

## By Rev. William Castro

*Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. (Romans 12:16)*

Many pastors and elders in the PCA are beginning to acknowledge the need to discuss the issue of ethnic diversity. On June 18, at the 42nd General Assembly, the Cooperative Ministries Committee (CMC) presented that diversity is one of the five key issues facing the PCA.<sup>1</sup> For pastors who are working in settings of strong diversity that include both immigrants and non-immigrants this is encouraging news. But we know that pursuing diversity brings with it the important topic of assimilation.

There are different ways to define assimilation. For the purpose of this article, it will be defined as the process by which immigrants come to resemble the majority in America. In concrete terms, it is the process by which immigrants and their descendants adopt America as their own country with the result that the American majority progressively accepts them as important part of society. Assimilation is both important and problematic. It is important because historically, immigrants are eventually assimilated, some more quickly than others. So anyone who wants to minister to immigrants, even though assimilation is not his main duty, must come to understand that he/she does not work in a vacuum, but in a real country where each immigrant is part of this process of assimilation.<sup>2</sup> It is problematic because there are various ways of understandings of

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://byfaithonline.com/cmc-identifies-five-key-issues/> The same was pointed out by Zoe Erler in his article, "The PCA and the Browning of America" <http://byfaithonline.com/the-pca-and-the-browning-of-america/> accessed 5 30 2014. In addition, during this GA was a conference concerning "Race, history, and the PCA" where according with Jemar Tisby "Dr. Ligon Duncan, Chancellor of Reformed Theological Seminary, pledged his hearty and vocal support of the movement toward greater diversity in the PCA." <http://jemartisby.com/2014/06/19/ripple-effect-race-and-the-pca-general-assembly-2014/> accessed on June 19, 2014. These encouraging news has been expressed more and more at General Assemblies, as Michael Ross, (senior pastor of Christ Covenant Church, NC,) said when he was elected as moderator of the GA 2012, "In regards to the PCA ... I tend to be optimistic about where we are and where we're headed." When I entered the pastorate, the PCA was "either all-white suburbanites or in little towns. Now we're coast-to-coast, much more ethnically diverse, and there is a strong PCA presence in large urban areas." <http://byfaithonline.com/michael-ross-elected-moderator/> accessed June 20 2012.

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<sup>2</sup> I consider the importance of assimilation as stemming mainly from reality than necessarily an ideal. As David Moran said in his groundbreaking *Manual for Church Planting among Hispanic Americans*, "the judge of all cultures is the King of the supra-cultural kingdom of God" so we must "not assume that becoming more American is valued superior to remaining more culturally Latin nor vice versa." P.11. I agree with Moran that we cannot make an approach to ministry more "moral valuable" than other. However, I press more than Moran on the issue that states that the integrated approach of doing Hispanic ministry and church planting is more realistic and has long lasting impact than an ethnic separatist approach of ministry. This is specially true in the "new destinations." This may be not be applied to traditional destinations such as at the Southwest. As Moran said "some of these people never immigrated.

what assimilation implies specially that American society like all societies are not static. And how do we evaluate the process? For this reason, I propose to use the term “healthy assimilation” that I will explain in further detail. At any rate, it is crucial, if we are to become a more diverse denomination that the PCA progresses towards understanding assimilation, its importance, and how integrated ministries can help this assimilation. I want to promote a conversation regarding this topic especially in the context of places that are known as “New Destinations.” These destinations are places that have experienced, over the last three decades, a big wave of immigration and are different from the traditional destinations such as in the West and Midwest which have had a historic immigration population. Immigrants in the New Destinations exhibit remarkable diversity and have their own special challenges and opportunities of assimilation.

Last Year, Helen Marrow, professor of Latin-American studies at Tufts University, published an article on the importance of considering different factors in our understanding of immigrant assimilation in these new destinations.<sup>3</sup> Helen Marrow’s research can help us to be more accurate in evaluating the assimilation of immigrants to society, including the church. I try to use some of her questions applying them to the ecclesiastical context and add some others from the ecclesiastical perspective.<sup>4</sup>

First question: How do we see assimilation? Is it viewed as an outcome or as a process? Scholars in the past have typically seen immigrant assimilation as an outcome of some convergence to a mean, but in recent years, they have realized the importance of seeing immigrant assimilation as a “process toward some convergence to a mean.”<sup>5</sup>

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Their lands were acquired by the United States in the early 1800’s. Some of them have, as primary cultural goal, the preservation of their heritage.” P. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Helen Marrow. “Assimilation in New Destinations.” *Daedalus* vol. 142 Number 3 (Summer 2013): 107-119. As Victor Zuniga and Ruben Hernández-Leon, *New Destinations: Mexican Immigration in the United States*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005. Traditional destinations, such as Arizona and Texas, have more homogenous immigrants. By contrast, North Carolina and South Carolina have seen a significant increase in their immigrant population over the last few decades and have a variety of large immigrant populations, not only from Mexico, but also South American countries. Over the past two decades, South Carolina has experienced unprecedented growth in the Latino population, which increased 148% from 2000 to 2012. Greenville, in South Carolina, is considered one of the counties with the largest Hispanic population in the state, along with Beaufort, Charleston, and Richland. It is a “true emergent area of immigrant settlement.”

[https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts\\_for\\_features\\_special\\_editions/cb11-ff18.html](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb11-ff18.html)

<sup>4</sup> Marrow’s objective is to challenge their fellow scholars to better clarify how they evaluate assimilation. My purpose in this article is to challenge the PCA to have a balanced evaluation of understanding assimilation in the Hispanic ministries. In this article, I assume that assimilation is a good thing for immigrants and for society in general. I am committed to challenge my fellow Hispanic friends to make sacrifices and assimilate, but at the same time, I think that it is necessary to challenge the majority of Presbyterians to change and make space for the Hispanics to assimilate.

<sup>5</sup> Marrow, “Assimilation in New Destinations” p. 111. For instance, immigrants can still maintain an ethnic identity even when other factors (other than ethnicity) can influence life opportunities of assimilation. See Richard Alba and Victor Nee Richard Alba and Victor Nee "Rethinking Assimilation

Those opposed to immigration tend to deny that assimilation is occurring and stress the use of services by immigrants to show that they are a burden on our society.<sup>6</sup> However, history tells us that immigrants today are following similar patterns as other immigrants in the past.<sup>7</sup> We tend to forget that it also took time for the European immigrants to assimilate. Many of them lived in ethnic neighborhoods, refused to learn English, had their own newspapers, own drug stores, candy stores, and even their own entertainment institutions (theaters, bars, etc.).<sup>8</sup> Even though these European immigrants showed resistance to assimilation, their descendants are thriving American citizens today. Unfortunately when they look in retrospect [retrospectively], they tend to see their ancestors' process of assimilation as something faster than it was in reality. Should they not have mercy and patience on their fellow citizens? (Matthew 18:33).

Considering assimilation as a process is very important especially for those of us who work with the Hispanic community following an integrated model. Acknowledging this fact helps us avoid discouragement, in moments when we are not seeing short-term results of the assimilation of this population. If we are working in integrated ministries trying to build bridges between Hispanics and the rest of society, we need to be conscious that it generally takes generations to see results. This is hard to be accepted in a culture of instant gratification. Is in this context in which the preaching of the word is needed of being like "the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain."

Seeing assimilation only as an outcome may prompt churches to take extreme measures, especially when creating a plan for their outreach ministry. Those who are excited about assimilation may demand an immediate and wholly assimilated ministry, which sometimes only requires a bilingual person to translate the English American worship service through headphones. "Immigrants must assimilate!" Expectations arise. Others are less optimistic and may tell us that we are beating a dead horse. They consider the "ethnic separatist approach" as something that is more realistic and effective. This approach either dismisses any possibility for PCA churches of doing something intentional for the Hispanics or stresses "Hispanic ethnic church planting," separate from the majority, because "immigrants are difficult to be

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Theory for a New Era of Immigration in *International Migration Review*, vol. 31, N<sup>o</sup>. 4, Special Issue: Immigrant Adaptation and Native-Born Response in the Making of Americans. (Winter, 1997), pp. 826-874. (quoted by Marrow, p 111.)

<sup>6</sup> Selwyn Duke, The American Thinker: Why They Won't Assimilate, May 21, 2007. Available at [http://www.americanthinker.com/2007/05/why\\_they\\_wont\\_assimilate.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2007/05/why_they_wont_assimilate.html)

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2010/09/pdf/immigrant\\_assimilation.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2010/09/pdf/immigrant_assimilation.pdf)  
See also "America's Assimilating Hispanics"  
<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324787004578495393859698964>

<sup>8</sup> Alexander, June Granatir. *Daily Life in Immigrant America, 1870-1920*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2007. 198-200 and 208. Granatir reports that in 1910 there were 13.5 million of immigrants born overseas, 87% of them were Europeans. Approximately 2.3., millions of immigrant men were not interested to become American citizens. More than fifth of the immigrants were older than 21 did not speak English. p. 212.

assimilated.”<sup>9</sup> I think we should find a middle ground. We must press on towards assimilation but consider that this is not only an outcome reflecting some convergence to a mean but also a process reflecting movement toward convergence to that mean—which may occur over time and generations.<sup>10</sup> The church can positively influence this by finding creative ways to embrace the Hispanic community.<sup>11</sup>

Second question: What reference group is used to measure assimilation? To which group are we comparing the people who are assimilating? If we compare second-generation children of Hispanic immigrants to native-born whites, we might conclude that these children have experienced less assimilation than if our reference group were instead their first-generation immigrant parents.<sup>12</sup>

Measuring assimilation of immigrants by comparing them to the native-born white majority may prompt churches to see integrated Hispanic ministries as unviable.<sup>13</sup> We may worry that Hispanic immigrants will feel overwhelmed in a church that is mostly made up of the white upper-middle class population. We may be afraid that Hispanic immigrants will compare themselves to those who are well-off and feel discouraged about their own reality and identity. Although this concern is reasonable, since a mostly white upper-middle class church can be intimidating for many Hispanic and Latino immigrants, we must consider that this is not the only

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<sup>9</sup> It may be one reason why the MNA “Cultural Assimilation Paper” says that “there may be factors that make it very difficult for the existing congregation to make the changes necessary to accomplish that. Thus, in some communities already served by PCA churches, the only way to reach new people in the community may be through planting new churches.” <http://pcamna.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/20080328Cultural-Assimilation-Paper-Revised-Draft-March-28-2008-FredRev.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Marrow, “Assimilation in New Destinations,” p. 108.

<sup>11</sup> There are in the PCA good examples of integrated ministry. Some efforts in that direction are: Grace Presbyterian Dalton (GA), Granada Presbyterian (FL), Old Culter Presbyterian (FL), Coral Springs Presbyterian and Crosspoint Encuentro. I think the PCA would profit from promoting more these styles of ministry. As the “PCA Cultural Assimilation Paper” stated “most PCA churches can assimilate many more people, and many more kinds of people into their midst than they may realize before they try.”

<sup>12</sup> Marrow, p. I prefer to use the term “native born-white” to refer people others call Caucasian or Anglo. We need to know that there are many white people among Hispanic immigrants as well. There are many people from South America who are white but they prefer identify themselves as Hispanic even having the same color of skin than Americans. They recognize their reality of being immigrants can be heard in their accent when speaking English. Their children, however, may be completely unknown about their ancestors come from South America except for their last names.

<sup>13</sup> The contrast I made in this article between white and Hispanic may seems problematic for many readers. I understand this difference of race in terms of both, physical features and also cultural connotations. I understand that the words “Hispanic,” “white,” and “black” are problematic. The ideal thing will be no use them at all. However, reality shows us differently as John Piper said with respect to race and racial: “There is no escaping this historically, and, in the present day the problems we face are conceived along racial lines understood mainly as color lines.” See Piper, John. *Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian*. Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2011. p. 17.

point of reference. Hispanics usually find hope and encouragement when they compare themselves to how they began their first days when they moved to the States. Many immigrants have to begin from zero once they arrive in the USA and this is a point of reference of how they evaluate their mobility and assimilation. The experience of being welcomed by an established majority group, gathered into one body under Christ called the house and family of God, who are in the process of perfecting themselves in Christ, is a great encouragement in the assimilation process. We must remember the biblical terminology of the Confession of Faith of Westminster concerning the church!<sup>14</sup> Thus, exposure of immigrants to a native-born white majority can work both ways; it can serve as encouragement or discouragement depending on how hospitable or unwelcoming the environment is in which these interactions occur. The church can help in providing a healthy point of reference in which immigrants may be challenged but also encouraged. Are we ready to tell the immigrant “sit thou here in a good place;” or rather tell him “stand you there, or sit here under my footstool.” James 2:3.

The most important concern for the PCA churches should not be if their churches are made up of well-off Americans but if we, the preachers, are willing to preach to these well-off disciples about being willing to associate with people of low position and set an example with our own lives (Rom. 12:16). Are we making a conscious effort, in encouraging, the middle upper class native-born white American population to embrace the Hispanic Immigrant community? Are we promoting ministries on the basis of the spirit of love and “interactionism” with the new comers?<sup>15</sup>

Third question: Whose viewpoints do we accept to measure assimilation? Marrow states that scholars evaluate immigrant’s assimilation on the basis of their own standards of assimilation. However, lately they are recognizing more and more the need to balance this opinion, considering also how the first-generation people and their children see themselves in their process of assimilating into the city, society and the church. There are several elements that scholars take into account to measure the end result or success of assimilation: socioeconomic status, spatial concentration, language assimilation, and intermarriage; lately, however there has been much interest in the “self-appreciation” of assimilation or what scholars call a “subject centered” approach to evaluate assimilation.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. 25.

<sup>15</sup> It is a long discussion what this passage means by “low position.” In this article, I use it in the sense of new comers having to start in foreign country from zero, they are more vulnerable, and this implies financial distress and less opportunities. Of course, just because people are immigrants does not mean they are less. Many immigrants are educated, and many whites can have less education albeit be better off financially. For instance, one may be astonished on how low philosophical education Americans receive (even in the middle and upper class) in comparison with people who finished high school in other countries.

<sup>16</sup> See the research Min Zhou, Jennifer Lee, Jody Agius Vallejo, Rosaura Tafuya-Estrada, Yang Sao Xiong “Success Attained, Deterred, and Denied: Divergent Pathways to Social Mobility in Los Angeles’s New Second Generation,” in *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* [November 2008 620: 37-61.] Sociologist Min Zhou and her colleagues have analyzed how immigrants and their descendants define their experiences and perceive their mobility and success.

I think this question should also be considered in the church today. Churches may have the risk of being too quick in designing or dismissing ministry plans on the basis of what the native-born white majority believe are the measures and standards of success and failure. We measure the assimilation of immigrants and ministry according to these standards, but we fail to listen and understand how immigrants themselves see their presence in the PCA and how they see their assimilation process, their progress, and their failures.<sup>17</sup>

Even more, we may see a lack of assimilation and progress when immigrants see themselves moving forward. Marrow mentions that some scholars, for instance, see second-generation immigrant youths who pursue self-employment in the arts, entertainment, as evidence of poor assimilation because native-born white Americans usually measure assimilation as convergence to standard, upper-middle-class measures of occupational specialization, (white collar employment, such as business, law or medical school, etc.). But perhaps for many of these second-generation immigrants, seeking other occupations provides a great amount of dignity.

Similarly, the American majority may see a lack of assimilation when first generation of Hispanics press for worship only in Spanish and make little to no effort to learn English. However, Hispanic immigrants see themselves assimilating and making progress because they are working hard and making sacrifices in order to provide and educate their children who [do] speak perfect English. These parents, in contrast with the individualistic mindset of American society, see themselves assimilating through their children and as a family (not only as individuals). Those who are working with the Hispanic community constantly witness that the reason why many immigrants fight to stay in this country is only because they want to offer a better place for their children, even when they have to deny themselves what the majority considers the "good life." This may be one reason (of course not the only) why immigrant children in the New Destinations are making such rapid academic progress even above African American students.<sup>18</sup> By no means are we dismissing the importance of learning English, but

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<sup>17</sup> The skepticism of assimilation from the majority perspective can be seen in the expression of PCA pastor Ron Gleason who respect to the idea of immigrants (including illegals) are a revitalization of churches he said in 2009: "Observing two predominantly Hispanic church plants in my Presbytery for a number of years has not yet convinced me that this is true. While I am thankful to have ministry to Hispanic communities, we have yet to receive confirmation that these church plants will eventually assimilate into Anglo congregations already in existence."

<http://rongleason.blogspot.com/2009/11/normal-0-false-false-false.html> "How will our PCA pastors integrate the legal Hispanic churches into mainstream PCA churches? The PCA has allowed the Korean PCA to be in existence for a number of years without requiring them to assimilate into the PCA proper. The net result is that many of these Korean churches still hold services exclusively in Korean and they tend to stay to themselves. They are in America, but are not yet of it. This is a sad undertaking."

<http://rongleason.blogspot.com/2006/09/christians-illegal-aliens-vi.html>

<sup>18</sup> Marrow says "Some Hispanic students are making such rapid academic progress that local teachers and administrators have begun to wonder why African American students—their historical minority group—are not keeping pace with either native whites or high-achieving first-and second-generation Hispanic students." This of course is in the context of new destinations. See this assessment [http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2010/09/pdf/immigrant\\_assimilation.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2010/09/pdf/immigrant_assimilation.pdf).

we should value their already achievements of immigrants to encourage them to move steps further.

It is interesting that even in difficult and hostile environments, immigrants see themselves moving forward. While scholars expect little hope for these persons, and measure these immigrants from the white category evaluation of success and achievement, the immigrants consider their situation not as immobile but as flowing toward assimilation.<sup>19</sup>

As Christians, we should not reduce assimilation to an upward socioeconomic movement, but consider that assimilation includes a series of factors. Immigrants and their descendants can achieve upward mobility without becoming cultural and socially akin to mainstream native-born society. Likewise, immigrants and their children can become culturally or socially more akin to mainstream natives by being either upwardly or downwardly mobile.<sup>20</sup> So in this case, churches should not assume that immigrants could not achieve assimilation just because they struggle economically. It may be the case that some brothers and sisters who are struggling financially are advancing more in their assimilation and in the love for America as their country. On the other hand, not all the people we interact at work, who may be seen as "successful" by mainstream culture, are actually progressing in their process of love America and adopt it as their country.

It is exciting that the PCA is beginning to embrace the issue of ethnic diversity. This is happening in the administrative level as in the congregational life as well. But it is time to start considering how the immigrants and the minorities consider themselves in this process. For instance, one of the questions that we should be asking is: Do they want to plant churches that are separated from the native-born white Americans? Or should they be included with the majority? Do they want to be ministered from [out of] the ecclesiastical outskirts or peripheries, or do they want the Americans majority to make some changes in the way they do their core ministry in order to provide space for them and help them in their process of assimilation to church and society? By no means are we saying that what immigrants say must be done, but that it is important to provide a voice for them in the PCA so we can address these questions, i.e., a voice that really represents the immigrant community, their aspirations and desires. Usually we take for granted that Hispanic, Asian, and African Americans already have a voice among us. We assume that these minorities have been listened. However, listening is a process of [a] conversation that perhaps has not taken place in most PCA churches.<sup>21</sup>

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There are other less optimistic assessments about the reality of Hispanics in the whole country. See for instance: <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb10/vol67/num05/The-Latino-Education-Crisis.aspx>

<sup>19</sup> Marrow, "Assimilation in New Destinations," p. 111

<sup>20</sup> In the basis of Herbert Gand analysis that quoted by Marrow, p. 111.

<sup>21</sup> Zoe Erler says recently that "although the PCA doesn't collect ethnic data, it's safe to assume that the denomination's demographics don't reflect the wider population." "The PCA and the Browning of America." Similarly, we can say that leadership in the PCA is composed mainly of white pastors or those who have become westernized enough to be accepted as leaders. If we see assimilation as a process and not only as an outcome we must include not only those who are at the end of this process but also those who are in the beginning.

A fourth, last, and the most important question we should consider is: How is the message of the Gospel impacting the process of assimilation? The Bible does not use the term “assimilation” but it is implied in several passages which call us to “live as people who are free,” to “honor everyone,” respect the authorities of the land, and have a good testimony in society. (1 Peter 2:13-17, Romans 13, Acts 2:46-47). If the Gospel is preached it will encourage a healthy assimilation. We should speak of a “healthy assimilation” because there are many aspects of the current American culture that we must not assimilate but there are others that are in agreement with the Bible. We as a church must consider the spiritual growth of immigrants, which can be reflected in their duty to attend church on the Lord’s Day, and to be proactive in the church where they attend. It is really hard for many Hispanic people to break the habit of working on Sundays. Therefore, a constant call from the Gospel, as well as an example set by the rest of the members are crucial in their process of assimilation to the church. But the important question of “How the Gospel impacts assimilation” should not be asked only to immigrants but also to the large community of the PCA. How is the message of the Gospel impacting the process of welcoming the immigrants into the church?<sup>22</sup>

Worship on Sundays, while not being the only element, can be an important element in the process of assimilation for Hispanic immigrants, even more so from the perspective of God’s kingdom. Real desire and commitment to welcome immigrants can be tested on the Lord’s Day. I am conscious that the main motivation for worship should be to glorify God but this call to glorify God it is not only a call for individuals but a call for the communion of the saints (*Communio Sanctorum*). It is exciting that more people in the PCA acknowledge the need to go to the immigrants with a humble and servant heart. However, it is only when we are willing to worship beside them that we truly embrace them as brothers or sisters in Christ and not just as good people to do business with from Monday to Friday. Considering that, perhaps churches that have already made progress in their outreach to the Hispanic Community can be challenged even more. Perhaps churches must reevaluate where their efforts should be invested and try to find a balance in their approach to the immigrant community. Many churches feel at peace because they have done their work ministering immigrants on weekdays, through ESL, Good News Club, after-school programs (all great ministries!). However on the most important day, the Lord’s Day, the white American majority feels peace going to worship in their comfortable and traditional way, passing by, in a non-intentional way, the opportunities to welcome unchurched immigrants to worship God.<sup>23</sup> We need to ask ourselves whether the reason why we don’t want to change is because our practice is commanded in the Bible or it is

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<sup>22</sup> There is still not much research in how churches are helping or hindering the process of assimilation in the South. Our church has been part of the research of professors Patricia Ehrkamp and Caroline Nagel called “Immigration, places of worship and the politics of citizenship in the US South” among other things the purpose of the project is to analyze how churches and faith help in the process of assimilation.

<sup>23</sup> Westminster Larger Catechism q. 118. Confession of Faith of Westminster Chap. 21. VIII. Are our emphasis on the Lords Day celebration according with the balance and wisdom of the Bible and the Westminster Standards or we tend to stress one of the elements and downplay others? We should “observe a holy rest” and we should engage in “public and private exercises of His worship,” but we should also take time “in the duties of necessity and mercy.”

just because we don't want to give up our comfort?<sup>24</sup> That is where the real challenge of diversity and assimilation stems from. The objective of addressing these questions is not to create a sense of guilt but to challenge and call the church to duty for the beauty of God's Kingdom.<sup>25</sup>

We can say that pursuing integrated ministry and bringing Southern white upper class to the same table with construction workers immigrants may be an illusion. This reminds me of a young member from Mitchell Road Church who reached out to the neighborhood across the street and took a group of Hispanic kids to Furman University. When they came back, a well-intentioned man, a church member as well, approached the young man who organized the field trip and argued with him. According to the older man, what the young man did was wrong because it provided "false hope" for the kids across the street. They may never get accepted to a college or university. Amazingly, the kids who heard that conversation prevailed growing up in this environment and ended up going to college. They became a productive part of society and some of them have even been involved in the same ministry now, trying to reach new kids across the street where they used to live. (Matthew 10:18) It is encouraging for me that our senior pastor usually says that his prayer and his vision is that God would reach the community and that we will be open to the point that one day a child from across the street in the apartments could become the senior pastor of our congregation. (Hebrews 13:2) The Hispanic community is very grateful for the work and dedication of the PCA churches who have attempted to integrate them.

This does not mean that we should dismiss other approaches to how to measure assimilation. Traditional concerns of the scholars concerning the difficulty of assimilation and the fears of churches of pursuing an integrated ministry should not be dismissed. Evil may be in the extremes. My objective in addressing this issue is to point out that perhaps the ways we have measured assimilation and success are currently out of balance and it has been considered the standards of scholars (In the case of the academy) and the standards of American white majority (in the case of the PCA). More conversation needs to happen. There are harder questions that need to be addressed to challenge both, majorities and minorities to work together. What are the main issues that American churches, such as the PCA, are avoiding and need to talk about as we move to embrace minorities and multi-ethnic diversity?

I am excited about the opportunities to come for the PCA churches in terms of reaching minorities. I want to encourage people to have the conversations that we need to have in order to work together in preaching the Powerful Gospel of Christ to transform and reach the World.

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<sup>24</sup> The Westminster Larger Catechism q. 109 tells us that what we "received by tradition from others," should not necessarily rule our worship "though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, ..."

<sup>25</sup> As the PCA Strategic Plan prepared for 2009 and 2010 Cooperative Ministries Committee says "In order to bring about healthy change a church must develop a "holy discontent." With some aspects of its present situation. If people assume that *everything is right* ... then there is no incentive to change. Apathy and immobility characterize the church because any change is presumed to be the enemy of present comfort. But the antidote to apathy is not panic. Those who seek to bring about change by claiming that *everything is wrong* ... create cynicism and paralysis. Change is meaningless when hope dies ... Thus, motivations for healthy change cannot be found in either self-serving apathy or other-directed cynicism, but rather in something between." pp. 1-2.

If we believe in the power of the Gospel, we must work, toward integrated ministries, if we used to say that America is the place to achieve dreams, we must say that church is the place where we can attain real biblical hope, which is more than upward mobility or economic or social success, but a legacy for the futures generations in which the transformation of the Gospel is reflected in the life of our churches. We must press on to bring down, with the Gospel, the walls of separation between God and man and between neighbors.

Can you picture a summer where PCA churches send their short term missionary teams that reflect the demographic change not only of American society, but also of its churches? Short-term mission teams, composed of not only of white Christians but also African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics joined together by the Gospel and preaching the same Lord, and the same Gospel of redemption. We need to rekindle our hearts for integrated missions in America so that the world will believe that Christ has been sent to us (John 17:23).