



Intercultural Competence Plan

"After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."
Revelation 7:9a

Our Purpose

We believe God's love heals and transforms lives. God's love is encountered in disciples of Jesus who passionately share faith, hope and justice in the community. Vital congregations form and shape passionate disciples. We recruit and develop transformational leaders to make disciples and grow vital congregations to transform the world.

Our Vision

We see a church like Jesus Christ—radical spirit and humble, teaching and healing, soul saving and soul tending, leader and servant, unbound and outbound. We also see a Wesleyan Church—personal holiness and social holiness, connectional and risk-taking, thoughtful and inspirational, small groups and large vision, *welcoming all and respect for diversity of thought*.

What is our Commitment?

We are committed to resource and support the development of congregations and lay and clergy transformational leadership. Equipped and vital leaders and congregations are powerful witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the region.

What is Intercultural Competence?

Intercultural competence is the understanding of your culture and others cultures and the ability to shift perspectives to honor and collaborate with all cultures. It is a mindset. A skill set. A heart set.

A mind set (knowledge) concerns how we think about difference including verbal and nonverbal communication styles and values and the stumbling blocks that prevent non-dominant culture members from fully participating in the community.

A skill set (abilities) consists of continually learning new ways to interact with others who are different from us.

A heart set (attitudes) concerns how we feel about difference and involves appreciating others as they are, no matter how different or similar.

Intercultural competence requires:

- the aptitude to appreciate, be open to and have the flexibility for differences in cultural diversity;
- an acute self-awareness, or the ability to be aware of values, attitudes and assumptions that informs one's perspectives and behaviors;
- some degree of cultural knowledge in a variety of cultural environments;
- the capacity to communicate across cultural difference; and
- the ability to cultivate meaningful social relationships across culturally different groups.

The Christian Imperative for Intercultural Competence

For Christians, being inter-culturally competent is not just a good idea, it is a biblical mandate. It is required of us. Jesus commands us to love one another (John 13:34, Matthew 22:36-40, Matthew 28:16-20). It is a simple command but it requires effort on our part. This requires knowing the "other" and listening to one another. "Knowing the other" needs to be more than just listening to the stranger's story. It must also mean understanding and appreciating the differences between her/his story and our own. We need to have intercultural competence to love across boundaries.

The Intercultural Challenge for GNJ

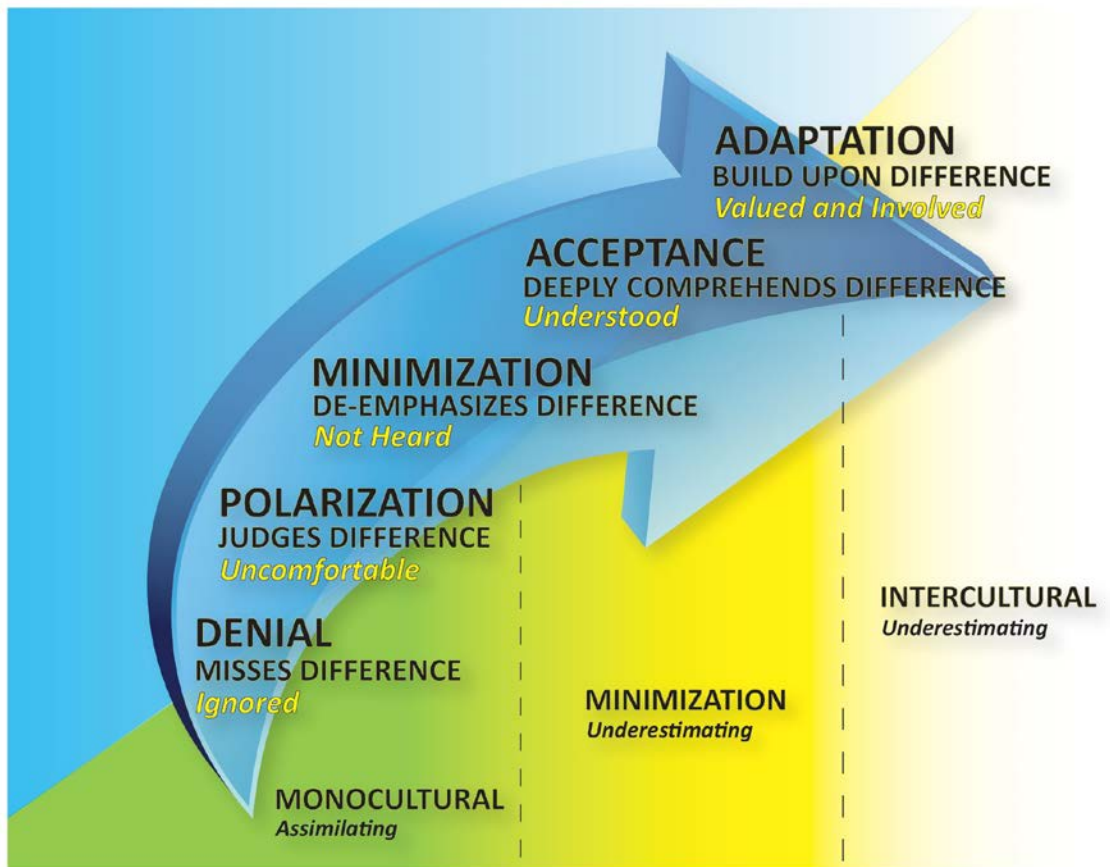
The challenge for most our congregations is not a desire for diversity and inclusion; but rather a resistance to make the changes needed to foster diversity and inclusion.

Most congregations realize their need for greater diversity, even those in locations where the surrounding population is virtually all from one race. All churches have gaps between the makeup of their churches and their communities, whether it is race, age, gender, education, economic status or a range of other differences. If we are to develop attitudes and actions that are necessary to live as authentic Christians in a complex and diverse world, we will need to effectively interact across differences and work to inclusion for all peoples.

The benefit of being one of the most diverse conferences within the denomination is the potential for intercultural competent leaders that can connect across differences in communities and congregations. The assumption has been that diversity itself produces a depth of understanding across cultures or intercultural understanding. Diversity is not enough. Diversity plus intercultural competency will lead to inclusion of all peoples.

Intercultural competence will not happen on its own. It requires clear intent, purposeful self-reflection, a supportive cultural context and integration into systems.

The Journey towards Intercultural Competence



Intercultural competency is a life long journey. We are constantly learning and understanding how culture evolves with time and how we interact with those changes. The above diagram provides us a suggested journey for developing intercultural sensitivity. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) provides empirical evidence of the different phases we might be in our skill set in working with cultural differences. J. Bennett and M. Bennett developed this model which outlines a move from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism. The term “ethnocentrism” refers to “the experience of one’s own culture as ‘central’ to reality, this means that the beliefs and behaviors that people receive in their primary socialization are unquestioned ; they are experienced as ‘just as the way things are’.”¹ The term ethno-relativism was coined to mean “the opposite of ethnocentrism – the experience of one’s own beliefs and behaviors as just one organization of reality among many viable possibilities”.²

The intercultural Development continuum has five distinct experiences that spread between ethnocentrism and ethno-relativism.

¹ In Wurzel, J. (Ed.). (2004). Toward multiculturalism: A reader in multicultural education. (2nd ed. Pp.62-77). Newton, MA: Intercultural Resource Corporation. 62

² Ibid

We as the body of Christ are in a journey towards perfection that requires on-going self-examination. The continuum provides us a place to engage in self-awareness reflection of how we relate the cultural differences that surround us.

As we seek to be faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ to love our neighbor as ourselves, we are called to journey towards an ethno-relative approach that builds on the differences that God's tapestry has created so that we can be the beloved community.

Definitions

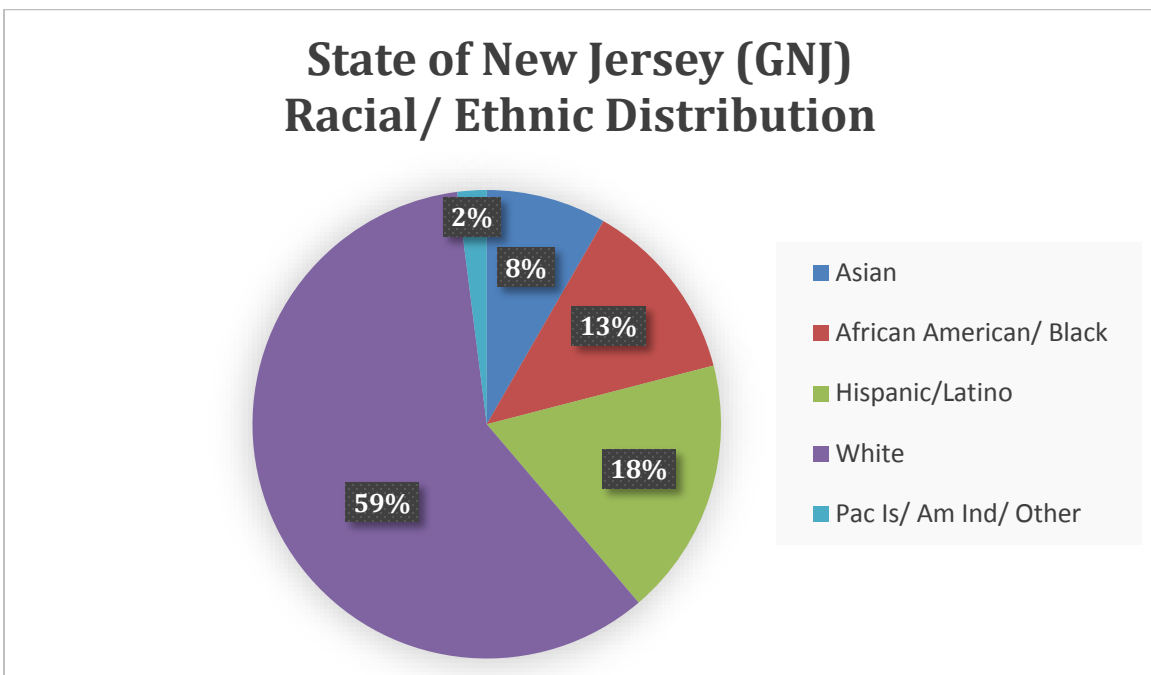
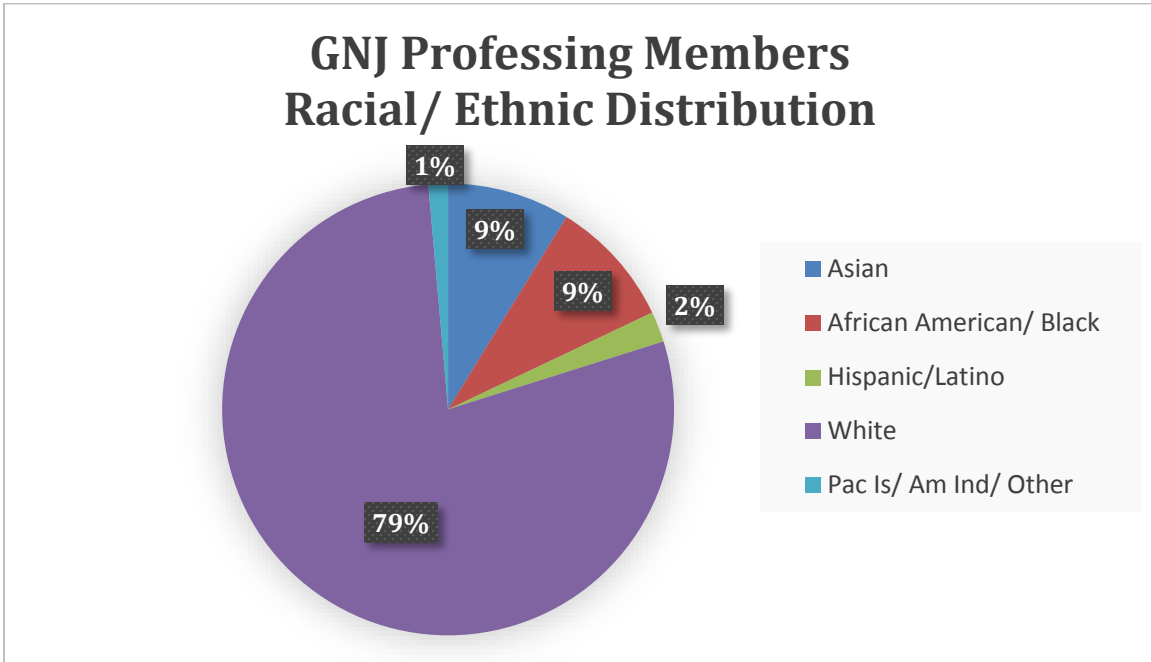
We have commonly used terms to count and categorize our congregations in Greater New Jersey. To facilitate the conversation, the following definitions apply.

Multicultural congregation – these are congregations where at least 30% of their professing membership is of other ethnic/racial group from dominant ethnicity in the local church.

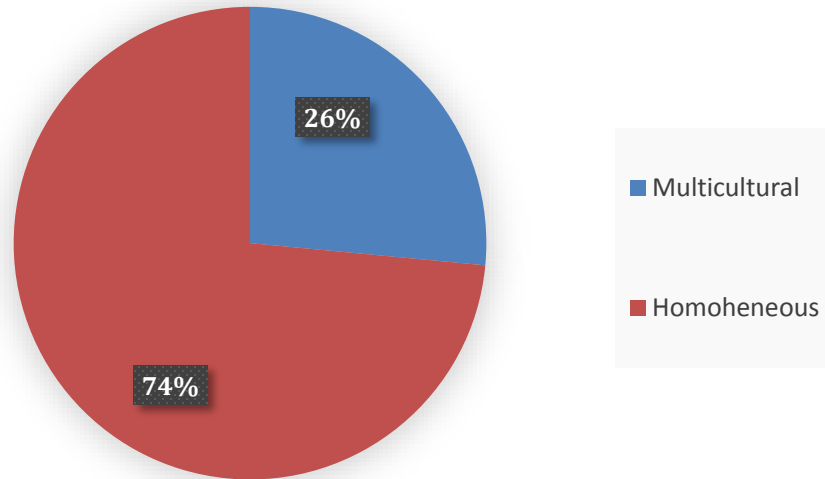
Cross racial/cultural appointment – a clergy person is considered to be under a cross cultural/racial appointment when his/her ethnicity is different from at least the 75% of the ethnic/racial distribution of the professing membership of the local church.

Our Current Reality

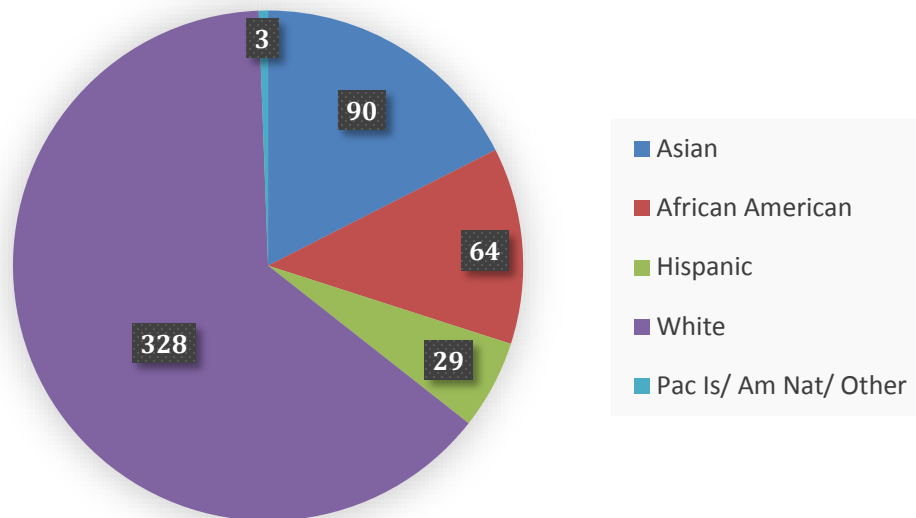
For the church to be relevant in our communities, we must first understand our contextual reality and mission field. The following graphs highlights demographic data to provide a baseline of who are the United Methodist in GNJ by race; ethnicity, gender, clergy, and others identifiers. The data also provides a comparison of who our neighbor is (racial and ethnic) statewide.



GNJ Multi-Cultural Churches Distribution

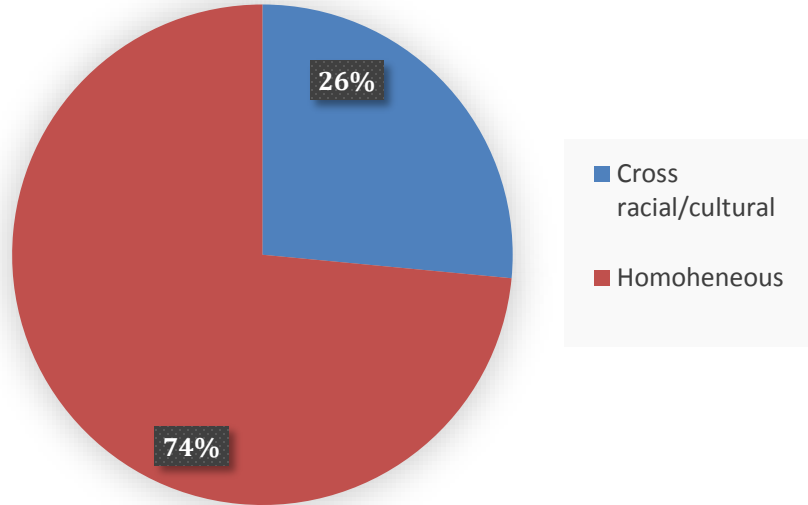


GNJ Clergy Racial/Ethnic Distribution

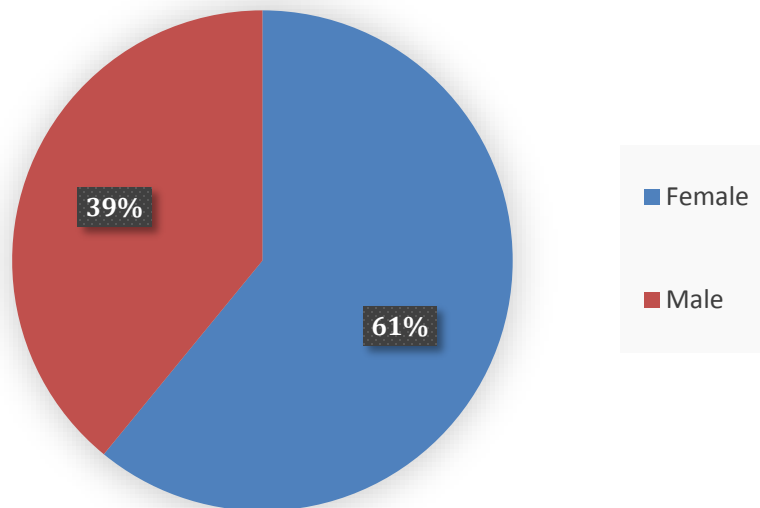


Note: The above graph provides actual numbers instead of percentages of GNJ Racial/Ethnic clergy composition so that all ethnic/racial groups are highlighted, even those that currently represent less than one percent.

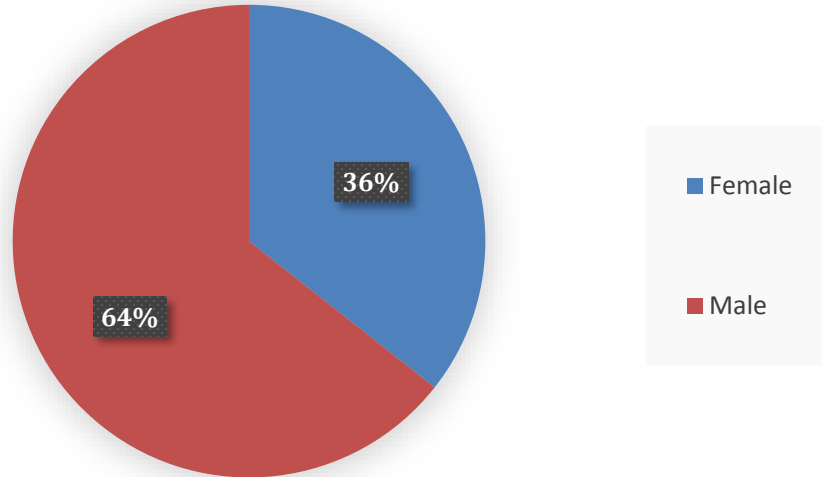
GNJ Cross Racial/ Ethnic Clergy Appointments Distribution



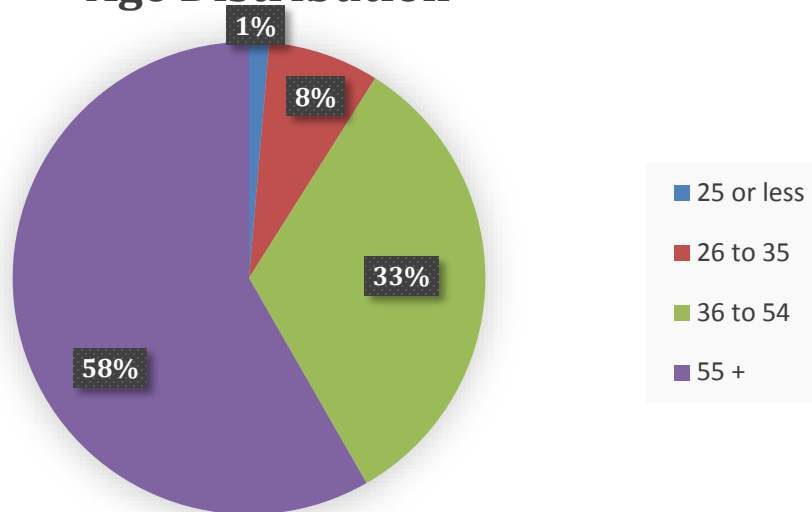
GNJ Professing Members Gender Distribution



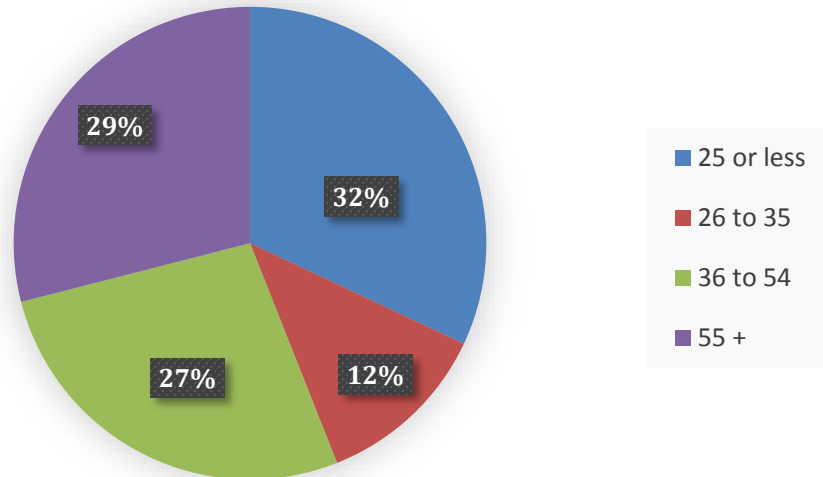
GNJ Clergy Gender Distribution



GNJ Clergy Age Distribution



State of New Jersey (GNJ) Age Distribution



GNJ is in the top five most diverse conferences in our denomination. Each Sunday our worship services are conducted in nine different languages (list languages). However we face many challenges. Our diversity does not reflect the states diversity in

- Race
- Age
- Gender
- Ratio of Urban to Suburban to Rural

Diversity is also more than ethnicity. Diversity includes, but it is not limited to, people of different races, geographical location (urban, sub-urban, rural, etc), socio-economic classes, theologies, ages, sexual orientation, disabilities, and people new to the faith.

GNJ needs to be further shaped by the significant diversity of our region as was the early Christian church as reported in Acts 10.

Purpose of the GNJ Intercultural Strategic Plan

Develop the leadership capacity to create a systemic shift in GNJ from *Diversity* to *Intercultural Competence*.

This is a 10-year strategic plan and direction to grow intercultural competence so that GNJ's values, processes and policies align and develop the leadership capacity needed for a regenerative intercultural competent GNJ.



Diversity recognizes that each person is unique and recognizes our individual differences in perspectives, identity, and points of view among individuals in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. Diversity includes important and interrelated dimensions of human identity such as race, ethnicity, color, gender, socio-economic status, nationality, citizenship, education, geographic origin, sexual orientation, ability, age, political beliefs, and or other ideologies.

Inclusion, means that all people should feel valued, have their differences respected and have their basic needs met. Inclusion means each person can live a life where they are treated with dignity and respect, can participate fully, have a voice so that they can influence decisions that affect them and can live up to their God-given potential.

This model is based on the following assumptions;

- Change is a process
- Change occurs in stages
- Change is more spiral than linear, (i.e., the organization goes through valleys and mountains in reaching higher stages of inclusion due to backlash, economic changes, and other factors)
- Organizations must be prepared to fully realize inclusion
- Organizations and individuals go through a similar set of developmental stages.

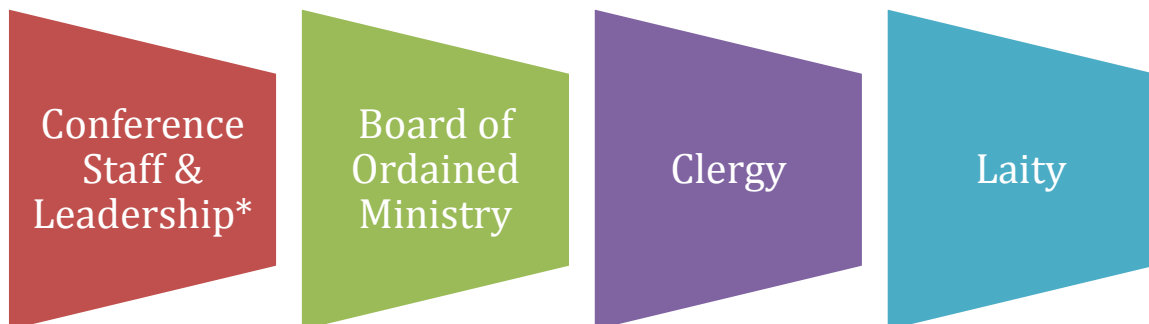
Values

These are the values we will honor as we lead GNJ into intercultural competence;

- Christ-like Love
- Trust
- Humility
- Transparency
- Community (Ubuntu)
- Justice
- Accountability

Key Audiences

GNJ will focus on four key segments of the conference leadership to become an inter-cultural competent conference that can work across the differences that exist within the church and the mission field. The four-key audiences will be:



***Conference Staff & Leadership** includes the Cabinet, GNJ Staff, Board of Laity, elected officers and Vital Mission Partners.

Three Year Goals (by 2021)

We will work with congregations and transformational leaders that are *ready* and *desire* to be interculturally competent and Christ-like as they carry out their mission and ministry.

Completing the following goals will build a *solid foundation* for a 10-year commitment of growing intercultural competence in which GNJ's values, processes and policies align and develop the leadership capacity needed for a regenerative intercultural competent GNJ.

- 1) GNJ leadership and staff teams will work together, in consultation with GCORR, to *assess* their level of intercultural competence and receive appropriate *training* and set *strategies* that foster intercultural competence in GNJ. This work will target four general groups:
 - a. Conference leadership
 - b. Conference staff
 - c. Connectional Table, Boards of Laity and Ordained Ministry and agencies
 - d. Vital Mission Partners and Advance Specials
- 2) GNJ Board of Ordained Ministry will work in consultation with GCORR, to develop the knowledge, skills, policies and practices that make intercultural competence a priority for board members, existing clergy and throughout the candidacy process, including but not limited to DCom, RIM, and all other recruitment efforts.
- 3) The GNJ staff leadership team will evaluate GNJ Rules of Order, communications, staff and hiring policies and practices and modify as needed, to reflect the conference commitment to intercultural competence.
- 4) The Connectional Ministries team will identify GNJ bright spots where intercultural competence is best practiced, who then will become teaching congregations and ministries in GNJ and the greater church.
- 5) The Connectional Ministries team will assess current congregational, laity and clergy leadership development resources and evaluations (Team Vital, Coaching, PaCE, Communities of Hope Vital Laity Leadership Development, Lay Servants, Clergy & Congregational Evaluations, etc.) and modify them to incorporate equipping for intercultural competence as needed.
- 6) 100 congregational teams participate in a cross racial/cultural vitality program.
- 7) 200 clergy participate in an intercultural competence development program (to assess & develop knowledge, skills and leadership capacity).
- 8) 100 clergy will participate in a pulpit exchange program.
- 9) 2,000 laity are equipped in cultural competency.

The following metrics will provide us additional measurable indicators about our long-term progress towards a culture of intercultural competence in GNJ. By 2027:

- GNJ racial/ ethnic professing membership increases from 18882 to 19448
- The number of multicultural congregations/faith communities increases from 114 to 175
- GNJ racial/ ethnic active clergy increases from 186 to 204
- GNJ women active clergy increases from 36% to 45%
- Average active clergy age is reduced from 55 to 50

We believe accomplishing these goals and objectives will bear fruitful outcomes that include intercultural competent transformational leadership, radical Christ-like discipleship, vital congregations that includes everyone in the community and reflects the diversity of their ministry context, changed lives and transformed communities.

Budget Needs

The task force recommends that \$10,000 are allocated from the 2014 strategic plan reserve to carry out the three-year intercultural goals. The GNJ Leadership team will work with the Board of Ordained Ministry and the Board of Laity to assess their financial investment to carry out the plan.

Next Steps

Phase 2 – Detailed Strategic Plan Development – [08/01/2017](#)

- Executive Summary refined after AC session - [6/15/2017](#)
- Create staff project management team – [06/15/2017](#)
- Facilitated work sessions of Task Force and Project Management Team with GCORR Staff. [07/30/2017](#)
- First draft of detailed Strategic Plan and Resource Development planning completed [09/01/2017](#)
- Final detailed Strategic Plan and Resource Development planning completed – [11/01/2017](#)

Phase 3 – Implementation of Strategic Plan – [01/2018 – 06/2021](#)

The Cultural Competence Task Force will meet once a year to receive updates from GNJ staff and evaluate progress and then report to Connectional Table and Annual Conference accordingly.

Phase 4 – Evaluation – [03/2021](#)

Evaluation, recalibrating and strategic planning process for the next four years.

Our Partner

The General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) is a catalyst and partner with other leaders in The United Methodist Church to support the development of inter-culturally competent leaders who are engaged in ministry that promotes intentional diversity and equity.



RELIGION & RACE

General Commission on Religion and Race

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

GCORR trains, resources, and connects leaders to hone their intercultural skills, which allows them to establish relevant ministries in a Christian movement that reflects the diversity around us.

The Core Values of GCORR are based on the biblical imperative of right relationships with God and one another—relationships of: Love, Grace, Equity, Justice, Respect, and Mutual Accountability.

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GNJ Inter-Cultural Task Force Members

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Rev. Will Kim, Chair, GNJ Korean Caucus
Rev. Sam Choi, member GNJ Korean Caucus
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Rev. Charles D. Mitchell, Native American Caucus
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