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## CM COMMENTS

# A Membership Reflective of the Harvest Field's Diversity

by Conference Minister Ron Hamilton

It is a custom for the Conference Minister to join members of the Credentials Committee to personally welcome newly licensed ministers at our Annual Gathering. This happened as usual at our 2015 Annual Gathering in Rochester, New York. As I walked through the line of approved ministers and met Rev. Jorge Hrebien from Whittier, California, he leaned over to me and said, "I'm the only Spanish speaking pastor here today!" I acknowledged what he said, gave him a big hug, and told him I would share that fact with everyone in attendance.

Jorge serves as the Spanish-speaking pastor at the Plymouth Church in Whittier. The church recognized that two-thirds of the population of Whittier was Hispanic and determined to minister to this people group by offering a Spanish speaking service. This service happens at the same as the English service. The two groups join together on a regular basis with Pastor Dan

Pryor translating Pastor Hrebien's message and vice versa. God is using this effort to reach many people with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus and lives are being touched and transformed by this ministry.

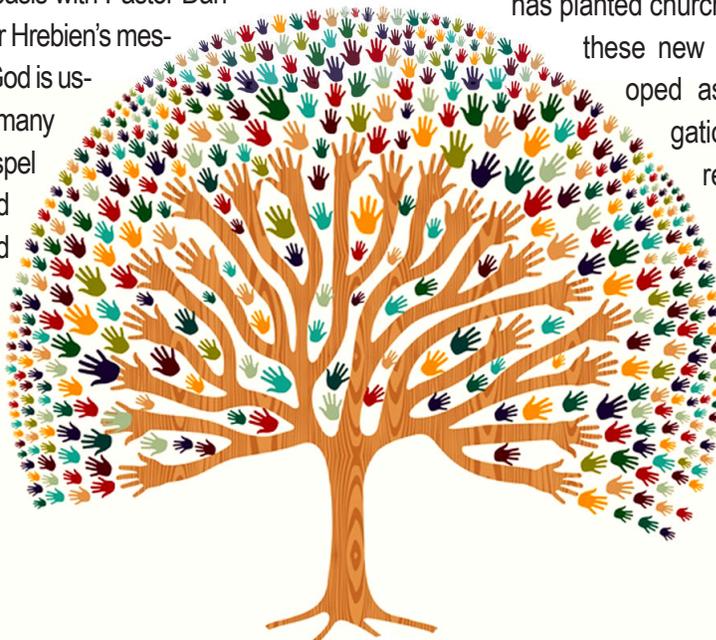
This is a living example of our value of developing a "membership that is reflec-

tive of the harvest field's diversity." Our world is changing at a rapid pace and this change affects the communities in which we minister. The non-Hispanic, native-born white population will become less than 50% before 2040. Nearly every community in our nation is more ethnically diverse than it was in the previous generation. Jesus said, "...Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest." (John 4:35) This teaching encourages us to reach the people around us with the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Our ministry of Church Development trains and equips member churches to connect with their communities and reach people with the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. Churches that take this seriously have experienced a significant change in their memberships and ministries. Our Conference

has planted churches in urban areas and these new ministries have developed as multi-ethnic congregations that are effectively reaching their communities with the Gospel.

The membership of our Conference will change as we live in obedience to Jesus and reach the people around us. ♦



## NE REGIONAL NEWS



## Diverse Thoughts

**Terry Shanahan**, *NE Regional Minister*

Lately, the FORESEE topics have been our Seven Guiding Values, bringing us this month to our seventh and final Guiding Value, “a membership reflective of the harvest field’s diversity.” When it was first suggested that multiple staff members write on the same topic each month, I was concerned that the ensuing articles would be repetitive and redundant. But such has not been the case. In fact these articles, for lack of a better term, have been quite “diverse.” They have in fact showcased the diversity that exists in the leadership of the Conference; each one of us writing from the view of their own position or place of ministry, which I will do now.

Webster’s dictionary defines diversity as “essential difference” or “variety.” In my position as Regional Minister, I am in a unique position to be aware of the diversity in our churches in the Northeast. As I travel the region and visit churches, evidence of diversity shows up in many ways. We have many different size churches, ranging from mega church to a church of a few handfuls of people. We have many different types of worship, ranging from traditional to contemporary and including Anglican and African. As an observer, I have seen great diversity in economic status with some churches being very well off, and some as “poor as church mice.” Our urban settings display the most racial diversity with some of our rural village churches have no racial diversity in their communities to draw from. I also observe both gender and generational diversity in our churches. It warms my heart to see men and women, young and old worshipping God and living life together. All this is leading up to say, that to an observer like myself, diversity does exist within the CCCC. In fact we can state with certainty that we are more diverse now than we have ever been.

However, simply observing and saying that diversity exists does not imply that our churches and parishioners are all accepting, pursuing and adapting diversity as a guiding value. In fact, when we are working with churches and trying to improve their health, it is often discovered that a systemic barrier to that health is a lack of diversity. Often without realizing it, churches over time become insular, self-focused and exclusive. Without trying to, they become adept at

## CHURCH DEVELOPMENT



## Real Diversity

**By John Kimball**,  
*Director of Church Development*

When people hear the word “diversity,” it can foster many different ideas. Some respond negatively because their experience with diversity has been around quotas or a manufactured situation that may not have been genuine. These are certainly not what the CCCC means when it values “A Membership that Reflects the Harvest Field’s Diversity.”

In the work of church development and revitalization, authentic diversity in a local congregation is much more a product of the work than a target. It’s clearly a value, because we believe that as each local church faithfully works out the gospel ministry within their own community, the fruit of that work will be people who are saved. Therefore, we will ultimately look more and more like the communities in which we serve as our work is a faithful expression of the gospel, not about trying to reach as many different ethnicities or social strata as we can.

Churches that have become inwardly focused or even ingrown tend to also be “monotypic” when it comes to diversity – even in communities with great ethnic and economic variety. This often translates into fear of “differentness” and an avoidance of certain people groups because of the possible changes they may seed if assimilated into the congregation. All of this is antithetical to the gospel mission Jesus gave us. The Great Commission calls us to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). The Greek word there is *ethne* (from which we get the English word *ethnic*). Dr. Ralph Winter rightly translated this word as “people groups” when he referred to the commission on the church to reach the whole mosaic of humanity with the gospel. The apostle John paints a picture for us of the completed work in his Revelation:

“After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb...” Revelation 7:9

Christ’s vision has always been one of wholesale diversity.

As a local church rediscovers the joy of making authentic

## CHURCH MULTIPLICATION



## Church Multiplication Helps Us

**Rob O'Neal**, *Director of Church Multiplication*

### *Reflecting the Diversity of the Harvest*

Shakopee, the town where I work, is changing rapidly. After many generations of homogeneity, immigrants from Russia, Somalia, many different parts of Asia, and across Latin America are changing the ethnic makeup of our neighborhoods and schools. Change like this has happened in many parts of our country already as the United States remains a nation of immigrants.

Our cities in particular are blessed with people from a variety of nations and ethnicities with a diversity of cultures and languages. What a great blessing!

We want the diversity of our population to be reflected in the Conference. That commitment is happening quickly in the Church Multiplication Movement. We are planting churches in urban and near urban settings, giving us more and more contact with different kinds of people and giving us opportunities to engage them, share the Good News about Jesus, and invite them to become disciples.

Some of our church plants enjoy high levels of diversity. They have people of various income levels, different races, and multiple nationalities. What they are experiencing can and should become normal for our Conference in the future.

The Bible presents a beautiful vision of what the church is supposed to be like in the Revelation. In chapter 7, John (the author) saw a great multitude of those who had been followers of Jesus and now stood in heaven. They were from many different nations, multiple people groups, and a diversity of ethnicities. As different as they must have all looked to John, he saw that they were all wearing similar white robes. John could see not that we would all have one tailor in the future but that we would all have the commonality of being forgiven by Jesus and equally sons and daughters of the living God. How beautiful!

May our churches begin to reflect this kind of diversity. May we be the agents who make this happen. *May God look good as we do.* ♦

## CONFERENCE CARE



## Becoming More Diverse

**By Lenn Zeller**,  
*Director of Conference Care*

*“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:28*

John Blake, CNN writer, said the following in a blog some time back:

“ ‘Sunday morning is the most segregated hour of Christian America.’ That declaration, which has been attributed to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., used to startle listeners. Now it’s virtually become a cliché.”<sup>1</sup>

Most of us know that to be true. Not all, but most of our congregations are very homogenous. We might even say that they are segregated. The article, “Race, Diversity, and Membership Duration in Religious Congregations,” said that nine out of ten congregations in the U.S. are segregated— a single racial group accounts for more than 80 percent of their membership.<sup>2</sup>

This should not be so in the Church of Jesus Christ. Our seventh guiding value of “A Membership Reflective of the Harvest Field’s Diversity” says that we do not want it to be so in the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference. And history tells us that it was not always so. As the *IVP Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* explains, “The Twelve [disciples] displayed a remarkable diversity in background, including businessmen (Peter, Andrew, James and John), a tax collector (Matthew), and a zealous revolutionary (Simon the Zealot).<sup>3</sup> They also came from a variety of tribes and locations. They were not a uniform group by any means.

After the Resurrection, when the church began to grow and blossom, it brought together a wide variety of folks ... Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female, Greek and Hebrew (see Galatians 3:28, 1 Corinthians 12: 13, and others). Somewhere

<sup>1</sup> John Blake CNN News Belief Blog, October 6, 2010; <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com>

<sup>2</sup> “Race, Diversity, and Membership Duration in Religious Congregations,” by Christopher P. Scheitle and Kevin D. Dougherty. *Sociological Inquiry*, Volume 80, Issue 3, pages 405–423, August 2010

<sup>3</sup> *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 2nd Edition, The IVP Bible Dictionary Series. Edited by Joel B. Green, Prof. Jeannine K. Brown and Nicholas Perrin.

## AROUND THE WORLD

## How is World Relief Responding to the Syrian Refugee Crisis?

World Relief is the disaster response and relief ministry of the National Association of Evangelicals. The CCCC has a historic and on-going partnership with World Relief. The information provided here was supplied by our ministry partner liaison with the intent to aid CCCC churches who are interested to join World Relief's response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis.

- A. **IN JORDAN:** World Relief is helping children and youth who have been separated from their families during the crisis and are in danger of being trafficked. Through our office in Jordan, and in partnership with local organizations and churches, we are providing non-food items (hygiene kits, cooking utensils, bedding/blankets) to displaced Syrian refugee families and their host families.
- B. **IN TURKEY:** We are in the process of launching an office in Turkey to support its burgeoning population of Syrian refugees.
- C. **IN THE UNITED STATES:** World Relief is already welcoming Syrian refugees to the United States and will continue to do so, along with the other 8 national refugee resettlement agencies.
- D. **IN COLLABORATION** with Refugee Council USA, World Relief is advocating to President Obama to increase the United States' annual refugee admissions goal to include 100,000 Syrians in 2016.

### WHAT CAN I DO?



- A. **PRAY:** We have developed seven major prayer requests that begin to encompass the vast, often immeasurable needs of this vulnerable group. Go to the CCCC website and download the above mentioned prayer requests from the online version of this newsletter.
- B. **GIVE:** Please consider donating to help support the work of World Relief as we stand with Syrian Refugees. Donate Online at: <http://worldrelief.org/disaster-response/syria>
- C. **SIGN UP** to *WeWelcomeRefugees.com* - This is a place for you to say: We Welcome Refugees - and get to live out those words. A place for your church, your people, your community, to have a practical, tangible, real way to welcome in the stranger in Christ's name, a place hosted by World Relief, The Justice Conference, and Ann Voskamp, with more partners to be added soon. (If you are already Welcoming Refugees and would like to partner with us, e-mail [welcome@wewelcomerefugees.com](mailto:welcome@wewelcomerefugees.com).)
- D. **REACH OUT** to local refugee-serving agencies in your area to see how you can walk alongside newly arrived refugees. World Relief serves refugees in 25 cities across the United States. If there is no World Relief office near you, find another resettlement agency in this online affiliate directory.
- E. **LEARN ABOUT** refugees. This story is about Syrian refugees, Ibrahim and Nirgez, and their family's ongoing journey to safety.
- F. **ADVOCATE:** Call your Senator and Congressional representatives to tell them you are in support of Syrian resettlement in the U.S., and encourage your church to rally behind the cause and do the same.
- G. **SIGN** this White House petition for the U.S. to resettle more Syrian refugees. To sign the petition go online to: <https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/authorize-and-resettle-syrian-refugees-us>. ♦

**A bulletin insert containing this information is also available for download at [cccussa.com](http://cccussa.com) under the RESOURCES tab.**

## AROUND THE CONFERENCE

## New Wineskins

by Gary Gardell, *Pastor Plymouth Congregational Church, Spokane, WA*

Just south of I-90 in Spokane, WA sits a building with huge granite pillars and thick oak doors that looks like a courthouse. When it was built, it was modeled after a similar, larger one in New York City that is long gone. The cornerstone in Spokane says, "Temple Immanuel," and the date is given on two calendars, 5680 and 1920. There is another date significant in the building's history: since 1967 it has been the meeting place of Plymouth Congregational Church. In 2014 God poured some new wine in this old wineskin and now on Sundays three churches share the spacious rooms of this former synagogue that morphed into a church. Only a Sovereign Director could have orchestrated the events leading to this.

In the five years that Gary and Kim Gardell had been serving Plymouth discussions were held about sharing the building's ample space. For one year, a contemporary church hoping to plant in the area, rented offices and held an early morning discipleship group in the basement. Then an appointment for coffee with the husband of a young woman Kim had taught in AWANA years before led to an inquiry from *another* church looking for a place to meet. At the time however, it seemed there was "no room in the inn" for an additional group. Coffee was part of a different discussion between two guys who had loaded airline customers' bags together in college. One of the guys was the church leader searching for a home for his church, Soma, and his friend was leading the discipleship group meeting in the basement at Plymouth. The discipleship group was not growing as expected and it seemed God was leading them to target another area. This revelation led to more meetings (and coffee) between Soma and Plymouth.

After a long and intense period of discussion, Plymouth was divided about whether to allow another group to share the facility. Sides were taken as a meeting to vote on the issue was set. God clearly directed circumstances regarding the outcome and it passed by two votes. (Lest you think our leadership needs coun-

seling, there was a significant group of active non-members, not eligible to cast ballots, who were very much in favor of the proposal to share.)

On March 1, 2014 Soma Communities-Spokane began to move into Plymouth's building. They had previously been meeting in a downtown church and were delighted to have safe parking and clean Sunday school rooms. A joint work team cleaned closets and rearranged the basement into a worship space. Worship schedules were adjusted and both groups began to meet on Sunday mornings. Within a few months of inviting Soma to worship at Plymouth, a PCA church planter also inquired about using the space and Presbyterian worship began to be held at 5PM each Sunday.

There have been issues to work out, but each week the pastors of three very diverse churches meet to discuss, pray, and figure out how to work together. In early 2015 Plymouth and Soma teamed up to update the basement by remodeling it with new carpet and paint. At Christmas and Easter joint services were held and we part-

nered on cooking and delivering meals to shut-ins.

What is God doing in Spokane? We are not sure of the future but we are certain that He is pleased to see His building used nearly to capacity each week. The pastors are blessed to be able to meet and pray in the unity that the Gospel brings and to work together to consider how to better witness to the community with the synergy of three groups united in Christ. 250 people now share the costs of operating and maintaining a large, old building.

After one year God is moving the PCA church out to a school where they can worship in the morning and already inquiry has come to from *yet another* group to utilize the space in the vacated time slot! God keeps reminding us that Plymouth is His building and He has plans to use it to spread the gospel of Christ in Spokane. ♦



DIVERSE cont from pg 2

keeping people out; usually people who are not exactly like themselves.

If a church is completely made up of a particular gender, or generation, or race or economic status that should be a sign that it is not reflective of the harvest field's diversity, and efforts should be made to discover why not. As our guiding value states "In the Church we are to demonstrate on earth, right now, what will be in His glorious Kingdom." Have you or your church adopted diversity as a guiding value? Is your church demonstrating on earth what will be in His glorious Kingdom? Because in reality, all seven of these values are not simply CCCC values, they are Kingdom values. In His Joy, Terry ♦

REAL cont from pg 2

disciples in her community, building on the foundation of consistent intercessory prayer and a need-oriented evangelism that is fully driven by love, she doesn't have to try for diversity. It will happen. As fear and man-made barriers are removed, all of the people in the community will become potential disciples in the church's eyes.

There are few things more beautiful than a congregation that embraces and celebrates the multiple cultural facets Jesus redeems and invests in her. And we look a lot more like heaven as we live this out before the world. ♦

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR AND READERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

We welcome your contributions! If you have comments on what you read here, please e-mail them to

*communication@cccusa.com.*

If you have other comments or articles you wish to contribute, including "Something to Think About," please send them to the same e-mail address.

BECOMING cont from pg 3

along the way, however, it became easier to simply segregate than to work out our cultural differences. Our seventh guiding value declares that we wish to change that reality and find a new norm of diversity and unity of faith in Christ.

But how do we do that? I confess that it has not been easy for us at St. Paul's Church in Stowe, PA. God has blessed us with an open door into the local elementary school, where we have ministered through an after school Bible club for several years now. Our connections with those families, many of them minority or racially mixed, have grown over those years. Trust has developed and deepened, and we have been able to relate to some of those families on a variety of levels.

But it has not been easy to bridge that gap in the worship setting. There have been some successes. Through the Bible club ministry, Janeen and I have a much more culturally and racially varied circle of influence than we have ever had in 35 years of ministry. We are working hard to develop those relationships. A few of our new friends have come to visit our worship service from time to time, though regular, ongoing worship attendance is rare. A handful of the Bible Club children participate in Church School. We have tried hard to be enthusiastically welcoming. But ... so far ... it has not resulted in a numerically significant diversity in our congregation. I am coming to grips with the reality that it will take intense prayer, great patience, much time and ongoing intentionality. The segregation did not happen overnight. I guess neither will the breaking down of those walls. Let's keep praying and trying and seeking the grace and guidance of God as we become more reflective of the harvest's diversity in the CCCC. ♦



## HEALTH NEWS

## Prevention

by **Betty Mitchell RN BSN,**

*Parish Nurse, Emmanuel Bethel Church, Royal Oak, MI*

Today, children 12 months old or older receive the chickenpox vaccine to help decrease the annual number of chickenpox cases.

The virus that causes chickenpox hides quietly in the body, typically near nerve endings. However, once someone has had chickenpox, sometimes years later, the virus may become active, and it increases your risk of getting shingles. Children may get shingles, but the risk increases after age 40.

At the onset of shingles, one may experience pain and tingling days before the shingles rash actually appears in the area where a rash will develop. Generally, the rash is on one side of the body or face. The rash can be very painful and uncomfortable. Fever, chills and headaches are not uncommon.

During the time the rash is present, someone who has not had chickenpox may get the disease from you. Infants are particularly at risk for getting chickenpox if exposed to someone with shingles. Until the blisters in the rash are dry and crusted, you are considered contagious unless the areas are covered. Good hand washing often will help decrease the spread of the virus.

It is important to contact your doctor as soon as the symptoms begin. The sooner an antiviral medication is started the less severe the symptoms will be. Other pain medications can be ordered to help control any discomfort.

After the rash goes away, it is not uncommon for someone to have lingering pain. It can be very uncomfortable, to the point of interfering with eating, dressing, and other daily activities.

It is possible that someone may develop shingles more than once. The best way to avoid developing shingles as an adult is to get the shingles vaccine when you are eligible, generally over the age of 50. It is not only children who need immunizations, but adults do, as well. Check with your local health department or your primary care doctor for the vaccine.

Stay healthy and plan a time to get the shingles vaccine to protect yourself and the young children in your life.

*Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see:  
The blind receive sight, the lame walk,  
those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised,  
and the good news is proclaimed to the poor."*

Matthew 11:4-5 ◆

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/shingles/about/prevention-treatment.html>

## CHANGES &amp; OPPORTUNITIES

### PASTORAL CHANGES

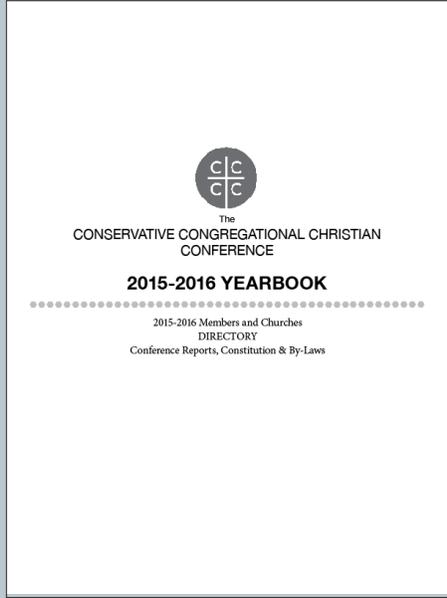
Marietta, OH Putnam Congregational Church\*  
Peter Bridgewood\*

### PASTORAL OPPORTUNITIES

Bethune, CO	Hope Congregational Church*
Flagler, CO	First Congregational of Flagler-Arriba*
Greeley, CO	St Paul's Congregational Church* <i>(Part-time Associate Pastor)</i>
Hudson, IA	Community Church of Hudson*
Sulphur Springs, IN	Sulphur Springs Christian* <i>(Family Life Minister)</i>
Beverly, MA	Pilgrim Church* <i>(Part-time)</i>
Haverhill, MA	West Congregational Church* <i>(Senior Pastor)</i>
Heath, MA	Union Evangelical Church of Heath <i>(Part-time)</i>
Kingston, MA	Mayflower Congregational*
North Dighton, MA	West Dighton Christian Church*
Taunton, MA	Union Congregational Church*
Cook, MN	Ashawa Chapel* <i>(Part-time)</i>
Eure, NC	Eure Christian Church (Independent)
Lakeview, NY	Lakeview Community Church*
Middletown, NY	First Congregational Church* <i>(Part-time)</i>
Lima, OH	First Evangelical & Reformed Church*
Marietta, OH	Putnam Congregational Church*
Beaver Springs, PA	Christ Church (EFCA)
Coventry, RI	Church of the Apostles*
Suffolk, VA	Cyprus Chapel Christian Church*
Jericho Center, VT	Jericho Congregational Church*
Cheney, WA	Cheney Community Church (Independent) <i>(Part-time)</i>
Wilton, WI	Faith Congregational Church*

\* = Conference member  
+ = In process

# These Resources Available at [www.ccccusa.com](http://www.ccccusa.com)



To find these and other resources, go to [www.ccccusa.com](http://www.ccccusa.com) and click on the RESOURCES tab.

- CCC 2015-2016 Yearbook- August
- Note: This file is protected, CCC members please refer to the September mailing for the password.)
- Monday Prayer Guide- Self-print: Color or B&W
- World Relief Syrian Refugee Crisis Bulletin Insert



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