



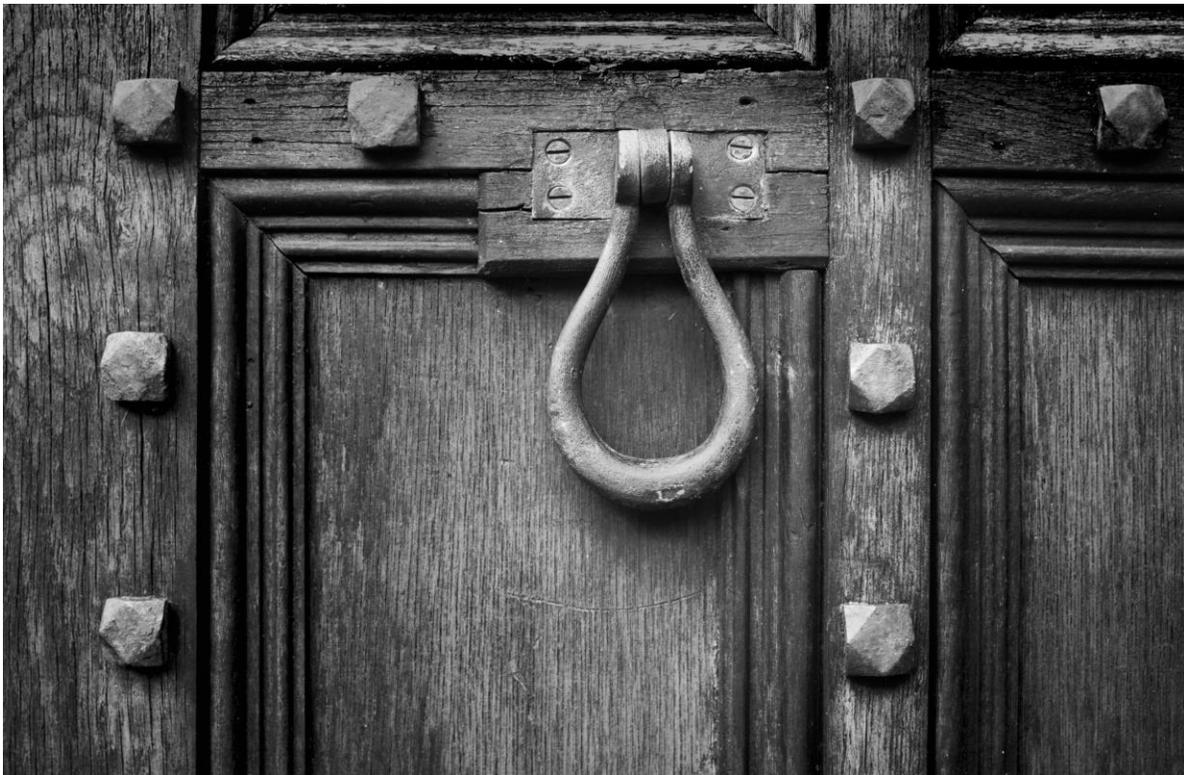
GCORR

General Commission on Religion and Race

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Learning from Strangers

Joys and Challenges of
of Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Ministry
in the United Methodist Church



G. Derrick Hodge

First Edition for Pastors and Laity

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RELIGION & RACE

General Commission on Religion and Race

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THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Message from the General Secretary

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR). We are proud to present to you: *Learning from Strangers: Joys and Challenges of Cross Racial Cross Cultural Ministry in The United Methodist Church*.

We are excited to provide this resource on the subject of Cross Racial Cross Cultural (CR or CC) Appointment and Ministry at this time in the life of our church and society. We are living in a time when the need for lay and clergy leaders, who are able to embrace – and learn from – those who are different, is vitally important. The good news is that I believe more and more annual conferences and local churches understand this fact and are seeking support to live into the fullness of what it means to be the Beloved Community. Learning from Strangers is one of the ways that GCORR is offering that support.

This manual highlights the on-the-ground experiences of clergy and laity currently serving in CR or CC settings. It is intended to provide insight about the perspectives and experiences of these leaders so that more intentional and systemic steps can be taken to increase the joy and decrease the preventable challenges of these ministries. You will find that this book is not a “How to” manual on CR or CC appointment and ministry, but rather an invitation to think and dialogue more deeply about the unique nature of ministry in a cross cultural contexts. We hope that pastors and laity will discuss the themes of this book in an effort to build stronger relationships and engage in more vital ministry.

GCORR offers it prayers and encouragement to all who work faithfully to build the peaceable realm in our midst, who love unconditionally and who strive to serve across lines of difference. We support you and pray God's blessings on you and your ministries.

In Christ,



Erin Hawkins
General Secretary

Acknowledgements

Although only one person compiled the data and wrote the following manual, the wisdom and experience represented comes from many different voices. The General Commission on Religion and Race extends thanks to the many dozens of bishops, district superintendents, clergy, and lay leaders who shared their stories, frustrations, and triumphs with us. We are especially indebted to the following conferences that hosted site visits:

Central Texas Annual Conference
Florida Annual Conference
North Texas Annual Conference
Northern Illinois Annual Conference

GCORR's Team Leader for Program Ministries, Reverend Giovanni Arroyo, was an enormous help throughout the research project and writing; this manual could not have come together without his support. For the quantitative survey that concluded our research project, GCORR benefitted greatly from the experience and expertise of our Research Intern, doctoral candidate Joshua Tuttle. Other members of GCORR's staff also contributed in various ways to the completion of this manual: Maurita Bowie, Reverend Amy Stapleton, Reverend Michelle Ledder, Catherine Payling, and Jeehye Pak. It was the vision and commitment of the General Secretary, Erin Hawkins, that enabled this manual to be created.

An early draft of the manual was read by a group of faithful United Methodists who critically read and commented on it. Their insights improved the final version a great deal. They are:

Mr. Vincent Gonzales
Reverend Dr. Claude King

Ms. Marian McCray
Reverend William Obalil

Finally, anyone who reads this manual is indebted to the many unnamed faithful Christians, of all ethnicities, ages, and classes, whose continuing struggles to live together in (and into) the Reign allows United Methodist communities to experiment, sometimes falter, and sometimes succeed. This manual is dedicated to the hope that one day soon, we can all respect and revere difference of every sort and to learn from it, without trying to silence it, find a least common denominator, or turn difference into tokenism.

This version of the Best Practices Manual is the first edition, which is a draft for beta testing. We ask you to read and use this material, distribute as you see fit, and share your experiences with us. The manual is based on real, lived, on-the-ground experience of pastors, laity, and cabinets. It can only be improved and updated if readers are willing to share their critical comments. Send your thoughts, ideas, or critiques to: research@gcorr.org.

Preface

This resource is the result of an 18-month research study conducted by the General Commission on Religion and Race. From the early planning stages, we had three foundational goals in mind. First, as we traveled the country having consultations with cabinets and bishops, we learned that there is a great need and desire for help in understanding the complexities of CR or CC ministries. We wanted to create something useful that could be understood and used by folks at various levels of the connection.

Second, it was the vision of GCORR's General Secretary, Erin Hawkins, that any resources we create be firmly rooted in a formal research process, using the best methods and analyses of social science. The theological justification is clear, the need is there, and there are thousands of experiences around the country that might be useful to share. But to make it accessible, meaningful, and actionable, that experience had to be mined, organized, analyzed, and then translated for various audiences.

Third, we knew that the research had to explore actual, on-the-ground experience of ministry in the United Methodist Church. Thus, this manual does not summarize the vast literature on multicultural engagement in Christian congregations, nor does it engage in theological debate, nor does it rehash the two fine volumes already in existence regarding CR or CC ministry in the church.¹ Rather, the ideas and suggestions that follow were discerned through interviews with cabinets, pastors in CR or CC settings, and laity in those same congregations. What follows is not the *opinion* of the General Commission on Religion and Race, but the *actual experience* of United Methodists as they work in their communities to make disciples and transform the world.

One final comment before we begin: this manual is but the first draft of a *working document*. Earlier versions were submitted for critical review to diverse United Methodists, lay and clergy, who contributed their perspectives and sensitivities. They identified ways that the singular social location of the manual's author could be expanded and enhanced. We hope that this process will continue: our vision is not only that the manual will be used and useful, but also that it will generate dialogue within and between the levels of the connection. This dialogue may discern new ideas and new approaches. Users might have alternate experiences to offer that require a nuancing of the manual's ideas.

Thus, the continuing vitality of this manual depends upon the on-going participation of its users. This is only the first edition – look for new editions, annually, at gcorr.org/crcc. Our hope is that in five or ten years, although the volume may have new content, it will be just as vital and useful, and the in the process of revising and creating new content, users will be inspired to create even more effective and faithful strategies. To offer comments and suggestions, write to GCORR's Director of Research at research@gcorr.org.

May the Holy Spirit guide the reading, writing, interpretation, and use of this document!

¹ We direct the reader to: Dharmaraj, Dharmaraj, and Lyght, *Many Faces, One Church: A Manual for Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Ministry* (Abingdon: 2006) and Lucia McSpadden, *Meeting God at the Boundaries: Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural clergy Appointments* (United Methodist Church: 2003).

Executive Summary

1. The Faith Imperative. Both scriptural imperatives and the Wesleyan tradition urge the church to actively support – and even encourage the expansion of – cross-racial and cross-cultural ministries. More resources need to be devoted to identifying present and future sites of CR or CC ministries, and in the preparation and support of them. Recommendations for cabinets and for the Council of Bishops are included in the companion resource “Learning from Strangers: Best Practices for Conferences in Nurturing Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Ministries.”
2. The Source of Information. The General Commission on Religion and Race has mined the experience of a diverse cross-section of clergy and laity who currently serve in cross-racial/cross-cultural settings. This local experience indicates unique challenges and frustrations, ideas for how to overcome them, and the significant joys of CR or CC ministry.
3. Joys and Benefits. Most pastors currently serving in CR or CC settings indicate that there is great joy in their ministries, and that they choose to continue in CR or CC settings. Clergy identify the potential for spiritual transformation of congregations, and potential for enhancement of their own ministry skills, as primary benefits. Other benefits are also strongly indicated.
4. Career Considerations. The majority of clergy who participated in the research feel called and especially skilled in CR or CC ministries, and they indicate a hope that their next appointments are also to CR or CC settings. There is very little indication that clergy feel pigeonholed as CR or CC pastors or stuck in their careers. Most clergy state that they have been well-served by the appointment process and are satisfied with their particular district superintendent, but there are significant differences from one conference to the next. The clergy who express career dissatisfaction and lack of support are concentrated in a handful of conferences; thus, career dissatisfaction is not a universal experience.
5. Challenges and Frustrations. The primary frustration expressed by clergy are:
 - a. loneliness and isolation;
 - b. worship style of the congregation does not nurture the pastor;
 - c. different relational norms that make meaningful interactions more difficult;
 - d. lack of cabinet understanding of the unique needs of CR or CC ministry;
 - e. lack of conference support for solving conflicts and doing outreach;
 - f. subtle or overt racism on the part of laity; and
 - g. complaints that sermons are not understandable, if the pastors' first languages are not those of the congregations' they serve.
6. Lay Frustrations. The primary frustrations expressed by laity are:
 - a. disagreements with clergy over appropriate level of formality and use of titles;
 - b. disagreements with clergy over norms of authority and power-sharing; and
 - c. the belief that some cabinets and some clergy prioritize clergy careers over local needs (“careerism”).

7. Implications: Geographically and Ethnicity Specificity. Complaints of racism are highly variable according to ethnicity; that is, Black clergy (including Africans, African-Americans, African-Caribbeans) perceive racism more often and more sharply than do clergy of other ethnicities. South Asian clergy most often have language difficulties. White clergy serving congregations of color complain of lack of resources from the conference, and of racism by the congregation. Latino clergy are most often the recipients of xenophobic projections. Levels of support are highly different from one conference to the next, as are the satisfaction levels of clergy of color. In short, the challenges and frustrations experienced by laity and clergy are highly dependent upon both geography and ethnicity.

8. Implications: Programmatic Interventions. Thus, it may not be helpful to talk about the needs of CR or CC ministry, or to plan programmatic interventions, that assume a homogeneity, as if the needs of one ethnicity in a west-coast conference, for instance, are similar to those of a different ethnicity in the other side of the country. Despite this fact, the data from local experience can be distilled into several common themes, even if the solutions are contextually unique:
 - a. There is a significant need for much more training at the local level. Pastors, lay leadership, and district superintendents agree that training cabinets alone is not likely to solve the problems of CR or CC ministries at the local level;
 - b. There is an urgent need to conferences to re-evaluate priorities in order to give more time to preparing CR or CC sites in the future, preventing misunderstandings that then require enormous DS time to solve, and in establishing local networks of clergy for mutual advise, sport, and language help.
 - c. In the meantime, local congregations and clergy could facilitate CR or CC ministries with a few simple steps:
 - i. Both laity and clergy need to work against the assumption that they share the same relational norms, expectations about power-sharing, and comfort with informality. Frank and unembarrassed dialogue in the beginning of a pastorate would do much to facilitate successful ministry.
 - ii. One topic for such discussions should be the possibility (or likelihood) of racism. Laity should be given the freedom and safety to share their feelings without judgement. Clergy of color who have successfully ministered in the midst of racism report that patience and tolerance – but not passivity or permissiveness -- are the most helpful approaches.
 - iii. Pastors ministering in CR or CC settings are encouraged to exercise patience and tolerance, but not to subordinate themselves to the congregation's norms and expectations, or be inauthentic. Many pastors report that this is their strategy, but doing so brings with it a great emotional cost, and robs the congregation of the potential to be transformed. Clergy are urged to *not* avoid the discomfort that can be the touchstone of growth. Clergy and laity *share* the responsibility to change and grow.
 - d. All these recommendations draw attention to the need to focus ministry on the building of *relationships*. In fact, relationships, many clergy say, are not only a means but also the goal of ministry, and in CR or CC settings, relationship=
=building are even more difficult but all the more urgent.

Chapter One: Strangers Bearing Gifts

Christ the Stranger

Even the most casual reader of the Scriptures can't help but notice that 'strangers' appear quite frequently, often knocking on a door. Throughout the history of God's people, as told in both Hebrew and Greek texts, the stranger is a frequent presence. A messenger. A teacher. A migrant in need. Maybe even an angel.

The stranger in the scriptures is a brother or sister in need of hospitality, often in need of the most basic food and shelter required to stay alive. We in the Christian church are accustomed to interpreting the stranger as an image that commands us to provide hospitality, giving us an opportunity to serve. Jesus was a migrant and stranger, and He commanded us to serve 'the least of these, my people' as if we were serving Jesus Himself. Our care for the homeless and the immigrant are therefore faithful responses to the scriptural image of the stranger, faithful ways to contribute to the building of the Reign of God, to 'prepare the way in the desert.'

But the arrival of the stranger gives us much more than an opportunity to practice mercy and to obediently serve the least of these. Theologian Arthur Sutherland argues that hospitality is in fact the core of Christian theology. Summarizing his work, the editors of Abingdon Press wrote that:²

Arthur Sutherland places before us our fear of meeting the "other" and the "stranger" in an increasingly global, and frequently dangerous, village.... Hospitality is not simply the practice of a virtue but is integral to the very nature of Christianity's position toward God, self, and the world—it is at the very center of what it means to be a Christian and to think theologically.

The opportunity to serve the stranger is, therefore, part of the divine logic of transformation, both personal and social. Further, as theologian Rowen Williams argues, "In Jesus we meet God not as someone safe and familiar, but as a stranger."³ Further, "Because Christ's life is catholic and unbounded, he [sic] is never fully absorbed by any particular human context. He is both 'native' and 'stranger' to all social locations."⁴ If the church

² Editors (2006) Rear cover of Arthur Sutherland's *I Was A Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

³ Benjamin Myers (2012) *Christ the Stranger: The Theology of Rowan Williams*. New York: Bloomsbury. P34.

⁴ Ibid 64.

sees Christ as a stranger, and if hospitality is part of God's economy of salvation, then it follows that deep and holy hospitality *is* reconciliation; *it is the healing of ruptures*.

The Stranger as Teacher

But we shouldn't stop there. The scriptural stranger is seldom merely a passive recipient of charitable ministry. More often, the stranger is a messenger from God, with a mission to help God's people figure out how they have been going astray, and how to find their way back to their divine home. Consider the strangers who showed up at the gate of Sodom. They were not only messengers of God, but also agents of God's work. And not least, they were *teachers* of God, agents who taught Lot about God's justice and God's mercy.

In the Greek scriptures, too, angels/messengers/agents of God are not uncommon, and they play an important role in helping to guide God's people to the path of righteousness and reconciliation. Angel/teachers announced and facilitated both the birth of Jesus and the resurrection of the Christ. They *taught* the apostles, first the women and then the men, about God's plan for reconciliation and transformation of their broken world. According to *Acts*, God appeared a number of times to the apostles and disciples to comfort, guide, and *teach* them about the God that they could only know in part. By teaching them, they also caused them to act, which means that they caused them to change their world. So the teaching of God is never just an intellectual exercise; it is a mechanism for the work of God. The teaching of God is active and causal, and is an extension of God's own presence.

The agents of the teaching/doing were all strangers, of course, because only a stranger could stand outside the social norms of any particular community, and show it what it could not see. It takes a stranger to point out that there is another way to live, another kind of relationships with each other and with God. Like a fish in water, we are not even aware that water exists, much less that we live in it. It takes something outside the fish bowl to teach us that there is a universe of air outside the bowl. It takes a stranger to teach us that there is another way to be faithful to the God of creation.

It Takes a Stranger

Theologically speaking, then, the stranger is much more than she may seem at first glance; she is a vital minister of God's love and reconciliation. We normally learn from, and receive nurture from, those who share our experience. Members of our own communities who speak our language and reflect our own ideas back to us. A stranger is someone who emerges from an altogether different time or place – or who has been among us, but whose experience has not been valued or even heard, like the strangers in our midst. Because of this, she is not a product of the social pressures that nudge people in one direction or another. She is not bound by the prejudices and expectations that are normal in each particular community of people. She is able to see that we are in water, and to call it what it is. In short, the stranger is an excellent teacher of God. She shares with us the way that God is experienced in her place, among her people. She tells

stories of reconciliation, renewal, and rebirth in ways that we would never have imagined. She teaches us the way that her people interpret the scriptures, and the ways that her experience has manifest the love of God.

This challenges the limitations of our faith. It challenges the social norms that, before she came, we did not even know existed. Her new experiences of God force us to re-examine things we thought were self-evident. Her witness deepens our faith and calls us into renewed relationships with God. And if our relationship to God is renewed and refreshed, then so is our relationships to each other, to people near and far, to the whole of God's creation. And the opposite happens, as well: our testimony enriches the life of the stranger, and she is renewed as a result of having been with us. God uses the stranger to teach us and we teach the stranger, emerging from the encounter just a bit closer to that human ideal toward which we are called to march.

None of which would have happened had the stranger not appeared at the city gate or knocked on the church doors. In other words, it takes a stranger to invite us to knock down the barriers that separate us, and to see that there is a whole new world of Christian experience that we had not even known existed.

Christians as Strangers to Each Other

The pastor is that stranger, someone new who has been sent in order to teach the congregation new ways of understanding the gospel and our call. Someone has come to teach us something, and to learn from us as well. When a new pastor arrives, he is a stranger to the people of the congregation, and they to him. All new pastors are strangers to a congregation – and vice versa – so with each new pastor there is a potential for teaching and learning and, therefore, of transformation.

Experience is the lens through which people view and interpret the wonders of God. So when a congregation comes face-to-face with a pastor whose lived experience is significantly different, then a new understanding of God might be at hand. The pastor may bring with her different lived experiences, a nuanced way of understanding the scriptures, a new lens on the gospel. When a congregation encounters a pastor who brings a different lens, then it encounters an angel from God who has something new to teach, if only people are ready to hear willing to be changed.

What kind of strangers are we talking about, anyway? What kind of 'difference' do we mean? Just what qualifies as a "cross-racial" or "cross-cultural" appointment? In this manual and in common church usage, "cross-racial" is almost always followed by "cross-cultural." Sometimes they are even used interchangeably, but there is a danger to this: they do not have the same meaning and should not be conflated. Race and culture are not the same thing, so it is important to understand the distinctions in order to faithfully and fruitfully talk about CR or CC ministry.

A *cross-racial* appointment is one in which a majority of the congregation looks physically different than the pastor, in terms of *phenotype* – those elements of outer appearance that our society has come to associate with 'race.' Biologically, of course, the distinction between "races" simply does not exist; there is sometimes more biological diversity *within*

a so-called “race” than there is *between* “races.” Further, at the level of genotype, *all* human beings – be they from Asia, Europe, Africa, or the Americas – contain *all* of the biological diversity that God created and placed in Africa at the beginning of humanity. So we need to understand race not as a set of biological facts, but as a social idea that has, historically, served the purpose of organizing and justifying inequality. In this manual and in GCORR, when we talk about ‘race’ we refer to the social experiences of those groups whose outward appearance has caused them to be seen as different and separate. “Race” does not refer to national origin, language, immigration status, or even history, but only to the physical differences that are used to separate us. The term ‘cross-racial’ thus refers to ministry in which the outward appearance of the majority of a congregation’s laity represent a different racial category than does its pastor.

Race is a social category that was invented in the seventeenth century as a justification for colonial capitalism and slavery. Although race is not biologically real, it is a powerful force that continues to influence social relationships. In the context of anti-racism ministries, it is important to use the word ‘race’ to describe the social belief in it and its institutional embodiments, but not the actual people who are believed to be different.

The term ‘cross-cultural’ has a much broader range of meanings. In this manual and in the General Commission on Religion and Race, ‘culture’ is understood as that core part of identity and experience that provides a unique perspective on God’s work in the world

Culture is a learned set of beliefs, practices, values, and norms that emerge from the material, lived experience of groups of people and their ancestors. Culture interprets the world and determines worldview, relational patterns, neural-emotional responses, ways of conceiving the self and others, communication, and the like. Culture is like a pair of glasses that interprets what we see, but it cannot be taken off or put on from one day to the next. It is an intergenerational and fundamental core of identity that usually operates beneath the level of conscious awareness.

and on our Christian responsibilities. Culture includes historical, geographical, and economic difference, and these are what determine our worldview – rather than the biological differences that are labeled “race.”

People reared in rural Idaho, for instance, might be said to be of a different ‘culture’ than someone from Boston, for instance. Coal miners from Appalachia have a different ‘culture’ than college professors from the east coast. A first-generation immigrant (one who was born outside the United States) certainly has a different ‘culture’ than a third-generation immigrant (one who was born in the United States and whose parents were also born here). It could even be said that a 22-year-old has a different ‘culture’ than his grandparents; thus, if a 22 year old clergy arrives to pastor a congregation of retirees, that appointment might properly be labeled ‘cross-cultural.’ Certainly this is true of a third-generation immigrant pastoring a congregation of older, first-generation immigrants, even if they have the same country of origin. The nature of such differences could be biological, cultural, or experiential; but whatever their source, Christians are called to see differences as opportunities for richer ministry, rather than as barriers to it.

Thus, cross-racial and cross-cultural are not the same thing, though we often use them in tandem. One pastor serving in a CR or CC settings put it his way: “Differing skin color

doesn't always mean that a cross-cultural appointment exists; 'cross-cultural' and 'cross-racial' don't mean the same thing." She is absolutely right. Any appointment is potentially "cross-cultural" because of the many differences between groups of people, even of the same "race": class, (dis)ability, marital status, national origin, language of choice, theological perspective, and geography (urban/rural, north/south, east coast/west coast). All of these characteristics can cause cultural misunderstandings significant enough to impede vital ministry, if left unattended.

It is also true that race is not the same as culture. Two persons of the same racial identity could have grown up in very different circumstances, and have different ways of seeing the world and God. And persons of different 'races' who were reared in similar circumstances might have very similar 'cultures.' Generally, 'cross-cultural' is the broader term, because it encompasses race and other kinds of difference. 'Cross-racial' refers specifically to physically manifested differences in *phenotype* – outward appearance – that have historically been interpreted as indicators of different capacities, social statuses, and even different relationships to God.

Strangers and Ministry

In Protestant theology, all Christians, not only clergy, are ministers of the gospel. Clergy learn from congregations they serve. If members have a significantly different lived experience – such as would be caused by differences in nationality, ethnicity, race, class, geography, political and theological orientation, physical ability and the like – then the congregation is the messenger of God, the stranger, who could teach the pastor. United Methodist theology, as discerned and debated in seminaries, annual conferences, and General Conference, has repeatedly reaffirmed this understanding: the gospel of Jesus Christ is the story of crossing boundaries and barriers, in search of a better relationship to God. This is a core of Wesleyanism.

The only problem is that – in the scriptures and in the church – strangers are often not recognized for the angels that they are. And even if Christians do see the potential for transformation and are open to it, there is the problem of translation: how can a new and unique understanding of God be shared with people whose lived context is so different? Myriad barriers might interfere with the transformative potential of ministry across lines of difference. Because of both sin and well-intentioned error, the differences that God intends to be a source of new wisdom, become barriers to it.

This, then is the challenge: to find ways to overcome those barriers, in order to unleash the transformative potential of cross-racial and cross-cultural pastoral appointments. The difficulties might seem substantial, but the rewards are vast. We hope that the following chapters will be useful as Christians continue to learn how to live, witness, and serve as one very diverse people of God.

Chapter Two: To the Clergy

To understand how to support cross-racial and cross-cultural ministries in the United Methodist Church, the General Commission on Religion and Race engaged in an 18-month national research study. During this time we hosted focus groups and interviews scores of cabinets, pastors, and laity about their frustrations, successes, and recommendations. In the final stage of the project, to confirm and quantify what we learned in those conversations, we invited 1,700 pastors currently serving in CR or CC settings to participate in an anonymous survey. Four hundred responded – a very large response rate for a survey of this type.⁵

This chapter summarizes what we learned from the clergy in all stages of the research, and what those learnings might mean for pastors serving local ministries. We begin by describing the several joys of CR or CC ministry, and what motivates so many pastors to remain in CR or CC settings, despite the challenges. The following sections describe the common themes we discerned as we heard pastors talk about their frustrations and challenges. There are significant barriers to vital and sustainable ministry across lines of difference, but as the pastors tell us, they pale in comparison to the opportunity for mutual transformation for which CR or CC ministry is so well suited.

In short, there is no barrier so high or so wide – even something like entrenched racism – that faithful ministry cannot overcome. We have been assured that on the other side of those barriers is the joy that comes from holy transformations. That joy comes to clergy who faithfully attend to their own self-care, even while accepting the costs of discipleship; who proactively seek the help they need from colleagues, mentors, and cabinets; who respond to resistance non-defensively; who constantly seek to learn as much as to teach, expanding their skills and nurturing their curiosity; and who strive above all to be in *right relation* with their lay partners in ministry.

In fact, if we are faithful in all these endeavors, then the transformation is not only promised to us, but it has already happened. We need only the wisdom and courage to overcome the challenges of resistance and our own uncertainties.

⁵ For a description of how this list was compiled, and the limitations of the methodology, see the methodological appendix in Chapter Six.

The Joys and Rewards of Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Ministries

One of the questions in our large-scale anonymous survey listed ten joys and benefits of CR or CC ministries that we heard as we interviewed clergy across the country. The question asked the participating pastors to indicate which five were most important to them, or to add a new joy/benefit. The chart below indicates the benefits chosen most often.

The results confirmed the theological insights described in the last chapter. The most often chosen benefit was that “congregations would be exposed to new experiences of God that emerge from different lived experiences.” Based on their on-the-ground experience (as opposed to theological reflections, the pastors identified that a CR or CC appointment (including both clergy and laity) is a way that people can be brought into new and renewed relationship with God. The unique experience embodied by a pastor from a different part of the country or world, who speaks an unknown language or was reared in a different way – whatever its source, unique experience is the “stranger” that God sends to bring communities into a new level of spiritual life.

The five most-often identified joys and benefits of CR or CC ministry, according to clergy currently serving in CR or CC settings

1. Congregations could be exposed to new experiences of God that emerge from different lived experiences.
2. Congregations could become more relevant in their neighborhood, reaching new communities of people.
3. Clergy persons could be stretched to learn new skills related to communication, diplomacy, self-care, and openness.
4. Old prejudices and institutional segregations could be challenged and new multi-voiced communities could emerge.
5. The congregation could become more energized and creative by the arrival of a different pastor that brings it out of its rut.

Note that the second most often chosen joy/benefit was that clergy, too, would be stretched and learn new ministry skills; the benefit is not unidirectional. Later in the survey, we asked the same question in a different way; 76% of the pastors confirmed that “opportunity to stretch and grow my skills” was one of the top five congregational characteristics that would make their next appointment a happy one. These findings therefore points unequivocally to the fact that both clergy and congregations benefit enormously from being in CR or CC sites, despite the challenging aspects. Thus, the data make quite clear that CR or CC appointments are golden opportunities to enhance the church’s

ministry, rather than last resorts to be discussed at the end of the appointment-making process.

In addition to the ten joys and benefits we listed, we gave pastors the opportunity to add a comment or to add in a benefit that we had not anticipated. Here are a few of their answers:

- "I *prefer* multi-racial and multi-cultural ministry!"
- "I feel called to CR or CC appointments, so I am right where I belong and want to stay."
- "I have been blessed by CR or CC ministry and feel it has helped me to grow spiritually."
- "I am learning how to be in ministry to people who are different from me right now."
- "My cross racial appointment was quite rewarding."
- "I have the skill to "cross racial barriers", one of the gifts I have been given. I have always been appointed to a CC/CR congregation and enjoy it."
- "I believe God gave me the ability to relate cross-culturally."
- "I have had a beautiful experience working with Anglos being a young, recently graduated Hispanic minister."
- "As a second career pastor, my training, knowledge, skills and abilities have brought me to [a place in which] I am very comfortable in cross-racial appointments."

This all sounds pretty wonderful, and it is. But real grace, real transformation, does not come cheaply. Cross-racial and cross-cultural ministry is about discipleship, and discipleship costs. A number of pastors were unable to identify their five greatest challenges; they wrote that they had experienced none of the difficulties we had predicted. But this was a minority – most pastors serving in CR or CC settings did have obstacles to overcome before they could hear the Holy Spirit say "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

"Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ."

"Costly grace confronts us as a gracious call to follow Jesus, it comes as a word of forgiveness to the broken spirit and the contrite heart. It is costly because it compels a man to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him; it is grace because Jesus says: 'My yoke is easy and my burden is light.'"

Dietrich Bonhöffer,
The Cost of Discipleship

The “Cost of Discipleship”

Clergy who serve in CR or CC settings do face several challenges related both to resistance on the part of laity, and their own developmental/spiritual growth. Common difficulties that impede the effectiveness of CR or CC ministry are, among others, related to racial history and racism, conference appointment-making procedures, authenticity and assimilation, loneliness and isolation, and the urgent need for more training. From their perspective, lay leaders identify lack of training, language problems, and clergy careerism as frequent barriers to effective CR or CC ministry.

Conversations with clergy serving in CR or CC settings enabled us to discern a list of the frustrations and challenges that they most commonly face. We then wrote this list into the survey in order to either confirm, complicate, or expand it. Clergy were asked to identify which five challenges are most difficulty for them in their ministries. The complete text of each option is below:

- 1 . Some members of the congregation, or some systems established in the church, are either subtly or overtly racist.
- 2 . My tradition teaches a model of power-sharing in which the pastor is looked to as a strong leader and is given much autonomy, but this congregation has a history of strong lay leadership, so members question my decisions. Or, vice-versa, I want to nurture strong lay leaders, but the congregation looks to me as a the sole authority.
- 3 . I am not personally nurtured by the worship style that my laity prefer. When I experiment with new worship elements, people complain.
- 4 . Some members of the congregation, or some systems established in the church, are either subtly or overtly racist.
- 5 . I am not personally nurtured by the worship style that my laity prefer. When I experiment with new worship elements, people complain.
- 6 . The conference or district does not seem to understand the particular issues and needs related to CR or CC ministry or to my own ethnicity. I do not feel adequately supported by the cabinet.
- 7 . I feel alone and isolated, without my preferred community around me to support me.
- 8 . I do not have the time or resources I need in order to do outreach and grow the church.
- 9 . Church members have different relational norms that those I grew up with. It is very difficult for me to have relaxed but meaningful social interactions with the laity.
- 10 . According to my social and religious tradition, I should be addressed as "Reverend" or "Doctor," but people here want to call me by my first name. That feels

very odd and disrespectful to me, but they seem offended if I ask them to call me by my title.

- 11 . I doubt that my career will advance while I am here; this place feels like a dead end with little potential for demonstrating my abilities to the cabinet.
- 12 . Some people complain that they cannot understand my sermons because of my accent.

When we analyzed the results of the survey, we noticed that the same challenges and frustrations, with some exceptions, recur for all ethnicities. But the frequency of their appearance, and the unique interpretations and experiences of them, are different. This indicates that the different ethnicities either experience different challenges, or that they perceive and interpret them differently. It is also likely that – taking into account differences in individual personalities – pastors of each ethnicity are differentially sensitive to the challenges, and interpret them differently.

For example, most White clergy report that they experience racism from congregations of color they serve. But the type of racism, its emotional impact, and possible remedies, will be very different for White pastors serving congregations of color than for, say, Black pastors serving White or Asian congregations. These diverse experiences of racism are because of racial history in the United States, but also because of different interpretations of social cues, and different understandings of what race is and how it works.

With these provisos in mind, below is a chart that lists the challenges and frustrations that were included in the top-five list by the most clergy:

Black, African-American, African Diaspora:

- 1 . Subtle or overt racism
- 2 . Clergy and lay power-sharing
- 3 . Not nurtured by worship style
- 4 . The conference does not seem to understand
- 5 . Isolation and loneliness

East Asian:

- 1 . Subtle or overt racism
- 2 . Different relational norms impede meaningful interactions with laity
- 3 . Isolation and loneliness
- 4 . Problems with language proficiency or accents
- 5 . The conference does not seem to understand

Latino, Latina, Latin American:

- 1 . Subtle or overt racism
- 2 . No time or resources to do outreach and grow the church
- 3 . Clergy and lay power-sharing
- 4 . The conference does not seem to understand
- 5 . Different relational norms impede meaningful interactions with laity

Native or Indigenous [all of these are tied in importance]

- 1 . The conference does not seem to understand
- 2 . Clergy and lay power-sharing
- 3 . Subtle or overt racism
- 4 . Not nurtured by worship style
- 5 . No time or resources to do outreach and grow the church

Multi-Racial or Mixed

- 1 . Subtle or overt racism
- 2 . Different relational norms impede meaningful interactions with laity
- 3 . Not nurtured by worship style
- 4 . Clergy and lay power-sharing
- 5 . Isolation and loneliness

Pacific Islander

- 1 . Subtle or overt racism
- 2 . Different relational norms impede meaningful interactions with laity
- 3 . Not nurtured by worship style
- 4 . Clergy and lay power-sharing
- 5 . Isolation and loneliness

South Asian [the first two and the last two are tied in importance]

- 1 . Clergy and lay power-sharing
- 2 . Problems with language proficiency or accents
- 3 . Subtle or overt racism
- 4 . Not nurtured by worship style
- 5 . Different relational norms impede meaningful interactions with laity

White

- 1 . No time or resources to do outreach and grow the church
- 2 . Subtle or overt racism
- 3 . Different relational norms impede meaningful interactions with laity
- 4 . Not nurtured by worship style
- 5 . The conference does not seem to understand

To interpret this data correctly, we must resist the urge to read it as if the ideas and terms mean the same thing to everyone; the way that any one survey-taker or reader understands a term like “relational norms” cannot be assumed to be the same for the next pastors taking the survey, or the next reader of this manual. Further, events in the life of a congregation are interpreted differently by each group and even by many individuals, so we cannot glance at the list and think we know about the experiences of another ethnicity.

For example: it may be that a particular manifestation of lay resistance – say, members giving the pastor the cold shoulder during coffee hour – is interpreted as racism by one group of pastors, whereas the same resistance may be interpreted as nostalgia by another group. Although nostalgia and racism may be closely related in some contexts, they are not the same thing, and hence they require different responses. If pastors of one ethnicity have been accustomed to interpreting lay resistance according to a singular

framework, then the frequency and seriousness of that problem might seem far greater than it would, if the same events were interpreted by pastors of a different group. At the same time, pastors representing a different ethnic group might tend to minimize (or even not notice) one of the challenges, which would cause an underreporting of its seriousness.

Programmatically, this means that no strategy to solve problems and support CR or CC ministry should be uniformly applied to "CR or CC pastors" who are assumed to face similar problems and have similar support needs. Because of history, geography, and language, each ethnicity tends to face different challenges and frustrations. Further, there are significant differences in attitudes, resources, and lay resistance from one conference to the next. Therefore, support for clergy serving in CR or CC settings needs to avoid the temptation of generalizing or of finding the least common denominator.

Finally, quantitative data from the survey should not be interpreted simplistically, because it is very unlikely that the diverse clergy who completed the survey use and interpret certain words similarly. For instance, each ethnic group and the individuals within them have rather different experiences of race and racism, so when they encountered the phrase "subtle or overt racism" in the survey, different images and feelings surely came to mind. For instance, clergy of an Asian heritage, for instance, probably interpreted "subtle or overt racism" rather differently than did clergy from a Latin American or African-American heritage.

Despite these complexities, we can discern several themes common among clergy serving CR or CC settings. We urge clergy to be aware of the possibility that these challenges may emerge, and to pro-actively seek support in overcoming each of them. Our hope is that the way we have articulated the challenges and frustrations will help clergy seek the support they need. The following sections discuss the challenges and frustrations most frequently cited by pastors: racism, different relational norms, loneliness, expectations of formality and respect, negotiating power-sharing, and self-care.

Race and Racism

Some United Methodists say that the church has overcome racism, that it only exists in certain small pockets, and even there it is on the decline. Christians with that belief are surely good and well-intentioned people, who do believe that racism is evil but that it really is a thing of the past. Perhaps they are speaking aspirationally, hoping to wish away all forms of bigotry. But we know, of course, that Christians are not exempt from the influences of secular society, and racism is not gone from within the church.

Most pastors who serving in CR or CC settings report that they have experienced some form of racism in their current congregations. In fact, when given a list of potential barriers

to ministry, racism was a barrier that most pastors stated was one of their top five frustrations. Black pastors⁶ report that racism is a major frustration for them more often than any other clergy ethnicity. The table below displays the frequency with which pastors placed “subtle or overt racism” in the list of five most frequently experienced challenges to ministry:

Ethnicity	# of pastors of each ethnicity who placed racism in the top 5 lists.	% of all pastors of each ethnicity who placed racism in the top 5 lists.	Rank of racism, as compared to other frustrations and challenges.
Black or AA	108	72	First
East Asian	32	45	First
Latina/Latino	24	60	First
Native	4	44	Third
Pacific Island	4	50	First
South Asian	5	50	Third
White	25	47	Second
Multi/Mixed	12	60	First

Racism is powerfully diffused into every aspect of social life in the United States, and Americans of all races carry within them racial ideologies, often unawares. Because of this diffusion, all pastors are very likely to be the recipient of racial projections at various times in their ministries.

Race as proxy. Because race-based attitudes and stereotypes are so common in our social world, race has been and continues to be used as a proxy for all manner of social tensions. “Race” is like a social code that many of us use to interpret events and others’ behavior. For instance, if a group of laity decide that they reject a new pastor’s theology or social skills, they may rely upon a racial trope to justify or give form to their distaste. As one African–American DCM told us, “race is the go-to thing” as a quick explanation for conflict; it is a facile explanation for complex and complicated interpersonal tensions that may not be primarily rooted in race.

For this reason, it can be difficult indeed to discern and identify racism, and to distinguish it from other forms of social angst. A pastor might enter a new CR or CC setting and perceive resistance that might be about race, or it might have a different source. Below is a brief list of some of the other motivations for resistance to a new CR or CC ministry, based on interviews with clergy and laity:

⁶ Following the standard categories used by the Census Bureau and by the General Commission on Finance and Administration, “Black” refers to Africans and members of the African diaspora. Thus, the category includes African-Americans, African-Caribbeans, and people born in Africa. We recognize the limitations of this categorical system, but it does have analytical advantages, and anyway coherence to a standard classificatory system allows the church to compare itself to national and global demographic trends.

- **Fear of the unknown.** Never having had, say, a female pastor or an Asian pastor (if the congregation is not Asian), people may not know what the future holds for the church. There may be some concern that numbers will drop, tithing will decrease, or the church will be perceived differently in the community. In this case, racism is intermingled with generalized fear for the survival of the congregation.
- **Nostalgia for the past.** Older or multi-generational members who grew up in that church may pine for the glorious old days, when the pews were filled and the congregation was a center of local social and political activity. Nostalgia is also a sadness for the loss of grandparents and aunts and uncles. Members may see the CR or CC pastor as an embodiment of changing times, changing neighborhood, and changing church. Resistance to the new pastor might be misinterpreted as racism, or may actually contain some racism mixed with the nostalgia. It is difficult indeed to disentangle and discern the sources of resistance to a new CR or CC appointment.
- **Loss of identity.** An element of nostalgia is a memory of way things used to be, and the faces that used to be in the pews. Those may have been the years in which a particular ethnicity of European immigrants was making a home in the area, so nostalgia get mixed-up with ethnic pride. People have accepted the changing neighborhood as inevitable, and they may even have moved to a different area. But the church of their childhood – that must not change. It has always been, for instance, a bastion of Ukrainian culture and celebration of that identity. A new pastor, whose heritage is from a different part of the world altogether, threatens the sense of purpose and identity.
- **Expectations Based on Stereotypes.** People who have positive feelings about a different race or ethnicity may nonetheless have come to believe certain stereotypes. For instance, an African American pastor told about his entry into a White congregation. People were glad to have him and welcomed him, but a few people expressed disappointment after his first sermon; they had expected charismatic preaching with call and response and singsong. Not having experienced Black pastoral leadership before, they held certain beliefs based on stereotypes, but these were not negative in the same way that blatant racism is.
- **Fear of Economic Insecurity.** Working-class fear of job loss fuels much anti-immigrant sentiment. 'They' are coming to take 'our' jobs, many people are made to believe, and the steady decline in wages and benefits for the working class give credence to fear. This is particularly relevant for pastors from Latin America; no matter how long they have been in the United States, fear causes people to treat them all with the same suspicion and contempt. Xenophobia – fear of and contempt for 'outsiders,' such as Latin American immigrants – can look very much like racism, and can even become racism under certain circumstances. But its source is not the same as the racism against, say, African Americans. Thus, the pastoral response must be different. It is difficult to tease apart racism and xenophobia, but it is important not to lump them together in either analysis or response.

Belief that Black is bad. Although all groups of pastors reported that they perceived racism against them in their ministries, it is particularly acute for Black pastors serving congregations of other ethnicities. The reasons for this are consistent with the rest of American society outside the church: the particularly brutality unleashed on Black communities historically and even today, and the unique role of the trope of Blackness in constructing class inequality in the United States.

One of the lasting consequences of this history, still deep in our culture, is the association of blackness with inferiority. This insidious form of racism has to do with an evaluation (perhaps even only semi-conscious) that Black is either bad or inferior. Even people who do not perceive themselves to be racist nonetheless may believe that others are, so they base their evaluative judgements on that assumption.

If a small congregation has been diminishing in numbers and financial security over the years, and a new Black pastor arrives, members may fear that the bishop plans to close the congregation permanently. The feeling seems to be that a dying church would not receive the best pastors in the conference, and the assumption is that a pastor of color is somehow second-rate, in the eyes of the cabinet. So the laity may interpret a new Black pastor's arrival as the death knell of the congregation. This could also be true if an older (White) pastor arrives, one who appears to be near retirement. Laity may perceive that their congregation is the last stop in the pastor's career and that he doesn't have much left in him. This small and poor church has to settle for him.

Similarly, a congregation may believe that it is being punished by the DS, whom people feel must be annoyed with them. A Black pastor told us that when he arrived at his small, White congregation, members assumed that by being assigned a Black pastor, the church was being punished, *and* that he was being punished by being assigned to a small, dying congregation! This is evidence not only of a racist belief that clergy of color are somehow second class or less desirable, but also is evidence of an enormous disconnect between conferences and congregations, such that laity think of themselves in opposition to cabinets that are out to punish or limit them.

Thus, laity may assign various *meanings* to the arrival of a pastor who represents some difference, and these meanings have nothing whatever to do with the clergy person. Fear for the future of the congregation gets intermingled with stereotyping and invidious racism. One pastoral response would be to reassure the laity that they are not being punished, that the pastor wants to be there and will work with them to continue faithful ministry, and that she has no plans to turn the church into something different.

Ministering in the midst of racism. How best should a new pastor respond to racisms, subtle or overt? This cannot be prescribed universally; each minister must determine for herself how to engage pastorally in the face of race-based hostility, after conversations with her mentor, DS, colleagues, and/or spiritual adviser. What we can do is share the experience of one pastor, who seems to have found a way to engage with racist members pastorally, without losing his self-respect and without relinquishing opportunities to teach.

The following is the transcript of a focus-group conversation between Reverend King, an African-American male pastor, and Reverend Hertz, an Asian-American female pastor, both from the North Central jurisdiction, and both pastors of older White congregations.

They first discussed language, accent, and expectations. Reverend King described the expectations of a Black preacher when he first arrived at one of his prior CR or CC sites.

When I began to talk they were waiting and especially when I got up to preach. They wanted to know whether I was going to start hooping and breaking into call and response. Some of them asked 'why don't you preach like that?' or 'we want you to be Black.' I said, 'Well, you're not talking about being Black, you're talking about being stereotypical Black. Whatever I do is Black; whoever I am, that's Black. But you're speaking about my cadence in speaking, the language I use, and how I preach – is it coming from the Black tradition that you [expected].'

The pastor's response to these expectations was to treat them lightly, and gradually educate his congregation. In another part of the conversation, Reverend Hertzell described the xenophobia that she heard when she arrived at her CR or CC site.

I got blatant outbursts saying, "We don't want Hispanics here! We don't want to worship with illegals! We're not learning Spanish! Illegals are criminals." ...That was my first week. It took me back, and I thought, 'where is all this coming from?' It took some time to explore; a lot of it is fear of the unknown. That's what it keeps coming back to.

What I learned, and what I did, was a lot of *listening*, understanding that across the board there is humanity in everyone. There's vulnerability and fear. So I just did a lot of listening.

[Then] I started integrating teaching, little by little. Preaching was definitely predominantly teaching. ...I introduced various cultures and social justice issues. [The congregation] had been very isolated, self-caring and self-supporting, and in survival mode. So they had forgotten about our mission to care for the world. I started bringing news about what's happening in the neighborhood...[we began to help the homeless in the neighborhood]. [So I gradually] tried to pry open their eyes.

So Reverend Hertzell responded to vicious xenophobia by understanding their fear, listening to them without judgement, and having reminding herself about their humanity. Through preaching she reawakened their sense of Christian mission, so they began to open their eyes to the suffering of others. This, gradually, reduced their tendency to verbally attack Latino immigrants. It took her over a year of patience and tolerance to begin to see the fruits of her ministry, in the form of transformed members.

Next, Reverend King explained how he handled subtle racism in his new charge.

My church has been all-White from its inception in early 1960s. I was their first pastor of color. ... I did feel a sense of fear, that because I was there the congregation would immediately begin to change over to Black. I said, 'I'm not here to turn the congregation to all-Black membership; I'm here to invite in all of the folks in the neighborhood. That will mean Black people will come, Asian people will come. I want to reach out to Whites too.'

I began to have conversations with them and listen to them, giving them the opportunity [to speak frankly]. I don't want them to feel like they can't say it. I want them to say it. I actually want to hear [their fears and stereotypes]. They are probably afraid to say it, but in listening to them and getting to know them, I ferret it out. They will bring it, the more comfortable they feel with me.

This kind of approach will not work with every pastor; some people might be inclined to be more aggressive in challenging stereotypes and racist attitudes. To be successful this approach requires a strong sense of self, so as not to become personally offended, and self-control, so as not to respond with anger or judgement. For Reverend King, his approach worked very well indeed:

The fear is still there. The neighborhood is changing and they see it. They wonder where they will be [in the future.] [They tell] stories about how it used to be and 'how many people we had in here', 'look at all the old pictures'. 'Here's what we're used to, this is what it was. We didn't have enough seats in the sanctuary to take them all. Easter was packed.' I hear them and I celebrate that and I say, 'But we still have lots of people around in the neighborhood. Let's not focus on whether they're racially different or 'illegal'; let's see what we can do to love them.

That opens conversation. 'What should we do?' I said, 'We should love them.' 'But how do we show love [to those kinds of people]?' Just tell me what you feel and just let it out and then we'll talk about it. I try not to do a lot of judging, I want to hear what they say first and then try to open them up to [a new way of feeling about other people].

Thus, we could summarize in four words the advice of these two pastors, when confronted with racism and xenophobia:

Patience	Tolerance
Non-Judgementalism	Teaching

The majority of CR or CC pastors agree: 74% included the following statement in their advice to clergy entering into their first CR or CC site: "Be true to your own identity, but also be careful around other people's vulnerabilities and fears." This does not mean that people should tolerate racism; rather, Pastors Hertzell and King would say, it is the mission of the clergy to teach the children of God how to reject sin and be transformed.

More agreement with this general principle comes from the CR or CC pastors who completed the anonymous survey. Consider these suggestions:

- "Figure out why people are afraid of what's different about you, and move forward step by step."
- "Be genuine, and love people for whom they are. Don't be afraid to speak truth about hard issues, including those related to race and culture."
- "Speak openly and honestly about culture, racism, and cross-cultural communication and action."

- “Assuage initial fears that the conference has sent you to cause the church to serve another ethnic group.”
- “Love the people. [Even the racists.]”

Loneliness and Isolation

This problem is not uncommon, particularly among those pastors who are members of geographically specific communities. For instance, imagine a United Methodist pastor who was born in Haiti and thus speaks Kreyol as his first language. Caribbean restaurants and specialized grocery stores are in a particular neighborhood in the city, which is also where he is surrounded by others who speak Kreyol. Ways of walking, chatting, socializing – all the relational norms that (usually) operate beneath the level of consciousness are perfectly normal in that neighborhood.

But when he is outside his Haitian community, the “relational cost” is much higher for him, because he has to monitor what he says and every aspect of his social interactions. Further, his brain has to immediately translate non-verbal communication, like facial expressions, because gestures and expressions may not mean the same thing in Haiti as they do in other neighborhoods. Further, he feels that he has to be on guard and at his best outside his community, because his accent labels him as an immigrant, so people watch him carefully, waiting for him to make a mistake that would confirm the anti-immigrant rhetoric in the area. It is only in his Haitian neighborhood that he can truly relax.

Our fictional example grew up in a Wesleyan congregation in Haiti, and as a young adult migrated to a city in the southern part of the United States. He joined a United Methodist congregation, went to a UMC seminary, and was granted status as a provisional elder. His bishop then sent him to serve an historic Black church in an African American community in the northern part of the conference, hours away from his Haitian community.

He is excited to be at his first church, but he has the normal new-pastor stress, and he has to pay a higher relational cost just to socialize with others at the bank, barber shop, or congregation. Another problem with his first charge is that the bishop had assumed that, since he is phenotypically African and part of the African diaspora, he would fit right in to the African American congregation. This turns out to be not true at all. The laity are a product of, say, 150 years in the area, and unconsciously reflect the values, social norms, and interactional styles of Black middle-class America. This is all foreign to him, and there are awkward moments in which he commits a social snafu, unawares. He works hard to learn these foreign social norms, but it is *work* – in addition to learning how to pastor.

The most uncomfortable aspect of the appointment is the worship style to which his new congregation is accustomed. The bishop has assumed that, because Black Americans and Haitians have the same African phenotype and are part of the African diaspora, they would share worship preferences. But the new pastor gave disappointingly dull sermons, according to the laity, and the pastor was not able to sing the hymns that always used to make him feel so good. He learns to *perform* worship according to the laity’s

expectations, and they, in turn, are willing to try a few little changes here and there in the service. Nonetheless, the pastor is not nurtured by the worship style of the congregation he serves. Occasional trips to the nearest Haitian neighborhood are refreshing to him, but he has to take a few days off to do it, so he can't do this very often. Over the course of six months, he realizes that the toll on his emotional and spiritual wellbeing is quite serious.

Various elements of this scenario are not uncommon among CR or CC pastors in the United Methodist Church, particularly those were born and reared outside the United States, and those who in some other way are not nurtured by the dominant cultural forms and who therefore rely upon a geographically contained community. 23% of the polled CR or CC pastors included in their top five list: "Return to your own community in order to be nurtured and to socialize." A very significant 35% percent wrote that one of the 5 most serious problems in their setting is that "church members have different relational norms than those I grew up with. It is very difficult for me to have relaxed but meaningful social interactions with the laity." Even more, 38%, wrote that "The conference or district does not seem to understand the particular issues and needs related to CR or CC ministry or to my own ethnicity. I do not feel adequately supported by the cabinet."

"Ministering in a different culture than my own exacts a higher level of energy (emotional, spiritual, mental, physical, etc.); this is not appreciated or even understood by those of the dominant culture."

Pastor in a CR or CC Setting

Pastors in CR or CC settings are well advised to make regular and intentional plans to return to the source of their nurturance. This should be communicated to the SPRC and DS early in the appointment, and time away should be held as inviolable.

New Relationships and the Pace of Change

Many pastors, especially when they are appointed to a new and unfamiliar setting, may have an instinct to tread carefully in the beginning and to not make waves. This would be a good instinct. One of the top five recommendations made by 75% of the CR or CC pastors we polled was to wait until relationships have been established before proposing any changes, even minor ones. When laity believe that a pastor loves them and loves their church, they will be willing to go along with changes that would have otherwise provoked uproar.

Much of the Christian faith involves contradictions and paradoxes. The values of authenticity and flexibility need to be negotiated and re-negotiated.

It is also true that pastors in CR or CC settings are scrutinized even more than other clergy; laity are watching to see if the pastor will confirm their stereotypes or suspicions. The first year should be a time of getting to know people, and allowing them to get to know you.

'Getting to know' you means getting to know *all* of you – especially those parts that are unfamiliar to them. "Treading carefully in the beginning" does *not* mean that you should stifle those characteristics that are different than theirs. Experienced CR or CC pastors do not recom-

mend that you try to blend-in, fit-in, at the expense of your uniqueness. For that uniqueness is precisely what you have to offer them. It is the material with which you will offer them a change to be stretched beyond their comfort zones. It is not faithful ministry to minimize cultural uniqueness for fear of being rejected. If she minimizes those aspects that provide fodder for transformation, then she is denying the beauty of the creation and interfering with the work of the Holy Spirit.

Aside from denying the laity an opportunity to learn and grow, minimizing distinctiveness has a serious personal cost to the clergy. Emotional health requires integration of the whole self. This does not mean that all personal matters should be shared, but only that clergy should be willing, as relationships develop, to unfold their full self as a ministry to others.

For instance, imagine a Latina pastor whose cultural background includes strong connection and sense of responsibility to extended family. She enters into a setting in which the congregation consists primarily of rugged individualists who believe that people should strike out on their own at age 18, move far away to take the highest-paying job possible, and see extended family members only at Christmas and funerals. One of the many gifts that the pastor has to offer the congregation is her different relationship to family and different understanding of what it means to be an adult. That difference offers the laity a change to examine (perhaps for the first time) their own norms and practices. They could learn and be transformed, if the pastor were to tell stories about her family and how they help each other to survive, thrive, and remain faithful. Were she to stifle that central aspect of her culture, in order to 'fit in' to the dominant culture of the congregation, then she would be denying the sacredness of her relationships, and denying the possibility of transformation to her new congregation.

"As African Americans, we've always had to adjust to the dominant culture. That's nothing new. [In CR or CC ministry we] have to find the line between making adjustments and being true to yourself."

Pastor in a CR or CC Setting

So the experienced CR or CC pastors have two apparently contradictory recommendations for pastors going into a new CR or CC site: first, tread carefully until relationships are well established. Respect their insecurities and vulnerabilities, and respect their cultural heritage (even if it contains some unpleasant elements). Second, be authentic to one's

authentic identity, even if it seems incompatible with that of the majority of the congregation. Don't deny your own cultural uniqueness, and share it with your people. These are the suggestions of the current CR or CC pastors whom we met and interviewed.

The respondents to the anonymous survey confirmed that advice perfectly. Consider these quotes from the survey of pastors in CR or CC sites:

- "Just understand that people might not know your life experience. Be patient."
- "Don't pretend – just show yourself. Let them accept you as you are. And most important, be humble."
- "Give yourself permission to name your cultural differences and ask the SPRC to name the church's differences, so that you can find common ground to appreciate each other and what God is doing in the mix."
- "Be yourself."
- "Take your time! Don't only listen, but *hear* your people."

Language and Identity

The last section went to great pains to encourage pastors in CR or CC settings to think of their uniqueness as an instrument of the Holy Spirit for the transformation of lives. It is equally important for pastors to realize that it is not *they*, the clergy, that is different in some way; we could equally say that the *congregation* is different. Difference does not exist except as a relation between people or peoples. In Christian relatedness, both parties are called to authenticity, teaching/learning, and forgiveness for any error, real or imagined. In fact, we might conclude, ministry in which one side of the equation (the pastor) does all the changing in order to not upset the apple cart, is not faithful Christian ministry. To be faithful, clergy have to share who they are, including those differences that are difficult for some folks to accept. Pastors in CR or CC settings need the courage to know who they are without fear, to be who they are without apology, and to share it with the congregation, as a stranger bearing a precious gift.

But we also pointed out that authenticity should sometimes be tempered. And sometimes it is not easy to distinguish between a cultural difference that should be shared, and a personal quirk that should be addressed and, perhaps, ameliorated. In this section we address *communication*, one of those characteristics that could be either an area that the pastor needs to improve in order to minister effectively, or a cultural heritage that should be cherished and used as a learning/teaching opportunity.

But pastors who are still learning the congregation's language might view their accents as an impediment to the preaching of the Gospel. Preaching is that ministry activity in which communication difficulties are most likely to emerge. If a pastor is engaged in pastoral counseling, say, or a lay leadership committee meeting, communication is a constant back-and-forth, so both sides constantly confirms that they have understood. Further, it is much less likely that a pastor from the pulpit would be able to use facial expres-

sions to aid in understanding, since not all listeners will be close enough to detect it. Finally, it is usually only in a sermon that a pastor's voice is electrically amplified; many amplification systems distort vocal patterns to a small extent, usually unnoticeably. But for a parishioner with a hearing disability, these small distortions can easily render a sermon unintelligible. It is for these reasons that many pastors wish to improve their sermons delivery.

In our site visit to north Chicago we learned about a program in which the district superintendent arranged a (volunteer) voice coach, one of the lay leaders in the city, to conduct group and individual sessions with clergy whose first language is not English but who pastor English-speaking congregations. The coach worked with them to help them audibly recognize the ways that their particular ways of pronouncing certain English words rendered their sermons difficult to understand, from the perspective of a native English speaker. The program was voluntary, so only those pastors who wanted to improve their English pronunciation skills, chose to participate.⁷ If a language clinic is not feasible or desired, the long discussion of language in chapter three, to the laity, gives some other ways to help parishioners understand sermons.

In northern Chicago the communication difficulty was related to first-generation immigrant pastors serving English-speaking congregations. This is the case in the vast majority of CR or CC settings in the United Methodist Church. But that does not mean that communication difficulties have to do only with non-native pronunciation of English. For instance, there are also native-English speaking pastors serving Spanish-speaking congregations; whether those pastors are White or Latino, their Spanish pronunciation might need improvement

"I believe that every congregation deserves a pastor people can understand."
Pastor in a CR or CC setting

Lastly, communications barriers can certainly exist even if the pastor and the congregation fluently speak the same native language. Regional differences, local inflections, accents, dialects, and not least local expressions – all of these could produce a barrier. They carry significant social meaning. That is: these elements of communication are very highly *class determined*, which is to say that they are specific to class formation. A certain way of pronouncing a language - be it Spanish, English, or anything else – carries with it a class marker. A native speaker can listen to someone speak, and know whether that person comes from wealth or poverty, East Coast or West Coast, city or farm.

So we have arrived at a potential quandary, from the perspective of the pastors. An Appalachian accent in English or, say, a Mayan/Ladino accent in Spanish are cultural differences that communicate class and geography. As cultural artifacts, they are also a part of that uniqueness that is a precious gift to us all. But if those differences are socially

⁷ Participants in the Chicago language group were primarily those clergy with an East Asian or South Asian heritage. In the survey, too, pastors who indicated that language had been a barrier to effective ministry were, by a significant majority, Pacific Islanders, East Asians, and South Asians. These were followed, in diminishing order, by Francophone West Africans, Native Americans, and Latinos. The charts detailing this data are below.

disparaged, then to share them openly may cause some in the congregation to shut down, disconnect, or stop attending altogether. Thus, the accented pastor has a dilemma and a decision to make. To be authentic and true to one's heritage would nurture the emotional health of the pastor and help the congregation learn about that part of the world and its richness. If relationships have been established, then the accent could cause some laity, gradually, to relinquish certain class- and race-based prejudices.

But on the other hand, there is a difference between competent speakers of a language who have a regional or class accent, versus those who are learning a second language, and who struggle to find the right words during a sermon. If the pronunciation of some words is incomprehensible to some, so that it causes them to stop attending services, then a pastor might choose to invest time and energy in language study. According to Reverend Singh, one of the participants in the northern Chicago language group:

[I could take the approach that] after a while [church members] will learn to understand my accent. But I don't agree with that attitude that 'they need to learn my ways.' I have heard some pastors say that the laity have to learn somebody's culture, and be able to communicate and work with the pastor. Sometimes people will go and say 'they need to learn how I speak.' But if I can improve my accent and be a better communicator, then I have the responsibility to do that also.

Reverend Singh, whose native language is Hindi, believes it is the responsibility of the clergy to facilitate ministry with clear communication. But another pastor in a CR or CC setting describes the tension between being authentic to one's cultural heritage and being effective in ministry; this is an African American pastor whose first language is English. He feels that his credibility might be in question if he speaks English in the way that is most real and authentic to him. We quote him here extensively because his words exactly capture the dilemma of pastors in CR or CC settings.⁸

The moment my ancestors were brought to this land as captives, their native languages were beaten out of them and replaced with English, for the most part, as a way to control them. After not being taught English properly, their broken version of it was derided by most Whites [and others], and it was used as evidence of their profound lack of intelligence.

Authenticity for Black people has huge a linguistic component. If a Black clergy person speaks in ways that are totally authentic to her or his racial/cultural background, but the congregation has difficulty understanding him or her, then there is a need to *not* be so authentic in that aspect. [If I were to] speak with the type of slang and accents that I grew up with and that I use in my preaching in black churches, I would not be well understood in cross racial/cross cultural appointments. Being faithful to who I am in that way could have caused a barrier between me and the White congregants.

⁸ This quote has been redacted from a longer text. Reverend King has confirmed that the redaction has accurately reproduced his meaning.

At school and in our local churches, the style of casual speaking used by we Blacks, descended from slaves in the South, has never been accepted as a positive attribute by other non-black people in the church. I was and am now authentic in my personality, appearance, and even my quirks, but as for my language, I was and am now hard pressed to speak to the congregants authentically, like I speak casually to other Blacks. I do pray for the day when black people can speak authentically using some slang and some Ebonics without their intelligence being brought into question at the churches we serve.⁹

This pastor has laid the issue bare: the need to be authentic, both for the emotional and social health of the pastor and for the potential learning of the congregation, balanced against the need to keep congregants' minds and ears open for the painfully slow transformation that CR or CC appointments can bring. This manual does not prescribe where the balance should be struck; each pastor needs to evaluate this based on the local realities and her personal proclivities. We present this discussion not as an answer, but as an opening to a necessary dialogue for pastors, laity, and cabinets.

Self-Knowledge and Self-Care

Clinical Pastoral Education assumes that to do faithful ministry, clergy people need to engage in regular and critical self-examination, spiritual growth, and reflection of ministry practices. Effective congregational ministry is difficult, stressful, and renders clergy vulnerable to criticism. For these reasons and many others, the need for self-care, spiritual growth, and rigorous self-examination – while helpful for any clergy in any setting – becomes urgent in CR or CC settings. An unreflective congregation is spiritually dead, and an unreflective pastor is more likely to cause chaos than transformation. Thus, we cannot exhort clergy strongly enough to seek a mentor, pray and meditate, seek psychotherapy if needed, take initiative to check-in with the DS on a regular basis, keep a ministry journal or other form of systematic reflection, and leave the ministry area on occasion to return to one's own social and worship communities.

The 400 CR or CC pastors who responded to our survey chose the most important 5 pieces of advice for new CR or CC clergy, from a list of advices that we discerned throughout interviews. The most frequently chosen of these are included in the following chart.

⁹ Linguistic anthropologists have long considered AAVE – African American Vernacular English – to be a logical and coherent linguistic system, equal in creativity and systematicity to other English variants.

What would be your advice to a pastor about to enter her first CR or CC setting?		
Answer Options	Percentage of Pastors	Number of Pastors
Before arriving, find out about the history and personality of the congregation.	68%	244
Build relationships with parishioners before making changes.	67%	241
Be true to your own identity, but also be careful around other people's vulnerabilities and fears.	63%	228
Work with the SPRC to locate opportunities and needs for frank dialogue.	51%	183
Establish a network of other pastors in CR or CC appointments, for mutual support and advice.	50%	179

We also allowed respondents to write-in any additional suggestion that had not occurred to us. Several wrote about the need for self-knowledge, suggesting that, like any relationship, the CR or CC pastor/congregation pairing is a two-way street; that is, as we urge congregations to engage in rigorous self-examination and to make plans to address anything that might get in the way of faithful discipleship, clergy must do the same. Consider the following quotes from CR or CC pastors, unedited and unredacted:

- “Be prepared to deconstruct your own prejudices, misunderstandings, and preconceived ideas about people of other races/groups.”
- “Check in with your own ethnocentrism. Know thyself!”
- “Be open and transparent about your weakness.”

This is not a luxury for the benefit of those in multi-staffed churches, or those with personal assistants that free-up mental and calendar space. Rather, this is an *imperative* for any and all clergy, even those who are constantly rushed and stressed and overworked.

Knowing one's self also means knowing one's emotional and spiritual needs, and committing to meet them. One element of self-care that often goes unrecognized is the need to be nurtured during worship. In most CR or CC settings, the pastor leads a worship style other than that which nurtured him for all those years prior. To be in a CR or CC setting means that a pastor may have to sing songs that do not tug at her heart, preach differently than she enjoys hearing, to increase liturgical formality or decrease it – in short, to serve the spiritual needs of the congregation, while her own needs are unmet.

“I have adapted to a culture of worship that is very different than my own. I long to energize worship.”
Pastor of a CR or CC Setting

There are several ways that a pastor could respond to this need:

- 1 . Ignore it, pretend it isn't there, pretend that pastors don't need spiritual uplifting. (We do not recommend this alternative.)
- 2 . Plan certain weekends – say, once a month or whenever is possible – to sit in the pew of some other service whose worship is closer to that which best nurtures the clergy. This could be accomplished by a pulpit exchange or, better, by finding a service later on Sunday or on another day, thus not interfering with clergy duties. Consider these words of a pastor in Dallas: “When I can, I try to find somewhere else to worship for me... I try to make sure that I'm fed, and I'm filled with the things and the music that I like, and then I'm ready to go.”
- 3 . Teach the congregation. Gradually – and only after having established relationships of love and trust – a pastor could begin to introduce elements of his own worship tradition. A pastor from Fort Worth told us: “I preach more interactive, call and response style of preaching. They weren't [doing anything like that], so it was a growing process for them. It took some teaching...They were willing and excited. It took the boringness out of worship, and made it more engaging, and authentic.
- 4 . [We invite the reader to share with us her experiences and to offer ideas to her clergy colleagues. We will continue to grow this list as new ideas are offered.

Again, attending to a pastor's spiritual health is not just a matter of self-care; it is also a matter of self-knowledge, because it requires an honest assessment of the pastors' needs and limitations. Healthy CR or CC ministry requires a constant negotiation with the laity and with *self*. Understanding one's self, and committing to growth, is an obligation to God and to the church.

“I do think it would be helpful, once every so often, to have a Sunday when I can go away and worship somewhere else – worship in a way that feeds and nourishes *my* soul.”

Pastor of a CR or CC Setting

Authority and Formality

Tensions or even conflicts can very often develop in a CR or CC site, but no one is quite sure of the source. The pastor might one day notice a certain prickliness from the SPRC chair, but she either can't or won't articulate the cause. Or perhaps the council chair has a vague sense that the pastor is not on top of things – seems distant or disinterested – but there is nothing specific to which to point. Everyone could have a bad day, be preoccupied, or just be in a grumpy mood, but there may be consistent unpleasant buzz that cannot be specified.

At other times, there may be “no small disagreement”¹⁰ between pastor and lay leadership. Whether overt or covert, simmering or explosive, tensions/conflicts sometimes emerge and everyone involved is baffled as to their cause. It may be that there is a fundamentally different understandings about the nature of the relationship between congregation and pastor, which is to say, different understandings of power-sharing and proper spheres of influence.

The underlying problem is that most laity (and even some clergy) simply assume, without thinking about it, that everyone is on the same page in terms of the proper power-sharing relationship between clergy and laity. It would never occur to someone reared in one particular congregation, with one way of doing things, that there is any other way; their way of distributing authority is universal, at least within United Methodism. When a new pastor arrives, it seldom occurs to the lay leadership that he or she does not embrace and embody the same rules.

If a pastor begins making even small decisions without consulting the laity, then the SPRC or the church council might start to feel that their authority is eroding. They might grumble, as the people did against Moses, or there might be a knock-down drag-out (like at the Council of Jerusalem).

Less often, the opposite is the case: laity wait for the pastor to do something about this problem or that, to make a decision and take action. Meanwhile, the pastor wonders which lay leader is dropping the ball by not taking action. Or the pastor calls the lay leader to ask her what has been done and what is her plan, to which the laity respond ‘I don't know. I've been waiting for you to make that decision.’

In either case, the problem is that the lay leadership and the pastor did not, in the beginning, talk about how authority and responsibilities would be shared. It would be impossible to make a firm plan that would cover all exigencies; these sorts of different understandings may only come to light when a specific situation occurs. Clergy and laity should discuss the issue in general terms at the beginning of a pastorate, come to an agreement about how future tensions and disagreements will be addressed, and keep the lines of communication open wide.

This is much more likely to occur in CR or CC settings in which the pastor was trained in a church outside the United States, or if the pastor has emerged from a tradition whose laity has a different relationship to the pastor than in most UMC congregations.

This possible source of conflict was confirmed by our surveyed pastors. 34.9% of them reported that one of the 5 most likely problems in a CR or CC site is:

The pastor's tradition teaches a model of power-sharing in which the pastor is looked to as a strong leader and is given much autonomy, but the congregation has a history of strong lay leadership, so [laity] question the pastor's decisions.

One of the pastors wrote that the opposite scenario was a problem for him; a passive and/or lazy laity will wait around for the pastor to do things that, in other UMC congregations, are lay responsibilities:

¹⁰ This is a Biblical euphemism for a ‘knock-down drag-out’ conflict -- see Acts 15:7.

The UMC tradition teaches a model of power-sharing wherein the laity is supposed to take co-leadership with the clergy. However, the predominant group within the congregation I serve seems to operate on a much more pastor-centric model, according to which the pastor is supposed to do *everything*. This is quite frustrating, particularly because I have no staff or resources to help, and the congregation does not want to volunteer for much.

The answer to these sorts of potential conflicts is the same as the answer to many problems discussed in this manual: to talk about it. Distribution of authority should be brought out of the realm of doxa (things that are so assumed that it does not occur to anybody to need to be talked about) and into the realm of manifest dialogue.¹¹

The same is true of another common source of tension in CR or CC settings: the way to address the pastor. This is another potential difference that will not occur to the laity; for them, it is simply normal and appropriate that they address the pastor by her first name. It is their way of showing that she is one of the family, in relationship with them. But in her tradition, it would be unthinkable to use a first name; she expects to be addressed as "Rev. Dr." as a sign of respect for her office. To them, the use of titles may seem arrogant.

The issue here is not merely that people have different habits of language. Much more importantly, it is that different cultural communities assign different *meanings* to the uses of first names and titles. To most middle-class White congregations in United States Protestantism, the use of first names conveys affection and familiarity. To a pastor from a different tradition or different national heritage, the use of titles is for respect, the same way that a child is not likely to call an elder by his first name.

Again, this issue needs to be addressed plainly, in the beginning of the pastorate, with the congregation via the SPRC. And more than simply saying 'this is what I am accustomed to' or 'this is what I prefer', the pastor needs to explain to the laity what the title *means* to her, and the laity need to do the same. Sharing the various *interpretations* of those practices will more likely lead to understanding of the other, rather than to merely butting heads in a battle that someone has to lose.

Careers and Careerism

Pastors in exile? In the course of the research that produced this volume, GCORR heard stories aplenty about the struggles (and even ill-treatment) of pastors moving into new CR or CC settings. One of the concerns we heard even before the research began was that CR or CC appointments could potentially even impede clergy career development. For career-oriented clergypersons, an appointment to a CR or CC setting might be perceived as an unwanted pause in an upward career trajectory.

Such interpretations are encouraged when appointments are made to CR or CC settings that are small, unable to pay apportionments, and/or are in remote areas. Skilled clergy

¹¹ One of the CR or CC pastors suggests that the *Discipline* can be very useful in a dispute with laity. Leaning on disciplinary mandates shows laity the reasons of for certain decisions and the source of her authority. This also provides a teach opportunity those who know little about the *Discipline* or United Methodism.

appointed to such settings might feel exiled to easily forgotten sites that are not likely to attract the attention of cabinets or allow them to showcase their skills. They might feel like their careers have been stalled. Some might even wonder if their cabinets have stalled their careers intentionally.

This is possible, but, we believe, not common. Our many conversations with cabinet members and pastors during the course of the research detected no indication that appointments to CR or CC settings are a detriment to career development, are unwanted by most clergy serving CR or CC settings, or are part of a sabotage strategy. It is true that our qualitative data is only of a small sample, but the quantitative data can reasonably be generalized to represent the attitudes and experiences of most UMC clergy serving in CR or CC settings in the United States. Thus, there is some reason to be confident that most pastors do not feel that their careers have been negatively impacted.

The career challenges of clergy in CR or CC ministries are not denomination-wide or systemic, but the *solutions* to those problems are. This does not mean that they demand less action on the part of the entire connection, but rather that the nature of that action will be varied.

Instead, as we have seen, the initial data indicate that a significant majority of clergy find great satisfaction in the work, do not feel pigeonholed or exiled, and do not wish to move away from CR or CC ministry. The pastors do indeed identify problems, and there are a number of ways in which conferences could make positive changes to better support them. But these problems and proposed changes do not indicate a significant systemic dissatisfaction with career trajectories.

For instance, one of the concerns we had heard before beginning the research was that clergy serving CR or CC settings might be sent to small and financially unstable congregations, where clergy talent might not get noticed by a cabinets, or where clergy are less likely to be able to travel far to participate in conference activities. This possible detriment is reasonable, and it may indeed be true that small and geographically (or socially) isolated congregations are less likely to provide the fuel for rapid career advancement as compared to, say, being an associate of a large and wealthy church in the largest city in the conference. So the feeling of having a career stalled as a result of such an appointment is a real fear that is not entirely baseless.

But the reality is that the majority of United Methodist congregations are small and geographically scattered. Most clergy beginning a career – especially local pastors – will be appointed to small congregations. There are very few associate positions in large and wealthy churches in large cities. So the concern that clergy may have, that their careers will not progress as well in some sites as compared to others – is reasonable, but it is hardly specific to CR or CC ministry settings.

In short: clergy serving in CR or CC settings report to us that there are tremendous joys and benefits that only CR or CC ministry can bring. There are also unique challenges,

some of which this volume attempts to address. But especially in relation to career potentials, the problems that some clergy have told us about seem to emerge from specific personalities and customs of some cabinets, rather than from the nature of CR or CC ministry. In other words, the research suggests, problems associated with CR or CC clergy careers are not systemic or denomination-wide, but specific to certain conferences and personalities. This does not mean that they are less serious or that they demand less action on the part of the entire connection, but the nature of that action will be rather different. The nature of these changes are discussed in GCORR's booklet "Learning from Strangers: Best Practices for Supporting Successful CR or CC Ministries."

Appointment Priorities. Finally, a word about prioritizing needs in the appointment-making process. This matter is discussed in detail in the companion booklet, but some mention of the topic would be helpful to clergy as well.

The vast majority of clergy serving CR or CC settings state that the needs of the mission field (first), and then of the congregation (second), are more important than clergy career considerations. The consensus seems to be that, when clergy accept a call to serve God, they accept that this choice will have certain costs. A clergy vocation is not like a corporate career that brings complete freedom to pursue self-interests.

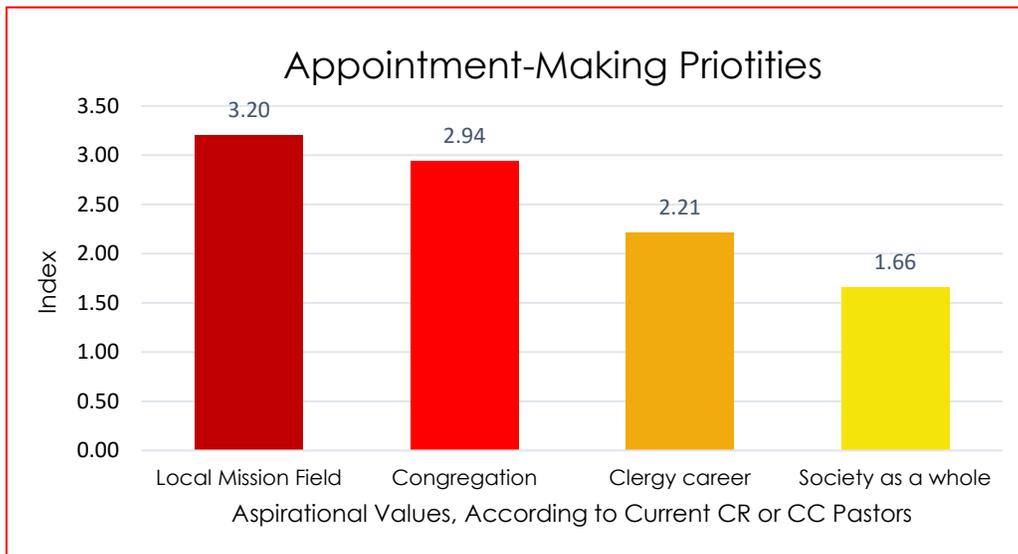
Both clergy and laity have some fodder for complaint. A few CR or CC clergy do rue the fact that CR or CC sites are not often large and glamorous, and do not have the potential of propelling a career in a spectacular way. On the other side, an SPRC chair expressed some resentment about her belief that cabinets were more invested in furthering the careers of the prominent pastors, rather than in helping congregations receive the most appropriate pastoral leadership. Concern over income and egos can interfere with the goal of nurturing vital congregations, she believed.

Our interviews with cabinet members confirmed that, indeed, decisions are sometimes made based on clergy careerism rather than on the best interests of congregations. If true, this would seem to be a misunderstanding of the ideal of itinerancy.

But when 400 CR or CC pastors were asked pointedly about prioritizing needs, a different picture emerges: clergy seem to accept that a life serving the Church requires some sacrifice, and so they reject careerism. When asked to choose the top five problems or frustrations that emerge from current CR or CC appointments, only 14.9% included the following in their list: "I doubt that my career will advance while I am here; this place feels like a dead end with little potential for demonstrating my abilities to the cabinet."

In another question, only 4.3% said that they feel "pigeonholed and stuck" in CR or CC appointments, and only 11.4% wrote that "I don't feel pigeonholed, but I would like to move into a non-CR or CC setting as soon as possible." By contrast, 71% wrote that they have special skill for CR or CC ministry and/or feel that it is their calling, so they are perfectly content to spend their careers doing it.

When asked to rank the appropriate priorities that cabinets should use during appointment-making, only 2.5% felt that “taking care of clergy” should be the top priority. When pressed further on this issue, 10.3% reported that clergy career needs should be the top priority, as compared to 51.6% who gave top priority to the local mission field, and 31.5% gave top priority to the congregation.



Cabinets, pastors, and laity confirm that some cabinets do sometimes make appointment decisions based on factors such as these. Although these motivations are not consistent with the ideal of itinerancy or Wesleyan ecclesiology, cabinets sometimes cede to careerism demands under pressure by prestigious pastors, wealthy churches that pay large apportionments, or well-connected clergy.

Despite this fact, the vast majority of CR or CC clergy state that the needs of the mission field, and then of the congregation, are more important than clergy career considerations. *The consensus seems to be that, when clergy agree to serve the needs of the Reign of God, they know that this will have certain costs.* Hence, life as a pastor cannot be compared to other career paths, nor can the freedoms and benefits of a secular career be easily grafted into the life of ministry – certainly not without sacrificing the wellbeing of mission fields and congregations.

This data leads to the following conclusion. There are various goals that some people might call “careerism”:

- Desire for sustained or increased income;
- Desire for increasingly prestigious appointments;
- Ambition for conference-wide office; and
- Personal ego, as when a former conference staff person desires a plum appointment.

Most CR or CC pastors agree that none of these personal goals should supersede the needs of the mission field of congregation.

But there are considerations other than careerism that CR or CC pastors do wish that cabinets would take into account:

- The need for cabinets to understand the peculiarities of CR or CC ministry and of ministry with various constituent groups;
- The potential isolation of CR or CC pastors, particularly in rural settings;
- The need for more time and resources to make CR or CC ministries work; and
- The personal and career sacrifices of clergy spouses.

Finally, despite what may be true for some conferences and some pastors, most CR or CC pastors who participated in the GCORR research study are motivated by factors other than careerism. By a substantial margin, relationships and service were at the top of the list of priorities:

Which congregational characteristics would most likely facilitate happy and successful ministry at your next appointment?	
A warm and welcoming congregation.	77%
Ample opportunity for missional work in the community.	74%
Opportunity to stretch and grow my skills.	73%
Salary stability.	53%
Geography (urban, rural, accessible).	41%
Potential for career development.	31%
Wherever the cabinet wants me to be.	27%
Near my own community, for my emotional and social health.	25%
An SPRC that specifically requested someone of my ethnicity,	17%
A congrtegatton that is willing to change.	4%
A diverse congregation.	3%

We urge all clergy to speak openly and frankly with the district superintendents about the urgency of on-going dialogue and support related to relational, intercultural, personal, vocational, and self-care needs. At the same time we urge cabinets to laud those clergy who speak freely about these matters, rather than thinking of them as those who rock the boat. Finally, clergy, cabinets, and SPRCs need to talk frankly about the way that competing needs and priorities should be negotiated in each ministry setting.

Chapter Three: To the Laity

Shared Responsibility

Ministry of a Christian congregation is the ministry of *the congregation* – not merely of its pastor. Ministry is all about relationships, and holy relationships are always bi-directional. Thus, the success or failure of a pastorate is the joint responsibility of the clergy and the laity. In all congregational ministries – but especially when there is a CR or CC ministry – both laity and clergy have responsibilities to God. When lay Christians are passive (or passive aggressive), they ignore their assignments from God, their responsibility to do ministry in God's world. A prerequisite to successful ministry is that laity accept their own calls to active ministry, alongside the pastor, and in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation.

Lay leadership should periodically remind all members of their collective and individual responsibilities to God's church. But at a time of pastoral transition, the chair of the Staff/Parish Relations Committee should take the lead in teaching the congregation and guiding it through the process. Lay members who are not on the SPRC want and deserve to know what is happening at each stage. Sometimes discussions between the SPRC and the DS need to be kept confidential, but to the extent possible and appropriate, the lay leadership should always keep the congregation informed.

The entire church is responsible for the success or failure of the new ministry. Leaving everything up to the new pastor is not faithful discipleship.

Again, the message that ought to be regularly communicated is that the entire congregation has a stake in the success or failure of its ministry.

With that in mind, we asked 300 pastors in CR or CC settings what advice they have for the laity of a congregation about to receive a new pastor. Their response is summarized in the chart below. Note that several of the items are all about *relationships*. The primacy of relationships was a dominant theme in our interviews and conversations with hundreds of lay leaders, pastors, and conference officials. Faithful ministry, reconciliation, transformation, even salvation – it all depends upon the healing and nurture of holy relationships.

The five things that clergy might want to say to the lay leaders of a congregation that is about to receive its first CR or CC pastor.

	Answer Options	%
1	Take the new pastor around to small groups, so that he can get to know everyone, right from the beginning. And learn about your new pastor, her experiences, and what gives her joy and sadness. <i>Be a facilitator of relationships.</i>	59%
2	Learn about your new pastor, her experiences, and what gives her joy and sadness. Encourage others to see her as another child of God whose life experiences and pastoral training will benefit you.	58%
3	Before the new pastors arrives, hold small or medium-sized group discussions, in which you encourage people to speak frankly about their fears and concerns.	57%
4	There are many elements of church life that seem normal and natural to you, but that might be unique to your congregation. Help the new pastor learn those norms and expectations.	55%
5	The new pastor may understand the world differently than the membership, and therefore have a different approach to the Gospel. Be open to the joy of new insights.	46%
6	Instruct members to send all feedback directly to the pastor and then, if still dissatisfied, to the SPRC, but never to the district superintendent or bishop.	34%
7	Before the new pastors arrives, hold a congregational meeting to discern a few things in your worship life that are very important to the congregation, and explain these to the pastor.	34%
8	Soon after the pastor arrives, talk to her about how authorities and responsibilities will be shared between the pastor and lay leadership.	28%

The remainder of this chapter will discuss the ways that laity, especially its SPRC, can facilitate a smooth and hope-filled transition to a new CR or CC pastor. The findings and recommendations of those clergy and laity with experience in CR or CC settings have been organized into five themes: ¹relationships, ²social norms and unspoken expectations, ³authenticity and the burden of change, ⁴authority and formality, and ⁵communication.

Relationships

We cannot stress too much that a primary service that an SPRC could perform is to be a facilitator of new relationships. A great deal is riding on the first few weeks and months, when laity decide how they feel about the new pastor and whether they plan to remain and contribute, remain and complain, leave the congregation altogether, or something in-between. It is a crucial time. Immediately upon arrival the new pastor will want to learn all about the people with whom she will minister. She will need to learn about them, and they will need to learn about her. This is best done not during Sunday service, but in the format of small group gatherings and informal conversations.

For instance, the new pastor could meet informally with each program group or lay ministers. Their discussions at this point should have nothing to do with program, but rather with getting to know each other, as personally as each feels comfortable at that early stage. The SPRC, or perhaps a few members who volunteer for this particular service, should arrange these meetings. The organization could well occur before the new pastor arrives, or even before he is named.

Better still would be a series of dinners or Saturday lunches, in which one, two, or three families could host the new pastor at a private home. These should *not* be programmatically organized, that is, the families need not have the same roles or anything in common, except that they want to know the new pastor and for him to know them. In this way, these dinners could even have the secondary benefit of allowing members to know each other better. The atmosphere is casual, light, and friendly – not like a duty or a question-and-answer session. Church business is not on the agenda, because the people present need to know each other as individuals, not as people who serve a function. Again, the SPRC is the appropriate body to organize and promote such meals, in consultation with the new pastor and allowing her to set the pace.

But since all relational norms are culturally determined, even the suggestion of having meals together should be evaluated based on the norms of the congregation and the comfort level of the pastor. One CR or CC pastor told us that

This type of preparation is not [appropriate for all situations], because many Blacks are not normally given over to inviting their pastor into their homes. Becoming more familiar with a pastor often happens at large church gatherings or extended trips together, as part of a church group.

As time goes on, the SPRC can and should continue to function as, and to promote itself as, the facilitator of relationships. As in any relationship, there are likely to be occasions in which one or both parties are not entirely happy with the other. The SPRC has a definite role to fill as a mediator, if things get that far. But before mediation is needed, we strongly urge lay leaders to respond to complainers by suggesting that they speak to the pastor herself. Triangulation, via gossip or the search for allies with whom to

And all the children of Israel
murmured
against Moses and Aaron.
Numbers 14:2

complain and commiserate, might be the norm in many congregations, but it is not healthy, holy, or helpful. SPRC members should take the lead in discouraging all such behavior. Anyone with even a minor complaint should be encouraged to meet privately with the pastor. Clergy are trained to listen, hear, and respond appropriately, without defensiveness or aggression.

Some people may be uncomfortable talking directly to the pastor, perhaps because of a personal shyness, a cultural norm, or racism/xenophobia. Motivations are difficult to disentangle. But whenever the reason, those persons should be given a choice by the SPRC: either speak directly to the pastor, speak to the pastor in the company of the SPRC chair, or accept the situation as it is. If the complaint is a more serious one, or if there are a number of people with similar complaints, then the SPRC is the correct place to take the grievances, again while avoiding gossip or rancor.

The SPRC should communicate in no uncertain terms that it is not helpful or appropriate for any member to complain directly to the district superintendent or to the bishop. If that is done, then the conference staff will simply send the complaint back to the local SPRC, and much damage will have been done to the internal cohesion and trust within the congregation. If members attempt to circumvent both the pastor and the SPRC by complaining to the conference, then they are engaged in toxic behavior that risks sabotaging the effectiveness of the church's ministry.

Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure...Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky.

Philippians 2:14,15

Social Norms and Unspoken Expectations

Chapter 1 used the image of 'fish in water' to describe culture that surrounds us and makes it difficult to see anything outside of it. The water even makes it difficult to know that we are in water. In congregations, people tend to assume that the way things are in their church is simply the standard or normal way of doing things. It could be that they assume that all Christian churches have a coffee hour, communion once per month, and a vacation Bible school. Even more often, it is the subtle and unspoken rules that seem so normal to us that we simply take them for granted and assume that everyone thinks and does things in the same way.

But everyone does not think and do things the same way. Even between UMC congregations in the United States, there are widely different practices, theologies, and social norms. A congregation will go a long way toward being ready to hear the gospel from a new and different pastor, if it can begin to observe itself, and to recognize that nothing is normal, standard, or universal.

When a new pastor has been reared or trained in a different church tradition, a different denomination, or even the same denomination but in a different part of the world, she may do things that seem odd. The way she sits behind the chancel, the way she socializes (or not) at coffee hour, the way she interacts with lay leaders, the hours she makes herself available for conversation or counseling, her decision to accept or decline invitations to dinner – in these and dozens of other ways, she might seem just a little different, like she doesn't quite follow the social rules that seem obvious and self-evident to the congregation. The way she sits and walks and talks and shakes hands may be perfectly normal and appropriate in some other context, but they cause some discomfort or anxiety among members who just don't understand why the pastor doesn't follow the congregation's expectations.

But how could she follow those norms, if no one has talked to her about them? And how could the SPRC have talked to her about the unspoken norms in the church community, if no one has paused to reflect upon them and identify them? Long before a pastoral transition occurs, the SPRC would be well to organize a series of reflections and conversations in which members are asked to identify the unspoken norms. This will not be easy since, by definition, they fly under the radar most of the time. But being able to discern and identify norms and expectations is important in a congregational moral inventory, or spiritual growth.

A surprisingly large portion of survey pastors, 35%, report that differences in relational norms – how people engage with each other, what topics are taboo, how casual or how formal, hugging vs. handshakes, and the like – make it difficult for a pastor to establish the kinds of relationships with congregants that are so vital for the success of a ministry.

As indicated in the chart above, the second most frequent advice from experienced CR or CC pastors is “There are many elements of church life that seem normal and natural to you, but that might be unique to your congregation. Help the new pastor learn those norms and expectations.” One role of the SPRC could be to have conversations with members and with the new pastor about these norms and expectations – not to insist that she meet them, but so that she understands why folks react the way they do. This should be an on-going process, since relational norms are not easy to articulate, so it may take weeks or months to think through these issues.

Unfortunately, social norms often don't reach the level of conscious awareness until they are violated, no matter how much pre-reflection is accomplished. Even more than preventing misunderstandings by talking about known social norms, the SPRC and pastor must facilitate healthy communications and develop problem-solving strategies, for those times when disappointment occurs and anxiety builds.

Authenticity and the Burden of Change

Church members might assume that the pastor will, gradually, conform to the established social norms, will begin to “fit-in,” so all they need to do is to be patient and wait for that to happen. Some pastors, particularly those whose culture has taught them to be conciliatory at all costs, might agree, and comply with that expectation. A pastor from the North Central Jurisdiction told us:

I don't agree with the attitude that ‘they need to learn my ways.’ I have heard that the laity should learn my culture, and be able to communicate and work with me. But speaking from pastor's perspective, I feel that when I go there, I should learn *their* ways and how they function, in order to be successful with them.

The problem with this approach is that it assumes that the burden of change is and should rest entirely on the pastor, who must accommodate to the comforts and preferences of laity. But relationships are never one-sided, so the burden of change should not be the responsibility of one person alone. Both the burden and the privilege of learning and adjusting should be shared. Recall the scripture discussed in chapter 1: it is through meeting the stranger, and being shown new and different aspects of God, that spiritual growth occurs.

If the “stranger” accepts the ways of the congregation and tries to fit-in as much as possible, then the value of her lived experience from which others might learn, is dampened. If lay members only wants a pastor who mirrors the last pastor, and who thinks and prays and votes the same way they do, then there is nothing to bring those members to a new level of spiritual maturity. They will remain stuck, just where they are. In other words, if nothing changes, then nothing changes.

A pastor may wish above all else to fit in, to ‘assimilate’ to the dominant culture, to minimize his uniqueness in order to not rock the boat. But if this is his choice, then he is doing a great disservice to the congregation. He is robbing them of the opportunity to be transformed and to learn new ways of seeing God and their own mission as Christians. This would be unfortunate.

“Sometimes I am exhausted by adjusting to different communication styles.”

CR or CC Pastor

Therefore, those with much experience in cross-racial and/or cross-cultural appointments urge laity: to resist the urge to minimize differences, encourage assimilation in order to keep the peace, or pretend like differences do not exist. While compromise is a part of all relationships, it is not the responsibility of the pastor to do all the compromising, all the changing, all the conforming. Everyone involved in a CR or CC ministry must learn from each other, and everyone involved will indeed need to compromise. But the compromise should never be one-sided and should never come at the cost of authenticity.

Authenticity, in this context, means that both clergy and laity should remain faithful to who they are, to the extent appropriate and comfortable. This includes their differences, uniqueness, and even their personality quirks. No one in a Christian church should ever deny, or be encouraged to deny, the beauty and brilliance and holiness of their own lived experiences, their languages, their accents, their ways of seeing things, their physical differences – their entire beings. For all that they have, all their differences, are of God and are gifts of God that they are called to share with each other and with the world.¹²

A pastor may choose to minimize his uniqueness in order to fit-in and avoid conflict. But if this is his choice, then he is doing a great disservice to the congregation. He is robbing them of the opportunity to be transformed and to learn new ways of seeing God and the Chris-

Thus: it is not entirely the responsibility of the new pastor to change in order to meet our norms and expectations. Rather, both laity and clergy share the burden of compromising when necessary, and always being open to learn.

The way to faithfully engage with others across lines of difference is to be fully authentic, to invite and welcome the authenticity of others, even when it makes us uncomfortable, and to constantly seek for ways to teach and to learn. That is the way of faithful Christian discipleship in the presence of difference.

Authority and Formality

In the previous two sections we discussed differences in unspoken assumptions and ways of being, and the need to balance compromise with authenticity. We saw that it is entirely possible – even likely, in many conferences – that a congregation will at some time or other receive a clergy person whose pastoral formation was not in the UMC, or not in the United States. Such pastors may have been formed within a church tradition in which the relationships of clergy to laity is more formal than in most UMC congregations.

Even within the United States there are UMC congregations that, for example, are a part of the Black church tradition; in those churches, the pastor is treated with deference and addressed only by her title and last name (for instance, Rev. Dr. Ruby Wilson). Or perhaps a pastor arrives from Germany, where all possible titles are normally used (for instance,

¹² An important caveat to this discussion of authenticity, as it related to African American linguistic forms, can be found in chapter two.

Ms. Rev. Dr. Wilson). In either case, the new pastor may feel that addressing her by her title is a sign of respect for the role she plays (clergy person).

In some church traditions, the pastor is the sole authority and makes decisions unilaterally. On the other extreme are those churches that treat the pastor as an employee who must obey the lay leadership. Both ideas can exist within UMC polity.

But United States popular culture celebrates informality and familiarity; people often feel that titles are distancing mechanisms that create a barrier between people. Thus, in most U.S. UMC congregations, particularly the smaller ones, laity are accustomed to addressing the pastor by her first name (i.e., Ruby). Sixteen percent of the pastors we survey identified this issue as a frustration for them.

Laity need to be aware that, if a pastor asks people to address her formally, it is not a sign of arrogance or distancing. Conversely, pastors need to know that, if laity prefer to address them by their first names, it is not a sign of disrespect or uninvited friendship. Whatever the case, the answer to possible misunderstandings is to talk about it. In its initial discussion, the SPRC should tell the new pastor about its customary preference (along with other social norms, as described above), and ask her how she wishes to be addressed. This is a matter of dialogue and compromise.

An even more troublesome conflict might arise if the pastor and laity have different expectations about authority-sharing. These norms are seldom discussed, because both sides tend to assume that the other follows the same unwritten rules of congregational life. But no congregation, CR or CC site or otherwise, should assume that laity and clergy share the same assumptions about pastoral authority. Some pastors are rooted in church traditions in which the pastor is the sole authority, and makes decisions unilaterally. On the other extreme are those churches that treat the pastor as an employee who must obey the lay leadership (the employers, as they see it). Either of these extremes could conceivably exist within the bounds of United Methodist Polity.

Frustrations and misunderstandings could easily occur if each party operates with different assumptions about authority sharing. In fact, 33% of the pastors surveyed identified this issue as one that interferes with the success of their ministries. A lay leader might become incensed if she learns, for instance, that the pastor has made a significant change in the Sunday school curriculum without consulting her. Or the pastor may feel like the lay leadership does not allow him to do his job as he feels called to do. Neither party is correct in such a scenario; they both made the mistake of not talking about such matters, and coming to a clear mutual understanding, at the very beginning, and by not making mid-course corrections together. Especially in a CR or CC ministry, nothing should be assumed.

Communication

A common laity complaint comes about if a congregation speaks a language that is not the first language of the pastor, e.g., if the congregation is English-speaking and the pastor's first language is Korean or Spanish. The pastor might struggle with English, or might be fluent but speak with an accent. Older worshippers, particularly, report that they have difficulty understanding sermons, if they are delivered in broken or accented English; it is difficult, they say, to hear any sermon, but if the cadence or pronunciation is not what they expect to hear, then comprehension might be even more difficult. And if only a few phrases in key points of the sermon cannot be understood, then those older members might lose the meaning of the entire sermon.

Of course the opposite could also be the case: a native English speaker tells the cabinet that he speaks Spanish, so he is appointed to a Spanish-speaking congregation. But his Spanish is broken, words are pronounced oddly, or he has a heavy accent so that some parishioners cannot understand the sermons. He may be well able to engage in conversation with parishioners when face-to-face, because they can read his gestures and facial expressions, and he can tell instantly if there has been comprehension or if he needs to repeat something. But a sermon requires more than conversational fluency. When in the chancel speaking to the entire congregation, the non-native Spanish speaker cannot rely on the same visual aids as he does when in conversation. Further, sermons often rely upon subtlety, and even a proficient speaker cannot reproduce the same kind of nuance as could a native speaker. A surprisingly large number of CR or CC pastors – 35% of our survey responses – reported that people sometimes complain about not understanding sermons.

There are several possible fixes to this dilemma. A common one is that the preacher is asked to write his sermon, and to distribute copies after the service. Some congregations project the written sermon onto a screen. The problem with these solutions is that it constrains the preacher to reading a written text; some clergy prefer to be more extemporaneous and to go off-script. But extemporaneous preaching in a language other than one's first language is very difficult indeed. Large congregations with the financial ability to do so may hire a simultaneous translator, so the preacher can deliver the sermon in his native language, thus reproducing the nuance that sermons require.

The best solution for most congregations may be to distribute an *outline* of the sermon; that option allows for some conversational or extemporaneous preaching, but even more importantly it allows the listener to at least see the logical flow of the message. Thus, even if some phrases are missed, and can still follow-along. Finally, one member of the SPRC might be a 'language mentor', and review sermon recordings in order to help the pastor improve.

As with most of the potential frustrations described in this manual, the SPRC needs to have ongoing conversations with the pastor, and the members need to know the correct procedure for addressing the issue with either the pastor or the SPRC. Open, frank, and friendly dialogue can often create solutions.

There is one possibility of which the lay leadership needs to be aware: language difficulties could be used as a cover for other complaints. For instance, if an SPRC chair hears "I can't understand his sermons," it may be that the complainer has other problems with

the pastor but is either unable or unwilling to articulate them. A laity complaint about an accent might really be a way to voice racism without risking social censure. It is also likely that some complaints about accent are a way to voice an anti-immigrant xenophobia. Finally, gut-level negative feelings about Black Americans could be packaged as complaints about language; some laity may complain that they are not able to understand the preaching rhythm or vernacular of some Black pastors, but what really is at issue are deeper problems that need to be laid bare.

Lay leadership and pastors need to promote frank discussions about race, allowing members to share without fear of judgement. Pastors and SPRC members need to talk together about how to engage with the many forms of racism that may appear in such conversations or in congregational life. Pastors, laity, and cabinets are urged to consult GCORR resources related to having frank conversations about race, ethnicity, xenophobia, and otherness.

Methodological Appendix

The Research Underneath the Recommendations

The task of the General Commission on Religion and Race, according to the *Book of Discipline*, is to "...to challenge and equip the general agencies, institutions, and connec-tional structures of The United Methodist Church..." In partial fulfillment of this mission, GCORR works to create new resources to aid the church in its engagement with the mul-ticultural reality of the world, not least the growing number of cross-racial and cross-cul-tural pastoral appointments in the United States. The long and deep engagement of GCORR personnel at the conference level provided significant insight, but General Sec-retary Erin Hawkins wishes to anchor these resources in the *actual lived experiences* of United Methodists *at various levels* of the connection (not merely the conferences).

Her Director of Research therefore designed a research program to accomplish the fol-lowing:

- 1 . To roughly quantify of the number of CR or CC sites in the U. S. church, and to map those sites for a quick and easy visual comparison with demographic shifts in the country;
- 2 . To paint a picture of the conferences' current practices related to CR or CC ap-pointment-making;
- 3 . To capture the lived experience of CR or CC sites, on the ground at local congregations, and from the perspectives of both the clergy and laity;
- 4 . To organize the data attained, analyze it according to the best practices of social-science, and interpret it for consumption by various constituencies; and
- 5 . To produce a series of recommendations, for every level of the connection, to enhance the quality of CR or CC appointments and appointment-making and to facilitate successful ministry.

This manual is one of the products of that research project, which ran for 18 months be-ginning December 2014 and ending May 2016.

In designing the methodology, we balanced two sets of opposing ideals: first, random-ized sampling that could approach generalizability versus selection of key sites that had drawn the attention of conference personnel. To approximate generalizability to the en-tire UMC in the United States, so that the findings would be relevant and useful throughout the connection and across the country, we used a randomized sampling technique, de-scribed below. But we also wanted to learn from laity and clergy that had had some

special success with CR or CC ministry; thus, to identify sites for phases 3 and 4, we relied upon district superintendents and our own experience with partner conferences to enroll sites that had a high likelihood of providing rich data.

The second set of balanced ideals was the type of data sought. We wanted to balance and integrate the insights that could emerge from qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies, and then to add to this a graphic representation using geographic information systems. Thus, in addition to this manual and two formal project reports, we produced an interactive map of CR or CC sites, titled the GCORR Diversity Map. It is available on the agency website.

The results of the study therefore combined analyses of data collected using various methods; the benefits and detriments of each are described below.

Phase I: Geographic Data

The first task was to produce an inventory of CR or CC sites. This was done so that we and anyone else in the connection could see the concentrations of sites geographically, and so that we could send an invitation to take the phase IV survey to all CR or CC pastors in the country. We quickly discovered that this inventory would be both very difficult, but also very useful, because no one else in the connection had ever produced such a list. It took over a year of repeated entreaties to the conferences to help us produce a database. As of the formal close of the study on 31 May 2016, approximately 40% of conferences had cooperated. The lists of CR or CC appointments in the other 60% had to be estimated based on old and unreliable data that we acquired from GCFA.

With this data, we created an interactive, web-based map, using the most sophisticated GIS software available, ArcGIS. But before geocoding and inserting the address of CR or CC sites, we first had to construct the basic maps. We therefore spent six months creating maps of all conferences, jurisdictions, and many districts. We then integrated these UMC map files with census data, so that demographic trends could be followed in one particular UMC geographic scale, like a conference or district. This was an arduous task, because again, no one in the entire UMC had ever bothered to create such a map. Only those boundaries that coincide with a state line were exact; almost no conference map and no district map were based on actual satellite data points. The map that we created for this project, therefore, is a resource that can have multiple uses for various agencies of the church.

Phase II: District Superintendents

In order to achieve a wide geographic representation and to approach generalizability, we produced a sample of 20 district superintendents using a standard randomized sampling strategy: multi-staged, non-stratified cluster sampling with probability proportional to size. First, we randomly selected conferences, distributed proportionally according to

the number of conferences per jurisdiction (PPS). Using this method, jurisdictional distribution of the sample was: 2 conferences from Western, 6 from Southeastern, and 4 from each of the other three jurisdictions.

The next operation was to randomly select one district superintendent from each of the 20 conferences. All 20 granted an interview. The interview method was: 30-minute telephone interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using standard qualitative data analysis software (AtlasTI). This analysis, and its interpretation, produced several preliminary recommendations for appointment-making, which were described in a report sent to all cabinets on 15 December 2015. District superintendents were asked to identify CR or CC ministry sites that have had significant experience and thus were likely to produce useful data.

Phase III: Local Pastors

Largely from and DS interviews and from our own experience, a list of 24 local churches was drawn: 4 in Dallas, 4 in Fort Worth, 6 in Chicago, 4 in Portland, and 6 in Tampa. Of those, 17 were willing and available to be interviewed. Again, the 30-minute telephone interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. Rather than questions related to trends and conference procedures, questions of local clergy had to do with their specific experiences in their mission fields, successes and failures, barriers, needs, frustrations, lay-clergy relationships, and recommendations.

In the course of these interviews, we identified CR or CC ministries that have significant experience and wisdom to share with the rest of the connection. So we planned a series of site visits to talk further with the pastors and with laity. Four cities were chosen for sites visits: Tampa, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Chicago.

Phase IV: Site Visits

The site visits occurred in March and April of 2016. GCORR's Director of Research traveled to the cities, visited congregations, observed worship services, and conducted more data collection. This consisted of two forms: in-depth interviews with cabinet members, laity focus groups, and clergy focus groups of lay leaders. These site visits produced another 14 interviews and focus-group discussions, which were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using Atlas.

Phase V: Quantitative Survey

The qualitative data from phases II, III, and IV – analyzed and interpreted using the best practices in the social sciences – produced a number of recommendations for cabinets, and best practices for local congregations. The next task was to test the findings by comparing them to experiences in areas other than those visited. If the findings were confirmed by a preponderance of clergy serving sites with a wide geographic and demographic distribution, then they could be interpreted to be relevant and appropriate for

the entire domestic connection. To conduct this test, we wrote a quantitative survey consisting of 38 questions, organized around the following topical areas:

- 1 . Demographics
- 2 . Current CR/Cc appointment
- 3 . The appointment-making process
- 4 . Clergy career
- 5 . Next appointment hopes
- 6 . Joys and benefits of CR or CC ministry
- 7 . Challenges and frustrations of CR or CC ministry
- 8 . Advice to clergy
- 9 . Advice to laity
- 10 . Advice to cabinets

Our phase I inventory indicated that there are currently as many as 2,468 CR or CC sites in the United States (there are about 150 less pastors, because that many have two-point charges). Of those, we manually searched for and located email address from 2,034 pastors. From that number, we examined each name and deleted:

- clergy who had participated in some other phase of the CR or CC study;
- clergy who had participated in GCORR's multiculturalism study some months prior;
- clergy who were on the Board of GCORR or who had some other connection to the agency.

The final list consisted of 1,799 email addresses to which we sent an invitation to participate in the survey.

But the data on the larger list of 2,468 sites was not all recent and confirmed data; only 40% of conferences had provided us with updated and current lists. To compensate for this, we then sent the invitation to participate, along with a letter explaining the goals of the study, to all district superintendents in those conferences that had not responded to our requests for updated lists of CR or CC sites. In the cover letter we asked the district superintendents to forward the invitation and Survey Monkey link to any CR or CC pastors in their districts. This second mailing was sent to 248 district superintendents. Within a few days, this appeal to DSs had brought a new wave of clergy to the survey.

By the time it was closed on 31 May 2016, 393 pastors had completed the survey, out of approximately 1,800 who had had the opportunity to participate. This represents a very respectable response rate of approximately 22%. Of those who began the survey, the completion rate was an excellent 78%.

Thus, the portion of CR or CC pastors who completed the survey was at least 10%, far more than are needed in order to claim generalizability. However, the survey was sent to all known CR or CC clergy, rather than to a smaller *randomized* sample. Thus, a strict statistical interpretation would not claim generalizability; nonetheless, because the number of completed surveys is such a large proportion of the known total number of CR or CC clergy (more than 10%), we believe that the findings described herein are indeed

representative of the experiences of clergy and laity in CR or CC sites throughout the United States church.