



Many Voices

Intercultural Unit Director's Message

Welcome to this special edition of MANY VOICES. Through this edition we hope to convey what we seek to do in the Intercultural Unit, Commission for Mission.

The Intercultural Unit engages with the Synod and wider church at its various organisational levels to resource the Synod in becoming an Inter-cultural Church.

Among many things, being an intercultural church means a church with “mutually respectful diversity and full and equitable participation of our indigenous (first peoples), and second peoples (the Anglo ethnic majority and other ethnic minorities) in the total life, mission and the practices of the whole church”.

The Intercultural Unit seeks to achieve this by focusing on these eight areas:

- Re-engaging and Challenging the Synod
- Fostering Intercultural Competence amongst the leadership and membership of the Synod
- Explore and Engage Postcolonial Issues with the Synod
- Empowering CALD Leaders and Communities
- Growing NextGen Leadership
- Embracing and Embodying Diversity as a Synod
- Assessing and Speaking into the Power within the Synod Structures

- Encourage and Resource the Development of Leadership Amongst CALD Women

Over the last four years we have sought to work:

- Relationally
- Intentionally and
- Thematically (a yearly theme)

We take seriously the interconciliar nature of our church. We seek to collaborate when we are asked or when we can. When we see a gap we seek to fill it. We highlight issues that we believe the church needs to be aware of. And we are prepared to name the elephant in the room when we have to.

We hope you enjoy this Synod edition of MANY VOICES. It's a bi-monthly newsletter which we email to Ministers and interested others. A link to it is also included in the monthly Synod e-Newsletter. If you wish to receive MANY VOICES the best thing to do is download the [THIRD SPACE App](#) into your smart phone or tablet.

Shalom

KOH Swee Ann



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Submissions to Many voices are welcome. Please forward articles, info, inquiries and/or photos to: Robyn.Hosking@victas.uca.org.au

Intercultural Understanding

By Dev Anandarajan

Australia is becoming increasingly diverse. Both the majority Anglo Saxon/European community and other migrant cultures find themselves in an increasingly multi cultural, multi religious, multi ethnic and multi lingual mix of Australian society. Our work places, our learning institutions, travel space and public spaces are very diverse.

The changes are also impacting our Church. The Uniting Church is also becoming increasingly diverse. If we want to make our living as a diverse community in the society and Church a success intercultural understanding is an essential part of living with others.

People develop Intercultural Understanding as they learn to value their own cultures, languages and beliefs and those of others. It is important then at all levels we build awareness through education in building a society that is cohesive and culturally diverse.

Intercultural understanding is vital for Ministry in the Church. If done well it can build a vibrant community of celebration, hope and witness. If not done well it will lose the potential of what it could be and worse, leave members disillusioned who may then seek other communities.

There is a need to reskill Ministers and Church leadership to respond to the changing cultural landscape of the Church and society. In my twenty years in the UCA it has been my experience that the Church has tried in some way to learn how to respond to the changes in society in order to make the gospel relevant. We have sought the expertise from the USA and UK in particular to learn from and respond to the rapid changes in society, youth culture, impact of multi media and technology.

But we are yet to address the challenges and needs that we face in our churches to minister meaningfully in a culturally diverse Church. We all need to learn the skills to do it well.

I would like to relate my experience as a minister that I hope in some way illustrates the need for this by sharing the stories of two young couples who brought their newly born babies (a few weeks old) to Church. Both the children were as yet not baptised. The two separate events occurred several years apart.

The first couple brought their newborn son to Church on a Sunday. The mother had been an active member in the Church. There was much excitement at Church that Sunday. The baby boy was welcomed very warmly and the mother enjoyed the attention the baby received that day. It was indeed a joy for the family and members of the congregation. After the worship members gathered around the baby, taking turns to carry him and enjoy the experience. I was part of the congregation offering welcome and rejoicing with the family. The baby was baptised later in the year.

Several years later a similar thing happened with a family bringing their firstborn son to Church. They were new to the country and had been attending Church for less than a year. The grandparents were also at Church that day. I knew I could not respond to them as I had responded to the previous couple. The former one was from an Anglo-Saxon background and the latter from an Indian one.

As I had lived in India as a University student and worshipped in Churches there I had gained some understanding of their Church

culture and faith practice. For the Indian parents bringing the child was both social and deeply spiritual. The parents had brought the baby with an expectation to be blessed, a significant moment for them. After worship I approached them to have a chat and offer a blessing. In Indian tradition the mother and grandmother covered their heads and as the mother held the baby the grandmother knelt down while the men stood. It was a sacred moment for them.

I have served in congregations of multiple cultures and I have always been aware that one size does not fit all. I had to relate differently to members of different cultures. Sometimes I had wished I had a better understanding and knowledge how a particular culture would have wanted me to offer ministry to them.

I was once perturbed when an active member of one of the congregations in which I served asked a request if I could baptise her grandnephew in her home. I was not only not used to having a baptism outside the Church but that of a child of a person who is not a member or part of the congregation. The member's niece was visiting from overseas and had delivered the baby in Melbourne. Now they were preparing to return home a couple of weeks after the birth. As I was contemplating their request I received a call from a Minister who had worked in the member's country of origin. Divining my dilemma, he explained that in that particular culture it was the practice to conduct baptisms at home with members of the family and friends before the child could be taken anywhere, even to Church. Hence, this baby's baptism was vitally important as the baby was leaving his great-aunt's home and was thus required to be baptised.

Intercultural understanding is crucial for the Church not only for the leadership but also for the membership. It represents a cultural change and therefore needs to be a consistent part of the life of the community directed at making the Church welcoming and nurturing. By

becoming sensitive to intercultural understanding, Ministers and the leadership of the congregation have the opportunity to find ways to minister meaningfully to a diverse community of faith.

Acknowledging difference is

inadequate. Having an awareness alone is not helpful. It is easy to smooth over differences. Our diversity needs to be used for greater participation, engagement and learning. Intercultural understanding calls for a change of practices if we desire different outcomes.

CALD statistics in the UCA Vic Tas		
Congregations and Faith Communities in Presbyteries		
Presbytery	Congregation	Faith Community
Loddon Mallee		Mildura - Tongan
		Mildura – Cook Island
		Robinvale - Tongan
		Robinvale – Fijian Indigenous
Port Philip East	Caulfield Indonesian	Niuean
	Gardiner Indonesian	Dandenong – Fiji Hindi
	Clayton Cook Island (Balkara)	Springvale - Dinka
	Chadstone Fijian Indigenous	Noble Park - Chollo
	Dandenong Fijian Indigenous	
	Malvern East Tamil	
	Keysborough Samoan	
	Malvern Korean	
Port Philip West	Melbourne West - Korean	Footscray - Dinka
	Croxton - Korean	Werribee - Dinka
	Footscray - Vietnamese	Melton - Dinka
	Brunswick - Indonesian	Plenty Valley - Samoan
	St Albans – predominantly Filipino	Sunshine - Samoan
	Sydenham Caroline Springs – predominantly Filipino	Essendon - Samoan
		Keilor - Samoan
		St Albans – Vietnamese (meets separately, not yet a faith community)
Yarra Yarra	Canterbury - Tongan	Nunawading – Chin (Burmese)
	Deepdene - Korean	Nunawading – Fijian Indian Hindi
	Box Hill - Korean	Mitcham - Vietnamese
	Pilgrim Doncaster - Korean	
	Kew - Korean	
	Melbourne - Chinese	
	South Camberwell - Chinese	
Tasmania	Sandy Bay – Cheil Korean	
There are 22 CALD congregations and 19 Faith Communities		

Becoming an Intercultural Church

Nearly forty people attended a conference held at the Koornang Uniting Church on Friday and Saturday, 13 – 14 May 2016, on the theme ‘*Becoming an Intercultural Church*’.

The conference was organised by the Intercultural Unit of the Commission for Mission. Dr



Rosemary Dewerse, Mission Educator at St John’s College Auckland, was the key note speaker (pictured below).

Dr Dewerse is author of ‘Breaking Calabashes: Becoming an Intercultural Community’ which offers four practices that welcome and empower all people.



Rosemary’s presentation was interactive and there were opportunities for group work.

Participants have been very positive about the conference in their evaluations and have provided the Intercultural Unit with helpful suggestions for themes for future conferences.



Worldviews not Worldview

By KOH Swee Ann

One fish asks another fish “how’s the water?”

Fish don’t know they’re in water. If you asked them to explain it, they’d say, “Water? What’s water?” They’re so surrounded by it that it’s impossible to see. They can’t see it until they get outside of it. This is how I feel about worldview. The story reminds me of people so immersed in their own worldview that they forget that there are other worldviews, that not all people view the world in the exact same way as they do.

Most people aren’t even aware of their worldview as being a worldview. They think of it as “normal” or “regular” or “just plain old reality”. That’s how worldview feels to each of us, of course. The only time you find out that something you think of, as “reality” is really “a point of view about reality” is by running into someone else who doesn’t see it that way. That can only happen when you meet and have to work with, or otherwise relate to, people with a worldview dissimilar to yours. Since the dominant worldview is, well, dominant, most people who hold that worldview never meet

anyone who views things differently. thus, it never occurs to them to give a “name” to the way they see things. To them, it’s simply how things are. It’s reality.

A worldview (or “world view”) is a set of assumptions about physical and social reality that may have powerful effects on cognition and behavior. For the purposes of this article, worldview may be defined conceptually as follows:

A worldview is a way of describing the universe and life within it, both in terms of what is and what ought to be. A given worldview is a set of beliefs that includes limiting statements and assumptions regarding what exists and what does not (either in actuality, or in principle), what objects or experiences are good or bad, and what objectives, behaviors, and relationships are desirable or undesirable. A worldview defines what can be known or done in the world, and how it can be known or done. In addition to defining what goals can be sought in life, a worldview defines what goals should

be pursued. Worldviews include assumptions that may be unproven, and even unprovable, but these assumptions are superordinate, in that they provide the epistemic and ontological foundations for other beliefs within a belief system. (Adapted from Koltko-Rivera, 2000, p. 2)¹

It is a commonplace observation that “everybody sees the world in his or her own way”. However trite this truism might be it conceals a profound insight, the implications of which have been but poorly grasped in our multicultural church and multicultural society.

Please read the rest of the article in the ‘Third Space’ - <https://www.vinteract.com.au/view/s/UU3EvThFJ4wjPOpig-NgIZNzmv>

¹ Koltko-Rivera, M. E. (2000). *The Worldview Assessment Instrument (WAI): The development and preliminary validation of an instrument to assess world view components relevant to counseling and psychotherapy* (Doctoral Dissertation, New York University, 2000). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 61(04)

Celebration of Samoan CD release

Plenty Valley Uniting Church has much to thank God for, including celebrating the launch of its Samoan Choir's second CD on 30 April 2016. They have been blessed by the contribution the choir has made to their weekly Sunday morning services. The Choir sings to praise God and the CD is one way in which they share their gift with the wider church.

The launch day reflected traditional Samoan customs as the choir presented the CD at the start of a worship service of celebration.

Miracle Ah Loon (as the daughter of the group's leader Anae L Ah Loon) lead the Choir into the building with a traditional dance as they sung a hymn especially adapted and arranged for the service. With prayers and readings from the Samoan members of the congregation and a reflection by Rev. David Anderson the service reflected the two major languages spoken by the congregation. The worship was followed with a celebration lunch.

A great effort was put in by Lemalu Lealailauloto A. Alesana as the Choir

leader (Ta'ita I pese) and Muliagateie Frank Tauiai Leati as the Choir Master (Faia' oga musika). Frank has taken traditional Samoan hymns and created new arrangements to both retain the Island sound but bring a more modern touch to the Hymns. We hope the wider church will appreciate the choirs offering. You can find the CD for purchase and download on the choir's web site www.samoanchoir.com.

It was a pleasure to listen to the choir and participate in the feast and entertainment.



Forthcoming events

- 1. 'Women Doing Post Colonial Theology with Musa Dube'** - Postcolonial Contexts:
Moving, Living & Preaching Between Borders
Venue: Centre for Ministry and Theology
29 College Crescent, Parkville VIC 3052
Date: 24 - 25 July 2016
For more information please visit our Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1592818071008227/>
Register at: www.bit.ly/postcolwomen
- 2. 'Ministry in the Contact Zone and the Third Space'**
A Post Colonial Theology Conference
Leader: Prof Musa Dube
Venue: Korean Church of Malvern
23-27 Glendearg Grove, Malvern VIC
Date: 26 -28 July 2016
For more information please visit our Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1704446133159340/>
Register at: www.bit.ly/contactzone
- 3. 'In Diversity Unity'**
CALD Ministers' Retreat
Holy Cross Centre
207 Serpells Road, Templestowe VIC
24 - 26 October 2016
- 4. 'Jesus in the margins'**
NextGen Camp
8 - 10 July 2016
Speaker: David Pargeter
Campsite: ADANAC CYC, Yarra Glen

Unity and Connecting

By Josh Ocampo, NextGen Committee Chair

I have been part of the Uniting Church for most of my life. One of the things I always reflect on when I think Uniting Church is the word 'uniting'. It gets me thinking: what does it mean to be united?

We are all a part of one church, the Uniting Church of Australia and beyond. I think as a church we need to start communicating and connecting with each other, and really be united. As it says in Romans 12: 15: "...so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

We need to make that our clear message that we are all connected, we are all part of the same body and therefore need to help each other, connect with each other and support

each other.

I am part of a Committee in the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania called NextGen. We are a group of young leaders of our local churches, striving to connect with other young leaders in the church. There is a view that there is not many youth excited about ,or attending church. However, what is evident from our NextGen group is that there is a lot of young people attending but that they need a voice, and a platform to be heard.

Our goal and vision for NextGen is not only to connect churches from all different cultures and backgrounds, but connect youth and young people to each other, to show that there are many young people who are not only very active but are already leaders in their local

churches. There are those who may have lost a connection with the church or don't feel a part of the church, and this needs to change.

In our connecting with one another, we need to not only be part of the crowd but be bold and forward thinking enough to encourage the Next Generation to build up leaders, not only in the local church, but within the Synod and wider church. To be ready to equip and encourage those young people to be leaders not waiting for tomorrow, or a few years' time, but for today.

This year NextGen will strive to be active in not only trying to connect people and others together, but in doing so connect us more to our loving God who we lovingly and ultimately serve.

NEX  GEN

