

**Doing Ministry in a Multicultural Setting**  
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The USA is a nation of immigrants, added to the many Native Americans tribes who were here originally. This is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual society, with English as the national language. This nation is a mixture of cultures, traditions and languages. More than 100 languages are spoken in this country and Spanish is the second most used language, making USA the second largest Spanish speaking country of the world (Mexico 108 millions, USA 50+ millions and Spain 40 millions)

Look at our neighborhoods, schools, malls and workplaces. America is incredibly diverse in race, ethnicity and culture. Visit a mall, ride a subway, or dine in a restaurant in any mayor American city and you will see a multitude of cultures, all shades of skin colors, and hear different languages and accents. Demographic changes are transforming the US cultural landscape in areas once predominantly Euro-ethnic and African American.

The face of the USA is constantly changing (racially and culturally) of both church and society. These changes represent a big missionary challenge to the PC(USA); it is an open door for the work of the Lord. Where missionaries once went abroad to foreign mission fields, the new frontiers for preaching the gospel can now be found within the borders of this country. These are opportunities, which God provides to carry out ministry in these frontiers. The mission field of the world is now at our doorsteps.

That is the reason why the 208 General Assembly meeting (1996) affirmed the goal of increasing the racial ethnic membership of the denomination to 10% by the year 2010 and to 20% by the year 2020. This is an unavoidable challenge. The Rev. Helen Locklear former GAC deputy said: "Today the world has become a global village, and the United States has become the mission field". Today's immigration is more diverse than ever because people now arrive from every corner of the world. USA Today newspaper said: "The newcomers have transformed an overwhelmingly white population of largely European descent into a multicultural society that reflects every continent on the globe. Some arrived as war refugees. Most came in search of better opportunities in a country that has strong civil rights and a "stable economy".

A third of the US total population is Racial Ethnic and 17% of these are Hispanic/Latinos. Rev. Dr. Chuck Denison former General assembly associate for NCD's ministries said: "This is the landscape of the new America; this is the opportunity before us". The writer of Ecclesiastes (1:4) wrote: "One generation passes away, and another generation comes". In Christ's church, each succeeding generation must confront the challenges of the past, present, and

future. These challenges are part of the church's mission; which is active, prophetic and eschatological. "This is the day that the Lord has made".

As a new century begins, one of the most important challenges facing the U.S. is the demand of an increasingly multicultural society. This has implications for theology and ministry. The Rev. Raafat Girgis associate for Multicultural Ministries said: "It is expected that by the middle of this century most communities will be multicultural". Community changes mean change in ministry.

The Rev. Tony Aja former associate director for the People in Mutual Mission program area (WWM) said: "The image of the U.S. population as a melting pot is giving way to a new image of a salad bowl or a colorful tapestry. Newly emerging Immigrants and expanding ethnic groups bring cultural diversity, beauty, and strength to the fabric of this society. These groups also bring gifts of spirituality that both enrich and challenge and also add numbers to our circle of fellowships and congregations" Living the Vision Series, "Welcoming Immigrants and Their Gifts. PDS 72-307-00-001

Through Jesus Christ, God offers salvation to every race and tongue, to every person and every nation (Rev. 5:6, Acts, 17:26, Eph 2:14-15, Gal. 3:28) God has create diversity and celebrates it (1 Cor. 12:11) The church of Jesus Christ is built on the universal love of God and its power to transform people of every race, culture, and class into a community living together as the Household of God.

### **The Multicultural, Cross Cultural & Inter Cultural Church**

The church is the community of faith where all are welcomed, received, and accepted regardless of migration status or place of origin. Abraham left his house, land and family without knowing where he was going. Only his faith and the knowledge that God was with him moved him (Heb. 11:8-13) in the same way, many immigrants are entering this country with a dream. Some people arrive by plane, others by roads, others through the desert and others through the sea. Some has arrived and settled, while others died on their way. They came from Latin America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe, etc. For many immigrants the USA is the "Promised land".

**The Missional Church.** The missional church is a church immersed in the community. A church that is able to take "ministerial risks" (out of the comfort zone). It's a church that can be involved in new practical ways to be the prophetic voice to, for and with the community. The missional church is a church that overcomes color obstacles to be a truly worshiping community; a true cross cultural, intercultural, multicultural, inter generational and multi language community church. It's a church that can emerge with a new ministry face in worship, service, spirituality, koinonia, with a missional minded pastor and leadership.

## **Hispanics**

One of the cultures in the USA is the Hispanic/Latino community, the nation's largest minority group, which makes this country the second largest Spanish-speaking nation of the world. Currently one in every eight persons in the USA is Hispanic. Today Hispanics number over 50 million. They are younger than the rest of the nation, in part because of their higher birth rate and the large number of young immigrants. A third of all Hispanics are under age 18. Dr. Marilyn Pupo a Methodist elder said: "We know well that because of the proximity of the USA with Latin America, the flow of Hispanics into our lands will never stop"

The Hispanic culture is composed of people from different Spanish speaking countries. The common denominator among them is the language, flavored with the different cultural expressions. There exist different life-styles, customs, habits, politics, music, food and accents. Not all Hispanic eat tacos, pupusas or mofongo, dance salsa or sing with mariachi or rondalla.

Among Hispanics in USA the Mexican population is the youngest and the largest. The Hispanic/Latino constituencies are represented by a variety of different cultures, races and nationalities. Hispanic people are a mestizo people (mixing of races). We are people with a cultural and racial heritage that embraces the total spectrum of color and of several races.

The second largest Mexican city in the world is Los Angeles, the second largest Puerto-Rican city is New York, and the second largest city out of Cuba is Miami. Hispanic/Latinos are already the largest minority in 23 states. 93% of all Hispanics self identify as Christians. 70% of these identify themselves as Catholics and 30% as Protestants. The Mexicans are the most Catholics; the Puerto-Ricans are the most Protestants.

## **Hispanics in PC(USA)**

Since I began as the associate for the Hispanic /Latino-na Congregational Support office of the GAMC in August 2001 there has been a nationwide growing interest to do ministry with Hispanics. Church growth is continuous and every year new Hispanic congregations and missions are emerging (ten per year); new pastors are entering in the ordained ministry (70 candidates and inquirers-2010); and a growing group is involved in the Commission Lay Pastor program (300). The majority of our candidates are bilingual and bicultural. That is the reason there are an emerging group of Hispanic/Latino ministers working as pastors in Anglo congregations. On these historic times new administrative personnel are forming part of the different governing bodies, theological institutions. Diversified ministries are emerging and new sanctuaries are constructed.

Today in PC(USA) we have 340 Hispanic/Latino congregations and missions, 1.8% of the total membership in the denomination, more than 40,000 members. We have Hispanic congregations in our 16 synods and in 91 of our 173 presbyteries, established in 31 states. In numbers we are the third racial ethnic

group in the denomination with more than 400 ordained ministers. All Latin America is represented in the majority of our 340 congregations and missions and in our pastorate. Accents, cultures, worship styles and traditions are blended together.

The Hispanic/Latino constituencies comprise a focus of attention in the implementation of the mission of the PC(USA). The PC(USA) approved during the 215 General Assembly meeting (2003) in Denver, CO. the Strategy for Ministry with Hispanic/Latino Constituencies, to address the development and ministry issues related to and with Hispanics in USA and Puerto Rico. The strategy is available on the GA web page, in English and Spanish. Contact [www.PC\(USA\).org/hispanic/pdf/strategy.pdf](http://www.PC(USA).org/hispanic/pdf/strategy.pdf) [www.PC\(USA\).org/hispanic/pdf/estrategia.pdf](http://www.PC(USA).org/hispanic/pdf/estrategia.pdf)

Hispanic/Latino brings a strong element to the culture of the Presbyterian Church, which is being called to serve an increasingly diverse nation.

### **Recommendations for Congregations**

1. Discover what is happening in your community, be connected to it and be a caring congregation.
2. Consider new ways for mission and ministry as changes occur in your community.
3. Be aware of the places where immigrants are moving to in your community.
4. Discern how God is calling your church and presbytery to multicultural ministry or language specific ministry.
5. Explore and envision a new future; be certain to have a clear reason why the church wants to start or sponsor a multicultural or language specific ministry.
6. Revitalize your congregation with a new challenge, such as sharing your facility with an emerging immigrant group.
7. Invite other ethnic people to participate in the life of your church.
8. Be aware of cultural, worship and models approach. (Full participation-membership-fellowship)
9. Create a task force or mission committee to design an action plan.
10. Share your session and congregation decision with other churches and the presbytery; work in partnerships.

11. Inform and consult with the GAMC Multicultural, Hispanic/Latino, New Immigrants, Asians, Middle Eastern or Korean Congregational Support offices.

12. Do not be afraid to take a risk. Seek the Lord's will. God is challenging the church to share the faith, love and hope that are found in Jesus Christ.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) has continued its pilgrimage toward the centuries. Like any other ecclesiastical organization it had to readjust, renovate and reformed itself according to the word of God and the call of the Spirit to avoid falling into ineffectiveness. The reformation process is continuous and the demographic changes do not stop. That means that we need to rediscover the novel future of God in the midst of the demographic changes in our society.

God's urgent message is for us to reach out to one another as witness and servants of Christ. "Do you not say, four months more, then the harvest? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting (John 4:35) Jesus commanded his followers to be his witness... to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8b). All races, cultures, peoples and nations are people of the ends of the earth; geographically dispersed, culturally different, but still the objects of God's amazing grace.

### **Conclusion**

People of God we are not an accident in the history. We are part of his perfect plan. No matter we are declining and aging as a Christian denomination, the life of the church is not over. The one that lead and sustained the past of the church is going to continue to lead and sustain its present and future. It's time to move forward from institutional preservation to being focused on Christ missional purpose. We need to take the initiative to be a missional church. If we don't take the initiative others can do it, others can be envoys, to others they are going to hear, others are going to preach to them and to others they are going to believe and follow.

That's the reason why in the meantime some denominations and local churches grow and others decline. Part of the job of a healthy church is to discern the times. This is our times for Church revitalization on a multicultural, bilingual or specific language way. Be prepared for that. God is with us.

The Hispanic/Latino-na Congregational Support office is interested and able to work in partnerships with the different middle governing bodies. One of our goals is to assist in the development of ministries with Hispanics. That's the reason why I am here today.

For more information visit our web page, [www.PC\(USA\).org/hispanic](http://www.PC(USA).org/hispanic). Part of this article was tacked from the booklet "The Hispanics". You can order it by calling at 1-800-524-2612, item 72-430-03-001. It's free of charge.

