

A MULTI-RACIAL AND MULTI-CULTURAL MINISTRY WITH THE HISPANIC /
LATINO COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

A MULTI-RACIAL AND MULTI-CULTURAL MINISTRY WITH THE HISPANIC /
LATINO COMMUNITIES

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This project centers on ministry and service within Hispanic/Latino communities, engaging the social, spiritual, political, and economic realities that shape their lived experiences. Particular attention is given to the broader sociopolitical context and its impact on individuals and families, approached through a social justice lens grounded in an anti-discrimination framework. The project draws on biblical and theological foundations to articulate a vision of ministry rooted in doctrinal principles that must be actively embodied in practice.

The project culminates in a theological and practical framework emphasizing integration, unity, and equity by integrating key theoretical perspectives and insights from various scholarly sources. A significant component of this work includes interviews with leaders in national bodies and organizations of the United Methodist Church, whose perspectives inform a set of facts, ideas, and strategic recommendations.

Ultimately, the project argues that developing a multiracial and multicultural ministry is possible and imperative within the First United Methodist Church of Homestead (FUMCH) context.

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INTRODUCTION

In this project, I present the challenge of serving Hispanics/Latinos within a multicultural and multiracial ministry and explore how to integrate the United Methodist Church's denominational plans and policies into the local church context. At the beginning of this research process, I served as the senior pastor of the United Methodist Church of Monticello within the New York Annual Conference of the UMC. On July 1, 2024, I was transferred to serve as Senior Pastor of the First United Methodist Church of Homestead (FUMCH) at the Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (FLUMC).

I analyze how the development of the Hispanic/Latino population has been considered in the approach to multicultural and multiracial ministries. The aim is to promote progress and strengthen the local church, ultimately positively impacting each level of the ecclesial structure.

I present information from various areas of The United Methodist Church (UMC), including its institutional structure and specific agencies that address this issue, as well as the correspondence of this information with the details that emerge from the context of the local church and its periphery. These ideas' ideological and fundamental aspects are based on biblical, theological, and philosophical interpretations of the Church. That is why I included specific quotations from the sacred texts concerning the line of thought of equality and oneness in Christian communities from their historical basis and in their distance from the experience of our present.

I present information from various literary documentation, including plans and systems developed by the United Methodist Church. My research methodology includes a case study of my congregation, incorporating tools such as demographic data, direct observation, and the perspectives and narratives of leaders at various levels of the church's institutional structure. Historical and cultural information will help us understand the current situation of the concept of multi-cultural ministry that we are interested in developing.

Regarding the context of the United Methodist Church of Monticello and the First Methodist Church in Homestead, Florida, the demographic and organizational details of the congregations are presented to help us understand the surrounding communities' demographics.

This way, we will integrate theories based on an already established philosophy, obtained from various documentary and bibliographical sources, which correspond to the central themes of integration, inclusion, unity, and equity.

This project offers possibilities to generate spaces for experiences of cross-cultural religious celebration. Various identity characteristics should be considered to help define the practices and styles that will shape the celebrations while maintaining the foundation and doctrinal focus of the institution we represent, The United Methodist Church. With recognition and inventory strategies, we will learn about the various cultural and religious identities that must be addressed.

Throughout this process, I would like to address not just one question but the diverse range of questions and lack of knowledge that a congregation with a traditional

Caucasian profile typically faces. One of the main reasons this issue must be addressed as a challenge is the lack of knowledge perpetuated by quietism, which upholds and reinforces the status quo.

This project aims to serve the Hispanic/Latino community, bringing together communities of a specific context while considering and caring for the cultural, political, and social identities of all groups and nationalities represented.

Description of the Project

The theme of this paper is a multi-racial and multi-cultural Ministry with the Hispanic / Latino Community in a Specific Local Church Context. I have recently been appointed Senior Pastor of a predominantly white American congregation with a growing Hispanic membership, reflecting the significant increase in the Hispanic/Latino population. With my Hispanic/Latino identity and from the ministerial and missionary perspective, I am interested in serving this population in various ways.

Statement of the Problem: The challenge of serving with Hispanic/Latino as a multi-cultural and multi-racial ministry, and how to integrate all the denominational plans and policies from the UMC into the context of a local church.

What specific resources and efforts must we consider to effectively serve a Hispanic/Latino community as a Multi-Cultural and Multi-Racial ministry in the context of my local church? This project examines and assesses the primary denominational statements, resources, and policies of the UMC related to Hispanic/Latino ministries, with a particular focus on racial dynamics within this context.

The theme of this project is a multi-racial and multicultural ministry with the Hispanic/Latino Community in a Specific Local Church Context.

The project's central concept is the Multicultural and Multiracial Ministry, which focuses on Hispanic/Latino communities. Given my identity, language, cultural knowledge, current ministry appointment, membership, and relationships within certain bodies and agencies of the UMC, I am uniquely positioned to research this issue closely.

The exploration of resources and sources should focus on the social, spiritual, political, and economic aspects of the Hispanic/Latino population. Among the sociopolitical aspects, racism will be considered one of the main elements of the context. This specific aspect must be treated with discretion and a social justice approach emphasizing an anti-discrimination vision.

The cultural characteristics and religious identities of diverse Hispanic nationality groups and the “Anglo-American” people should also be considered respectfully.

The question is: What specific resources and efforts must we consider to effectively serve a Hispanic/Latino community as a Multicultural and Multiracial ministry within the context of my local church? This question becomes crucial as we explore the context and fill the gaps with resources and effort. The question becomes interesting because it leads us to an examination and an inventory of resources to solve the equation of assets sought. The question becomes answerable because pairing needs and resources will reveal different methods and opportunities for connecting with the Hispanic/Latino communities. The question becomes modest because it focuses on the reality of this concept in a specific context.

Chapter 2: Concepts and Foundations of Multicultural Ministry

1. Characteristics and Overview of the Multi-Cultural Ministries

The concept of the Multicultural Ministry is a mechanism for creating opportunities and fostering participation for individuals representing diverse cultural communities, grounded in the principles of equity, justice, and respect. This concept has been deemed necessary for the church's development. It is crucial to understand that the dynamics of a congregation are limited to granting participation and spaces of opportunity to people of a single cultural profile, a single race, and, in turn, a single socio-political profile, when many details of social justice and the call to create a single body in Christ are omitted. In addition, when inclusion is not considered in the church's missional and evangelizing projects, the great opportunity to utilize the advantages of diversity in collaboration for the common good is lost.

The multicultural concept can be illustrated as an attempt to weave a large mantle that incorporates the properties and characteristics of various yarns, making the fabric a solid and striking one due to its multiple colors and varied texture. The mantle we want to weave is a congregation; the threads are the community members directly involved in the mission, and the colors are the individual characteristics of the various racial groups and cultures incorporated into a single fabric.

Beyond being a necessary concept, the biblical foundations and definition of the Church of Christ reveal that multiculturalism is an integral part of its original essence, as justice, one of the pillars of the Kingdom of God, is manifested in equity and openness.

“Today a multiethnic/multicultural church means something distinct. Today, many churches strive to represent the diverse population of their communities, encompassing

all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, there are Christians convinced that this is the way God intended the church to be.”¹

2. Goals of the Multicultural Church

The church is a body with a mission and vision representing the organization's primary goal. The suggested model is a good reference for arranging the goals according to the values of the multicultural organization.

1. To model for a community a social system that equally distributes power among its members and still functions well.
2. To convince other institutions, including other churches, to become multicultural by example; and
3. To transfer new patterns of relating to people of various ethnic backgrounds to these other institutions.²

3. Values of the Multi-Cultural and Multi-Racial Ministries

For believers in Christ, a primary mission is proposed to us: making disciples for the transformation of the world. This mission comprises a series of processes involving communication, social interaction, and spiritual engagement; that is, it is based on interpersonal and community relationships, specifically in the context of discipleship, and in turn, opens up possibilities for transformation that are generated by and with people at the heart of a community. From the perspective of community elements, changes must be made to the extent that a group incorporates the diversity of individual contributions into its collective reasoning to represent cultural, ethical, and spiritual values. So, I can affirm that the great value of a multicultural and multiracial ministry is established to the extent

¹ “A Vision for Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Cultural Ministry,” Discipleship Ministries, 2025, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/a-vision-for-multi-ethnic-multi-cultural-ministry>.

² Laurene Beth Bowers, *Becoming a Multicultural Church* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2010). 121

that the identity characteristics of one race and one culture are intertwined with the diverse characteristics of other races and cultures to present a model in which the maximum value of love, peace, and justice, that means the highest values of the Kingdom of God. "In a day when racial enmity pervades, the church, through multiethnic/multicultural ministry, has an opportunity to be a beacon of light and hope and a sign of God's reign."³ God's calls for us to represent the values of the Kingdom become a challenge and, at the same time, an opportunity to be a contrast to the manifestations of division, prejudice, marginalization, and contempt.

To put it another way, no race and no culture can claim all the elements to proclaim the ideal society in terms of the implementation of the Kingdom because, in this way, it would be incurring the gross defect of exclusivity and an attitude of supremacy concerning other cultures and races. Recognizing the contributions that must be attributed to a collaborative fabric, from diversity to the uniqueness of purposes and values, is a significant first step toward multicultural enrichment. The project of multicultural ministries must be an authentic process of creating harmony between the various cultures represented in an environment that fosters the sustainability of a mission, aiming to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Such a missional approach demands and elicits unanimity, ruling out competition for power and dominance by a single class or group.

If being in a multiracial congregation simply means people of color have to conform to a dominant group's beliefs and practices, then arguments for separation may well win the day. But if being a true multiracial church means spiritual mestizaje, then we have people and groups coming together to worship, learn from one another, and care for each other. This would include promoting cultural development and collaborating for liberation. If a true multicultural

³ "A Vision for Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Cultural Ministry," Discipleship Ministries, 2025,

congregation is this, and we argue that it must be, then power and hope can best be found in our coming together.⁴

4. Distinction between Cross-Racial and Multi-Racial, and Cross-Cultural and Multi-Cultural

A ministry classified as Cross-Racial is established when a minister of a race other than the predominant race in the congregation is assigned. On the other hand, a multi-racial and multi-cultural congregation is one whose diversity promotes significant participation of each race and culture represented, with great emphasis on equity and the collaborative and participatory balance of those races and cultures. “The vision of the multiethnic/multicultural church is one where persons from many races and nationalities join together in a community of faith, heirs to the promise of oneness in Jesus.”⁵

Therefore, the greatest challenge in multicultural ministries is the significant effort required to unify and balance ethnic and cultural approaches and differences. On the other hand, the various scales of values identified from the multiplicity of cultures involve creating consensus and redefining criteria, considering the primordial values of Jesus' message and teachings, which are based on justice, peace, and love.

On the other hand, the generational wounds created by segregation, racism, marginalization, and all the transgressions committed by the "dominant races" on the colonized and the despised also have an impact on this challenge. History leaves traces that expand through the collective pain of identity.

Considering all the possible historical and circumstantial challenges of the First United Methodist Church of Homestead's context, the goal is to move it from the first classification in the illustration below, Assimilated Multiracial Congregation, to the third

⁴ Curtiss Paul DeYoung et al., *United by Faith* (Oxford University Press, 2003). P 139

⁵ “A Vision for Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Cultural Ministry,” *Discipleship Ministries*, 2025,

classification, Integrated Multiracial Congregation. Above all, the goal of reaching the third column of the picture must be to achieve an optimal level of social and community interaction among church members, regardless of race, and between the church and various community groups within the geographic context.

	ASSIMILATED MULTIRACIAL CONGREGATION	PLURALIST MULTIRACIAL CONGREGATION	INTEGRATED MULTIRACIAL CONGREGATION
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE	Reflects one dominant racial culture	Contains separate and distinct elements of all racial cultures represented in the congregation	Maintains aspects of separate cultures and also creates a new culture from the cultures in the congregation
RACE OF LEADERSHIP (LAY OR CLERGY)	Dominant race	Representative of the different races in the congregation	Representative of the different races in the congregation
DEGREE OF SOCIAL INTERACTION ACROSS RACES	Can be high or low	Low	High

We currently have a church with two cultural races represented without a balance because the white-American population dominates leadership; therefore, it is an Assimilated Multiracial Congregation. Its history and other circumstances have led to this current definition.

The degree of social interaction is limited to intra-group relationships rather than cross-group relationships. This also distinguishes the resources available to each ethnic group for their potential ministries.

⁶ DeYoung et al., United by Faith. P. 166

Chapter 3: Leadership, Tools, and Demographic Context

1. Leadership Recognition

We must also remember that there is a danger of falling into assimilation instead of concentrating on integration. Inclusivity is a valuable exercise when adequate opportunities are provided for participation on an equal footing while respecting the individual differences and identities of people and groups.

The experience of being with people of a variety of backgrounds thus helps lead those in multiracial congregations to place a positive value on people's distinctiveness; to use those differences as part of the process of working toward a higher goal; to desire the differences, too, as a way of enriching themselves; and, under healthy conditions, to learn how to live in a multiracial and multicultural group. In this sense, far from integration leading to assimilation, at least in the overall context of the multiracial congregations my colleagues and I studied, integration helped people grow more secure in and proud of their cultural identities.⁷

Through fellowship and group work, we will develop an understanding of the values and assets of the entire mission team, the congregation, the staff, and everyone connected to the primary mission. With that in mind, there will be a fundamental understanding of the points of agreement and the points of difference, as well as how all these points can be helpful for the same goal.

For all elements, resources, and proposals to be realized and achievable, we must have resources, which I refer to as mentoring, guidance, and reference points. To illustrate this point, I present the following expression from Curtiss Paul DeYoung's book *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation As an Answer to the Problem of Race*.

Finding racially diverse leadership means that uniraical congregations may have to change the way they typically find clergy and/or lay leaders. They may have to

⁷ Michael O Emerson, *People of the Dream* (Princeton University Press, 2010). 119

contact organizations and seminaries where there are many members of races different from their own. A colorblind approach is not viable since such an approach will likely produce only leaders who are members of the majority group. Our leadership philosophy sounds like affirmative action, and on that basis some may be inclined to reject it. One way to make this philosophy easier to accept is to think of racial identity as an additional asset for a given leadership position.⁸

The main challenge of this project is to create a process of transformation that transcends traditional leadership methods and incorporates the values of justice, equality, and equity within the commission's congregational platform.

2. Tools of understanding

To develop the concept from the beginning, it is necessary to establish openness, an invitation system, and a good practice of radical hospitality, along with all the details that make integration, sharing, a sense of contribution, and the spontaneity of each person and each group a reality.

A good proposal to fulfill the abovementioned details is known as a mutual invitation, which seeks to decentralize the power or autonomy that a particular person or group can exercise. Roles, tasks, spaces, responsibilities, and privileges can be or should be shared among all members. Therefore, the participation of every member is valued with genuine appreciation and facilitated through open opportunities for contribution.

This process of mutual invitation decentralizes the power usually held by the designated leader. In this process, the facilitator spends some time introducing the process, shares, and invites the next person. At that point, the facilitator ceases to have power to control because who will speak next is now up to the person to whom he or she has just given the power to speak. This is what giving power away means. It is a practical way of practicing the spirituality of the cross. To many whites who are used to being in control, this process can be very

⁸ Deyoung, *United by Faith*. 177

uncomfortable. To some, it is a relief because anxiety and stress tend to come with having power all the time.⁹

We add the practical principle of considering the diverse contributions individuals and groups can make through collaboration among all represented parties. At best, this is the discipline of worship and gatherings.

What would a liturgy for a multicultural gathering look like? This is a key question that I reflect upon every time I design a workshop or a conference for an intercultural encounter. I want to share with you some of the insights I have gained from my work in search of such a liturgy. The following elements must be included in the process of the gathering: description of the purpose of the gathering, ground rules of interaction, procedural instructions, time for building interpersonal relationships, time for working together on tasks, reflection on the experience and discussion of how to apply the learning to future gatherings.

This process implies very careful planning before each gathering. It also implies that the process will continue to evolve because the learning you gain from doing it will help you redesign the next gathering.¹⁰

3. Relation between the surrounding demographics and the local church demographic profile.

In my personal experience, I have had the opportunity and even the ethical obligation to analyze how the local church I accompany maintains a growth trend in the Hispanic/Latino population that we serve through outreach programs or ministries. That is, just with the numbers that emerge from our experience from week to week, we are seeing an increase in the Hispanic/Latino population that receives a direct benefit from our ministries. Now, the demographic profile of the church/congregation membership maintains its demographics with almost 98% white/American people.

⁹ Eric H F Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993). 83-84

¹⁰ Law, 102-103

The following data, presented from my current place of ministry, truly reflects many regions of the nation. Thus, these demographic details will be fundamental information in the research process.

- Demographics of the context

The statistical resource obtained from the most recent 2020 Census exercise reflects that the Hispanic/Latino population ranks second among ethnic groups in Sullivan County, New York, where I minister currently.

Sullivan County, New York

Population, Census, April 1, 2020	78,624
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Race and Hispanic Origin

White alone, percent	82.6%
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Black or African American alone, percent(a)	11.0%
---	-------

American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent(a)	0.8%
---	------

Asian alone, percent(a)	2.2%
-------------------------	------

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent(a)	0.1%
--	------

Two or More Races, percent	3.2%
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Hispanic or Latino, percent(b)	18.3%
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White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	68.2% ¹¹
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Similarly, this statistical resource reflects that at the state level of New York, the second ethnic group in the population tabulation is the Hispanic/Latino group.

¹¹ US Census Bureau, "QuickFacts Sullivan County, New York: 2022," Census.gov, n.d., [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Sullivan County, New York](#)

New York

Population, Census, April 1, 2020	20,201,249
-----------------------------------	------------

Race and Hispanic Origin

White alone, percent	68.6%
----------------------	-------

Black or African American alone, percent(a)	17.7%
---	-------

American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent(a)	1.0%
---	------

Asian alone, percent(a)	9.6%
-------------------------	------

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent(a)	0.1%
--	------

Two or More Races, percent	2.8%
----------------------------	------

Hispanic or Latino, percent(b)	19.7%
---------------------------------------	--------------

White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	54.2% ¹²
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Finally, the statistical resource at the national (U.S.) level shows the exact correspondence of second place to the Hispanic/Latino population.

United States

Population, Census, April 1, 2020	331,449,281
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Race and Hispanic Origin

White alone, percent	75.5%
----------------------	-------

Black or African American alone, percent(a)	13.6%
---	-------

American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent(a)	1.3%
---	------

Asian alone, percent(a)	6.3%
-------------------------	------

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent(a)	0.3%
--	------

Two or More Races, percent	3.0%
----------------------------	------

Hispanic or Latino, percent(b)	19.1%
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White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	58.9% ¹³
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¹² US Census Bureau, "QuickFacts New York; United States: 2022," Census.gov, n.d., [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States](#)

¹³ US Census Bureau, "The Hispanic Population in the United States: 2022," Census.gov, n.d., <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2022/demo/hispanic-origin/2022-cps.html>.

These statistics are also reflected in the number of people we serve through one of our outreach ministries, which offers services every Saturday. On the most recent day of service, out of 61 people applying for the grants, 42 were of Hispanic origin; in other words, 68.8% of the population who applied for the grants is of Hispanic descent.

This last piece of information tells us that we are serving and helping Hispanics. Still, we are not responsibly taking advantage of their presence to establish relationships that bring them closer and integrate them into the congregation.

Survey year	White	Black	Asian	Latino	Other/Mixed	Sample size
2014	94%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1,736
2007	93%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2,384

Bearing in mind the cultural, political, economic, and religious interactions and effects that the ethnic groups can cause and develop. Because of those realities, we will find some interesting statements that will give us an understanding of the presence of the Hispano/Latino population within the Christian traditions. My approach to this subject will focus primarily on my ministry denomination as a United Methodist clergy. The following statement is based on the general information obtained.

This growth also has implications in all areas of society's life: in politics, economics, culture, and also in religion. According to the Pew Research Center, 48% of the Hispanic-Latino community is Roman Catholic, 29% belongs to other

Christian traditions (evangelical, Protestant, Mormon, etc...), 2% to other religions and 20% does not identify with any specific religion.¹⁴

The United Methodist Church has significant statistical data sources on the denomination's national demographic makeup. Differences in two specific historic times are displayed as follows:

As shown in the table, the demographic composition of the United Methodist Church has remained relatively unchanged between 2007 and 2014. The percentage of the white population, which has the most ethnic representation, remains above 90%. The Hispanic/Latino population is represented at only 2% (with no signs of growth) over the two years of the statistical sampling.

In these historic moments for the United Methodist Church at the national level, a disaffiliation process has been underway, as local congregations have decided to move to other denominations or adopt a non-denominational congregation model. This movement has arisen due to doctrinal and political differences irrelevant to this research, which may potentially impact the demographics of the United Methodist Church. In this way, the process and its demographic implications must be considered in the future to lend greater strength and validity to the participation of Hispanics/Latinos.

It's hard to say what the post-separation landscape looks like for The United Methodist Church. Still, I hope the church understands that the future and vitality of our denomination will be based in large part on our service and witness among all the races and cultures that make up our society. As the face of the U.S. continues to change over the next two decades, we need the Plan to continue to be present in the formation of United Methodist leaders among our growing

¹⁴ Gustavo Vásquez, “*La Comunidad Hispana, Las Redes Sociales y La Iglesia*,” Ed. United Methodist News Service, June 29, 2021, <https://www.umnews.org/es/news/la-comunidad-hispana-las-redes-sociales-y-la-iglesia>. (translation mine)

Hispanic-Latino community, reflected Bishop Sally Dyck's words.¹⁵ This observation, which has often profoundly impacted my Hispanic/Latino identity, has led me to the following question: What are the challenges facing our local church in developing a community with representation proportional to the surrounding community? What resources exist at the various levels of the denominational structure to work through these challenges in the vision of a cross-cultural and multi-racial ministry? How can we draw attention to and engage the current membership to foster proper openness to the Hispanic/Latino population, and how can we encourage the Hispanic/Latino population to engage with the existing membership?

In addition, some aspects, elements, and factors are developing in political/racial issues, and an honest discussion of civil rights development is considered in society, specifically at this historical moment. For this, I believe it is essential to mention the transcendence and usefulness of vision to strengthen the mechanisms of social justice that the church is called to exercise, practice, and demonstrate in its essential ministry.

- First United Methodist Church of Homestead (FUMCH) Community Context:

I present the regional demographic landscape at various scales and with multiple reference sources to visualize and understand the project's context and objectives.

Population dynamics illustrate how racial and cultural issues are and should be managed in the local church.

- Statistics.

The table below presents the demographic statistics for the city of Homestead, Florida, as well as the ethnic composition of its population. The statistical data are presented in numerical (number of people) and percentage forms for 2020 and 2024, with a projection

¹⁵ “*Desafíos Presentes Y Futuros Para Nuestros Ministerios Hispano-Latinos*,” Ed. United Methodist News Service, accessed November 9, 2023, <https://www.umnews.org/es/news/desafios-presentes-y-futuros-para-nuestros-ministerios-hispano-latinos>. (translation mine)

for 2029 also provided. The projection confirms that developing multicultural and multiracial ministry is pertinent to the future of the Homestead community.¹⁶

Race/Ethnicity Homestead, FL						
	2020	2024	2029	2020 %	2024 %	2029 %
Asian (Non-Hisp)	857	656	695	1.06%	0.80%	0.79%
Change Count		-201	39			
Percent Change		-23.45%	5.95%			
Black (Non-Hisp)	14,038	15,421	16,622	17.44%	18.73%	18.84%
Change Count		1,383	1,201			
Percent Change		9.85%	7.79%			
White (Non-Hisp)	8,621	9,499	10,313	10.71%	11.54%	11.69%
Change Count		878	814			
Percent Change		10.18%	8.57%			
Hispanic or Latino	55,037	54,793	58,481	68.38%	66.55%	66.30%
Change Count		-244	3,688			
Percent Change		-0.44%	6.73%			
Other Race (Non-Hisp)	1,939	1,959	2,099	2.41%	2.38%	2.38%
Change Count		20	140			
Percent Change		1.03%	7.15%			
Total	80,492	82,328	88,210			

According to the information shown by the MissionInsite application through the table above, the city of Homestead in the state of Florida, located at the southern end of the state, has an ethnic composition with a majority population of Hispanics/Latinos (approx. 66% at present), that is, a "supermajority". A significant factor contributing to this is the area's extensive agricultural development and construction industry, which serves as a primary occupational base for migrants from Central and South America. A network of individuals from government agencies and other services who are also Hispanic has been

¹⁶ "MissionInsite," Missioninsite.com, 2025, <https://app.missioninsite.com/map/40e58008-6607-4d2b-b24d-c7944493ec7f/reporting-demographics>.

established to serve this working population. According to demographic statistics, the white population occupies third place, surpassed by the Black population, which remains second. The ratio of Hispanics, Blacks, and Whites is 70/20/10.

The following table shows the demographics of Miami-Dade County. This county includes the city of Homestead and is reasonably proportional to the data presented in the table above. The data in the following table are presented using the same methodology as the previous one.¹⁷

Race/Ethnicity Miami-Dade County	2020	2024	2020 %	2024 %
Asian (non-Hispanic)	41,672	41,844	1.54%	1.53%
Change Count		172		
Percent Change		0.41%		
Black (non-Hispanic)	378,756	388,521	14.03%	14.23%
Change Count		9,765		
Percent Change		2.58%		
White (non-Hispanic)	361,517	362,462	13.39%	13.28%
Change Count		945		
Percent Change		0.26%		
Hispanic or Latino	1,856,938	1,879,672	68.77%	68.85%
Change Count		22,734		
Percent Change		1.22%		
Other Race (non-Hispanic)	61,295	57,618	2.27%	2.11%

¹⁷<https://app.missioninsite.com/map/40e58008-6607-4d2b-b24d-e7944493ec7f/data>

Change Count		-3,677		
Percent Change		-6.00%		
Total	2,700,178	2,730,117		

According to the demographic information for Miami-Dade County, it is notable that the data identifies the Hispanic/Latino community as the population with the highest presence. The county mostly has these numbers because it includes the city of Miami within its territory, which is recognized for its large Cuban and Venezuelan communities. The political and social strength of Hispanics, particularly the Cuban community in Miami, makes the area attractive for Hispanic migrants.

Now, let's examine the demographic information provided in the most recent official report from the FUMCH Local Church. The data is obtained from the church's Membership Book information, which must be updated annually. The data presents the numbers of members disaggregated by ethnicity at the end of 2023 and 2024. The difference between one year and another can represent a percentage increase or decrease, or, as in this specific case, stability in one of the classifications.

Church Name: First - Homestead
District: Southeast
Conference: Florida (751)
Pastor Name: Rev. Jorge A. López

CHURCH CONFERENCE REPORT 2025¹⁸

Membership Ethnicity	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>Membership</u> <u>%</u>
5a Asian	0	0	No Change	0
5b African American/Black	3	4	33% Increase	1%
5b.2 Caribbean	5	5	No Change	2%
5b.3 Haitian	0	0	No Change	0
5c Hispanic	48	78	62% Increase	27%
5d Native American	0	0	No Change	0
5e Pacific Islander	0	0	No Change	0
5f White	193	193	No Change	68%
5g Multi-Racial	4	4	No Change	1%
5 Total Membership	253	284	12% Increase	100%

It can be understood that the Hispanic population experienced remarkable growth from one year to the next, while the white population remained unchanged in the same period. The primary reason for the significant increase in Hispanic membership is a concerted effort by Hispanic leaders. This leads me to suggest that if all leaders from all

¹⁸ Jorge Lopez, "EIN #: 59-0816440 Membership and Participation," February 1, 2025.

represented races coordinate their efforts, more comprehensive growth indicators can be sustained.

By examining and comparing the demographics of congregational membership with those of the surrounding area, it is evident that there is no correlation with equity. The congregation's historical membership has not led to the necessary adjustments or changes in the missionary paradigm, particularly in its leadership and efforts aimed at the immediate population and its profiles.

In my quest to establish better benchmarks for comparing the congregation's demographic profile, I obtained valuable information for this analysis. FUMCH Church has one of its central ministries as a school, offering preschool, elementary, and intermediate grades. I include tabulated information about the demographics, in ethnic terms, of the faculty at First United Methodist Christian School (FUMCS).

Reference Chart from First United Methodist Christian School about Demographics of Faculty Members

Race	Teachers	Teacher's Assistants
White American	10	3
Hispanic	11	7
Afro-American	1	4
Other	1	0
Bilingual Skills:		
English as First Language	12	3
Spanish as First Language	7	1

The administration of First United Methodist Christian School (FUMCS) has provided these data. This information suggests that the school, in its faculty and pedagogy resource organization, is considering the local demographics to tailor its services. In other words, when we examine the number of Hispanic and bilingual teachers and assistants, we observe a strong correlation with the statistical population numbers of the city of Homestead.

- Local vs. Surrounding Demographics

We see no direct correlation with all the demographic data presented, and comparing the data from the City of Homestead with the data obtained from the most recent statistical report of the FUMCH. Still, there is a growth trend in the congregation's Hispanic/Latino community membership. This leads us to consider the development of all core elements of multiculturalism for the congregation's immediate future.

Under these circumstances, it is imperative to inform the church membership of the need to unify efforts to develop a church that incorporates human resources into a single mission, without discrimination. On the contrary, if we consider the advantages that diversity brings to social and spiritual development, we will have significant consideration of resources aimed at the same end.

- Understanding of Diversity in the Local Church Membership Context

In this historical moment in which the Hispanic ministry of FUMCH sustains excellent progress in several aspects, mainly numerical, we have the great opportunity to analyze the bases and factors of each race represented and their ways of contributing to numerical growth, but more important than numerical, in terms of quality in the relationships that

form and unify the community. Each sector can contribute diverse elements, and each form of collaboration will help the fabric.

At FUMCH we have representation from the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, various Caribbean islands and the Bahamas; With all these representations we have a reasonable universe of cultures that can contribute their best reflection to coordinate a joint project that serves the surrounding population.

Chapter 4: Theological and Denominational Foundations

1. Church and Cultural Values

The ways of exercising social ministry are directly intertwined with how the church, in its local and congregational experience, develops mechanisms of fellowship and friendship in discipleship, spiritual disciplines, and various community experiences within its membership, all with honest openness to the surrounding community. One of the fundamental practices of the church is worship in the service. In this regard, I must say that the identity of each race and culture represented in the community must occupy and offer a meaning that connects with the best of meanings, the love of God, and the virtues of celebrating Christ as one body.

2. Biblical and Theological Statements: Foundations for a Multiracial/Multiethnic Ministry

There is a biblical background that provides a historical reference to the ideal concept of multiethnic or multicultural ministries. Although some scholars begin their proposals with consideration of the early Christian churches mentioned in the Book of Acts of the Apostles and the epistles of the Apostle Paul, in my reflection, I go a little further back, to

the person and examples of Jesus in his itinerant ministry. One of the best examples of Jesus' multiracial ministry is his encounters in interventions in the Decapolis.

³¹ Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went by way of Sidon toward the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. ³² They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³ He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. ³⁴ Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” ³⁵ And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶ Then Jesus^[h] ordered them to tell no one, but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. ³⁷ They were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”¹⁹

Decapolis is a region composed of ten cities with Hellenic and Roman cultural intersections. Coming from a strong Jewish tradition, Jesus and his disciples entered the region to share the Gospel's message and miraculous acts. Jesus's message managed to unite people of different ethnicities and cultures, establishing a process of spreading the message to many within the environment and showing the elemental pillar of equity as one of the main pieces of God's Kingdom. From my point of view, it is fascinating that Jesus was not trying at all to change the cultural way of living. Jesus sought to frame the various cultural elements in the proposal of the Kingdom of God and its justice. Jesus welcomes all the details of a culture that can be in harmony with God's love and thus integrates and incorporates all races into one encounter. He was delivering a healthy message to promote integration amid diversity. In another example, Jesus integrates the Samaritan woman into an evangelistic effort, considering all the cultural, political, and religious differences between the Samaritan people and the Jewish people from a complex historical background, overcoming racial, ethnic, cultural, political, and gender

¹⁹ New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Mark 7; 31-37

prejudices. In my opinion, the personal experience of the Samaritan woman with Jesus let her know about the openness of the gospel and the opportunity to let her feel empowered with a sense of compassion, solidarity, and understanding.

Following the ascension of Jesus Christ comes the historic event of the Day of Pentecost, In my opinion, one of the best narratives of the sacred text is in the book of Acts, chapter 2. In the experience of prayer and praise, the manifestations of the power of the Holy Spirit are presented. Of these manifestations, the one that interests us the most is the plurality of tongues/languages among those gathered in the Upper Room to proclaim the great news at the beginning of the church in the languages of the people who surrounded the place, there being people from various locations, both near and far from the city of Jerusalem.

⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ²⁰

With this account, we obtain sufficient historical and theological reasons to propose that establishing and developing the church as a dynamic concept and institution are generated from a cross-cultural and multiracial basis with a single common denominator for all, faith.

²⁰ New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Acts 2:4-12

Following this account, the same book of the Acts of the Apostles presents the saga of the apostles, primarily Paul and Peter, in their cross-cultural experiences as the church expands according to the mission entrusted to them by Jesus before his ascension.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”²¹

Among the fundamental areas of the early church, the term "Koinonia" is mentioned to establish the experiences that entail the development of interpersonal relationships in fellowship and solidarity. Developing fellowship is essential to the foundation of Jesus' discipleship, as he brought together twelve people of diverse personalities, education, and worldview profiles. Through intentional fellowship, a community is formed, and this community derives its powerful meaning from the diversity of its members, embracing the grand proposal of the Kingdom of God and His justice through the significant element of unity amid diversity.

"There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."²²

In his ministry to the Gentiles, the apostle Paul encounters a great diversity of cultural, social, and ideological characteristics throughout Asia Minor and Europe. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul encourages them to maintain unity in the Spirit, saying:

I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,³ making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace:⁴ there is one body and one Spirit, just as

²¹ New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Acts 1; 8

²² New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Galatians 3; 28

you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. ²³

On the other hand, the Apostle Peter also exhorted us to unity and the unique identity that unites us and characterizes us as believers in exercising the priesthood of all believers. In his first letter, Peter tells us:

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people,^[a] so that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ²⁴

Because of all that has been said, from the encounter with faith, with belief, with God's call, with the essential ministry of making disciples, with the most excellent sense of humility and obedience, we become one church sustained by one Spirit who is Holy (perfect and integral) through the means of grace, primarily through the sacramental practices of baptism and the Eucharist.

Most of the time, the ideas delivered in our sermons are careful and conditional to a certain level of no exposure. Racism and other forms of prejudice can be seen as vulnerabilities.

I suspect that behind the rhetoric lurks a real fear that discussing race, culture, power, and privilege openly in the church might expose many of us for who we really are—persons uncomfortable with difference and dogged by our prejudices. In other words, we would find out that most of us do not measure up to this young man's standards for being a "good" Christian, namely, (1) not being a racist, and (2) not judging or condemning people who are different for us.²⁵

²³ New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Ephesians 4; 1-6

²⁴ New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, *1 Peter* 2; 9-10

²⁵ Lucia Ann McSpadden, *Meeting God at the Boundaries* (General Board of Higher Education and Ministry United Method, 2003). 101

In our historical moment, the words and concept of globalization are mentioned and repeated with great emphasis, which, in a certain way, serve as a model of openness and a collection of various currents and diverse cultural and ideological models disseminated by mass media and social networks. This new model of global interconnection opens doors to knowledge and facilitates understanding through information and communication. In other words, a contextual framework allows us to be closer amid the great diversity of races and cultures. This can help us understand cultural differences and seek a more assertive and respectful approach and access.

With a large margin of historical distance from the ancient era to our recent decades, we arrive at the experiential, civil, humanitarian, and social dilemmas and conflicts of racial and cultural segregation, with the idea of attributing supremacy to a specific race and culture. The circumstances generated by marginalization, colonization, discrimination, and segregation significantly affected the dynamics of the Methodist Episcopal Church. (The Methodist Episcopal Church was the name of the leading Methodist denomination until 1968. In 1968, the Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church to form The United Methodist Church.) As a result, denominational decisions were made that projected division and approaches contrary to the love of Christ.

When the United States officially began to dismantle racial segregation, new dialogues and movements emerged to confront and start correcting the injustices rooted in prejudice and hatred. In response, the United Methodist Church established and developed various agencies to address broader issues of unity, justice, and inclusion across different sectors of church life. As the UMC has acknowledged the Hispanic-Latino sector as a minority, it gives this issue a purpose of justice definition and a sense of mission project of

integration and unification. With all that historical frame, we should look at the development of some programs and initiatives promoted.

3. The United Methodist Church (UMC) and Hispano/Latino Ministries

The presence of the Hispano/Latino people within the United Methodist Church is an asset for both “sides” of the formula or equation. The Hispanic people's cultural and political points of view can provide a better theological perspective. The Methodist tradition can be a source of spiritual formation and a ministerial preparation tool for the Hispanic population who serve at the UMC.

Now it is up to us, as Hispanics and Methodists, to continue with our Wesleyan tradition to analyze and act in accordance with God's will in the historical situation and the socio-cultural context in which we live. And for the sole purpose of infusing new vigor into the Methodist Church in its mission to "propagate biblical holiness" and reform society.²⁶ (Trad. Mine)

- Denominational Multiracial/Multiethnic Ministries Development
 - General Executive Structure of the UMC

The governmental structure of the United Methodist Church is episcopal-based, with a republican organization of government comprising three branches: executive (episcopal, Council of Bishops), legislative (General Conference), and judicial (Judicial Council). The constitution, rules, regulations, processes, and governance emerge from an episcopal and legislative platform that is identified as the General Conference. Then, according to the diagram presented shortly, the jurisdictions are regionalized, which in turn are subdivided into Annual Conferences; a Bishop leads each Annual Conference. Each

²⁶ “Teología Y Doctrina Metodista Módulo III Plan Nacional Para Ministerios Hispanos Y Latinos,” accessed November 9, 2023, https://www.gbhem.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Module_III_Teologia_y_Doctrina-B-r.pdf.

Annual Conference is divided into districts, and several local churches are incorporated within each district, supervised by a District Superintendent.



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From the General Conference, the agencies and bodies that will sustain and implement the ideological and philosophical policies outlined in The Book of Discipline (the primary document of the United Methodist Church, which contains all the details legislated and approved by the General Conference) are established and presented. The general agencies are Archives and History, Church and Society, Communications, Discipleship Ministries, Finance and Administration, Global Ministries, Higher Education and Ministry, Publishing House, Religion and Race (GCORR), Status and Role of Women, United Methodist Men, United Women in Faith, and Wespeth. As we progress, it is essential to highlight the role of the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR), whose work is key to this project. The following section will explore its mission, responsibilities, and impact.

²⁷ Anita, "United Methodist Connectional Giving PowerPoint Presentation - SlideServe," SlideServe, September 21, 2011, <https://www.slideserve.com/Anita/united-methodist-connectional-giving-powerpoint-presentation>.

- MARCHA - Hispanic/Latino caucus within the United Methodist Church

Within the panorama of diversity, in the structure of the United Methodist Church, specific agencies, organizations, and bodies have been developed that address the issue of "minorities" to provide a remedy of unity and full participation. In the case of the Hispanic/Latino community within The United Methodist Church, the body representing the Hispanic cause is known as MARCHA (Associated Methodists Representing the Hispanic American Cause). The elements that comprise the purpose of MARCHA are rooted in the values of dignity, justice, equality, respect, solidarity, and open spaces. Two of the elements that are directly identified with the purpose of this work are:

- Offer accompaniment and mutual support to the people in the organization of the it, and in the training opportunities to respond to their needs.
- Work in solidarity with other ethnic-racial and ecumenical groups. MARCHA's vision is to be an advocacy tool for Hispanic/Latino Methodists that ensures that the cultural contributions and values of Hispanic/Latino people are received and appreciated in church and society.²⁸

MARCHA is the Hispanic/Latino caucus at the United Methodist Church. It is an instrument created to advocate for the causes of Hispanics/Latinos and the church sectors with which they have a relationship. His advocacy promotes equality, solidarity, justice, and openness within the church and broader society. Let us examine the details of its fundamental philosophy, as written and disseminated by the body itself.

- MARCHA believes in the dignity and respect of every person within and outside the church. It acts out of a sense of compassion and a mission in the world. It values diversity, inclusiveness, transparency, integrity, collaboration, teamwork, and participation. It advocates for justice for the Latino/Hispanic community in the United States and Latin America. It provides space and opportunities for addressing concerns and relevant issues throughout the UMC denomination and the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico. It believes that all Hispanic/Latino leaders,

²⁸ "Sobre Nosotros," accessed March 6, 2024, <https://marchaumc.org/sobre-nosotros/>. (Trans. Mine)

congregations, and communities have the potential to experience life to its fullest and is dedicated toward achieving this reality.²⁹

This philosophical approach of MARCHA proposes the specific values that we seek to promote in our context. Diversity is a significant value element and one of the priorities at the heart of this project. In the same way, inclusiveness, teamwork, and participation are other essential and primordial elements for integration and equity. Therefore, MARCHA is one of the most critical tools for sustaining a dialogue corresponding to the ideas, suggestions, and mechanisms for implementing and developing a multiracial and multicultural ministry.

Given the diversity and rich pool of theological, cultural, artistic, and missional contributions, we must emphasize the importance of ensuring that the representation and collaboration of Hispanic/Latino people are valued. The effervescence and charisma that the Hispanic/Latino identity can offer should also be valued to show the new generations a sense of revival and renewal.

- General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR)

The MARCHA body is presented in the governance structure of the United Methodist Church as part of the General Commission on Race and Religion (GCORR). This agency's primary purpose is to create and develop philosophy and resources to establish a multi-diverse community of people with the same faith under the umbrella of the church organization. Therefore, preparing leaders with diverse talents and gifts from all sectors of society is one of the agency's primary tasks. As part of its highest affirmations, the core values are revised periodically to be based on the perspective and the circumstances

²⁹ "Strategic Plan - MARCHA," MARCHA, 2015, <https://marchaumc.org/strategic-plan/>.

of the world: “The Core Values of GCORR are based on the biblical imperative of right relationships with God and one another – relationships of: Love, Grace, Equity, Justice, Respect, and Mutual Accountability.”³⁰

The General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) stands out among the agencies created and developed during this process. In 1968, the GCORR was formed to hold the newly formed United Methodist Church accountable for its commitment to reject the sin of racism in every aspect of the church's life. It is a cause of justice that drives the organization of this agency to manage and promote mechanisms of racial unity and integration within its fundamental project of a unified body.

The United Methodist Church proclaims that from God’s goodness and love, God created all persons as God’s unique and beloved children. Racism opposes God’s law, goodness, and love and diminishes the image of God in each person. Fueled by white privilege, white supremacy and colonialism, the sin of racism has been a destructive scourge on global society and throughout the history of The United Methodist Church. It continues to destroy our communities, harm people, obstruct unity, and undermine God’s work in this world. Racism must be eradicated. Therefore, The United Methodist Church commits to confronting and eliminating all forms of racism, racial inequity, colonialism, white privilege and white supremacy, in every facet of its life and in society at large.³¹

The GCORR is a highly active body developing a robust theological perspective that serves as a foundation for upholding the principles of inclusivity and equity.

Interestingly, an article recently published on their website (www.gcorr.org) distinguishes and correlates the doctrinal concept of the Trinity with three indispensable aspects of the multicultural fabric we wish to develop. The publication says:

We believe that the Image of God found in the person of the Holy Trinity is Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive. We know God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit under a diverse number of names springing forth from many

³⁰ “Who We Are,” GCORR, accessed March 6, 2024, <https://www.gcorr.org/whoweare>.

³¹ The United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* 2016. (Cokesbury, 2017). Article V.

cultures and languages. We are invited to become one with the Trinity, to add our diversity to theirs. Created in the image of God means that our diversity reflects this divine reality. Our cultures, ethnicities, sexual and gender understandings, our languages, our theological understandings, our family histories, our lived experiences, our education, the era in which we were born, all that makes us all a unique expression of the divine.³²

At the time of writing, March 2025, GCORR was concluding its Board Meeting. In a unique statement with a summary of what happened at that meeting, I obtained the following expression from Rev. Dr. Giovanni Arroyo, General Secretary of the GCORR:

As we navigate this moment in the life of The United Methodist Church and the world, our call to justice, equity, and inclusion is more urgent than ever. This board meeting reaffirmed our commitment to walking alongside congregations and communities, equipping them to confront racism and build a church where all people are fully seen, valued, and embraced. The work ahead is challenging, but it is sacred, and we step forward with faith and determination.³³

To the extent that GCORR's agenda aims to equip faith communities to eradicate racism and create an environment of coexistence in racial equity and justice, it is meritorious to establish guidelines and measures that advance that same agenda in Jurisdictions, Annual Conferences, and Districts. Jurisdictions and annual conferences do not have uniform policies regarding processing initiatives that arise from agencies such as GCORR.

- The Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministries

The 1992 United Methodist General Conference adopted the Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry. Six national ethnic plans emerged, including the Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry. “The purpose of these ethnic plans is to reaffirm the inclusion of people from

³² GCORR, “GCORR Board Meeting Centers on Justice, Equity, and the Sacred Work Ahead,” Mailchi.mp, 2025, <https://mailchi.mp/gcorr/all-gcorr-board-meeting-centers-on-justice-equity-and-the-sacred-work-ahead?e=8731d82759>.

³³ GCORR, “GCORR Board Meeting Centers on Justice, Equity, and the Sacred Work Ahead,”

diverse cultural identities, family traditions, socioeconomic backgrounds, sexual identities, and political affiliations.”³⁴

The PHLM's agency can best be defined by citing its historical definition and establishing its meaning, primary dynamics, and purpose.

The Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry (PHLM) is the first comprehensive, coordinated, and systematic to serve Hispanic/Latino communities living in the United States. Through the PHLM, The United Methodist Church has sought to invite Hispanic/Latino persons to discipleship in the name of Jesus Christ and to membership in The United Methodist Church. With this specific visionary focus in mind, the PHLM has worked in collaboration with four program agencies of The United Methodist Church to assist annual conferences in the United States Hispanic/Latino persons. It also has strived to help The United Methodist Church grow in its cultural competency.³⁵

The aspects of this document that interest me most are the inclusion of cultural competence as part of this body's core mission and its intended connection to the Annual Conferences. The fundamental dynamic between what is proposed and what is being developed in the local church is a crucial detail that I will address and analyze in the context of the local church.

Rather than accepting just one traditional and historical model for all, the Hispanic/Latino Leadership challenged the fundamental thinking of the majority and called to develop a new and vital generation of leaders equipped with a good understanding of the extensive range of world views, cultural backgrounds, and theological perspectives present in the world today.³⁶

A program's primary focus must be well-established and executed with a leadership base that understands and values diversity and cultural equity in its theological perspective.

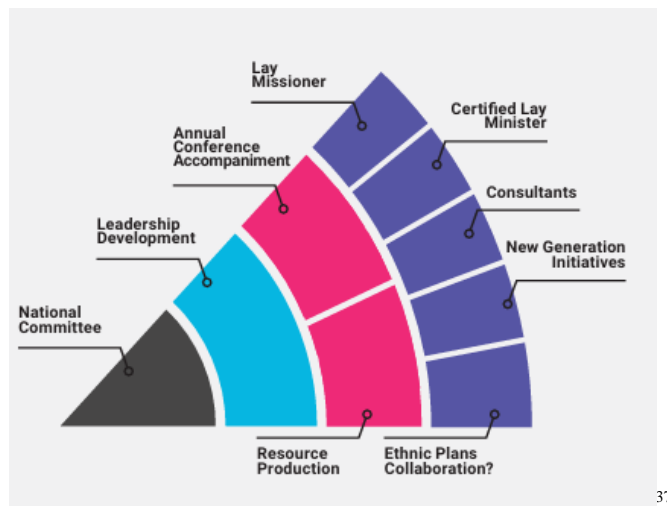
The PHLM's discipleship model must be developed with a quality understanding of the pursuit of justice and equality.

³⁴ “NPHLM,” NPHLM, n.d., <https://nphlm.org/>.

³⁵ “NPHLM,” NPHLM, n.d. Hispanic/Latino Ministries., <https://nphlm.org/>.

³⁶ Ibid.

In the dynamics of a church body or agency at the denominational level, the development of ideas and initiatives is expected to flow in both directions, from one end to the other. If the communication dynamic is hindered at any level, the information that encourages implementing and updating the plan is stopped. The following graphic presents the ideal model for implementing the Hispanic Plan from the National Committee to the laity base within the local church. The executive structure of the denomination ensures that the correct levels of information and execution flow in both directions.



Information, initiatives, testimonies, results, and proposals emerge from local communities and are transmitted to the Committee through the appropriate channels, including the PHLM.

In the specific context of the FUMCH, it is necessary to analyze at what level or levels the flow of information is being hindered so that we can adequately receive the didactic

³⁷ "NPHLM," NPHLM, n.d. Hispanic/Latino Ministries, <https://nphlm.org/>.

and theoretical resources needed to implement a plan that helps us develop our multiracial and multicultural ministry.

Rev. Dr. Lydia Muñoz currently serves as the executive director of the PHLM. From her experience in ministry at the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church, where she worked for social justice with an emphasis on participation rights for Hispanics/Latinos, she has a thought that summarizes the importance of the NPHLM in terms of equality, justice, and affirmation of values very well.

The original NPHLM legislation for Hispanic/Latino Ministry passed by the 1992 General Conference affirmed a vision of a dynamic and growing United Methodist Church, joyfully sharing and living the Good News of Jesus Christ in a multiplicity of places, urban and rural, in congregations large and small, and in a variety of cultural settings. In this church, groups that have traditionally been disenfranchised will be full partners in Christ's ministry, and the gifts of every Hispanic man and woman, young and old, factory worker and professional, immigrant and native-born will be used for the edification of the whole body (1 Thessalonians 5: 11). A church in which such diversity, rather than dividing, unites to accomplish a common task, in a variety of circumstances, toward a common goal (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).³⁸ (Trans. Mine)

The aim is not to segregate or favor ministries based on race or nationality but to establish a body with a united vision and mission.

Based on the information presented by these agencies affiliated with The United Methodist Church, significant steps are being taken toward achieving racial and cultural equity and unity. This is crucial for fully integrating the Hispanic/Latino community across all UMC's ministry levels.

³⁸ "Pregunta Metodista: ¿Qué Es El Plan Nacional Para El Ministerio Hispano/Latino?, The United Methodist Church, accessed November 9, 2023, <https://www.umc.org/es/content/ask-the-umc-what-is-the-national-plan-for-hispanic-latino-ministry>.

- Denominational Discipleship Development

To develop a practical implementation process, the dynamics of integration from the levels of annual conferences and their districts to local churches must be proposed, streamlined, and facilitated. Fundamentally, the local church receives the resources, ideas, and guidance necessary to make Hispanic/Latino community integration a reality at the grassroots.

The scenario that validates the institutional philosophy is the context of the local church, which develops with all racial and cultural diversity elements in its environment. That is, we must remember that the local congregation is a representative reflection of what is perceived and identified in the demographic reality of its immediate population.

This will result in several outcomes for the local church and the surrounding community, particularly a shift in how the church and other organizations perceive the issue of racial and cultural division. That is, the exercise of unification in diversity would significantly modify how the world perceives the church amid a world deeply divided. The following statement offered by Paul DeYoung is a straightforward way to propose a multiracial movement.

The world has rightly judged the church a failure in addressing the racial divide. Even so, we believe that multiracial congregations are God's plan for responding to racism. Given our history in the United States, such bold proclamations sound like empty words to many. So, we must quietly, intentionally, persistently, and courageously begin to live our faith that God through Jesus Christ can reconcile us across these entrenched racial divides and that God has given each congregation, each individual, and each denomination the ministry of reconciliation. We are calling for a movement in the church toward multiracial congregations!³⁹

³⁹ DeYoung. *United by Faith*. 184

These words, intentionally, persistently, and courageously describe an effort that must be progressive, organized, well structured, and encouraged from the highest levels of the organization, and at the same time with the practical and humble protagonism of the people at the base level of the congregation and with the awareness of the individual as an essential, basic, and fundamental part of the community exercise.

- Denominational Social Principles

To give us philosophical direction, the United Methodist Church has, as one of its most essential affirmations and postulates, the document of social principles, which includes specific expressions on the subject hand. Here are some key points that reflect the social principles of The United Methodist Church.

We affirm our unity in Jesus Christ while acknowledging differences in applying our faith in different cultural contexts as we live out the gospel. We stand united in declaring our faith that God's grace is available to all, that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Social Principles Preamble

Culture and Identity—We believe that our primary identity is as children of God. With that identity comes societal and cultural constructions that have both positive and negative impacts on humanity and the Church. Cultural identity evolves through our history, traditions, and experiences. The Church seeks to fully embrace and nurture cultural formation and competency as a means to be fully one body, expressed in multiple ways.

Social Principles III. THE SOCIAL COMMUNITY

A) Rights of Racial and Ethnic Persons—Racism is the combination of the power to dominate by one race over other races and a value system that assumes that the dominant race is innately superior to the others. Racism includes both personal and institutional racism. ...Therefore, we recognize racism as sin and affirm the ultimate and temporal worth of all persons. We rejoice in the gifts that particular ethnic histories and cultures bring to our total life. We commit as the Church to

move beyond symbolic expressions and representative models that do not challenge unjust systems of power and access.⁴⁰

The Social Principles of the UMC are an absolute denunciation of the harm caused by racism to human dignity. At the same time, the primary goal of integration and equality is defined as the central pillar of a transcultural and transracial community. And fittingly, the United Methodist Church has a Social Creed that also highlights some of the most pertinent and essential principles for establishing a concrete stance on the issues of equality and equity.

- Our Social Creed

We believe in God, Creator of the world; and in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of creation. We believe in the Holy Spirit, through whom we acknowledge God's gifts, and we repent of our sin in misusing these gifts to idolatrous ends.

We commit ourselves to the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and people with disabilities; to improvement of the quality of life; and to the rights and dignity of all persons.

We believe in the right and duty of persons to work for the glory of God and the good of themselves and others and in the protection of their welfare ...

We dedicate ourselves to peace throughout the world, to the rule of justice and law among nations, and to individual freedom for all people of the world.⁴¹

These affirmations represent the fundamental foundation of justice, rooted in equality.

Therefore, we must embody the main statements of the institution we represent, and more importantly, we must act according to our beliefs and faith. There should be an exercise of reflection for every congregation to enhance the specific implementation of the UMC philosophy in terms of social justice principles and standards. Therefore, the discipleship

⁴⁰ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2016*. (Cokesbury, 2017).

⁴¹ *The Book of Discipline*. ¶ 166

process has a strong philosophical basis for developing a robust method of understanding and nourishing the essentials of the Multicultural and Multiracial initiative.

Chapter 5: Denominational Leadership Perspectives

1. Narratives and Perspectives from Denominational Leaders

Several leaders from the agencies and commissions mentioned above have been interviewed and asked two key questions:

- Do you believe that local churches are adequately receiving the resources developed at the denominational level to support multicultural and multiracial ministries? What challenges or obstacles have you observed in this process?
- What recommendations would you offer to various levels of the church structure (Jurisdiction, Annual Conferences, Districts) to enhance the implementation of the denominational multicultural and multiracial initiatives?

a. Considerations from Bishop Héctor Burgos

One of the leaders who has spoken with me on this issue is Bishop Hector Burgos, who was born and raised in Puerto Rico and grew up as a devout Christian at the Methodist Church and raised in Puerto Rico and grew up as a devout Christian at the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico, "El Olivar," in Bayamón. From there, he moved and settled in New Jersey, where he was consecrated and ordained as a Presbyter of the United Methodist Church. In his ministry experience, he has directly served communities through multicultural ministries, including his role as District Superintendent at the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. Now, Bishop Hector is part of history as the first Puerto Rican "Boricua" elected as a bishop in the United Methodist Church and

named Resident Bishop of the Susquehanna and Upper New York Annual Conference. Because of his experiences with struggle and his profound vision on the subject, his insights are summarized in the following paragraphs, and his complete answers are included as an appendix.

To the first question, he responds with seven key challenges for the implementation of multicultural and multiracial strategies in local churches: (1) personal and institutional racism, (2) lack of cohesive strategy, (3) Strategy Deficiency at Cabinet Level, (4) Inadequate preparation of ministry candidates, (5) passive discipleship, (6) low cultural competence, (7) shortage of resources in native languages.

To the second question, Bishop Burgos makes a series of recommendations for the various levels of the denomination regarding the issue, and one of the recommendations that I consider of great relevance is "Identify congregations experiencing significant demographic shifts and collaborate with willing and ready congregations to prepare them for CRCC appointments and ministries." This recommendation is exciting because it goes to the basis of the context at the beginning and suggests doing work of accompaniment and preparation from the moment demographic changes with great potential are detected. The issue is addressed from the source and with tools that adjust and temper the context. Based on his answers, Bishop Burgos broadens his critique of our denomination's challenges regarding including Hispanic ministries for various reasons. I agree with Bishop Burgos that the first and most significant challenge on his list is racism. That aspect must be addressed prophetically with explicit denunciations and transparent proposals for the eradication of racial prejudice at each level.

b. Considerations from Rev. Dr. Lydia Muñoz, Executive Director of The Plan for Hispano/Latino Ministries

The Rev. Lydia Muñoz is an ordained minister of the United Methodist Church. She is a versatile, virtuous, and dedicated "Boricua" woman. Dr. Muñoz has extensive experience developing justice ministries among marginalized and multicultural communities and has led worship for over 20 years in various and diverse settings at multiple levels within the United Methodist Church (UMC). At the time of this work, she serves as the executive director of the United Methodist Church's Plan for Hispanic Ministries. Therefore, drawing from Rev. Muñoz's extensive experience, we can better understand the structural challenges that continue to hinder multicultural ministry at the local level.

Based on the insights gathered in the interviews, I conclude that even with what has already been achieved and established in the United Methodist Church about multiethnic and multicultural ministries, there is an ideological and programmatic tension within the structures of the United Methodist Church, which prevents the full flourishing of multicultural dynamics at the local church level. Ideologies and perspectives from all sides of the racial and cultural subjects cause that tension. However, for Rev. Muñoz, the most significant factor contributing to the slowness or laxity in the design and implementation of Multicultural curricula is the lack of knowledge at various executive levels. On the other hand, the combination of a rush to obtain results and a lack of intentionality regarding processes makes this issue very difficult and complex in practice. She says in a significant expression, "At El Plan, we believe that comprehensive strategic planning can serve as a means of grace. Annual conferences would benefit from engaging

our ethnic plans and GCORR, Discipleship Ministries, and other agencies that provide multicultural resources.”⁴²

The concept of "means of grace" is much more than a tool or a utensil; it is a whole movement that generates the reach of God's transforming power in all the terms of the Kingdom; And those terms are: justice, peace, love, dignity, inclusivity, equity, welcome, solidarity, compassion, respect, empathy, opportunities, coexistence, well-being, and much more in the framework of grace. The means of grace is a concept initially used in the Methodist tradition, which refers to the sacred practices of the sacraments, marriage celebrations, ordination, and other rituals. In sharing this quote from Rev. Muñoz, I am satisfied with the way she conceptualizes the great challenge of multicultural programs and ministries as a means of grace because it establishes the image of an issue that deserves all kinds of space and attention for its transcendence in social, spiritual, civil, religious, and civic justice.

Chapter 6: Local Ministry Practice – FUMCH

1. Resources, Challenges, and Opportunities in the Ministries with the Hispanic/Latino Communities:

The church is the most excellent organism at all levels and in all settings, and it is called to show integration and equality through the common denominator of faith for mission.

In many contexts in the United States, there are groups of Hispanics/Latinos with a strong desire to collaborate and make significant contributions to the mission of God through the church. We should focus on the need for openness on the part of existing congregations

⁴² Héctor Burgos, Challenges of Serving Hispanics/Latinos as a Multicultural and Multiracial Ministry in the United Methodist Church, interview by Jorge López, February 8, 2025.

that need to share their authority and power to create and provide spaces for the contribution of Hispanics. For this reason, I believe that guidance and promotional resources, as well as an environment conducive to good exercise, should reach the leadership of local churches. There are several models for this. One model that stands out is the concept and practice of cross-racial and cross-cultural ministerial appointments.

Cross-cultural-cross-racial appointments are a clear signal that the church intends to be an inclusive and welcoming community in a divided society. The system of open itinerancy is the key institutional mechanism for creating and sustaining such a community, and the annual conference and its structures and programs are the most immediate institutional resources.⁴³

I have been appointed to a cross-racial charge, and, in my experience, it has been a process of understanding the values of diversity.

2. Building relationships and community with the Hispanic/Latino Communities.

Knowing the platforms already created, the varied ideas and proposals, and the resources that can be generated from the denomination's structure, it is now up to us to pay attention to the models, characteristics, goals, and approaches that must be considered at the base of the local church or congregation.

Multiracial congregations require time, energy, and focus that could be used elsewhere. But neither the ease or difficulty of the task nor its simplicity or complexity are the issues on which to focus. We are called as Christians to live, work, serve, and be together, forging community that can occur only with God's help. Just imagine for a moment what would happen in communities across the United States—and in the nation as a whole—if multiracial congregations began emerging in cities, suburbs, and small towns. It is a compelling thought, a journey worth taking. Humbly doing so is our witness to the world.⁴⁴

3.

⁴³ Lucia Ann McSpadden, *Meeting God at the Boundaries*. 127-128

⁴⁴ Deyoung, *United by Faith*. 181

4. Leadership and Programmatic Structure

This statement embodies much of what is known as the Kingdom vision, which has as its primary objective the transformation of the world through the pillars of justice, peace, and love. The Kingdom vision is a perspective of the world completely transformed by the central values of equality, freedom, and wellness.

To meet this objective, which also represents a significant challenge, it is necessary to establish organizational models that can be tailored to the specific context of the congregation, ensuring the concept of multiculturalism is successful and engaging.

Considering pertinent case studies gathered from scholarly literature further illuminates the potential for enhancing the development of multicultural and multiracial churches, offering valuable insight into the criteria governing these organizational models.

Because multiculturalism is a relatively new subject to study in relation to the Christian church, the present task before us is to construct a model for others to follow. For a model to be effective, it has to have three criteria; One, it has to fit with our understanding of cultural distribution; that is, the power has to be decentralized and distributed between cultural groupings. Two, it has to encourage relationship building between cultural groupings and individuals. Three, it has to move us further in the journey to become a multicultural church and not simply get us stuck in any one place along the way.⁴⁵

The three models presented by Lauren Beth Bower are the Renting Model, the Sister Church Model, and the Integration Model. The meaning of the word “decentralized” is powerful and highly pertinent to the gradual formation of a multiracial ministry.

For a practical concept, there should be clear objectives, goals, and a vision to ensure everyone is on the same page and shares a unified understanding of the primary mission.

⁴⁵ Bowers, *Multicultural Church*. 114

5. Case Studies: Progress and Challenges at FUMCH

Let's now look at the current landscape of the local church in Homestead and the development of Hispanic ministry. Consider the existence of resources established at the denominational level and their interaction with the ministry's development, if any.

At FUMCH, a Hispanic-Latino ministry gathers a group of approximately 40 people on Sunday afternoons for worship services. This ministry began with the initiative of several bilingual and Hispanic leaders who invited Hispanic individuals from the local community. The discipleship, formation, and growth process within this ministry cannot be attributed to any structure or program established at the level of the denomination's organization. Instead, it has resulted from the local leaders' initiatives and direct pastoral ministry. Today, this ministry does not have a presence or full representation in the official leadership structure of the FUMCH.

This data on the process of formation of Hispanic ministry in FUMCH, offers us enough facts to say that the most significant challenge is the lack of resources and programs for the development of Hispanic/Latino ministry in full connection with the structure of the church from its most direct organizational levels and close to the local church.

In a clear example of how the development of Hispanic/Latino ministry has been handled in our local church, I present the following. For a person to be received as a member in full communion, it is common to offer a basic discipleship process that covers the fundamental doctrines and beliefs of the institution. This discipleship process must be provided by a person trained in the matter. In 2024, the group of brothers and sisters who wished to be part of the church's membership received a doctrinal workshop from a Hispanic pastor appointed to a nearby Methodist church because our church did not have

a bilingual leader prepared for this role. He was not a leader assigned by the district office or any specific body. Everything has been done at the initiative of local leaders without intervention from a conference or district body.

6. Florida Annual Conference Program "*The Beloved Community*"

In my process of moving from the New York Annual Conference to the Florida Annual Conference in the summer of 2024, I was able to receive many answers to questions about the specifics of the context, the organization, the basic structures regarding the ministry of the Homestead local church, and the dynamics most relevant to the vision. One of the answers that I consider very superficial was the question of what the relationship is or has been between the ministry of the Hispanic/Latino community and the structure of the District and the Annual Conference. I received this as an answer: "The ministry is getting to it and the Conference knows". The answer made me understand that the ministry is well-known but has no official structure for processes and procedures. It should be noted that at the time of my transition, the painful process of disaffiliation for many congregations from the United Methodist Church had been concluded. In the context of the Florida Annual Conference, many Hispanic/Latino congregations also disassociated themselves from the United Methodist Church. Therefore, we focused on the multicultural concept because it was relevant.

Through documentary research and consultation of various sources, I have gathered information regarding the current structure within the Annual Conference that holds the responsibility and authority to address the theme of multiculturalism. Recently named "The Beloved Community," this is the Annual Conference's tool for addressing racial and cultural equity issues. In connection with GCORR, this discipleship platform, work, and

action aims to bring the affirmations of justice and equality to all ministerial forums, applying values that correspond to the specific context.

The Beloved Community recognizes and celebrates the beauty and power of God's gift of diversity. It is designed to engage and enrich FLUMC congregations as they consider their unique and diverse callings, gifts, and graces. Ideally, our work will enable congregations to understand their varied make-up as well as the communities in which they serve to further reach individuals with the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

When providing leadership to local churches and ministries, we begin by equipping individuals within our Annual Conference with the skills necessary to help lead congregations through difficult conversations regarding the variety of "isms" that exist in society. We then look at available resources to help pastors and congregations begin to respond to new ways of thinking about inclusivity in order to extend the reach of the church into the community that it serves.⁴⁶

The aspect of preparing leaders to engage in concrete dialogues on issues such as prejudice, segregation, marginalization, colonialism, favoritism, supremacy, inequalities, and all forms of declaring and fomenting injustice is the most fundamental and momentous step in the process of transformation and preparation for inclusiveness. These ideas that permeate the social sectors are reflected in the dynamics of congregations in many ways, and we need an awakening process of deconstruction and reconstruction. When I propose a method of deconstruction, I mean the process of discerning which parts of the current scheme of values should be excluded; for example, the idea that our cultural form is the best in style, structure, and dynamics, and that makes us displace all the ideas of other cultures as secondary and disadvantaged. So, the construction process consists of reordering all the positive aspects of discernment into a conglomerate of values that promote openness, equality, and diversity.

⁴⁶ Brick River Technologies, "FLUMC - the Beloved Community," Flumc.org (The Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church, 2025), <https://www.flumc.org/thebelovedcommunity>.

After recognizing an environment of frank openness to Kingdom values (peace, justice, and love) with contextual applications, the environment will be conducive to implementing the path of racial and cultural inclusiveness. Therefore, the leadership team will serve as the voice both within and outside the congregation, upholding the principles of inclusivity and equity as guiding principles in the development of the mission.

Chapter 7: Socio-Political Engagement and the Church

1. Socio-Political Issues

Social and political problems tend to significantly affect groups disadvantaged by discrimination and sectarianism. In a democratic political system, civil and individual rights should exist, at least in principle. However, these rights are often manipulated and exploited to support the interests of the powerful and advantaged.

Against this backdrop, examining how race and nationality intersect and influence political and social structures is crucial.

2. Race and Nationality as a Challenge and Resource

In the historical context of the United States, it is indisputable that a strong American nationalist movement exists. The national political movement known as "Make America Great Again (MAGA)" responds to and fuels an extremist sense of American nationalism, which consequently antagonizes any movement that attempts to create and develop an environment of multicultural collaboration. This aggressive form of nationalism resists efforts toward multicultural partnership, instead fostering dynamics of exclusion and dehumanization. This movement thrives on the fear of multicultural and international

Commented [FP1]: The final sentence introduces race and nationality, but the transition could be smoother. You might say: "Against this backdrop, it is important to examine how race and nationality intersect and influence both political and social structures." This would show how your focus naturally emerges from the broader issues you've described.

diversity. As a result of such political movements, the dynamics of dehumanizing the "foreign" or "strange" are fostered, and the inequality that arises from the struggle for national supremacy is legitimized.

Moreover, within this framework of American nationalism, racial hierarchies are not only preserved but actively intensified.

3. Racism as a Social Pandemic

We live in times of significant challenges in many social, political, and economic aspects that are exacerbated by the painful and terrible issue of racism. During the global tragedy of the Coronavirus pandemic, the nation was receiving the horrific scenes of George Floyd's death (murder) in Minneapolis through the news media. The streets of many cities were filled with crowds protesting and denouncing police abuse and racial discrimination as the causes of this event. On the other hand, extremist white supremacist groups organized demonstrations against protesters advocating against police brutality. In addition, sensationalist emphasis on the virus's emergence from a region of China paved the way for speculation and misrepresentation, fostering discriminatory persecution against our Asian neighbors.

With all these developments and with political demonstrations that promote and motivate racial prejudice, most of the Hispanic population seeks to live and work with dignity in this nation and thus take advantage of the opportunity and even the privilege of a quality of life that they do not have in their respective countries. The book *Diversity in América* highlights and identifies specific expressions of racism within this nation:

Racial tensions, confrontations, and violent acts continue to occur in many geographic locals. Sometimes it is a Black-White conflict, perhaps in New York City, or it is a Cambodian-Latino fight maybe in Stockton, California. Possibly it

is Blacks clashing with Korean merchants in Chicago or elsewhere, or with Hispanics in Miami.⁴⁷

At the specific moment of writing this bill, we have in our context the unfortunate occurrence of executive orders from the incoming president of the nation to carry out mass deportations of immigrants. Our immediate community is affected by the large number of people who maintain an incomplete immigration process and who are vulnerable to acts of discrimination and injustice, not only by law enforcement agencies but also by citizens who use government actions to accentuate and invigorate their racial prejudices. In other words, the dynamics generated by racism and cultural discrimination have been awakened as a result of planned socio-political management. Generally, the root of racial discrimination has been the manipulation of a system to segregate and gain power from one race over another. The phenomenon of power mixed with discrimination can cancel opportunities for all to prevent the disadvantaged race from gaining an advantage and achieving development.

Yes, the zero-sum story of racial hierarchy was born along with the country, but it is an invention of the worst elements of our society: people who gained power through ruthless exploitation and kept it by sowing constant divisions. It has always optimally benefited only the few while limiting the potential of the rest of us, and therefore the whole.⁴⁸

To this end, the church has the immediate challenge of serving as a moral, humanitarian, spiritual, emotional, and supportive aid and refuge for those who are marked by all kinds of persecution and racial prejudice of these times.

In our context, Homestead's demographic dynamics pose various challenges. And because of trends in demographic changes, multiracial and multicultural work and

⁴⁷ Vincent N Parrillo, *Diversity in America* (New York: Routledge, 2016). P 185

⁴⁸ Heather McGhee, *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* (New York: One World, 2021). P 14

ministries are and will be pertinent and inevitable. This includes all the details about the struggles for equality, equity, and justice. Vincent Parrillo discusses this trend and its current implications:

Despite questions about categories or the accuracy of demographic projections, the United States is clearly becoming a more multiracial society than ever before. What does this mean for race relations? American society is less racist than in the past, but racism still saturates the land. Discrimination and violence sometimes show that race relations are deteriorating rather than improving.⁴⁹

This challenge that the church has as an institution and as a body becomes more complicated when there are voices from within that sympathize with discrimination and marginalization. The phenomenon of supremacy expands and sharpens when governmental and political forums authenticate and validate racial and cultural persecution and marginalization. Then, individuals who identify with these movements begin to feel empowered by the rights granted to them, which devalue everything that represents a contrary movement. "The pandemic of white supremacy has been revealed in these months as the long-nurtured and ill-founded desire of the white community to use state power as a way of casting the shadow of death entirely on another community."⁵⁰ For all these reasons, now more than ever, the church must seize the opportunity to demonstrate justice and solidarity in these circumstances. "In a day when racial enmity pervades, the church, through multiethnic/multicultural ministry, has an opportunity to be a beacon of light and hope and a sign of God's reign."⁵¹ The church must champion manifestations of solidarity and empathy to make the Kingdom visible and accessible

⁴⁹ Parrillo, *Diversity in America*. P185

⁵⁰ Mark D W Edington, *We Shall Be Changed: Questions for the Post-Pandemic Church* (New York: Church Publishing, 2020). P xiii

⁵¹ "A Vision for Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Cultural Ministry," Discipleship Ministries, 2025, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/a-vision-for-multi-ethnic-multi-cultural-ministry>.

during political and racial turbulence. It is essential to cultivate a sense of conscience and commitment to action grounded on what we truly believe as a Christian denomination with a robust history of learning and reform.

4. National Diversity as a Resource

By gaining clarity on the demographic aspects of our environment and understanding the realities in various aspects of society, we can begin to discuss our starting point to chart the transformative path of unifying the church's ministries. Diversity will be key and central to enhancing the potential and effectiveness of the outreach and discipleship mission. "Our differences can make us stronger, smarter, more creative, and fairer. Once we abandon the false idea of zero-sum competition, the benefits of diversity become evident, from the classroom to the courtroom to the boardroom."⁵²

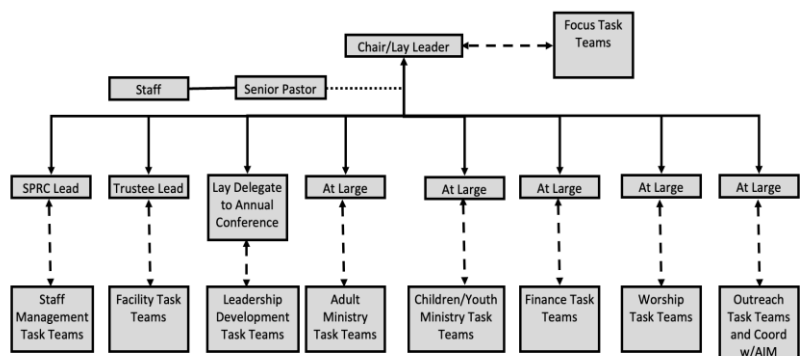
Creativity in developing outreach strategies for the services offered by the church will increase the likelihood of achieving results, as people with diverse cultural perspectives will provide ideas that are directly intertwined with the communities around us. People who understand the experiences and needs of the surrounding communities will consider the realities of those communities directly, which should inform the plan's objectives.

⁵² Heather McGhee, *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* (New York: One World, 2021). P 281

Chapter 8: Toward Equitable and Inclusive Participation

1. Current Organizational Structure of FUMCH

Understanding the institution's organizational structure is essential to recognizing the current leadership structure within the FUMCH congregation. The 2016 Book of Discipline at ¶247.2 provides a standardized model that, according to active ministries in the local church, can be expanded but not diminished in scope. It has been given the title "One-Model" because it incorporates a representation of each ministry or area of work into its structure.



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This board is composed entirely of white members with English-speaking American idiosyncrasies, except for one of the "at-large" spaces allocated to the coordinator of Hispanic ministry. That is, the church's administrative and programmatic decisions are considered and set by the white-American membership.

⁵³ "Asbury United Methodist Church: One Board Model Empowering Unity, Streamlining Ministry," 2017, <https://asburylv.org/wp-content/uploads/Church%20Council/AsburyChatHandout03172024.pdf>.

This presents a limitation in the knowledge, perspective, and actual understanding of cultural details that already exist within the church's official membership, and even more so in the immediate context of our institution's location.

It is my opinion that the management of the church's economic and administrative resources should be budgeted based on a missionary program that corresponds to meet the needs of the surrounding community, thereby improving the quality of life by the Kingdom of God's model, a model based on compassion, solidarity, justice, equity, freedom, openness, and peace. To this end, the most convenient way to establish a missionary plan that meets these criteria is by establishing and fostering direct relationships with the communities to be served. In our case, the FUMCH already has a direct relationship with members in full connection. With the goal of a balanced leadership structure, my first significant transition focus is to promote the presence of Hispanic/Latino leaders in each task group. From these working groups, a deeper understanding of the realities of ministries and the value of the contributions that each member can and should make is gained.

2. Leadership and Community Availability

The availability of leadership resources should be recognized from the pastoral or ministerial platform. In this case, the minister is responsible for knowing the profiles of potential church leaders. Although the One-Board Model structure does not explicitly display the position and specific structure of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee, this committee is chaired by the senior pastor, and its purpose is to recruit leaders to fill positions throughout the organizational structure. Additionally, this committee is responsible for developing discipleship and preparation strategies for

potential leaders in various areas, including administration, programming, and organization.

Due to the development and growth, we see in Hispanic ministry in terms of organization and programming, I have already identified potential leaders for the multicultural platform we aim to establish.

- On-Hand and Needed Leadership

In evaluating and analyzing the human resources that the FUMCH church possesses, Anglo-American leaders have the experience and knowledge to manage the institution's economic affairs, encompassing the administration of accounts, investments, policies, permits, and government procedures. On the other hand, the emerging leadership of the Hispanic community has an understanding and experience in reaching out to and addressing the needs of the communities they represent, which have the most significant potential for growth. Therefore, creating, implementing, and developing a readiness model for each leadership group to equip the other with their strengths and vice versa is an ideal way to transform.

Incorporating a discipleship plan is essential for fostering the transformation in participation and leadership I aim to promote and establish. By implementing this plan, we can provide education and a deeper understanding of the fundamentals and contextual factors that must be considered in the local church's mission. The information contained in discipleship will encompass everything that the general agencies of the United Methodist Church, such as GCORR, provide in their statements, bylaws, and recommendations.

This discipleship process will also include specialized leadership tools in various practical areas of mission, exploration of resources, and application of stewardship in utilizing talents, skills, and resources.

From a general and standardized perspective, a specific plan should be developed that incorporates all the details of the vision into a mission that best aligns with the characteristics of the First United Methodist Church of Homestead's context.

At the same time, a process for incorporating Hispanic/Latino members into leadership positions within the One-Model Board structure should be established. For this process of integrating human resources into the existing leadership structure, the same structure has a committee known as the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee. This committee has been established to recruit and prepare leaders within the congregation to fill positions based on the gifts and talents recognized through prayer, discernment, dialogue, and consideration. As the congregation's senior pastor, I serve as the committee chair. I am responsible for bringing together the committee members to establish a consultation and recruitment plan according to the leadership positions that will be vacant for a future term, either for a maximum term of time, by resignation, death, or transfer of a leader in a position.

2. Vision for New Creation: Building relationships and community with the Hispanic/Latino Communities

The plan I seek to implement aims to establish a structure, a body, and an identity that will conform to and model the Kingdom of God implemented through the Holy intervention of Jesus Christ. To achieve this, it is necessary to establish a clear focus and a unified vision to implement a single mission—what I call a “new creation”. This refers to a local church that, in its current reality, functions as two congregations sharing a

building and budget, but where decisions are validated and made primarily by one group. It is a church where the Hispanic/Latino community lacks equal representation in leadership and decision-making and where ministry plans are often developed without considering the voices that represent the congregation's actual context. For this local church, I aim to cultivate a model of inclusiveness that embraces the value of diversity and its contributions. In creating a new reality that conforms to the model of the Kingdom of God, we must consider that each group or sector should have the opportunity to reflect on and discern its current state and readiness for the process I propose. Through adequate, honest, and transparent reflections, we will gain a clear understanding of the current panorama, enabling us to determine the necessary steps of learning and discipleship and their appropriate order. With all the elements of discernment and knowledge, I aim to develop the discipleship process as a sacred act. These reflections and exercises of discernment will define the stage or phase of intercultural sensitivity to which each sector is classified. Below, I present the stages of development of intercultural sensitivity developed by Milton Bennett:

- Bennett's Stages of Development in Intercultural Sensitivity
 - Denial of difference: the inability to construe cultural difference; isolation: separation.
 - Defense against difference: recognition of cultural difference with negative evaluation; denigration; superiority.
 - Minimization of difference: recognition and acceptance of superficial cultural differences while holding that all human beings are essentially the same; physical universalism, transcendent universalism.
 - Acceptance of difference: recognition and appreciation of cultural differences.
 - Adaptation to difference: development of communication skills that enable intercultural communication; empathy; pluralism.

- Integration of difference: internalization of bicultural or multicultural frames of reference; maintaining a definition of identity that is “marginal” to any particular culture; contextual evaluation.”⁵⁴



Bennet uses ethnocentrism to describe the practice of interpreting and valuing others using our own cultural basis as the rule and the fundamental. So, we can consider the same illustration with the concept of race, with racism as one of the extremes and equality as the other. In the picture, we see how the extremes of ethnocentrism on the left and ethnorelativism on the right mark the stages from the problem to the ideal of integration, respectively. In the case of FUMCH, I believe that, in most cases, membership can be placed between the stages of minimization and acceptance on a diagram that goes from racism to equality.

It is necessary to establish that Bennet's model (DMIS) was used to understand the stages of development and transition. In the actual case of FUMCH, I must incorporate specific critical details of the significant problems related to the process. In other words, special attention must be paid to our process to the problem of racism in its various aspects, for example, institutional racism, collective racism, and individual racism. In the same way,

⁵⁴ McSpadden, *Meeting God at the Boundaries*. 137

⁵⁵ Organizing Engagement, "Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity," Organizing Engagement, November 1, 2019, <https://organizingengagement.org/models/developmental-model-of-intercultural-sensitivity/>.

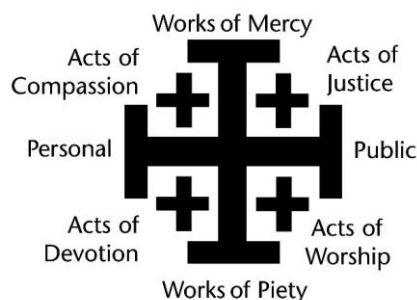
the issue of oppression and abuse of power must be carefully addressed because it is necessary to evaluate, not only the perception but the conviction that transformation includes a process of healthy breaking, repentance and humility, healing, and reconciliation from the individual to the collective and institutional character. Here, I reiterate the need for a healthy process of deconstruction and reconstruction.

3. A Joint Process

I plan to present the General Rule of Discipleship as an essential instrument and model for the shared discipleship process. The General Rule of Discipleship is the foundational model because it presents and projects the individual and communal aspects of every believer's discipleship exercise on a single platform. This discipleship platform stems from the basic teachings of Rev. John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, who stated that the three basic rules that a disciple of Christ must follow are, do no harm, do good, and maintain a relationship with God through His ordinances; from there we, the people called methodist, have come to this conceptualization of a discipleship process. Therefore, it is the ideal platform for focusing on and developing specific plans for the church's mission.

4. THE GENERAL RULE OF DISCIPLESHIP

To witness to Jesus Christ in the world and to follow His teachings through acts of compassion, justice, worship, and devotion under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁶



The goal is to establish a robust church within itself, equipped with the necessary resources to demonstrate genuine compassion and solidarity with communities through acts of social justice. All groups in the church's plenary will be involved in programming that offers dynamic discipleship guides that are practical for personal and group growth in faith and vision.

Fellowship events are among the process's most essential activities. Events that can take place within a social and community framework, such as a dinner featuring traditional foods from each represented culture or a gathering on the folkloric customs of the participating countries, will help create an environment of rapprochement and understanding.

The elements of study, fellowship, organization outline so far, along with connection, are essential parts of a process that becomes both practical and theological. The Wesleyan quadrilateral will be another indispensable tool for understanding the doctrines of our

⁵⁶ Covenant Discipleship: Changing lives, transforming communities | UMC.org, "The United Methodist Church," The United Methodist Church, September 5, 2019, <https://www.umc.org/en/content/covenant-discipleship-changing-lives-transforming-communities>.

denomination. The well-known Wesleyan quadrilateral establishes that the basis for a theological understanding must be grounded in the Holy Scriptures and that the reflective process must incorporate critical analysis through reason, tradition, and personal and communal experience. This will serve as the foundation for establishing our definition, what we believe, and what we receive as a call to a mission that will be our focus.



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With the understanding of the Sacred Scriptures in connection with personal and collective experiences, we can contextualize the meaning and perspective of the biblical message to the realities of the various racial groups and, above all, to the congregation's aspirations. With the theological-doctrinal framework of the Wesleyan quadrilateral, we will have an adequate foundation to sustain the aspirations that reach the table of understanding, and thus we can develop the sacred act of equality, justice, peace, and solidarity; that is, the model of the Kingdom of God.

By considering the Wesleyan quadrilateral as a framework of theological analysis to understand and appreciate the contributions of each culture and each race, we have adequate tools in several ways. Knowing the experience of each culture and each race in terms of their stories and narratives about God's power, justice, peace, and love at work in

⁵⁷ "Wesleyan Quadrilateral," Schematron.org, 2025, <https://schematron.org/image/wesleyan-quadrilateral-diagram-7.png>.

their situations in their home nation and God's offers of hope are elements that help the theological vision of other cultures represented in the congregation to expand and transform. A dialogue about the experiences of the colonized and the experiences of the colonizer will be interesting to understand or decipher the factors and causes of a reasoning of faith. The reasons that have led us to feel and think in a certain way about God's interventions can reach the dialogue held within the framework of the ring to reach reasonable understandings of collaboration. For this dynamic, using reason attached to the Sacred Scriptures will be fruitful in incorporating justice. The various traditions cultivated by races and cultures add significant elements to enrich liturgical encounters and sustain learning dialogues about the signs, symbols, prayers, music, rituals, and ceremonies distinct from our nationalities.

Through theological and doctrinal parameters, and with the missional outline of the General Rule of Discipleship, we have sufficient elements to guide us in a discipleship process that pursues the goal of social holiness.

5. Social Holiness and Ecclesial Transformation

The concept of social holiness arises from the theology developed by John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement. It establishes that to the extent that an individual grows and is transformed into his faith, he must positively affect certain social fibers. This way, the individual will make a collective transformation called Social Holiness. Religion is not a dynamic that occurs in individuality but has a communal and social character to define the Kingdom of God and its justice. Social holiness refers to the inseparability of personal faith and social responsibility — not simply that personal growth leads to social change, but that holiness itself is intrinsically communal.

For this reason, the teaching and application of values must be the same for all, even if this means that each racial sector must take different measures to achieve integration and equity. Each cultural and racial group will have to propose a process of transformation towards social holiness that is, by its historical and current situation, as a starting point. Each cultural and racial group will have different challenges to address for its process of healing and holiness. In turn, each party must consider its effects on other groups in the search for equity, justice, and full participation.

6. Transformations for Balanced Participation

By incorporating the details of the General Rule of Discipleship and maintaining a practical doctrinal and theological foundation based on the foundations of the Wesleyan quadrilateral, we develop a process of healthy spiritual transformation. This will create the foundation for establishing specific ministries through open communication and a mission approach that shows a united body's coordinated effort.

When we coordinate and effect the church's mission through specific ministries, we must make every effort to show the best manifestations of Christ in response to the needs of communities within and outside the ecclesial institution. In this case, including all resources will be the primary representative and demonstrative detail of the Kingdom of God to do justice, show compassion, and mercy. In his book *Inclusion*, Eric H.F. Law proposes three forms or manifestations of ministry in which leaders should exercise their gifts, talents, and skills most effectively. First, the leader must direct his efforts to the common ministry in the church, that is, within his congregation, to sustain and develop his resources. Second, there must be an effort to lead the people who make up the church to exercise their personal and spiritual resources to build the mission. Finally, church

leadership becomes fully effective when the manifestation of the church's mission for the community arises in its environment and context.

The leader must conform to the body's vision and mission to serve inside and outside the entity we represent and show the same quality in all services and any context in which service and help are necessary. That is why the transformation generated through discipleship and other coexistence tools will result in a group of leaders with a true sense of solidarity and openness.

The leader must align with the vision and mission of the body they represent, serving both within and outside the entity and demonstrating the same quality in all aspects of service, regardless of the context or need. That is why the transformation generated through discipleship and other coexistence tools will result in a group of leaders who possess a genuine sense of solidarity and openness.

7. Tools for Intercultural Understanding Among Leaders

For most of the exercises and stages of growth and cohesion that I aspire to achieve, excellent leadership resources already serve as tools to establish the right platform.

Among these valuable resources, I include an established organization, the development of multicultural activity, bilingual human resources within the leadership team, resources available at denominational levels, standard projection into the future, and a discipleship blueprint that will be the primary instrument of communication, fruitful dialogue, and collective understanding.

From this inventory of available tools, we can affirm that the following objectives are achievable. According to The Lewis Center for Church Leadership, the goal can be characterized by the details of the organizational profile of diversity-oriented churches:

1. Leadership that strategically creates vision and value congruence across the organization that empowers teams and individuals and fosters higher than normal levels of organizational commitment and productivity towards being multicultural.
 2. A top-management team that reflects the demographics of the church membership and the community.
 3. Organizational strategy that is clearly articulated and supported by decisive action when inequalities and conflict in the church and the community need to be addressed.
 4. A leadership development plan that is predicated upon the recruitment, training, and professional development of future generations of leaders.
 5. A formal plan to focus leadership concerning organizational change and diversity management.
 6. Policies and procedures for conflict resolution and reconciliation at all levels of the organization and in the community.
 7. The leader defines, legitimizes, and reproduces the organization's vision, mission, values, and practices across generations.
- Those are essential steps to follow, but it starts with a love for Jesus, who stresses inclusion and diversity.⁵⁸

8. Collaborative Faith Projects

By considering reason, tradition, and experience, according to the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, we create space to develop a balance among the three parts with total correspondence to the Holy Scriptures. Let me explain: the experience of the groups involved in organizational development offers valuable insight into the kind of justice the church longs for. These experiences also help us approach doctrinal issues more pragmatically, informed by the cultural and racial contexts from which they emerge. The

⁵⁸ Brick River Technologies, "FLUMC - When Churches Celebrate Diversity and Inclusion They Are Following the Teachings of Jesus," <https://www.flumc.org/newsdetail/when-churches-celebrate-diversity-and-inclusion-they-are-following-the-teachings-of-jesus-18908682>.

realities experienced in the communities represented within the church environment serve as the compass or GPS (Global Positioning System) for our reflection and praxis. I propose a system that enables us to see the realities of our membership, the realities of the communities in our context, and the resources we can utilize to establish bonds of service and mission tailored to the present. That is why the church's human resources, primarily current and potential leaders, are the most crucial tool in the plan. "To make a cultural shift, we must gather passionate, enthusiastic people who want their church to be more missional and outwardly focused. Without this group of leaders and the pastor, it will be challenging to shift the congregation's perspective, culture, attitude, and behavior."⁵⁹

These four aspects—perspective, culture, attitude, and behavior—are deeply interconnected. I want to highlight them as key areas where transformation must occur for the plan to move forward effectively. To foster this transformation, I propose sharing perspectives rooted in lived experience, allowing these experiences to be tested and refined in the theological crucible—that is, through communal theological reflection. From this, we can develop a practical, Christ-centered methodology.

I refer to this process as incarnation: translating what we learn from our context into lived expressions of empathy, compassion, solidarity, and mutuality. I believe this incarnational approach will lead the congregation to healthier and more fruitful practices. As part of this process, I outline ten core values that should be integrated, especially among those in leadership, to guide and sustain this cultural shift.

Ten values that leaders of healthy churches practice: 1. Love God: Worshiping, serving, honoring 2. Love your neighbor: Affirming, forgiving 3. Faithfulness: Carrying out the ministerial tasks that are asked of you, when they are asked of

⁵⁹ Bob Farr, Doug Anderson, and Kay Kotan, *Get Their Name* (Abingdon Press, 2013). P 71

you, and at the time they are asked of you 4. Passion: Serving with spirit, motivated to influence others 5. Loyalty: Being loyal to the leaders God has given us 6. Obedience: Listening, complying, and being accountable to those in authority consistently 7. Creativity: Being open to change, resolving problems and conflicts by providing solutions 8. Availability: Being present at all times to guarantee leadership visibility 9. Meekness: Having a teachable spirit, allowing yourself to be guided, formed, and instructed by a mentor 10. Integrity: Being the same in private and as you are in public—what you think, what you say, and what you do should be one.⁶⁰

Love is the special ingredient that can modify our attitudes and prejudices in proposals for social justice and collective well-being. The message of Jesus has a central idea:

“³⁰you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”(NRSVUE)

Only with love can we achieve the great objective of the United Methodist Church proposed in The Book of Discipline when it says, "The United Methodist Church commits to confronting and eliminating all forms of racism, racial inequity, colonialism, white privilege and white supremacy, in every facet of its life and in society at large."⁶¹

Visibility is proposed as one of the values achieved through acts of presence that correspond to the mission of satisfying the community's needs to the extent that the church obtains adequate and relevant resources. In turn, that visibility must demonstrate and embody the values necessary to meet the urgencies and challenges of the people.

Presence and availability must reflect the passion that is an indispensable characteristic of the incarnation because of the character of compassion and solidarity.

⁶⁰ Iosmar Alvarez, *Viral Multiplication in Hispanic Churches* (Upper Room Books, 2016). P 141

⁶¹“The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2020/2024,” A.co, 2020, <https://a.co/41x9Ma2>.

9. Inclusion and Integration as final goals.

A good plan for inclusion is the core intention we must sustain throughout developing a multicultural and multiracial ecclesiastical community. The primary concepts and ideas include the emphatic management of upholding doctrinal bylaws, utilizing resources recommended by denominational agencies, fostering appropriate learning through discipleship, evaluating and preparing leaders to maintain balance in the governing body, and maintaining and fostering healthy interpersonal relationships. The implementation of all these aspects to achieve the goal will depend on the loyalty and consistency of the leaders in their execution, which is essential for an effective collective effort. To this end, promoting the practice and understanding of a covenant is advisable. I present this congregational covenant with great appropriateness, as it is well-suited to reach and foster a healthy and vibrant multiracial and multicultural congregation, fulfilling its mission through various ministries.

A Congregational Covenant

1. *Foster a caring community:* We will act with kindness, empathy, and compassion.
2. *Celebrate our differences:* We will set aside our individual agendas and look for common ground so as to find the “we” in our journey together.
3. *Encourage trust and respect:* We will nurture a safe and supportive atmosphere, respectfully address concerns, seek productive resolution of conflict when it arises, and help others in that process.
4. *Support our community and leadership:* We will participate in and provide support to our community as well as our committees and leaders. We will share the work of advancing our congregational vision and goals.⁶²

⁶² Jacqueline J Lewis and John Janka, *Ten Essential Strategies for Becoming a Multiracial Congregation* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2018). P 137

These words should be treasured by each member of the ecclesiastical community as a sacred act. Kingdom values must be explicit and intrinsic in the qualitative development of every ministry that arises from the church, in the church, for the church, and through the church. Individual assessments will be relevant if they are concretely rooted in the four points of the suggested pact.

“We respond to God’s call in the world by giving witness to the transformative power of the gospel, engaging in acts of mercy, and striving toward the attainment of justice and peace as hallmarks of God’s coming reign. In all of these efforts, Christians are reminded that diverse as we may be, we are all a part of the same body under the sovereignty of Christ (1 Corinthians 12: 12-31).”⁶³

This is a core statement established as part of the social principles of the United Methodist Church, specifically as part of the preface to the Social Community chapter. The emphasis of our witness is to show our unity even with diversities, or better yet to regard diversity as a resource for unity in Christ, our only sovereign. It is possible, as long as we apply ourselves to the transforming grace of the gospel with the mercy and solidarity that corresponds.

⁶³ “The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2020/2024,” A.co, 2020, <https://a.co/41x9Ma2>.

Conclusion

Homestead, Florida, needs a faith-based organization that appropriately values its total population's racial and cultural diversity. For these purposes, I see First United Methodist Church of Homestead (FUMCH) as having the capacity and the necessary elements to develop an organization that can positively impact the population. The FUMCH has a long history, a validated witness in various forms, and a sustained and uninterrupted tradition. The church's current leadership has the discretion and interest to bring an internal transformation appropriate to the context. The FUMCH has a good group of Hispanic/Latino people who have been welcomed as full communion members of the church and who exercise various forms of leadership and mission; sufficient elements to connect the demographic profile of the city with the church through a process of unification of the ethnic groups represented in the membership of the church to consolidate a multiracial and multicultural church.

Through a structured discipleship system—and with the support of various bodies and agencies of the Florida United Methodist Church Annual Conference, such as The Beloved Community—the church will be encouraged to foster the meaningful integration of its diverse ethnic groups into a unified ministry plan and a core mission that genuinely reflects and responds to the needs of the surrounding community.

Unifying resources, knowledge, experiences, and diverse perspectives through a consensus-based process and real-world embodiment will enable the optimal synthesis of the myriad elements woven into a unified fabric.

The various dilemmas and obstacles facing the plans of UMC denominational agencies and bodies will be addressed by the local church's management in communication with

the denomination's bodies, ensuring that this communication is appropriately channeled through the corresponding levels of the organizational structure.

The most significant challenges of the historical context are racism, American nationalism, bureaucracy, fear, abuse of power, and the evil intention to foster a system of supremacy of one race over others. For the effective development of our multicultural and multiracial community, we must be intentional and determined to implement a system of discipleship with theological content relevant to the context and validated by the experiences of the races represented, from their proper perspective—the perspective of justice and equity.

With the resources that various denominational agencies have on this issue and the corresponding initiatives to foster a fruitful environment, the FUMCH has an excellent opportunity to develop and cultivate this multicultural and multiracial ministry for the glory of God.

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APPENDIXES

Interview with Bishop Héctor Burgos: Challenges of Serving Hispanics/Latinos as a Multicultural and Multiracial Ministry in the United Methodist Church.

Interview by Jorge López, February 8, 2025.

Do you believe that local churches are adequately receiving the resources developed at the denominational level to support multicultural and multiracial ministries? What challenges or obstacles have you observed in this process?

No. The crux of the issue lies in the absence of a deliberate and comprehensive strategy. There is a marked distinction between transient "programs" and robust "strategies." Programs are typically promoted sporadically, whereas strategies are systematically implemented with a focus on achieving substantial impact. Key challenges and obstacles include:

1. **Personal and Institutional Racism:** This pervasive issue manifests at all levels of the church, hindering progress.
2. **Lack of Cohesive Strategy:** At the general church level, there is a fragmented approach to equipping and resourcing leaders and congregations. Each agency operates in isolation, creating a competitive environment that confuses constituents. Additionally, many annual conferences independently develop resources, often driven by a "hero" complex, believing they can outperform others.
3. **Cabinet-Level Strategy Deficiency:** There is a lack of a well-defined strategy for recruitment, appointment-making, transitions, and ongoing support in CRCC ministries at the cabinet level.
4. **Inadequate Preparation of Candidates:** Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) and District Committee on Ordained Ministry (DCOM) lack strategies to assess and prepare candidates for leadership in CRCC environments, compounded by a lack of cultural competence among BOM members.
5. **Passive Discipleship:** Local churches often maintain the status quo, contributing to their decline due to isolation from evolving communities.
6. **Low Cultural Competence:** This is especially prevalent at the local church level, where individuals struggle to relate across cultural differences.
7. **Resource Gaps:** There is a shortage of resources in native languages that are contextualized for diverse constituencies.

What recommendations would you offer to various levels of the church structure (Jurisdiction, Annual Conferences, Districts) to enhance the implementation of the denominational multicultural and multiracial initiatives?

1. General Church Level: Develop a cohesive and well-coordinated strategy for CRCC initiatives. This involves moving beyond isolated efforts and fostering collaboration across agencies.
2. Jurisdictional Level: In times of resource constraints, better coordination at the jurisdictional level is crucial to reduce redundancies and duplications. Jurisdictional BOM should establish standards to ensure equity across the jurisdiction.
3. Annual Conference Level: Implement clear strategies and processes within BOM/DCOM to develop and prepare candidates for effective service in CRCC settings. Continuous training on cultural competence, anti-racism, and CRCC realities is essential.
4. Investment in CRCC Development: Allocate intentional funding, staffing, and support ("acompañamiento") for CRCC development.
5. Cultural Competence in Discipleship: Integrate cultural competence into the core of discipleship rather than treating it as an add-on. Develop strategies to identify and dismantle personal and institutional racism.
6. Support for Demographically Changing Congregations: Identify congregations experiencing significant demographic shifts and collaborate with willing and ready congregations to prepare them for CRCC appointments and ministries.

Paz,

Héctor

Interview with Lydia Muñoz, Executive Director of PLHM: Challenges of Serving Hispanics/Latinos as a Multicultural and Multiracial Ministry in the United Methodist Church. Interview by Jorge López, February 8, 2025.

1. *Do you believe that local churches are adequately receiving the resources developed at the denominational level to support multicultural and multiracial ministries? What challenges or obstacles have you observed in this process?*

I believe that our denomination is at a very early stage of developing curriculum for multicultural and multiethnic ministries. In my experience, there has generally a lack of understanding around multicultural and multiethnic ministry as a whole. Latine communities are already through immigration already multicultural, however the denomination doesn't seem to grasp that. Secondly, there are resources produced by the General Commission on Religion and Race around multicultural congregation development and multiethnic ministries, however it is also accompanied by a process that includes intercultural competence, implicit bias and antiracism training that often requires a process that is deliberate and intentional. Many annual conferences do not take the time to engage the process because they want to hurry up and respond to the growing need.

However, process is important so that we do not engage in harmful behavior. Not following an intentional training and development process leads to very difficult situations particularly in trying to developing multicultural ministries.

2. *What recommendations would you offer to various levels of the church structure (Jurisdiction, Annual Conferences, Districts) to enhance the implementation of the denominational multicultural and multiracial initiatives?*

One of the sayings we have at El Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry is that you have to go slow to go fast. What we mean by this is that process and intentionality shows that we have a commitment to doing no harm, and ultimately that is more important than the amount of ministry we actually have. We are in the business of developing disciples not just developing multicultural congregations. We want all congregations that can engage in holy and vital conversations that bring about transformation and impact in their communities. At El Plan we believe that comprehensive strategic planning can serve as a means of grace. Annual conferences would do well to engage our ethnic plans as well as GCORR, Discipleship Ministries and other agencies that provide multicultural resources .