints and reflexes that produce our response to everything that we assess or evaluate, and they determine our value judgements of proximate cultures.

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<sup>44</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1956).

Now we see how the influence of the racist philosophical thought in the past still lingers in our judgement positions today. In the ideal world to which our conference aspires, my two worlds of Afrocentric and Eurocentric spiritualities would easily merge and amicably accommodate redesign. Yet, I continue to experience dissonance between these two worlds. There is an accepted presumption that the dominant cultural template in United Methodist worship is the Eurocentric model of liturgy and pageantry which have been handed down from historical Christianity's pre-colonial past. This model enjoys pre-eminence and is driven by a sense of entitlement in this honored position. We have all acquiesced to this as the normative model of Methodist worship. Thus, in most of the congregations to which I have been exposed, the worshippers under this model are left with a compromised feeling when forced to give accommodation to anything that competes for a place in that worship space. The worshippers in my CR/CC appointments, particularly those of European descent, conclude that their dominance in secular political affairs must also translate into the sacred worship space. This assumption may be derived from the presumption that worldly gain means Godly favor. Thus, secular dominance suggests God's approval; and so, this entitles the Eurocentric model to a place of preference in the worship space. This is a questionable assumption because in worship, as I understand it no such preference exists. Hegel's robust philosophical effort to stack the social pecking order has influenced the framers of our modern theological derivatives to use their eisegeses of scripture to justify so many forms of tyranny which were visited on humankind. The examples are many through the ages. From dishonest business practices to the slave trade; from rape and exploitation of women and vulnerable people to child soldiers; human beings have used God's words to justify it all. However, God has no



leniency to inordinate human pride and arrogance. And so, it may be reasonable to conclude that the elimination of prideful cultural dominance in the worship space should give way to a new and egalitarian embrace of openness to all. Henri Nouwen voiced this opinion on the subject: “To convert hostility into hospitality requires the creation of the friendly empty space where we can reach out to our fellow human beings and invite them into a new relationship.”<sup>45</sup> There must be allowed worship space really for all of God’s people to equally bring their praises to God. The worship worlds that wrestle for centrality can all coexist, but it would seem that our human pride and bigotry prevent us from achieving that Godly coexistence.

### **A Tension of Cultures in Worship**

The tension between Eurocentric, or “white,” cultural expressions in the worship space and those of people of color is pronounced in United Methodism. Black cultural worship expressions in particular are viewed as problematic. This is not only in terms of theological interpretation of scriptures, but also in terms of artistic cultural expressions in worship. To a great extent, white culture seems to employ a staid, cerebral, contemplative, and quiet atmosphere in the worship space. Pastor 06 (one of the interviewees) expressed this sentiment in his response during our interview. He said,

Whiteness in general in the US is “a shutdown kind of thing.” It produces a cerebral, rational, pragmatic positioning. White people are not willing to acknowledge the effects of racism on everyone, including themselves, and on the broader society. Part of the price for that negligence is that cerebral, logical,

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<sup>45</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*. (Fount, 1996).

rational approach to things and a looking down on, and trying to distance themselves from a more spirited, vulnerable approach to the human experience in most things including worship.<sup>46</sup>

To the Euro-American congregants in my CR/CC appointment, animated and emotional expressions made in a free-spirited manner, without clerical control, seem too chaotic and disorderly. In said worship culture, pneumatologically influenced worship is perceived as soulful, emotional, and perhaps even devilish. This oppositional stance to a Pentecostal worship flavor was one source of tension with black pastors who have an Afrocentric Pentecostal orientation in worship.

In many black cultural worship experiences, the opposite seems to be more ubiquitous. Motion, rhythm, sound, simultaneous audible prayer, repetitious singing dance, and a widespread openness to pneumatological liberalism (moving under the influence of the Spirit) and freedom are accepted and encouraged. Some forms even employ a liberal use of water, fire, and soil. They engage these practices at times even to a fault, where it could be perceived as chaotic emotionalism. Spiritual free flow is scary to many people and easily misunderstood. Pentecostal-style worship tends to predominate in Afrocentric Christian worship. Examples of these can be seen in the Church of God in Christ, African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, National Baptist, and in many storefront congregations in New York. Black-style worship practices in predominantly white worship spaces have been problematic for segments of evangelical Christianity. Jennifer Harvey explained:

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<sup>46</sup> Interview with Pastor 06, February 17, 2019.

Aside from sharing the basic beliefs confessed in the Apostles' Creed "black and white believers often radically differ in their faith-based thoughts and practices."

. . . The differences are fascinating. They range from the contrast between "academic" and "experiential" models of Christianity, to different understandings of morality and the relationship between faith and works, to widely divergent levels of ease with including beliefs that might be considered outside the bounds of "orthodox" Christian doctrine within one's religious matrix.<sup>47</sup>

All of these factors converge and complicate the worship as a cross-cultural experience within the UMC. The church is still over 90% white in the United States.<sup>48</sup> Resistance to cross-cultural worship experiences remains acute.

The story of Charles Parham, who was himself a former Methodist minister, is one that reflects the sentiments of many white Methodist congregants, with regard to black-oriented worship models. Parham broke away from the Methodist Church to form his own organization. He experienced much success in his church building mission and was quite innovative in his views on scripture and in his evangelistic efforts. Parham is reputed to be one of the progenitors of the present-day Pentecostal movement, with his teachings that built on his Methodist background, and his own innovations on the doctrine of speaking in tongues (Glossolalia), the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the ensuing Charismatic movement. In his innovative approach, Parham crossed segregation lines and preached to people of color, even allowing black people into leadership

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<sup>47</sup> Jennifer Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, Prophetic Christianity Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 17, Kindle.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Lipka, "The Most and Least Racially Diverse U.S. Religious Groups," Pew Research Center, July 27, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/27/the-most-and-least-racially-diverse-u-s-religious-groups/>.

positions within his organization. Parham commissioned Lucy Farrow, and later William Seymour, to initiate the work on Azusa Street in Los Angeles California. This work became the famed Azusa Street Movement that propelled the Pentecostal fervor that swept the globe. The point of invoking this history is to explore what happened that caused Parham to lose control over Seymour, Farrow, and the resulting Asuza Street movement. When Parham finally visited the famously successful work that was going on there, he was displeased with what he saw. As explained by James Goff, “Seymour soon broke with Parham over his harsh criticism of the emotional worship at Asuza Street and the intermingling of whites and blacks in the services.”<sup>49</sup> Despite the obvious prophetic anointing on Parham’s life, he could not get beyond his Eurocentrism. He would prefer to allow his movement to be fractionized, and the obviously most potent arm of it to be estranged, rather than tolerate “the emotional worship at Azusa Street and the intermingling of whites and blacks in the services.”<sup>50</sup> Truly most white Methodists today would not express their sentiments in those terms, but their approach towards giving place to non-Eurocentric templates of worship seem to reflect that very same attitude.

Perhaps what many pastors are facing in their cross-cultural appointments is what Carol Anderson describes as “white rage.”<sup>51</sup> According to Anderson, white rage is the backlash of white supremacy to black success and achievement. Anderson said, “What is really at work here is white rage...In some ways it is easy to see why white rage is not about visible violence, but it works its way through the courts, the legislatures, and a

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<sup>49</sup> James Goff, *Fields White Unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2015).

<sup>50</sup> Goff, *Fields White*.

<sup>51</sup> Carol Anderson, *White Rage the Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

range of government bureaucracies. It wreaks havoc subtly, almost imperceptibly.”<sup>52</sup> Anderson posits that white rage enjoys an unparalleled privilege of being disguised as a logical presumptive norm. It is not seen for what it is, which is as an insidious virulent sentiment that is capable of destroying any society in which it is allowed to thrive. It is so carefully interwoven into the fabric of western societies that most of the time, to all of our frustration, it goes unrecognized for the hurtful philosophy that it is. It operates under the pretext of a legitimate political option, when it is actually nothing but a debased human emotion which is centered in fear and greed and is probably the worst product which the white community could produce. While it hides itself in articulate rhetoric and legitimate political apprehension, it is still nothing but human fear, greed and hate for “the other.” Coupled with might and the monopoly on state-sanctioned violence, white rage is allowed to exist to the advantage of those it benefits, and to the chagrin of those it disadvantages. It enjoys an offensive, but solid place in society. It is ubiquitous in the rhetoric of the public hatemongers and in the speeches of the politicians who represent them. It is dog-whistled to the racially biased, and to the politically savvy, when there is a call to action, to augment the pillars of the social superstructure which is built upon white rage.

White rage arrives at active potency when any threat to white privilege exists, or when the advancement of any non-white concerns is manifested.<sup>53</sup> It works insidiously to harm and annihilate all competing interests, no matter how altruistic, humanistic, or noble the cause. Nothing must be allowed to coexist, much less compete with it, or to threaten

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<sup>52</sup> Anderson, *White Rage*.

<sup>53</sup> Anderson, *White Rage*.

the objectives that it so effectively precipitates. It is promulgated with the threat of violence or with the actual perpetration of the same. And it is legitimized in the intellectual discourse of both its beneficiaries and those who are victims of its subtle brainwashing power, whether that rhetoric comes from the schoolteacher, politician, store clerk, or Supreme Court judge.<sup>54</sup> If Anderson's ideas on white Rage are true, then when applied in the context of CR/CC it will explain why there is such great challenge to black clergy and resistance to worship innovations in the subject congregations. By Anderson's measure, then, white hegemony must not only refuse place in the worship space to competing interests, but it must go so far as to identify these modalities of worship to be inferior and unworthy of exploration.

While Pentecostalism should not be equated with black worship, neither should it be concluded that black worship is typified by the free-spirited customs which is ubiquitous in most Pentecostal worship services. We cannot ignore the historical cultural origins of this type of worship and the influence of black worshipping customs on the emergent modern Pentecostal denomination. It would be a flawed premise to state that there is a monolithic format for black worship culture, as this is influenced by many factors including socio-economic and ethnic orientations. It would not be flawed, however, to conclude that the socio-economic position of most black people in the West and the experiences coming out of their common history have produced emergent religious-cultural practices that are fairly ubiquitous across many of the black nationalities and unique cultural enclaves that have emerged in the modern cultural era. Santeria among our LatinX family; Obeah in the English-speaking Caribbean; and Mojo in New Orleans,

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<sup>54</sup> Anderson, *White Rage*.

South Carolina, and other areas in the southern United States all show similarities in extra-ecclesial spiritual practices which bear striking similarities to practices on the African continent which preceded the slave trade and still exist today. It would be reasonable to posit that within the forms of black ecclesial practices, there are historic similarities in the practices that exist in the worship of black folks. Clearly if one would attend any service in predominantly black churches on a Sunday morning, one would see these similarities. Negro Spirituals are particularly exemplary of the uniqueness of the black ecclesial experience. They demonstrated a clear expression of grief in the plight of black humanity in the western world and they embraced a lament which is wholly expressive of the pathos of black people. Said Frazier, "Nevertheless, the sacred folk songs express the awe and wonder of the Negro in regard to life and death and his emotional reaction to the complexity of his existence and his desire to escape from the uncertainties and frustration of this world."<sup>55</sup> Not only was there unique black worship expression in song, it was expressed in bodily movements that had survived the middle passage and were preserved even through slavery in the occasional and few opportunities that blacks were left on their own to freely express their spirituality. Frazier stated. On the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia where the slaves were most isolated from whites, some of the Spirituals revealed some continuity with their African background. This continuity is to be found especially in what was called the Afro-American shout songs...so named because they were sung and still are sung while Negro worshippers are engaged in what might be called a holy dance. . . . Primitive man

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<sup>55</sup> Edward Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (Liverpool University Press, 1964), 20.

does not preach his religion, but dances it instead.<sup>56</sup> So there is an emergent format or modality of worship practices that are fairly typical to black people which has emerged out of their common historical experiences, and which produced a genuine, and unique spirituality.

One would have to repose completely in denial of reality should one conclude that there is not a uniqueness in the cultural worship expressions of black worshippers. Speaking of the black man, Frazier wrote: “He adapted Christianity to his Psychological and social needs.”<sup>57</sup> Out of that great and rich history came a culture that influences every aspect of American life today, no less so in the world of the ecclesia. The black cultural worship was deep, expressive, genuine, and unique to this community. It found a place particularly among those of lower socio-economic background, the most bitterly oppressed of the lot, and those most needing the experience of a transcendent Christ. The emergent black cultural expressions permeated our communities and soon found their way in every aspect of black life, and no less so in the rituals and worship templates of black churches. It is understandable that the cultural worship patterns emerged to be the norm in churches all over the United States. The Church of God in Christ (COGIC) churches took on a definitive black musical distinctiveness for which they are still known today. Even the Assemblies of God congregations embraced a measure of this black-style worship in most of its churches, and so they began influencing other groups around them. Many historians recognize the black culture influenced root of Pentecostalism. Walter

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<sup>56</sup> Frazier, *The Negro Church*, 20.

<sup>57</sup> Frazier, *The Negro Church*, 20.



Hollenweger posited that Pentecostalism's music and liturgy reflect and are enriched by black music and oral culture:

The musical preferences reflected jazz and the Blues reflecting the fluidity between black pop culture and Pentecostal practices. The informal practice of openness with the people boldly standing and testifying may have come from the slave religions in the southern plantations. These things and more revealed the black impact on the world through the Azusa Street Revival and its influence on the Pentecostal insurgency that took the world by storm.<sup>58</sup>

Undoubtedly the influence of black cultural expressions has saturated American life in both the ecclesial and the secular world. This cultural expression mutates in every generation to reflect the norms of that generation's taste.

The MEC, given its history of segregating its black adherents into the Central Conference, was to a great extent spared being overly influenced by that black-style worship. Many of the denominations that spun out of Methodism were more open to and even welcomed the black-style worship experiences. Pentecostalism particularly embraced the fervor that this worship style added to its ranks. The Azusa Street revival from which Pentecostalism was catapulted internationally had set the tone for the free-spirited worship styles that became typical of this movement. It also embraced the new theological position of Glossolalia, or speaking in tongues as evidenced of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the spiritual gifts which flowed therefrom. Kay explained, "Pentecostalism was not made in the USA; but it benefitted from the energy and the strategic location of the Azusa Street revival, especially as the revival's main leader, W.J.

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<sup>58</sup> Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2012).

Seymour preached with such conviction about baptism in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>59</sup> These teachings were typical of the movement. The place for charismatic belief and experiences were the main markers which differentiated between Pentecostals and the Fundamentalists. The Fundamentalists held to dispensationalist views that posited that miracles and unusual movements of the Holy Spirit were ended in the dispensation that culminated in the first century CE. These Fundamentalists became the harshest critics of the evolving Pentecostals but were unable to keep pace with Pentecostalism’s potency and growth.

After Lucy Farrow arrived on Azusa Street, taking with her the teachings of her former employer and spiritual tutor Charles Parham, and merging these teachings with the black worship experience, what began was the famed Azusa Street Movement. W.J. Seymour, a student of Charles Parham, was sent by Parham to assist Farrow in developing the newly developing work.<sup>60</sup> Seymour was soon caught up in the uniqueness and potency of the movement and became the one that added Parham’s theology of Glossolalia to this nascent group. Seymour’s influence impacted the vast majority of the Pentecostal movement. The COGIC, which began in 1896, fell under the influence of Seymour when its founder, C.H. Mason, met with Seymour and received the laying on of hands and the baptism of the Spirit in that meeting in 1906. COGIC as the largest black Pentecostal denomination was now engaging fully in the fast legitimizing black worship style. Another large and influential Pentecostal denomination that emerged in 1914, The

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<sup>59</sup> William K. Kay, *Pentecostalism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>60</sup> Sarah E. Parham, *The Life of Charles F. Parham, Founder of the Apostolic Faith Movement* (New York, NY: Garland, 1985).

Assemblies of God, also embraced the popular worship style and theology as it organized itself. It was one of the larger successor Pentecostal groups whose structure and worship style reflects the black tradition. On this matter, Kay stated: “The structure that was hammered out have stood the test of time and largely preserved the wild and unstable revivalist fire that by 1912, had burned itself out on Azusa Street.”<sup>61</sup> So, Kay points out clearly that the fervor that started on Azusa Street is yet preserved in the worship styles of some modern Pentecostal based organizations.

### **An Intersectional Example**

Acts 9 offers an interesting situation that typifies the quandary in which many white Christians find themselves. I choose to call it an intersectional parallel. Peter in his Jewish upbringing was brought by God into a different way of seeing relationships between ethnic groups within the nascent Christian sect. His Jewish beliefs told him that non-Jewish people were common and unclean, but his new and God-given revelation showed him that in the sight of God no person is of inferior worth, but all are equally welcomed by God.<sup>62</sup> Peter’s moral position of preserving his Godly status and privilege as a Jew was thwarted by God’s call to a more open reality in ethnic relations. Peter quickly acquiesced to God’s correction. He was bold enough to openly proclaim and act upon his new conviction.<sup>63</sup> While Peter’s separationist position was not based on race, but more on covenantal purity, it resulted in him dissociating himself from non-Jews as

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<sup>61</sup> Kay, *Pentecostalism*.

<sup>62</sup> Act 10:1-35 KJV. See for the scriptural reference for this story.

<sup>63</sup> Act 10:34-35 KJV: 34 Then Peter opened [his] mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

they were considered “common and unclean.” It requires little effort to see how his situation at that juncture is akin to what many of our white brethren face in making choices regarding race relations today. However, the way many people value “white privilege” in our present society makes it difficult for them to be as responsive to divine correction as Peter. The preservation of this privilege seems to be worth more than the eternal destiny of the souls of its beneficiaries. Folks would do more to preserve the privileges of white hegemony than to challenge it even though white hegemony’s injustice puts them at risk of displeasing God. White privilege is a value uniquely afforded to those who possess the basic traits for participation in this exclusive club. Such beneficiaries hold the insidious advantage as an understanding between them. They consent to its preservation by default in their inaction against it, or by their acquiescent failure to reject the institution from which they so undeservingly benefit.

Jennifer Harvey calls for a radical approach to racial reconciliation in the church.<sup>64</sup> Harvey proposes a reconciliatory model that is based on reparative justice, or what is commonly called reparations. Said Harvey, “It (reparative justice) insists we look carefully at where we are now in the historical moment, and at the ways the legacies we inherit continue to shape and inform our relationships across lines of racial difference and to strengthen unjust contemporary social structures that subjugate some while benefiting others.”<sup>65</sup> The radical approach taken by Harvey in offering a solution to the ecclesial world is one that is challenging, but necessary. This radical approach really seeks to address, in a practical and redemptive way, the historical divide between our various

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<sup>64</sup> Harvey, *Dear White Christians*.

<sup>65</sup> Harvey, *Dear White Christians*.

communities. Such an approach calls white Christians to repentance for having engaged in the complicity that sustains their beneficial enterprise. It tugs at their newfound awareness of the injuries that it has caused, and endeavors to bring them to the place where they realize that what they enjoy is not the construct of God's good favor upon them, or the fruit of their ancestral ingenuity and heritage. It makes them realize instead that they are now involved in a generational legacy of injustice, and that their continued participation does question their place in the kingdom of God.<sup>66</sup>

Harvey's call echoes those made centuries ago to no avail. For obvious reasons, such appeals do not sufficiently prick the hearts of the beneficiaries of privilege. Harvey recalls the famous 18<sup>th</sup> century "Equiano's Plea." Equiano's plea was made and published in the writings of the famous black abolitionist, Olaudah Equiano, when he wrote,

O, ye nominal Christians! Might not an African ask you, learned you this from your God? Who says unto you, do unto all men as you would men should do unto you. Is it not enough that we are torn from our country and friends to toil for your luxury and lust of gain? Must every tender feeling be likewise sacrificed to your avarice?<sup>67</sup>

The majority of Christians then, and for successive generations thereafter, paid little heed. Therefore, the call for unity and justice in the body of Christ still continues. Harvey further writes,

those of us whose identities have been forged and continue to be shaped by white supremacy in this nation, and who have inherited the heavy weight of ancestral

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<sup>66</sup> Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, 194.

<sup>67</sup> Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, vol. I (London: Author, [1789]).

complicity in its legacies, need to repent. We need to apologize and take responsibility...if the model of Zacchaeus holds anything for us, need to be meaningful with concrete actions and programs for repair. We must become “repairers of the breach” who figures out how to begin paying back several-fold, when possible. What has been taken. We must do so even while cognizant that the atrocities that constitute our racial history can never be fully repaired.<sup>68</sup>

Harvey’s call is not really new. It is another clarion call to our seemingly nominal Christian brothers and sisters to engage the attitudes and actions that will really reflect the Christianity they profess—a Christianity that brings them to face an inconvenient truth of a troubling reality which says, “We have met the enemy and he is us!”<sup>69</sup>

Many will say that realizing such racial self-awareness in the white church will never happen, particularly when the benefits of the system are so great to those privileged and entitled to it. However, in a united stance the World Council of Churches (WCC), of which Methodism is a part, generally stands against racism. Indeed, a noble effort to finally proactively address the issue is a formidable challenge. The churches’ united wish is to acknowledge and tackle the insidious root of bitterness that lurks in the recesses of race relations. Many past efforts have brought only chuckles at our many joint prayers where whites pay lip service to the treaties into which they entered to end the unjust practices, and people of color walk away with faithless hope that maybe this time their white counterparts might be serious. Hopefully, with the WCC’s involvement, this may be the time and place that serious effort could end in concrete corporate action. The world

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<sup>68</sup> Harvey, *Dear White Christians*.

<sup>69</sup> Walt Kelly, *The Pogo Papers* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Gregg Press, 1977).

has become an ever more dangerous place. Human capability for self-destruction is unlimited. If ever there was a time to address and correct injustice which is the scourge on humanity, it is now. There is, in my opinion, no other option in this modern era. Therefore, United Against Racism (An initiative of the WCC) is a well-founded effort to change things. We must pray for their success, support their efforts, and engage proactively in self-examination with regard to our contribution to this diabolic source of discord in the body of Christ, and in the world at large.

This statement made by the WCC, which is emphatically clear and profoundly replete, is as follows:

In proclaiming this decade, the international community is recognizing that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected...the WCC toured the US and witnessed atrocities regarding our ongoing manifestations of white power, white privilege, and white supremacy. It issued a challenge to act—to utilize its agency as an instrument for change to address the festering wound of racism in America.<sup>70</sup>

The position of this organization is laudable; however, translating these ideals to on-the-ground realities is where the difficulties arise. Many see these statements as being applicable in employment, housing, etc., but not in the area of worship. The resistance of the Eurocentric normative model to the accommodation of other worship models comes out of different anxieties that is held by those that subscribe to the dominant liturgical forms of worship.

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<sup>70</sup> National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, *United Against Racism: Churches for Change* (Chester Heights, PA: Friendship Press, 2018).

### **An Explanation Offered**

The emergent Pentecostal movement cannot deny its evolution through the structures of Methodism. The Azusa Street experience and its effect of catapulting Pentecostalism into the stratosphere of international notoriety must trace its birth through the gestation of the Methodist experience, both experientially and theologically. Pentecostalism speaks of the assurance of salvation. It also relies on the theological rationality of the experiential aspect of salvation. Within Methodism what is commonly referred to as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral features experience as a tenet of its faith and practice along with scripture, reason, and tradition. As stated in the UMC Book of Discipline, “All religious experiences affect all human experiences and all human experiences affects our understanding of religious experiences. . . . Experience authenticates in our own lives the truth revealed in scripture and illumined in tradition.”<sup>71</sup> Wesley’s own heart-warming experience had assisted his transition from relying on strict theological and philosophical approaches to salvation to a model that embraced the experiential. This experience gave him the assurance that he had obtained salvation. The theological constructs that flowed from Wesley’s experience then established that there is not just a cerebral theological and methodological approach to relationship with God, but there is also an experiential aspect that gives witness in the spirit of the penitent that a change had occurred. While the transformative process will continue in the sanctifying work of the Spirit, there is a heart-warming moment in which an assurance of faith is given to the contrite worshipper. Wesley’s experience and later theological rationalism formed the basis upon which Pentecostalism later built. Its doctrinal congruence with the

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<sup>71</sup> United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline*.



Methodist movement allowed it to integrate seamlessly with Methodism and to follow all the same migratory routes that Methodism took in its own international progression.

Pentecostalism, with its wholesale borrowing from black-style worship and spirituality, is but one of the emergent denominations which has continued the vigor of the Methodist movement. While it emerged to be a new denomination, its roots, history, and theology are undeniably via Methodism. This being the case, then, if modern Methodism rejects or is repulsed by Pentecostalism, then it rejects its own legitimacy for all the same reasons that it might cite to reject its progeny. For Methodism to scoff at Pentecostal worship is for it to reject very valid and important tenets of its own history, and to show that its rationale for doing so is flawed and based in a resistive desire to preserve Eurocentric dominance in the template of its worship experience. The embrace of that style of worship is not inimical to Methodism, but it is an embrace of a part of itself to which it has given foundation and rise and subsequently abandoned. The future that Methodism seeks to realize may be in the recognition of the appeal of the Pentecostal movement to the demographics that it so desperately needs to reinvigorate its diminishing ranks and to revive its anemic soul from the errors of its past treatment of non-Eurocentric worship modalities. Said Bishop Thomas J Bickerton, “Why is it that we have so many other churches renting space in our facilities. With all things being equal in our space they are worshipping 200 persons, and we are worshipping 11 in that very same environment?”<sup>72</sup> Could it be that the attributes that we have rejected, they have embraced and made their own, and from this they are now harvesting bountiful rewards? These questions need to be vetted, and if the answers are in the affirmative, then it is incumbent

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<sup>72</sup> Thomas J. Bickerton, Lecture given to clergy, Ban Suk United Methodist Church, Westbury, NY, December 19, 2019.

upon us to reclaim that part of our heritage and implement these ideas with all due speed and deliberation. Bishop Bickerton further recommends “Go to their services, see what they are doing, and do the same, because if it works for them it will work for us also!”<sup>73</sup>

Could it be that at the highest levels our leaders in the upper echelons are beginning to agitate for innovation? Could this mean that the conferences of Methodism are ready to advocate for revolutions in ministry and worship that would make a difference in the pew population? Is the call of Bishop Bickerton a license for pastors to transgress the boundaries of Eurocentrically-based worship models which were established by historical default?

Vincent L. Wimbush, professor and author, holds that cultures are not just norms that develop among groups of people, but they are the basis upon which rewards, and punishments are meted out. Conformance to the norms of a particular cultural enclave would determine how far you go in that society. It determines your success, failure, or even the extent of the punishment you face when you are found to be in violation of the norms of that culture. The power of the controlling effect of this influence on the members of that society is extraordinary, as running afoul of those norms could render the offender an outcast who is anathema to the rest of the cultural group. So, too, the rewards for conformity are substantial, and the stricter the conformity the greater the rewards to individuals in the cultural enclave.

Wimbush’s treatise on *Theory of Institute of Signifying Scriptures* goes even further than all the ideas and resolutions offered above. He calls for a complete transgression of disciplinary boundaries in our thought processes and the evaluation of

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<sup>73</sup> Bickerton, Lecture.

our socio-cultural limitations. While Wimbush calls for this revolution in the area of scriptural review, his ideas could be applied in the area of worship also. Transgressing the normative model is by all means the next frontier of our journey. Boundaries, both theological and social, must be broken down and all that inhibits the full expression of adoration to God must give way to the genuine expression of our love for God, regardless of its cultural origin. Wimbush states it effectively in this way:

What is now begged for here is the deep and wide excavation, the recognition and analysis of imbrication and collusion, maskings, fears, anxieties, risks, hopes, and aspirations beyond cultural, tribal, and academic enclosures and their control over periodization and questions—in other words, how we continuously make the human. Transgression, indeed.<sup>74</sup>

In responding to this call by Wimbush, a radical approach for the adventurous worshipping community would be a shifting away from the idea of cross-culturalism altogether and taking on a more intercultural approach to worship modalities. This will be dealt with in our concluding chapter, as it would certainly better serve the church's thrust towards its objectives. One thing is certain: We need revival to our collective souls; therefore, we all have to engage in the boundary-crossing activities that will precipitate exploration of full interculturalism in the worship space.

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<sup>74</sup> Vincent L. Wimbush, *Refractions of the Scriptural Critical Orientations as Transgression*, (Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2016).

## CHAPTER 3: THE PROJECT AND THE ANALYSIS

In this chapter we will review and analyze the statements made by the seven pastors who were formally interviewed, and we will explore information obtained from ten other pastors who voluntarily and informally offered their opinions. We will look at the context of their ministries and evaluate their statements through their viewpoints as they are expressed. We will not comment on or critique these viewpoints individually, but we will amass the common themes that emerge and address them in light of the overall thesis of the paper. The chapter airs the concerns that are foremost in the minds of these pastors who are serving in cross-cultural appointments; it voices their expressions of pain and frustration deeply internalized in the hearts of the subject clergy. This chapter exposes the feelings and offers them as concerns to be explored by those who are in a position to respond in a meaningful way. Whether indeed these feelings are valid or not is not the focus here, but the chapter identifies a clear opportunity to capture firsthand experiential data which, if acted upon, could produce a more effective approach to the issue of cross-culturalism in the church and a remedy to combat the malady of racism and de facto segregation which permeates the broader society and unfortunately is reflected in our churches.

### **Method and Participants**

Formal interviews were conducted with seven pastors and informal discussions were held with another ten pastors, who voluntarily shared their experiences on the subject. Of the seven formal interviews, six pastors were United Methodist Elders, and one was a fully ordained Episcopal priest. All of these pastors are in CR/CC

appointments, and at least two of them have also held previous cross-cultural appointments. Five of the seven are black clergy presently serving in predominantly white congregations; one of the other two clergypersons is black and presently serves a mixed, but transitioning congregation. His congregation is comprised of a declining white and progressively more black population. The last of the seven clergypersons is a white pastor who serves a congregation that is about 75% people of color, and the remaining 25% are white.

### **Data Collection**

The procedures used in accumulating the data for this project were as follows. Formal interviews, in which each pastor received the same set of structured questions, were conducted with each pastor in person. They all responded to the structured questions which are presented as Exhibit A of the appendix. The pastors interviewed were all located in the Long Island East district, or in my contextual vicinity within the NYAC. The questionnaire was designed to solicit qualitative rather than quantitative data. One purpose was to obtain “felt experiences.” Another objective was to discover the experiences of the pastor in their congregational appointments. A third goal was to elicit narratives of their adjustment strategies in pastoral appointments. Research questions were firstly given to the subjects for their review, and then each question was asked of the interviewees sequentially. They were all interviewed individually. The questionnaire sought to examine how pastors dealt with some of the issues that arise while in the context of our ministry settings: issues such as culture, race, and ethnically based practices. The narratives are stories told of the experiences with members in cross-

cultural appointments in which meaning, and identity are tested, adjusted, and redefined. The characters that the stories feature, the roles that they play, and the connection of those stories to the larger social context reveal the ways in which each contextual story relates to reality and shows that each can become an avenue to greater understanding. We explored issues of broad importance within the acknowledged social context, specifically, those of the pastors, the parishioners, and the conference.

After the interviews, responses were organized into categories relevant to the thesis issues (e.g. worship experience, perceptions and beliefs, emotional and spiritual responses, faith formation, race, etc.). The next step included the identification of themes, patterns, and connections, all vital to the creation of the narrative framework, and which demonstrated common patterns of behavior or outcomes. I sought particularly to identify anger or outrage in the reaction of the pastors and to examine what the potential fecundity of that outrage and intellectual response could be. I was very particular to identify the issues and use the combined outrage and intellectual response to identify the impact of the pastor on the congregation, and vice versa.

The narrative conveyed by each pastor contributed to a collection that communicated the experiences of cross-culturally appointed clergy. These narratives were used as stories in this study which tested meaning and attitudes. The characters featured in the stories, the roles that they play, and the connection of those stories to the larger social context would reveal the ways in which each contextual story can both create reality and provide insight into a realm of greater understanding.

### **Introduction to the Interviewees and Their Ministerial Settings**

Pastor 01 is a black female. She has 1,000 members on the church's record, but only 120 to 150 in regular attendance. The congregation is predominantly white, about 90%. It is mainly middle- to upper middle-income. Pastor 01 explained that the congregation harbors strong resistance to ethnic and financial justice. The leadership was heavily white and male. Of the 22 persons, only one black male and three black females were on the entire leadership team.

Pastor 02 is African American. She leads a predominately black church, and she also co-pastors a predominately white church. Pastor 02's black church is in an urban setting. It is a congregation which struggles with low attendance (about 30 people) and has financial issues. Its members are of lower middle-income status, and it is a congregation with more liberal leanings on most issues. The congregation has about 10% non-black attendance. The white church that Pastor 02 co-pastors is located in a suburban area. It has a membership of about 150. Most of the members of this congregation are in the middle to lower middle-income bracket. Most of them are homeowners by inheritance, which means that they have strong cultural ties to the community and are used to certain long-held traditions.

Pastor 03 is African American. He pastors a church in a suburban setting. The church is all white except for himself and his son. It is a small congregation which holds conservative positions on most socio-political issues. Pastor 03 reportedly enjoys a thriving relationship with this congregation and finds it to be quite amicable to him and his son in spite of their cultural differences. He admits to having some struggles in the

initial stages with leadership resistance; however, as time went by, both he and the church leadership learned to work together in a more objective manner.

Pastor 04 is a black Latina who champions the cause of justice and is known for her activism. Her many challenges to injustice are famous among her peers Presently, Pastor 04 herself is engaged in the challenge of a cross-cultural appointment. Pastor 04 once said: “Advocacy for others who are victimized by injustice is one thing, but when you are your own advocate in a cross-cultural appointment, that is a whole different ballgame, altogether.” Pastor 04’s congregation is about 3% black and 97% white. Comparable to other UM congregations, it is affluent and above average in size (about 120 in regular attendance). It is in a suburban area and holds mainly a culturally conservative predisposition, with some members leaning towards more liberal approaches on issues.

Pastor 05 is a black Caribbean male and is the only pastor interviewed from a non-UMC denomination.<sup>75</sup> He pastors a quickly transitioning Episcopalian church of 75 - 80 persons in a suburban community. It is about 17% white, 80% black, and 3% Hispanic. Reportedly, no power struggle exists because there is an all-embracing predisposition. The population shift in the broader community within recent years has transitioned the church’s population into a more expatriate body. The white population, while yet a minority overall, is still racially a large and influential group. The church, though, is one that is well adjusted in its power structure between the various ethnic and racial influences.

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<sup>75</sup> A non-UMC pastor was interviewed to see if there was similarity of experiences in the same contextual area, but outside the UMC denomination.



Pastor 06 is the only white pastor who was interviewed in this study. He is an Anglo-Saxon American. He pastors a church that is about 75% people of color and 25% white. The congregation is very liberal in its socio-political outlook and it is a strongly affirming LGBTQIA congregation. It exists in an urban setting and its population is lower to middle-income in its financial status. It is a newly minted congregation within Methodism and has a membership of about 70-80 persons.

Pastor 07 is a black female immigrant. Pastor 07's congregation is 90% Caucasian, 5% Asian, and 3% Latino, with a few blacks within the ethnic mix. The ethnic make-up of her congregation reflects its broader secular community with many of the white ethnic groups being represented; that is Anglo, German, Irish, Italian, and more. The congregation is middle to upper income and while it is socio-politically conservative, it is also very ambivalent on many social issues like human sexuality, justice, contemporary vs. traditional worship, etc.

Many similarities were observed in the traditions of these congregations. There was generally strong protectionism for race-based traditions in worship, and churches situated in white enclave communities were more protective of worship traditions than those that are in transitioning or mixed neighborhoods. The following analysis will more clearly show the findings.

## **Analysis of Responses**

### **The Formal Interviews**

The information offered by the formal interviewees presented four overriding themes:

1. Resistance to pastoral leadership in the local churches based on cultural assumptions.
2. The pastors' feelings of isolation and abandonment by the conference.
3. The need for stronger pre-appointment preparation and sustained post-appointment work with congregations outside of the pastors' efforts.
4. An intolerance for the pastors' own cultural expression or input into the normative worship experience.

### The Pastors Speak: Resistance to Pastoral Leadership

The first major theme, resistance to pastoral leadership, emerges from the responses that were given to questions 8g and 8h. These questions were:

- g. Is there any form of resistance to your implementation of new ideas or policies?**
- h. Is there unusual resistance to your management/leadership efforts?**

The pastors generally felt that there is resistance to their pastoral leadership in the local churches based on the cultural assumptions of their congregants. Pastor 01 said, "I don't know if it is because of my gender, race, or both, but I experience a lot of pushback to my efforts."<sup>76</sup> This pastor stated that she received unnecessary pushback on ideas which she proposed for change or improvement to congregational practices. In this pastor's statement there are feelings worth examining which fit a pattern among the interviewees. Pastors found themselves being evaluated repeatedly as to their authority to act on administrative matters. They discovered that they had to be given the nod of

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with Pastor 01, January 17, 2019.

approval by individuals who had no training, limited knowledge, and even less spiritual insight or sensitivity towards pending administrative and ecclesial matters. Pastor 01 further commented, “There is no presumption that I know anything. One person asked me, ‘When am I going for my elder’s orders?’ I feel like if I had been a white male, things would have been different for me.” The interviewee continued, “This comes from an unacknowledged inability for them [the congregants] to see me fully as a person. . . . ‘Whiteness’ is their default setting and anything apart from that is, ‘the other,’ and it is threatening.... This comes from a bit of white fragility or guilt.”<sup>77</sup>

Another similar incident reported by Pastor 02 is as follows.

After having a midweek prayer vigil in the park with some youth, I took some of the signs that the youth had made with me to church that Sunday. I wanted to highlight to the congregation the extent of questionable police shootings, and the wholesale slaughter that took place in that very week alone. In those shootings, I said three black men were questionably killed, and several other people were also victims of deadly gun violence. I explained that there was also a shooting incident in Florida where several police officers were killed.<sup>78</sup>

The pastor wanted to address the need for prayer for a solution to the problem of gun violence in our country. “One older man,” she lamented, “got up in the middle of my preaching and yelled out, “God does not want you doing this. Take that stuff down!”<sup>79</sup>

This parishioner, she explained, had this same type of outburst on many other occasions

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with Pastor 01, January 17, 2019.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Pastor 02, January 17, 2019.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Pastor 02, January 17, 2019.

during the service, while she was preaching. Pastor 02 further explained that she was called to a meeting with the Staff Pastor/Parish Relations Committee (SPPRC) Chairperson. In this meeting it was stated that the pastor was in a highly Republican area, and that she should be aware of that if she wanted to continue pastoring in that church.

### The Pastors Speak: Isolation and Abandonment

The second theme that emerged from interviews with the pastors was the issue of the pastors' feelings of isolation and abandonment by the conference. Pastors felt that much of the time they were on their own in their work and that sustained support from the conference was not there. They felt that they were in a position of vulnerability and they had to fend for themselves as they navigated the troubling issues of race relations where they are most times a voice of one in the wilderness. Pastor 07 griped,

We send pastors into those congregations, but who prepares those congregations?

It is great to have a policy of cross-cultural appointments, but just sending a black pastor into these circles is not only dangerous, it is counterproductive. Without preparing the receiving congregations, working with the people, offering constant support to the pastor and careful nurturing to these congregations, quite often the pastors' efforts are more offensive than they are helpful.

The conference-appointed pastors are often seen as the source of offense. Consequently, they are less likely to be the ones who will make any meaningful headway or change in those congregations. Pastor 07 further noted: "Everything about that pastor may be viewed as contrary to the grain of who those congregations see themselves to be." Unfortunately, when the pastor does not produce the expected growth and change, then

the pastor is seen as ineffective, and may even carry the stigma of having destroyed that church. The pastors must navigate the forces of cultural recalcitrance. They stand alone to mold the right outcome in every manifestation of this resistance, knowing that any failure could confirm their critics' accusations of their incompetence and produce an adverse judgement of the same from peers and supervisors alike. This is what creates the feelings of abandonment and isolation in the CR/CC pastors.

Pastor 04 said that the effort of cross-cultural change is not working because after all this time, the denomination is still 93% white. She stated that she does not think that the resistance she experiences is based solely on her race, but rather it is fear of the unknown. For this congregation, outreach is scary. She expressed:

The conference is not doing a good job at cross-cultural appointments. quite often, there is a brain-drain out of the black community with these pastors who would possibly be real assets to the black community. However, they are appointed to mostly resistant white churches where they are neutered by the onslaught of abuse and must acquire survival instincts to preserve their own security.

She further stated that the little diversity and race tolerance training that the churches receive from the conference is quite insufficient. It seems that every interviewee identified the concern that the conference assumes too much when appointing a pastor in these settings and then assumes that all is well.

#### The Pastors Speak: Pre-Appointment Preparation and Post-Appointment Work

The third theme that emerged from interviews with the pastors was the issue of the need for stronger pre-appointment preparation and sustained post-appointment work with

congregations outside of the pastors' efforts. All the pastors, both in the formally interviewed sample and those with whom I held informal discussions, unanimously contended that the NYAC could do a much better job at preparing churches for receiving pastors into cross-cultural situations. They all vociferously insisted that the effort is much too distant and superficial. They contended that the churches need to be given more effective training and tools for understanding the gravity and consequences of racial intolerance. They maintained that all of our parish churches need to receive instructions, down to the minuscule levels from a conference-mandated and conference-designed campaign of information that will address, in a comprehensive and holistic manner, the issues involved with the problems of cross-cultural clergy appointments.

Pastor 02 leads a predominately black church, and she also co-pastors a predominately white church. She explained that despite all her efforts, the two churches would not worship together. She explains that the white church just refuses to do so. The white church members resist all attempts to organize joint events with the black church. Pastor 02 claims that her white church is closed to any non-traditional activities. They complain when songs are selected from the hymnal called "The Faith We Sing" (a Methodist hymnal that features mainly songs from the African American tradition). She stated that the congregation is, at best, tolerant of her presence. She said, "in spite of its approved balanced budget, the Church Council voted not to pay its apportionments to the conference. This, they did to send a message to the conference that they were weary of the impositions of the conference." The word "impositions," she quipped, "subliminally means sending undesirable clergy."<sup>80</sup> Pastor 02 feels that even though the incident in

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with Pastor 02, January 17, 2019.

which she was struck by a parishioner was reported to the conference, nothing was done. This, she concluded, could be because the perpetrator of the assault is a wealthy and influential parishioner in the church, the district, and in the conference. She suggested that there is little desire to lose such well-positioned subscribers.

Pastors 03, 04, and 07 to lesser or greater levels expressed the same sentiment on this issue as those expressed by the two preceding pastors. Pastor 03 stated that it was just in the initial stages of his ministry with that church. He represented that the resistance has since significantly subsided to a much more manageable level.

One female pastor (Pastor 02), described a harrowing encounter with a parishioner who frantically entered a meeting. He was irate from conversations he had held with other parishioners, just prior to that meeting. This meeting was a meeting for trustees of several different cluster churches who assembled for a discussion. In that meeting, Pastor 02 (the only black clergy person in that cluster) was required to explain her use of the parsonage because she possessed two small pet dogs. As she excused herself and proceeded to leave the meeting, which she explained was addressing an issue which she deemed inappropriate for that joint session, the irate parishioner approached the door as she was exiting and slammed the door, striking her on the shoulder. In the moment, he exclaimed, "All Lives Matter! All Lives Matter! All Lives Matter!" Shocked and exasperated, the pastor said that she immediately questioned the man about having physically assaulted her. He blatantly denied it. Everyone else in the room claimed not to have seen what happened, thus relieving themselves of the responsibility to respond to this uncomely conduct, or to suffer the consequences of breaking ranks with the

entrenched leadership.<sup>81</sup> What she did soon come to realize is that people have greater loyalties to those with whom they have had long-standing relationships, rather than an itinerant pastor whom they could lose at any time. She figured that they fear contradicting or running afoul of the entrenched hierarchy, and then having to live with the permanent wrath of their leaders for being sellouts. That is a dynamic that is repeatedly played out in the local churches, as far as itinerant pastors are concerned.

All the pastors, both in the formally interviewed sample and those with whom I held informal discussions, unanimously agree that the NYAC could do a much better job at preparing churches for receiving pastors of cross-cultural backgrounds. They all vociferously insisted that the effort is much too superficial. They contended that the churches need to be given more effective training and tools for understanding the gravity and consequences of racial intolerance. They contend that all of our parish churches need to receive instructions, down to the miniscule levels from a conference mandate, and design a campaign of information that will address, in a comprehensive and holistic manner, the realities of the problems of cross-cultural clergy appointments.

#### The Pastors Speak: Intolerance of Pastor's Culture

A legitimate and pertinent inquiry regarding this matter would be whether a white pastor, serving in the reverse setting with a congregation of color, would have the experiences, in reverse. The question is, would people of color demonstrate the same level of animus towards a white pastor as do their white counterparts? A seasoned white pastor whom I interviewed, who has served in white churches, in congregations of color,

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<sup>81</sup> Interview with Pastor 02, January 17, 2019.



and in an LGBTQIA-affirming congregation, shared some interesting notions on the issue. In our interview, the pastor was open, honest, and candid. As he described his early adjustments and his experience with the black congregation, he explained,

I found that I modified my preaching style and my prayer style to meet the needs of these congregations. I adapted my style to suit them. Those changes opened a part of my spirit which was very liberating for me. Being brought up in mainly white congregations, the spiritual expression tended to be fairly rational, and limited in terms of vulnerability and openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit. My experience is that white culture is pretty locked down, across the board. It's not just in worship, its dance, etc.<sup>82</sup>

When probed further, he conjectured,

Historically in the United States, white people are isolated from their own [original] cultures. When Scotch, German, Italian, or Irish people came to the United States, one of the first bargains that they made was that they traded their own cultures for “whiteness.” Many of the Europeans that came to America had to trade their varying cultures for whiteness, because “whiteness” was where the privilege existed. Most of these people coming to the U.S. were not considered to be white. They had accents; they were immigrants. Immigrant groups coming to the U.S. were not white. So, they had to lose some of their own cultural expressions and their own heritage, even sometimes change their names a little bit, in order to conform sufficiently to receive the privileges of whiteness. So, there was a real loss for some of these emergent white ethnicities in the process of

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with Pastor 06, February 17, 2019.

becoming white to receive all the privileges and benefits within the society. Some considered that to be a good trade-off.

The pastor offered a further analytical thought. In summary, he reasoned that whiteness in general in the U.S., is “a shutdown kind of thing.” It produces a cerebral, rational, pragmatic positioning. He explained, “White people are not willing to acknowledge the effects of racism on everyone, including themselves, and on the broader society. Part of the price for that negligence is that cerebral, logical, rational approach to matters and a looking down on, and trying to distance themselves from a more spirited, vulnerable approach to the human experience in most things including worship. Pastor 06 pensively continued analyzing that race is one of the deepest and most challenging issues facing any congregation. In churches that are experiencing demographic change, white parishioners tend to be very guarded with a bit of an irrational fear of loss. It reflects a bit of a loss of something to which they were otherwise entitled. The churches are in a bit of a stasis. Where a delicate balance exists between those desiring change, and those desiring preservation of the traditional. Pastor 06, who is a white pastor said that he always felt respected in the worship space in his churches of color. While he felt some people were never comfortable with his presence, he always felt respected for his office. On one occasion, he felt the need to call the bishop to worship with the congregation so that they would see and know that he was appointed by a black bishop as the pastor of this black church that had not had a white pastor since the 1950s. He argued that as pastor, he was not there to make folks comfortable, but he was there to perform ministerial duties with and among them. So, there was discomfort on the part of some

folks in the black church with a white pastor, but otherwise the environment was nurturing and accepting of this seemingly unusual appointment.

Pastor 03 is a black middle-aged male pastor who pastors a congregation in north-west Connecticut which is more than 99% white. His family are the only blacks in the congregation apart from two other mixed-raced couples. His congregation is mainly lower middle-class, and the worship style of the congregation is traditional. In my interview with Pastor 03, he cheerfully raved about his positive experience with the white congregation, which he pastors. He boasted of few conflicts with few to no challenges to proposals for improvements or change. He clearly stated that there are practically no problems with race relations in his church, and that things were moving quite smoothly.

Pastor 03 has pastored his congregation for about four years. His claims to the amicability of his experience were not shared by most of the other pastors in similar settings within the representative sample, but he has served longer and has been able to derive his present leadership team. He did state that his initial efforts were met with resistance, and that there was an old boys' network that was very challenging in his adjustment period. He further explained. "God removed some of them. Some got sick and had to step down, another got mad and left." He stated that he had to change some of them, but eventually his humility and patience fostered a better working relationship between him and the congregation. He now enjoys a pastor/parish relationship where he can get things done, and he has great support from the local leadership.

While Pastor 03 would yet like to make significant changes to the worship structure, his progress is slow. He said,

We are trying to incorporate some blended music and some folks are like Yeahhhh! while others are still like, what?... While I would say that the worship experience is not one according to my experience. I am more charismatic and upbeat in my experience, but they are more mellow, Eurocentric. Maybe it is just a matter of timing. This is not necessarily because of congregational disinterest, but more so because of financial constraints.

He believes that the introduction of different worship modalities would raise eyebrows, but it would eventually be accepted if he had the financial wherewithal to sustain it. The responses in this interview represented mainly a congenial atmosphere emerging out of initial resistance. While most of the other interviewees explained challenges based in whole or part on their ethnic background, this pastor enjoys a more productive relationship with his congregations after his years of creating and nurturing that relationship.

Pastor 07 is a mature, well experienced, dynamic, and bold woman of God. Very well qualified to be a pastor, she has practiced ministry in various settings, with much success. Yet, her formal interview echoed a familiar refrain, but with cautious overtones. She is black and of Afro-Caribbean heritage. She identifies herself as “One of Africa’s Children in the Diaspora... In other words, I am black.”<sup>83</sup> She brought a certain cautious wisdom to the session. She was frank, yet didactic in her responses. She showed her vulnerability, yet demonstrated a resoluteness of will to take charge. She exuded courage in dealing with the issues in her settings and showed that her approach has been to call

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<sup>83</sup> Interview with Pastor 07, February 28, 2019.

things out for what they are, yet to do it with a wisdom that reflects her awareness of where and who she is.

Pastor 07's congregation is 90% Caucasian, 5% Asian, 3% Latino and, a few blacks among the various mixtures. The ethnic make-up of her congregation reflects the broader secular community, with many of the white ethnic groups being represented—that is Anglo, German, Irish, and Italian. Pastor 07 responded to question 6 of the questionnaire as follows:

Our experiences differ because we see the same situations differently. Given the same set of facts, our perceptions and conclusions are different. Most of them [the congregants] see things through a very individualistic light. But I see it through the experience of my community (that is the black community). As I am a parent and a grandparent, I present with certain biases to social issues as does others. But I look at things through the lens of my community. Something may not happen to me personally, but if it happens to someone in my broader community [black], I take that personal as though it happened to me. We will not see things the same because I see it from the perspective of one that is oppressed, they do not share that experience. They are the beneficiaries of the system that oppresses my people. And though they did not build the house, they certainly live in it and benefit from it. So, we will not see things the same. So many times, my congregants will say, "Well I am not Racist." But the fact is that I look at things from an Afrocentric perspective, and they view it from a European point of view, and those two views are not the same.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Interview with Pastor 07, February 28, 2019.

She gave an example of the differences in experiences. She explained that her congregants were surprised when she and other black folks mentioned that they have had to have “the talk”<sup>85</sup> with their sons. “What talk?” the congregants asked. They were then mortified that in the black community, such a thing exists. She then explained that because those experiences are different and perceived differently, in this congregation, she would not attempt to discuss it. In some cases, she would not even mention it in order to avoid the contentious controversies that sometimes arise from those type of discussions. She stated that most times, it cannot be expressed, far less addressed, in normal conversations.

Pastor 07 discussed worship styles, agreeing that in most white churches, the liturgical style is traditional. In her experience, white churches are slightly tolerant of different ethnic styles, as long as they are not permanent. She tells of great resentment that exists for non-Eurocentrically originated cultural expressions. She expressed that as long as a change does not threaten permanency, it can be tolerated. But it must not threaten the privileged place of the status quo culture. Pastor 07 testified that initially, many people were troubled with her presence, as an ethnic minority. In general, though, she was well-received. She continued:

I have a unique way of pastoring white people. I will speak of justice in the context that we all want the same things, as opposed to using flash-bang statements such as “black lives matter!” I craft my sermons with a particular sensitivity so that it is not offensive or too shocking to the congregation. I speak

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<sup>85</sup> “The Talk” is a conversation that many black parents will have with their children, and particularly with their sons, about behavior during encounters with police officers, and even in some cases with white people in certain communities.

my truth, but I don't just shout out loud. I always do a manuscript, though I am extemporaneous. My manuscript helps me to think things through and craft my thoughts so that I say them well. I do not take on the approach that I came out here and that I am going to change these people.

So, Pastor 06 has found an effective way to balance her expression of strong thoughts and feelings with words to minimize adverse impact on her congregation. This, she believes, works well for her.

Pastor 07 made another interesting observation. She explained that her knowledge from prior extra-ecclesial experiences became an asset that brought her much appreciation from the locals in the new congregation. She said that they respected the fact that she added so much value to their operation, purely because of the secular knowledge base that she possessed. She commented that her congregation respects value-added. Not only is she a great ecclesial leader, but because her secular knowledge is so substantive, it saves the church monies that would normally be paid for the extra-pastoral services she performs at a high level of competence. This pastor believes that she has shattered the stereotypical expectation that the congregation held for her as a person of color. They expected a "welfare queen," but she is the business queen that the congregation so greatly needed.

Pastor 07 was the one that had probably the sharpest rebuke to the conference's effort at cross-cultural appointment-making. Her view is that many of the pastors of color that are sent into white churches come from spirited, active, and successful black churches. They are sent into severely damaged, and many times dying or declining, white churches. These pastors are now sent into struggling congregations without the necessary

wherewithal or resources to engage in the recovery activities required to improve or correct the church's lethal trajectory. The problem is further exacerbated with the arrival of this counter-cultured person, who is now seen as more of an offense than as an asset. Previous white pastors have committed great injury to these churches. Now, the black pastor is given a double challenge. The pastor must change the worship culture to make it a more appealing experience that will attract new people. Simultaneously, the new black pastor also has the responsibility of combatting the prejudices and bigotry that are entrenched in the subculture of these institutions. These two tasks are not congruent with each other. Pastor 07 claims that it is like dropping a nuclear bomb into a combat zone and hoping that nothing triggers it to explode.

Pastor 07 spoke passionately about her area of particular challenge. She said that because she has been serving white churches for so long, and that she has been out of her social location for so many years, she feels that she has been impeded from the style of worship that truly satisfies her. There is a cognitive dissonance produced by the disconnection from their cultural origins that pastors have to experience in cross-cultural appointments. As Pastor 07 explained,

The fact is that I also go to church to worship. And when I worship in these settings, not having that true authentic worship that relates to me, is particularly a challenge to me. To the congregations I serve, this style of worship is good for them. But coming from my background, my need in the worship experience is different and it is not represented in this new space. That is the challenge that I have to learn to live with. But it is a huge challenge. I have now been going without the worship experience that I am used to, and find authentic, for a long



time. The intellectual challenge is good for me in these churches. But the form of worship, where my needs are met, is not present, is a challenge to my very experience of God.

Even though Pastor 07 tempers her message and attitudes so that she is less imposing on her congregation, she laments that yet her worship needs are not being satisfied in her engagement with the worship model in that context.

### Pastors Speak: An Outstanding Perspective

I was particularly eager to conduct my interview with Pastor 04. She is a black Latina who is fiercely dedicated to the cause of justice and is known for her activism. Her boldness in challenging injustice is legendary among her peers. She has a well appreciated track record of struggle, activism, advocacy, and resistance against injustice. Within the recent past, Pastor 04 finds herself with the challenge of a cross-cultural appointment. As she stated before, when you are your own advocate, It is a different dynamic altogether. This pastor reported that her congregation is culturally different from her, in the sense that she said “I see God as a friend who walks with you, while most of the congregation view God as a genie in a bottle, who shows up sometimes. Most of them do not understand that racism still exists or that it is something that we are still combatting.”<sup>86</sup> She said, that many of her congregants express the attitude that racism was in the past and that black people should just get over it already. Her messages that convey top justice issues would most times elicit a mixed response from the audience. Many of them would take on the eyeroll attitude, while a few others will be responsive

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<sup>86</sup> Interview with Pastor 04, January 18, 2019.

with a cheerful, “Yeah!” Her church has two services. Although one is described as contemporary and the other as traditional, they are both really traditional but attract people based on their preferences for the slightly different tones and practices. The congregants make efforts at building relationships, but that extends to the fellowship hour only. Beyond that, there is no outreach, even in the neighborhood. Missions to them are activities that happen abroad, not next door.

Pastor 04 is the first black pastor in that church, and she relates the story of one parishioner who confessed that when she saw her picture, she was not sure if they would have anything in common. Upon further probing, the parishioner revealed that she was concerned that the pastor was black and that she would not be able to relate to her as the pastor. Pastor 04 questioned her, “Am I a woman? We have that in common.” The parishioner retorted with the response that she was not a racist; her best friend is black. Pastor 04 questioned her, “Well how am I different from your friend, and how many black friends do you have? If you could relate to your friend, then why would you not be able to relate to me? Is it that you do not see someone black in the role as a pastor or in a leadership role with you? Do you think that there is some racism in your statement? Where, then, is that coming from?”<sup>87</sup> This exchange shows that Pastor 04 is a straight shooter and will deal with the matter directly, and in the moment.

The pastor expressed that her congregation is open to exploring cultural diversity in worship but do not have anyone who can play the variety of music they would incorporate. The pastor says that she does not think that the resistance she experiences is based on her race, but rather it may be fear of the unknown. For this congregation,

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<sup>87</sup> Interview with Pastor 04, January 18, 2019.

outreach is scary. She feels, as do other pastors, that the conference is not doing a good job at cross-cultural appointments. She thinks that quite often, there is a brain-drain out of the black community with these pastors who would possibly be real assets to the black community. However, they are appointed to mostly resistive white churches where they are neutered by the onslaught of abuse and must acquire survival instincts to preserve their own familial security.

Asked if she feels that white people are afraid of colonization in reverse, and are protecting themselves against what they see as a black conspiracy or an agenda to take over their churches, she replied immediately, "No!" She explained that the white power structure is too well entrenched for that to happen, but the fear of it may be a real fear that drives their actions. She mentioned that she has never seen one white church that has changed their hymns for Gospel music. She jested, "White people believe that they are the saviors of the world, and nothing is going to change that, or them." She posited further,

They do not see a need for change on their part, because they conclude that they only have to tolerate you for a short while, then you're gone. If not, and there is too much change, then there is the white flight option. However, they have many tools of resistance to change and they are readily open to using them.

Pastor 04 stated that the effort of cross-cultural change is not working because after all this time, the denomination is still 93% white.

Pastor 04 sees that the greatest challenge for this church is they think that growing the church's revenue and not winning the lost is the church's main purpose. They really do not believe in converting people to Jesus or making Disciples of Jesus Christ. What

they see is declining membership. Therefore, “we need another 15 tithe-paying families in here to help us cover these bills.” But “the projects” is not where you will find such tithe-paying families. Those people need not come. They do not need relationships with them. She imitated with raised eyebrows, peeling eyes, a smirk, and quote-fingers, “You got to go to the ‘good areas’ and try to get those people to join us.” Pastor 04 continued to clarify her point by explaining:

It is almost as if it is a social club, rather than a real Bible-believing response to the great commission of the Lord, in whom they claim to believe. The church must grow, but it must grow with the right people, and people of color is not it. This would be funny if it was not so serious. Really, the white churches are so cerebral and pragmatic that Jesus is one of the options that they offer, rather than being the central focus of everything that they do, which is where a lot of the conflicts lie. What do we do with Jesus? Do we ourselves serve him while we serve him to others?<sup>88</sup>

As is typical to her personality, Pastor 04 left us with an important question, and many profound thoughts to ponder. She is known for often taking a no-nonsense approach to ministry. As she pastored her former congregation, which was predominantly black, she was known to be an assertive bottomliner. That approach might work well for a black female in a mainly black congregation, but in a cross-cultural setting it may pose some problems as it may play into stereotypes of an angry black woman, and the reactions to that perception can pose greater problems for her. In her interview, however, she

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<sup>88</sup> Interview with Pastor 04, January 18, 2019.

explained more succinctly what the others were saying indirectly and summarized well the commonly held point of view of most of the interviewees.

### Summary of Interviews

The interviewed pastors gladly welcomed the opportunity to pour out their concerns, their frustrations, and even their anger. They generally felt that the conference is proactively engaging multiple efforts to address racial justice issues within its structures. They were satisfied that there is meaningful dialogue geared to reverse the historical injustice that plagues the church. They were proud of the conference engaging in meaningful activities, of which the service of repentance held in the Annual Conference of 2017 is an example. Another example is the NYAC's support of the General Conference's stance on racial justice issues which is expressed in the Social Principles of the UMC.<sup>89</sup> They were happy that the General Conference has transferred to the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) responsibility to implement the Social Principles. Also, the GBCS is presently working on changes to the *Book of Resolutions*, which would address many social issues including race relations. Only one of the black pastors interviewed claimed to have had only small initial resistance which declined in the ensuing years. As stated before, it is an outlier response because it differed from the experiences of the other interviewees. The only white pastor interviewed expressed little resistance in his service to predominantly black churches. He also spoke of his own transformative experience in growing to appreciate the worship style of his congregation. The non-UMC pastor (Episcopalian) explained that as an Episcopalian his worship

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<sup>89</sup> *Social Principles of the United Methodist Church 2013-2016: with Official Text and Teaching Exercises, Plus Our Social Creed* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 2013).

experience with all his congregations are about the same because they do not stray too far from their liturgy. The major points of contention that were unanimous among the UMC interviewees are as follows:

1. Frustration and dissatisfaction with their effectiveness in cross-cultural ministerial appointments;
2. Ongoing, repeated, and unnecessary resistance to their pastoral efforts at making even minuscule changes;
3. Varied and frequent bouts of unpleasant verbal and even physical exchanges, while dealing with sometimes very trivial church matters;
4. Aggrievement that they had to facilitate a worship style where they were not enjoying the richness of the worship experience from their former communities, and that there was so little tolerance for giving place to new experiences in their appointed locations; and
5. Tremendous resistance and challenges to their leadership from the entrenched white power structures that existed and continued to hold sway in the local churches.

Pastors with whom I shared informal conversations, who were similarly appointed, generally shared the same feelings as their interviewed counterparts. In the five areas of concern above the strongest and most passionate lament generally came while discussing item number four above. This issue exposed their loss of the worship freedoms which were so common in their former communities. Pastors 01, 02, 04, and 07 who expressed this concern wished that they could introduce these worship modalities into their new spaces. Some of them fantasized about the richness and euphoria that they

could add to the worship experience should the congregations become open to such experimentation.

I also shared the same sentiment. I long to fulfill my worship desire in the house where I labor, and with the people whom I am assigned to serve. As I facilitate them in their worship mode, I wish that they would value my ministry as more than paid service. Rather, I wish that they would see me as facilitating our shared entry into a mutual space where we meet God in a manner that allows each to fully experience God's presence.

### **Some Informal Discussions**

Of my ten informal discussions, four were with male pastors and six were with female pastors. Five pastors were LatinX, of which three were females and two were males. There were two Asian pastors; both were female. There were two black pastors: one male and one female; and there was one informal discussion with a white pastor. Four of the five LatinX pastors served predominantly white churches, and the other now serves a mixed but predominantly black congregation. The story of his experience in this congregation is briefly dealt with later in this chapter. Of the four LatinX pastors who served white congregations, three of whom are females, all four, including the other male pastor who has suffered the same experience as his female counterparts, griped about the difficulty of serving in sometimes intractable predominantly white churches. The remaining five informal discussions were split as follows: One was a white male who served a predominantly black congregation. This was his first appointment after seminary. Two were females of Asian descent, one was a black female and the other was a black male.

The white male pastor claimed to have had a typical pastoral experience at his appointment, with customarily expected adjustments on the part of both himself and the congregation. Since he came from Iowa, the worship experience in a black church was new to him, but well appreciated over time. I could attest to this because I knew him during his tenure at that church. It was a small, predominantly black church with only two white parishioners. This pastor explained that his main challenge came out of his own pastoral inexperience. He also had some difficulty in adjusting to the different worship style of this black and heavily Caribbean congregation. His training, however, gave him the skill, and his common sense and humility assisted in his work with his new congregation. At the end of the year that he spent in the cross-cultural appointment, he reported that his reappointment to a conservative and traditional white congregation was a culture shock to him. He whispered to me that he missed the jubilation of his former (black) congregation.

The only LatinX pastor who served a non-white, mixed congregation, comprised of black and Latino parishioners had an interesting story. He pastored two churches who shared the same space. One was predominantly LatinX, and the other was predominantly black. The LatinX congregants unfortunately refused to worship with the black parishioners. They reportedly even took issue with the LatinX pastor being married to a black woman. The parishioners planned and led a protest action in which they attended church one Sunday and waited until the pastor was about to preach. Then they all arose, walked out, and never returned. That congregation has since recovered, with record growth, which was never before witnessed in that congregation. Both female pastors who were of Asian descent reported that they experienced open disrespect, and bouts of



physical intimidation by male parishioners who held prominent roles in the church. They were denied basic benefits, clearly mandated in the *Book of Discipline* and in Conference Guidelines. Benefits, such as expense reimbursements, were refused and fought against all the way to the District level. The two Asian Pastors explained that their culturally inherent appearance of docility had disarmed their detractors from the strength and resolve that these two Korean women revealed. When they knew that they were in the right they fought resolutely for that right, much to the chagrin of their detractors.

The next pastor in the informal sample (a black female), has survived for upwards of eight years in her current appointment. The initial years, she explained, were rough. She fought many battles and was at times even locked out of the church. After demonstrating her strength and determination to succeed, and despite the many conflicts she described, she and her opponents now operate in a fragile truce. She continues to face the challenge of her appointment with uncommon courage and will prudently avail the rest of us that were in similar circumstances of the benefits of her wisdom, experience and counsel on the matter.

The black male pastor who informally shared his experiences faced the gravest challenge in the first month of his cross-cultural appointment. Within that first month after his arrival in his new congregation, all but two of the white parishioners that he met there suddenly stopped attending the services. About three months after his arrival, he received a letter from a fellow United Methodist pastor who pastored a congregation a short distance away. The letter contained a list of names of the absentee parishioners (all white). These parishioners wished to transfer their memberships to the writing pastor's congregation. He questioned the wisdom of the writing pastor's action and request, but

then he acquiesced to the idea that what the parishioners wanted should be his guide in this matter. Many were the horror stories of those pastors with whom I spoke informally. They were more liberal with information than those that I formally interviewed.

While some of the adverse experiences of these pastors could be attributed to the antagonism which unfortunately still exists against women in pastoral ministry, the main issue that caused the problems was the pastors' race. Evidently, the hostility is not only occurring among white congregations against pastors of color, but also within the LatinX congregations which may bear residual ethnic tensions with other groups. These conflicts are complicated and arise out of historical anxieties and prejudices that still survive today. It may be that as the denomination continues to be so predominantly white, focus on the CR/CC appointments issues within that context would be a good jumping off point to address the issue between groups generally. While this is so, it does not mean that the problem between other ethnic or racial groups in the church is any less salient or palpable as relating to CR/CC appointments in general.

For all the interviewees, the reality of racism within their CR/CC appointments is the very fabric of their lives. A few pastors among the group achieved interracial congeniality. Yet, an element of their personal relationship with God that was sacrificed for this congeniality was an ethnic-based form of worship that I have called black worship/spirituality in an earlier chapter. I conclude this chapter by narrating a cross-racial encounter that occurred in an event hosted by the NYAC that was not within a congregational appointment setting, but relevant, nonetheless. That the encounter occurred at a special convening of clergy at the NYAC points to the insidious way racism pervades the church's fabric. Even those who are anti-racist can inadvertently propagate

its tenets when it is not as obvious to them. However, some of the interviewees of this paper were at that special convening of the conference. For them, it was the cross-cultural encounter that was challenging, and they did not hesitate to challenge its comfortable racist assumptions. They did so with courage, boldness, conviction, and weary intolerance for persistently lingering racist ideas.

It was an interesting phenomenon to witness the interviewees' engagement in a confrontation at the special convocation of the conference in April 2019. There, the keynote speaker discussed Christian leadership using as their example the conduct of the American explorers, Lewis and Clark, on their exploratory journey to the west.<sup>90</sup> He highlighted the shining examples of persistence, entrepreneurship, and success provided by the heroes, Lewis and Clark. Before long, a lone black female pastor interrupted him. She was promptly joined by a few other pastors of color. They found that the speaker's presentation of Lewis and Clark as stellar examples of Christian leadership to be objectionable and injurious, particularly to the people of color in his audience. Their claim was that it represented typical Eurocentric reasoning that continues to shape the thinking of those who are exposed to it. They claimed that the interpretation of the facts, as it was being expounded by the speaker, was fraught with white supremacist presuppositions which permeate white U.S. thinking.

The disagreement occurred one day while attending the convocation. I could not help but conclude that the bold rebuttal and austere resistance of several black clergy people to the presuppositions of the day's lecturer may have come out of a compelling need to react to assumptions to which we all too often reluctantly acquiesce.

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<sup>90</sup> Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018).

The black clergy people's challenges to the speaker on that day certainly demonstrated that these assumptions will not be allowed to dominate clerical discourse anymore.

They complained that the telling of that narrative, in that way, perpetuates the racial stereotypes and continues to support the thinking that is the source of so much historical grief and pain. They maintained that the different voices inside the stories must be accounted for in ways that do not cement the discourse in white patriarchal terms. Those voices have a place, and they must be equally represented. York is the black slave who is most well-known for accompanying Lewis and Clark. He, among others, provided expertise and services indispensable to the success of the mission without being given due credit. As they explained their position, I thought, "Truly, they were not just mindless beasts of burden that had no opinion, stake, or agency in the ongoing enterprise, though forced to participate. Yet, who is telling their story in the process? And why is it not seen as necessary to give them voice in the overall narrative?"

The resistant clergy further contended that this story must also be told through the eyes of the Native American woman who was really, by virtue of her background, the key navigator of the uncharted terrain. The two white men should not only be lauded in their community for their great beneficial conquest, but they must be called out for who and what they were. They were men who claimed a relationship with the Lord yet practiced their inhumanity and counter-Christian culture as slavers, rapists, murderers, and bigots: slavers because they owned slaves; rapists because they imposed themselves on subordinates who did not have the wherewithal to say no. Their stories tell of their shortcomings in this trek. They were more driven by lust and greed than by the qualities to which they claimed to aspire. The clergy people's rallying cry was that in the process of

de-colonizing our ecclesial minds, there should be no free passes for white male privilege anymore—no justification for capitalistic values at the expense of our values that promote our common humanity and true Christian virtue. They insisted that we re-tell the story rightly, with no more loving and making of a lie. The concerns of this group had to be addressed then and there. These black Christian leaders were claiming injury and they were not having it anymore. The black clergy vehemently argued that this is where the perpetuation of the speaker's presuppositions must stop. The impasse of the day evoked a pastoral intervention by the bishop, who skillfully negotiated a suitable truce, that enabled the session to move forward.

Among the gathered there was mixed reaction. Some of our white counterparts stood up and vociferously echoed the call for corrective action. Others remained silent, with a look of consternation, and some with looks of disgust. It is noteworthy that a number of other white clergypersons left the convocation at this point. It is plausible to assume that among that number were persons who objected to the disruption. Yet, there were a few black clergypersons who countered the resistance and demanded that the speaker be allowed to continue his message without further interruption. They claimed that there were some folks present who wanted to hear the lecture as is. In the moment, I was proud of the courage of the black clergy who were willing to stand and to strongly represent a usually marginalized/ostracized/unacceptable/stigmatized viewpoint whose time had come.

The practices within the church surrounding the propagation of white supremacy and the misrepresentation of African American history and the caricaturing of African Americans, and other people of color must be countered. The negative historical profiles

of people of color must be eclipsed by a new view which is not tainted by traditional Eurocentric, racially insensitive narratives. These efforts are essential if the issue of white hegemony within the church is to be properly addressed. I admired the humility of the speaker, who acknowledged the virulence of his presuppositions in speaking to this crowd, and quickly offered alternate sessions to address the emergent issues. I learned from the example of the bishop, who clearly understood the problem and refused to sit this one out. He was exemplary in resolving the issue in a pastoral manner towards all involved. The behavior of the clergy of color was a demonstration of the radical courage that it would take to make meaningful change in the body of Christ on the entrenched issue of racism. This courageous act in the face of possible adverse consequences said a lot to me because at least four of the clergypersons who stood up had been or were scheduled to be interviewed by me. This, to me, was not just a thoughtless act of rebellion or insubordination, but it was an example of the holy boldness and courage which fortifies those sent into the cross-cultural spaces. The contrition of the speaker and the conciliatory action of the Bishop, both provoked by the boldness of the clergy of color, were noteworthy—all these folks were intent on making change. That is a model of what it takes to make things better and to improve race relations in the church.

## CHAPTER 4: OUR CONCLUSION

### **Grappling with Some Theological and Doctrinal Issues**

Certainly, the argument can be made that the worship world of my youth was based on ignorance, coming from the lack of education that typified the social position of my forebears. African slaves, imitating their colonial masters, and produced a religious experience to satisfy their longing for a relationship with God. This religious practice, over generations, has become legitimized. It now occupies a space of acceptance, if for no other reasons than that it has survived the test of time, and that it has helped a people to thrive through the roughest period of their personal and collective histories. Illiteracy forced them to rely heavily on oral tradition. But as time and opportunity passed, scripture was introduced and interpreted to fit the need that was quite effectively being filled without scripture. A Eurocentric interpretation of scripture was not convenient to the social circumstances of the worshippers. For instance, formal marriage was not necessarily a requirement for cohabitation in this community. Marriage, to them, was a couple getting together and producing children and successfully staying together. As the European interpretation of scripture took hold, suddenly, the people in the traditional model found themselves to be sinners in need of serious correction and instruction. As could be imagined, this did not sit very well with the practitioners of my traditional faith. In many other doctrinal issues, they found themselves to be wanting, particularly when the Eurocentric way of viewing the world was applied. Even their most potent worship that brought so much strength and satisfaction to them was now in question as to the manner and object of their faith.

As the history of Colonialism progressed, and as my ex-slave forbears became increasingly civilized, or should I say “Europeanized,” their faith fell more into question. We, the later successors of that faith, being educated under a British colonial model, had legitimate questions of the progenitors of our faith because many things were not lining up. Answers given to our questions were feeble and laughable, and in many cases the lack of the ability to express the ideas of what makes this unusual Christian sect so ubiquitous and potent just gave way to silence, perhaps because some things are just best left unexplained. “Sabucara! One day, one day Congotay,” the elders will tell you. I was never sure what they meant by that expression. As rational youths, we would smirk with the pride that we may have just won the argument by default. But in our hearts, there was still the question as to the bona fide survival of that faith; the love for the Lord God through his son Jesus Christ, the truly transformative experiences that people undergo in that faith community, the miraculous movement of the Holy Spirit in those circles, as opposed to the seeming absence of that Spirit in the dominant cultural worship. The indomitable spirit of that movement remained: not even the pangs of masa’s whippings, or the brutality of the British colonial constabulary, or the rebuke and scoffing of the socially placed religious belief systems—none has succeeded in eradicating or curtailing the growth of this grassroots religious movement. Robinson explained: “Oral cultures tell stories that are not necessarily interested in total accuracy. The narratives extrapolate the stories to make a point. The verification of the veracity of facts was not the focus, but only the moral of the story. There is no analytic relevance, but it is most times ethnographic in style and flavor.”<sup>91</sup> The progenitors of the faith community of my youth

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<sup>91</sup> Randall C. Baily, *The People’s Companion to the Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010).



would conclude that they have no obligation to acquiesce to the scolding of the dominant faith community. They would argue that the dominant Eurocentric faith model has no right to dictate to this faith community how the scripture should be handled or interpreted. Their conclusions would be that the final arbiter of these questions is none but God. They would vehemently contest that God only has the right of demythologizing spirituality. Churches that are numerological in their responses to God's call are often shunned and revered as "low class revivalism." They are considered to be low-class folks' expressions of ignorance. And so, they fail the entrance test for an equal place on the worship platform. The question asked by Dr. Althea Spencer-Miller should be fully examined, "Is there space for alternate biblical hermeneutics which offers an opportunity to explore an unaccustomed perspective for biblical interpretations? What does it mean to place an Afro/Caribbean model, rather than a European model at the center of the analysis of the worship experience? While dominant culture seeks to establish the rules, many in the broader culture stand in sharp exception to the rulers and proceed continually to violate those rules."<sup>92</sup> Spencer-Miller's call blends with a burgeoning contemporary chorus of those calling for reexamination of "the traditional" in light of an earnest cry from an emerging society that long for real experiences that are not rooted in the orthodoxy of a sordid past.

### **Conclusion**

Randall Robinson stated, "Perhaps we should take this as a signal that those who put the Bible together recognized that culture and times influence theology, and that there

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<sup>92</sup> Spencer-Miller, Lecture.

is more than one way to look at things. Readers from different cultures and different times have looked at the same text and come up with radically different ways of interpreting the text.”<sup>93</sup> Within the worship of my childhood faith communities, there was a transcendent experience, with the Lord’s presence. My childhood faith community was skilled at the art of theologically jumping off the ledge. Their interest is in the Jesus who really did not belong anywhere or to anyone. They are drawn to a Jesus who created space where there was no space; the Jesus who did not fit where humanity would place him; the Jesus as a person who is transcendent of the movement; Jesus as one who re-allocates resources to the places most needed; Jesus as one who is real to others as he is to them. They worship a Jesus disembodied, and a Jesus who sees the people lost in the crowd. To my primary faith community, Jesus does not belong to the elite. He is not the exclusive possession of anyone. They realize that those who control the levers of socio-political power are the ones who make the reality for everyone else. Yet they choose not to acquiesce to the reality created for them. They experience God in their own reality, and that is sufficient for them.

### **Can My Two Worlds’ Worship Experiences Coexist?**

That we are all called to worship the great God of creation is a foregone conclusion. For everything that has breath must praise the Lord. Further, our faith demands that all of creation must give glory to God, meaning that we ought not to live our lives oblivious to that call. Our sentience as human beings gives us greater responsibility in worship, which calls us to bring the best of our beings to bear on the

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<sup>93</sup> Baily, *The People’s Companion*, 13.

worship experience. All our manufacture and design, all our gifts and graces, all our worth and value must be employed in the grandest expression of love for our creator. The objective of our worship is to honor the creator and build bridges of love and unity among his creatures. We do fail in that objective when we become more fixated on the creatures' involvement in the worship than on the object of that worship, which is God our Savior. Even worse is when we do not see the humanity of others in the worship space and give place to them and all their earnest worshipful expressions. Once we begin to think that our own modalities of worship must be the evaluation criteria of the modalities of others, and the bases for awarding a place in the worship space, then we have stepped into the realm of selfish, prideful arrogance, which is anathema in the space of adoration for God. The human biases that we hold must be checked at the door of the worship space. This worship space is not necessarily a physical building, but it is a place of experiencing God's fullness—a place of love and charity for neighbor, and a place where we can all be equal before the one who knows us in all of our shame and vulnerability. In God's presence, we relinquish our agendas, and we expose our defenselessness to God in the hope that we will receive all the redemptive wholeness that God has promised to deliver.

The movement of God's Spirit in that space is often beyond recognition because of the mysterious ways that the Spirit chooses to manifest at times. But that is a testimony to the fact that God will not be constrained by human limits and that no human effort to order God's manifestation in that space will be esteemed. God is no respecter of persons. In that worship space, lives are irreversibly changed, and circumstances are altered for the better. Reversals of adversities are available for the asking because that space is the

presence of God, where there is fullness of joy, and pleasures forevermore. No individual or culture has police power in that worship space. All authority ends, eminent domain is solely God's, and the overriding priority becomes the will of God for all of us. People enter that space in error and return corrected. Their brokenness is mended; their ignorance is replaced with an intuitive wisdom that surpasses human understanding. No flesh or pragmatic mind can glory in that space. Those who attempt to bring cultural dominance can only hope to affect those who are nominally and non-participatory guests in that space. The superficiality of their approach to, and their expectation for that space is fulfilled solely in their bid for cultural dominance. They do not even approach perception of the height or the depth of that mysterious edifice. The human wisdom that they possess is earthly, sensual, and devilish. But to those of us who come thereto lacking agenda, and with simplicity and vulnerability, God shows up ready to make a difference in us and in the circumstances of our lives. While I do not wish to tone as preachy and judgmental at this point, the logic of education, the efficacy of words, and the constraint of time would not afford me the ability to fully clarify these ideas, or to be as scholarly and rational as warranted by this thesis.

All things being considered, the term cross-cultural is a very broad concept that could entail the dealing with, or offering comparison between two or more different cultures, or cultural areas. While we appreciate the vastness of the concept of the term cross-cultural, for the purposes of this project, I have evaluated it in its narrowest definition as being cross-racial and ethnic demarcation lines which are being analyzed in this paper. The cultural psychologists at the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* have offered an analysis of three conceptual ideas that relate to this subject, describing the

social dynamic among groups of people coming together from different cultural backgrounds. The three concepts are cross-culturalism, multiculturalism, and interculturalism.<sup>94</sup> They posit that there are some shortcomings with cross-cultural relationships. Applying their ideas in our context will show that in cross-cultural appointments, pastors are held up to the norms and standards of the dominant culture. They are expected to match up to or to embody the ideals of the culture which is held to be the normative culture. Everything they do is evaluated on that basis, and other expressions of ministerial initiative are deemed a violation or a mistake. So, the pastor's cultural origin is contrasted to the normative model, rather than anticipated as another way of doing the same thing or reaching the same objectives. The pastor's cultural difference is acknowledged, and in some cases, it is even understood. However, it does not bring about the transformative change which is essential for true fellowship in the worship space. A few individuals may acquiesce to the pastor's cultural difference, but there is no real collective transformative change in the congregation to give place to the pastor's contributive efforts. The congregation demands "culture fit" from the pastor. According to an article which appeared on HRTechnologist.com:

Culture fit tries to quantify how well a candidate can adapt to the ethical position of your organization. . . . "Culture add" can play a significant role when you assess candidates. Here, you're not only looking for an alignment between the

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<sup>94</sup> Mahfud et al., "Multiculturalism."

candidate and your organization's values, but you're also seeking value add from them joining your company.<sup>95</sup>

This being the case, it is obvious that cross-cultural appointments will fail to bring about the desired end of full and complete fellowship between varying cultural worship templates because there is a demand for conformity and an evaluative default for the level of conformity to the established norm. A pastor occupies a very personal place in the life of every parishioner. The relationship that the parishioner holds with a pastor is one that tends to be inherently deep, sincere, and meaningful. This relationship requires mutual vulnerability, though a higher level of reliance is manifested on the part of the parishioner than on the part of the pastor. That could be an unnerving proposition for persons who have not come to terms with their own personal prejudices and biases. To have that sort of relationship with someone whom one considers to be culturally or otherwise inferior, and lower on the evolutionary scale than oneself is to feel an inherent sense of loss or diminishment.

One pastor commented, "There is no presumption that I know anything. One parishioner asked me when would I be going for my elder's orders." The pastor thought that this question was offensive, because she had been a fully ordained pastor for several years and had served in senior Bishop's cabinet positions for many years. Had the parishioner just taken the time to look at the church's published information about the pastor, this would quickly come to light. The parishioner just concluded that this pastor was inadequately qualified for her position. The pastor continued to say,

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<sup>95</sup> "Culture Fit vs. Culture Add: Will Your Recruits Add to Company Culture?" HR Technologist, November 26, 2019, <https://www.hrtechnologist.com/articles/recruitment-onboarding/culture-fit-vs-culture-add-will-your-recruits-add-to-company-culture/>.

I feel if I had been a white male, then things would have been different for me. While they have given problems to many pastors before me, I do feel that I am experiencing a different level of nastiness, unabashed nastiness, that other pastors would not have experienced. We ought to ask congregations to address these hard questions: What does it mean to you when a person of color says to you, I am your pastor? How does it feel that maybe you're not sure that you can embrace me, because you do not have any experience relating with someone who looks like me? How does that play itself out in the life of the church? Do you have the resilience to have these tough conversations with your pastor so that you could continue your growth in the Lord? We do not do a good job at tackling these issues when making these appointments in the Conference.<sup>96</sup>

Again we see the lament that is shared by so many pastors in CR/CC. The conference needs to do more in preparing congregations to engage this necessary process.

Again, applying the ideas of the cultural psychologist from the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* in our context, we could conclude that at best, pastors would be happy to achieve a multicultural church. A multicultural church is one in which many cultures peacefully co-exist. Everyone is aware of the others and does not have a problem with the other cultures' presence. Ethnic foods are served from time to time, and there is broad tolerance for diversity in song, dance, music, and instrumentation. People can feel embraced and be appreciated for who they are. No one feels that his offering in the worship space is an imposition, but rather it is valued and emulated. The problem with multiculturalism is that while there is peaceful co-existence, there is no real transfer of

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<sup>96</sup> Interview with Pastor 02, January 17, 2019.

value. Respect exists for difference, but that is as far as it goes. There is little to no transformative collective impact on the whole. I am still me and you are still you. The us is nothing but an understanding or a fragile truce of co-existence. The intrinsic value of the contribution of each group is admired at a distance, but not embraced and internalized as an indelible part of the whole.<sup>97</sup>

Perhaps the ideal objective for the conference to pursue should be interculturalism. The creation of more intercultural congregations is more reflective of the Apostle Peter's efforts in the early church after his iconic vision. Consistent with Peter's statement, Scripture states: "34 Then Peter opened [his] mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."<sup>98</sup> Once more, using a contextual application of the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology's* concept of interculturalism, we can say that intercultural congregations can be places of deeper respect and deliberate efforts for understanding each other's cultures. They can be nurturing spaces where the best of all of us is shared, embraced, and appreciated. Relationships between various cultures will be deepened by honest conversations and exchange of ideas. Cultural approaches to problems would be evaluated and justly vetted to see if their applications in the present context would be beneficial to the whole. Nothing would be considered inferior because of its origins, but the wisdom of age-old traditions which are tried, and battle tested, would be introduced as solutions to present ecclesial problems. Collective congregational transformation would be inevitable, because the cultures learn from each

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<sup>97</sup> Mahfud et al., "Multiculturalism."

<sup>98</sup> Act 10:34-35 KJV.



other and so everyone is edified and benefits from the time-tested wisdom of all the other members of the community. Competition for preeminence based on presuppositions of superiority of one culture over others would be absent or discouraged. Cultural egalitarianism would be given a healthy chance at success among the devout subscribers of every congregation. This would be the highest aspirational value as opposed to engaging models of singular cultural dominance. People would accept our differences and not focus on them as a source for competition, but we would embrace the best that we all bring to the table and incorporate the differences into the whole for the betterment of us all. An intercultural congregation is not easy to build, but like the Acts 2:46 church, it will foster cooperative congregations and precipitate the favor of God and of all humanity.

### **Other Ideas to Explore: Bitterness or Betterment**

In the two years that followed my initial encounter with H. T. in the vignette related in the introductory chapter, I was deliberate in showing brother H. T. what Christian love is about. I engaged him on every level. I patronized his business. I selected him to work with me on projects. I was determined to be in his face and to let him see me as a person and not as a social location. I prayed with him often, and I greeted and hugged him after each service. I showed interest in the things and activities he was interested in. Amazingly, I have seen this brother transform into one of the most loving and caring persons in the congregation. He called me with any information he received on members who are too sick or too shy to call me themselves. When he celebrated his wedding anniversary, he asked me to preside over the renewing of his vows at his home

with his family. The event was a grand one, and my wife and I were the only two people of color at the event. The lack of racial variety in that event showed me his world and possible source of his insensitivity, but the presence of my wife and me also showed his effort at transformation, and what is possible in the work of CR/CC appointments.

In the same vignette of my encounter with brother H. T. who insulted me, The impulse was to let him have my full venom as an example to all so likeminded as I presumed he was. Every instinct in me was to diminish this brother for his audacious outward racial animus. The lower nature in me yearned to make him see and feel the fearless anger that possessed me in the moment. But just at that time I recalled my cross-cultural submersion professor, Dr. Elkins, walking us through some of the attitudes we faced during our submersion session. My training in cross-cultural tolerance tempered my actions and gave me a related experience from which I could draw in the moment to guide my response.

In the heat of that moment I was tempted to react hastily, rather than respond humbly. Had I reacted in the way that I felt, it could have set on course untold difficulties that could have made my tenure at that church one that was much more tumultuous and stressful. The first interactions that I experienced with this brother were inflammatory. My instinctual reactions in that first moment could have destroyed any possibility of a constructive relationship. That I chose to establish a working relationship with him shaped an environment in which he could put aside his bigotry and have a positive encounter with a person of color. We both have been transformed through this process because we have been learning together about overcoming anger and disdain. Consequently, we have achieved many good accomplishments over the course of two

years. We are men of faith, and that faith has served us well. This was the kind of situation that required a graciousness that was more than we were both capable of. The hand of God guided, the wisdom of God influenced, the power of God transformed, and the love of God prevailed.

Our conference's effort, in collaboration with the broader denomination's embrace of its prophetic call to justice, calls us all to the transformative process of intercultural change. If we can't acculturate in the worship of our God, then I dare say that this then cannot be done anywhere or in anything else. Transformational change is the basic tenet of our shared Christianity; its workings in this intercultural worship experience would be a testimony to the power of the God we serve and the potency of the gospel we preach. As we are all transformed from the silos of our cultural agendas, and fully embrace the fulness of our call, what would emerge would be an example to all humanity, and certainly it will be a wonder to behold!

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Questions Presented to Pastor in Formal Interviews**

The questions below are those presented to each Pastor in the seven formal interviews that were conducted. The questions were as follows:

- 1. What is your current appointment location?**
- 2. What is the major racial composition of your congregation?**
- 3. What is the major ethnic composition of your congregation?**
- 4. Are you of the same ethnicity as the vast majority of the congregation?**
- 5. Describe your social location?**
- 6. In what ways are the majority of people who are members of this congregation different from you?**
- 7. To what liturgical style does this congregation mostly adhere?**
- 8. What has been your experience with this congregation in regard to the following?**
  - a. Racial tolerance of different ethnic/racial groups in the worship space.**
  - b. Race relations in terms of all groups in membership**
  - c. Cultural diversity in worship**
  - d. Openness to alternate worship styles and methods**
  - e. Openness to alternate musical genres and non-traditional musical instruments**

- f. How have you been treated as an ethnic minority in the worship space?**
- g. Is there any form of resistance to your implementation of new ideas, or policies?**
- h. Is there unusual resistance to your management/leadership efforts?**

**9. What is your opinion of the New York Annual Conference's efforts at making cross-cultural appointments?**

**10. Do you think that this effort works? Why, or why not? And, what is your suggestion for improvement**

**11. Can you describe an experience that you have had that you found to be particularly challenging to you in your ministry setting?**

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