

# Candour



Presbyterian Church  
of Aotearoa New Zealand

NEWS AND VIEWS FOR MINISTERS

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## Ministry in multicultural New Zealand



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## Contributions

We welcome responses to published articles. If you would like to write a piece replying to any of this month's featured articles, please contact:

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# Guest editorial

Howard Carter

**F**or my birthday last year I received a precious gift from a Chinese student who attends Studentsoul... it was a red egg. She had gone down to the supermarket, bought an egg and food colouring, gone back to her apartment's communal kitchen, boiled it and then put it and the food colouring in a bag and bought it along to worship on Wednesday for me. Apparently a red egg is given on birthdays in her culture, and that was why I really valued this gift. She had shared with me the gift of her culture. Perhaps working with students, and in the centre of Auckland, I find myself immersed in the growing cultural diversity of the city which, I believe is at the forefront of a growing cultural diversity in our country.

Studentsoul Auckland is small yet among the dozen or so people that have made up our core group at various times over the past 18 months there are Maori, Chinese, Korean, Samoan (via the west coast of the South Island), Egyptian (via Dunedin), German and even a couple of that hard-to-define ethnic group – Pakeha New Zealanders. For St Andrew's Symonds Street's Bible Sunday last year a Bible reading was given in 18 different languages. A friend in another Auckland church said, "Only eighteen?" and was able to top that number. With 40 percent of Auckland's population being foreign born (the seventh highest percentage of any city in the world) how we do church in the midst of this cultural diversity is of significance for our society.

How we deal with this growing diversity is a big challenge for the Church. In the past there have been many different responses: we have welcomed and still welcome ethnic congregations governed in the main, by the way things are done in their home culture (and hey isn't Scottish Presbyterianism a lot like that?). We have rented out our buildings to budding ethnic congregations. We have diverse congregations where the leadership does not reflect that cultural diversity and we have diverse congregations trying to come to terms with their diversity at all levels.

In his book *The Monkey and the Fish* (2009, Zondervan), David Gibbon suggests the way forward is for the church to become a third culture place. Third culture people are those who have been born into one culture and have lived in another and then thrive in a culturally diverse environment, savouring the different flavours, creativity and insights. My kids are probably going to be part of a generation who will be third culture by nature. My youngest daughter's circle of friends includes Korean, Chinese, a US American and an Indian Muslim, and my youngest son says, "Dad I've got friends from all over the world, and that's just in my class".

How we do multicultural congregations raises issues of language and culture; small things like how do you interpret silence or big ones like how do you allocate resources? How do we celebrate the diversity we have? It invites us to learn and to listen across barriers. One session I know of has people from four different continents and many different ethnic groups who, while sharing a common vision, wrestle with the different ways each of them go about doing things.

At the heart of it all is the question, how do we love one another? Sadly the Church down through the ages has not been good at this. We have been, and still are, guilty of cultural imperialism; wanting things to be done the way we as a group do things. Henri Nouwen says, "The long painful history of the Church is the history of people ever and again tempted to choose power over love". People often resort to the use or even the abuse or misuse of power because they lack the skills for intimacy. Power is a poor substitute for love.

I love Psalm 117, that little psalm that stands right at the centre of our scriptures is an invitation for all nations and people to come and worship God. It is like the benediction to the great commission - to make disciples of every nation, and I believe it is important that we keep this in mind as we wrestle with being multicultural congregations and an increasingly diverse Church.

*The Rev Howard Carter, minister of Studentsoul Auckland, is this month's guest editor. He is also a member of the Candour editorial committee.*



# Asian ministries and the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

Stuart Vogel, Northern Presbytery

“Ethnic ministries”, which usually refers to Pacific and Asian ministries, are a major area of growth in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. The number of Asian congregations has been increasing. In April this year, nine new Korean congregations were accepted into our Church. Two Mandarin speaking ministries have been established in Auckland over the last three or four years. Most Asian congregations and ministries are growing numerically, if sometimes slowly. Their members tend to participate in church events during the week, and children and youth groups are usually strong. Also, many Asians have joined English speaking congregations and have enriched those communities.

However, while Asian ministries may well be a major *opportunity* for church growth, they are not the main *challenge* facing our Church. In comparison to Asian and Pacific ministries, mission and ministry to the Pakeha, or “Anglo-Celtics” as they are known in Australia, is in decline. According to census figures, the percentage of the New Zealand population affiliated to the Presbyterian Church fell by 7 percent between 2001 and 2006. If the *increasing* numbers of Asian and Pacific members were taken out of its statistics, the *numerical decline* in the Presbyterian Church would probably be catastrophic. And yet, people of Anglo-Celtic background still make up around 70 percent of the New Zealand population. They, in all their variety, remain the critical groups to reach. Failure to find a way forward among this “ethnic grouping” would be fatal. It may be that our Asian and Pacific sisters and brothers can help us do so. This is perhaps even their responsibility as missionaries to New Zealand. But the Presbyterian Church itself needs to focus on this key task.

Because of the nature of immigration patterns, a large component of Asian ministries over the last two decades has inevitably been largely the “gathering in” of migrants who are already Presbyterian Christians. The history and success of Presbyterian missions to Korea and Taiwan in the 19th and 20th centuries have ensured that many Presbyterians are among the immigrants from those countries who have settled here. The Presbyterian Churches in Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong (today the Church of Christ in China, Hong Kong) are strong and vibrant.

Furthermore, the Presbyterian Church has always had a particular call to Chinese and Asian people, from the gold rush days in Otago, through to the Canton Village Mission established in 1901, and now through the establishment of Asian congregations and the current Asian migrant inflow. This is an ongoing, persistent privilege, responsibility and challenge we dare not deny.

In terms of theological understanding or broad principles of worship and faith, there are no significant differences between our Korean and Taiwanese partner churches and the Presbyterian Church. We *ought* to be able to celebrate and worship together in One Spirit. We are united in the Reformed faith and its patterns of worship, ministry and mission. Recent General Assemblies of our Church have been ministered to in worship by Korean choirs. A Korean minister preached to Auckland Presbytery at the induction of a Taiwanese minister in Howick last year. Many English speaking congregations have been enriched and challenged by hosting Asian congregations. However, precisely because of this unity in faith and life it is all the harder to grasp why at times considerable, and almost it seems, polarising differences of understanding arise.

North East Asian churches carry out their church operations and governance, ministry and mission differently. At first sight their structures all *look* the same: Asian congregations have congregations, sessions, (they still have deacon’s courts), presbyteries, General Assembly and look back to the Westminster Confession of Faith. However, the roles and mandates of each court are somewhat different to those in the New Zealand Church. North East Asian church governance tends to allow more authority to be given to the congregations. The congregational ownership of land, the way ministers are called and paid, assembly assessment, how missionaries are sent and how global mission is carried out are all done differently. This makes accommodation within the Presbyterian Church more difficult.

It is crucial for us all to realise that *this is not disunity*. Historically, the Books of Order of these various churches have generally evolved out of 19th century North American Presbyterian Church traditions, which came with the US and Canadian missionaries. Those Books of Order can be significantly different in practice from those from the Scottish and English Presbyterian traditions.

For the migrant Asian Presbyterian then, the issue becomes: What are the rules here? Why is it done like that? Which Book of Order should and can we follow?

More widely, at the heart of the crisis for the migrant church is the tension that the Japanese-American theologian, Fumitaka Matsuoka describes as “holy insecurity”. Matsuoka means the experience of being caught between living in two cultures and ways of being the church. First generation migrant churches attempt ministry and mission in a new and confusing environment using their known and trusted patterns from home. However, the tried and true compass that has worked so well in the past now struggles in an environment where the “magnetic field”, or the social environment and key issues confronting their people, are different.

Australian Koreans talk about their congregations as the “Kimchi Pie Church”. Kimchi (pickled cabbage, a Korean delicacy) does not go well either *in* or *with* that famous Australian delicacy, the meat pie. How to combine the two in an “edible” way is a challenge. Every Asian congregation to some degree relies on and tries to preserve its own theological and cultural insights, while adapting to and absorbing some – and only some, those which it discerns as good – aspects of the resident culture. Then, as time goes on, and increasingly, Asian ministries suffer a double marginalisation, on the one hand from their home countries, which are changing rapidly without them and on the other from the structure, culture and community of the new country. A kind of freezing point can be reached quite quickly.

Migrant churches are inclined to reproduce and idealise the original culture, which may no longer exist. The attempt to preserve the heritage and values that they have brought to New Zealand can not respond adequately to the challenges of the new community. For this reason, despite the growth of Asian ministries in the first generation, there is often huge loss in the second generation born in this country, for them the Church has become irrelevant and inadequate.

The receiving English speaking church can also face a kind of insecurity. The arrival of migrant Christians is unsettling because it creates a tension between the need to allow enough flexibility in the way we apply church regulations and at the same time try to maintain visible unity in the way the Presbyterian Church is and does ministry and mission. We could, of course, say with Søren Pind, the new Minister of Immigration in Denmark: “The way I see it, when you choose Denmark, you choose Denmark because you want to become Danish”. It would be easy to say that as you are in New Zealand now, follow the Kiwi way. To its credit, the Presbyterian Church has not consciously chosen that way. However, sometimes the pressure on the migrant Christian to adapt is more subtle. Non-Asians happily go to the Lantern Festival and enjoy moon cakes. But in the end, *what* is accepted, *when* and *how*, is decided and determined by the hosts who hold the right to decide. As Martin Luther King Jr said, “lukewarm acceptance is more bewildering than outright rejection”.

Presbyterians love words like due process and procedure, or to use the old phrase, to do all things “*decently and in order*”. None wants to oppose these things; to do so sounds like trying to get an unfair advantage. The difficulty is that the language of *due* process is English and its rules are written, defined, interpreted and presented by the host community. It is difficult for the newcomer to follow, especially when they receive differing advice about what the due process actually is. Even more importantly, the concept of due process tends to seek to manage and control cultural differences within the confines of the existing organisation, its structures and values, rather than foster or value those of the other. It tends to press the incoming migrant church into a pre-determined mould without allowing time for the process of change, and adaptation to the new processes to occur.

Moreover, the migrant church experiences a strange combination of welcome and challenge. A Korean minister in Australia, Kil Bok Hong, wrote about the Korean migrant experience in Western countries:

***“We receive pains from the Western Churches and Christians who skilfully balance selfish capitalism and Christian love and compassion. We do not have much place to stand when the dominance is based on economic and political Machiavellianism that says power is justice.”***

Kil knows very well that without Western missionaries there would be no Gospel in Korea. In the new land, there is much deeply genuine, Spirit-filled love flowing to Koreans from Western Christians, who are at times inspiring. His words are not meant to either depress or anger his Western brothers and sisters in Christ. He also notes the Koreans need to change. They too suffer “pains from our own inability and minority complex to break away from it”. This can be hard for us all to hear.

However, there may well be a deep stain of “selfish capitalism” among Western Christians.

An Asian migrant church is genuinely welcomed and invited to use the English speaking congregation’s facilities for worship on Sunday afternoon – only to find that hiring the church is far more expensive than the school hall and classroom where they currently meet. The welcome to join the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand seems to depend on paying their non-negotiable Assembly and presbytery assessments. For special events, Kiwi church facilities are sometimes charged at virtually commercial rates.

This puts the Asian minister and session under stress. They must not only convince their congregations to pay, but they also need to convince the congregations that the welcome into the Presbyterian Church is not conditional on payment. The meat in this kimchi pie then becomes the session and minister.

So what to do? The critical issue should not be “how to accommodate or absorb those people” into the historically dominant group. Payment of the assessment ought to be negotiable rather than imposed when any congregation first joins the Presbyterian Church. The payment could gradually increase over a set period, at an agreed rate, and be directed at a project which is on the Assembly budget. The first generation migrant church might well be allowed to follow the Book of Order of their home church as far as possible. Nor should they be expected to come to and participate in presbytery as though they had been in New Zealand for 160 years. They can however, have the key agenda items translated into Korean, have the opportunity to discuss these matters in their Korean presbytery network and have one of their members report their views back to the presbytery in English.

A true capitalist however knows the power of investment. Asian ministries should be seen as an investment. Asian congregations will need to develop English speaking ministries, as their younger generations growing up in New Zealand will speak English. This is happening now and they will see their commitments to ministry and mission in the Church here.

Korean and other Asian students are passing through our ministry training programme and are ministering richly *to us all* now. The first generation Asian migrant ministers inevitably need to expand their vision of ministry to recognise that they are no longer in their home country. They too need to see that they should invest their resources in this context. This too is happening. A Korean church in Auckland has just established a preschool ministry in conjunction with the Church’s Kids Friendly. It will be for all children. These developments are the now and the not-quite-yet Kingdom of God among us. We should not let current issues of Church polity deprive us of the investment that Asian churches are providing.

It is good to close with the healing words of Kil Bok Hong:

***“I used to think that I was a doctor in the church, a general practitioner, not a specialist. However, now I realise I am not a doctor but one of the patients. The more I try to heal other people, the more I become a false doctor. Like any other member in the church, I am also sitting in a waiting room in a hospital to see the doctor. While I am waiting in the room, I share my symptoms and my experiences with other people so that we can be of comfort to one another. Or can I say that I am playing a role of receptionist in the hospital? However, I am not the doctor. Who, then, is the doctor? Who is the doctor who can heal the universe and save us?”<sup>2</sup>***

*The Rev Dr Stuart Vogel is Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand Asian Advisory Group*

1. *Jesus Christ: The Healer for Korean Immigrants*, by Kil Bock Hong, in *30 Years Korean Ministry in Australia*, edited by M.D. Yang and Clive Pearson, United Theological College, NSW, Australia, 2004, p.255-263., p.259

2. Kil, p.263

# God's ministry, the people's church

*Jonathan (Hone) Te Rire, Putauaki Parish, Te Aka Puaho*

*The "eternal gospel" is destined to be preached to "every nation and tribe and tongue and people" (Rev. 14:6)*

## **A theological base for multicultural ministry**

Whatever its challenges, multicultural ministry has its precedents. Te Aka Puaho shares a kawenata (covenant) with Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership inspiring the partnership to share in the effective evangelism of God's work. As Amorangi ministers of word and sacrament we are taught to provide for all of our people. Jesus in his ministry did not limit himself to a particular ethnic group. His ministry embraced all cultures and peoples. In Exodus 3:15 God commanded Moses, "therefore you shall say unto the children of Israel, I have been sent to you." In the work of God's ministry no person can be turned away from God's love because of their skin colour or worldview. During his ministry Jesus reached out to the Jews, gentiles, Samaritans and Romans. In Revelation 14:6 it says the "eternal gospel" is destined to be preached to "every nation and tribe and tongue and people". Our task as servants of the Lord is to share the Lord's love unconditionally in word and sacrament to the world.

## **A philosophical base for multicultural ministry**

The world is rapidly becoming a multicultural melting pot, a cosmopolitan, multi-dimensioned society.<sup>1</sup> Church congregations also reflect this multicultural mix. This trend is more noticeable in large cities, particularly within inner-city areas. However, trends also reflect a multicultural church attendance in the rural sectors.<sup>2</sup> In some of these environments, it may not be feasible or even desirable, to conduct church any longer only for one section of society. Ethnically speaking, the church should, as far as is possible, reflect the makeup of its congregation. Church membership in Aotearoa New Zealand is becoming noticeably mixed and diverse in terms of cultures.<sup>3</sup> Therefore it seems right that the church service should reflect that diversity, or at least the sermons and even the language should tune itself to the multicultural mix of the church-goers that fill its pews.

## **Guiding principles for ministering in a multicultural setting**

In a multicultural setting certain principles should serve as guidelines. The most crucial one, perhaps, is to be able to see and understand things from another culture's worldview. "Transcending one's culture of origin does not mean turning one's back on it. We live in a world that is irreversibly plural where culture is concerned."<sup>4</sup> At church we should celebrate the diversity of cultures.

The Māori centric churches have services and prayer sessions in their own language as is appropriate, but also cater for those non-Māori speaking adherents as well. Some Sunday services are quite literally bilingual. For example, the Te Aka Puaho service books are written in English and Māori, and other cultures such as Samoan, Tongan, Chinese and Japanese, have service books written in their own languages. The "eternal gospel" as pointed out in Rev 14:6 should be destined for every nation, tribe, tongue and people.

## **"Communication between people in different cultures occurs within the context of social relationships."<sup>5</sup>**

It is important to build friendships in a multicultural setting. A feeling of acceptance includes affirmation of one's ethnic particularity.<sup>6</sup> So, people in the church can still be who they are nationally and culturally and yet be part of the larger Church family. We cannot ignore our racial and ethnic differences, nor should we view everyone in the same way. The wonderful heritages that all cultures bring to the membership and work force are added values that enhance the church.<sup>7</sup>

## **Challenges of multicultural ministry**

The challenges faced in a multicultural congregation might be many. Language, I suspect, will be one of these. In a setting of many cultures, the possibility of misunderstanding is always present. What is acceptable in one culture may be offensive in another. Racism, where one culture feels it is superior or better than another, is always a lurking, potential negative factor, even in the church. When felt in the church it can be even more destructive, because people do not expect to experience it there.

"Living today in a world which has become a global village we come in contact with people representing a variety of different cultures. To communicate the Gospel in cross-cultural settings it is necessary to develop a bicultural perspective. The capacity to understand and accept the cultural ways of other groups of people, while at the same time recognising the validity of one's own cultural heritage, maybe called a bicultural perspective."<sup>8</sup>

If we can accept cultural differences that we don't understand or even agree with, then we will be able to coexist in harmony. In God's eyes we are all unique individuals with special gifts and abilities, while we are at the same time one in God. The Holy Scriptures is always a good place to start because it transcends all cultural boundaries in that it delivers but one language – the love of God for all people.



## Conclusion

In multicultural churches we need to ask, "If a local church is situated in a multiracial community, should it prefigure its prayer services and evangelistic approach, to cater for the various ethnic groups that comprise the local community?" And, "If a local congregation is multiracial, in what ways can and should its worship reflect a multicultural influence?" We must use all kinds of people in our worship services. These services should find a mixed array of prayer sessions to a raft of singing genres. Having such a variety of service modes adds flavour to the worship service. Many of our younger members enjoy a worship service full of diversity in song and worship style.

Though ministering in a multicultural setting isn't for everyone, it does give one the opportunity to experience first-hand all kinds of approaches to evangelism and worship activity. It also provides a better appreciation of other people's lifestyles and worldviews. It inspires a bigger picture of God's family; as a rich blend of peoples, colours, and customs. A multicultural ministry also demonstrates to the world how the Gospel can unite all people and bring them into the Lord's eternal multicultural family. God bless.

1 Noam Chomsky, *New World of Indigenous Resistance*, (California, USA: City Lights Bookstore, 2010), 118

2 Statistics New Zealand website address accessed at <http://www.stats.govt.nz>

3 Ibid

4 David Theo Goldberg, *Multiculturalism* (Oxford, U.K.: Basil Blackwell, 1994)

5 Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1985, 227

6 Steven. C. Rockefeller, "Comments" in *Multiculturalism and the "Politics of Recognition"* 1997.

7 Benjamin Reaves, "What Unity Means to Me" in *Adventist Review* (4 Dec. 1990) 18.

8 Lyman. E. Reed, *Preparing Missionaries for Intercultural Communication* (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1985), 143.

# Diversity and unity: ministry with multicultural congregation

*Chong Woo Kim, Balmoral Presbyterian Church, Northern Presbytery*

**B**almoral parish is located in central Auckland, where over 200 ethnic groups are living together. It is usual at our parish for everybody to say hello to their neighbors who have different cultural backgrounds. Balmoral Church has members who have various cultural backgrounds; actually, this past Pentecost Sunday people could hear 10 different languages of the same passage in the Book of Acts.

As the minister I have had interesting experiences in visiting multicultural situations; one day, I went to a Chinese member's place. When I came into the place, there was China! The music, the smell, the decoration and the atmosphere was exactly the same as China. Next, I visited a Pacific Island member; the member greeted me with a big hug. And last was a European member, who waited on me with coffee and snacks. Afterwards I had felt that I had been to three different countries.

Being a minister within this situation I begin to think about what a multicultural ministry is. As a basic step, meeting with different people who have different cultural backgrounds stimulated me to develop communication skills because many members of my church speak English as their second language, so their expressions were unique; also I had my own style of expression as a Korean.

This cross-cultural communication is a basic skill for ministers in multicultural congregations. With cross-cultural communication skills I have better understanding, and so I can do better pastoral care. This skill is useful not only for pastoral care but also for worship because I think about how to worship with those who speak English as a second language (my worship is in English all together).

When I thought more on this aspect, I could make various people involved in the service because my preaching always considered those who speak English as their second language. With consideration of different languages and different cultures there were many interesting benefits in worship.

Once a month, one of the cultures was introduced to the congregation by the members of that culture and all members had time to do intercession prayer for that country.

Ministry in multicultural churches begins with awareness of the differences between cultures and then walking together; this is simply called "unity and diversity". Making a balance between unity and diversity is not an easy endeavor, but the best way for it is the fellowship of Holy Spirit.

With Holy Spirit, multicultural ministry will be an answer to multicultural society, and make for enriched ministries in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand.



# Multi-cross-cultural churches

Margaret Martin, Northern Presbytery

**Caught Between Cultures** was the title of a small book published by the interchurch Christian Research Association in 1999. It came from research by Jemaima Tiatia for her MA (Hons). She is a New Zealand born Samoan and makes points about the influences on young Samoans in this country. The research notes the strong links with family backed up by church, with school introducing the wider world, and different values and experiences that are often in conflict with the other two.

From the publicity that followed the publication of this book, Samoans were proud of this achievement by a young female Samoan student, but senior ministers also criticised her as a young person speaking out in this way, and they argued against the findings of the research and ignored the implications.

More than a decade later similar tensions will still exist, though the nature of the influences may vary in other cultures. Ministers in all multicultural churches need to be aware of such issues to be able to help parents, and to adapt their church programmes and their teaching in significant ways.

The Christian Research Association sponsored other research and together with some study leave reports, made important suggestions to congregations about the changing cultural mix within New Zealand churches. We spoke about cross-cultural congregations to stress the importance of relationships but also used the term multi-cross-cultural because of the diversity.

“We are all one in Christ”, but our expressions make some people doubt this.

It is noticeably difficult for most European members to accept that they have things to learn about other cultures, and to recognise the importance of different languages being used sometimes in services. Ways to introduce other languages include:

- Offering the welcome to Holy Communion in each of the first languages of congregation members
- Singing at least occasional hymns in another language
- Issuing an invitation occasionally to say the Lord’s Prayer in their first language
- Sometimes a Bible reading or quote in another language, not understood by the majority, as an acknowledgement of what it is like to hear but not understand

“We are all one in Christ”, but our expressions make some people doubt this. Too many Europeans are prone to say, “They should be like us if they want to live in this country” or “English is the language in this country” and so on. Some people may have chosen to attend an English-speaking congregation because it provides a way to practise and so improve their English. Whatever the “mix” of people, building a strong sense of community is vitally important.

Over past years there has been a great increase in banners, pulpit falls, and bookmarks, in colour and embroidered with different symbols, perhaps celebrating different seasons of the Christian year. Is it obvious in multicultural congregations that there are other cultures represented by colour and symbols? (When churches were becoming union or co-operating parishes, a survey found that the most successful, after some years together, were those that had visually incorporated significant symbolism from the joining churches and not kept to only those already in the building they now shared.)

There are some very good examples of members from other cultures accepting leadership roles and finding an important part to take in their new church, but there are also many reluctant, because their English language skills are not sufficient, to take part in discussion. It takes some ingenuity to find ways around that problem.

A piece of research, from a Church Life Survey, answered mainly by Europeans, asked if non-English speakers began to attend their congregation which of the following would they prefer?

- 15% said one congregation – separate language services
- 27% said one congregation – separate language small groups
- 45% said become one congregation using English language

An analyser of the research pointed out that this could be interpreted in several ways. It could be saying:

- “We want to be together all one in Christ” and this is the only way to stress that
- If you want to be part of us you have to be like us
- This is the way it is. We don’t want to change
- You leave your culture behind when you come to this country
- You are very welcome but we have nothing to learn from you
- The only way we can express unity is by doing the same thing at the same time in the same place

Those of us for whom English is the first language need to be sensitive and humble about our inability in languages of other countries.

We all need to be alert to the fact that the ethnic mix in our Church is changing rapidly, and this is occurring faster in some parts of the country. There are no easy answers, but the changing cultural mix has many implications for our churches, and continually tests our ability to learn and to change when needed.

*The Very Rev Margaret Martin, QSO, is a former National Coordinator of the Christian Research Association, which ceased operations in 2002.*



## Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership MINISTERS' STUDY GRANTS

Are you a Presbyterian minister planning on further study? Do you know that you can apply for a **study grant** from the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership?

Applications are invited in March and September each year for post-ordination study grants for ministers in good standing of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. These grants are made possible through the generosity of the Mary Ann Morrison and M S Robertson estates and are administered by the Senatus of the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership.

### WHAT ARE THE RULES?

1. The proposed course of study will aid the applicant's professional development.
2. There is a potential benefit to the Church and the probability of significant service to the Church.
3. Parish and presbytery approval has been obtained for the study, where appropriate.

In normal circumstances grants do not exceed one-third of the study costs involved and may be held in conjunction with other scholarships and grants other than the Postgraduate Scholarship. Grants are not made retrospectively and relate only to costs to be incurred by the scholarship holder themselves.

Please note: successful applicants who move to ministries or other positions outside of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand within two years of receiving a grant may be required to repay up to 50 percent of the grant received.

### HOW DO I APPLY?

Applicants are asked to address the criteria and set out their expected costs including conference fees, tuition fees, basic accommodation and travel, and to supply any other information that may be relevant.

### ENQUIRIES TO:

The Registrar, Knox Centre for Ministry & Leadership, Knox College,  
Arden Street Opoho, Dunedin. Email: [registrar@knoxcentre.ac.nz](mailto:registrar@knoxcentre.ac.nz)

**Closing date for the next round of applications: 30 September 2011**

# Greetings in a dozen tongues

*Glenn Jetta Barclay, Northern Presbytery*

**W**hen I was young, accents provided one of the few clues that not all people at church were born in New Zealand. Some had rich brogues and were at times hard to understand. We did not use the term multicultural, but clearly we did come from a number of lands and cultures. True, the British and Irish looked rather like the majority of the congregation, but I recall other European migrants also. Worship style and practice appeared to be unaffected by this – except perhaps at Christmas.

What a wonderful change there has been to those earlier days. At present, I am nominator at New Lynn, Auckland. Nine cultural backgrounds comprise those on the church roll. Parish life reflects this. The service starts with greetings in 12 languages – the people repeating the words strongly and with enjoyment. The choice of song, story and prayer reflects the different cultural backgrounds – so too does the way activities and worship incorporate the very young through to the very old with that family focus so central to certain cultures. I invite people to say the Lord's Prayer in their first language.

As with other parishes, certain events highlight the national foods and forms of entertainment. Congregations with which I have been involved consider special days like White Sunday as highlights. Even more valuable than the enjoyable and educational experience of being in such diverse congregations is the deeper experience of teamwork, of respecting and trusting one another as the tasks of parish life are undertaken.

When I prepared four young people for confirmation recently, two were Indian, two were Samoan New Zealanders. I needed to be sensitive to certain cultural expressions during the celebration of confirmation so as to honour their parents' backgrounds. so we discussed this beforehand.

During my years in Northern Ireland I found the lack of cultural diversity in people and worship style somewhat bland. All white faces! The mode of service reminded me of church here in the 1950s. This is not to say that the worship was not sincere – simply more predictable.

I cannot recall Maori people being in my two childhood parish bases in Hamilton and Cambridge. I have used a mixture of Maori and English for many years. I hope it is more than token.

The danger of worship meeting many cultural needs is that it can become contrived and messy. In Canada I attended a multicultural Advent service which was so piecemeal that the worship lost its essence and focus. It became entertainment rather than revelation and response.

Many migrants prefer church life expressed only according to their particular culture. That's understandable. Increasingly others have chosen to be in a mixed parish so as to be open to different ways and understandings.

On Pentecost Sunday we read again of the speaking in different tongues. This is a reality in some churches today. We can rejoice in that and pray God's Spirit continues to send us out inspired to the world!

## NINE TIPS FOR SPEAKING WITH A MULTICULTURAL AUDIENCE

**Gillian Woodward, Kaimai Presbytery**

For those speaking in a multicultural setting, here is a list (that came from Toastmasters) I found helpful in my South Auckland parish having 10 to 14 nationalities in the congregation.

1. Dress suitably for your audience.
2. Allow time for people to get used to your voice.
3. Speak slowly in basic English. (I have found a printed service helps with understanding liturgy.)
4. Don't use unnecessary jargon, slang or metaphors.
5. Be discreet with anecdotes, jokes and gestures.
6. Use simple visual aids to reinforce your message. And remember to repeat key words. (I found during a university English as a Second Language course that if a person misses the key word, they have missed the entire talk.)
7. Be positive with recommendations.
8. Distribute handouts at the finish.
9. Simple is always better than complex.

It can be worthwhile printing in the bulletin a prayer the minister wishes to use in the service, as well as putting it on the projection screen. This increases comprehension. There are also some useful pictures in the illustrated Good News Bible.

# AES Column

*Martin Baker*

**A**fter 12 days, back in June, eating Auckland Holiday Inn food and sitting in an overheated conference room, I was beginning to wonder if I was ever going to leave. While it seemed like a good idea at the time to host the Pacific Regional Conference for the Council of World Mission (CWM) at the airport Holiday Inn, and while I will be forever grateful to the team who made it all happen for the 45 delegates who attended, airport hotels by their nature have a sense of sitting in a waiting room disconnected from anywhere and anything else.

What made the difference was the great company provided by a really fascinating and able group of church leaders from the nine Pacific churches who make up the largest CWM region in its global network of 31 churches.

The impact of CWM (the London Missionary Society or LMS as it was once known) on these Pacific communities has been profound. LMS missionaries seem to have been almost following those first European voyagers into the Pacific, proclaiming the Christian Gospel, building hospitals and schools, and establishing the Reformed faith through a form of congregational church structure throughout the Pacific. One of their strengths, of course, was the training and support of local missionaries who then went on to places like Papua New Guinea where the images of founding Christian missionaries are not images of Europeans, but of Cook Islanders and Samoans.

We invited Dr Geoff Bertram from the Institute of Policy Studies to speak to the group about the social and economic patterns evident in the Pacific. He pointed to the fact that economies of small Pacific nations are sustained because of the flexibility and innovation of their people. For most Pacific island nations there is a dual economy: one part which continues the traditional economic patterns of the local society and the other which establishes an economy in New Zealand, Australia or the United States. These dual economy societies are durable and flexible and experience high movements of people and capital between them.

Typically a Pacific island society will reach a certain level where most of those who identify with that cultural group actually live in another Pacific Rim country, but maintain very strong links to their particular Pacific nation. Bertram was very strong in his view that indigenous Pacific people have "agency". This is contrary to a view that sees Pacific people as somehow being the victims of colonialism. He strongly affirmed that Pacific people are highly adaptable and are adept at weighing up and making decisions about the respective benefits provided by the influence and impact of western culture.

When we reflect about our Church as being made up of people from different backgrounds, I think we need to consider that many of these people have not come here as new settlers in the same way as many of our European ancestors. People from Pacific and Asian nations are part of particular kinds of Diaspora communities who maintain and are strengthened by maintaining dynamic relationships with the country and culture of their (or their parents) birth.

Our Church is not simply becoming more multicultural, but more global. It's a more complex task perhaps, but our organisational and structural strength as a Church, and our effectiveness in participating in God's mission will not come from defining our difference, but through developing strong interdependent relationships with other churches – those which have played a role in forming and nurturing the Christian faith among the people from these nations who are now so much a part of our life together. As Bertram said, we need to exercise agency in this, to discern the benefits and blessings in these new relationships and to work together to fulfil the call God is making on our Church, its life and mission in this time and place.

Of course our Church won't be like any of the others. We have a commitment to the tangata whenua, and we have our own special history, traditions and stories. It is in the interplay of all these dynamics that God brings forth creation and does a new thing. Let us do all we can to go the extra distance to open up communication, to be hospitable and to continue seeking that unity we find in Christ.

Thanks again for all your support.