

GNJUMC Ethnic Local Church Committee Report

Overview and Mission

During the past conference year, the Ethnic Local Church Committee continued its work of empowering, equipping, and advocating for ethnic clergy and congregations serving in cross-cultural and cross-racial ministry settings. Guided by the love of Christ and the values of The United Methodist Church, the committee is committed to fostering environments where ethnic pastors and local churches can flourish in discipleship, leadership, and mission. Our work seeks to cultivate spiritual, relational, and systemic support so that ethnic leaders and congregations may fully live into their God-given identity, calling, and witness. (¶632)

Focus of Work This Past Year

A primary focus of the committee's work this year was the intentional support of ethnic clergy candidates preparing for the Board of Ordained Ministry. Recognizing the unique challenges often faced by ethnic candidates navigating the ordination process, the committee established a clear mission and began implementing concrete steps toward providing equitable and culturally responsive support.

Specifically, the committee organized efforts to:

- Reviewed and provided support of ordination candidates' papers prior to submission for constructive and formative feedback.
- Supported ordination candidates in strengthening interview techniques and their articulation of theology, United Methodist polity, and practice of ministry.
- Identified and invited elders to participate in mock interviews to mirror the Board of Ordained Ministry process.

These mock interviews offered candidates a supportive environment in which to practice responding to questions, clarify their theological voice, and gain confidence as they prepared for official interviews with the Board of Ordained Ministry. This work reflects the committee's commitment to advocacy, mentorship, and systems navigation for ethnic clergy discerning and pursuing ordination.

Strategic Vision Moving Forward

Building on this initial work, the committee has identified strategic goals that will guide its ministry in the coming years. These goals reflect a holistic approach to clergy support, congregational readiness, leadership development, and systemic transformation within the conference.

Key strategic priorities include:

- **Continued Support for Ethnic Clergy in the Ordination Process**
Providing intentional guidance, advocacy, mentorship, interview preparation, theological articulation support, and systems navigation to ensure equitable access and successful progression toward ordination.
- **Anti-Racism Education and Accountability**
Collaborating with conference leadership to offer anti-racism, intercultural competency, and implicit bias training for clergy and congregations.
- **Congregational Cultural Competency and Readiness**
Partnering with Journey of Hope and Wellness to equip local churches with tools and resources that would aid them in effectively transitioning and partnering with ethnic pastors serving in cross-cultural and cross-racial appointments.
- **Pastoral Well-Being**
Promoting holistic spiritual, emotional, and vocational care for ethnic clergy and their families through peer support and wellness resources.
- **Leadership Development and Mentorship**
Offering culturally competent leadership training, peer cohorts, and mentoring networks in partnership with Strengthening the Black Church for 21st Century (SBC 21) and other ethnic committees.
- **Storytelling, Data, and Celebration**
Collecting and sharing stories, data, and ministry narratives that highlight the contributions, challenges, and transformational impact of ethnic clergy and local churches across the connection.

Conclusion

The Ethnic Local Church Committee remains committed to walking alongside ethnic clergy and congregations with care, advocacy, and hope. This past year marked an important step forward in supporting candidates for ordination, and the committee looks ahead with renewed commitment to strengthening leaders, equipping churches, and dismantling barriers so that all may thrive in God's mission. We are grateful for the collaboration of conference leaders, elders, and local churches as we continue this work together.

Tagline:

Empowering Ethnic Clergy and Local Churches for a Church Without Walls and Without Barriers.

Prayerfully Submitted by,

Latasha Milton, Chair

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