

# GREVILLEA

May, 2007

Welcome to the ninth edition of **Grevillea** an e-magazine to stimulate your thinking!

Why "Grevillea"? The Macquarie Dictionary defines "grevillea" as any shrub or tree of the very large, mainly Australian genus Grevillea family. Many are attractive ornamentals and a number are useful trees. It is also worth noting that grevillea can be very toxic.

So Grevillea is an Australian e-magazine which will cover a large range of subjects as time goes on. We trust they will be interesting (not just ornamental), useful and stimulate (not irritate) your thinking. We aim to have articles that will be short, practical and worth your opening them as attachments.

This edition focuses on **Multicultural and Cross Cultural issues.**

Bui Chi Ai shares about his ministry at Cabramatta, the struggles and joys, and what has developed there. Jione Havea reflects on multicultural ministry drawing on his Tongan background. Amelia Koh-Butler offers thoughts on second generation issues, focusing particularly on those who are born in Australia of Korean parents. Jason Choi reflects on his time in the synod of Vic/Tas as the Multicultural Ministry and Mission consultant. Finally there is an article by Eric Law dealing with fear which first appeared in the book, *Crossing Borders*, edited by Helen Richmond and Myong Duk Yang.

Email me if you have some thoughts to share. My email address is [chrisw@pnp.unitingchurch.org.au](mailto:chrisw@pnp.unitingchurch.org.au)

I am sure you will be stimulated by reading these articles.

Grace and peace

Chris Walker

## MINISTRY AT CABRAMATTA UNITING CHURCH MULTI CENTRE

Bui Chi Ai, Minister at Cabramatta UC Multi Centre

I can't remember when and where I had heard this story, maybe a long time ago, a story like this: "After God created the world, he made Adam. Then God knew that Adam was lonely, so God made Eve for him. After having Eve with him for a couple of months, Adam returned her to God, saying: 'God, I can not live with this woman, she troubles me a lot, so here I give her back to you'. God said, 'OK leave her here'. But two weeks later, Adam came back to God and said: 'Lord, I would like to have Eve back with me, I miss her so much'. 'Here you are', God answered, and gave back Eve to Adam. But then a couple of weeks later Adam brought Eve back to God saying the same thing. He did that three times. In the end he said: 'Help me Lord, what can I do, I can not live with her and also I can not live without her'".

Like it or not, in the world today, we are living and communicating with people around us who are totally different from us. They speak a different language, eat different food, and are living and thinking a different way, and we can't ignore it. And that is the same for the church. So the only way for us is to find out how to live with one other in harmony and understanding, and to bring the glory to God. That is why I have found the story above is similar to my ministry at Cabramatta Uniting Church where I exercise my ministry within the three different congregations. The first group is the English Speaking (that includes: Australians, and those who can speak English including Laotians, Filipinos, Indonesians, and Tongans). The second group is the Cambodian, and the third group is the Vietnamese. They are all different. How can I work with them all? To tell you the truth, I do not know.

It is not easy, of course, but this is my 8<sup>th</sup> year in this church. And in this paper I would like to share with you how I exercise my ministry among them, to let you know the difficulty, the pain, the misunderstanding but also the joy, the success and the blessing that I've received during those 7 and more years.

Firstly, let me tell you a little bit about the Vietnamese and Cambodian relationship. The geography shows that we are neighbours; we share the same border. But history also tells us we do not get a long with each other. Before 1975, quite a number of Vietnamese people moved to live in Cambodia. In 1972, a large number of Vietnamese people were killed by the Cambodian authorities. In revenge, many Cambodians who were living in the Vietnamese land were killed by the Vietnamese as well. But the significant thing was after 1975 when Vietnam fell into Communist hands. Also it was the time when Pol Pot ruled the Cambodians. Vietnamese communists helped to fight them and then installed the government who people believed was run by the Vietnamese. This invasion made the Cambodian people very upset, but they had no choice. So people in both countries do not like each other.

When I accepted the call, I moved from Brisbane in the Synod in Queensland to come to the Cabramatta Uniting Church. I thought in the beginning that I would only be working with Vietnamese people, but the circumstances have changed. The Cambodian Minister, who I initially ministered with at Cabramatta, finished his term after 12 years in this Church. So I then had to look after the Cambodian and the English speaking congregations as well. For me to work with the Cambodian people

is not easy, apart from what I said earlier, but also because I can not speak Cambodian.

The Second group I am telling you about is the English Speaking people, mainly a dozen of real Anglo Saxons plus others. They have been members of this church for many years, and most of them are over 60 or 70, and the fact is we have a lady who now is 93 and still very active. Working with these people is not easy at all. The story they told me later was, when they learnt that Presbytery decided to call a Vietnamese to come and work, some comments were: "Another Asian! We have had enough; this is our last chance..." And in my first years, things were really frustrating. After a year with them, it seemed they still did not want to accept me. One member said to me: "You are not my minister, you are minister for the Vietnamese people." They waited for an Anglo minister to come.

How can I survive?

The important thing I have learned is to trust God totally, trust that He called you and He will never leave you nor forget you. Secondly is trying your best in your ministry including your living, teaching and performing the ministry.

In the beginning, when I wanted to start English classes to help the Vietnamese and others to learn English, this idea was strongly rejected by all members of the church council. They said it a waste of time, just because they already tried, and also they said that I came here too late, there are many organisations out there running English classes. Despite this, I begged them to let me try some time to see how it might go. And so with my small faith, I prayed and started to have English classes in early 2002. That year we had 27 students, and the next year God turned this number around, 27 to 72. It is amazing isn't it? In the following year we had 93, the fourth year there were 128 people to come and study English in the church hall. Among them were some Buddhist monks, and nuns. Most of the students are elderly people and they were not just Vietnamese but also Cambodian, Laotian, Chinese, Thai, Japanese....This miracle absolutely turned the church members up side down, because I know they never saw such things happen before.

Every Sunday for two years, I was running three services, two in the morning for the English Speaking and the Vietnamese and in the afternoon for the Cambodians. I do not know how I can do this, but I have been doing these things for many years. It is just like I have had people ask me, how can I survive after 10 years in the Communist jungle goal? I don't know. The only thing I know is: by the great Love of our God. Now we only have two services on Sunday: English Speaking and Vietnamese. For the Cambodians, those who can speak English have joined the English Speaking group, and others who can speak Vietnamese join the Vietnamese. Surprising me is that most of them can speak Vietnamese well.

Things have become a bit easier for me, perhaps because of what people picked up in my sermons on Sundays and through my daily ministry. My message to them is very simple and clear: Love God and think of others rather yourselves.

Knowing most elderly people are lonely at home, or they just stay around the Cabramatta area, I thought of taking them to go around Sydney, and to let them see many beautiful places in NSW. So I organise bus trips every month. To make a

booking, we bargain the price, and we have had a very good time in the last 5 years. We have never missed a single month. We went to: Newcastle, Wollongong, Canberra....and some times stay over night at Orange for the Japanese Garden, or Hill End for gold prospecting. Two trips with a dozen of them were to Cairns. It was a wonderful time. In December we had two buses for 125 people. God gives me a wonderful chance to come close to them. During the trip I share with them my time in the Communist Re-education Camp and show them some Christian videos. Who knows what will cross their mind, only God?

Then three years ago, after many times I walked to the Cabramatta mall, seeing elderly people sitting there doing nothing. I sensed they were "lost", "lonely", lacking communication and fellowship. I prayed to God to give me a chance to approach these people, how to meet some of their daily needs? What I was thinking was that if the church could give them a good meal during the week, then I believed that for some of them it would mean a lot. So on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2004, with God's help and others from the church, especially a member of the Vietnamese congregation Mrs. Phan Tang, we started our Fellowship Lunches on Wednesdays from 12:00 noon, admission free for the needy. We began with over a dozen people, with more to come, and up to today every Wednesday around 10am to 11am, there are a number of people who come to the church, sit in the hall, talk, share with one other and wait for the free lunch provided by the church. Believe it or not, some of them take two busses to come. They live in Toongabbie as well as Birrong. I know for sure that they are not coming here for food only....It is running very well for more than 3 years now, and sometimes we have over 60 or 70 people. Some days we run out of food; the cooks have nothing to eat. The money we spend for this project comes from donations from churches around Sydney who invite me to come to their church to speak about our work at Cabramatta or to share with them my time in the Communist jail. It also comes from the people who visit us though the program called, "Experience a Day of Cabramatta" organised by us. (If you would like to know more about in this program please contact me on 9754 2441) Early this year, I thank God, we received a great fund from the Board of Mission through the Easter Thank Offering. It enabled us to buy dry foods and some new equipment such as: fridge, microwave, cooking pots, bowls, cups, spoons, forks.... Praise God.

Now the people in the community know that they can come to the church on Wednesdays, not to hear the minister's 'propaganda' on Christianity, but to come to enjoy fellowship with others, listening to the music through DVDs, and enjoy the hot meal. Or on Tuesdays or Thursdays to learn English. It's free. Isn't it wonderful? I also visit Park Lea Prison and conduct fortnightly services at Canley Vale and Fairfield Nursing Homes. Both these places are for me a very good time as I meet people who are isolated and lonely. My experience in the Communist jail helps me a lot as I talk to the prisoners.

Do I have problem? Yes, and its hip!!!. Let me share with you some things. One Sunday after the service, a lady came to me and said, "Today in your sermon you pronounced one word wrong" not surprising me. She continued, "Do you know how I know?" I answered: 'because you can hear my sermon' in other words "because you pay attention to the service". From that day on, I do not know if I still pronounce words wrong or not, but I do not hear from her any more!

One time, when I prepared the Bible study for the group, I photocopied some pictures as well to make it easier for them. But just when we started, a man told us, “This is why we run out of cartridges.”

Another story: in our kitchen, we had a lot of old cups and glasses, so we bought some new ones. Then on Sunday a lady asked: “Where is the cup, I do not drink with the mug?” I did not know what she was talking about, but later on I know that in the early years only the slaves used the mug to drink, the royalty used the cup.

But after all, during seven years working with these people, Anglo and non-English background, I found it isn’t easy. As I mentioned earlier, they eat different food, speak a different language, are living in a totally different way, but the thing that encourages me is that we know we share the same faith, worship the same God, who loves everybody and sees everybody as equal.

Now some of them write on a card sent to me on Christmas day or on my Birthday saying: “I hope you can stay a bit longer with us” or “Thank you for your inspirational ministry.”

God is so good, I believe that He never puts us in a place without His grace, as long as we trust Him, and totally depend on Him. I thank God for this calling and also I thank the Uniting Church. Recently it gives me more confidence when I know that God has chosen our President, the Rev. Gregor Henderson, a person I found very enthusiastic and passionate to the people of cross cultures. Also I thank God for the NSW Synod especially the Board of Mission and the Parramatta-Nepean Presbytery for the great support they give to this wonderful ministry. I strongly believe that the people of Cabramatta Uniting Church will continue to bear witness for Jesus to the community regardless of colour, background and culture, because at last it is “not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit” (Zechariah 4:6). To God be the Glory. Amen

## **Our multicultural church ... now what?**

Jione Havea, lecturer at United Theological College

*Tapu ki he fonua ni mo hono kakai!* I begin in the Tongan language, following the Tongan practice of *fakatapu*, in which I acknowledge the *tapu* (sacredness) of this land (*fonua*) and its people. I begin with the *fakatapu* because I write and reflect with full awareness that I am a migrant, a foreigner in a land that is home to others. I begin with the *fakatapu* also because I am a *ringin*, a stranger, who has not felt quite at home in the Uniting Church.

I offer this reflection as if I am speaking to you in person, face-to-face, for *fakatapu* is something that Tongans do when we speak in public, but this does not mean that you and I know each other. *Fakatapu* is a practice from our oral settings. I

offer my *fakatapu* to you also in order to encourage culture-crossing of two sorts, crossing over from oral-speech to writing, and crossing over from Tongan customs to scripting a text in English. The first is a crossing over with respect to the *form* of address, and the second is a crossing over in terms of the *passion* behind the way I think and write what I am trying to say.

Many people from oral cultures dread the practice of writing not because we can't think or reflect, but because we are forced to articulate our thoughts in a *form* that does not engender our fluid and ebbing ways of thinking. We might be able to translate our ideas into a different language, usually English in our setting, but to translate the *passion* behind our ideas is not always possible. In other words, we might be able to cross over in *form*, but our *passion* remains untranslatable.

I have many friends who speak fluent scholarly English and are gifted in orality, but their *passion* dies when they are forced to write or journal their thoughts. I have other friends also (and you thought I did not have friends!) who can't give a coherent argument, but ask them to write a poem or rap, or to draw, and they come alive. The issue in these cases is not just about language, but also the need for ways in which *form* can 'woo and rock' (attract and energize) the *passion* of people from oral cultures. (I should quickly add that for me, oral cultures are not the privilege only of darker skin people.)

We have such people in the UCA and its theological schools, including United Theological College, where I work. And it is painful to see their passion squeezed out by the constriction of the *form* demanded upon them. I am not talking about the passion for the church or for the gospel, for theological reflection or for the ministry, but the *passion* behind the way they think and behave, the *passion* for who they are. The suffocation of this *passion* also happens in migrant congregations, where the *form* of becoming church does not always make sense to the majority of the members, especially the younger ones.

When I ask "now what?" in the title of this reflection, I am fishing for the opportunity to awaken our awareness toward the need to 'woo and rock' *both form and passion* in our multicultural church. As a church that celebrates its multicultural makeup and continually seeks ways to become church in a multicultural context, the Uniting Church is among the leaders in this land. I however feel that, thus far, the weight of the push toward becoming a multicultural church has been on the *form*, and

it feels as if we are at a crossroad where we can *transform the form* so that the *passion* is equally embraced.

How do we do this? Now what? I beg the pardon of Tongans as I respond from our experiences. Take as an example a *form* upheld in most Tongan congregations, namely, Sunday School. I myself grew up in the Methodist Sunday School culture, as did many of the Tongans of my generation in the UCA, but Sunday School did not ‘woo and rock’ me in the same way that it engendered the generation of my parents, and their parents. In fact, my parents (who were devoted church workers) allowed me to stop going to Sunday School when I was thirteen! By then, Sunday School had ran its course for me – which was primarily to preoccupy me and my friends after Sunday lunch so that we did not play or wander somewhere else (which was not done on Sundays in Tonga those days). Sunday School did not engender my passion for the church and Christianity. If Sunday School did not work for me in Tonga, how can it work for Tongans in Australia? We can of course change the syllabus, adopting something more Western, but the form is still very Tongan.

Does Sunday School work for church members from other cultural or denominational backgrounds? What *alternative form* can we propose that might ‘woo and rock’ people’s *passion*? Now what? Now I am going to sound more strange than usual: Let’s trans-form (give a new *form*) funerals so that they ‘woo and rock’ the *passion* of Tongans. Most young Tongans would attend at least one funeral each year, which often lasts over a week, and it is an extended affair where people come to know (or hate) each other, learn of their extend families from far and near. Funerals are events where the *passion* of Tongans congregates. It is already full of passion, and it is not denominational at all.

Funerals have similar effects on other Pacific islanders as well, and is multicultural in dynamic ways. Why don’t we become church in the midst of such gatherings? Sunday School is a weekly event that gets more painful each week. Funerals are intensive for a week, but what we can do in that week can ripple through the rest of the year.

Now what? How do we tell Tongans in the UCA that Sunday School does not work? In other words, how do we cross the line and give them a new *form* which will engender, ‘woo and rock’, the *passion* of the next generation?

This is the second part of my response to the “Now what?” question: we need to be upfront in the way we become a multicultural church. We spend a lot of energy

on trying to be politically correct because we do not want to offend people from other cultures. We take pride in being tolerant of each other. We think that becoming multicultural requires that we tolerate our differences. This is good! The downside of this is that it does not encourage us to wrestle with our differences. In other words, tolerance becomes the politically correct way of *not* engaging our differences.

I have attended many (church) gatherings at which tolerance is the driving force: take this year's NCYC gathering at Perth, where a tent was pitched for the UAICC mob at one end of the field and a room set up as the 'multicultural space' at the opposite end of the campus. There was not much effort by the rest of the participants, the majority, to cross into those spaces at the edges. Some did cross over, and some of them were patronizing. Even the 'multicultural ministry' presentation was an elective.

Now what? Why not, at the next UCA function, put the UAICC tent at the centre of the grounds and encourage participants to cross into their space and sit with them. This would be uncomfortable for both the Aborigines and non-Aborigines, I am sure, but that would be a good kind of discomfort! And if we invite the elders to perform a smoking ceremony and welcome us to land, we should give gifts in return. It is not enough to give only our words, our votes of thanks, in a world where words are broken, where words deceive and sometimes kill. It is also not helpful to uphold the culture in which we expect the host to provide while the guest shows up with words. Cultures in which guests take gifts exist even in biblical times. When biblical characters go on journeys, they take gifts, the best remembered of which is the visit by the three wise persons when Mary gave birth to Jesus.

And why not make the multicultural ministry presentation at the next UCA gathering compulsory? It is strange that we take pride in becoming a multicultural church but multicultural ministry is still an elective in our gatherings.

I reflect as a migrant but I can't speak on behalf of all migrants, nor can I speak on behalf of all Tongans. If I have misrepresented or misread your situation, I apologize. *Fakamolemole'i au!* Forgive me! When you are done with that, I hope to still 'woo and rock' you this question: Now what?

*Leveleva e malanga kae tau!* I now wind up my reflection (*malanga* also means sermon), expecting that it has landed (*tau* also means arrived, hit, connect)!

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Generation Ministry –ABKs**

*Some thoughts from Amelia Koh-Butler, Director ELM Centre*

### **What is an ABK?**

ABKs are NOT young Koreans.

1.5 refers to people born in Korea but growing up and being educated in Australia, but a 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen person is quite different.

ABK = Australian Born of Korean ethnicity

### **Characteristics of ABKs**

#### *Language*

This person has probably grown up speaking Korean at home but thinks, works and learns in English. Reading and writing are stronger in English and there may be a sense of inadequacy when it comes to Korean language and cultural confidence.

#### *Family*

This person has a strong sense of family and community – this is similar across most migrant-ethnic groups to the second generation. However, this person's understanding of family is often held in stark contrast to their peers' experiences of family (at school or at work). This may lead to some confusion, resentment, pride or a higher than expected need to be affirmed in the family.

#### *Sense of Identity*

When an ABK is in Australia, s/he is always Korean. However, the first visit to Korea is a shock – suddenly, self-identification is Australian. If s/he goes anywhere else in the world, there is a sense of confusion – How do I describe myself? Who am I? Where do I really belong?

#### *Sense of Church*

Church is tied up with culture, so it can be difficult to be clear about - what is culture and what is faith? Belonging to the Church Community may be about the cultural community or the faith community. There are likely to be some conflicting feelings, such as: do I really belong in this cultural community? And do I really belong in this faith community? The easiest way to help with this sense of belonging is to have members of this Church Community visit another Church of non-Korean background or Inter-church Camp or Celebration for a friendly faith-based event. This helps to affirm that, yes, there is a sense of 'belonging' in the Korean context but also there is a belonging in the broader 'world' church. The tendency of some migrant-ethnic communities to try to keep their 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen people within the migrant-ethnic community can serve to undermine the self-confidence of ABKs and may result in feelings of resentment or inferiority.

ABKs who integrate best in Australian society manage to retain a valuing of their ethnic culture and heritage while stepping beyond the limitations of their migrant cultural group. These people are able to enjoy their Korean-ness but are not limited by that. It becomes a gift to be shared beyond the Korean Community.

## **Diversity among ABKs**

### *Generational Issues*

There are 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen ABKs in a large range of age-groups.

Some are also Gen X (b.1964-1979). Some are also Gen Y (b.1980-1997).

Some are Mosaic (b. late1990s-).

2<sup>nd</sup> Gen ABKs may, therefore, be mature adults, young adults, youth or children.

These different groups all have different characteristics and need different styles of Ministry.

Over the last 20 years, the education system and the world of children has changed incredibly. Children at school function and communicate quite differently now by comparison to a very few years ago. It is important that people working with young people do not make assumptions about their experiences, but actually find out – How is life for this particular ABK? What are the issues for this particular age-group in this particular time and place?

### *Gender Issues*

Attitudes to gender differ from culture to culture. This can be confronting for both males and females as they are challenged and treated differently in their school and workplaces than they are at Church. Gender issues need to be addressed from a Gospel perspective rather than only a cultural heritage perspective. Where cultural gender attitudes come into conflict with a Christian perspective, the concerns need to be articulated and dealt with rather than ignoring the issues or deferring to culture. This is where the priority needs to be clear – all of life needs to be interpreted in the light of faith in Jesus Christ – not just through social history.

### *Hyphenation and Blending Issues*

At some point in time, every ABK will face feeling 'torn' and stretched. Every ABK will also have the opportunity to weave a new tapestry for the future. Becoming a new style of 'Aussie' is possible because the country is still so young and is still in the process of developing its identity. ABKs can make the choice to use their gifts of self and ethnic background to give greater colour and vibrancy to the communities in which they live. They have the opportunity to bring their faith experiences and God-relationship into a world that longs for healing and spiritual nourishment.

Holding different cultures together in the Church is hard enough, ABKs hold different cultures together in their personal lives. ABKs face extraordinary situations that no-one planned for – bringing home or dating someone from a different culture – introducing Korean values to friends and colleagues – being the first people they know to have Italian-Korean-Australian children!

### *Church and God*

It is vital to remember that the task of 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen Ministry is to enable 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen to worship God and to enable them to join in God's mission. The task is not first of all to build the Church. Stories of successful 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen Ministry will always describe the development of relationships rather than the development of institution.

# **Reflection on My Involvement in Multicultural Ministry in the VIC/TAS Synod**

Jason Choi, Minister, Greystanes UC

This is a personal reflection on my involvement in Multicultural Ministry & Mission (MMM) within the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania during my term as the MMM Consultant from January 2000 to June 2005.

It was my privilege to meet so many wonderful people within the Synod and beyond. As I reflect upon my work in the Synod, I miss many colleagues who encouraged me, shared their wisdom and became personal friends. Indeed, my life and faith had been challenged and enriched through the fellowship and work together with them.

I have so many different streams of memories as I write this article for 'Grevillea'. This reflection is closely linked to the sense of satisfaction, as well as to the personal challenge associated with several unfinished agendas.

Here I want to reflect on my subjective memories by grouping together two areas: positive contributions and unfinished tasks. I do not intend to suggest or make any form of implication for MMM here in the NSW Synod or our Presbytery. However, I will try to put the actual figures, areas and programs in the Synod, so that readers may understand even a partial picture of MMM, and draw some relevant ideas or tips for their own context.

## **Positive Contributions**

### **1. Supporting the growing edge of the Church through practical help and a pastoral approach**

The Synod had 22 non-English speaking background (NESB) congregations from 10 cultural origins in 2004. Besides, there were many small congregations/faith communities loosely associated with the Synod or simply sharing the property with local congregations.

Working with these NESB congregations, I tried to focus on four areas: developing pastoral relationships rather than administrative co-ordination; exercising hospitality; extending practical support; and participating in the worship services which is the nerve centre of those congregations. I was able to extend personal support to new ministry agents who joined MMM from overseas or other denominations. I think those approaches had been effective in embracing diversity and nurturing intercultural solidarity even in the times of testing, like the Assembly Resolution 84.

My way of supporting those congregations began with a clear distinction between the UCA congregations and other congregations.

For the UCA congregations, I tried to offer practical support like arranging financial grants, transferring the right of the 'beneficiary user' of a worship centre/manse, running property sharing seminars, resolving the visa status of some ministers, etc.

For the non-UCA congregations, I encouraged them to become recognized congregations of the Synod, but I made it clear that they were tenants using the property. Thus I assisted them to make a Memorandum of Agreement for sharing the property and exchange the copy of Grievance Process to resolve potential conflicts.

I had experienced the 'God of Surprises' with the sudden increase of Sudanese members through the generous efforts of St James, Box Hill, Springvale and Footscray UCA.

All those congregations were growing in numbers and confidence in mission in the midst of problems and struggle. They sang a lot, prayed a lot, ate together a lot, laughed a lot and cried a lot. I was delighted to take a part in the process and to learn from them.

## **2. Living the spirit of "Together and Rejoicing"**

I admit the fact that MMM sometimes may cause distress, conflicts and problems at various levels of church councils. At the same time, there are many good reasons for celebrating and rejoicing together as we participate in the ministry.

The MMM Committee worked together with the Planning Group for the Synod meeting to reflect and celebrate the multicultural nature of the church. It was great to taste the spirit of "Together and Rejoicing" not only for NESB congregations but also for the Synod as a whole.

The Synod had 46 NESB ministers out of a total of 464 ordained ministers (under the age of 65) in 2004. They were well scattered over 12 Presbyteries both in city and rural areas. The Goulburn-Murray Presbytery, located in a typical rural area, had 6 NESB ministers out of 32 ministers.

Each presbytery had its own retreat for ministers but I initiated an annual retreat for NESB ministers held for the first time in 2001. Its prime goal was to promote the spirit of "Together and Rejoicing". We managed to continue the annual retreat without any designated budget, and each of those retreats was well appreciated by the participants. Now this retreat has become a model for other synods to follow.

Members of the MMM Committee had experienced the same spirit of "Together and Rejoicing" as they shared their gifts and energy for this challenging ministry. The bi-monthly fellowship meeting aimed at building relationships through the input of guest speakers and sharing of meals often provided through the hospitality of the host congregation. The Management Committee of 12 members had separate business meetings to make the Committee more accountable to the wider ministry of the Synod, since we sent our representatives to major Synod Councils like the Standing Committee, Placement Committee etc.

## **3. Pro-active Contribution to the ministry of Assembly MMM**

The work of the Assembly MMM has been shaped by the dominant voice of the NSW Synod for many years. This biased practice has been justified by a few factors like the location of the Assembly Office in Sydney and the dominant numbers of the National Reference Committee (NRC) coming from the NSW Synod.

I have tried to stimulate more sharing in the work of the Assembly MMM through more pro-active contributions. During my term, the Synod had managed to secure an increased membership of NRC.

We had the NRC Meeting 2002 in Melbourne, and it was the first time that the NRC meeting had been held outside of Sydney. The Synod team had prepared the liturgy and sermon notes for the 'One Great Sunday of Sharing 2003' on behalf of the Assembly. That was the first attempt initiated by the Synod, and it became a new way of working together in the whole church. We resolved to host the National Consultation for MMM in 2006. I am proud of the increasing contribution made by the Synod for the wider ministry of the Assembly.

#### **4. Promoting the Theology of Cross-cultural Ministry (CCM) through the Theological Hall**

It took more than two years to negotiate through the Joint Committee of MMM and the Theological Hall, and finally it was resolved to include one CCM Course in the UFT curriculum. We had its pioneering session in the first semester 2004, with a part-time lecturer, Jovili Meo from the Pacific Theological College in Fiji. The "overseas exposure" component of the course was scheduled to follow. I hope to see that both courses will become requirement courses rather than electives in the future.

#### **5. Arranging Exchange Programs with Korean Partner Churches**

Australian churches began to send missionaries to Korea over a century ago and they all came from the Synod. Even today, about 20 ex-missionaries belong to the Synod. They had arranged a small welcome party for me right after my arrival there. They had offered a sense of home while I was away from home. They asked me to bridge the gap between the Synod and Korean partner churches.

That was how I got this extra concern to arrange a few exchange programs with Korean churches. During my term, nine representatives of the Bourke Presbytery visited the Seoul Presbytery, Korea from 18<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> April 2001. Toorak UCA and Suan Presbyterian Church in Pusan had established a sister church relationship, and the leaders of both congregations made mutual visits to each other.

I also arranged a visiting program for two moderators of the Synod to visit Korean partner churches. I assisted Malvern Korean Congregation to send a lay mission worker to North Korea through UIM of the Assembly in June 2004. Rev. Sung and 16 women ministers from the Presbyterian Church of Korea visited the Synod on 21-26 August 2004.

Many positive feedbacks were acknowledged through those exchange programs in spite of the fact that both churches have a different mission priority and agenda.

## **Unfinished Tasks/Agenda of MMM**

I had several unfinished tasks and agenda at the time of my departure from the Synod. Here I want to mention just three of them.

### **1. Preparing an Institutional or Structural Change to form a new Unit for MMM in the Synod**

MMM was a part of the Mission and Resource Development Unit (equivalent to the Board of Mission in NSW). However, I proposed to form an MMM Unit as a positive way forward for the whole church. This radical proposal required increased resources for MMM in terms of number of staff and financial budget.

The actual budget allocated for the Synod MMM was \$562,000 in 2003. This amount included all grants and ministry funds carried out by local presbyteries. If the Synod could earmark the same amount of funds, then it would have been feasible to establish the new Unit without any extra financial burden.

I was convinced that such a structural change would be more effective for MMM than any strong words or actions from the Synod. The new Unit could co-ordinate the practical ministry, theological reflection and policy making for MMM in a more holistic way and a just manner. So I made only one proposal to the Synod in my final report.

### **2. Taking the risk to coin and use new terms for MMM**

Language is not neutral. Some terms convey meanings that distort or exclude. We need to rethink our use of terms in such a way that it helps us to move forward as a cross-cultural church. Here I want to mention three common terms and related issues from my work.

#### **a. Use of the term ‘migrant-ethnic’**

The term has been used in the wider society and church to refer to Non-Anglo people, NESB people or any minority groups. I believe that the term is neither ideal nor correct, because we have all “ethnic” backgrounds, and we are all “migrants” except the Indigenous People in Australia.

One Chinese UCA in Melbourne has more than 130 years of history, and I felt it was not appropriate to group it as a ‘migrant-ethnic’ congregation. At the same time, there is much evidence that NESB Australians are creating hyphenated identities like Anglo-Celtic, Asian-Australian or Pacific-Australian.

#### **b. Multicultural Ministry (MM) or Cross-Cultural Ministry (CCM)**

MM has been the language we have used to express our search to be God’s diverse people. However, it is clear that Indigenous People do not want to be a part of MM.

Perhaps CCM is a way of finding common ground to talk about the same vision for all.

‘Multicultural’ could be a static term that merely describes the presence of many cultures, while ‘cross-cultural’ speaks of interaction among diverse people. It seems to me that CCM confirms more to our biblical understanding with a Christological focus. It is Christ who makes it possible for us to cross over to one another. Thus, I prefer to use CCM rather than MM.

### c. NESB or Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background (CLDB)

NESB has been the term we have used in our church for many years. The term gives a clear implication and issue associated with English proficiency. So it is still relevant to use the term in the work and life of the UCA.

However, there are a few arguments that the term is not inclusive enough. Now we have many UCA members from the NESB community, but they cannot speak other languages except English. Thus, I prefer to use the more inclusive term of CLDB in the future.

### **3. Vision that CCM is something for all of us in our Church**

We often see CCM as something marginal, an “add on”, or as something for NESB members only. Many of our Anglo-Celtic members think such ministry is not for them.

The 1985 UCA Assembly had declared that “The Uniting Church is a Multicultural Church”. Based on that statement, we are seeking to find ways of talking about MMM which promote the sense that MMM is something for the whole church.

I once visited and preached at four rural churches of Shepparton, Swan Hill, Warracknabeal and Robinvale in the Synod. They were all dominantly Anglo congregations but they had NESB ministers of Samoan, Indian-Fijian, Korean and Tongan background. I also visited a worship centre and manse at Manangatang where a Samoan-background minister had lived 20 years ago.

People in the Swan Hill area speak about 30 different languages at home. Robinvale is a small town of 2,000 residents, but they came from 47 different nationalities including 400 Indigenous People. Besides, the town has many seasonal fruit pickers from many parts of the world as well. The MMM is not new at all in this rural centre.

I was convinced from the tour that MMM has become an agenda for both the urban centre and rural areas in the Synod. However, those demographic facts and agenda are not the main reason to claim the vision that CCM is something for all of us. I believe there is a profound theological reason to affirm the vision.

We are the pilgrim people of God. We travel together to the promised end of the church. We know that the ultimate church will be cross-cultural, comprised of many people from every race, nation and language (Rev. 7:9).

On the way, we come together from our different cultures through the cross of Christ. If we want to engage with one another at any level of depth, we need to cross over from our boundaries into the boundaries of others. The way is neither easy nor smooth. We must take up our cross and sometimes deny ourselves. The heart of this spirituality lies in the person and work of Christ.

That is the core reason to claim this vision, that the CCM is something for all people of God. I believe that is a practical way to live out the Pentecostal vision of the church.

### **Epilogue**

The proposal to form a separate CMM Unit was endorsed by the Synod and appointed a new director from NZ in 2006. I attended the National Consultation of MMM in Melbourne in 2006 with great excitement.

The new Chairperson of the NRC was appointed by the Assembly in 2006 and he is a member of the MMM Committee of the Synod. The new National Director inducted in 2007, came from the Synod, and he will work in the Assembly Office in Sydney for only one week in a month and the rest of his time will be based in Melbourne. The new moderator of the Synod 2006 was elected from a Tongan background member of the MMM Committee.

All of them are non-related happenings, but I rejoice and give thanks to God for granting much more than I ever prayed for. To me, all these reflect the positive sign of hope to grow further towards the vision of CMM of the church as a whole.

## **FEAR: STUMBLING BLOCKS FOR MINISTRY IN MULTICULTURAL SETTINGS**

Eric H. F. Law

*What are your fears, if we are to intentionally move toward becoming a multicultural church?*

This is a must-ask question for any communities that are attempting to embrace the multicultural reality in which they find themselves. This is because fears are the major stumbling blocks for doing ministry in multicultural settings.

I have worked with over 200 churches in 3 mainline denominations in the United States over a period of 6 years. Again and again, I discovered that naming the fears early on in the process was crucial in helping a community to move constructively and faithfully toward becoming a more inclusive church.

I would like to share some of the fears that I have heard different church communities name. Some of the fears are on the surface and can be addressed more easily. Some fears, however, are very deep-seated and require great pastoral care and careful facilitation of process for transformational change. My hope is that by sharing these fears and some possible processes and tools that could enable people to work through them, I can help other church communities to anticipate and be more ready to work through their fears, in order to achieve their vision in doing effective ministry in multicultural settings.

## **Fear of not being able to communicate**

This fear is especially prominent when more than one language group is involved. Sometimes people avoid entering into environments where they might feel frustrated or embarrassed for not speaking the other's language. This is a surface kind of fear and can be effectively dealt with by training people with skills to communicate across language barriers and by using technologies effectively. For example, in a formal setting like worship or a church meeting, a community can use a simultaneous translation system in which the participants wear headphones and can tune to the language that they can understand. This requires that the community has the financial resources to buy such a system and to hire competent translators for each event.

For informal settings, we need to teach everyone in the community skills to communicate across different languages. In a bilingual community it is helpful if everyone wears a nametag and on the nametag is written the language or languages that the person is proficient in. If a person only speaks Korean for example, and this person wants to communicate with a person who only speaks English, the Korean speaker needs to find someone with both English and Korean written on his or her nametag and invite that person to help with the communication.<sup>1</sup> If a community is spiritually healthy and secure, helping people to learn the appropriate skills and employing appropriate technologies will enable the community to move forward in accomplishing becoming a more inclusive multicultural community.

However, most fears are not just something that we can address with technologies and skill training. Often the fear comes from a deeper place and for many people is very hard to acknowledge and articulate.

## **Fear of being judged**

This kind of fear is often experienced by church members who honestly believe that they should be sensitive to different cultural groups and genuinely want their church to be more inclusive. However, in the process, they discover that they have thoughts and feelings about the differing others that might be considered as insensitive and even racist. Therefore, they avoid sharing these feelings. They either ignore them or allow these feelings to bottle up inside. If these kinds of feelings are not allowed to be expressed and addressed constructively in the midst of a loving supportive community, they could be redirected in ways that could be destructive to doing ministry in a multicultural community.

To enable people to work through this fear, we need to create a safe space where people can share their true feelings and experiences without being judged. They need to be assured that their reactions to differences are natural and they should not be ashamed of them. We need to provide a supportive environment in which feelings can be expressed so they can be worked through in constructive ways. It is a good discipline to invite the community to accept and uphold a set of Respectful Community Guidelines at the beginning of every gathering. The guidelines should invite everyone to speak honestly and listen empathetically and most important, keep confidentiality.<sup>2</sup>

## **Fear of unmanageable conflict**

In the world that we live in today, we are continuously shown how dealing with differences can be destructive- riots, law suits and church divisions, just to name a few. Some people might have bad experiences in racism or diversity sensitivity workshops in which conflicts were poorly handled resulting in unresolved hurt feelings. With this fear, people avoid dealing with differences altogether but want to focus

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<sup>1</sup> There are other techniques that I have successfully employed. I have summarised a few of them in Appendix D in Eric H. F. Law, *The Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1995), pp.158-159.

<sup>2</sup> For full descriptions of communication ground rules and respectful communication guidelines, see Eric H. F. Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell With The Lamb* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1993), pp. 103-109 and Law, *The Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed*, pp.85-89.

on what people have in common only. Although it is important to begin the discussion of multicultural ministry by sharing what people have in common, the exploration will not be very productive unless differences are honestly addressed.

To address this kind of fear constructively, we need to provide opportunities for intercultural dialogue. People should leave the meeting knowing that they have learned something significant, gained some intercultural skills, a greater understanding of others and self, and have a sense of hope for the future. This means every gathering to discuss multicultural ministry has to be carefully planned using inclusive dialogue skills. These meetings should move the dialogue toward greater honesty and compassionate listening that enables people to discover solutions and constructive ways to move toward greater inclusion of others. I have devoted much of my ministry and writings on developing and sharing these models, skills, processes and theologically reflecting on what helps foster constructive faithful dialogue.<sup>3</sup> Careful planning using these principles and tools will assist in the exploration towards becoming a more inclusive community.

### **Fear of losing control**

Very often, the movement toward multicultural ministry is precipitated by the decline of an older church community coupled with a population shift in the neighborhood. The instinct of the old-timers in dealing with change is to hold on tighter to what they have. To them, there is enough change out in the world that they live in; they want to have some sense of control when they are in church. For the newcomers who, in many cases, are new immigrants, their experiences are often full of uncertainties; therefore, when they come to church, they want to recreate their homeland's environment in language, custom, and food, etc. They feel the need to be in control as well. When you have two groups that need to be in control, you have problems. This fear of not being in control is connected with two deeper fears – fear of losing one's identity and fear of dying.

### **Fear of losing one's identity**

Many church members fear that if their church becomes multicultural, they will lose their identity as a church. This fear is often expressed this way: I don't want to lose the traditions that I love. If we change the worship, it won't feel like church any more. We are going to be so diverse that we might forget about being a church. If they come into our church, they should learn to fit into our way.

A way to help people to work through this fear is to ask: *What are the essential things that they do not want to lose as we explore becoming a more diverse church?*

Then ask: *What are the things that they are willing to let go without losing who their identity?*

In order for any community to deal with any change, they have to address these boundary issues. Sometimes, it means negotiation is needed with the old-timers in very specific terms. For example, in one church, we said to the old-timers after we listened to their concerns: If we promise you that we will also have a worship service that will follow the tradition in which you grew up, will you support this new worship service that would welcome people from the neighborhood? Naming those things that we will and will not do is crucial at this stage in order to help those who are fearful to re-enter into a safer environment in which they can entertain the coming changes.<sup>4</sup>

For the newcomers, the same process also applies.

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<sup>3</sup> See Eric H. F. Law, *Inclusion* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000) which presents a practical and theological model of what is an inclusive community. For more processes and skills on constructive dialogue see, Law, *The Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed* and Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*.

<sup>4</sup> For the full description of the process to help people to name the parameter, see Eric H. F. Law, *Sacred Acts, Holy Change*, (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2002), pp. 104-110.

*As we move toward becoming part of this large multicultural community, what will we do that can ensure that you will not lose the essence your community.*

Then, we also ask:

*What will we not do in order not to destroy your sense of identity.*

The different groups, both the old-timers and the newcomers, then share these parameters with each other. If they can name what they are not willing to let go and what they are willing to consider sharing and changing, then we can start talking about what we can do together that will enable them to become an even stronger and more faithful community.

### **Fear of dying as a community**

The fear of dying is the deepest fear that a declining community has, when it is challenged to consider sharing with people from other cultural backgrounds. Most of the time, members of such a community will not admit it. In fact, outwardly many say that they want to welcome others into their community but every attempt is blocked by the fear of dying. As they actively trying to get people to come, they become too needy, which actually has the opposite effect. The more they try, the less willing the newcomers are to stay. One of the churches that I worked with finally admitted after a long period of exploration: We are trying so hard to survive that we forgot to be faithful.

A constructive approach to this kind of fear requires the sharing of God's unconditional love through Jesus Christ. People, who have tried to be inclusive but were not successful, need to know that God still loves them even if the church that God entrusted in them did not grow. Then they also need to know the good news of Jesus Christ, which is: when we die, that is not the end of the story. As Christians, there is always the hope of the resurrection. When members of a declining community realize and finally acknowledge that the church community as they knew it is dying, that is when this community begins to see the hope of resurrection.

Studying Holy Scripture in community over a longer period of time is the best way to teach the good news of the Gospel.<sup>5</sup> I usually start the exploration process with a community before Lent and aim at finishing the exploration period by Pentecost. As the community gathers monthly, I begin each meeting with Bible study. I suggest that they study the Gospel lesson of the upcoming Sunday according to the Lectionary of the denomination. Through the season of Epiphany, Lent, Easter and Pentecost, members of the community listen to Scriptural texts that take them through the death and resurrection cycle of Jesus Christ. I also make sure that each meeting concludes with worship that reinforces the dying and rising cycle of life as Christians.

In the end, it is God through Christ, who moves the community toward greater inclusion.

What are your fears?

This is the question that must be asked if we are to enable a church community to explore doing ministry in the multicultural reality that we now live in. Naming these fears is the first step. Addressing these fears with the appropriate tools, skills, processes, pastoral care, and theological reflections is the key to a successful movement toward becoming a multicultural inclusive church community.

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<sup>5</sup> For a simple but helpful bible study process called Community Bible Study, see Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, pp. 121-131.