

A Journal for the Practice of Reconciliation

Volume 21, Number 3—Summer 2001

Multiculturalism, Diversity and Racial Reconciliation

This edition of *Shalom!* was directly inspired by one of eight Brethren in Christ priorities for the next 10 years: “**Enriched Community: We will work to be increasingly enriched by ethnic, cultural and racial diversity.**” I am excited about the possibilities. For many years, I’ve wanted the church to be more intentional about better reflecting the amazing racial and ethnic diversity in North America. This priority is a great start.

At the same time, we have a long way to go. Multiculturalism and diversity are more comfortable ideas, but we also need to explore the much harder issue of racism that still afflicts our society and the church in North America. As I’ve talked about racism in many intense conversations in recent years, here are a few things I think I’ve learned and that are reflected in various ways in this edition of *Shalom!*

- Most people are generally well-intentioned and do not want to be racist. Sometimes in the heat of debate, it is easy to forget that. Yet, just when I am quite sure of people’s good intentions, I hear of nasty overtly racist acts happening even in the church.
- No matter how well-intentioned we are, racism is a fact, and white privilege is a fact. As a white person, I live daily with the privileges I have simply because I am white.
- Undoing racism involves coming to terms with how I have internalized my power and privilege as a white person in the U.S., and then systematically and intentionally working to create structures that include, empower and respect everyone.

- Heart and attitude change is critical, but so is systemic change that will begin to distribute power and privilege to everyone.
- It is important to evaluate what we do to dismantle racism by the results and not the intentions. However well-intentioned we are, if we don’t see change in the ways racism still grips our society and the church, then our good intentions are not worth much.

One way to evaluate results is to check ourselves against the following continuum used in Mennonite Central Committee U.S.’s Damascus Road training (see pages 10-11). Churches can rate themselves as to whether they are: 1) exclusive, 2) passive, 3) engaging in symbolic change, 4) inclusive, 5) engaging in structural change, or 6) achieving identity change. Frankly, I think the Brethren in Christ are still only undergoing symbolic change, with some pockets still quite passive and others becoming more inclusive. We can rejoice at the progress we’ve definitely made, and see where more progress is still needed.

This edition approaches multiculturalism, diversity and racial reconciliation from several angles. As you read, keep in mind the vision from Revelation 5:9, where John sees gathered around the Lamb “saints from every tribe and language and people and nation.” I hope many of those multicultural saints will be Brethren in Christ! ☺

Harriet S. Bicksler, editor

Multicultural Voices

I didn’t realize the Brethren in Christ had such a wonderful vision regarding racial and cultural diversity. This information needs to be communicated to people in congregations. As a racial minority, I have had a really positive experience in my congregation. I attribute this positive experience to two things: fellow brothers and sisters’ demonstration of their love for Christ, and the fact that many people in our congregation have had cross-cultural experience through missions or traveling abroad.

I am able to serve freely and use the gifts God has given me. I have not felt that anyone dislikes me for being Chinese, although they may dislike me for other reasons. I do think that people have naïve notions about people from a different race or culture.

For me it is important to understand that someone who has racist and prejudiced attitudes is usually showing symptoms of something deeper. If there is racism and prejudice in the church, it has more to do with an individual’s heart towards God and their own insecurities. I also feel I should take an active role in “educating” others about my culture; this would help to minimize irritating situations and comments that come from people’s naïvete about cultural differences.

Ling Dinse, Elizabethtown, PA

A Modest Proposal for Increasing Diversity in the Brethren in Christ Church in North America

By Perry Engle

ENRICHED COMMUNITY:

We will work to be increasingly enriched by ethnic, cultural and racial diversity.

Brethren in Christ priority, adopted at 2000 General Conference

“Just make sure you are not trying to be diverse for the sake of being diverse.”

Charlie, Korean-American church-planter, Southern California

For most of us, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s observation that 11:00 Sunday morning is the most segregated hour of the week couldn't be more true. Even though it could be argued that the first great reformation of the Early Church involved the racial reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles (see Acts 10), still it's a reformation that has yet to be fully realized in most of our churches. The reality is that barriers still exist for most of us when it comes to worshiping and fellowshiping with people of other cultures and race.

The purpose of this article is to offer some practical suggestions on how we might begin to foster a more enriched community within the Brethren in Christ Church in North America. Even though my own church in Southern California is

now beginning to show some signs of reflecting the diversity of our community, that in no way makes me an expert on this subject. In order to make up for my limited experience, I've taken the liberty of asking some friends, coworkers and acquaintances across North America for their suggestions

on how to begin to create a more enriched Christian community. Gathering from their input and my own experience, I have put together a “Top Ten List” of how we might begin to work at increasing diversity within the church.

1. Ironically, the first step to increasing diversity in the church is to NOT to make diversity the goal. Rather, our focus should be on ministering to the felt needs of those existing in our realm of influence. A Hispanic woman in my congregation summed it up best: “The more you try to be culturally/racially sensitive, the more you are setting yourself up to offend people. Focus more on the needs of your church. Lonely, single people, struggling teens, struggling marriages... Deal with the real issues people are facing, and you will find that for many, the color of their skin is the least of their concerns...”
2. We need to be more strategic and intentional about planting churches in ethnically diverse communities. Without question, this will be the single greatest indicator of how diverse we are to become as a church in the coming decade. If we are truly serious about enriching our community of faith, I would suggest that one out of every three churches planted over the next 10 years needs to be intentionally targeted as a cross-cultural or multi-cultural

ministry. This would provide a meaningful benchmark for U.S. churches at least since the most recent U.S. census statistics show that nearly one in three Americans today is a member of a minority group.

“A common mistake predominantly white churches make is ‘reaching out to people’ because of their color! College was a great awakening for me and that is when I truly came to know the world. The same people who initially brought me to know the Lord were the same ones who ‘rocked’ my world. I did not know that they had reached out to me because I am Latina and they wanted more ‘diversity’ in the group. So you know, the ‘white folk’ were not the ones who reached out to me. They sent an African American because that was ‘closer’ to me. They failed to see that in so doing they had pegged me as something that I was not. For a moment I doubted my faith, but God was quick to let me know that just because they were making mistakes did not mean that his love for me was not real.” — Margie, Southern California

Alongside of this, for us to begin to bridge the cultural divide that confronts our denomination, more pastors and church attenders need to commit to living in ethnically and economically diverse communities. As one pastor expressed it, every church member needs to “think like a missionary.” His observation: “We have no problems going to a foreign country and learning the language, the popular culture, the rituals and customs of that culture and trying to plant a church that will be adaptable to that climate. But sometimes we assume that missions is something for people ‘over there’ and not here, and so we neglect to learn the language, customs, values and rituals of the local culture.”

3. Express your support for the formation of a denominational Commission on Enriched Community. A group like this could meet regularly to address issues

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related to racial inclusion. It could offer suggestions to church leadership, which in turn would help the church at large stay on task in its desire to build a more enriched community.

4. In your own church, be aware of the broader implications of implementing quotas in leadership and on boards. On one hand, quotas (the placing of someone on a board or in leadership because of their ethnic background or gender) may help to increase diversity in the short run. But on the other hand, it may also act to increase resentment over time. It's one thing to include someone in leadership because of his or her giftedness, experience or spiritual

“Our church (not BIC) has usually opted for quotas, which I find (as a ‘half minority’) a bit insulting. I understand the intentions behind them. But when I am asked to serve on a board or a committee for the area-wide church, I want to be asked because the person asking thinks I am well-qualified or feels like God would call me to something like this. In the back of my mind, I would always be wondering; ‘Am I being asked to serve because my presence in meeting some kind of quota?’ If I were being asked because I’m a minority, I would like to be asked in the following way: ‘You may not be the best qualified person to serve in this capacity, but because our society is a racist society, and therefore, our churches...can be racist, I would like a minority like you to be in such a position to counteract that racism.’” — Charlie, Korean-American church-planter, Southern California

maturity. It's another to include them simply because of their gender or the color of their skin. Our goal should be to raise up leaders of all backgrounds through expanded outreach, vigorous discipleship, and ongoing leadership training.

5. Provide opportunities for people of color to tell their stories – in small groups, in worship gatherings, in testimony and song. In so doing, we learn that people are people, and their dreams and disappointments are similar to ours even though their cultural context may be completely different. Said one Canadian woman after hearing people share their stories in her own church, “These stories, offered courageously, opened windows to worlds I would never have understood or appreciated otherwise, and helped me love those people as my brothers and sisters.”

6. Diversify the music in your worship

experiences. One African-American sister said to me, “Personally I feel we are on the road to singing one kind of music only... contemporary rock. If gospel music is important to me or choirs in general, they probably are important to others.” What is needed is to find ways to expand our musical horizons with quality and integrity. Invite in a special worship leader or music group that will lead you in new expressions and

directions of praise and worship. But a warning: There's nothing worse than an all-white worship team trying to pretend that they are people of color.

7. Don't be afraid to talk about racial reconciliation in the church. Pastors in particular should rediscover the great reformation of the Early Church, and be willing to preach on the great lengths to which God has gone to tear down “the dividing wall of hostility” between Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:14). Be prepared to be misunderstood, questioned and stretched in dealing with this highly charged issue. But don't ever underestimate how close this issue is to the heart of God.

Remember, as Spencer Perkins and Chris Rice have written in their book, *More Than Equals*, “reconciliation is a spiritual concept.” It is “white Christians and black Christians recognizing their need for each other. It is seeking from each other ways to demonstrate this love to each other, to our children and to the unbelieving world” (p. 128).

8. Develop a program to address a felt need in your community. Jump in, roll up your sleeves, and learn by

“A former pastor of mine once commented from the mike, as an African visitor walked to his seat, that ‘it’s nice to have some color this morning.’ He said it warmly, I’m sure he thought welcomingly, as everyone in the congregation under the age of 40 sank cringing in their pews.” — Doreen, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

“I remember a kinda funny story when our gospel choir sang at a church in Santa Clara. They invited us for Martin Luther King Day (I don’t think they thought of blacks any other time of the year...). Some progressive person had invited us, but they did not seem to know what to do with us after we were there...and they kept turning the mikes lower and lower...AS ALWAYS WE ‘WAS JUST TOO LOUD!!!’ What’s up with that anyways...?” — Ingrid, Southern California

doing - whether by starting a literacy program for new immigrants, holding an international foods festival, putting on a parenting seminar, or opening up the church parking lot for a skateboard night for inner-city youth. If you're not sure where to begin, hit the streets and start asking people, “What do you think are the greatest needs in this community?” And then respond by putting your love into action.

9. Assume that a certain amount of cultural arrogance resides in your own heart. Don't be afraid to admit that you really do believe (as we all do) that YOUR way is the RIGHT way, officially sanctioned by God and the Holy Brethren in Christ Church. Instead, humbly accept that God has a million-and-one things to teach us about the wisdom and insight of those around us who come from cultural backgrounds far different than our own. Maybe, just maybe, in an Acts 10 moment of clarity, each of us, like Peter, will recognize “how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts everyone from every nation who fears him and does what is right” (vs. 34).

10. Finally, give diversity time. I can personally attest to the fact that increasing diversity in a local church doesn't happen overnight. People of color will be drawn to a traditionally white church only if their needs are addressed, their experiences (including their pain) are embraced, and their traditions respected. Diversity is built on trust. And trust takes time. Take the time and expend the effort to earn that trust. If you do - if we all do - then maybe the first great reformation of the Church will begin to become a reality in our midst. ☺

Perry Engle is pastor of the New Community Brethren in Christ Church, Pomona, CA, and is a member of the BIC General Conference Board.

Becoming a More Multicultural Church in Southern California

By Paul Lehman-Schletewitz

When I was first asked to write about diversity in the church, I thought I didn't have anything to say. In the last 15 years, the local community around our church meeting site has shifted from a predominately white population to an Asian majority. Yet our church remains very peachy beige in hue. Sure, there are the brave souls, the Filipino, Persian, Hispanic and Chinese families that have dared to cross the great divide, but they are a significant minority. Then the Bishop called and asked me to write about diversity in the Pacific conference, from the perspective of our experience here in Walnut.

The Issue is Upon Us

While I was a seminary student in Kentucky, I experienced firsthand the segregation of races. Not that I hadn't before, but segregation in our part of the world had been more politely packaged. In the big city, income and housing costs are the ostensible dividers, but in the little rural town in which I lived in Kentucky, the line of division was more crudely the railroad tracks that powerfully separated whites from blacks. This created two communities that existed along side each other and never mixed.

In Kentucky, back in 1984, it would be a welcomed event for this homesick California boy to see a Hispanic man shopping in the local IGA because Hispanics weren't in Kentucky. Recent census data has shown that people are more highly mobile and ethnic groups are making their presence known in areas where they have never been before. The old days of black and white division in urban America are giving way to a new wave of yellow, brown, red, white and black in rural America. On a recent trip to see my wife's grandmother in Kansas, we were tuning the radio of our rental car when the dial landed on a Spanish station. There we were, in the heartland of what most people would consider "white America," hundreds of miles from any big city, listening to a station that has found a Spanish demographic large enough to find commercial viability. Racial diversity is fast shifting from a strictly big city issue to everyone's issue.

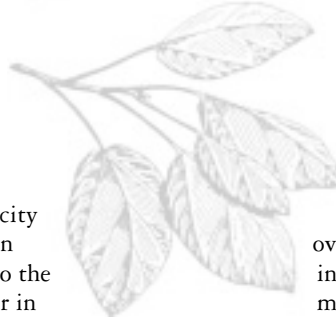
The Differences are Real

A recent article in the *Los Angeles Times* praised our little city of Walnut, California as a haven for diversity. Here, according to the *Times*, all the races live together in harmony. The *Times* apparently does not look very hard. While there is an outer veneer of acceptance, the truth is that the veneer is very thin. There is in fact a profound distrust between the people of different colors and nationalities along with some pretty hard evaluations. My daughter Joy was an infant, and I took her with me wherever I went. Around that time, I started a home group that met in the afternoons. Each of the four members of the home group was born in a different country. All of them were women. Joy was my entrée into the circle of women, and the love of Jesus was my ticket into the hearts of them all. What I found were very real differences in perception of how white America views others and how those others view white America. The fact is that many people carry hurts inflicted on them by those in power in this country. It is also a fact that accents, skin color, and origin are strong indicators of how far we are allowed to advance unencumbered into this culture. It also became clear that overtures on the part of white Americans are met with a profound initial mistrust. The differences are real.

We Must Be Intentional

Left to ourselves, we will, just as my great grandparents and grandparents did, form ethnic and cultural enclaves. These ethnic enclaves are circles in which we will move freely to worship, to do business, to socialize and to marry. They are also strong and easily visible and function like walls or rivers; they are barriers both intentional and natural to keep the familiar in and the strange out. Therefore, interracial relations will rarely ever "just happen." They must be intentionally breached and purposefully bridged.

So it was that over a year ago, we began to seek a Chinese Pastor to serve on staff in our small fellowship. Our desire is not to ghettoize our Mandarin speaking brothers and sisters by starting a strictly Mandarin work, but rather to intentionally work at bridging the gaps between us. I have had



long conversation with the pastors from the Ontario Brethren in Christ Church over their similar attempt to incorporate a Spanish ministry. In listening to what went right and what went

wrong, I have come to the conclusion, the divide is wide, and it will take the planning and execution of cultural engineers to bridge the gap.

Now immediately, most people think that being a cultural engineer/bridge-builder is a highly specialized job that will require years of formal training. In actuality, cultural bridge building is part of the whole call of Christ to his followers when he called them and us to the nations (Matthew 28:19-20). My experience is that the love of Jesus intentionally demonstrated will go a long way.

Honest Open Self-examination is Necessary

One of our former members had served with our BIC mission work in Thailand, and upon her return she settled among us and served as an English-as-a-Second-Language instructor at the local university. It wasn't long until we had a few, then a dozen native Mandarin and Taiwanese speaking people attending church each week. The issues were huge. Aside from the language, cultural and religious difference (most of them were Taoists), there was the unstated animosity of the white church members who now saw the Asians coming to take over *their* church. I am stating it much more crassly than anyone ever would. Our church is a polite, loving and accepting congregation, but one with some issues.

Part of the process we have been going through is confronting our prejudice with the call of Christ. Obviously, one or the other must hold sway. My task has been to keep a focus on the harvest to which we have been called, to confront unchristian attitudes however subtly expressed and pray for the church and the work.

What's Happening in the Conference

Today, the Hispanic ministry within the Pacific Conference is growing. In a few years of work, we can count six Hispanic churches in our region. The fact is that 30

percent of the Pacific conference's work is now among Hispanic churches and their people. Bishop John Arthur Brubaker sees these church works as "a source of enrichment." He comments, "They may be doing more for us than we are doing for them." Undoubtedly, for in view of the great commission with the nations at our doorstep this is our task. Perhaps one of our biggest achievements in many people's minds is the re-acquisition of the old Upland college campus which is now the Pacific Christian Center. The center's leadership envisioned a thriving focal point

for Brethren in Christ ministry and it is growing in that direction with the Pacific Lifeline, Cristo La Roco Brethren In Christ Church and the new elementary school all on site. In the midst of those significant works are Christian churches of other denominations—Filipino, Indonesian and Hispanic congregations—which use the center and help make it a vibrant center for Christian community. Within our conference various churches have other national churches meeting in their facility; however, these serve more as accommodation than integration.

Keep Working

I love Italian salad dressing. The spices are so tasty and the balance of olive oil to vinegar gives it a nice smooth yet tart acidic taste. But you have to shake it up; otherwise all you get is bland oil and nothing else. The church needs to keep working at shaking up the mix. It is essential, as the Church of Jesus, that we intentionally shake the bottle. ☺

Paul Lehman Schletewitz is senior pastor of the Walnut Brethren in Christ Church, Walnut, CA.

Coming Together In Toronto

by Vidya Narimalla

When people ask me what I do for a living, I explain that I am a pastor of a church. If they wish to know more I explain a bit about the church and denomination. Many people then assume that we belong to that group that doesn't drive cars, wears black clothes and farms. The puzzled look on their faces says it all. How can someone from an Indian origin be pastoring a Mennonite Brethren church? I don't look like them, wear clothes like them or farm. It is during these conversations I realize how much work we have yet to do. Another time, a colleague from a different denomination wondered why Mennonites and Brethren in Christ think they are so good at peace and reconciliation issues when there are so many different groups among us. I didn't have an answer.

I don't think there were denominations on Pentecost Sunday almost 2000 years ago when the Holy Spirit breathed on the First International Church of Jerusalem. I guess church has come a long way since then — or has it? I am not a naive idealist to close my eyes to the realities of change and neither am I pessimistic about the future of the church of Jesus Christ. It is this challenge and call that brought our family to Toronto to start a church to reach some of the many who are flocking to this great metropolis.

After five years of church planting efforts, God blessed our labour in bringing a small group of committed people to New Covenant Christian Fellowship, a Mennonite Brethren church plant. Just over 100 people, including children, claimed NCCF as their church. Some mature believers, some new, immigrants and host population alike, we had some 15 cultures represented with dreams and hopes of increasing this diversity. It is truly humbling to realize that

five years ago when we first came, we didn't know anyone.

We were renting a small facility and needed to move to accommodate our growth. Our facilities search committee worked hard and came up with a few options for the future. Amalgamation with the Bridlewood Brethren in Christ Church was not one of them. I had known Pastor Walter Kelly for a few years mostly through our mutual interest in MCC work, and an occasional lunch. Walter and I discussed the idea of our churches coming together once before, but nothing had happened. Now, we were pleased that both churches and denominations responded positively to explore further whether there was any merit to this vision.

As the idea of becoming one church was settling into our minds, we spent much time in dialogue and prayer. We stressed that both groups enter into any arrangement with full and clear understanding of what we were doing. We came to the table with a spirit of excitement and apprehension, dreams of an expanded vision for our churches, open minds, and simply trusting the leading of the Holy Spirit in all our deliberations, regardless of the final outcome.

A Tale of Two Churches and Their City

Bridlewood has been in Toronto for a number of years and therefore is better established in the community. While NCCF is only a couple of kilometers away, it is the new kid on the block, having been there since June 1995.

Bridlewood's people are solid long-time church members with a good understanding of church, commitment and stewardship, mostly Caucasian, with a few families from other ethnic backgrounds as well, and a bit more settled in how church

should be done. NCCF's people are a mix of mature believers and new Christians, very multicultural, and not set in their understanding of how church should be done.

By the end of the 2001, Toronto's population is expected to be 54 percent non-Caucasian, primarily new immigrants. This changing dynamic is reflected in the neighborhoods where Bridlewood BIC and NCCF are situated with no sign of the trend reversing any time soon. Churches that have tuned into this changing reality have made the adjustments and are on an upward growing curve. Conversely, churches that have ignored this phenomenon are either shrinking, closing their doors, or moving further into the suburbs of Greater Toronto.

In my many discussions with Walter, I sensed a deep desire to make the church better reflect the community in which it is located. I too share those views. The question before us was, "Are we ready, willing and able to embrace the people that are coming our way"? The answer was a definite "yes" from the leaders of both churches.

Toronto is an expensive city in which to live. It has a mobile population, including Christians, with few denominational loyalties. Church-hopping is almost like a hobby for some people. Unless a church has a good core group of 150-200 people, with a constant mind-set of reaching new people for the Lord, it will be forced to shut down. A merger was seen not only as a practical solution but more importantly, as a strong witness of unity and peace between two like-minded churches.

No pastor wishes to be in a situation where he or she has to constantly struggle just to maintain the same people. Extended periods of such struggles sap physical and spiritual motivation to keep going in ministry, or they tempt the pastor to bail out and go to a smaller town with committed people where the necessity to evangelize and bring more people into the

church may not be as pressing as it is in urban settings. On the other hand, in a larger congregation with more potential to bring in others and working as a team, pastors can complement each other's gifts.

Recipe for a Successful Merger

As the Merger Task Force examined the confession of faith documents of the Brethren in Christ and Mennonite Brethren, they came up with negligible differences on matters of theological importance. Denominations are joining hands on a larger scale. Mergermania is rampant in the corporate world. I believe that this is simply a recognition of making the best and most efficient use of our resources (people and finances).

A 10-member Task Force looked at eight priorities ranging from theology, mission and vision to the name of the church. The Task Force worked on eight

important priorities that needed to be negotiated and agreed upon for this merger to go ahead. Both conference leaders were kept abreast of all proceedings. No theological or doctrinal differences of significance were found between the two denominations. The new church will have a dual denominational status. A fair and equitable distribution of assets will take place if the merger needs to be dissolved.

In December 2000, a draft Memorandum of Understanding was put together and unanimously approved by the Task Force and presented to the individual churches and Conferences. A vote of over 75 percent by the membership was suggested. In January 2001, Bridlewood and NCCF voted over 90 percent in favour of the merger. Ontario MB Leadership Council gave unanimous approval to move forward. Brethren in Christ Conference Board of Directors gave unanimous

approval for the merger. The unified church's new name is **New Life Christian Church**.

The official opening service of the New Life Christian Church was held on Palm Sunday, April 8, 2001. Bishop Darrell Winger of the BIC Conference and Rev. Henry Wiebe, Moderator of the Ontario MB Conference, attended along with several other people from both conferences.

God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. Hebrews 11:40. ☺

Vidya J. Narimalla is co-pastor of the newly-merged Mennonite Brethren and Brethren in Christ congregation, New Life Christian Church, Toronto, Ontario. He is also a member-at-large of the board of Mennonite Central Committee, where he serves on the executive committee and as treasurer of the board.

Enriched Community in Welland

By Gordon Gilmore

Canada often describes the diversity of its people as multicultural and multi-faith. With a population of 30,000,000 residents Canada is indeed a nation of many races, languages, customs and religions all living peacefully together under one flag. The city of Welland, Ontario with a population of 48,000 accurately represents this reality. The neighborhood of the Welland Brethren in Christ Church has a high concentration of Italian neighbors. *The Community Messenger*, a church newspaper, has introduced the gospel to these neighbors. Significant migration to Welland after the second world war brought many Italian, Dutch, Polish, Croatian, Hungarian and other Europeans to the city. These new immigrants moved into neighborhoods where already a strong English and French community was present. Into this international small city environment came Hispanics, Jamaicans, Sri Lankans and Africans during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

The Welland BIC Church, although originally made up of predominantly Anglo-Saxon, Caucasian believers is changing and stretching to receive seekers and believers from many different cultures, nations and languages.

For many years, French and English speaking believers have worshiped together in English at the Welland BIC Church. Now, other races and language groups are regularly observed at the services and events of the church. In 1998 Frank and Christie Fu located in Welland with hopes

of finding employment with a corporation where other Chinese immigrants had been hired. The Fus with a university education in mechanical engineering had moved from Beijing, China to Welland. They were invited to a Sunday morning service at Welland BIC by some newly acquired Canadian friends. Although they had a very superficial understanding of Christianity given their atheistic background, they were open-minded and ready to consider the truths and teaching of Scripture. Pastor Ron and Marjorie Lofthouse, associate pastoral couple at Welland BIC, quickly and lovingly established a friendship with Frank and Christie. In broken English they asked many honest and challenging questions and eagerly professed faith in Christ when the invitation was presented to them. In 1999, the Sunday before moving to Toronto to start a new job, both Frank and Christie publicly testified of their new found faith in Christ and were baptized as believers and followers of Christ.

Welland BIC was sad to see the Fus move away. However, as is so often the case in the life of the church, others come to replace those who leave. Since the Fus' departure several new Chinese couples have become part of the church family and many other contacts with the Chinese community have been made. Hong Yu and Jung Hwang came in 2000, were married by Pastor Gordon Gilmore and have been openly investigating the claims of Christianity. They are presently in a newcomers class.

Terry Ciolfi is a single divorced woman of Fench heritage. A year ago Terry decided to rent several bedrooms to Asian students attending Niagara College of Arts and Technology. Terry faithfully invites and brings the students living in her home to youth activities and church services. Terry and our youth leaders go out of their way to present the gospel to the many Chinese and Japanese students who move in and out of her home. The youth group in turn has gone out of its way to welcome and befriend the students who come to church. In June, When, a Chinese student, very thoughtfully and joyfully made a profession of faith. Another Japanese student, Shingles, an engineer, is seriously considering the meaning of trusting in Christ for salvation.

Experiencing the reality of a diverse community of believers, while blending cultures and languages and varying world views together is a challenge for a local church. It is vital that those who come among us find a loving community of believers ready to cast aside stereotypes and prejudices and embrace people from different backgrounds into a family that is truly international and loyal, first of all, to the kingdom of God. This coming together of different nationalities does indeed enrich the Welland BIC church family. ☺

Gordon Gilmore is the senior pastor of the Welland Brethren in Christ Church, Welland, Ontario.

The Church and the Culture of Age

By Janet M. Peifer

What will the 21st century church do with the 20th century's gift of longevity? The culture of age is blinking like a neon light. Our politicians have noticed. Community, state, and national organizations have programs in place and facilities in operation to address the changing demographic landscape. Universities demonstrate an awareness of rapidly increasing numbers of older adults by offering additional majors in the field of gerontology.

The Christian church, on the other hand, has frequently responded as though aging is a problem to be fixed or something to avoid like the plague. Too few pastors have given serious thought to guiding their congregations in long term planning for the congregation as its older members numerically equal or exceed its younger ones. Other church members and leaders support myths about aging which negate the mutual blessing that the older and younger can be to one another.

Issues Calling for Attention as the Church Prepares for the "Culture of Age" Shift

1. The church should consider adopting proactive statements of belief and action for addressing the needs of the transitional and frail older adults in the local congregations and neighborhoods.
2. Large numbers of pastors, ministers, bishops will be retiring soon, and there are not enough young men to replace them. Women called of God to church leadership will be greatly needed along with men in our denominations.
3. Multiple church staffs should strongly consider hiring a Pastor of Adults, or a Parish Nurse to provide adequate pastoral care and to meet the social needs of its older members.
4. Churches should also strongly consider keeping capable retirees on staff and serving in Christian education and as committee persons. Research and experience shows that many older adults are dedicated, generous financial contributors, stay in their home community, have a history of long-term church membership, and are biblically knowledgeable.
5. Congregations need to supply hearing devices, large print bulletins and hymns, ramps for access to the building, wheelchairs accessible to

assist older adults into the building, handicap accessible rest rooms, etc. to accommodate the increasing number of transitional older adults who attend worship services.

6. Churches should consider use available space in church facilities for an older adult day care ministry to assist church families and families in the community with respite needs due to the older adults who live with them.
7. Carefully planned intergenerational church programs and team leadership will be important. For example, an older adult and a teenager who is a budding teacher could teach a Sunday School class together. Or, older adults can assist in caring for infants in the nursery or teaching children's classes. The older adult needs the enthusiasm and energy of the child or young person, and the children and young person needs the mentoring/coaching of the older adult.
8. Well-planned outreach programs will intentionally reach unchurched older adults in the community. Churches may want to consider having educational classes in the church—to teach new skills or in-depth Bible studies utilizing retired college professors or high school teachers.
9. The inevitable increase in congregational funeral/memorial services will have the potential to serve as an opportunity to teach a congregation that death is part of life.
10. Loss and grief issues will necessitate discussion/support groups, with particular emphasis given to coping with the numerous losses older adults and their caregivers face.
11. Unless a cure is found for Alzheimer's Disease there will be a sharp increase in the number of church members affected by dementia, and/or a sharp increase in the number of persons in the congregation who are caregivers of affected loved ones.
12. The diversity of needs and interests among the congregation's older adults (ages 65-105) will necessitate specialized training of leaders to address differences that are not unlike ministries which span elementary-aged children to middle-aged adults.

This brief enumeration of issues the church is and will be facing highlights that such ministry is not only "to" or "for" older

adults but primarily "with" or "among" them. Regardless of whether older adults members are active, transitional, or frail, their capacity for serving and ministry rarely ends until breath ceases.

Addressing Training Needs for Congregations Attune to The Culture of Age

Win Arn writes that "a minuscule number of church leaders have been trained in the unique needs, opportunities, and outreach strategies required for persons over 50" (From Arn's article, "Is Your Church Senior Sensitive?" in *Enrichment Journal Online*, April 1998). It is not unusual to see brochures of extensive Christian education and pastoral ministry conferences where not one of the dozens of workshops and plenary sessions addresses the unique opportunities and needs of the adults over 65 years of age.

All Christian Ministries majors and seminary students would do well to take a required course specifically geared to effective pastoral care and ministry with older adults. Educational practicums and ministry placements should not be void of hands-on ministry with older adults. At Messiah Village I offer to supervise one Messiah College Christian Ministries student per school semester to offer him or her the opportunity for concentrated older adult ministry. These students receive invaluable ministry experience that pastors of the local congregation would wait years to receive.

As a denomination, the Brethren in Christ has yet to develop a vision, purpose, and plan to address this phenomenal social transformation. If such a document were in place, we would have a base from which to encourage our seminary students to pursue courses and literature which would prepare them more effectively for the demographic landscape in which they will minister. It would also serve as a foundation from which to offer seminars and retreats for our current pastors, deacons, and lay leaders to assist them in effective ministry with their older parishioners.

I firmly believe that congregations that celebrate the gift of age will not only draw more older people through their doors, but people of all ages who want to be part of a church which does not lament having many older members, or discriminate against them in any way. ☺

Janet Peifer, D.Min. is the director of pastoral care at Messiah Village, and on the pastoral staff at the Messiah Village Brethren in Christ Church, Mechanicsburg, PA.

Multiculturalism: How Can Christians Have a Seat at the Table?

By Lois Saylor



In an age that values multiculturalism or the desire that all groups should be recognized and appreciated, Christians are often neglected. Author Bob Briner urges Christians to gain a seat at the table through engagement and excellence. Being salt and light in our world is not a new theme, but Briner points out that since “roughly 80 percent of Americans claim to believe in Jesus as the Son of God, we’re not doing so hot” affecting *our* culture for *his* kingdom. Affecting our culture—TV, movies, the arts, politics, business, the local community—is the call that Mr. Briner addresses in his book *roaring lambs*.

Consider these statements. “Being salt does not always mean we ‘evangelize,’ but by replacing evil with good, we enhance the climate for evangelism.” In all spheres of our lives Christians can be replacing evil with good. Driving our cars politely, suggesting an alternative to a haunted house at the PTA meeting, being a calming influence at a heated public meeting, displaying works of art that provoke thought (not titillation) at the local art show, publishing thoughtful articles or letters, or picking good plays and musicals for the local theater are all ways we can affect our culture by replacing evil with good.

He also writes, “Being salt is not nearly so much about having more pastors and missionaries as it is about having many more committed Christian lay people thinking strategically about and acting on ways to build the kingdom.” He laments that only ministry oriented young people are singled out for recognition, prayer, and financial support. “Why shouldn’t talented young people of the congregation who hope to enter medicine or teaching, or journalism, or writing, or plumbing, or retailing, or any other world of work be given at least the same kind of attention?” It is an intriguing idea that a legitimate Christian endeavor is raising support for the young Christian writer heading to the big city to try to write and publish his works

Even more, however, than just replacing evil with good by our daily Christ-like actions and attitudes, Briner is calling Christians to take on the seemingly overwhelming institutions of our day. He laments that we too often create our own

comfortable Christian subcultures of music, publishing, and entertainment. We end up literally preaching to the choir and not impacting our culture.

Briner cites Philip Johnson, author of *Darwin on Trial*, who also wanted to avoid being confined to the Christian subculture. He wanted “his ideas to go head to head with those of the world.” He knew Christian publication of his book would be easy, but it would not take him into the world his book needed to go. He had a difficult time finding a publisher, but once he did, “his book was widely reviewed” and “became a topic of conversation in top academic circles, brought about many invitations to speak and debate on many college and university campuses and engendered many radio and television interviews.”

Briner suggests that there are many more gifted thinkers who could be writing for the larger market and become roaring lambs like Philip Johnson. Moreover, it needs to be understood that he is not calling for Christians to *protest* the prevailing culture. “Our job is not primarily to protest, but to proclaim.” When it comes to movies he says, “I’m dead serious about the business of cleaning up movies by joining rather than fighting the industry. Think of all the effort that has gone into boycotting and slamming the admittedly awful movies being produced today. Are we better off for it?” He calls talented Christians to invade the movies, television, literature, the visual arts, sports and academia; and cites examples and gives strategies to do just that.

Briner published his book in 1993 and died in 1999. Today, there are living, working examples of his ideals. Some rock bands who have Christian members refuse to be defined as “Christian” bands. These bands want to simply make their music (which is influenced by their faith) and not get caught in the Christian vs. the world argument. They play at secular venues influencing their audiences with music that is not degrading, but musically valid and lyrically interesting. One such band, Lifehouse, was called “morally uplifting” by *Rolling Stone* magazine which also reported that the “group got its start playing (and leading worship services) at a church in Malibu.” During the interview

the group spoke about their Christian roots which were reported with respect. A gentle roar in the not so gentle world of rock and roll.

Jewish TV comedy writer, John Markus (The Bill Cosby Show) was impressed by professing Christian Kristen Chenoweth’s faith as she was trying to break into Broadway. He decided to write a sitcom based on her struggles. The show was reviewed in *The New Yorker* magazine where issues of faith were written about with respect and even good-natured humor. Markus tells about Kristen explaining the rapture to him, to which he replies, “Kristen, let me tell you something. If the time comes when I’m sitting here, eating meat loaf with you, and you disappear and all that’s left is your jewelry, I guarantee you that I will accept Jesus as my personal Savior.” Another gentle roar in that secular bastion, *The New Yorker*. (Readers need to make up their own minds as to whether the sitcom lives up to the writer’s original intent.)

Briner quotes Elton Trueblood from *The Company of the Committed*: “The test of the vitality of a religion is to be seen in its effect on culture.” The question we need to ask is, “How are we doing?”

Shalom! would love to hear how you or someone you know has been a roaring lamb. Consider sharing your story and encourage others with a gentle roar! ☺

Lois Saylor attends the Elizabethtown (PA) Brethren in Christ Church and is a member of the Shalom! Editorial Advisory Committee. She reviewed Bob Briner, roaring lambs: a gentle plan to radically change your world, Zondervan Publishing House, 1993. Bob Briner, who died in 1999, was president of ProServ Television, an Emmy Award-winning producer, an author, and co-hosted a nationally syndicated radio show.



Upsetting the Melting Pot

By Rebecca Ebersole

As a 1980s child, Cold War rhetoric intrigued me. I didn't believe it. I dreamt of studying Russian and believed that Russian children were probably a lot like me. In contrast to Cold War diatribes, I learned, like all elementary students, that the United States is a great "melting pot" where anyone can accomplish anything. These two views, held in tension, marked the beginning of my understanding of ethnic differences.

As I grew into a teenager, I added to this idea of multiculturalism. It meant respecting others, not discriminating, appreciating different cultures, sampling foreign foods, and seeking friendship with people from a wide variety of backgrounds. It meant beating racism one person at a time, focusing on our similarities rather than our differences. I feel comfortable with this idea of multiculturalism, but I discovered that it's not complete.

A college sociology course, *Minority/Majority Relations*, dramatically expanded my idea of multiculturalism and racism. I learned that racism cannot be wiped out one person at a time, that racism relies on power and economic structures deeply entrenched in our society, that our "melting pot" nation actually tries to assimilate other races into its white mixture. I learned that as a white person I have certain privileges that everyone does not enjoy.

An article by Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" helped me to better understand racism. She wrote, "As a white person, I realized that I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to

see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage."

Most of us do not claim these privileges consciously or maliciously. McIntosh writes, "Whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work that will allow 'them' to be more like 'us.'"

This is why many efforts to form multicultural churches or institutions do not work. They focus on integrating people of color into a white culture, not truly establishing a multicultural culture. Being "multicultural" means creating space where every culture can be expressed, learned from, and appreciated. The goal is more like a salad with distinct vegetables than a melting pot, as one of my professors said.

McIntosh's statements and her sample list of privileges made a lot of sense to me. I realized that as a white person, I experience the world differently in some ways than people of color.

A friend of mine challenged me to create a list of some white privileges that I benefit from, rather than restating McIntosh's.

Here goes:

- I can gather with a group of people from my own race without others wondering why—if I wanted to be part of an integrated culture—I only associate with those of my race.
- I can choose to think about racism or not think about it. I am not daily reminded of its devastating effects on myself or others.
- I can choose to believe that others are making a bigger deal of racism than it really is.
- If I buy a sports car, I can drive it confidently as a young adult without worrying that I might be pulled over (even when driving at or below the speed limit) and questioned if I stole the car. (An African-American young man in Mechanicsburg was stopped 14 times and questioned by police after inheriting his grandfather's red sports car. Finally, he sold the car to avoid harassment.)
- My race rarely comes up in any conversation I have. I am not asked to speak for the people of my race. (This one is from McIntosh's list)
- Race does not become a defining characteristic of mine. No one describes me as "You know Becky, the white woman who attends the gym."
- If I am asked to be in a publicity photo, I don't have to wonder if it is because of my race.

Everyone should enjoy many of these privileges. European Americans can, however, intentionally give up some of the

detrimental "privileges" like remaining oblivious to the language and culture of people of color by learning about a variety of heritages and reading literature of different cultures. At the same time, there are some things that white people can do to help make some positive privileges available to everyone. For example, they can refrain from asking others to speak for their entire race.

The system of racism, however, keeps doling out white privileges, in spite of our best intentions for equality. We need to work together to dismantle racist structures. Just giving up white privilege will not end racism.

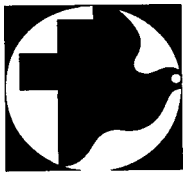
Racism diminishes the lives of both European Americans and people of color. It robs European Americans of dignity as they (often unwittingly) participate in systems that dehumanize others, as they lack the richness of partnering with those of other races, as they can only comfortably relate to a shrinking segment of the population (white people), and as they value only some of God's creatures.

It's easy to get overwhelmed when talking about issues like this. I attend a church that's working toward multiculturalism because this is important to me. But, I also live and work in places with people who are ethnically very similar to me. In many ways, I have a lot to learn about the topics of multiculturalism and racism.

It's important not to get discouraged. As individuals and churches we can make a difference. We can corporately seek education through programs like MCC U.S.'s Damascus Road Anti-racism Training. In Sunday school or training courses, we can examine white privilege and racism in open and noncondemning ways and consider how it is inhibiting our ministry. We can make life choices that help in dismantling racism. I admire members of my Harrisburg church who live and form relationships in culturally diverse neighborhoods.

As a denomination, let's look at ways that we can promote multicultural congregations, ones that are not just congregations of white people trying to add some people of color to the mix. Even the locations of our churches promote or discourage multiculturalism. So when we plant churches, we can look seriously at communities where we can partner with people of color. Let's become a denomination in which our understandings of God and the world are rooted in the richness of all of the cultures and people that God created. ☺

Rebecca Ebersole, Mechanicsburg, PA, is a writer, editor and member of the Harrisburg Brethren in Christ Church.



focus on Mennonite Central Committee

On the Damascus Road

By Brenda Zook Friesen

As organizers worked feverishly for the “Restoring Our Sight” conference, they were hoping for 20-30 participants. The conference was sponsored by the Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Racism Awareness Program and open to those seeking to challenge racism in the Anabaptist community. Much to the organizers’ surprise, *more than 250* Mennonites and Brethren in Christ gathered for the conference in Chicago in March of 1995. Participants came together to examine the biblical basis for anti-racism work, learn the history of racism in the Anabaptist tradition, and take a closer look at institutional racism. At the end of the conference, there was a clear call for anti-racism work to continue beyond this brief weekend. Requests were made to provide anti-racism training for long-term institutional change.

Following “Restoring Our Sight,” a group representing a variety of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ organizations gathered in Goshen, Indiana, to decide next steps. Through a series of meetings and discussions, *The Damascus Road* was born. The name refers to the process of transformation that Saul experienced on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-31). A training process was developed to equip participants with the theological, educational and organizational anti-racism skills they need to begin the process of transformation in their own institutions. Just as Saul heard God’s voice, was freed of blindness and eventually helped open the Christian community to full Gentile participation, *The Damascus Road* involves the movement of God’s spirit, new sight and institutional transformation.

The first round of anti-racism training was offered in 1996 and since then, more than 50 teams have participated. These teams reflect a wide variety of Anabaptist organizations, conferences and church congregations. Each team is composed of at least five members and is racially diverse, gender balanced and representative of varying levels of leadership. Teams are commissioned by their sending institution

specifically for the task of dismantling racism within the institution. Obviously, this is not an easy task.

As teams return from their anti-racism training with *Damascus Road*, they take many paths. Some teams are thriving beyond what anyone anticipated. They are consistently expanding with new team members, providing introductory anti-racism workshops for their churches and having profound influence on the way policies, procedures and mission statements are formed. They are infusing anti-racism into every aspect of life, not only within their institutional life, but within personal relationships and community involvements as well.

Other teams are barely surviving as they face geographical barriers, time constraints and disappearing budgets, not to mention the inevitable challenges that come with any type of anti-racism work. Some team members become discouraged when faced

with the realities of racism: racism is alive and well, this is a long-term process, and racism is saturating every part of our lives, even within the church. Some do not realize the commitment that would be involved and regretfully withdraw. For others, the process of exposing their own personal connections with racism is just too painful and too disconcerting. Some people outright resist any anti-racism efforts.

Throughout this process, it has been clear that while there is a place for multicultural diversity training and sensitivity training, what we really need is a clear mandate for *anti-racism*. For our churches to have any integrity about claiming oneness in Christ, we must be about the work of actively dismantling racism. This moves us to a place beyond just “getting along.”

Mennonite Central Committee U.S. began to understand this reality in a new way during the early 1990s. Across the nation there was talk of “changing demographics” with the number of people

of color increasing significantly.

Corporations began to update their marketing to target a “wider audience” and human resource departments were hiring diversity trainers to help manage cultural differences. In the midst of these new trends, MCC was taking note that our constituency was still composed of predominantly white people. A new vision statement was created with the hope to “broaden the vision” beyond the traditional European American, western culture approach.

The Damascus Road Anti-Racism Process has been part of this new vision for the Anabaptist community and Mennonite Central Committee U.S. While we have witnessed some significant changes through the work of the anti-racism teams and Damascus Road leadership, we recognize that we still have miles to go. Racism has been such an integral part of our history, faith and culture that at times, it seems impenetrable. Our institutions have become more “colorful” but power and privilege still remain in the hands of those who have white skin.

In an effort to be faithful to our understanding of Christ’s teaching, we continue to work for a church that is truly welcoming to everyone. Not only should our churches be welcoming, but our organizations, our homes and our communities. We hope to move beyond a warm welcome to create places that embrace various cultures, leadership styles and power distribution. Knowing there is no quick fix, we hold to the vision from Revelations 7:9 where “every nation, tribe, people and language” gather at the throne of the Lord, worshipping together. We have witnessed glimpses of this vision in our anti-racism organizing and continue to move forward in faith. ☺

Brenda Zook Friesen is the director of MCC U.S.’s Racism Awareness Program and coordinator of the Damascus Road Anti-Racism Process. For more information about Damascus Road, contact MCC U.S. at (717) 859-3889; website: www.mcc.org, or e-mail Brenda at bzf@mcc.org.

Reflections on the Road to Damascus

Since Mennonite Central Committee U.S. began the Damascus Road anti-racism training process, a number of Brethren in Christ people have participated in the training. Some are or have been members of MCC boards (regional and national), and some are members of individual institutional Damascus Road (DR) teams. As chair of the board of MCC U.S. and a member of MCC U.S.'s DR team, I am especially interested in how individuals have been affected by what they learned at the trainings. Following are responses from several people to some questions I asked about their experiences at DR training.

What was the most important thing you learned?

- Racism has conferred upon white people, including myself, extensive benefits and privileges, and I as a white person benefit from those privileges even though I may not invoke them.
- The training was a time to grieve the inhumanity and intentionality with which one race establishes systems that suppress another. During the training it became very clear that racism will not disappear because of measures taken during the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Persistent intentionality is required.
- Having a way to discuss racism using agreed upon definitions is priceless. I further realized how much of a stronghold racism has in the United States.
- Even though the idea of "race" is a myth, "racism" is real, complex, and nasty for those who need to endure it.
- A significant learning experience was the concept of the iceberg; it demonstrated how much of racism is below the surface where we don't readily see it.

How would you assess the Brethren in Christ Church's commitment to being an anti-racist institution?

- We are generally passive, with some features of symbolic change.
- I'm not familiar with the denomination as a whole, but at least we are providing a place for this kind of work.
- I haven't heard or read much in the denomination so I would say we are at square one.
- I think we are ready to become less racist, but I'm not sure we are ready

for all it may mean. We want to do things the way we have normally done them; we don't do a lot to open the doors for those different from "us."

- Although most Brethren in Christ would deny racist sentiments, the truth is that the majority of us are racist because we are part of the dominant European American culture. Right now I don't hear a call to train ourselves on issues of racism so that we can be intentional in creating anti-racist structures.



What would you recommend?

- All members of Leadership Council should take Damascus Road training, and then establish a DR team whose assignment would be to educate the constituency about racism and stimulate remedial thinking.
- Continue seeking to love like Jesus loves.
- Make sure decision-making bodies have representation from other racial/ethnic groups and that the representation is more than "quota fillers."
- We need to have conversation and develop policy about racism.
- If we truly want to be an anti-racist and multicultural church in North America, we need to begin saying so and create the appropriate structures that allow it to happen.

How can white BIC people work at being accountable to people of color as we try to fulfill the Impact 2010 vision point of "Enriched Community"?

- Build social relationships with neighbors and co-workers who are persons of color. See models in our denominational leaders and pastors. Choose communities with mixed populations in which to plant churches, and deploy church-planting pastors who are committed to building congregations of diversity from their inception. Recruit a senior pastor who is a person of color.
- If accountability can't occur within

the congregation, then find the nearest group that is willing to participate. If you are really isolated, then give us a call at Circle of Hope!

- One of the things I did after DR training was enter into an accountability relationship with a person of color. It is good to be accountable to a person who can talk to me about my behavior.
- We can explore ways to get connected with non-white churches in our larger regional communities, and listen, listen, listen. Then partner with them for the benefit of that larger regional community. ☺

Reported by Harriet Bicksler. Thanks to the following people who responded: Sam Brubaker, Arcanum, OH (MCC Great Lakes); Ken Hoke, Carlisle, PA (BIC Church Leadership); Marian Musser, Carlisle, PA (formerly MCC East Coast); Bill Strausbaugh, Mechanicsburg, PA (Messiah College); and David Valentine, Philadelphia, PA (Circle of Hope).

Multicultural Voices

When I pastored the Bethel church in Miami, I discovered that although we spoke the same language, there was ethnic pride and racism among the different Hispanic groups. Among minorities, the problem of racism often has a lot to do with economic issues. Another example of the complexity of the issue is that Cubans resent being called people of color. African Americans are people of color.

Personally I have not experienced racism in an overt form in the church. I have always been treated with respect and love. However, there was a time when I was on a denominational board when one of the members told me he was a racist. Amazing!

If we want to attract individuals from different ethnic and racial groups, we will probably need to have more contemporary worship styles. Many minority churches are more need oriented than what I have experienced in Brethren in Christ churches. I also think we will need to be more intentional about finding, funding and training ethnically and racially diverse ministers.

Eduardo Llanes, Miami, FL

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"I'm beginning to see the point"

I went to the Damascus Road training assuming I had no trouble accepting those of other races and that I was not a racist. I had to accept the fact that racism is not only prejudice towards other races but being part of a system with power and control over other races. We make the laws and the rules and expect them to be like us, speak our language, and accept our culture. Those of color at the training were all in successful vocations and professions, and appeared to "have it made," but all experienced subtle discrimination. One man said it well: "Every morning when I leave the house, I feel like I'm under a cloud."

My experience with the Brethren in Christ Church is that anti-racism is not a valid issue. When I have brought up this discussion in Christian groups or with individuals, there is little comprehension of the problem and people generally react defensively. Showing a film on racism in Sunday School classes met with negative reactions, and the main issue of the film was derailed with peripheral comments or personal experiences or concepts. But there is some hope. One person who was initially defensive later told me, "After thinking about it, I'm beginning to see the point."

With our children and young people at school with those of other races, I feel there is a need for teaching understanding, tolerance, and acceptance. There are numerous excellent videos available on the subject through MCC that can be used in Sunday School classes or youth groups. Reading good books written by persons of color give us perspective on racial issues. The problem of racism will always be with us, but we can enrich our lives and enhance our Christian testimony by making an effort to develop relationships with those of other races. ☺

Myron Lady, Abilene, KS (former MCC Central States)

Seventh Annual Brethren in Christ Study Conference

**"With Words, Notes and Brushes:
Conversations on Faith and the Arts"
October 26-27, 2001**

The Seventh Annual Brethren in Christ Study Conference will be held October 26-27, 2001, at the Grantham Brethren in Christ Church (Friday) and Messiah College's Climenhaga Fine Arts Center (Saturday). Sponsored by the Sider Institute for Anabaptist, Pietist and Wesleyan Studies, this year's conference will focus on connections between the Christian faith and various artistic endeavors. Speakers and presenters will include Messiah College president Rodney Sawatsky; art historian Susanna Caroselli; poet Jeff Gundy; musicians Dwight Thomas, Richard Roberson, Austin Hartman, and Annette Jeffrey; theater professor Valerie Smith; film critic Crystal Downing; sculptor Ted Prescott; and the entire Houghton College art faculty.

For more information about the conference, including registration materials and a schedule of presentations and workshops, visit the Sider Institute website at www.messiah.edu/siderinstitute (Click on "News & Events"); or contact David Weaver-Zercher, The Sider Institute, P.O. Box 4033, Messiah College, Grantham, PA 17027; e-mail dzercher@messiah.edu, or call 717-766-2511 (x7379). Conference brochures are available; the registration fee for the two-day conference is \$25.00 (price includes refreshment breaks and a Saturday luncheon). ☺