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The Racial Ethnic TORCH



GROW | TRANSFORM | EMPOWER | LEAD | DEVELOP



**A message from the director,
Rhashell D. Hunter**

Racial Ethnic & Cross Cultural Ministries (formerly The Racial Ethnic Unit) was established in 1987 in the reunited Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It was designed to develop and implement ministries and programs related to the issues of race in church and society. In 1993, Racial Ethnic Ministries was created within the National Ministries Division. The Minutes of the 205th General Assembly (1993) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reads “Through monitoring and advocacy, the Racial Ethnic Ministry Unit assists the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in its effort to become a more racially just and inclusive church. We understand a racially inclusive church to be a community of faith, rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and in which membership and full participation at all levels of decision making and mission are not proscribed by race or national origin.”

Women’s Leadership Development & Justice Ministries (formerly The Women’s Ministries Unit) was organized to empower women and combat gender injustices in the church and society. Women’s faithfulness in living out God’s call in ordained and unordained ministry has involved struggle and courage. Historically, the leadership gifts of women were not recognized. Today, women’s leadership in mid councils, national church offices, seminaries, and pulpits throughout the church has increased. Women are in leadership roles as teaching elders, ruling elders, executives, Christian educators, deacons, teachers, and in many other roles, as we live into our Brief Statement of Faith, acknowledging that the Holy Spirit “calls women and men to all ministries of the church.”

Racial Ethnic & Women’s Ministries/Presbyterian Women (RE&WM/PW) was created in 2006. It combined the offices of Racial Ethnic Ministries, Women’s Ministries, and the Presbyterian Women mission organization into one ministry area. The focus of the office is to assist the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in fulfilling its commitment to become an open, inclusive, and racially just church. Through our ministries, we engage the church in its mission to become more diverse and inclusive of racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups, and we equip women for leadership in all ministries of the church.

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On the cover: The Ebenezer Presbyterian Church in Woodbridge, VA, is growing so quickly that Sunday school classes are packed. Learn more about this new immigrant church on page 12.

Save the Date

March 3, 2013, Celebrate the Gifts of Women Sunday, in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Although Celebrate the Gifts of Women Sunday is March 3, 2013, your congregation or women's groups may use the resource on any day that you choose. The Celebrate the Gifts of Women resource is in the November/December issue of *Horizons* magazine, and the bulletin cover and resource are available as a free download from pcusa.org/women, and free from Presbyterian Distribution Service (PDS)—800-524-2612 or pcusa.org/store, item 27501-13-001.

March 11-13, 2013, The Coordinating Committee for Korean American Presbyteries Annual Consultation and Conference, Louisville, Ky. Participants will include executive presbyters, stated clerks, and the moderators of the four non-geographic Korean mid councils, as well as staff from the Office of Korean Emerging Ministries and the Office of the General Assembly. For information, contact Sun Bai Kim, at sunbai.kim@pcusa.org

March 1-15, 2013, 57th Session, UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), New York, N.Y. The theme for 2013 is "Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls." A delegation from Presbyterian Women, Inc., Young Women's Leadership Development, and Women's Leadership Development will attend. Some limited scholarships will be available.

March 2013, Cross Denominational Multicultural Event, Chicago, Ill. Sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Congregational Support, this event brings together 50 leaders from five denominations—United Church of Christ, United Church in Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, United Church of Christ, and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for a consultation on the future of the church in a multicultural world.

August 1-3, 2013, Racial Ethnic & Immigrants Convocation and Multicultural Conference

The National Multicultural Conference, and the Racial Ethnic and Immigrants Convocation will be held at the 2013 Big Tent on August 1-3 in Louisville, Ky. Reconnect with old friends and meet new ones, as we enjoy worship, education, and community time together.

Fast Facts

Did You Know?

How many members and how many congregations do we have?

At the end of 2011, there were 10,466 congregations and 1,952,287 members in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)—a net loss of 63,804 members from 2010 (-3.2 percent) and a net loss of 94 congregations.

What has been the membership change over the last 10 years?

In 2001, the PC(USA) reported 2,493,781 members, so the current membership reflects a

net loss of 541,494 members, or about 21.7 percent, over the last 10 years. There were 11,141 congregations in 2001, some 675 more than in 2011.

What is the size of the average Presbyterian church?

Presbyterian churches tend to be small. Three-fourths (75 percent) have 200 or fewer members. The average, or mean, size of a Presbyterian church is 187 members. The median size is 93. Eight in ten (80 percent) have 250 or fewer members. More than half (53 percent) have 100 or fewer.

On the front cover of each *Racial Ethnic Torch*, you will see our mantra: *Grow, Transform, Empower, Lead, and Develop*. The core ministry and the purpose for our work in the Racial Ethnic and Cross Cultural Ministries offices are:

1. **Church Growth**, with a focus on new worshipping communities
2. **Transformation** of existing congregations
3. **Social Justice and Empowerment**
4. **Leadership Development**, with a focus on developing racial ethnic, women, and young adult transformational leaders, and
5. **Cross Cultural Ministries**

Thus, our mantra is *Grow, Transform, Empower, Lead, and Develop*. The Racial Ethnic and Cross Cultural ministries offices *inspire, equip, and connect* racial ethnic and new immigrant worshipping communities and develop and empower racial ethnic and new immigrant leaders. The ministry area does this through training, coaching, resource development, leadership development institutes, networking, and providing grants to congregations, racial ethnic schools and colleges, and racial ethnic and immigrant members and leaders. In Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries/Presbyterian Women, we engage the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in its mission to become more diverse and inclusive of racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups, and we equip women for leadership in all ministries of the church.



The Rev. Sun Bai Kim, associate for Korean Emerging Ministries, preached at the Joint Security Area church during the PC(USA) delegation's visit to Korea.

Praying for the Unification of Korea

By Bethany Furkin

"We in the church are always praying for the unification of Korea," said the Rev. Koon-yeol Kang, who pastors a church on the South Korean side of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) at the 38th Parallel, dividing Korea.

Located within the DMZ is the Joint Security Area (JSA), used for diplomatic meetings between North and South Korea. The JSA is home to about 250 Christian soldiers who worship at Kang's church every week.

For Rev. Sun Bai Kim, the Presbyterian Mission Agency's associate for Korean Emerging Ministries, the call for unification rings true. Kim was in Korea last fall as part of a delegation from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), visiting the Presbyterian Church of Korea as it celebrated its 100th anniversary and General Assembly.

Kim spoke at the JSA church.

The Korean War started on his ninth birthday, and when the war ended three years later, Kim was an eyewitness to the fragile peace and to the separation of families between the two countries.

The economies, cultures, and politics of the two Koreas are very different, Kim said. South Korea's economy is growing, as are Christian churches here, including more than 20,000 Korean mission co-workers serving in 173 countries. There are more Presbyterians in South Korea

than in any other country, including the United States.

"Wherever you go, you can find Korean churches and mission co-workers working for people," he said.

But North Korea remains poor and oppressed and is home to many human rights violations.

Preaching on Isaiah 40:1–5, Kim spoke of a "bold statement" of drama, mystery, and hope. In that passage, Isaiah tells the persecuted Israelites that they will be blessed.

"This speech was expressed to a people who had experienced the loss of nearly all human dignity as captives," Kim said. "For these people in despair, the prophet Isaiah expressed a message of hope and comfort."

Like the Israelites, the Korean people have served their time of captivity—and that time is over. Koreans have faced captivity and division since 1945 and the end of World War II: some 67 years. God liberated the Israelites after 70 years.

"Let us listen to the voice that cries out. We need to prepare the way for the Lord," Kim said. "The uneven ground of the Korean Peninsula will become leveled with justice for all. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together."



A delegation from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) visited the Presbyterian Church of Korea as it celebrated its 100th anniversary and General Assembly. Leaders within the Presbyterian Mission Agency, including Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries/ PW, took part in the historic trip.

Photos by Erin Dunigan



Dynamic New African Worshiping Communities

As you may know, African worshiping communities are among the largest growing new immigrant ministries in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). In Racial Ethnic & Women’s Ministries, we collaborate with congregations, mid councils, Bible study groups, fellowships, new church developments, and networks, assisting the church in its efforts to become diverse, cross-cultural, and culturally proficient. We also assist mid councils in developing and growing new worshiping communities.

A search has begun for a new associate for African Emerging Ministries. This associate will lead the church in growing African new worshiping communities in collaboration with mid councils and congregations. In the pages that follow, you will read about a few of the African immigrant worshiping communities in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that are new and dynamic.

Ghanaian Presbyterian Fellowship of Delaware

limestonepresbyterian.org | 302-345-4950
3201 Limestone Road, Wilmington, DE 19808
Mawuna Gardesey, Elder, m.gardesey@att.net
New Castle Presbytery

The Ghanaian Presbyterian Fellowship of Delaware started in 2007 in a family home in Newark, Delaware. Beginning with eight members, the fellowship now numbers 60 and is located at Limestone Presbyterian Church. This fellowship is in conversation with New Castle Presbytery about securing a permanent worship space. One of the fellowship’s founders, Elder Mawuna Gardesey, is enrolled in the PC(USA)’s theological education program for new immigrant lay leaders. Upon completion of the program, Gardesey will be a commissioned ruling elder for the fellowship.

The Ghanaian Presbyterian Fellowship has an active youth group that is in charge of the music ministry of the church. The fellowship sponsors the Black Star House Academy, an academic enrichment program for Ghanaian youth in the US. The fellowship adopted a rural clinic in Ghana as a mission project. Last year, fellowship members donated vaccines. This year, they are sending the clinic a centrifuge for lab work.



African Christian United Fellowship

acufellowship.org | 412-758-4452
250 N. Highland Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15206
Pastor Malu B. Mutombo
bmmutombo@hotmail.com
Pittsburgh Presbytery

The African Christian United Fellowship received a mission grant from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s office of Evangelism and Church Growth to start a new church development. The fellowship envisions being a spiritual home for African immigrants in Pittsburgh and for others who wish to join them in worship.

This fellowship reaches out to African immigrants of various ethnicities and backgrounds. Worship services are interpreted in English, French, and African languages.

The members of the African Christian United Fellowship view God as a missionary God who works through the congregation and staff and through financial resources. The fellowship serves with mission agencies; works for racial, social, and economic justice; trains disciples; and works toward strengthening ecumenical bonds.



Neema Community Church

neemacommunitychurch.org | 913-671-2319
9900 Mission Road, Overland Park, KS 66207
Rev. David Ndavi Nzioka
neemacommunity@yahoo.com
Heartland Presbytery

Neema Community Church began as a Bible study with six to eight people in the home of Rev. David Nzioka. In 2008 the church was chartered as a new church development with the help of Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village, Kansas, Heartland Presbytery, and the office of New Immigrant Congregational Support in Racial Ethnic & Women’s Ministries.

The Neema community has touched the lives of many people, especially those from Kenya. It is the first Swahili-English speaking congregation in the PC(USA).

Members of the Neema Church reach out to the surrounding community through visitations and prayer, reflecting this congregation’s emphasis on compassionate, Christlike care. The Neema community accepts that each person is created by God with unique interests and abilities.



Celebration of New and Emerging African Immigrant Worshiping Communities

These are just a few of the new and emerging African worshiping communities in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). There are many, many more. These worshiping communities are often characterized by vibrant, faith-filled worship and centered upon mission in the name of Jesus Christ. You are encouraged to visit and join with these congregations as they seek to be communities of faith, hope, love, and witness.

Imagine wanting to deepen your faith and finding the door locked.



Now, imagine you're the key that people need.

Would YOU open the door for others?



New immigrant and racial ethnic communities often face challenges, such as language barriers, the need for resources, and immigration issues—or they simply don't feel there is a place for them in many churches.

Help others find a spiritual home, share the gospel, and together with us, worship Christ Jesus. Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries has set a goal to raise \$1.5 million over the next three years to develop racial ethnic and new immigrant worshipping communities.

Please help with your gift today.

Enable us to inspire, equip, and connect those who seek to deepen their faith in new worshipping communities. Join us as we come together, changing lives through Christ's love. Support current and emerging racial ethnic and new immigrant worshipping communities.

Please mail your gift to RE&WM—Racial Ethnic and New Immigrants Initiative, or make a donation online at pcusa.org/racialethnic. Be sure to ask your employer if they have a matching gift program for charitable donations.

To learn more about Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries, go to pcusa.org/racialethnic.

YES!

I want to help support the important work of Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries:
Racial Ethnic and New Immigrants Initiative

Enclosed is my gift of \$ _____

My check payable to Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is enclosed. ECO Project #E048310.

Credit card: VISA MasterCard Amex Discover Account # _____
Expiration Date _____/_____

Name _____ Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Signature _____ Phone (____) _____ Email _____

Please mail this form and your donation to: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), PO Box 643700, Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700



Growing a Diverse Church: A Call for Unity and Reconciliation

By Sterling Morse, coordinator for Cross Cultural Ministries & Congregational Support

From its earliest days, Presbyterian congregations have sent disciples into communities both in the United States and abroad to share the good news of Christ to all men, women, boys, and girls. Just as they have received us, now God is sending them for us to receive. Fully embracing the brothers and sisters from the “other folds” is the key to the church’s pastoral, prophetic, and missional health.

“I may never reach perfection, but Lord, I tried...”

This is a common chant I heard growing up in the African American church tradition. It puts the emphasis not on perfection but on striving toward it as a goal in Christ. It reminds us that in reaching our goals of growing a diverse church, our body, soul, and resources must be employed. The partnership with the Holy Spirit makes the difference .

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Presbyterian Mission Agency, specifically the offices of Racial Ethnic & Women’s Ministries/Presbyterian Women and Evangelism & Church Growth, to hold a national consultation to develop strategies and policies to support racial ethnic, multicultural, and new immigrant growth in the PC(USA). The consultation will be coordinated with the African American Church Growth Strategy consultation, also to be held in 2013.

The Racial Ethnic and Immigrant Church Growth action from the GA was a response to a report from a task force, established by the 219th General Assembly (2010), to address why the goal of a 20 percent increase in racial ethnic and new immigrant membership, set by the 208th General Assembly (1996), was not realized. In 1996, racial ethnic groups represented more than 20 percent of the general population of the United States. The racial ethnic membership of the PC(USA), however, was 4.7 percent. By 2010, the percentage had increased to 27 percent racial ethnic representation in the general population and 9.1 percent racial ethnic membership in the PC(USA), leaving the church well short of the 20 percent goal.

Jack Marcum, coordinator for Research Services of the PC(USA), in his report, *Race and Ethnicity in Church and Society*, stated: “At current rates, the United States will be a majority minority country in 30 years, while the PC(USA) will not reach its 20 percent goal until 2064.”

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“I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me...” John 17:23  
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In its effort to discern the cause of the slow growth within the PC(USA), the task force sent out a survey to all the mid councils. Over half responded, and many shared a common refrain: the goal for increasing the diversity in the denomination was viewed by many as a top-down proposal, developed with little if any input from those most affected by and able to respond to the challenge. Racism and the fear of change were also lifted up frequently as causal factors. Consequently, the movement lacked a cohesive, coordinated strategy to reach the goal.

A consultation will be planned as a collaborative process, bringing leaders from various areas and diverse experiences in the life and mission of the church, to be healed to the purpose and to discern the way forward, equally yoked, toward the goal of 20 percent racial ethnic and new immigrant church growth.

Jesus’ prayer challenges the church to be receptive and bring “other sheep” into the fold, with familial intention, making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). The unity in this passage is a spiritual unity, which comes from God; however, reaching it will depend upon how the community of Presbyterian believers responds to the call to become more diverse. In doing so, we will “**let the world know you sent me**”(John 17:23).

A Conversation with Rhashell Hunter: Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries/PW



What are some of the things that you're excited about?

We are reaching out to even more racial ethnic and immigrant groups. We are currently searching for an associate for African Emerging Ministries. This associate will help guide the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in partnership with mid councils and congregations, to help grow African worshiping communities. African immigrants are among the fastest growing racial ethnic ministries in the PC(USA). The African Presbyterian congregations I've visited in various cities have amazed me; worship is vibrant, engaging, and faith-filled. Teaching and ruling elders are growing, nurturing, and planting new worshiping communities, even apart from their own worshiping communities. Many of these communities are engaged in mission, and they are growing disciples of Jesus Christ.

What other areas are exciting to you?

I've been working on our new cross cultural ministries initiative. Recently, we brought a group of European American teaching and ruling elders together, from congregations and mid councils. The gathering of this group was intentional, so that these church leaders could share with us their ideas about engaging in cross cultural ministries in their communities and then go out and spread the word throughout the church, to grow in diversity. Sterling Morse, in the Cross Cultural Ministries office, has been a great colleague to work with. Raafat Girgis also continues to keep the vibrant multicultural church movement actively before the PC(USA).

We often receive General Assembly referrals on diversity that are

assigned to Racial Ethnic Ministries. This is something that I find quite curious, because normally we are not the ones who have problems with diversity, as our communities are often diverse. So why are we assigned GA referrals on diversity? Wouldn't it be more effective for areas that are not diverse to be engaged in the work of diversity and inclusion? Thus, we have been working with European Americans in the PC(USA), as well as racial ethnic people and immigrants, in our efforts to build relationships and engage in ministry across cultures.

I am excited about the opportunity to work on cross cultural ministries with European American teaching and ruling elders, and with racial ethnic leaders, in order to grow the church in diversity.

One of the church's goals is to join with and engage with young adults. Can you say a little about your work on this?

I have enjoyed working with our office of Young Women's Leadership Development (YWLD), led by Jackie Spycher and Alex Zareth Canales Gonzales. They support young women's networks in the church. Soon, a delegation of young women will participate in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Last year, there were more young women at CSW than in a long time. This year, we received even more applications to be part of this delegation, and we celebrate this.

The office of YWLD has moved from only offering national events to sponsoring more regional events, serving women where they are. And YWLD is redefining membership. Young women's networks are reaching beyond those who have signed up on membership lists to those in different geographic areas.

Hundreds of women have "liked" us on Facebook. If we multiply the number that we can connect with through Facebook, we have the ability to reach thousands of women.

Also, we recently held the inaugural gathering of the Cross Cultural Young Adult Network in Louisville. It was exciting to join with young adults from across the nation and hear about their hopes and vision for ministry in the church.

Last summer was a busy one for you, as you were at the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Women's Churchwide Gathering. Tell us about your busy summer.

At the General Assembly, some of the RE&WM staff resourced several committees, and we planned numerous events and trainings. We had more action items related to racial ethnic and new immigrant ministry at the last GA than we have had in a long time.

Presbyterian Women, Inc., is its own organization. You may contact Mary Jorgenson, the moderator of the PW Churchwide Coordinating Team; Ann Ferguson, PW program coordinator; or Susan Jackson Dowd, PW communication coordinator for more information on the work of PW. PW does a fabulous job with the Churchwide Gathering, Global Exchange, and its many mission projects, and the Gathering in Florida was a celebration of this mission. I love Presbyterian Women, and I am particularly encouraged by their great mission work both nationally and around the world.

What are some of the challenges in the months and years ahead?

The most significant challenge is dwindling revenues. When there is less income, persons in leadership have to make tough, strategic decisions, and this has been one of the most difficult parts of this work. I am pleased that we are reaching out to even more communities, particularly African immigrants and Portuguese-language worshipping communities. And we have created a field staff position for Middle Eastern ministries. The field staff for Portuguese Language Congregational Support will work with Hector Rodriguez, the associate for the Hispanic/Latino-a Congregational Support office, and the Middle Eastern field staff will work with Angel Suarez-Valera, the associate for New Immigrants and Emerging Ministries.

From the time I began this work in 2007 to today, the Presbyterian Mission Agency has cut its budget by over \$25 million. The cuts have been deep, but people in the church often expect us to do the same ministry that we have always done, with \$25 million less income. We are doing a better job of asking people to assist us by giving financially to support our ministries; however, many congregations, racial ethnic colleges, mid councils, and individuals are also experiencing dwindling revenues.

What work are you focusing on in the Women's Ministries offices?

The work of women's ministries continues to be important in the life of the church. Last fall, we partnered with Auburn Theological Seminary and the Office of Vocation in offering a Clergywomen's Head of Staff consultation in Louisville. And we recently published the resource for Celebrate the Gifts of Women Sunday, which is on March 3, 2013. It was great working with Rev. Shannon Kerschner, pastor of Black Mountain Presbyterian Church in Black Mountain, North Carolina, on this resource, which is published by Women's Ministries in partnership with Presbyterian Women.

We honored three dynamic women of faith at the Women of Faith Awards Breakfast, and we prepared the Red Book (with GA actions of interest to women), in partnership with the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC). In addition, we sponsored the Women's Orientation Breakfast in partnership with ACWC.

There are certainly issues that need to be addressed, as there are still imbalances and inequities for many. We will work to address some of these inequities and seek justice and empowerment for all women in the church.

What inspires you?

I have been inspired for a long time by leaders who quietly and faithfully serve the church. My colleagues Lonnie Oliver, Mei-Hui Lai, and Sun Bai Kim (in our African American, Asian and Korean Emerging Ministries offices) care deeply about the people whom they serve, and they are inspirational to me. All of the staff in the ministry area want to serve others, to the best of our abilities, in the church that we love. God has truly blessed us. We are forever grateful to the people of the church, who love us, pray for us, and allow us, through God's grace, to engage in mission and ministry.

Leadership of the young women's programs supported by RE&WM/PW



Vera Swann: A story of Presbyterian faith, service, and love

by Jessica Reid, Communications Associate

In India in 1952, it wasn't easy to be a Christian. But for missionary Vera Swann, who spent 12 years there, it was a time and a place that led to a deepening of her own Presbyterian faith.

"When you see certain people accepting Christ despite a terrible cost, you grow. Many of those who became Christians did so knowing their families would denounce them. I can't imagine that pain."

Vera Swann is the matriarch of a family of Presbyterian women and men who believe in the inherent value of education, faithfulness to God, and service to others. The family has five PhDs among them, and Vera earned a master's degree in

social services at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, N.C., one of the racial ethnic universities related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Vera met her husband, Darius Swann, while earning her degree. Dr. Swann was the first Presbyterian African American missionary to serve in China. Vera shared his love of mission work, and the two were sent to India shortly after they wed in 1952.

It was in India that Vera started an elementary school based on Gandhi's philosophies and worked to support new Christians who found themselves alone.

"They were ostracized," she said. "They gave up everything, but they gained a new community of people, Christians who cared for them."

The lesson of service to others was not lost on Vera Swann's daughter and niece.

"Serving in the church came naturally because of my family's involvement. And witnessing my mother's faith and service to others also steered my career choices," Dr. Edith Swann, Vera's daughter, said. "I received my PhD in nursing and worked in neonatal care, then with infants who had HIV, and later with adults who were diagnosed with HIV."

"All my life I've talked about the example of my aunt and uncle in India," Dr. Madeline Swann, Vera's niece, told us. "They were there helping others. They were serving God."

Edith now works for the National Institutes of Health and is focused on HIV vaccine research; Madeline recently retired after serving as an Army civilian, working in suicide prevention for the last five years of her career.

"I love to see these young people really succeed in getting out of the mold that contained us," Vera told us. "I love to see their faith in action."

Both Edith and Madeline attend Sargent Memorial Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC, and are active in their faith community. "Our church is good about welcoming all people and then helping them to identify their gifts," Madeline said. "There is something for everyone."

"It is one of the things I love about the Presbyterian Church," Edith added. "We celebrate diversity. It's one of the reasons I was drawn to the Committee on Representation in my presbytery. We look at the demographic makeup of our presbytery, of [racial ethnic people] and of women, and at how we can become more diverse and [meet] the needs of all."

Taking on the status quo and ensuring others are treated fairly is not new to the family. Vera Swann and her husband played a pivotal role in the civil rights movement, as did Vera's grandfather, Warren Poe, who was also Presbyterian.

Poe was a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter in Cheraw, S.C.

"He always told me that I didn't need money if I ran into trouble. He'd say, 'You can turn to the NAACP,'" Vera recalled.

Photos above

1. Vera and her husband.
2. Vera and her family and friends.
3. Vera and her husband in India (1952).



In the mid-1960s that moment arrived. Having returned from India, the Swanns filed suit when their six-year-old son, James, was denied admission to a school on the basis of race. The NAACP paid the legal costs for *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, which became a landmark Supreme Court case for desegregation and one Vera said her family had no choice but to pursue.

“My kids had grown up in India. We never taught them that they were different from anyone else. We had hoped to preserve that, so we decided to file the suit.”

The case opened the way for using busing as a means for desegregating public schools throughout the South.

It was that passion for fairness, justice, and equality that Vera carried with her into her work as staff with Presbyterian Women. She joined the group prior to the church coming together in Louisville, Ky., and worked with PW until 1993. During that time, she advocated for the needs of women in other countries and was also involved in the formation of the Committee of Women of Color (CWC). She is also the former moderator of National Black Presbyterian Women (NBPW) and helped plan the Lucy Craft Laney luncheon at the national meeting of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus for many years. The luncheon, sponsored by NBPW, honors the witness and service of African American women.

Edith said about her mother, “She taught me the fundamentals of service, being fair, nonjudgmental, and accepting of all people—for their race, culture, or any other difference. We learned to think from another perspective.”

Vera Swann (in green) with her husband, Darius (left of Vera), the Swann family, and members of her church family during a recent church event.



Vera believes that lifting up and supporting new generations is where Presbyterians should now focus their energies—especially for women.

“We need to look at how to help women in the workforce get involved in the church,” she said.

Vera’s granddaughter Jamie, a freshman in high school, is the next generation of Swanns motivated by the stories of her family’s faith and service. “Just sitting here and listening, I didn’t know all my grandmother and my family have done. It makes me want to be on top with them,” Jamie said. “I want to do the best that I can. I’m going to college and want to major in psychology and maybe be a teacher.”

The three older women gave a cheer as Jamie spoke. “It’s good that you’re going to college,” Madeline, Jamie’s aunt, said. “Shoot for a PhD. We have five in the family now. We could use a sixth.”

It’s clear the Swann family believes in supporting one another through their faith. Vera now attends Burke Presbyterian Church in Lake Ridge, Va., and had this last pearl of wisdom she wanted us to share with readers.

“There was a story told in our church that was meant for the children. It was about two friends named Sunshine and Rain,” Vera said. “The two were fighting about who was better and more important, so God sent them to separate corners. It wasn’t long before Rain caused a flood and Sunshine scorched the earth.

“When God asked them what they learned during their time apart, Sunshine and Rain replied that ‘we need each other.’ It’s that simple: we all need each other and should support one another—no matter our differences.”

Spotlight on Ministry: Stephen Nkansah

African Immigrant Ministries, Bursting at the Seams

By Jessica Reid, Communications Associate



Reverend Yaw Nkansah and his wife, Perpetual

Rev. Stephen Yaw Nkansah was born in Kumasi, Ghana. His parents were Presbyterians, and he was baptized as a Presbyterian in 1980. A year later he enrolled in what he called a lay preacher course, and so began his love of ministry.

Since then, Rev. Nkansah has earned a master of divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va. He has planted at least three churches or Bible study fellowships and begun work on more. Currently, he serves as the pastor of Ebenezer Presbyterian Church in Woodbridge, Va.—a church that’s literally bursting at the seams.

“We have 700-plus members, including children,” Rev. Nkansah said. “Almost all of our members are from Ghana. We have so many people committed to coming to worship and to Sunday school that we have overcrowded rooms, especially for the children. Every Sunday we have 160 to 180 kids.”

In 1993, Rev. Nkansah formed the Ghanaian Church Fellowship, which eventually became Ebenezer Presbyterian. He said it would not have grown into the flourishing church it is today without the direct support of Calvary Presbyterian Church in Alexandria, Va., and its former pastor, Rev. Henry Brinton.

“They helped us a lot—from funding to helping us secure a loan for a new building,” Rev. Nkansah said. “Now our challenge is to build something larger that can [accommodate] our growing congregation. This is a big problem. You can imagine how the children barely fit into these crowded rooms. We need to raise the standard, expand our

building, and not have our children crowded together.”

He also said a larger building would bring in more revenue through weddings, naming ceremonies, funerals, and other events supported by the church.

“I invite all Presbyterians to come see how our church is growing and growing, so they know our need is real.”

Ebenezer Presbyterian Church is just one of many new and growing immigrant churches in the PC(USA). Rev. Nkansah said the number of new immigrants from Ghana and elsewhere is growing exponentially. It’s the reason he says he’s able to help plant fast-growing fellowships and churches such as Christ the King Church in Berwyn Heights, Maryland, which has grown to more than 500 members since 2000.

He believes this is happening because immigrants are “thirsty for God’s grace and a place where they can be filled with Christ’s love.”

He is concerned that if the PC(USA) does not welcome and support new immigrants now, others will. “Pay attention to us,” he said. “It is only by doing that, by talking to us, that you can understand what we need.”

Rev. Nkansah said he believes the larger church needs to take a more active role in supporting new immigrant worshiping community development and not place the burden solely on the presbyteries. For him, the PC(USA) is where immigrants from Ghana and elsewhere can find a permanent spiritual home. But, he emphasizes, there’s no time to waste.

“I met with Presbyterians in Pittsburgh [during the General Assembly],” he said. “The moment I had some time, I began to make inquiries and talk with local church members and clergy about outreach. Wherever I find Ghanaians, I want to encourage and help them to come to the PC(USA).”

Ebenezer Presbyterian Sunday school classes are packed with students. The church is growing so rapidly that the congregation is having trouble finding enough space for all the children who want to take part.





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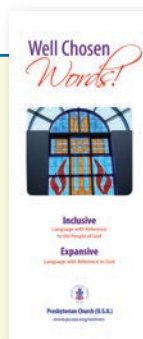
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