



Multicultural church -Chatlist

Friends,

Recently on the Chatham Chatlist, a conversation has started regarding church segregation (an earlier note may have been posted before I joined a week ago).

Here is the first post I saw, from Takonia:

On the "church segregation" issue, certainly the issue is de facto, not enforced segregation.

Nevertheless churches that set up two separate services might be said to be either:

--encouraging segregation

--providing for the separate needs of their parishioners

In any event, unless a church or any organization makes a deliberate effort to integrate, the result is segregation or at best, very gradual long term integration.

This is the second one from Susan Pelton:

The churches in Chatham are already pretty well segregated, mostly black or white. Why would Latino be any different, especially since the Catholic churches are few and far between here? Also, I wonder why people think the the Latinos are not trying to learn English? I've been trying to learn Spanish for the past 2 years, but It's hard to learn a new language. Also, whenever I say hola to someone in Walmart, they say hola back, but when I say hello, they always say hello back.

Here is my reply:

Regarding segregation within the churches:

I am the new pastor at Chapel in the Pines Presbyterian Church (the new church that meets at Dockside Restaurant). Part of the vision for this new church is that it will be multi-cultural in some way. Right now we are all white, because we are a brand new daughter church of University Presbyterian in Chapel Hill. Most all of our members (they will become official on June 4th) are former University Presbyterian members who live in Chatham County.

However, we have had and continue to have many conversations regarding what it requires to be a multi-cultural church. It is not an easy thing to do. And it doesn't just happen because you invite everyone to come. One model we are trying to avoid is the "come and be like us" model, which welcomes everyone and anyone as long as they adopt the model of the majority present (in our case, white, educated, financially stable North Americans). The model we are hoping to emulate is the "come and teach us about your culture and how you worship." We don't plan on watering down our faith, but we do recognize that there are Presbyterians (and many other Christian denominations) in Africa (Kenya and Ghana have especially large Presbyterian populations), as well as Guatemala, Korea, Mexico, Brazil, and any other country you could name. These Christians worship in many different ways. We are willing to learn from other cultures as we worship together and are hopeful that some model of a multi-cultural church will work in North Chatham.

The language barrier is a big issue. Many in our congregation are seeking to learn Spanish. Only one is fluent. We hope soon to offer SSL (Spanish as a Second Language) classes of some sort for the community. We have been in conversation with Spanish speaking congregations in Siler City and in Durham. We have talked about what a service would look like that included both languages. We are very interested in integrating cultures, though we are well aware of the challenges this poses to us.

In this short space, I have not, of course, been able to cover all of the issues or challenges that we face. I have not even touched on the segregation that exists between black and white churches. I have spoken with a number of people from both of these communities who claim that they prefer a segregated church because it isn't as much work. One man commented, "I work all week at the racial thing. I don't want to have to work at it on Sunday." Comfort is a big part of the segregation of cultures, I believe. At Chapel in the Pines, we are willing to push our comfort level. We are prepared to face the challenges of the gospel as we reach across the lines the world has drawn for us, but lines that in Christ should be invisible. I would be very interested in hearing from any of you about your thoughts on our efforts. We believe this is important and ongoing conversation for us all.

Grace and peace,
Mindy Douglas Adams, Organizing Pastor
Chapel in the Pines Presbyterian Church

This article comes from Chapel in the Pines (PCUSA)

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