

C Change

Small group discipleship resources for the 21st Century



Worksheet 6: Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry

the commitment of the Uniting Church

The Basis of Union points to the fact that the Uniting Church unites not only three former denominations, but also Christians of many cultures and ethnic origins. It states that the Uniting Church "believes that Christians in Australia are called to bear witness to a unity of faith and life in Christ which transcends cultural and economic, national and racial boundaries..."

Jesus Christ has made peace between people of every race, culture and class. This unity is a gift of God, a foretaste of the reconciliation of all things in Christ. It is a goal to be achieved as we commit ourselves in one fellowship to achieve justice, affirm one another's cultures, and care for any who are the victims of racial discrimination, fear and economic exploitation.

(We are a Multicultural Church, by the Fourth Assembly)



you are welcome

The sign said: "MONASH UNITING CHURCH. YOU ARE MOST WELCOME".

I hesitated for a while. I was not sure if a non-Christian was allowed to go into a Christian church, if there was a ceremony or ritual for newcomers, or if it was rude to come without an appointment. Nevertheless, I stepped into the church.

In this church, I came to know people in Australia and make friends with them. I began to engage Christianity. I go to church every week because of its warm, home-like atmosphere.

It is this spirit and attitude that drew me to the Uniting Church, and enabled me to take it as a home in Australia, a home embracing members of different cultures and different backgrounds. I grew up in an absolutely atheistic atmosphere. For many years I had not known anything about Christianity.

So when I go back to my country and I am asked for advice for those who are going abroad, I will say, "If you feel homesick or lonely, you can go to church."

(By a Chinese student.
From You and I, Our Stories.)

This sheet is part of a series on discipleship in the 21st century. It is offered by the National Assembly as a discussion starter for small groups, in congregations, faith communities or other settings. It may also be used for personal reflection. Low resolution copies of this sheet can be downloaded free of charge from the Assembly website or high quality print versions can be purchased from MediaCom for a small fee to cover printing costs.

“The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” (Leviticus 19:34 NRSV)

**“Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.”
(Romans 12:13)**

try these...

- 1) Befriend Christians from a migrant ethnic group. Gradually build up trust and Christian friendship. You will be greatly enriched!
- 2) Share property with a congregation worshipping in another language. Note the Assembly guidelines about property sharing:
<http://assembly.uca.org.au/multi>

fact file...

- Approximately 22% of people in Australia were born overseas.
- Australia is one of the most ethnically diverse nations on the world, with over 200 ethnicities.
- On any one Sunday, congregations of the Uniting Church worship in dozens of different languages (not counting Indigenous languages).

national conferences

UCA National Conferences are an important way for people of similar migrant backgrounds to meet together and reflect on life in the Uniting Church.

The following communities have formed or are forming National Conferences: Tongan, Samoan, Fijian, Indonesian, Tamil, Korean, Chinese and Vietnamese.

Some National Conferences are a gathering of key leaders to consult together. Others are great cultural and community occasions broadly attended by members of the community, with significant time given to cultural celebration.

The energy, enthusiasm and vibrancy of such celebrations of culture and history are a reminder of the empowerment that comes from maintaining and passing on what is life-giving and enriching from peoples' faith and cultural heritage.

reflections...

- What is needed if we are to walk together in this land?
- How can your Congregation extend Christ's hospitality to recent immigrants?
- How can our Church be a model of how to live in a diverse community?

further reading

Read and reflect on some of the material on the website of the Uniting Church's Multicultural Ministry agency, especially the Bible studies:
<http://assembly.uca.org.au/multi/>

Read some of the stories of people from migrant-ethnic backgrounds in *You and I, Our Stories*, available for purchase from UCA Multicultural Ministry. Discuss them in a home fellowship group.