



Transcriptions

The Multiethnic Church

Ted Ward

Annotation: *Ward Consultation, Deerfield, IL, 1997.* In his closing remarks at the Ward Consultation Ted Ward provides a definition of ethnicity, describes the multiethnic church, and affirms the format and potential contribution of the Consultation.



One of the choice remarks the first day, Vern said it. He said, “Children make their relationships, build their connections; adults see the differences and see them as barriers.” I wonder if this is what our Lord had in mind when he said, “Let the little children come to me.” And then he went on to say—and I wonder if you’ve ever reflected on it—he went on to use the plural, “Unless you become as children”, a relational group, not, as each of you becomes a child you will not see the kingdom, but, unless you become as children, a community, a group in your relationships to one another finding the connections, building the relationships; not being obsessed and blocked by the barriers, you will not really see what the kingdom is all about. I think this is not so much a salvation issue that he’s speaking to as it is an enjoyment issue. Why is the church of Jesus Christ so stinking sad? We haven’t found the enjoyment that comes from building communities. Children don’t run around looking for things to be sad about. Children run around looking for things to have fun with. Let me tell you, at least nine out of ten of the observations made by this last panel—worthy stuff—but at least nine out of ten of the observations made could have related just as well to what’s wrong with any monocultural church. Did you notice that? Seriously, how many of you really spotted that? We weren’t talking uniquely, as if you could talk uniquely to the multicultural church.

Now I think you said it beautifully: in the multicultural church, if you don't pay attention to those things, if you don't build those skills, if you don't get involved with that level of community-building, the whole thing disappears right in front of your eyes. That's why so many churches are so sad is because in the monocultural church it doesn't disappear. Think about that. I think, in the great providence of God, churches were intended to disappear when they become obsessed with barriers and fail to appreciate the enjoyment of experience.

I got into the career of education only to discover that the career of education is really concerned with culture. And you can't think well of the educative process unless you think carefully about the nature of human society. What makes people the way they are? Why do people interact the way they do? Where are the barriers that break people apart? Where are the joys that people can experience? If you really have some comprehension of education, you get in the process some comprehension of culture. The line between cultural studies and educational studies is a very fine line if, indeed, it exists at all.

Someone asked me, just a few days ago; maybe it was yesterday in the informal time, tell me a little about why you left the university and came to Trinity? It's a very long and complicated story. Margaret and I have never had a second thought about why God wanted us to do it, though we were totally surprised when it became clear that God did want us to do it. Because we had not intended that—did not seek that out—presumed that we would be, you know, for the rest of our careers doing God's work at Michigan State because we were very clear about what God's work at Michigan State was and we were in the middle of it. No question. We were not frustrated. But we came to Trinity almost with a sense of what's going to be next; let's discover it.

One of things I really was looking forward to, well, I'll have to admit it, two things: One, I really wanted to teach a seminar straight away to doctoral students in spirituality; couldn't do that one at Michigan State. I could do anything else I wanted to do. Michigan State was a marvelously free and creative place as long as you didn't go around doing stupid things, you know? And, even then, you could do a number of stupid things and get away with it. But I enjoyed the idea of coming to a seminary in order to work on the educational processes that function into spirituality. That was clearly one of them.

The other thing I wanted to be able to do was to put my preoccupation with culture and learning together in the third leg of that stool which is the spiritual domain, itself. Learning, culture, and the spiritual domain. I thought, boy, would that be wonderful to work in a place where you can do that freely and openly. Much to my shock, my horror in fact when I got here, I found that the students were uncomfortable with that trilogy. Not so much that there was something institutional or political, but students were uncomfortable. And I'll never forget the first two or three years in the Doctor of Education program I would ask in seminars, what's the spiritual implication? What's the theological implication? How does that relate to what the Scripture says? And I would get this kind of, what am I supposed to say? And I realized that I was dealing with people coming out of an educated background in which much of their education had been in theological studies, but they thought theological categories very nicely as long as they knew that's where they were at. And here I was working on learning in culture and that was a different track in their brain. And then I would ask a question that caused them to cross over, and the best response I could get was, duh.

Little by little, this community has changed. I don't know why? It's at least partly because the students here have come to realize that the central task for people who are going to be the doctors of the church is to keep your act together. Don't have these separate tracks of thought and separate categories of mind. But the relationship between those matters which are the nature of human society, the cultural reality, the people, the educational task. Those things that we do in order to assist and further the development of people, and those matters which are, in fact, theological and rooted in a spirituality that is a great concern as a center core of human development. It is keeping all that together. I think that this community in the doctoral programs here has really come to a fruition on that, which is exciting, and that's one of the reasons there are so many people here today.

I am deeply honored, really, by a consultancy. I'm thankful it's not a lectureship. I can't imagine anything less consistent with what I believe to be important. I think good lecturing is important. I'm trying to do a decent job of it right now. But that's not where it's at. Where it's at is in the interaction, is in the experience sharing, is in the here's how I look at it; here's how you look at it. I have to learn from your perspective and you might want to learn from my perspective, and in the process we'll both be better off but, more than that, we'll have fun. So we see a consultancy set-up in a kind of a perpetuity. Some my children are having a hard time with this. They ask that we prove that we're not both slipping over the edge, you know, sounds like kind of a post-mortem kind of thing going on, but we're delighted for it.

But I was just sitting here these two sessions saying to myself, what is it that brings these people together? I would be very self-centered to say that it's, you know, the consultation in Ted Ward's honor that brings them together. What it is that brings people together I believe to be two things: first of all, you know that in the coming together in this kind of a frame of reference—under the kind of management and guidance that people like Perry or Linda or others here could provide, or would provide—that you will have a chance to do more than just hear some opinions about something; you'll have a chance to get your hands on it, and you'll be able to think about it in a more specific way, and you'll be able to give and take in the process of dialogue. I think that's one of the things.

Today, I think there's another thing coming up, too, and I'm beginning to really feel it kind of tingling. I think there is a merging, a kind of a sense of community. It's like a community of the dissatisfied. Maybe of the people who come here as doctoral students are already defined that way. They are the dissatisfied. They are the people who say, the status quo can't be all there is to it; something else has got to be. Fortunately, as we've known it and learned it here, such people can also be sensitive people and aware people and gentle people. Such people, in fact, can be compassionate people. In fact, I think that that's one of the stronger driving elements in much of the dissatisfaction: is a compassion that says, if we're really going to relate effectively to people in the name of Christ, we're going to have to do it with a far keener sense of compassion for them and for their concerns and for their perspective.

And I think, possibly because of some of the things that some of us add to the experience while you're here in studies, there's a third element that gets into it: a kind of a heuristic strategy element. There are ways to get at these things. These are not matters that you simply have to murmur and mumble and fret about; they're matters that can be gotten hold of. And I really believe that a high percentage of the people that are in what I call this tingly new community that I'm feeling around me among alumni and others that are the alumni's own alumni, there's a shared

awareness that there are skills that will make us more able to deal with these mysteries and these difficulties in a constructive manner in such a way that we can make some differences. I would hate to be in a doctoral program that is purely concerned with techniques, management, methods, how to do it. God, deliver us from that kind of simplicity because that stuff never transfers well. It works here, it works there, it might work somewhere else; but what's the theory underlying it? What's the basic stuff there? What are the rudimentary values? What's the foundation of it all? People come through these experiences here, and many of you here in this room from this program or from other experiences that you've known and has brought you to this day—you know full well that there are such foundational ways to reason, to understand, to think, to reflect, and to learn.

And then, of course, there's the fourth factor that I've known to be so true—we've seen it here in this several sessions we've had together—just plain energy. This is not a lethargic community. As Linda has pointed out to me on several occasions, this is a group of people when they see a task to be done and somebody takes a responsibility, it'll get done; it'll get done well. It'll get done because there is a Holy Spirit-driven energy that is manifest in this particular community of faith. And I wondered to myself, should this not be what it is that we're trying to bring into the churches so that dissatisfaction can be eased over against a larger and larger wholeness of the church as people function together? Now there's where we get into diversity in culture.

I do not take a negative view of culture; I take a very positive view of culture. I can take a positive view of everything else that God put together in the creation. Culture is not a consequence of sin. Culture is not a consequence of the fall. Culture is not a consequence of the of the Babel experience. Culture is a consequence of God's own moment of self-reflection in which he looked at what he'd done and said, it's not good, and then he created Fred. Adam and Fred. No? He created Adam and, what was her name? God put the first great diversity on board and from that diversity all other human diversities track. God did it and he did it before the fall. Why? All you have to do is get out in the night sky and look up and say, good grief! The polka dots have all slipped; they're not in line. There's a big bunch of them together over here. There's another one over here kind of looks too bright, you know. They don't all look right. Our God is not the creator of sameness. He's the creator of diversity. We should not be afraid of diversity. Diversity in the church does not cause us to say, what do we *do* about it? It should say, what do we do *with* it? A great deal of difference there, what do we do *with* it?

We are the people who have the possibility of bringing encouraging hope—not only to one another but within the church. And not just within the North American church, but the church in the world today. And it's a delight to know that so many people are among us in community relating effectively in this cultural context among some of us who are the most monolingual and the most restricted in our cultural perspective of all the people in God's green earth. But as we look out at that kind of diverse world through the eyes of people sitting to our left, to our right, in front of us, in back of us; we realize that we have the potential of affecting an awful lot of this world for the Lord Jesus Christ. Now is this a very ambitious big notion? There are about fifty people here? I don't know. But if you don't think big, you never get any kind of a sense of what God can do. If God is as great as I think he's trying to say to his disciples when our Lord said, "greater things than I have done you will do," my goodness, should we not encourage one another with vision and with encouragement to think bigger? It is not too expensive. Our Lord himself did it and he suggested that it's a technique that we use, too.

There is, in this community, a nurturing of revolutionary commitment that is absolutely on target because it is absolutely a perpetuity from the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, God incarnate. We are in the business of nurturing revolutionary commitment of people. Donna said it well in her prayer: “We do this as agents of change in unjust world.” And we must through it all, keep a clear recognition that we labor; not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. The issues we deal with are ultimately sin issues. Sin issues: those diversities among people that become conflicts among people. Sin enters so quickly.

We live in a time, in this world, when the world is in a great deal of stress because of cultural proximity. Now given that culture is of God, nevertheless the sin coat on this world makes cultural interaction quite often negative. I use a simile like this—some of you have heard it perhaps too many times already, but some of you may not have so I’m going to do it again. I think that the whole world is a lot like a fairly flat field full of puddles. And when the water table has been historically relatively low, those puddles are all relatively isolated. There’s a little one here and a little one here and a little bigger one here and a little tiny one over here; there’s puddles all over the place. Those puddles are people—little puddles of people. But the world’s water table is rising. You can’t see it all, but it’s underneath. And as the water table rises, what happens to those puddles? All the puddles become each larger, but they also begin to touch one another. And as these puddles, different colors of puddles—it seemed they carried on the color from the soil they’re in—as they touch each other you can see little wild swirls of different colors coming together. And little by little, these puddles become a kind of a chaos because the puddles are no problem at all as long as they are insulated and isolated from one another; but the world we live in no longer allows that particular geology. The water table has risen—if you please, barring some kind of a major catastrophe—has risen permanently. We are living in a world where interactions among cultures are the name of the game.

I think we do well not to think exclusively of this issue of intercultural-ness and multicultural churches. I think we do well not to think of it exclusively as an urban matter. Now we have had in our conversations the last couple of days a lot of mentioning of the *urban*. Now I believe the urban is particularly important because the urban has become the provocation for attention to the issue. And you don’t want to knock it, say, well, now we’re aware that the world is becoming highly urbanized and there are some new problems associated with the new urban complexes. Well, now, yes. But the interesting thing is that the sub-urban and the rural and the countryside worldwide is affected by this and is itself becoming much more culturally diverse.

I was in a church in Nebraska not too many months ago, a free church you might know, and good grief, everybody looked alike. Then I begin nosing around the phone book. The phone book did not take long to go through. The phone book was skinnier than the notes that you get from many of my seminars. And, by golly, the names were very interesting—oodles and oodles of Scandinavian names. Italian names, big blocks of them in there. Indian names, Korean names in a little common village of farmers in Nebraska. How do you explain that? Bad editing in the phone book. No. The world is becoming intercultural at a very rapid pace, rural and urban.

Now in the urban situation we just can’t ignore it. In the rural, you can still do your thing on a monocultural basis and get away with it but, worse yet, you can do this in the suburb because the suburb brings you the largeness of the city without the tensions of the city. So our suburban churches are going to become increasingly monocultural, I’m convinced. More’s the pity. Because that’s where a good bit of the money of the church of Jesus Christ in North America is, that’s where

a good many of the young people of the church of Jesus Christ in North America are, and that's where a good bit of the incentive potentiality for change has gone to sleep. It's just too comfortable. Especially when you can keep looking there and there and there and feel so much superior and so much better off because—do you know in Waukegan, here's what happens in Waukegan? Oh, my goodness. Do you know in Chicago, here's what happens? Oh, my goodness. We're so glad we're not there. We're in Deerfield; we're in Banana Grove, wherever it is, in North Side. Oh, wonderful. And that's one of the things we've all got to take seriously: how do we wake the people of God up?

It isn't even a matter of foreign missions though some of you have asked the question why have we put the emphasis in this conference on the North American context? Well, there are at least two things you have to think about. First of all, there's a kind of an ethnocentric habit. When you ask North Americans, particularly in their institutions, to take a look at a problem like multiculturalism; they're going to come at it primarily from the North American perspective. Sure. But the other the other side of that is that the North American situation is itself a kind of a doorway, a kind of a, well, put it this way. You've got to get that community aware enough of itself self-critically or they're never going to relate effectively to the rest of the world. And, in some respects, we've got a bigger problem in North America.

Let me give you an illustration. One of our granddaughters, when she was about five several years ago—her mother's a pediatrician and a very wise woman, and she's never really done much more than expose her family to folks of different cultures and relates to various folks, and they just don't have any tradition in that family of drawing lines and drawing barriers—and all of a sudden Jenna was talking to her mother and said, "You know, Bobby's kind of different." And so Jenna's mother said, "Jenna, Bobby's kind of different? In what way is he kind of different?" "Well, his skin's brown." "Oh, really." And her mother then simply said calmly, "And what color is yours?" And she looks and she says, "Plastic."

Now it is that kind of habit of thought that says the difference doesn't necessarily mean that it ought to be like me. I may be the one who looks less desirable. I may be the one who has less of what really counts. That is really what we're after, I think, in terms of a Christian posture on difference: one that is able to see, self-critically, the strength and the weakness of *being* in order to be able to see it with more openness, the strength and the weakness of the *you*. And as we relate in that kind of a spirit, then the answer to the question why North America as our focal point for this consultation becomes a lot more clear. Because you will never get anywhere; you will never get anywhere with North Americans on this problem of multicultural-ness for and among North Americans until the North Americans are beginning to look more closely, systematically, self-critically at themselves. Now if someone else wants to say the same thing of Brazil, I'd say, God bless you. I used to work in that town, and there's a lot of that needed there, too. And there's a lot of that needed among some of the other ethnic groups that are, in fact, just as ethnocentric as Americans.

We've talked about ethnicity. We've talked about diversity. We've not differentiated these very well. They're not easy; they're terminologies and I don't think terminologies ever are the way you define your playing field, but I have a suggestion to make. God created diversity. Jesus accepted diversity and altogether 12 of the strangest combinations you ever saw. And then took that strange 12—who had, I suspect, at least a year of their time together to get used to each other—and then he took them all over the countryside among people who were even more different than themselves.

You take a look at the map of the travels of Jesus with his disciples, it'll blow your mind in terms of the cultural differences that Jesus deliberately took his disciples into. Why did he do that? Because Jesus believed that diversity is something you deal with—not to remove it, not to make it all alike—but to comprehend it and to recognize, then, that what God is doing in the world is simply taking all these little bits and pieces we called earlier the puddles, the differences, and forging them together into a chain. Paul said it rather well, he said, the church is not one; but the church is, in fact, a diversity. Not one member, but many. I'm referring to 1 Corinthians 12 there. And the imagery there is of forged links. Not woven strands of totally homogenous cable; but links and we have to respect those links. Diversity is a hindrance to some, but it's an energy to others.

I consulted with a growing Sunday school and, sure enough, my suspicions turned out to be right. On the telephone, as I talked to this dear pastor—a youngish pastor, well-trained Lutheran young pastor—I couldn't get to the bottom of it. How come you have a growing Sunday school? He couldn't put his finger on it. He says, "Well, the children come from the surrounding neighborhoods and communities." That was as close as he could come. When I got down there and took a look at it, I could tell he came from the neighborhood, but he sure didn't come from the kind of folks that church was. This 120 people was very homogeneous; that Sunday school was very heterogeneous. And the Sunday school had parents, but the church had never raised a question about those parents as possible church members. Why? Because they had great compassion for the children. I'm always impressed that God's people love children: red and yellow, black and white, you know, all the rest of that, but not the parents. See, here again, children build their commonality; adults see difference and see hindrance. And that was what was wrong with that church: they were seeing the community they were in as a threatening community full of people who were to be feared. And after working with them for a number of sessions, we finally made one brave step that you would have thought, why didn't you just do that years ago, months ago, sometime? Or, Ted, why didn't you get smart enough to recommend that first time you were down there? They decided they would have a Festival of the Nations because they checked their roles out and contacted some families and found out that they had thirty different nationalities represented in that Sunday school; thirty different ethnic groups, specifically nationalities in this case. I don't know whether they ever made anything of it, but I felt that I'd helped get them on first base; whether or not they ever got a run, I don't know. But they had a delightful Festival of the Nations and they had food, and they had games, they had songs. And they had these old Burghers who'd been running this little frightened White church amidst all these people from all over the world in their very neighborhood.

Now, why is it that God's people don't see that possibility right off the bat? I think the answer is we tend to see diversity much more as a hindrance than as a source of energy. But when it comes to ethnicity, we have an even more mystical problem there partly because it's a bigger, heavier word and that's supposed to scare us. I understand ethnicity this way. I'll just give it to you to think about and reflect on. It's kind of a handy definition that's kind of a pedestrian definition. That's really the best kind. Ethnicity is what my history has made of me. Every one of us has a history. A history has parents, grandparents, a name, a tradition, in some cases certain vocations, a language, a way of looking at good and bad, a way of talking about successful, a way of relating to fathers who know what you're going to do when you grow up; and that's ethnicity. It's what history has made of who I am.

And these matters of ethnicity, for some, unfortunately become a source of pride. And this is a tricky matter in the church because ethnicity in the church is quite often a negative when

ethnicity is a prideful matter that causes people to see themselves in any way superior to, having better answers than, or “God, I thank you that I am not as one of these.” You do remember the Pharisees’ prayer? And I think this is what the gospel really wants to redeem us from is *that* view of ethnicity. But the gospel does not want us to accept a different view of that that seems to be the other side and, in fact, is actually the devil’s side: to presume that there is nothing about ethnicity that is to be held onto. Ethnicity is a matter of concern that must be treated with respect because others have feelings. It’s as simple as that. And if ethnicity is, as I suggest, a matter of what my history has made of me and someone comes at my ethnicity, directly or indirectly, and attacks it; even if not, I have disciplined myself not to be inherently prideful of this as a Christian. It still is offensive and it is problematic.

This is, I believe, what the apostle Paul thinks about when he says, if you are really concerned about the work of the church in the world—I’m paraphrasing like crazy—but when Paul says, I become to the Jew, a Jew. To the Gentile, a Gentile. In effect, to the rich, among the rich; to the poor, among the poor. Those matters of my ethnicity that are in conflict with that person’s ethnicity are matters that I am willingly suppressing that they not become barriers. That is the kind of view that all of God’s people need, not just the people in multicultural churches.

Now my view is that God has given us a precious moment in history. When there are people like we were just looking at up in front of us here who are getting some very exciting experience working in multicultural situations and learning some things about it, that all the people of God ought to be listening closely to and learning from. It distresses me to realize that one of the most short supply careers in the world today is diplomacy. There are not enough competent diplomats. There are not enough people training for the experience of becoming diplomats. I’m looking here at big international levels, but I think that’s symptomatic of something that is shot right down through the world’s societies although we know full well that we live in a world that is very chaotic because of the incapacity to mediate, the incapacity to deal diplomatically—to deal in a civil manner with people who are different. Look at Bosnia, for heaven’s sake, look at Serbia, look at the whole of the conflict in the Balkans, look at the whole of the terrors in Central Africa. We’re living in a chaotic time. Christians, people of God, ought to be coming forth from all of our churches with some competencies as peacemakers. Do you believe that? When you reflect on the names of the Lord Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace is among them. And if you put that purely in eschatological terms and say, well, that’s a *mañana* kind of a thing; some day it’ll be fulfilled, you are missing the point. It is to be in the family of God, today, urban, rural, American, Argentine, Colombian, Korean, Chinese, wherever, as the people of God worldwide, it is to be among the peacemakers. Where do we learn those skills? I think we learn those skills in churches. That’s what God intended. And I think we learned to respond to the kinds of things we were hearing up here today. And again I repeat it: nine out of ten of those things were, in fact, not inherently problems or circumstances or remedies for multiethnic churches. Do you follow what I’m saying? But until we take the nature of the real world and the transformations that are occurring in it more seriously, we will continue to go right along tooting the same whistles, pushing our boat down the same channel and the laziness that infects the church will get to us. I’ve learned this much in my life over the years—there are three problems that infect the church supremely: laziness, pride, and power-holding. We’ve got to do something about that.

Ted Williams, yesterday, said something that is very close to my career and very close to my heart. He said that from where he sits in his ethnic group, it’s been valuable to him to have close

friends in the White community with whom he could sit down and say, help me understand. How many of you have that kind of a close friend in the other ethnic group from where you sit? We all have the other ethnic group. The Jews had the Samaritans, and Jesus played on that a lot because that's what he was trying to teach. You've got to play across that line. We've all got the other ethnic group. How well do you know another person in that group so that that person you could call on the telephone or drop in to see and say, help me understand what's going on, I don't see why this person's behaving this way. Why is this person reacting to me this way?

I value this in my life: God put me in an international career early on. I tried to turn that international career into an intercultural career. Many of my International Institute co-members at Michigan State were experts on the airports. They had visited every major airport of the world and they knew just exactly what the local customs were and how to do this and how to do that, but they didn't know people. And partly because I had missionary friends and college friends and so forth in so many cities of the world, I just made it a point right off the bat to get acquainted with people wherever I was and to get caught up and let them help me interpret and see things through their lives and through their experiences. And I very early learned that it's not very hard to get in with local folks and sometimes the translator—you're working in an international conference, you have a translator—and you say to the translator, “Can we have coffee afterwards? I want to talk with you? I need some help.” And lay yourself open and say to this person, “You know, you're a local person here; you speak my language. Help me understand.” And then go through my list of concerns from the day, and things that I couldn't understand in our negotiations and our planning. Have this person just say it, “Well, you're not, from the point of view of those of us in here in Guatemala, that looks like this and it looks like this.” And I'd say, “Ah,” and I hit the negotiations the next morning. It was as if I'd done a whole consultative piece of homework here because I had the handle on things that my counterpart, who was no longer just a translator but a cultural interpreter, could help me with and I could get into. I have valued these circles of cultural interpreters that I've known now as doctoral students and grad students here and there and people that I've worked with. There's hardly any place that Margaret and I will go in the world that we don't have a number of those people to get in touch with, and have a meal with, and spend some time in their home, and get their interpretations of what's going on in the world, and learn from it. These are the sorts of things that the people of God have available to them increasingly in any nation because of this rising up and mixing of the puddles. They're there. We can take advantage of them. Quite often the big difference between those of us who move on this and those of us who don't is a question of how well do you make friends with people who are different. And we all need to work on that one.

David Bohn's congruence—another thing I jotted in my notes from the week—tremendous idea; tremendous important idea. We're not concerned about conforming, but we're concerned about congruence so that our lives are flowing more in parallel and in relationship. We don't have to become all alike. God isn't trying to make us all alike. God's ideal is not to have people all alike. He wouldn't have made diversity if he didn't believe in it. The issue is are we letting difference block us and stop us?

In a church not far from the one where Bob Smith has pastored, I preached my first occasion in a truly multicultural church. I'd been talking about multicultural churches for longer than I'd care to even mention, to realize that I'd never actually preached in one until that particular morning. And it was an old church that had started out as a Baptist Church in this old part of Queens, not too far from LaGuardia field. And today it's a neighborhood just thickly crowded with

New York City's typical patterns of strings of people from this nation and that nation and the other nation. And the pastor there I'd gotten acquainted with through some other relationships and he just begged to come visit his church. Finally, he teased me into coming to preach there and so, on one occasion, I did. And I sat in the first part of that service and it was a lot like what we were experiencing here today. We didn't simply replace all the different backgrounds with something new and totally different from everybody, but they sampled. We started out with a organist who was playing some exquisite Bach on a very old pipe organ in this church that was actually two arms: one arm that went back about as far as you see there; another arm that went over this way. These people couldn't see these people. It's a terribly architected thing, but they had a piece of geography that they'd made the best of as you will in the city; and a lot of people in there. And I was sitting on the platform enjoying his music; the organist was really good! And a choir director got up—he, too, was Black—and, boy, when that choir started jumping, the organist was jumping, too! And it was this movement back and forth between different styles—each done respectfully, not as a show about somebody else—each done respectfully in its own terms much the way the spiritual was done for us today; just a respectful piece of real stuff. And then to accompany the hymns, they had three guitars out there. And we had the three guitars going to it and we did some plain old Scottish, Irish hymns with guitar. And, you know, this doesn't even fit. We ought to be doing the ditties on the wall with the guitars. And, oh, it was just rich.

And then I got up to preach. Now having worked in so many places in the world—having worked in, as a matter of fact, over sixty nations—I could see the ethnicity in the faces and in the clothes as I looked around the room. And I could see little families here I knew jolly well had to be fairly recent Southeast Asian folk: probably Indochina, somewhere, Cambodia, Laotian. I spotted some Vietnamese I knew had to be Vietnamese. I spotted some people that I *knew* had to be Brazilian. Some others, you know, you can always tell Brazilians. They have the most marvelously varied color of any nation in the world; just marvelously varied. And, oh, it was fun; just scanned around like that, you know, and I always look up at a congregation when I'm standing up and preaching. I kind of spread my books out and while I was spreading my books out I kind of look around and smile; try to catch as many eyes as I can possibly catch. And as I did that, I should never have done it because I found a high percentage of these people looking square at me, smiling. It was that rare thing called a happy church, and I wasn't ready for *that*. If I had looked up and seen all these ethnic diversities sitting there with the standard, alright, you tell us your thing, I would have been okay, but I saw these people, a high percentage of them smiling. I'd had a nice introduction from my buddy, the pastor, but not *that* good. And I thought to myself, this is what heaven's like. And, then, I made the big mistake of the morning; I said that out loud. Those were my first words. I said this must be what heaven is like. In one massive explosion, they applauded and I clutched up and could hardly talk. That was enjoyment for all of us. This is not how you deal with the barriers; this is how you enjoy diversity. Somehow, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have to be the people who spread the good news, the gospel, that the Lord Jesus Christ has come and that in him there is no difference. That's fun.

I want to thank you, again, for your part in making this a really exciting enjoyable experience for all of us. And thank you, again, Chuck for the skill and scholarship that you've shown; a marvelous example for us all here in this community and we'll value that for days and months and years to come. And I want to thank every one of you from the bottom of my heart, and on Margaret's behalf as well. We love you.