

Sophie Landt
Race in the American Church
Ministry manual

Summary:

My ministry manual research topic was to discern a biblical theology of diversity, particularly in the area of race and culture. The impulse behind choosing this topic was a sense that the Bible does have something to say to us about diversity, especially among God's people, and I wanted to get a clearer understanding of what the Bible does say in this regard and be able to summarize the points more easily. Yet beyond seeking information, I chose to do research in this area in order to answer the question of why Christians ought to care about racial and cultural diversity. The answers I found to this question are, first, because it seems to be something God cares about and, second, because we have a multicultural faith. Additionally, it is important to gain an accurate understanding of what the Bible really says because Scripture has been used to perpetuate injustice in matters related to race and culture. In doing my research I discovered that there is material on this topic available for those who are interested and go looking for it, yet this topic is not commonly found in general biblical or theological works; there is a significant silence on issues of race, culture, and diversity from White churches and academia.

Of the materials I reviewed, there were several frequently occurring key points which provide us with a biblical theology of diversity. It seems that a theology of diversity is the best way to phrase the issue because race is a recent concept not used in biblical times and so to apply race to the Bible is to read our own context back into the text. Cultural diversity, on the other hand, was present and assumed throughout Scripture. However, we can assume that discussions of cultural diversity, in our context, also apply to our concept of race, and the Bible, historically and presently, is commonly used to talk about race.

The basis of a theology of diversity is that throughout the entire Bible, God is consistently concerned for and works to redeem people from all nations and cultures. Beginning with Godself, we see in Scripture and the doctrine of the Trinity that there is unity and diversity in the Triune God. This aspect of God is also visible in creation which has diversity not only in terms of the vast number of created things but in each person who is made in the image of God. God's plan for diversity is evident when God commands humans to fill the earth and this commandment is enforced at Babel when the people are dispersed speaking different languages. Problems arising from a multitude of languages and cultures are not the fault of diversity itself but are a tragic effect of Sin which damages human relationships. This fallout from the Fall is remedied in the work of Jesus Christ who redeems the world and reconciles us to God and to each other in the Christian community, the body of Christ. It is precisely because we are united to Christ that we are called to be a united community which we may experience now but which we wait in faith to fully experience in the realized reign of God. However, unity does not equal uniformity; it is not that diversity is to be done away with but only that it no longer becomes problematic for communion. This is seen at Pentecost and in some of the experiences of the early church, although from the beginning the church struggled and continues to struggle living out unity and diversity. Yet Scripture's vision of our ultimate destiny, as foreshadowed in the book of Revelation, attests that God's mission to be racially and culturally inclusive remains and will be realized.

Therefore, we can see from Scripture that both unity and diversity are part of God's plan and calling for the church and this theology of diversity has implications for those who claim to be Christian. Christians are to be a reconciled and reconciling community, attentive not only to our relationship with God but with our fellow humans as well. If we are in Christ we live with the reality that Christ has broken down the barriers between people at all levels and within the body of Christ there are to be no divisions. This biblical call for unity clearly and forcefully counters racism and any other forms of cultural injustice that are part of our world. A Christian reading of Scripture must also include diversity and be a

plural reading with voices sharing from every part of the global and historical Christian community. And, this theology of diversity calls us to specific tasks like sharing the gospel with all people, initiating contact with those who are different from us, hospitality, love of the stranger, and reconciliation. Addressing issues of unity and diversity is not optional for Christians but is fundamental to our very identity.

Annotated Bibliography:

Campbell, Cynthia M. "Of Every Race and People." In *Shaping Beloved Community: Multicultural Theological Education*, eds. David V. Esterline and Ogbu U. Kalu, 101-112. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.

As a theological educator at McCormick Theological Seminary writing to others who are involved in theological education, Campbell's basic assumptions are that Christianity today is a multicultural faith and that there are both biblical and theological foundations that should lead us to embrace this multiculturalism. In reading the Bible, it is clear that diversity is a given because there are many nations, peoples, and cultures incorporated into the narrative. Further, God's promises are not only for the Jews but "Christian faith and community are open to all people from all cultures" and that cultural differences do not restrict creating a new, diverse community (103). Campbell makes the theological arguments that diversity is part of God's creation as all are created in the image of God and God is God of all people, all of whom are welcome to receive the gospel. Also, unity in Christ does not mean uniformity or erasing of cultural differences, only that these cease to be problematic for relationships. Finally, the author argues that embracing the multicultural nature of Christianity, which has adherents from nearly every nation and culture, is not a passing movement but is essential in theological education and in the church.

Christian Reformed Church in North America. *God's Diverse and Unified Family*. Study committee report. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Reformed Church in North America, 1996.

This report from the Christian Reformed Church in North America gives a brief history of racial and ethnic diversity in the denomination as well as biblical and theological principles related to such diversity. The authoring committee put forth this report in part because it recognizes the need to be increasingly aware of diversity in and out of the church. After studying Scripture the authors discerned the foundational statement of the biblical message on this topic is: To be in Christ is to be reconciled with one another as a community of racially and ethnically diverse people of God (8). Expounding on this, the study organizes the Bible's perspective as creation, fall, new creation. Although diversity is a good part of creation, after the Fall, an effect of sin is the breakdown of community and relationships. However, the work of Jesus Christ brings about unity and reconciliation. Therefore, Christians who find their identity in Christ are to work for racial reconciliation living in the hope that the reconciliation of all things will one day be realized. Giving a thorough yet straightforward portrayal of what Scripture says in regard to diversity, particularly in the church, this report helpfully states much of the information common to all of these sources in a way accessible to many in the church.

Hays, J. Daniel. *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

A Baptist biblical scholar, Hays' work is an attempt to correct the reality that there is almost total silence in White evangelical congregations and academia regarding the issue of race and what the Bible says about it. In this book, Hays looks at how Scripture has a general bearing on a biblical theology of race and particularly at texts that speak to the situation of Black/White relationships in the American church by way of speaking about the role of Black Africans in Scripture. The author's approach "follows standard historical-critical method, based on evangelical presuppositions regarding the nature of the Bible," but also identifies some of the cultural lenses we use to read Scripture in our context (21). Hays writes about the ethnic historical contexts of the Old and New Testaments as well as relevant texts in each which relate to race. Finally the author provides a synthesis, concluding that diversity and unity are in the plan of God, and challenges White Christians in particular to "embrace a theology and practice of racial equality and unity that is based on Scripture," (206). This source provides a more in depth analysis of what several other sources summarize but emphasizes more clearly the role of Black Africans in Scripture, particularly from the perspective of a biblical scholar.

Hiebert, Theodore. "Babel: Babble or Blueprint? Calvin, Cultural Diversity, and the Interpretation of Genesis 11:1-9." In *Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity II*, eds. Wallace M Alston Jr. and Michael Welker, 127-145. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007.

Writing for those in the Reformed community of faith, biblical scholar Theodore Hiebert examines traditional Jewish and Christian interpretations of Genesis 11:1-9, the story of Babel and the subsequent dispersion of the people, as well as some contemporary readings of the text and their implications for thinking about cultural diversity. Historically, this text has been interpreted by the Rabbinic tradition, Augustine, and Martin Luther in such a way that concludes that diversity, beginning with diversity of language, is tied to wickedness, specifically as punishment for the pride that prompted the building of the tower. John Calvin mostly follows this line of interpretation but suggests some divine responses to diversity, the main one being the gospel which leads to unity in faith. A contemporary reading of this text suggests that the problem at Babel was desiring a single culture which was in conflict with God's plan for cultural diversity. This interpretation, Hiebert argues, is more helpful in the North American Reformed community but in the context of the Reformed community recovering from apartheid in South Africa which has understood God's desire for diversity as a basis for segregation, it may be more helpful to emphasize unity as God's intention though it has been interfered with by pride.

Kang, S. Steve. "The Bible and the Communion of Saints: a Churchly Plural Reading of Scripture." In *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity, and Christian Faith*, eds. Robert J. Priest and Alvaro L. Nieves, 223-242. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

In this academic essay, Professor S. Steve Kang, makes the case that "God is seen continually at work to gather all his people in Jesus Christ under his rule," from throughout time and around the globe, and so a Christian reading of Scripture must include the participation and voices of all those who will be gathered to God (236). Given that the church, God's people, is made up of those from every tongue, tribe, and nation, an authentic reading of Scripture must be a plural reading, meaning it must include a diversity of voices. Kang suggests that there are not an endless number of meanings in the text but that

in order to arrive at a single correct meaning we need a multicultural interpretation, which includes the voices of the saints of the past as well as voices from diverse global and social locations. Especially because in Western theology Western white males' experience of God's relationship with humanity has been understood as normative, it is important to listen to "voices from the margin," such as womanist, Hispanic, Native American, and Korean American voices, who are able to offer a critique of the dominant perspective as well as share their own perspective. The reality of the diverse community of God's people should be the basis of the churchly plural reading of Scripture.

McKenzie, Steven L. *All God's Children: A Biblical Critique of Racism*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.

Professor Steven McKenzie notes in his book that race as a concept is not an issue in the Bible but the Bible is often an issue when talking about race because historically and presently the Bible has been used to perpetuate racist ideas and practices. This work is meant to counteract this use of the Bible and demonstrate that the Bible studied in context reveals "God's plan for humanity as a call for unity among all people and that, therefore, forcefully counters racism" (viii). Written with a lay audience in mind, this book is meant to prompt thought and discussion about racism within religious communities and the Bible's role in how we think about race. Each chapter of the book focuses on a biblical theme, examining a number of specific texts, taken either from the Old or New Testament and also relates the theme to the Black civil rights movement. Yet McKenzie notes that although the examples are from a specific context, the biblical principles presented in this book apply to any context in which racism is found. For those who look to the Bible for guidance, this book makes clear that the Bible calls for unity in our religious communities which have potential to overcome racism.

Parrett, Gary A. and S. Steve Kang. "Lord of the Nations." In *A Many Colored Kingdom*, ed. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett, 51-62. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004.

This essay briefly surveys the Bible in order to show that throughout Scripture, from Genesis to Revelations, God consistently is concerned for and works to redeem people from all nations or cultures of the earth. The authors claim that all people and, by extension, cultures have good, having been made in the image of God, and bad, as a result of the Fall. Still, it was God's intention that humans fill the earth and later, at Babel, God forced dispersion. As a result of dispersion, physical and cultural differences developed but this should have occurred anyway if people had followed the instruction to fill the earth. In the gospels it is evident that God desires to save the whole world and the work of Christ reconciles us with God and with one another, breaking down the dividing wall of hostility between people. Therefore, during the time before Christ's return, the church is to carry out the ministry of reconciliation and proclaim the gospel for all peoples, languages, and lands. Although the church has struggled to learn to live together from the beginning, it is something to strive for because being one in Christ doesn't do away with differences but does mean that all have equal value and standing in the community of faith. This essay shows that there is abundant evidence in Scripture to show that God desires and calls the church to be multicultural.

Parrett, Gary A. "The Wondrous Cross and the Broken Wall." In *A Many Colored Kingdom*, eds. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett, 63-78. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004.

Beginning with the understanding that, "the testimony of the biblical texts is clear and convincing: God loves the people of the world and calls us to do the same," Gary Parrett examines a number of Biblical texts in detail to illustrate how they inform the call of Christians to live out unity and diversity in the church. A basic tenant of this chapter is that God, through Christ, has reconciled those who believe to Godself and further has broken down divisions between people on all levels. Yet rather than focusing on specific cultural groups mentioned in Scripture, Parrett discerns from various texts characteristics that Christians are called to live into such as taking the initiative to go to others, hospitality, love of the stranger, and being intentional about seeking reconciliation. By examining Scripture and asking questions, the author prompts Christians to think about their own context and how they might live in a biblical and faithful way in their relationships and interactions with others with the ultimate goal of experiencing unity and diversity in the body of Christ. This is an essay that presents not only a theology of diversity but some guidance as to what kind of people we ought to be in order to live out such a theology.

Tienou, Tite. "The Samaritans: a Biblical-Theological Mirror for Understanding Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Identity?" In *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity, and Christian Faith*, eds. Robert J. Priest and Alvaro L. Nieves, 211-222. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Tite Tienou, academic dean at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, argues that while teaching on Jewish/Samaritan relations has often been used to encourage racial reconciliation, racial classifications are inappropriately applied to the Samaritans. Despite frequent classification, by scholars and Christians generally, of the Samaritans as half-breeds or an inferior race, these are biblically unfounded labels. There were no notions of race until fairly recently in our history and so to apply the concept of race to Samaritans or other groups described in the Bible is reading our own context into Scripture inappropriately and unhelpfully. The clear divisions between Jews and Samaritans were primarily religious and not racial or even ancestral and Jewish disparagement of Samaritans had to do with who they worshipped. So, while the Biblical passages pertaining to Jews and Samaritans may be used to teach reconciliation generally, they have nothing to do with race and Christians perpetuate the unfounded concept of race by continuing to apply it to Samaritans. This chapter does not specifically make a case for diversity or reconciliation but does demonstrate how the concept of race and our present experience is unsuitably applied to Scripture rather than allowing Scripture to speak to our own experience.

Woodley, Randy. *Living in Color: Embracing God's Passion for Diversity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2001.

Written from the minority perspective of a Native American minister and leader, this book looks at Scripture to see how God gives us identity in a multicultural world. Based on the premise that "we are a unity and a diversity, designed to serve and honor one another in relational oneness," the author makes an argument for a biblical model for racial reconciliation and healing among all people (13). Organized in three main parts, understanding diversity, opposition to diversity, and restoration through diversity, Woodley addresses a number of themes and topics, some from particular Scripture passages

and others from contemporary culture. This accessible resource is less biblical and scholarly and more narrative and experiential, providing an example of how the Bible and faith relate to the topics of race and diversity in everyday life. Offering biblical, theological, cultural, and practical insight, this book celebrates diversity and how people of faith might participate in God's vision and interaction with people from every culture.

Annotated Resource list:

The website of the Reformed Church in America, while not providing a biblical theology of diversity, does offer a number of resources that may be used by individuals and congregations concerned about issues of diversity. Based on the website, it appears that the RCA does not have a position paper on either race or diversity and I could not find an official statement of belief on these topics in the content of the website. Under the "Beliefs" tab is a link to the Belhar Confession study guide which contains a statement on race and diversity within it. However, the Belhar Confession has only been provisionally accepted as a statement of belief in the RCA. There is a "Multiracial Ministries" page which offers resources related to multiculturalism and tools congregations may be able to use. This page, created by the RCA's Multiracial Congregational Team, has links to such things as multiracial stories, assessment tools, PowerPoint presentations on racism, and updates from the Coordinator of Multiracial Ministries and Social Justice for the RCA. The RCA's website is www.rca.org.

On the website of the Presbyterian Church (USA), it was initially difficult to find anything specifically related to race or diversity but after some searching there are a number of pages that talk about these issues and multiculturalism in the church. One of the webpages of note was the Racial Justice and Advocacy page which has a number of items regarding race and are specifically about combating racism. There is also a page for the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns and a page on Reparations which include statements about why the PC(USA) is concerned about and committed to racial justice. The PC(USA) publication "Facing Racism: A Vision of the Beloved Community," is a multiple page statement which includes a theology of race and diversity and also focuses on how the church may be so as to face racism and follow biblical guidance with regard to diversity. The PC(USA) also commends the Belhar Confession. It seems that there are a number of pages and resources within their website that are not necessarily obvious at first but are easily found by exploring or using the search feature. The website of the PC(USA) is www.pcusa.org.

Clearly stated on their website as the goal of the World Council of Churches is ecumenical Christian unity. The World Council of Churches obviously has diversity in terms of worldwide church membership and so has as the focus of their organization unity in diversity and diversity in unity, the major themes presented in most theologies of diversity in the church. In talking about ecclesiology the WCC emphasizes and calls the Church to embody visible unity and to be a reconciled and reconciling community. While there were no clear statements about race or a theology of diversity in that sense in a prominent place, upon searching the website it was evident that these topics related to race and cultural diversity are addressed in a number of links to pages which include a large variety of subjects. It seems that for this organization it is not necessary to have a separate statement about cultural diversity but that various members and aspects of the organization recognize the significance and implications of race and diversity in a wide array of aspects of church life. The website for the World Council of Churches is www.oikoumene.org.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has on their website a page dedicated to the denominations social statements and on this page is a link to their statement on race, ethnicity, and culture. Their statement, "Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture," is a rather extensive statement which provided an explanation of the background for approaching these topics as well as specific ways the church is called to respond to issues of race, ethnicity, and culture in our context. First, the statement outlines who and how the church is to be in regard to diversity, namely unified in Christ, and the biblical and theological bases for this assumption. In addition, the statement addresses other aspects of the discussion on race in the church such as obstacles churches face, confronting racism, and doing justice through public witness, service, and advocacy. Beyond this statement there did not seem to be any other place on the ELCA website dedicated to the topics of race or diversity. The ELCA website is www.elca.org.

On the United Church of Christ website, there is not a place that specifically presents a theology of race or cultural diversity. However, the motto and foundational premise of the UCC in a sense applies to this topic. A call for unity and diversity is a foundational value for the UCC as is evidenced in all the statements on the website related to the identity, history, and basis of this group of churches. The history and makeup of the UCC shows that a number of congregations from a variety of cultures are part of this denomination and the UCC identifies itself as a multiracial and multicultural church. Mention of people of all races being accepted in the church is in the UCC's basic statement of belief, which is notable compared to the other denominations' websites I have looked at which do not mention race or culture in their statement of belief except on specific statement pages. That the UCC claims not to emphasize specific positions on points of doctrine may account for the lack of a theological statement on this topic but it may also be assumed that this type of diversity is a given and does not necessitate a presentation of their position. The website of the United Church of Christ is www.ucc.org.

Site Visit summary:

For my site visit I went to Hope Community Church which is a non-denominational congregation in Ypsilanti, Michigan. This small church has a worship attendance of about 60 individuals on a Sunday and of those there are a couple of black families, a few Asian individuals, and a few Hispanic individuals, while the rest are Caucasian. While this is not a large amount of diversity, it seems to be substantial compared to many of the other congregations in the area which tend to be more monocultural.

Of these minorities, individuals have come to be a part of the church through a variety of means. Some of them have come to this church through the same means as anyone might, namely evangelism or visiting the church. Some had previous relationships with church members and came after being invited. Others began to attend after marrying a White church member. Also, there are a few international students who attend as a result of the congregations outreach to international students at Eastern Michigan University.

One thing I noticed about this congregation is that although there is diversity, it does not seem to be of much significance. There was nothing I noticed to suggest a celebration of diversity or

difference or different cultures. It was as if race did not exist. Another thing was that there did not appear to be any minorities in prominent leadership positions. A black man was the greeter/usher but all the other leadership was white. I'm told that the greeter is also an elder and that a couple of the minority individuals lead small groups but I did not see anyone but whites in leadership during worship.

What strikes me about this congregation is that they are more multicultural than many, yet there does not seem to be any intentional push for diversity. The church is very intentional about being welcoming to everyone and they seem to be very successful at this as they are a small church and are very friendly toward visitors. They are also active in doing evangelism in their community. This may have an impact on their demographics because their community is significantly more diverse than a place like Holland, Michigan. Because the church does not meet in a church building, evangelism is done in a variety of locations which may account for people from different ethnic groups finding their way to the church. Also, those who have jobs or attend public schools are more likely to have relationships with those of a different race who they might invite to church. So, this church would seem to suggest that you can have diversity without thinking or caring much about race or race issues but further time and analysis might reveal further or more accurate insight.

Interview summaries:

For this interview I talked with my friend, who is a 24 year old, Hispanic school teacher. She has grown up attending and still attends a small, Hispanic Pentecostal Church where her father serves as the pastor. Those who attend this church are Hispanic and the language used in worship services and most activities is Spanish, with the exception of some children's/youth activities where the languages spoken are English and Spanish.

My friend's experience of race in the church in her own church is primarily homogeneous, which is in large part due to language barriers. When visiting other churches in the area, my friend noted that there are some characteristic cultural differences she notices but she feels she is responded to differently in different congregations. Some congregations are very welcoming while in others no one says anything to her. While this may or may not be how church members respond to all visitors, she noted she is "unsure" if how people respond to her has anything to do with her race. She noted that when she is greeted in a very friendly manner sometimes it appears others are "trying too hard" to be welcoming because she is of a different race. In general, she said, because the church is divided by race it is hard to know how to respond to visitors in your own church or when you are visiting other churches. Dinah said that if visitors of another race came to her church she would be unsure how to respond because she would wonder why they were there, especially if they didn't speak Spanish. My friend also observed that while she would be able to attend another church and feel relatively comfortable, her Grandmother would not because she only speaks Spanish.

Within my friend's own church, race is not often talked about and when it is, it is usually the topic of conversation for a small group of people. She says that it can be "touchy" bringing up race or language issues with the older generation because they are happy with their way of doing things. In

contrast, the youth are not very concerned about issues of race either (at least in the church) because “they’re in a bubble” and “they don’t know any other way of church.” However, because most of the youth primarily speak English, they do typical youth group type activities with youth from other (non-Spanish speaking) churches.

When race is talked about, it is regarding how church members could go into the community to let others know about their church. Yet because it is a Spanish speaking congregation, it is assumed that only Spanish speakers would want to go there and so outreach is done in neighborhoods where Spanish speakers are the primary population. When this church does do things with other churches it is most often with other Spanish speaking churches or other minority churches.

Regarding how her own faith influences how she thinks about race, she said, “it gives me a clear picture of how open and willing to reach out Jesus is to EVERYONE. He isn’t discriminatory based on race/language/ age/ etc...” She says that her faith impacts her view of how she personally ought to interact with people and how others ought to also, following Jesus’ example. Beyond that, she said she had not considered specifically how her reading of the Bible influenced what she thought about race in the church; she has simply been formed by her experience.

I interviewed my great-aunt Evangeline about her experience of race in the church. Vangie is an American born Chinese person who has spent her life in the Phoenix, Arizona area. Her first experience of church was when she was five years old and a Southern Baptist missionary couple started a Chinese mission church which met in the building of a white congregation. The services were mainly for children because most of the adults ran restaurants or business that were open on Sundays but parents were happy to have their children go and socialize with other Chinese children. Most of the Chinese families were from the same region in China and so they “maintained a Chinese village mentality” which happened to correspond well with the Southern Baptist church.

Now Vangie attends a Non-denominational Chinese Community church which has services in English and Mandarin. Vangie attends the English service which is attended mostly by American born Chinese. Others who attend this service are Caucasian women who have adopted Chinese girls and want them to be exposed to their own culture, Caucasian men who have married a Chinese/Asian woman, and a few South Eastern Asian women who are not Chinese. The Mandarin speaking congregation is about three times larger than the English speaking congregation and the two are really distinct congregations that don’t mix often.

Vangie told me that issues of diversity are talked about at her church often. An example of this is that her pastor just finished an eight week series on the differences between Chinese and American culture, especially to benefit those in Asian/American marriages. There are also discussions about the differences between Mainland Chinese, Taiwan Chinese, and American Chinese cultures, expectations, and behaviors. She also noted that the pastors (of the English and Mandarin congregations) do things differently because of cultural differences. Regarding diversity beyond Chinese cultures, Vangie said that the few Caucasians who attend usually have some connection to someone Chinese, like a child or spouse, but there are also a few who are “there specifically to try to meet a Chinese person with whom to have a relationship.” For others, she thinks it would be “off putting” to attend a Chinese church and be the minority there.

When visiting other churches, Vangie has had a variety of experiences. At a large mega-church near her home she felt very unwelcomed (she didn’t know if this was just because of her) and didn’t notice non-Whites. At another small church near her home the people were friendly and there were a few Asian women present and people talked to her. A church that she really likes visiting is the church her son attends in California which is about half Japanese, half Chinese, with some Blacks and

some Whites. This church, she says, is very friendly and intentional about being diverse and doing things such as reading, "Divided by Faith."

In terms of how her own faith impacts how she thinks about race in the church Vangie said that she sees Jesus as intentionally reaching out to those who were typically rejected or "untouchable" and was very welcoming of everyone, not hindered by societal or cultural "rules". Vangie says she wonders about the need for ethnic churches and suggest that they can be good for immigrants as a place to feel comfortable but "as time passes, it would seem that the more American they become, they would 'graduate' to a more diverse looking church." However, this is not how she observes things happening. Vangie says she believes Christians are "ONE family of many colors" but understands the desire to retain one's cultural heritage as well.