

# ACCENTS

이민자 *Love* 希望  
Paix MUNGU  
Esperanza  
IMIGRANTE *God*  
DIOS 移民者  
Mshikamano  
WAHAMIAJI  
ESPOIR 소망  
*Mapendo*

**Emphasis on Immigrant New Worshipping Communities**



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
**New Worshipping Communities**



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# INTRODUCTION

In parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo, dew collects on branches overnight. It drips on the first passersby who knock the leaves and dislodge the droplets onto their heads and belongings. As the Kiluba proverb says, “Amba umo apite kumeso, lume luba pu.” Translated literally, the proverb says, “The first who passes on the path is the one who catches the dew.”<sup>1</sup> For a more applicable interpretation, the proverb expresses the sentiment that the one who travels down the early morning path will encounter the most difficulties so that the ones who follow may find the road partially cleared and easier to navigate.<sup>2</sup>

With this manual, we invite you to join us on the roads we have walked as immigrant pastors of immigrant congregations, principally located in Atlanta. We think our collective stories will resonate across American cities, suburbs and towns where immigrant pastors serve congregations and make their homes. Each of us has experienced some moment, or many moments, when we understood just how marginal our experiences of pastoring remain within the dominant Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) ministry models, education, training and conversations. For Portuguese speaker the Rev. Rafael Viana, even as he began to increasingly comprehend conversational English at church planting conferences, for example, the more he then was also able to realize how great the distance was between the reality of immigrant communities where he lived and pastored and those presented as typical at the conference.

For both the Rev. Gad Mpoyo and Rafael, attending a Sabbath retreat organized by 1001 New Worshiping Communities in 2018 brought into focus the disconnect between Sabbath practice and immigrant pastor realities. The retreat emphasized how important it is for a church leader to take a Sabbatical for a few months in order to refresh the spirit and gain inspiration. We were both clear on the importance of Sabbath for a New Worshiping Community leader. What was less apparent, however, was the extent to which initiatives in this historically white and wealthy denomination could account for very different realities that made Sabbatical for an immigrant pastor a work of imagination only. Tight budgets, lack of shared pastoral leadership and congregational expectations



**REV. SUNGWO SAM KIM** is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). While studying at Columbia Theological Seminary in 2015, he and his wife began their journey as church planters serving international college students. Sam is also currently serving Atlanta Taiwanese Presbyterian Church as a co-moderator. As a qualified administrator of IDI and a qualified debriefer of the Birkman Method, he has a passion for team building.

**REV. RAFAEL VIANA** is the organizing pastor of On The Way, a Hispanic congregation with 12 different nationalities represented. Together with his wife he started a second NWC called Casa Brasil, a community formed by Portuguese speakers. He is a coach for the 1001 New Worshiping Communities program. He is also pursuing a Doctorate in Ministry with the Puerto Rico Evangelical Seminary.

**REV. GAD MPOYO** is the organizing pastor of Shalom International Ministry, a cross-cultural New Worshiping Community formed by immigrants and refugees. He is also the Southeastern Associate for 1001 New Worshiping Communities.

<sup>1</sup> Translation provided by Rev. Gad Mpoyo.

<sup>2</sup> As recounted by Rev. Gad Mpoyo to Jennifer Aycok, October 2016.

of the pastor — the pastor needs to be everywhere when needed — are just a few contextual factors that we (Gad and Rafael) experience that have prevented them from taking an extended Sabbatical.

Out of our shared experience of disconnection from denominational assumptions and frameworks for congregational ministry, they turned to one another. In talking with other colleagues who worked as immigrant pastors within immigrant communities, they found solidarity, and even more, friendship. Simultaneously, Gad's encouragement and mentorship of the Rev. Sungwoo Sam Kim during Sam's M.Div. studies turned into friendship. Thus, out of a conversation among friends from such different backgrounds and across languages — Rafael from Brazil, Sam from South Korea and Gad from the Democratic Republic of Congo — we found a shared desire to do more for those who face the same challenges we encounter. It is not our purpose to be the last word on the subject on what it means to be an immigrant pastor. As you will read, we are three male pastors serving in the same metropolitan area, even though in vastly different communities. This means our experiences reflect our unique backgrounds, heritages, family systems

and gender. We believe, however, that in sharing our accumulated experiences, we can further equip and serve churches to share in our calling of the incredible adventure of caring for those who are exiled as immigrants in North America. We desire to help others who feel dedicated to loving those who are most fragile and needy within the United States' social and political systems. We want to encourage immigrant pastors, charter churches, presbyteries and mid councils to understand that it requires significant empathy and willingness to love others across differences, to strive to understand one another across cultures, to have compassion for those who are considered "foreign," and to confront our internalized senses of power and ownership in the process.

Thinking about a name, we remember when Sam first talked about "ACCENTS."

***We all have accents, and really, an accent is nothing to be ashamed of but to be proud of because accents are beautiful.***

An accent provides emphasis where and how it is employed. Thus, we believe that an accent is a beautiful expression of the Christian mission of bringing the gospel everywhere and in all languages.



# THEOLOGY AND HISTORY OF IMMIGRANT CHURCHES

*“You shall also love the stranger,  
for you were strangers in the land of Egypt”  
(Deuteronomy 10:19).*

It is no longer an abstract notion that the demographics around the world and more particularly in the United States have changed and are becoming more diverse. In the United States, this occurred partly due to unanticipated waves of migration that began after passage of the 1965 Immigration Act. The act passed under President Lyndon B. Johnson and coincides with passage of the Voting Rights Act, with which it shares a complex and intertwined history.<sup>3</sup> For example, 44.5 million out of 300 million of the United States population are foreign born and that number is likely to grow in the coming years.<sup>4</sup> Among those who migrate to the United States, data shows that 75% of them are Christians. Many migrate for a number of reasons. For some, economics drives their migration, including the pursuit of education. For others, they leave their countries fleeing persecution, wars and injustices in search of a better future. For others still, climate change prompts their movement. According to 2018 statistics from our own denomination, the PC(USA), within the 1001 New Worshiping Communities initiative, 38% of the new communities are immigrant churches while 91% of historic mainline congregations are majority white.<sup>5</sup>

***The developing reality of globalized diversity poses new challenges and opportunities not only in our communities but also in our pews, for both established churches as well as for new worshiping communities.***



- Three questions are worth reflecting on:
- ***How can we grow to be a church that welcomes strangers, immigrants and refugees?***
  - ***How can the church life of our congregations and mid councils be meaningful and inviting to people from diverse backgrounds and cultures such as refugees or immigrants?***
  - ***How can Euro-culture congregations divest from institutional power in order to move from practices of welcome toward practices of mutuality and solidarity in relation to New Worshiping Immigrant Communities?***

We do not necessarily offer answers to these questions here. Each congregation and presbytery need to reflect on them in order to answer the larger question, “What church is the Spirit of God calling us to be today?” However, to begin to address the reality of new types of diversity in our pews and to live faithfully into our calling as the priesthood of all believers, we offer a brief outline for a theology of migration. Numerous sources exist for further study and reflection, some of which are included in the footnotes. We hope that this overview, however, encourages a deeper engagement with the biblical and theological resources at our disposal.

<sup>3</sup> Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2004), 136. The 1965 Immigration Act prioritized family reunification and skills-based immigration. Previously, immigration criteria for receiving American citizenship “were explicitly tied to race and natural origin, and often to sexual orientation and gender as well.” Passage of the 1965 act altered these criteria, but as migration and race scholar Daniel Martinez HoSang argues, “Immigration laws remained grounded in discerning individual fitness and worthiness.” As HoSang also shows, contemporary immigration justice reforms, mostly youth-led, actively highlights the anti-Black specter that simultaneously denies the full privileges of citizenships to Black Americans and to Brown and Black immigrants. See Daniel Martinez HoSang, *A Wider Type of Freedom: How Struggles for Racial Justice Liberate Everyone*, (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2021), 71, 73.

<sup>4</sup> Elaine Padilla; Peter C. Phan, *Christianities in Migration*, Lexington Books, New York, London, 221.

<sup>5</sup> [presbyterianmission.org/resource/1001-new-worshiping-communities-leaders-report-2018](https://presbyterianmission.org/resource/1001-new-worshiping-communities-leaders-report-2018)

Historian of world Christianity Andrew Walls points out that “human history has often been determined by movements of peoples.”<sup>6</sup> This is nowhere truer than in the biblical text. We may be tempted to think of migration as a contemporary phenomenon. However, Old Testament scholar M. Daniel Carroll Rodas has excavated the biblical text to show the centrality of migration to the formation of God’s people, mission and the idea of God itself.<sup>7</sup> Catholic theologian Peter Phan has further argued that God is a migrating God, one who moves into history from the very beginning act of Creation.<sup>8</sup> Historian Jehu J. Hanciles has been at the forefront of opening new ways to re-envision the sweeping history of the world Christian movement with migrants as the central agents of its spread.<sup>9</sup> Importantly, his focus on African migrants has begun to re-center the Black Atlantic in how we conceive of Christianity as a global religion with radical potential for cultural and social transformation.<sup>10</sup> Whether understood through biblical studies, theological studies or historical reflection, migrants and migration are central in the story of God at work and on the move in the world.

God hovers over the waters. Taken as part of a Christian cosmology, the opening verses of the Christian sacred text invite us into the presence of a God who is migratory, who not only speaks but moves as an act of creation. The story of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden in Genesis 3:4–19, while laden with loss and shame, may also be read as one of migration and exile. The building of the “tower of Babel” in Genesis 11:5–9 can be read as an act of “anti-migration.” As historian Hanciles argues, the building of and gathering at the tower contrasted with the intent of God to move people out from the devastation of the flood “in a way that allows them to experience the God of Heaven through a multiplicity of contexts and a diversity of cultural experiences.”<sup>11</sup> We must exercise caution in assigning providential intent to protracted, more violent and forced forms of movement. Yet, it is instructive to read the scattering after the flood and then again after the tower as opening up the possibility, through migration, of culturally diversified ways of knowing, responding to and following the Spirit of God.

Beyond the scattering and creation of diaspora ethne, or nations or peoples, God calls Abraham and Sarah to a distant land with Covenant promises of blessing, perhaps to only be experienced by future generations, in Genesis 12. The book of Exodus includes one of the major migrations, or Exodus, of the people of Israel out of Egypt and slavery into the wilderness and promised land. Although not exhaustive, the wanderings and prayers of Hagar, the story of Ruth, the books of Daniel and Esther, the multiple experiences of exile, and the social and political background of much biblical drama highlights the near constant condition of mobility. They give deep texture to grasping the Judeo-Christian story as one of God continuously moving among and meeting people in the midst of precarious mobile circumstances.

Even more, Jesus Christ’s incarnation, his “pitching a tent amongst us,” and his family’s rushed escape to Egypt under cover of night, where they lived as refugees for his first years of life, pointedly



Scripture alone points to God and God’s people moving from one place to the other for various reasons. The first migration we encounter in the Scripture occurs in the very beginning as the Spirit of

<sup>6</sup> Andrew F. Walls, “Towards a Theology of Migration,” in Frieder Ludwig and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, eds., *African Christian Presence in the West: New Immigrant Congregations and Transnational Networks in North America and Europe*, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2011), 407.

<sup>7</sup> See M. Daniel Carroll Rodas, *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Peter Phan, as presented in plenary address delivered at the World Christianity Conference: Currents, Perspectives, and Methodologies, Princeton Theological Seminary, January 20, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> See Jehu J. Hanciles, *Migration and the Making of Global Christianity*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2021).

<sup>10</sup> See Jehu J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West*, 141.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

underscore the centrality of migrant experience in the person and work of God. If we are to apprehend God at work in the world most fully, and if we are to be and become God's people most faithfully, migration — in all its forms — is central to the creation, person, mission and people of God.

At each turn in the narratives included above, it is apparent that, as Hanciles concludes, "the biblical story and message would be meaningless without migration and mobility."<sup>12</sup> Whether through forced enslavement or exile, obedient response to God's call, violent displacement or any number of other factors, whatever the type of migration that figures in biblical stories, they mark the beginning of and unfolding history of salvation. The stories of migration in the Scriptures point to the fact that like God the Creator, we who bear God's image are people on the move. What is more, the movement comes with purpose whether migration is forced or desired. In our view, God has called immigrant communities to share God's word and make disciples of Christ in all the four corners of the world.

## WAVES OF MIGRATION

The fact of migration as a powerful force not only in human history but in the history of world Christianity takes on particular nuance in the history of the United States. Using "migration" as an interpretive lens to characterize the enslavement and forced movement of Africans to the Americas is contested. For the connections we want to offer between immigrant pastor experience, the contemporary church, American history and the biblical text, we do find it helpful and instructive to consider the whole of United States history as nonetheless marked by waves of migration, whether forced and involuntary or aspirational and voluntary, beginning with transatlantic processes set off in the 15th century and leading up until this present moment. We do not offer an exhaustive history here, but we suggest that today's migrants, and our experiences and insights, reflect a much longer, complex story interwoven in the religiously and culturally pluralist making of the United States over the course of four centuries.

This story of migration that made the United States is not the first one of discovery, triumph, arrival or achievement. It is the first one of loss,



brutality and the setting of a crash course of the transatlantic slave trade, European religious wars and persecution, the development of capitalist modes of production, and land grabs and the genocide of Indigenous peoples into the experiment of contested democratic nation-making that continues to unfold.<sup>13</sup> Whatever we may offer today about our lived experiences of being immigrants and leading immigrant churches, we acknowledge that many came before us, often not by choice. Many who experienced the trauma of migration were enslaved or forced into near enslaved working conditions, displaced from their lands, or grafted into the American imperial fabric without the privileges of national citizenship, such as in Puerto Rico.

<sup>12</sup> Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West*, 140.

<sup>13</sup> See Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants since 1882*, 12, 19.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

For us, this longer story of migration includes the arrival of the first ships of enslaved Africans on American shores in 1619. This includes Chinese migrants of the 1850s who were welcomed as inexpensive laborers until the anti-Chinese movement began in the late 1860s and culminated in the 1882 passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act.<sup>14</sup> From this point forward, ethnic and racialized restrictions on immigration to the United States gained traction. Migration experiences for Eastern Europeans contrast with experiences for Western and Scandinavian immigrants, which contrast even more distinctly from the experiences of Asians, Africans and Latin Americans due to race, ethnicity and nationality being correlated with immigrant desirability until the 1960s.<sup>15</sup> Without oversimplifying complex, intertwined processes, we acknowledge that our current and past restrictive, racialized, ethnically profiled and skills-based immigration policies, through which we, our families and congregations continue to navigate, developed out of the same soils as plantation economies, African-enslaved labor and Indigenous genocide. The interconnections between these are not lost on us and must be acknowledged in any discussion of immigrant congregational development today.

There are a few ways to think about the sustained historical waves of migration to the United States within a longer, more global history of migration. Historian Andrew Walls is again helpful. He suggests there have been two great waves of migrations. On one hand, at the end of the 15th century, Europeans migrated to the Americas and formed new diaspora nations in some instances and in other instances, later in the 19th and early 20th centuries, established colonies of exploitation and colonies of settlement in Africa and Asia. On the other hand, starting in the mid-20th century, the Great Reverse Migration began and brought migrants principally from Africa and Asia to North America and western Europe.<sup>16</sup> Many people came to escape ruin of their homelands, and many also followed the paths carved out by colonial, religious and economic networks.

Apart from the two great waves described by Walls, another contemporary wave in the more recent 21st century continues to impact the United States' demographic and socio-cultural landscapes. This third wave has been driven by civil wars, climate change and in some cases, a search for better economic opportunities similar to the second wave. Millions have left countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Burma, Congo, Togo, Syria, Yemen, Korea, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela and Brazil in search of safety and purported security.

***As a church, we inhabit a particular if not entirely unique period in history that presses the question, how will we change as a church if migration is one of if not the defining phenomena of our contemporary moment?***

Because the movement of people is significantly intertwined with other social, political, economic and ecological change processes, examining migration and its implications for the life of the church necessarily opens us to consider our engagement with a broader range of causal factors of migration, as well as our own posture toward immigrants. Reflecting on our own Reformed history that has been characterized by migration may provide an additional point out of which to reflect on this question. In fact, comparative theologian Joshua Ralston has argued that mainline traditions, particularly of the Reformed lineage, would be well served by re-envisioning themselves as "catholic and dispersed" since inception.<sup>17</sup> Thus, to ask today, what church do we want to become as ministry partners with and among immigrants is first to reconceive our churches as pilgrim churches on the way with God. We join in with the Holy Spirit to welcome and stand with the stranger as we were once welcomed. In doing so, we must also learn to divest from institutional powers in order to share space at God's table where all are welcome and represented.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew F. Walls, "Towards a Theology of Migration," in Ludwig and Asamoah-Gyadu, eds., *African Christian Presence in the West: New Immigrant Congregations and Transnational Networks in North America and Europe*, 408.

<sup>17</sup> Susanna Snyder, Joshua Ralston, Agnes M. Brazal, eds., *Church in an Age of Global Migration: A Moving Body*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 46, 42, 47.



# STORIES OF THREE PASTORS



## LATINO/A

### *The Call*

First, let me introduce myself. My name is Rafael Viana from Brazil and I am married to Ivette Llano, who is Bolivian. We met at the Theological Seminary of Fortaleza of the Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil. We have two children, Gabriel and Raquel. For 13 years we worked as pastors and planters of new churches. In 2014, I received a scholarship to study for a Doctor of Ministry at the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico. During my studies, I understood that God was bringing us to a new moment in our lives, so in 2016 we took a Sabbatical year to be able to dedicate ourselves to studies and to live in another country.

***On Feb. 8, 2016, my family and I arrived in the city of Decatur, Georgia, with six suitcases and many dreams in our hearts.***

It was not an easy decision to leave Brazil to study in Puerto Rico and move to the United States for several reasons. We were pastoring the church we had planted in the city of Rio de Janeiro. My children at the time were 12 and 10 years old and were terrified of the idea of moving to another country. It was an extremely difficult decision to leave the achievements of a lifetime and pack our entire house into only six suitcases. There were many emotions involved in the process. Over the course of the Sabbatical year, I continued traveling to classes in Puerto Rico, and we also decided to live in the United States to learn English. The then-director of Outreach Foundation, the Rev. Jeff Ritchie, introduced us to Mission Haven

located in Atlanta. For more than 65 years, Mission Haven has been a home for missionaries when in the United States. They opened a house at 211 Inman Drive for us to live in for a year. When we learned where we were going to live, I remember that as a family we looked at the house on Google Street View and wondered what our new life would be like.

### *The Adjustment*

If you ask my favorite sport, I will say it's "talk," or conversation.

***That is why you can understand how frustrated I felt that I could not speak English upon moving to the United States.***

Along with not being fluent in the language of our new home, I did not know anything about how to live in America. I had no idea how to obtain car insurance or medical insurance, or how to buy something in fast-food restaurants. I wasn't even able to help with my children's schoolwork. I remember crying at the bus stop when I saw my kids going to school then spending all day anxiously waiting for them to come back to know if all was OK.

In the first few months of our new life in Atlanta, we visited some Anglo (or white) churches. However, we didn't understand anything, so we just enjoyed the choirs. By this point, though, my children did not want to go to church anymore because of the cultural differences. Since in our house we speak Portuguese and Spanish, we and our children experienced a disconnect from the local church due to language comprehension. So, we decided to visit Latin churches. Looking back today I can affirm that God's ways really are perfect. The decision to attend a Spanish-speaking church, El Nazareno Church, changed our history in the United States.



Two experiences on our first visit to El Nazareno Church made the time very special. First, we found in this church a place to gather and support local ministry. Ivette began to help with the music and children's ministry, and I had the opportunity to preach and teach in Spanish. Our children quickly became friends with the kids in the church. Second, we met the Rev. Lindsay Armstrong, whom I later learned is the director of the New Church Development Commission of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta. From this first meeting, we invited her for coffee in our house. With help from a friend who translated the conversation, we expressed for the first time the desire to develop a ministry here in the United States.

From that conversation, we began discerning where would be the most appropriate place to start a new community with Spanish speakers. Through this process, the Holy Spirit led us to the city of Lawrenceville that is located northeast of Atlanta. By now, the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta supported us in our discernment of the place where we wanted to start a new community. Our hearts filled with hope. However, we lacked a very important item: the work visa. At this point I had an F1 visa, or a student visa, that did not allow me to work. It is worth noting that the costs of the American immigration process are very high and the process itself is very complicated. Our money was at an end, and uncertainties led us to think that the time had come to return to Brazil. It was really a step of faith, because we couldn't afford the immigration process costs estimated to be around \$6,000. We received a precious blessing because through a member of the church we were presented with an immigrant advocacy firm that gave us representation pro bono. In the end, I only needed to pay the \$1,400 that corresponds to the Premium Process so we could get a response to our petition in 15 days.<sup>18</sup>

***After assembling and submitting more than 800 pages of required documents, translations and signatures, in 10 days I received the news of approval of the change of my immigration status to the R-1 visa, or religious worker status.***

The Presbytery of Greater Atlanta's New Church Development Commission support was indispensable for my family throughout this process. At the beginning of 2017, we moved to the region chosen to start the community church called On The Way.

The oldest church in the Atlanta Presbytery, Fairview Presbyterian Church, founded in 1823 and located in Lawrenceville, Georgia, opened its doors to host a new church that welcomes Hispanic immigrants. In the first year of On The Way, we received people from 12 different countries, but the two majority groups include refugees from Venezuela and migrants from Brazil. I learned a lot from my Venezuelan brothers and sisters about the challenges they face. It has been wonderful to see that through On The Way they have found a family and a safe place to share dreams and fears, struggles and hopes. The Brazilian group also grew and started some activities in Portuguese. As we listened to the desires of the Brazilian community, we responded by starting a second community called Casa Brasil. We can say that Casa Brasil is a New Worshiping Community that is the fruit of the work and dream of On The Way, the initial New Worshiping Community.



During this period, I started my journey with the 1001 New Worshiping Communities movement and have since had the opportunity to experience different aspects of the movement. Being part of 1001 New Worshiping Communities helped me gain broader insight into new ways of starting a new authentic relevant community within the current context of the United States. Like many who have worked with 1001 New Worshiping Communities, I started my work through application for a Seed grant then received coaching and participated in national conferences. By this point, my English had significantly improved, so my comprehension increased. As I listened, the more I learned about the program 1001 New Worshiping Communities and

<sup>18</sup> Premium processing is an expedited visa filing service provided by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for some worker visas. See [uscis.gov/forms/all-forms/how-do-i-request-premium-processing](https://uscis.gov/forms/all-forms/how-do-i-request-premium-processing), accessed Feb. 15, 2022.

the more I became involved. I participated in the Nine-Month Apprenticeship Program, and I was then invited to participate in coach training. I became the first coach who speaks Portuguese in the program. I had contact with Latin church-planting leaders from different parts of the United States. In 2019, I started the first Spanish-speaking cohort. I also participated in the support group that translated the coach manual into Spanish. In addition, I had the opportunity to preach in English during the national meeting of coaches in front of more than 50 pastors, coaches and leaders, undoubtedly one of the biggest challenges I have experienced recently. In 2020, our worship communities welcomed a one-year resident in partnership with 1001 New Worshiping Communities. Our story is still being written.



## ASIAN

“You are the FOB!” It was the first idiom that I learned when I “got off the boat” in 2011. As soon as I started a Master of Divinity at Biblical Theological Seminary in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, a Korean immigrant church asked me to lead their youth. On my first Sunday, I introduced myself to the youth. A student teased me saying that “You are the FOB.” I had no idea what he meant. Smiling, I pretended that I understood the expression. Shortly, he explained what the words meant, and his kindness made me feel embarrassed.

Throughout my ministry for 10 years in the United States, however, I recognize that “Fresh Off the Boat” (FOB) no longer describes the people who come to the United States to pursue their American dream.

***Rather, I would redefine FOB to mean “Fishers On the Boat,” who came to the U.S. to pursue the dream of God’s Kingdom.***

In leading a new worshiping community, I encounter many pastors and church leaders of FOBs. Although they got off the boat in the past, they are now serving people and the Kingdom of God as fishers on the boat. I believe that God calls us as immigrant pastors to be fishers of people in the United States. Here I share part of my story of how I became a fisher on the boat.

Currently, I serve an English-speaking congregation at Atlanta Taiwanese Presbyterian Church in Stone Mountain, Georgia, as well as lead the New Worshiping Community Oikos, a campus ministry focusing on international college students. I think that these have started because I took an English class at Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary (PUTS) in South Korea. While studying at PUTS, I enrolled in an English class led by Dr. Adams and Dr. Chou. They had been in South Korea for about 30 years as missionaries sent by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). After their retirement from Hanil University and Presbyterian Theological Seminary, PUTS invited them in 2010 to offer a class for one semester. I was able to take the class and had the opportunity to share with them how much I wanted to study in the United States. Dr. Chou recommended that I apply to Columbia Theological Seminary (CTS) in Decatur, Georgia. She emphasized that I would have many opportunities for scholarships that could cover all tuition at CTS. So, after receiving my bachelor’s degree in Theology from PUTS in South Korea, I came to the United States with my family in December 2011 to continue my studies in theology.

Since I was born in a Christian family and grew up in a church, I dreamed of becoming a pastor in a local congregation. Being a pastor in an established local church was the only ministry to which that I believed I was called. However, at CTS I was introduced to the 1001 New Worshiping Communities. In addition, during my studies at CTS, I tried to get out of my ministry box by joining a multiethnic/cultural church. I found that Shalom International Ministry was the community for which I was looking. Worshiping with Shalom opened a door to another realm of ministry. The Rev. Gad Mpoyo, one of the authors of this book, is the pastor at Shalom. In spite of our different ethnicities, I was surprised by our similarities in life as international seminary students,

immigrant pastors, husbands and fathers of three kids. For me, he was the pioneer who walked ahead of me through all the struggles that I would also face one day. He illustrated for me that an immigrant pastor who is not an American could start a new worshipping community; there were obviously ministries that needed me here. Gad shared his wisdom from his trial-and-error experiences. He also introduced me to the New Church Development Committee (NCDC) at the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta and 1001 New Worshipping Communities.

Meeting Shalom and connecting with NCDC opened the door to a new paradigm of ministry for me. Gad and Lindsay Armstrong, the executive director of NCDC, encouraged me to start a campus ministry. After discernment, I felt strongly that I had been called to young college students, especially international students like me. With prayerful support from NCDC, I built relationships with students on multiple campuses in Atlanta and offered a Bible study. This campus ministry Oikos was approved as a New Worshipping Community under the NCDC of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta in February 2015 during my second year of CTS' M.Div. program.

Oikos has developed into a community ministering to and with Atlanta-area international students from South Korea as well as Korean American students from out of state. The community has grown into a multicultural campus ministry. While they study in Atlanta for four or more years, students become vulnerable sojourners who seek a caring, relational and spiritual community. Due to poor transportation in Atlanta, it is hard for students to travel to Korean churches, most of which are located outside of the city's perimeter in suburban Atlanta. Our mission is to provide such students with proximity, relationship and spiritual community. We aspire to be a temporary household for international Korean students, to disciple them on their campuses and to send them into the community. I hope that the campus ministry Oikos fosters the spiritual growth of students during their time of study in Atlanta so that when they graduate, they will contribute to their local communities and churches.

Although the campus ministry was going well, I was frustrated with my unstable immigrant status as a student visa holder. I was not sure if I would be able to remain in the United States after graduation. The students in my ministry also worried that their community might disappear. In my last year at CTS, I tried to find a way to stay in the United States so

that I could continue the ministry. Thankfully, when I graduated from CTS in 2018, I was ordained as a validated minister through the campus ministry and applied for an R-1, or religious worker, visa. While I was grateful for the privilege of being ordained as a pastor, I also knew that many of my fellow international students at CTS would not have the same opportunity due to our temporary student visa status and lack of information. Upon graduation from seminary, many international students have to immediately worry about their visa status. Unless they move to another seminary to study for another degree so that they can retain their student visas for a few more years, they must find a church to sponsor their R-1 visa. Therefore, many international students in seminary cannot even conceive of the idea of a different type of ministry such as Oikos when the risks of our immigration status place constraints on what we conceive as possible.

My story is one of many stories shared among immigrant pastors. We believe our stories must be unfolded and heard in order for us together to continue dreaming of planting new churches in different ways. We believe that many churches will be revitalized through the sharing and entering into the lived realities of such stories. As we work together and learn from one another, the fruit of new worshipping ministries will be abundant.



## AFRICAN

On Aug. 17, 2005, I landed in Atlanta, which marked the beginning of a journey filled with opportunities as well as challenges. Talking about this journey is like exploring an ocean in one day. But in these few paragraphs, I want to

highlight key events that shaped my life and ministry as an immigrant pastor in the PC(USA).

When I arrived at the airport, everything seemed very new and big to me. Roads, cars, houses, buildings looked enormous. I felt like a drop of water in the middle of a huge sea. Thank God, I had a friend who came to pick me up and took me to the seminary where I was enrolled, Candler School of Theology. After my friend Emmanuel introduced me to the admissions office, an interesting conversation occurred with a staff member named Jane. I asked Jane if my apartment was ready for me to check into. Unfortunately, the apartment was not yet ready because I came a few days early. Jane suggested that I find a hotel for a couple of days as they prepared my apartment. "It is only around \$100 per day," Jane said to me. In my head, I commented to myself, that is too much money to spend for a day. Already, I could see a difference in context. For Jane, \$100 was not a big deal. As for me, it was quite a fortune. After I paused for a couple of seconds, I told Jane that I could not afford staying in a hotel with the limited funds I brought with me from Congo. She made a few more phone calls, and I was able to move into another apartment that same day. That was quite a big relief, but this was my first introduction to life in the United States.



While a student at Candler School of Theology, the first two years were tough in so many ways. I had to learn and adjust to living in a completely new environment. Although I spoke English before

arriving in the United States, living here and using the language in the United States felt like I was learning the language all over again. The context and terms used were completely different. Terms like DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles), IRS (Internal Revenue Service) or SSN (Social Security Number) to name a few were foreign to me.

During my studies at Candler, I began working at Druid Hills Presbyterian Church Night Shelter, marking the beginning of my relationship with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). During this time, one of my classmates and I started an outreach ministry for immigrants and refugees in the Clarkston community that later gave birth to Shalom International Ministry. The Shalom community first met at Midway PC(USA), then later, after the closing of Midway, at Memorial Drive PC(USA). I helped with worship planning, leadership and evangelism. It grew to have 70 members worshipping each Sunday. My experience with Shalom was part of the reason that the Revs. Joy Fisher, Sara Hayden and George Tatro reached out to me as they considered what God was doing in the Clarkston area. After several meetings and prayerful discernment together, we felt God's call to begin an intentional outreach based on the earlier work of Shalom — this time under the New Church Development Commission. I have led Shalom for nine years. Our guiding Scripture is Jeremiah 29:7: "Seek the shalom of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive and pray to the Lord for it; for in the shalom of it shall you have shalom." Throughout my journey at Shalom, I have been encouraged by the transformation I have seen in the lives of others.

My pastoral journey has also been filled with a lot of challenges related to my own immigration status. When I graduated from Candler, I took a one-year Optional Practical Training as pastor of youth and young adults at one of the United Methodist congregations in Atlanta. The agreement was to work with them for a year, then after this time, the church would sponsor my religious worker visa application (R-1). All was well until four months before my visa expired, the pastor of the church called me and said that due to budget shortfalls and economic downturn, they were no longer able to pay me, meaning my job was terminated. This news came as a shock. A shock of losing income. A shock of fear that I would be out of status since I had only four months to renew my visa. The plan to apply for a religious worker visa fell apart with just one phone call. I had

to make some tough decisions — whether to go back home or find a church that would sponsor my visa in order to stay documented in the U.S. I reached out to Druid Hills Presbyterian Church where I worked managing their shelter. They were gracious to work with me in addressing this imminent immigration case. After some consultation with a couple of attorneys, we decided to apply for a H1B visa, or a work visa. The process was long, but we submitted everything on time. After a couple of months of waiting, the visa was approved for three years.

While working at the shelter, I began exploring the possibility of starting pastoring at Shalom International Ministry. First, I worked as a volunteer, then I left the shelter to work part time and then transitioned to full time at Shalom International Ministry. This change also required a change to my visa status from H1B work visa to an R-1 religious worker visa. The process is very complicated and took almost two years for my visa to get approved. During that period, there were times when I could not renew my driver's license, could not open a new bank account and could not rent a car. Those were

very uncertain times. I held on to my faith in God and hoped that things would get better in the days to come. After the religious worker visa was approved, I applied for another two years renewal, which was eventually approved. By that time, I was eligible to finally apply for permanent residency. In summary, the whole process of changing status from a student visa to receiving the green card took 10 years.

***Our stories illustrate how our journeys into church planting as immigrant pastors intersect with complex systems — such as seminary institutions, national immigration systems, legal processes, and church hierarchies and politics — that we cannot control.***

We have often lived at the mercy of national, denominational and congregational powers that have stretched our faith while also strengthening our visions for our ministries. We have also been conscious not only of our own livelihoods and callings but that of our families' well-being, too. What happens to one of us occurs for all of us. We want to next give attention to their stories.



# IMMIGRANT PASTOR FAMILIES

We want to introduce the stories of our spouses as an aspect of our experience as immigrant pastors. We believe that many immigrant churches owe the spouse a lot for their sacrificial support. While we are male pastors who receive attention due to our visibility, our female spouses often work behind the curtain without any formal recognition. By sharing the stories of our spouses, we hope that people can see how the partners of the immigrant pastors are implicated in the ministry. Admittedly, we are three male pastors with three female spouses. What we share is unique to our stories and we do not intend to exclude female pastors or other types of spouses and partners from what we offer here. We are, however, informed as well as limited by our own experiences and hope they invite further conversation about and support for immigrant pastor spouses and families.



## HYUNSUN KWEON

My wife, Hyunsun, was not as excited as me when we came to the United States to pursue my M.Div. studies at Columbia Theological Seminary. She had a full-time

job in the city government of Kwangju as a social worker. To move to the United States with me and our children, she took a leave of absence from work for five years. As you may guess, nine years after we came to the United States, she submitted her final resignation from her job in 2020, even though she had always thought of returning to Korea to continue her work as a social worker.

While I studied at seminary, my wife stayed home to take care of our children. Spouses of international students receive an F-2 visa and spouses of immigrant pastors receive an R-2 visa. Neither one permits the spouse to be employed, and spouses of pastors are not eligible to have a Social Security Number. This meant that my wife could not open a bank account or even contract a mobile phone.

*Although my wife had professional experience and training in social work, being a wife of an international student who was also an immigrant pastor forced her to stay home.*

The loss of professional and social status and networks is often most acute for female spouses of immigrant pastors, although professional and social isolation can also occur for male spouses.<sup>19</sup>

Participation in the seminary community of spouses also proved difficult. SOS is a Morse code distress signal. It is also the name of the spouses' gathering at Columbia Theological Seminary. SOS stands for Spouses Of Seminarians. What a word! SOS offers compassion and solidarity to all spouses who live in the village of the seminary campus. Unfortunately, my wife could not afford to join the meeting since my family was committed to the ministry with me. We also had to save every penny. Having a simple cup of coffee out was a big expenditure for her. The combined effect increased her sense of loss and isolation.



## IVETTE LLANO

My wife was ordained a pastor by the Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil in 2004. She is Bolivian and learned Portuguese in order to complete her theological

studies as an international student in Brazil. She was the first ordained female pastor in the state of Rio de Janeiro and one of the first female pastors in the Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil. She faced many struggles to take up ministry in front of a church and be recognized in her work. After 20 years living in Brazil, the idea of starting over in another country was not in her plans. When we arrived and started to serve in the church, she received an R-2 visa. Soon after, we discovered that this visa did not allow her to receive payment for work, which in practice did not prevent her from serving as a volunteer in all church activities.

*Here, I want to highlight a common point among many Latin pastors — the family is engaged in the ministry and spouses often work without any remuneration.*

<sup>18</sup> When women migrate independently, they may often be doing so as the sole income provider for families in their country of origin. While they experience many vulnerabilities through migration, they may also have more independence to become an earner. Women who are married and migrate "are more likely than men to stay at home, making it more difficult for them to establish the language skills and social networks required to integrate in their new society." Although we must be attentive to collapsing all lived experience into oversimplified categories, it must be noted that within immigrant churches, female spouses may experience more loss and isolation through the protracted process of gaining green card status. See Khalid Koser, *International Migration: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6–7, 122.

Ivette faced another major challenge. Her weekly routine occurs within communities that speak Portuguese and Spanish, which in a way prevents her from improving her English. Finally, our worshipping community started in our home. On many occasions, we cleaned the house to prepare to receive the families, prepared a snack for the service and then cleaned everything up again. Despite all of this burden on our family, Ivette always says that she does everything in service to the Lord Jesus and that her faith has sustained her in the midst of the challenges she faces.



### SYLVIE KABANGA M

The story of my wife, Sylvie, is one of a kind. When I came to the United States, my wife stayed behind for two years in the Democratic Republic of Congo because of immigration papers. After two years of waiting, she came as an F-2 student, which means dependent status. This was a big shift for her culturally and professionally. When she lived in Congo, she worked full time. When she arrived in the United States, she could not work due to immigration restrictions as an F-2 visa holder. She stayed at home most of the time while I was in school. Those were difficult years for both of us. On the one hand, I was busy with school and work, but on the other hand, she remained by herself most of the day. After two years, thanks to a wonderful Candler professor who graciously agreed to pay her

tuition, Sylvie applied to study theology at Candler School of Theology. After three years, she graduated with a Master of Divinity. After graduation, the visa issue haunted her again. This time, she changed from an F-1 to an R-2, or religious visa dependent, in order to keep her status in the United States. It took Sylvie seven years to be able to find employment, not because she did not want to work, but due to immigration restrictions on employment. When she did finally receive her green card, the door to work opened and she found employment.

When it comes to Sylvie's involvement with Shalom International Ministry, it is worth mentioning that while she was in the process of waiting for permission to work, she actively supported the church since we launched in 2011. She worked as a volunteer, building our worship ministry from the ground up into a strong worship team. She has been a surrogate mother and sister for most of the immigrant youth at Shalom whose parents remain in their respective countries of origin. During Covid, we hosted approximately eight students for five months in our house. She made sure that everyone was taken care of in the middle of the pandemic.

***Many immigrant pastors' spouses and their children are often not mentioned or highlighted when we share about our ministries. Yet, immigrant families in pastoral ministry serve as the backbone of immigrant New Worshipping Communities. Without their leadership and support, immigrant New Worshipping Communities could not flourish.***

Here we have offered a small sampling of what could be numerous examples of immigrant pastors' spouses and families' experiences when they arrive as dependents. Though many of these stories remain untold, they point to the challenge that immigrant pastors and their families experience as they minister. God has blessed us with three children. At least for our kids, they will not have to manage immigration issues since they were born in the United States. However, for immigrant families whose children arrived young or were born or grew up outside the United States, I often ask, how do we raise these children who live in an American cultural context, but at the same time have heritage in their African roots? This is yet another set of challenges that immigrant pastors and their spouses navigate in raising their children, and often in an environment where their circle of support is very narrow and limited.



# SENSE OF CALLING AND SELF-CARE AMONG IMMIGRANT PASTORS

*In addition to sharing our experiences of finding our way as immigrants, pastors and immigrant families in ministry, ACCENTS also wants to offer some additional reflections on our ministry calls. We also want to discuss a few of the ways we have found support and care within the New Worshiping Community Initiative. Admittedly, this initiative is still in its infancy, and we continue to learn and grow together how to become the church God is calling us to be. As we have noted, however, immigrant pastor realities often fall off the radar within historic PC(USA) practices and frameworks for ministry. We hope what we share here can both support immigrant pastors who struggle with similar issues, and promote their pastoral success and fruitfulness, as well as flourishing.*

## CASE STUDY

*“I opened the door and there was that couple with their four children and a dog. They had lost their house, their furniture was scattered across the street and there was a sad look in everyone’s faces. Because of this I didn’t think twice. I invited them in to spend the night at our house. The days passed and it was a total of 42 days until they finally found a new home. We were very happy to help this family, but it caused many problems with our relationships at home. Our children felt frustrated and dropped school performance. At the end of this period, we were so tired and angry that fights took place. And not long after this family moved out, they left the church and we really felt betrayed.”*

## LATINO/A

The Rev. Ashbel Green Simonton arrived in Brazil on Aug. 12, 1859, without speaking Portuguese, and was the missionary who founded the Presbyterian Church of Brazil. He lived only eight years in Brazil, dying at a very young age at 34. However, his time there was marked by great achievements because he founded the first Presbyterian Church of Rio de Janeiro, created the newspaper Imprensa Evangélica (1864), organized the Presbytery of Rio de Janeiro (1865) and founded the Primitive Seminary (1867). In the mission field, he faced the loss of his wife, Helen Murdoch, in 1864. Four years later he also died in Brazil of bilious fever.

The Gospel spread throughout Latin America is the fruit of great missionary stories such as that of Simonton, who faced great challenges, learned new languages and cultures, and even died for the cause of the Gospel entrusted in the call they received from Christ Jesus. I believe that this is one of the reasons that our Latin American evangelical culture has an extremely strong sense of calling and that living by the Gospel is an act of faith. Across Latin American cultures, all we need is to believe that God is calling us on a mission, and we are committed to the work because God will provide us everything we need to follow the calling.

I am proud of this feeling and have experienced God’s care throughout my ministry. However, I faced situations that put my family at risk.

***I know stories of many pastors who succumbed, lost families, and even abandoned the faith because of the pressures of the calling to mission and lack of planning.***

It is common to see fellow pastors living day to day who rarely think or plan anything for the future. My pastor told me that as a leader, I should be an example, keeping problems only indoors with the door closed. For many Latino leaders, we are encouraged to minister like Superman.

It is necessary to understand this sense of missionary pastoral calling and the obligation of sacrifice related to it that is present in most of the immigrant leaders. Often the burden of sacrifice falls on the family of the pastor as well. Understanding this as a cultural dimension of our leadership values and practices can inform supporting immigrant pastors in our ministries here in the United States.

## ASIAN

In the context of campus ministry to international students, my call is not limited to being a teaching elder. Pastoral duties not included in my job description require me to be an Uber driver, a guardian/parent and a moving company, as some examples. Every Sunday, I pick up six students from three different campuses. When they return from summer and winter breaks, the pastor provides them airport pick-up service, also part of ministry.

*One evening my wife told me what my 9-year-old and 7-year-old daughters said at the dinner table. I was not able to join them for dinner on this particular day, and it was not the first time that they ate dinner without me.*

**Younger daughter:** Mom, where is Dad?

**Wife:** He has a meeting with students. Daddy wants to cheer them for their final.

**Oldest daughter** (to her sister): Don't you know Daddy likes them more than us?

*My heart was broken. I believe that their hearts have already been broken by my absence from my family.*

Immigrant pastors stand between self-care and sacrifice. The boundary between these two is blurry for the immigrant pastors. However, immigrant pastors live a life of ministry, since they believe that God calls them to serve God's people and the church community. As established churches build partnerships with immigrant communities, it is important they have a grasp of immigrants' understanding of their sense of calling as we have explored above.



## AFRICAN

The sense of call for an African immigrant pastor is multifaceted. The pastor plays more than the spiritual role in the life of the church. The pastor is a social worker, driver, counselor, paralegal, mediator, conflict resolution expert, health-care worker, financial adviser or the person the community goes to when they need financial assistance. Basically, whatever needs that arise in the community, the pastor is expected to respond and walk alongside the community. This way of looking at their call is rooted in a typically wholistic view of life and ministry.

***Being in ministry is not a compartmentalized call.***

There is a strong belief that the pastor's call is of being sent by God to serve others in all aspects of their lives and share the good news of salvation whether in time of joy or hardship.

***The pastor's well-being is dependent on the well-being of the community. Those two are inextricably connected and cannot be separated.***

One example that can illustrate the sense of call for an immigrant pastor is how my family and I handled the Covid crisis by opening our house to international students. Around March 2020, when the Covid virus started to spread around the country and around the world, one of my family roles was to extend hospitality to some of the students who did not have a place to stay in the middle of the pandemic. My role as a pastor extended to being a parent to those international students as well as being the liaison between the students and parents back in their respective countries. They stayed with us for five months. The community did not see this as the pastor's job alone, but also joined together to support this effort. This is an example that shows how multifaceted the role of the pastor is in the context of African immigrant communities. This sense of call is rooted in the African philosophy that places a strong emphasis on a wholistic way of viewing life.

***Being in ministry is not something that one can switch on and off. It is an ongoing call that meets people at the point of their needs.***

There is little to no separation between the church life and the secular life. The two worlds are intertwined. That is the reason why it is difficult for the pastor to separate themselves from the life of their congregants, and likewise for the congregants to separate themselves from the life of the pastor.

# PRACTICES FOR IMMIGRANT PASTOR SELF-CARE

## CASE STUDY

*“When I was invited to participate in the Spanish-speaking cohort, I thought, there is a problem in this story. During the call a person said to me: ‘Your life is important and if you are well, we know that your church will be well.’ I went to the retreat very suspicious, but at the first meeting the participants started to open their hearts and a circle of trust was created. I met friends who really care about my life. In more than a year of being part of this group, I faced really difficult moments and I had the support, advice and prayer from my friends to overcome each one of them.”*

Let’s think of a list of obstacles for a pastor or immigrant leader to start a new worship community here in the U.S. This list would include immigration processes, adaptation to a new culture, language and others. However, the deep sense of calling would motivate this leader to face all these challenges regardless of the time devoted to fulfilling their mission. In addition, pressure, expectations and a sense of responsibility within the immigrant leader and from the community would encourage them to devote all their time to ministry at the price of taking care of themselves. Their homes often serve as the site of prayer and worship meetings or as temporary homes for other immigrant families or individuals. Many immigrant pastors are also bi-vocational, and work in a secular/industry job while serving as an always on call pastor. For a New Worshiping Community, the pressures to “achieve results” that can be assessed also weighs on immigrant pastors. In theory, many immigrant pastors understand the importance of self-care, but for practical reasons (some we have already explored above), they are not able to care for themselves. The combined

effect leads to burnout, ill health or a change of careers altogether. We suggest that the care of the immigrant pastor and leader is essential for the entire community to be healthy. It is important to support immigrant leaders and pastors becoming aware of living a pastoral life that makes space for personal care and fulfillment of mission.

## NEW WORSHIPING COMMUNITY PRACTICES

*Below we highlight three effective practices that are offered within the 1001 New Worshiping Communities Program that has served as support for immigrant pastors: **Sabbath, Coaching** and **Cohort** (Mutual Support Group).*

### SABBATH<sup>20</sup>

*Sabbath: It’s in the Bible!*

*“The word ‘Sabbath’ is not in the African pastor dictionary!”*

These words were said by an African pastor who was about to participate in a Sabbath grant program being offered by 1001 New Worshiping Communities. Unfortunately, the same could be said of many immigrant community pastors. The word Sabbath does not show up in many immigrant pastor dictionaries. Whether African, Latin or Korean communities, immigrant congregations often expect that their pastors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, even when on vacation!

The expectation that pastors remain constantly on call and never have time apart from ministry is unsustainable, unhealthy and unbiblical. If Sabbath cannot be found in the dictionary of immigrant pastors, it is most definitely found in the Bible! Keeping the Sabbath day holy, or set apart, makes God’s ultimate top 10 list. In fact, it comes in at No. 3 on the list of things God invites us to do to walk in wisdom. It is a command that pastors continuously break to the detriment of their own spiritual, mental and physical health. From the perspective of Scripture, Sabbath is not a suggestion but a requirement. Sabbath is meant to be a regular part of our daily rhythm of life.

<sup>20</sup> For this Sabbatical session, we had the collaboration of the Rev. Jeff Eddings, Spiritual Formation and Coaching Associate, 1001 New Worshiping Communities; jeffeddings.com.

The reasons for needing Sabbath time are clear. The tasks of pastoral life are often urgent and challenging in immigrant communities. Due to the nature of this pastoral work, numerous pastors struggle with mental health challenges, burnout and isolation because they neglect to cultivate grounding practices that will support them in their ministry. It does not have to be this way! We choose these pathways of burnout and isolation that God does not desire for us. Sabbath is a primary way to avoid these pathways.

Returning to our African pastor's story, he took a week off to practice Sabbath for the first time in many years. He was amazed at how transformational the time was for him and found himself committed to making Sabbath a priority for his life going forward.

### **SABBATH: WHAT IS IT?**

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St. Ignatius has a prayer in the Spiritual Exercises that goes like this:

*I want to know God more deeply.  
I want to love God more intimately.  
I want to follow God more closely.*

Sabbath is about rest. But not rest for resting's sake. Sabbath is resting in an intentional way that connects us to knowing and loving God more deeply so that we may then follow God more closely.

We often fall into the trap of thinking we must follow God more closely through our pastoral work while neglecting the knowing and loving part of relating to God. However, following God is intertwined with knowing and loving God. We must *BE* and *BE WITH* God before and as we *DO* on God's behalf. Knowing and loving God is a lifelong journey into which we are constantly invited.

An intentional Sabbath practice is one that helps us to know God more deeply, love God more intimately, so that we may then follow God more closely in ways that promote life, wholeness and healing for us and for our communities.

### **SABBATH: CHALLENGES**

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One of the significant challenges for the immigrant pastor is helping their community understand the importance of regular Sabbath practice for the health of the pastor. The community needs to be formed in understanding the importance of Sabbath

not only in the life of the pastor but for themselves as well. When the pastor develops good Sabbath practices, community members may feel more inclined to practice Sabbath in their own lives as well.

Second, pastors make the mistake of comparing their ministry to Jesus. They may think, "Jesus was always on the go, always available, always helping people, so I should be as well!" However, Jesus modeled for us the importance of finding time and space to simply be with God. Even as he ran his ministry race, time and time again, Jesus went out to "a certain place" (Luke 11:1) as was "his custom" (Luke 22:39) to be apart and to be with God. Pastors need to cultivate their "certain places" and regular "customs" to replenish themselves in the Spirit of God so they can "run with perseverance the race marked out for them while fixing their eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-3).

We also need to remember that as the son of God, Jesus had a unique call to fulfill in approximately three years. Jesus knew he was lining up to run a sprint and so he prepared to run that sprint as hard as he could. In part that meant he did not take on a family life and this left him to be more free to run. He also encouraged his closest followers to pack lightly so they might be ready to move quickly as they traveled from place to place.

For many immigrant pastors, the race is not a sprint but rather a marathon. Pastors hope to be in the race for decades and not just for three years. Unlike Jesus, many pastors have families as an important part of their call and life obligations. Taking care of the family should always be a priority for the pastor. Time should be created to care for the families' needs as well as time to simply rest and play with each other. This is a critical part of the Sabbath journey.

If pastoral life is a marathon instead of a sprint, we must recognize the significant differences in the ways you need to prepare for a marathon instead of a sprint in order to be healthy. If you start out a marathon by running as fast as you can, like you do in a sprint, you will be finished before you get past mile one! You need to pace yourself and consider carefully how to care for yourself during the course of the race.

One who runs a marathon must take time along the way to hydrate and replenish their strength with energy bars, oranges and gummy bears! Marathoners also make sure they use the right equipment and shoes and find or create a support team in order to finish the race strong.

The marathon of immigrant pastoral ministry life is one where pastors must learn to pace themselves and learn how to replenish their strength on the way. Sabbath practice is an important way to replenish our spirits and our bodies for the journey.

### **SABBATH: OTHERS CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER**

When the woman came to Jesus and anointed him with expensive oil before his passion, she did so as an act of love and care. The disciples grumbled about her act and said that the oil could have been sold to take care of the poor. Jesus simply reminded them that the poor would always be with them, and he honored her beautiful extravagant expression of love toward him. This passage has often been taken out of context to excuse poverty as a condition of life that we should expect to endure and thus remove obligation to eradicate it. However, the emphasis of this passage is one of the more marginal figures in the social context of Jesus' ministry recognized who he was because of, we can creatively imagine, his interactions with her — perhaps interactions that made her feel seen, heard and human. Her pouring out oil was a reciprocation of this care she had received from Jesus. The disciples, as Jesus' select entourage, often missed seeing him as human and therefore failed to offer reciprocal care of him as the human.

Like the disciples, our communities may not be able to recognize their pastors as fully human with needs that include rest and play. Because rest and play is a privilege that many immigrant communities themselves do not get to enjoy, it can be challenging to recognize that rest is part of the deep care that immigrant pastors need to be sustained in ministry. Immigrant communities of faith may need to learn how to offer similar gifts of beauty and extravagance such as the woman who poured out oil to their pastors. Giving their pastors regular time off and at times financial support to take time away from the 24/7 demands of ministry are gifts of love that can transform their ministry as well as the community. A pastor who is cared for will always be one who is better equipped to care for others.

One practice that communities can adopt is to assign one person to be the Sabbath advocate for the pastor. This advocate would work with the pastor to develop their regular rhythm of Sabbath practice. They would help the pastor take weekly time off as well as plan for a regular vacation. They would also seek to make sure the pastor takes

regular Sabbaticals. They would also communicate the importance of Sabbath keeping within the community and work creatively with individuals and families to envision what Sabbath could like. This Sabbath advocate would offer the same blessing to the pastor as the woman did for Jesus by anointing him with oil before facing his deep time of trial.

### **SABBATH: TESTIMONIES**

#### **REV. SARAH LEE**

Watertown Multiethnic Community  
Watertown, New York  
After an eight-week Sabbatical



*Before my Sabbatical last year, I honestly felt that I was burned out from my ministry, even though my love and passion remained the same, or greater, for my ministry. I boldly asked my community and the presbytery for two months off. Amazingly, everyone said that I deserved to take the time. Furthermore, the Presbyterian Mission Agency granted me \$3,500 for my Sabbatical vacation. This grant enabled me to take a trip to Korea with my husband in order to reconnect with my family of origin.*

*We stayed at a guest house near my mother's nursing home in Korea. I was able to visit her frequently, even several times per week. The staff said that my mother was so happy to see me, and she gained new power and energy. The same was so true for me in that I became recharged and restored with physical and spiritual power and energy. My energy for ministry was renewed through spending this needed time with my mother and husband in Korea.*

#### **REV. ALEX GONZÁLEZ**

Fuente de Gracias  
Clovis, California  
After a four-week Sabbatical



*As a Hispanic pastor, we are accustomed to the idea that we have to be present for things to get done. The fact that we are always needed by the church makes us forget that it is not our church but the Lord's. Taking a four-week Sabbatical provided great time of rest and time with my family. The best part, however, was realizing the potential of others by being away from the church and seeing God work in their development. I was surprised and full of joy when I saw others stand up and lead the church when I was gone.*

## COACHING

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A 1001 New Worshiping Communities coach is someone who comes alongside a church planter to help them as a leader identify ministry values, prioritize, focus on priorities and determine what actions should be taken for a more effective ministry. A very common phrase in coaches training is the leader is the specialist and the coach accompanies the leader in reaching the knowledge of where the leader is, where the leader wants to go and how to get there. A coaching relationship focuses more on ministerial results through questions the coach encourages the leader to ask in order to generate the actions s/he will take.

The basis of this coaching relationship is trust and accountability within regular meetings. During coaching sessions, sometimes difficult questions are asked that can generate a certain discomfort but that lead the ministry leader to reflect more deeply on their actions. The sessions always conclude with setting goals to be met and thus to account for progress made in the interval between the meetings.

### GET UP THAT HILL! GET A COACH! (by Jeff Eddings)<sup>21</sup>

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*Recently I was on a hike with a heavy pack. We hit one particularly steep hill and I felt spent. My companions seemed to fly up the hill as I fell behind. But one person saw my struggle and came back to me. They walked with me and pointed out some spots where the terrain got tricky. They reminded me that I could do this and they offered me space to rest and fed me gummy bears and chocolate to fuel me the rest of the way up!*

*This is the work of a good coach. They come alongside. They do not do the work for you. They help you set goals (get to the top of this hill!), encourage you on the way, point out pitfalls and feed you in life-giving ways.*

An experienced backpacker has everything they need for the trail in their pack so they can face any challenge that might arise when they are out in the wilderness. Church planters are like this backpacker. They have all they need to do the ministry work in their “life backpack” that they carry with them at all times. The spiritual gifts, ministry experience, creative ideas and practical resources are all there waiting to be used on the adventure that is planting a new church! The problem is that sometimes planters forget they have what they need, or they misplace

items. They may also become overwhelmed in the midst of the many demands placed upon them.

A 1001 New Worshiping Communities coach helps pastors sort through their backpack so they can discern what it is they have and can use now. The coach encourages and reminds the planter that they are the expert in their context and that God has provided all they need to reach their goals of starting a new community.

A coach can be particularly helpful for an immigrant pastor. Our 1001 Coaching Network provides coaches from many different cultural backgrounds. Many of our coaches (including the authors of this resource) are immigrants themselves and have experienced all the challenges and setbacks that come from being an immigrant pastor. They can help immigrant pastors navigate how to work with presbyteries, partner churches and navigate polity issues in the church. They can also specifically help because of their knowledge of the immigration process. They can offer insights on how to manage the process alongside the pastor’s ministry. In short, a coach is a vital resource that can help pastors thrive and is available to our immigrant pastors through the 1001 Coaching Network.

## COACHING TESTIMONIES

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### REV. HENNIE WATTIMENA

Indonesian American Presbyterian Church, Derwood, Maryland  
On working with a 1001 New Worshiping Communities coach



*Being an immigrant pastor is not easy. Adapting to a new culture presents the pastor with many challenges. I also observed that immigrant congregations are also navigating issues of identity, language, financial crisis and power dynamics. I realized I needed help because the pastoral work became overwhelming.*

*I am grateful that I have a coach from 1001 New Worshiping Communities. I felt my coach is a godsend. My coach listens to me and helps me to focus and prioritize issues within the ministry. He also helps me find balance between my ministry and my self-care. He created a space for me to share without judgment. He helps me clarify my goals and encourages me to make progress toward them. Whenever I have felt stuck and overwhelmed in my ministry, it is comforting to*

<sup>21</sup> For this session, we had the collaboration of Rev. Jeff Eddings, Spiritual Formation and Coaching Associate, 1001 New Worshiping Communities; jeffeddings.com.

know that I can count on him for guidance. My coach told me, “Hennie, you are like a mountain,” meaning that we pastors are like a mountain that survives all the storms with prayer and God’s help. These words of support still ring in my ears. In a way, the coaching became a spiritual journey, which I found to be very meaningful and valuable for my ministry and my life.

### **EBEN ALONGE**

Organizing Pastor, David’s Court  
Ministry, Atlanta  
On working with a 1001 New  
Worshiping Communities coach



*My coaching experience with 1001 New Worshiping Communities remains one of the best things that has happened to me in ministry so far. Having a one-on-one-coach is a rare privilege that I never had for nearly 20 years of ministerial life.*

*Being coached with the New Worshiping Communities felt like being carried on the wings of grace. I felt renewed, rejuvenated and empowered to work and run for another decade because of the quality coaching I experienced. My interactions with my coach were not only formal and superbly professional on the one hand; they were also informal and personal on the other hand. I was able to glean from the vast years of experience of my coach who has been pastoring for many decades.*

*I was able to share my ministry burdens and challenges with him. Through his years of ministerial experiences, we worked through all the issues that felt mountainous to me to find resolution. I am very grateful to 1001 New Worshiping Communities for this golden opportunity. I strongly encourage anyone who can participate in the coaching experience to do so.*

### **COHORT (MUTUAL SUPPORT GROUP)**

*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Ecclesiastes 4:9–10*

Who takes care of the people who take care of them? Some statistics reveal that 80% of pastors consider that pastoral ministry affects their families negatively. Seventy-five percent report that they have experienced at least one major stress-related

crisis due to ministry.<sup>22</sup> Generally speaking, pastors are very accustomed to caring for others but have very little experience or expectation of receiving care. While this may seem endemic to pastoral ministry, in the case of the immigrant pastor it can be profound. Cultural barriers, immigration processes, adaptation to new social and economic systems, American racial landscapes, and acquiring English language and skills can and often do generate an acute sense of isolation.

***Coupled with the activist mode in which immigrant pastors inherently lead — spiritual leader; social worker; translator; negotiator within unfamiliar legal systems, for example — isolation and lack of care support are ingredients for failure, unhappiness, burnout and family crisis.***

Ministry leaders and pastors of immigrant communities and congregations need a safe and courageous place of care and support to be able to share their anxieties and fears, dreams and hopes.

The 1001 New Communities of Worship Cohort Program is a good example of a support group. Being part of a cohort group can provide support and friendship and remove the leader from the place of isolation. It can give them the opportunity to be in a safe space to share challenges and dreams, as well as the possibility of sharing knowledge. The formation of these groups has to be intentional and focused on the growth of its participants. The most important thing about these meetings is the life and well-being of pastoral participants and not necessarily increasing their productivity. This cannot be overstated. Participants need to be able to leave the place of being the minister, with its pressures and expectations, in order to seek comfort and be able to demonstrate their fragility and anxieties in the face of life’s dilemmas. This is an intentional process that does not occur or form immediately. Time must be given for involved leaders to develop deep relationships of friendship and trust. In the case of being immigrant pastors together, one’s particular experience of migration, exile, trauma and displacement, for example, will inform how the process of building trust and friendship will occur. It cannot be programmed or set on a timetable. In addition, cohort groups bring together leaders at different stages of the church planting process. Sharing personal as well as ministry development stories and insights allows shared experiences to promote an organic and healthy community learning process.

<sup>22</sup> London, Jr., H.B.; Wiseman, Neil B., *Pastors at Risk*, (Ventura, CA; Regal Books, 2003), 20, 86.

The Cohorts Program was developed to create a relational environment among leaders who are planting churches in different contexts and regions in the United States. A leader within each cohort organizes meetings and retreats focused on generating time for refreshment and spiritual renewal. There are several cohort opportunities that support the leaders of New Worshiping Communities. Each cohort has a specific interest focus, connecting leaders who are at similar stages in their communities or who are looking to grow in a particular area, such as financial sustainability or spiritual formation.

To provide one example, a cohort was formed with leaders who speak Spanish. Pastors in this cohort are often geographically isolated and do not speak English as their first language.

***They named this group the Cohort “Pa’lante” (Latin expression to move on) and together they support one another through use of Spanish language that promotes greater freedom of expression.***

Other cohorts that use different languages provide immigrant pastor-leaders opportunities to express their ideas in their first language and equip them with a space to share similar social, ministry and cultural challenges.

## COHORT TESTIMONIES

### REV. TAMARA LARA

Pastor, Nuevo Camino

Wimauma, Florida

About her experience at the 1001 NWC Cohort “Pa’lante” of Spanish speakers



*Our cohort has been a source of blessings for me — a space to share and to receive. I have been able to remind myself that I am not alone and that the Lord blesses me through other people. Participating in the cohort also has given me perspective and resources that I can use in ministry with my faith community and the immigrant community around me. Pastors still need pastors, and this group has been a very important “place” to be able to express myself and to receive pastoral care. Rafael particularly has always been a listening ear and a source of information and resources. The cohort has benefited me greatly, and the tools I have obtained within it have benefited my ministry.*

### REV. GUSTAVO SÁNCHEZ

Pastor, Mision Presbiteriana Emanuel

Long Island, New York

About his experience at the 1001 NWC Cohort “Pa’lante” of Spanish speakers



*The cohort provides the space for us to be understood, comforted, advised and prayed for. In the cohort, you do not feel alone.*





# CULTURAL FRAMEWORKS AND THREE ACCENTS FOR CHURCH PARTNERSHIP

## CASE STUDY 1

*A group of young Korean Christians started weekly gatherings at one of the leaders' houses. They have a prayer meeting and Sunday worship at the house. Their family-like relationship attracted more Korean Christians to join them. As the group grew fast, they needed space for their meeting. The leaders of the Korean Christians group visited an American church in the town. The American church has been known as a church that values justice and diversity. The Koreans suggested to the American church that the group of Korean Christians would bring more diversity in their church if they allowed them to use their facility. The pastor and sessions of the American church were excited about the partnership with Korean Christians.*

*Although the Korean group had their own worship service at 1 p.m. on Sunday, once a month they joined the Sunday worship service of the American church at 10:30 a.m. They had a joint choir team and exchanged their cultural heritage as Christian.*

*Six months later, the pastor of the American church asked the leader of the Korean group to meet up to discuss ministries. The leader from the Korean Christians was surprised to hear that they should stop eating Korean food in their fellowship.*

## CASE STUDY 2

*A Latin community used the facilities of an Anglo/white church for a few years. Community members organized a quinceañera, a party to celebrate a girl's 15th birthday. Church members worked hard to get everything clean, but they did not ask how to operate the industrial stove, and accidentally put out the pilot light fire on Saturday night. On Sunday morning, the church had a gas spill, so it was necessary to have firefighters come to the property. This incident prevented the white church from using the premises in the morning service. More saddening, the white "host" congregation would no longer allow the Latin church to use the facility. They had to find another place to meet for worship and events.*

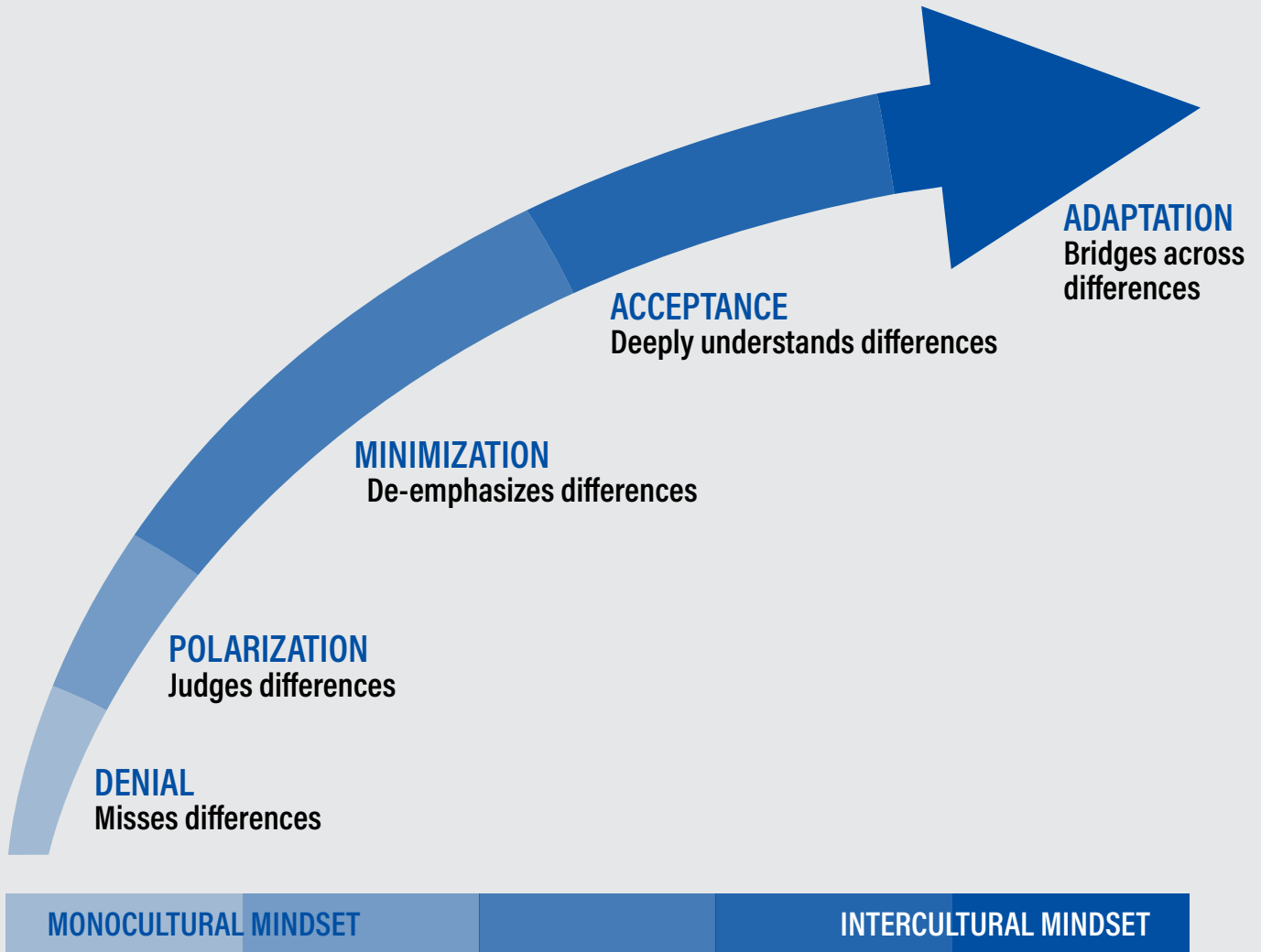
We cannot ignore that between historic PC(USA) churches and immigrant New Worshiping Communities, many cultural barriers exist. Some occur in the form of worship. Others occur through the experience of interpersonal relationships. Cultural barriers and misunderstandings often also arise through differences in what it means to share space. In order to build bridges, both congregations need to communicate intentions as well as name cultural values (that may need to be negotiated) that will in the end be decisive for the success of the mission of New Worshiping Community development.

Most NWCs have a partnership or at least a working relationship with a congregational church in order to do ministry together. A congregational church may expect to have an opportunity to serve their local community alongside an immigrant New Worshiping Community. If this NWC also seeks a space in which to worship, and a congregational church has some space to share with them, they may begin a closer journey of ministerial partnership and space sharing. While they begin this partnership with hope and excitement, before long both congregations may wish they knew about some issues related to power dynamics and boundaries in sharing spaces. Alongside understanding the partnership as ministerial, it will also be helpful to understand this forming relationship as intercultural in nature.

**ACCENTS** wants to emphasize that intercultural competence is the key to successful ministerial partnership. As Bhawuk and Brislin comment, "To be effective in another culture, people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be willing to modify their behavior."<sup>23</sup> Without intercultural competence, sharing a building will be just a hectic relationship that brings regrets and trauma.

<sup>23</sup> Bhawuk, D. P., and Brislin, R. (1992). The measurement of intercultural sensitivity using the concepts of individualism and collectivism. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 16(4), 413-436.

The graphic below helpfully maps the process of growth in moving from a monocultural mindset to an intercultural mindset. This process does not happen quickly, nor without significant change, particularly on the part of the historic, or dominant culture, congregation. The immigrant NWC may often not share in the “Presbyterian way,” nor should it be necessary to conform to the manner in which the historic partnering church may have been pursuing ministry. The pastoral leaders, as well as members, in both congregations will need to engage in intercultural learning, exercise intercultural humility, and, particularly for the historic church, experience power sharing in new ways that can be painful and difficult but transformative.



Adapted from the Intercultural Development Continuum: Primary Orientations

## ¡MI CASA ES SU CASA!

“¡Mi casa es su casa!” is a common Spanish expression meaning “welcome” in English. It literally means “my house is your house.” It expresses a philosophy of hospitality in which the person who enters your home really feels part of the family, that they feel at home! The Bible takes hospitality very seriously and countless biblical passages talk about its practice. I (Rafael) want to highlight two. The first comes from Romans 12:13, which says, “Share what you have with the saints who are in need. Practice hospitality.” The other verse is found in 1 Peter 4:9, “Be hospitable to one another without complaint.”



Think about the life of an immigrant who has just arrived in the United States. Think of the challenges they face: long working hours, a new language, different cultures, living without their favorite food, separated from their family, away from home. Many barriers exist for an immigrant family in approaching our large imposing church buildings. Our sense of mission should prompt us to ask, what ways can we make these immigrant families feel welcome, or at home?

The hospitality we propose refers to much more than opening the doors of your building and exercising an imbalance of power in a relationship with immigrant communities. Immigrant communities that partner in building use often live in constant fear that if they don't do everything right, they will be thrown out. For example, I remember an elder showing me the church's fellowship hall that we would use for our services. He said to me, “This is my baby; take good care of my baby.” I was so happy to have a place to meet with our community, but at the same time I had a fear of failing in some way of taking care of his “baby” in the way he expected.

A strong joint and mutual commitment to God's mission across congregations is needed so that challenges such as these — expectations of how a space will be used and fear about upsetting a church leader who has power to revoke use of the space — that will eventually arise in the partnership can generate growth and increased mutuality. Our building must be understood as a tool for God's mission in this world. When we as immigrants, who experience a daily sense of powerlessness, feel welcomed without fear of punishment, we take care of our common home with much more love.

***That's why the accent “¡Mi casa es su casa!” is an invitation to walk together in mission.***

Create opportunities that generate communion and collaboration at work. Understand that we share in the same mission and that we can mutually bless each other.

Bringing the accent “Mi casa es su casa” intentionally generates opportunities for collaboration that will strengthen the relationship by allowing both congregations to recognize that they are walking together in the same mission. Much of the conflict and tension between cultures is simply the result of a lack of knowledge. Cultures are different and that is why we must create spaces to be together and learn from each other.

Shared workdays, Easter egg hunts, music projects, plays, talent nights and many other activities can provide low-stakes (compared to joint worship, for example) opportunities to build relationships and community. In our congregations, sharing food across cultures and breaking bread together always provides excellent opportunities to bring congregations together. Finding low-key and low-stakes opportunities to be present with one another can promote understanding and trust for when differences inevitably lead to disagreements and tension that will need to be navigated from the foundation of mutuality.

In building good partnerships there is a maxim: “Who is not seen is not remembered.” It is important to share God's works among mission and church partners. We propose much more than an activity report. We propose something more akin to “testimony,” sharing unique stories of transformation of lives that were made possible by new worshiping and charter church partnerships. Stories of God's work among and between us can promote spiritual renewal and generate gratitude in the hearts and minds of everyone involved. Stories that will

motivate other churches to open the doors of their buildings, get involved in this important mission of God and with joy to say, “Mi casa es su casa.”

Remember the elder who likened the shared space to his infant? At the end of a few months of worshiping in the church, we hosted an Easter egg hunt in collaboration with the charter church that opened its doors to us. They are mostly elderly, but the New Worshiping Community is younger. Our children ran around the buildings looking for eggs filled with surprises.

***That day, the same elder who once chided me, “Take care of my baby,” looked at me with teary eyes and said, “Your community has brought us life!”***

## 두레 (DURE)

In Korean, the concept of Dure (두레) can be translated as “helping one another.” Du-re (두레) is a resource sharing system used by farming communities in South Korea. Farmers reduce the total amount of labor by working together on each other’s farms. When the farmers in the village help one another, they share labors, tools and even parenting. While people work on the farm, other families take care of their children together. Dure (두레) serves as a kind of collective partnership in life. As people help others first, the help-recipient and the giver consent silently, or by their actions, to help others later.

**ACCENTS** suggests that Dure illustrates the value of reciprocity in a partnership formed between a local congregational church and an immigrant New Worshiping Community. In the early stages of an immigrant New Worshiping Community, partnership with a chartered church can support immigrant pastors and their community in launching different pilots. The ministerial partnership with an immigrant church can also bring a new form of and opportunity for ministry to the congregation. For instance, a local congregational church can develop an annual mission trip with an immigrant New Worshiping Community. As a local church seeks an opportunity to cultivate long-term mission work abroad, the immigrant New Worshiping Community would be a good resource and become involved in local advocacy on issues that impact immigrant communities. The immigrant congregation would provide the churches with their living experience and information. Another suggestion that Dure offers

might include co-hosting Vacation Bible School (VBS). Due to the aging membership of many local congregational churches, members miss children in the sanctuary. They may not have hosted a summer VBS in a long time. On the other hand, immigrant New Worshiping Communities cannot take on planning a summer VBS due to the lack of space, volunteers, experience and available time due to employment. Co-hosting VBS would provide an opportunity to work and minister together in the surrounding community and in the process, minister to one another.

In the end, a partnership characterized by Dure prioritizes mutual growth and thriving for both congregations, not just upholding a contract between a landlord and a tenant.



## UBUNTU

Some Africans who live in the southern portion of the continent are familiar with the Zulu word Ubuntu, a word that describes the essential qualities of who we are as human beings. Ubuntu has origins in the Bantu language and thus is conceptually shared across Bantu-family languages, such as Shona, Xhosa, Lingala and Chewa.

***Ubuntu is often translated, “I am because we are, therefore I am.” This concept speaks to the fact that our lives are inextricably connected as human beings who are responsible to one another. When an immigrant New Worshiping Community suffers, the local charter congregation and mid council will also suffer. When a New Worshiping Community thrives, they will also thrive.<sup>24</sup>***

<sup>24</sup> Numerous books and articles are devoted to discussing Ubuntu. The most widely accessible and readily available book that applies Ubuntu in discussion of recent South African history and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is written by the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu. See Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Image-Doubleday, New York, NY, 1999.

As a philosophical concept, Ubuntu is deep and wide in theory and in application, or praxis. Therefore, it cannot be fully defined in one or two paragraphs. However, key values inherent in the concept may be noted, namely solidarity, hospitality, relationship building, communication and collaboration.



Though Ubuntu is an abstract term, it has practical aspects worth paying attention to by both charter congregations and mid councils as they walk alongside New Worshiping Communities. One may ask how charter congregations can embody the practice of Ubuntu in their shared ministries with immigrant New Worshiping Communities.

Accent suggests that practicing Ubuntu encourages sharing opportunities, challenges and responsibilities in the life of both churches; equal participation in decision-making and sharing leadership with immigrant New Worshiping Communities. At Shalom International Ministry, the practice of Ubuntu has been a gift both to the PC(USA) congregations in the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta and to members of Shalom International Ministry. Through the 10 years of its existence, both local congregations and Shalom have been walking alongside each other. New and lasting partnerships have been formed, resulting in new ministries that have positively impacted the Clarkston community. Thanks to the practice of Ubuntu, the children, youth and adults who experienced isolation now have community.

The young adults who were behind in their schoolwork due to language barriers and interrupted education now have a safe space to find help with schoolwork as well as build relationships with their peers through the Shalom After-School Program “Inspire.” Thanks to the practice of Ubuntu, local charter congregations have seen their lives transformed through their encounter with God and new community neighbors who come from different parts of the world.

***The concept of Ubuntu invites us to continue to join our hands as we seek the well-being of our community as the text of the prophet Jeremiah 29:7 encourages.***

The text reminds the exile during Babylonian occupation as s/he reminds us today that we are called “to seek the Shalom of the community because it is in its Shalom that we find our Shalom.” One of the ways we have experienced Ubuntu at Shalom has been through the partnerships that we have built with local congregations by forming an advisory team that is made up of Shalom members and partner churches. This team meets quarterly to discern where God is calling us to partner. Over these past years since this team formed, we have organized numerous events together that catalyzed building relationships; collaboration; and, have improved our way of communicating with one another as we share God’s love with the world. Some other examples include joint services, pulpit exchange, fundraising, youth retreat (Montreat, North Carolina), tutoring, fashion shows and cultural exchange, to name a few.

As we continue to ponder on this concept of Ubuntu, we may ask, how do local congregations and presbyteries embody the concept of Ubuntu as they seek to show kindness, inclusiveness, care, compassion and love to our immigrant New Worshiping Communities? How do we come to see that our well-being is intimately tied up in the well-being of others? And, how do we act accordingly? These are questions fundamental to growing into Ubuntu as partner congregations.

# PREPARATION AND TESTIMONIES FROM BEING ON MISSION WITH IMMIGRANT NWCs



## TESTIMONIES FROM MISSION PARTNERSHIPS

In forming church partnerships, we believe that stories are central for entering into the lived experiences of immigrant pastors, New Worshiping Communities and charter congregations. To that end, we have included some testimonies from PC(USA) pastors of both immigrant New Worshiping Communities and charter congregations who have engaged in congregational partnership. We hope these stories might provide insights into the shared experience of learning and growing together. These stories and insights are not prescriptive but rather serve as an invitation to listen to how God has worked and continues to work across communities to bring into reality a new way of being church on mission in the world.

**The Rev. Martin Osae**  
Ghanaian Community Church,  
Dallas



### *Introduction*

My name is Martin Osae. I was commissioned as a pastor four years ago and currently serve as the pastor for Ghanaian Community Church at Woodhaven Presbyterian Church in Dallas. In the Ghanaian community, use of the word “fellowship” indicates a small gathering, not a church. We chose to call ourselves Ghanaian Community Church to not create confusion.

### *Background*

I grew up in the Presbyterian Church in Ghana and served as a Sunday school teacher. As a young adult, I visited and then started attending a charismatic church. I again became involved in children’s ministry.

Having served in ministry in both types of churches, I moved to Switzerland to study children's ministry. In 1992, I received training as a "child evangelist" at an organization called Start Evangelism Fellowship. After my studies in Switzerland, I moved to London to work with a children's ministry. For three years, I worked as part of a team that trained Sunday school teachers all over England, Scotland and Wales. We also started a Bible class for children called Good News Clubs. When the ministry began, six children participated. By the time we left the ministry, 27 kids had joined. After this many years in children's ministry, I knew that I worked well with kids, so I decided to pursue a degree in education in the United States.

### *United States Journey*

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I moved to the United States in 1995 to attend Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma, graduating with bachelor's degree in Education and a Master of Education Administration. After my first degree, I taught in Tulsa public schools for four years while working on my master's degree. While in Tulsa, I served in a United Methodist church and started a puppet ministry with children. We visited nursing homes and started a puppet ministry with senior residents. After completion of my master's degree, my wife and I decided to relocate to Dallas and look for a church where I could serve. Wherever I have lived or moved, I have always participated in some kind of ministry, looking for what I can do to help the community. So, when we moved to Dallas, I found an opportunity to serve at a friend's church as an associate. We started having children and the distance between where we lived and the church became more difficult to manage. So, we moved to an Assemblies of God church where I served an associate pastor for about seven years.

### *New Worshiping Community Journey*

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While I was an associate pastor, a group of leaders in the Ghanaian community who lived in the Dallas area started talking about starting a Presbyterian church. Since I was also the president of the Ewe Association, an ethnic group from Ghana, for four years, I was well known in the broader Ghanaian community. Because I was heavily involved in the community, the men and women of the Ghanaian community approached me to start this proposed Presbyterian church as they knew me and my

leadership style. However, I told them that I pastored in a charismatic Assemblies of God church, but that I would pray about it. After praying about it, the question became, "Why not me?" Leading this church brought me full circle to my Presbyterian roots after a number of years working with charismatic churches.

Starting what has grown into Ghanaian Community Church was an honor. We began gathering in a living room with about 12 people. In August 2013, the Rev. Diane Baldwin, the former pastor of Woodhaven Presbyterian Church in Irving, Texas (Grace Presbytery), invited us to come and worship in their fellowship hall. After we began worshiping there, Diane moved and the appointed interim pastor became very instrumental in helping our church through the process of becoming recognized by the presbytery.

At one point in the process, power dynamics between the presbytery and Woodhaven Presbyterian Church came to a head. The presbytery wanted to claim our church as one of their new and innovative New Worshiping Communities. Woodhaven Presbyterian spoke up, asserting that they were the ones responsible for our becoming a recognized ministry. Due to a lack of clarity about where we belonged in the polity structure — were we part of the presbytery as a new innovative worshiping community or part of Woodhaven Presbyterian Church? — everyone wanted to take credit for our presence. Over time, the presbytery and Woodhaven came to an understanding of working in partnership to support us. They gave us some guidelines for becoming recognized, including sending me to Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary to obtain a certificate in ministry. I went through the program and received my certificate in ministry, after which I was commissioned as the commission pastor for the Ghanaian Fellowship. By this time, it was clear that we would be nested at Woodhaven Presbyterian Church to collaborate and build relationships while maintaining our uniqueness as an African congregation. Even though challenges occurred at the beginning of the process, once the presbytery and Woodhaven Presbyterian Church clarified how they would each be in formal and supportive relationship with our church, our own relationship with the presbytery and Woodhaven Presbyterian Church began to blossom.

Today, three leaders from Ghanaian Community Church serve as part of the Woodhaven Session. I also serve on the New Church Development Committee at the presbytery. We have also grown

very quickly while at Woodhaven, gathering about 120 people before Covid. Since Covid started, our numbers fluctuate between 60 and 80. We are very fortunate to have many children and youth as part of our community, totaling about 30. We have also invested heavily in them by paying for some of our youth to learn to play instruments. For instance, during Covid, we invested in getting an app where they could learn how to play instruments wherever they live. We also took advantage of developing virtual children and youth programs, and, thankfully, we are doing very well now despite the pandemic.

### ***Congregational Relationship and Collaboration***

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The relationship with Woodhaven continues to grow as we share in worship and ministry. It has been a catalyst for our own success. We collaborate very well with the pastor. I preach for him when he is out of town, and he does the same for me. If he wants to initiate a project, he will come and ask or call me to check what I think about it and vice versa. We also share the same space for worship. Woodhaven worships in the morning, and we worship in the afternoon. We hold joint services such as Pentecost Sunday, Christmas Eve and World Communion Sunday, to name a few. Having said this, not everyone at Woodhaven is happy for us to worship in the building. Some members do ask when we are going to leave. Right now, we have no intention of moving. Our goal is to continue growing until we reach the point of buying our own property. We are fiscally responsible and self-sufficient and are not dependent on the presbytery. Two years ago, our Leadership Team even decided to start contributing \$500 per month to Woodhaven. As we contributed financially, they began to see the value of us remaining there for now.

In addition to worship, we partner and add value to Woodhaven through the sharing of ideas and activities. For example, Woodhaven has an education wing that is being renovated with a \$75,000 grant received to realize a vision for ministry that our church shared with them. We wanted to offer educational programs that will benefit the Ghanaian community. We suggested teaching coding in the community and offering SAT and ACT preparation programs for youth. This mutual investment in community educational outreach is a result of our partnership.

### ***Community Involvement***

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Because I am known and respected as a spiritual leader in the Ghanaian community, I have been invited to be involved with community events, funerals, naming ceremonies and wedding events. We also have held a toy drive that we opened to the local community. Because of our involvement in the Ghanaian community, I insisted to the leadership team that we name our New Worshiping Community “Ghanaian Community Presbyterian Church.”

We also have a YouTube channel, “Word in a Nutshell,” that was developed during Covid. Even millennials follow our channel. We collaborate very well with the pastor, session and the entire church at Woodhaven Presbyterian. The pastor has played a significant role in the mindset shift for his members and the session. In the beginning, the presbytery had some reservations, but with time, they have opened up as they saw that we were engaged in the church and the community. We also received support from 1001 New Worshiping Communities and are now applying for the investment grant, which has been delayed due to Covid. Now we have a coach. Our goal is to invest in the educational program. Even those who were not enthusiastic about us being there initially are now saying yes to our presence in the shared space. When we have joint services, they enjoy our presence. We did an event called a “Taste of Africa,” which was very successful, and Woodhaven members enjoyed it. It was an excellent opportunity to build relationships.

### ***Challenges***

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We do not have any big challenges, other than when it comes to differences in relationship to time. Because we are more event-oriented than time-oriented, our members can be late. We are working together to adjust culturally to new understandings of time. As a Ghanaian church, we culturally do not participate or observe all the worship practices as Woodhaven, such as the Blessing of Animals. The pastor and I speak very clearly about such differences, and he is very understanding.



**The Rev. Dr. C. Gray Norsworthy**  
Johns Creek Presbyterian Church,  
Georgia



The Rev. Dr. Norsworthy is the senior pastor of Johns Creek Presbyterian Church in Johns Creek, Georgia, where he has served for 11 years. Prior to this, he was the senior chaplain at Big Canoe Chapel in Big Canoe, Georgia. Before serving as a chaplain, he was the senior pastor of Shallowford Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, where he first began partnering with immigrant churches.

While serving Shallowford Presbyterian Church, three immigrant churches nested there: Cristo Para Todas Las Naciones (Spanish-language), Hanbit Presbyterian Church (Korean American) and Atlanta Metro Church of God (Indian-Pentecostal). Presently at Johns Creek Presbyterian Church there are also three immigrant churches worshipping on-site: Igreja Casa Brasil (Brazilian), Crossing Community Presbyterian Church (Korean American) and World Healing Ministries (Indian-Pentecostal).

While serving Shallowford Presbyterian Church, Norsworthy focused his Doctor of Ministry studies on learning more about cross-cultural partnerships within the church. Norsworthy is often asked by other pastors considering hosting immigrant churches what is important to know about entering into these relationships. He considers it a great joy to share his experience and how he has been enriched over the years by these cross-cultural partnerships.

### *Church Renewal*

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When Norsworthy is asked about his experiences with immigrant churches over the years, a smile comes to his face as he talks about the relationships and friendships that have formed because of these partnerships. He first talks about the friendships that have developed with fellow pastors, many of whom he considers to be longtime friends. He acknowledges that he did not have some great plan to create these partnerships within the church he was serving. In fact, he was somewhat reluctant at first when pastors of immigrant churches began calling him to ask to meet in order to discuss whether there was space in the church buildings for them their congregations to worship.

When he arrived at Shallowford, there was already a Korean American church meeting there, but soon the pastor left. Another Korean American church

from a different location joined with them to start meeting at Shallowford Presbyterian Church. The Rev. Sung-Joo Park was called to pastor what became Hanbit Presbyterian Church. Within a few short years, the church grew to the point that it could no longer comfortably worship in the chapel of Shallowford Presbyterian Church. Eventually, with the help of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, they moved to a new location in Johns Creek, Georgia, where they built a new building and continued to grow. Over the years, Norsworthy's friendships with the other immigrant church pastors, the Revs. Waldo Pinilla and Alex Thomas, were also deeply enriching.

A partnership council of the four congregations meeting at Shallowford was created to build relationships, understand cultural differences, plan upcoming joint worship and fellowship events, and work out the day-to-day challenges that emerged from sharing the same space. Together they created a covenant which focused on moving beyond a landlord-tenant relationship, while creating a climate of grace as they shared sacred space together. Whenever he is asked about these cross-cultural partnerships, Norsworthy always affirms that he and the charter church congregations he has served receive much more than they ever give. He believes that in each church, the hosting church is simply a steward of the buildings that ultimately belong to God.

***Instead of one group saying to another, "You're in my space" — which might indicate some tension — Norsworthy reminds others that the only person who can truly say, "You're in my space" is God. Our task is to share God's space generously.***

Norsworthy had not planned to continue hosting multiple immigrant churches when he was called to serve Johns Creek Presbyterian Church. When the Rev. Sara Hayden from the New Church Development Commission of the Greater Atlanta Presbytery called to ask Norsworthy if Johns Creek Presbyterian Church would consider hosting a nearby Korean American church that had lost its lease in an office building, Norsworthy was nonetheless open to the idea. Since he had experience with this, he knew not only that it was not hard to do this, but there was great benefit for both congregations.

So, the church agreed to host that congregation and the relationship went well for a number of years. When their pastor left to lead another congregation, many of the members either followed him or

joined other Korean churches. Soon another Korean American church asked to nest in the church and again the church opened its doors gladly. In little more than a year, that congregation was given a church building that previously belonged to another congregation that was closing. Norsworthy was invited to attend the worship service celebrating the generous gift of the church property from one congregation to another. Again, it was another sign of renewal and new life.

Presently, Casa Brasil, a Brazilian immigrant church pastored by the Rev. Rafael Viana, worships at Johns Creek. Together with the other immigrant churches they hold joint worship services on World Communion Sunday and at other times. The worship includes music, a sermon and communion in three languages. Often the worship service is followed by a shared meal in which each church is invited to bring food representative of their cultures. Members of each congregation gather around tables and do their best to get to know each other. The members of Johns Creek Presbyterian Church realize that these partner congregations are more effective in reaching out to members of the community for whom English is not a first language, and for whom America is not their country of origin.

### ***Biggest Challenge***

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Perhaps the biggest challenge in relating to immigrant churches is the inability to take seriously how deeply culture is ingrained within all of us. Norsworthy discovered this not only from his experiences with congregations having cultural frameworks different from his own. Through his studies, he also learned that culture runs deep and is not something that is easily changed. When we think someone is trying to change us and our culture, it feels like something significant is being violated. When we do not take someone else's culture seriously and only view others from the centrality of our own cultural perspective, we fail to respect the other person as someone who is made in the image of God.

So, different cultures experience and view things differently. Norsworthy discovered that one such example was how different cultures understand time. This became an issue when trying to create schedules for the use of buildings when there were four congregations worshipping in the same spaces. One culture may take a very laid-back view of time, though this view of time may not even be consistent within an individual church. Other cultures had a much

more rigid view of time and when things should end. Seeking to be flexible with one another while still respecting appropriate time boundaries proved to be one challenge that needed to be worked through — which was accomplished without too much difficulty.

Another challenge related to how the hosting congregation viewed the relationship with the nesting congregation. Norsworthy continued to remind members that we are all partners in ministry rather than in a landlord-tenant relationship. Over time, this understanding of the church partnerships and shared space continued to be challenged. However, in most cases things were worked out because of the climate of grace that was established initially as well as the friendships that developed.

### ***Biggest Success Story***

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In one sense, the biggest success story occurred when one of the nesting congregations grew to the point that it needed to leave, which was bittersweet.

However, when Hanbit Presbyterian Church invited Norsworthy and members from Shallowford Presbyterian Church to be a part of their dedication service in their new building, it was nothing but joy. Then, when Atlanta Good Church needed to also relocate due to its growth and moved into the buildings that were given by Northwoods Presbyterian Church, as the charter church closed, it was inspiring to see the original members' generosity in handing over their building so that another new church could begin to minister to those in the community.

### **The Rev. Robert Sparks** First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta



My name is Rob Sparks, and I've been an ordained Presbyterian minister for more than 20 years. Currently, I'm the associate pastor for Care at First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta in Midtown. Prior to this call, I was a solo pastor at Fairview Presbyterian Church in Lawrenceville, Georgia, for 14 years. Lawrenceville is a small town roughly 30 miles northeast of Atlanta and is now considered a suburb in the Greater Metro area. I'm a child of the south as I grew up in Alabama. I went to college in Kentucky and seminary in Georgia. All the churches I've served have been in Georgia. My wife and I live in Decatur, about a 30-minute drive from Lawrenceville. I think I was a good fit with Fairview

because it was/is a historic southern church that is predominantly made up of white people and I was culturally in tune with them. However, as is typical of mainline clergy, I skew a little more politically and theologically liberal than the folks in the pews and am probably more inclined to welcome newcomers, especially recent immigrants, into our church.

At nearly 200 years old, Fairview is the oldest church in the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta. It began as a rural church that was caught up in suburban expansion when Atlanta's population soared in the 1980s and '90s. It experienced its first wave of membership growth in the early 1990s when Gwinnett County was the fastest growing county in the United States. The new residents were primarily white, roughly 90%. The growing pains were that many of the new residents were Northerners who'd come to the Sunbelt for jobs. Over time, the racial makeup of new residents shifted.

The neighborhoods around Fairview have become increasingly diverse. In 2010, demographers determined that Gwinnett County had become a "majority-minority" county — that is, white residents made up less than 50% of the population. The minoritized residents represent many different nationalities and races, but two have had an outsized impact on the Fairview congregation, Koreans and Hispanics. During my tenure, two Korean communities tried to start worshiping fellowships and one Hispanic congregation.

### *Biggest Challenge*

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#### ***The biggest challenge is the white congregation's sense of "ours versus theirs" mentality.***

Even though the church opened its doors for free, with both Korean communities, the church session placed strict limits on what portions of the facility could be used. They were welcome to use Sunday school rooms and the fellowship hall but not the historic sanctuary. There was pushback on the use of the kitchen, as one elder expressed concern that kimchi might "stink up the church." Ultimately, the first Korean group dwindled and never grew

beyond a group Bible study. The leading pastor also moved back to Seoul, so the small community ceased to gather. The second group from a different denomination grew rapidly. What became Servant Korean Evangelical soon exceeded the capacity of our fellowship hall, and the congregation moved into their own space. On their 10th anniversary, Servant Korean Evangelical invited me to speak at their campus where I addressed more than 1,000 people in their latest sanctuary. They have a successful ministry today, yes, but during our time of space-sharing, I never felt that Fairview was much more than a temporary landlord.

The third group, On The Way Church, is a different story. Simultaneous to Rafael approaching Fairview about starting a worshiping fellowship of Spanish speakers in our fellowship hall, Fairview's session was also approached by a different Korean community with a similar need. As a congregation we decided to support Rafael as he proposed a Presbyterian congregation in contrast to the Korean community who came from a different denomination. Personally, I looked forward to Rafael and his wife, Ivette, becoming a part of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta — truly cementing the fact that we are colleagues in ministry. The Korean churches made financial donations to Fairview's mission, but they were never partners in ministry. On The Way feels different. They were invited to participate in the charter church's worship and campus workdays, as much about fellowship as cleaning up the grounds, and church meals. Fairview has some Spanish speakers, and they became involved with On The Way, attending their worship services and participating in their projects like music lessons and tutoring. Rafael has also become an active participant in the ministries of the presbytery and General Assembly, thus furthering the larger mission and ministry of all PC(USA) churches. Even though I was called to a different ministry, I am still part of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta and remain a colleague in ministry with Rafael and Ivette. I look forward to seeing how the Holy Spirit will bless both On The Way and Fairview as the congregations spread the gospel of Jesus together in a corner of Georgia that continues to diversify and change.

# APPENDIX

**ACCENTS** would like to offer a sample of agreements between New Worshiping Communities and charter congregational churches. The different types illustrate the possibility of creative approaches to articulating mutual, clear and transparent partnerships. While the formality may not necessarily

resonate with the foundational work of developing relationships of trust, we have found that the process of discussing and articulating agreements that support sharing space can be part of, but not a substitute for, the process of building trust and mutuality across worshiping communities.

## EXAMPLE 1: COLLABORATION AGREEMENT

### COLLABORATION AGREEMENT

This Collaboration Agreement (“Agreement”) is entered into this (date), by and between (Hosting Church Name) Inc., with a principal place of business at (address), and (NWC Name) (collectively, the “parties”).

**WHEREAS**, Hosting Church Name operates the property located at the above-referenced address (the “Church”) for worship and other ministries and fellowships; and

**WHEREAS**, NWC Name desires to use various locations within the Church as further designated herein for its own worship and related ministries and fellowships; and

**WHEREAS**, the parties further contemplate a collaborative relationship between them in exchange for Hosting Church Name’s grant to NWC Name of usage rights in the Church locations designated herein.

#### **NOW, THEREFORE, the parties agree as follows:**

1. The term of this Agreement shall begin as of the date first written above and shall have an initial duration of one year. Before the end of the initial one-year term (length of sharing building), the parties shall meet to conduct a review, at which point the Agreement may be extended by mutual consent for additional one-year periods. After the initial one-year term, either party shall be permitted to terminate this Agreement on ninety (90) days’ written notice to the other party.
2. Hosting Church Name grants to NWC name rights of entry and occupancy and usage for the Church’s sanctuary for the purpose of NWC name worship services every Sunday starting at 1 p.m. The parties will work together in the event that Hosting Church Name has a special event that may require the timing of NWC name entry, occupancy or usage of such sanctuary to change on a given Sunday. NWC name invitees, agents and personnel are permitted to park in Hosting Church Name’s parking lot adjacent to the Church for purposes of such worship. Parking is not permitted during the week, during business hours, for NWC Name invitees, agents and personnel, except that NWC Name leadership shall be permitted to use one space.
3. Hosting Church Name further grants to NWC Name rights of entry and occupancy and usage for the mutually agreed upon spaces on the third floor of the Church’s education building for the purpose of NWC Name weekday ministry and fellowship activities. Such activities will occur after 1 p.m. NWC Name will receive one parking permit for daytime weekday parking. For clarity, other Hosting Church Name groups will also be using these agreed-upon spaces, and NWC Name will maintain the condition of such spaces so that they are suitable as shared space. NWC Name is accepting these spaces as is and understands that Hosting Church Name does not clean the third-floor spaces, nor empty trash from bins in such spaces, and NWC Name will be responsible for those tasks.

4. Provided that Hosting Church Name will maintain any required permits and licenses for use and occupancy of the Church, NWC Name accepts the above-referenced Church facilities on an as-is basis, and Hosting Church Name makes no warranty, express or implied, regarding their fitness for a particular purpose or regarding their condition. Hosting Church Name will provide utilities at no cost to NWC Name, but NWC Name will be solely responsible for any other expenses that NWC Name incurs under this Agreement.
5. NWC Name will ensure that all activities conducted in the space are legal and conform to any safety or security policies and practices ascribed by Hosting Church Name. Further, NWC Name will ensure that all activities are respectful of Hosting Church Name's neighbors. NWC Name will be fully liable for the acts or omissions, and for any claims in any way related thereto, of any of its personnel, agents or invitees while on any property owned, leased or operated by Hosting Church Name, and will indemnify Hosting Church Name for any claims resulting from its exercise of its rights and obligations under this Agreement, including, but not limited to, claims for (i) damages to the real or personal property of Hosting Church Name, (ii) personal injury or death of any person, (iii) damages to the real or personal property of any third party, (iv) damages to the real or personal property of any of NWC Name personnel, agents or invitees, (v) theft or conversion of any Hosting Church Name property. For purposes of this Section 5, "Hosting Church Name property" includes the property of any Hosting Church Name employee, agent, or invitee. NWC Name obligation under this Section 5 shall not apply to the extent that such claim arises from the gross negligence or willful misconduct of Hosting Church Name or its employees.
6. In exchange for the rights granted by Hosting Church Name hereunder, NWC name agrees to use its best efforts to support the ministry of Hosting Church Name, including, but not limited to, its mission work, and NWC name agrees to collaborate with Hosting Church Name regarding opportunities for shared worship (particularly, but not only, during the Christmas and Easter seasons), as well as for providing volunteer support for significant Hosting Church Name events as mutually agreed and participation in other ministries, mission projects or fellowship events.
7. Both parties agree to comply with applicable federal, state and local laws and with any rules, regulations or policies of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta.
8. The parties agree that this Agreement contains their entire agreement with respect to the subject matter hereof and supersedes all prior agreements, oral or written. Each party acknowledges that it has been provided the opportunity to review this Agreement with a lawyer retained in such party's discretion. This Agreement may only be amended by mutual written agreement. Neither party may assign this Agreement without the consent of the other party, and no third-party beneficiaries are intended to be created by the execution of this Agreement. This Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of Georgia.

**Effective as of the date first written above.**

Hosting Church Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

NWC Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

## EXAMPLE 2: CHARTER CHURCH COVENANT

### SHALLOWFORD PARTNERSHIP MINISTRIES COVENANT

*(Adopted by SPM Council on 11/10/98)*

As member congregations of the Shallowford Partnership Ministries, we covenant to the following:

- Work toward relating to one another as partners in ministry rather than a landlord-tenant relationship.
- Create a climate of God's grace and forgiveness, and be willing to forgive and reconcile when we intentionally or unintentionally hurt one another.
- Share the resources of buildings as "sacred space" that ultimately belongs to God.
- Worship, fellowship and serve together in ways that build Christian community among our congregations.
- Provide leadership and support of the Shallowford Partnership Ministries Council making attendance and involvement a priority.
- Celebrate the unity and the diversity we have in Christ.
- Honor and respect the differences of our cultures.
- Reverse our tendency of seeing people different from ourselves as insignificant, inadequate and deficient.

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