

Report to Harrisburg Brethren in Christ Church

Harrisburg Brethren in Christ Church (hereafter HBIC) is in an excellent position to minister to their multiracial neighborhood in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The church is located in a city that has a majority African-American population and the area around the church is also racially diverse. As the percentage of non-whites continues to increase in Harrisburg, HBIC will have to continue to reach them if it is going to continue to thrive. Fortunately, there has already been quite a bit of success achieved by HBIC as this church has increased its racial diversity significantly over the last few years. However, HBIC still has a challenge in ministering to this population. There is quite a bit of evidence of racial strife in Harrisburg, which will make the further development of a multiracial congregation difficult. However, if HBIC is able to build more diversity upon its already racially mixed congregation, then this church will be in a tremendous position to speak to some of the racial alienation in Harrisburg.

Our general assessment is that HBIC has made a lot of the changes necessary to allow the church develop a strong multiracial outreach. The congregation has recently reached a point where about twenty percent of the congregation is not white – thus reaching the accepted level of diversity necessary to be classified as a multiracial congregation.¹ This diversity has not come by accident, but rather it is the result of a good deal of hard work. We do not believe that this is a congregation that needs a major overhaul in order to achieve racial diversity. We contend that this congregation merely needs to make some important tweaks in its approach, investigate other possibilities for enhancing their racial diversity and prepare for future possible issues.

At this point HBIC is a multiracial congregation. There is sufficient institutional mechanisms promoting this diversity and that diversity is at a high enough level to warrant labeling HBIC a multiracial congregation. It is to the church's credit that it has retained the services of Reconciliation Consulting to build on its current strengths. If HBIC continues to make the same degree of efforts and incorporate the same type of changes it has done in the past, then we are confident that this church will continue to increase its level of racial diversity. The purpose of this report is to help put HBIC in a better position to minister to people of different races living in the surrounding communities of the church. We will first start with a general demographic assessment of the Harrisburg community. Second, we will discuss our assessment of HBIC as an institution, looking at both the history and organization of this church. Next, we will provide an analysis of HBIC that outlines strengths and potential trouble spots. Finally, we will

¹ The service that Dr. Yancey attended has about 300 attendees and he estimated that about 60 of them were people of color. This puts the church right at the edge of the 80/20 breakdown.

make concrete suggestions that the leaders of HBIC can consider as they move forward in further developing a multiracial Christian witness to their community.

The Harrisburg Community

HBIC is located in Harrisburg. Currently whites make up 32 percent, blacks make up 53 percent and Hispanics make up 12 percent of Harrisburg's population. The 7 mile long Census tract that contains the church is 51 percent white, 36 percent Black and 6 percent Hispanic. There is racial diversity HBIC can draw on in its immediate neighborhood and throughout Harrisburg. These demographics indicate that African-Americans are the racial minority group most commonly found within the neighborhoods HBIC serve. However, the neighborhoods in the immediate area around the church are more heavily white than the rest of the city. This suggests that Harrisburg is residentially segregated and the church is located in a fairly "white" area of the city.² Nevertheless, there is enough racial diversity in the general area of Harrisburg, and even in the immediate neighborhoods surrounding HBIC, to make efforts at racial diversity viable.

There is evidence of a strong economic and educational racial divide in the Harrisburg. Among white households in the city, 25.44% have incomes of \$50,000 or over compared to 21.26% of the black households and 10.54% of the Hispanic households. The per-capita income of whites is \$22,102 compared to \$13,583 for blacks and \$8,717 for Hispanics. Furthermore 23.6% of the whites have college degrees compared to 7.81% of blacks and 4.26% of Hispanics. There are clear economic and educational cleavages linked to the racial groups living in Harrisburg. This is important since it suggests that individuals of different races will have contrasting social/material needs.

Harrisburg is also characterized by a significant amount of racial strife. Recently there have been charges of racism directed against the Dauphin Borough city council by the police chief of Dauphin. This incident has caught the attention of the NAACP who is investigating it. There was also another situation earlier in Harrisburg in which a banner used by a gun-rights group urged the hanging of a Latino lawmaker. Finally, there has been recent controversy due to the support of the ACLU of Pennsylvania for action against racial profiling. All of this indicates that Harrisburg is a city deeply charged with racial tension. It is in an atmosphere of racial tension that HBIC must operate.

We can only speculate why the degree of racial strife is so high in Harrisburg. One reason may be because Harrisburg is a state capital, which often invites a great deal of political controversy. Pennsylvania is a state replete with all types of racial controversies and many of the actors of those

² Most of the surrounding cities to Harrisburg are overwhelming white. When we include the cities surrounding Harrisburg, the church is clearly located in one of the most diverse parts of the entire area.

controversies will attempt to find redress in Harrisburg. Another possible reason may be connected to the proximity of African-American activists in nearby cities such as Philadelphia and Baltimore. Because those activists are so close, they may take interest in the events of Harrisburg and encourage racial activism. It is also possible that at least some of this strife is due to the economic and educational cleavages documented earlier in this section. There is academic evidence that economic and educational racial disparity is related to the degree of racial hostility in a community. Regardless of why there is a great deal of racial strife in Harrisburg, it is important that HBIC appreciates the presence of this strife as they attempt to reach people of color.

The History of Harrisburg Brethren in Christ Church

The original congregation that would become HBIC was founded in 1962. The growth of this congregation facilitated the need for a move. In 2002 space was located at the present church site. The church has recently occupied this new building. The move kept the church in the same basic area of town but allowed the congregation to gain the space it needed to accommodate its growth. The purpose of the move was to keep HBIC in the urban part of Harrisburg and to find additional space. This motivation is in keeping with the desires of HRIC to have an urban emphasis in their ministry. An important part of the history of this church is this urban emphasis, which seems to have been a part of the church from its inception.

This transition is a work in progress. Currently there are plans to renovate garage space into a food pantry, and to overhaul the office area/discipleship space. There is also a hope that eventually the sanctuary will be moved to a larger space upstairs, which will allow for a better acoustic setting for the worship service and provide for a community center that serves the neighborhood. There is also an unfinished area that currently has not been designated for future use. The current needs of this area are the addition of air conditioning/heating, however; there are two classrooms that can be used in it thus far. It is unclear when these projects will be finished, as funding for these projects has not yet been raised. HBIC is currently operating under a tight budget. These financial challenges make it difficult for these needs to be met.

The Organization of Harrisburg Brethren in Christ Church

HBIC is organized with a pastoral staff, a leadership board and a congregational council. For important decisions there has to be a strong level of consensus among the members of the board. There are also a variety of committees who also help to make decisions. The leadership board tends to make the major decisions. The pastoral staff and leaders of each committee make up the majority of this board. The

committees are put in charge of certain areas in the church (worship, finance) and can make decisions within those areas. Deacons are used to conduct acts of service to various members of the church. While technically they are not decision-makers, deacons often have a visible presence that denotes recognition of leadership within a church body. They have been assigned their position to serve the members of the congregation. Since leadership in a Christian environment is often attached to servanthood, these deacons can also be seen as leaders. Thus, there are several opportunities for leadership at HBIC. These multiple layers of leadership offer an excellent opportunity for laity to become involved in the operation of the church. Through much hard work, these levels of leadership are racially diverse.

However, currently there is discussion about reorganizing this current leadership structure. The current structure has been criticized for not facilitating communication between the members of the church. There are also complaints about the lack of definition of some of the roles of the church members. A committee has been working on this reorganization for the last two years and it is unclear when the committee will come up with a new plan.

HBIC's stated vision is to develop a vital multiracial church of 500 for Harrisburg. Beyond this vision is a concern about meeting the needs of the community with Christian resources. This is seen in the relationships HBIC has with Messiah College and Christian Churches United. Furthermore, the church is also supporting the Samaritan Health Group in the development of a health center, which will also be useful in serving the community. The stated vision of this center is to demonstrate God's love with the provision of exemplary health services. The planned services will be holistic in that in addition to physical health, the center will also attempt to address some of the spiritual, financial, educational and behavioral issues of health. The church will either sell or lease the land to the Samaritan Health Group, which will run the ministry center. Ideally, the Samaritan Health Group and HBIC will develop a relationship with each other whereby they can share resources in their efforts to serve the local community. However, the center is still in the initial planning stages.

In addition to the medical health center, there are other important venues that HBIC has been able to use to become active in the local community. This church is also involved with Christians Church United (CCU). This is a Christian ecumenical organization that seeks to provide economic and social services for many of the disenfranchised of the community. These services include programs such as rental assistance, location of housing for the poor, prison ministry and bilingual services for first generation individuals. The leadership of CCU is generally from the mainline Protestant tradition as over 70 percent of the churches in this organization are mainline Protestant congregations. However, there are

also some evangelical and black member churches.³ This organization offers HBIC an opportunity to work with other Harrisburg churches on economic issues that are important to communities of color.

HBIC also has the opportunity to become active in the local community through Messiah College. This college is part of the same denomination as HBIC and thus it is feasible for HBIC to develop close relationships with students and faculty from Messiah. This possibility is enhanced by the fact that several faculty members at Messiah also attend the congregation. One of the benefits of working with Messiah is that there is evidence that the college is concerned about issues of racial diversity. There is an office of multicultural programs, which is staffed by an associate dean – Dr. Lawrence A. Q. Burnley. This office oversees a variety of racial diversity initiatives and it is charged with the responsibility of making Messiah a more welcoming campus for people of color. The office is also in the middle of developing an international racial reconciliation program that is in conjunction with a college in South Africa. Other research we have done has shown that most Christian liberal arts schools have not developed this much of an emphasis on addressing issues of racial diversity. As a result of this emphasis on diversity there are a fair number of multicultural student organizations at Messiah College. We have had a conversation with Dr. Burnley, and he has shown interest in working with HBIC. Collaboration with this college offers great possibilities for mutual rewards for both groups.

The theological orientation of the Brethren of Christ denomination is evangelicalism. Within that basic orientation is an emphasis on peace, community service and social justice. This particular congregation also has an emphasis on racial diversity. The relative success that HBIC has enjoyed in attracting racial diversity sets it apart from almost all other congregations in that denomination.

Analysis of Harrisburg Brethren in Christ Church

There are very real challenges for HBIC. Because of the racially charged atmosphere of Harrisburg, there is a significant amount of hostility existing between individuals of different races. Cities steeped in racial conflict tend to breed leaders of color who emphasize mistrusting European-Americans. Since HBIC is a predominately white church, they are going to be seen by some of these leaders of color as an institution that can not be trusted. The fact that HBIC seeks to attract a more multiracial population can also be seen as a threat to the power base of these leaders. In some ways it is in the interest of minority leaders for HBIC to fail in its quest to attract more people of color into the congregation. These leaders of color can perceive HBIC as an institution that may rob them of the loyalty some people of color have towards them. Nevertheless, these minority leaders have a great deal of support in the communities

³ We could not determine what percentage of the organization is evangelical, but about 10 percent of the churches in the CCU are predominately black churches.

of color. It is a mistake for the leaders of HBIC to ignore the local minority leaders, however it is also unwise to completely trust those leaders.

The general direction that the leaders (the pastoral staff and committee leaders) of HBIC want to take the church is towards an emphasis on a multiracial ministry. That vision was repeated many times in the questionnaires of the leaders. The leadership of the church also recognizes the urban nature of the church and postulates the importance of serving that urban community. In personal conversations with these leaders it was also clear that there is a high priority in reaching out to the general neighborhood. Reaching individuals in the immediate neighborhood for Christ and meeting their neighbor's real needs remains a high priority for HBIC leaders. Several other churches have accomplished becoming an urban multiracial church, but there are few other Brethren in Christ churches that have such a similar vision. Thus HBIC is taking a path where they have little role modeling within their own denomination.

The leaders' assessment of HBIC also indicated areas of strengths and weaknesses in the potential of this congregation to reach out to those of different races. As it concerns the strengths of the church the leaders pointed out the vision of becoming multiracial or encouraging racial reconciliation as a powerful strength of the church. It was also noted by the leaders that HBIC is a graced based church attempting to love the local community. The leaders recognized the many outreach programs that HBIC is using to serve the local community as another strength of the church. This emphasis on grace is part of the official statement of the mission in the church and it is seen in the type of programs that HBIC offers. Using this emphasis on grace will be important in helping the church to reach out to people of color.

The strengths pointed out by the leaders indicate that HBIC is not a typical conservative Protestant church that overly relies on an ideology of political conservatism. Indeed many of the core values expressed in the Brethren in Christ denomination are not compatible with a traditional conservative political ideology. While the church has a conservative theological tradition, there is more openness to political progressiveness on economic and racial issues than what might be expected from a church in a predominately white evangelical denomination. In fact there is more sympathy for Democrats than for Republicans among the leaders of HBIC. There is even more support for the NAACP than for Democrats among the leaders of the church. This bodes well for reaching people of color, who tend to have more of a progressive political perspective than white Protestants.

However, the leaders of HBIC did identify some weaknesses that need to be addressed to allow the church to move forward. One of the weaknesses that were observed by several leaders was the lack of church-wide participation in many of the church's activities. The leaders are concerned that often few people are called upon to do a majority of the work in the church. This undoubtedly is the case in many churches, but this may be more of a problem at HBIC as at least one leader noted that it was particularly

difficult to get African-Americans involved in the church. It is also notable that some of the leaders saw weakness in the worship of the church. Some observed that the worship lacked variety. This observation is particularly insightful since HBIC utilizes multiple teams for its worship.

It was also mentioned that a significant group of individuals at HBIC are resistant to change. Such resistance is not uncommon when churches are undergoing a transition towards becoming multiracial. Dealing with that resistance is going to be important for allowing HBIC to become successful in ministering to the multiracial urban community that surrounds it. Losing some of the members of the church because of changes that are made can be especially devastating to HBIC since the church is also struggling financially. Thus, changes to the church must be brought about carefully and in a way that can gather the maximum amount of support from the congregation.

The leaders seem to identify the intentional direction of the church towards a more racially diverse congregation, as the principle HBIC has been the most successful at accomplishing. I also observed evidence of this intentionality in some of the statements of the leaders concerning the strengths and mission of the church. The principle that seems to have the least amount of support concerned the worship style of the church. This is in keeping with the observation of some of the leaders about the lack of variety in the worship of HBIC. Thus the intentionality of HBIC needs to be used to help the church to develop a worship style that is more inclusive of individuals of different races.

It is also important to note that although the church is located in an area of racial diversity that it is not clear to the leaders that the members of the church have done a good job of attracting individuals from that community into the church. The leaders do note that the church is quite open to members of different races, but there is less confidence that this openness has led to reaching members of the community. Thus, the church is located in an area that allows racial inclusiveness to be possible, and the challenge of the church is to take advantage of this community's diversity.

According to the church leaders, the principle of personal skills also needs to be examined. Some of the church leaders doubt the ability of the church members to handle set-backs in the church with kindness, wisdom and even laughter. There is also concern about whether church members are sensitive to the needs of those of different races. This implies that leaders of the church may be picking up subtle unresolved interracial conflict. This concern is coupled with the relatively low score that the leaders provided with the idea that there are goals for educating members of the congregation and preparing them for a more multiracial congregation. Some degree of training may be needed to address some of these issues.

The general population at HBIC shows a sufficient level of respect for the need of understanding cultures of different races. Nearly all of the white members felt that dealing with racism should be taught

from the pulpit and that learning more about cultures of other races was important. This is a good indication that there is little need to convince the population at the church about the importance of developing multicultural awareness. Another strength we found within the general population of white church members was the lack of fear that the members have towards racial outgroups. Very few of the white church members have any problems with their children marrying outside of their race and the vast majority of the members want the church to do a better job of attracting individuals of different races. This is a population that is well suited for reaching out to those of different races.⁴

However, there is evidence that the some at HBIC do lack an awareness of the structural problems that plague people of color. Only about half of the white members of the church believe that racism occurs because of the unfairness in our society. In successful multiracial churches this figure would be around 60%. Furthermore only about half of the white members believe that education is key to solving racial problems. We do not want to sound overly pessimistic, especially in light of some of the other strengths in this congregation, yet the members of this congregation can benefit from gaining a better understanding of the structural nature of racism.

There are interesting differences between the church leaders (clergy and committee leaders) and non-leaders that may help account for possible cleavages in how each perceive racial issues. For example, the church's leaders averaged only having 1.688 of their 3 closest friends being someone of the same race. Among the non-leaders this figure was 2.183. This is an indication that the leaders are more likely to have friends of a different race than the non-leaders. Such differences can indicate that the leaders are more open to the perspectives of those of different races because of their greater exposure to those of different races. There are also some interesting political cleavages. According to the measure rating Republicans, the church's leaders were less favorable than other members (4.25 versus 4.58).⁵ Perhaps more importantly they were more hospitable to the NAACP (6.313 versus 5.682). There were very little differences between the leaders and non-leaders in their rating of Democrats. Yet, these findings alone suggest that the church's leaders are more sensitive to the political concerns of people of color than others in the church. This reflects the relative lack of awareness the general church population has towards the existence of institutional racism. Such an assertion also aligns with the fact that the leaders are more likely to have more different-race friends than others since there is research indicating that having a more racially diverse social network is linked, among whites, to more awareness of institutional racism.

⁴ The number of non-white laity who filled out the surveys (n = 11) was too small to make strong assertions with these dichotomous measures. However, generally non-whites possess racial attitudes that were either just as progressive as their white counterparts or were even a little less progressive. To the degree that this difference mattered it was because of the powerful progressiveness of the white members of the church as it concerns multicultural awareness and the potential fear of racial outgroups.

⁵ These scores are based on a 7-point likert scale.

We also wanted to assess potential racial differences within the congregation. We did this by comparing whites to members of all other racial groups.⁶ Once again we found an important difference in the racial makeup of the social networks. Nonwhites only had an average of 1.588 of their 3 closest friends being of their same race. This is compared to 2.214 for the white members of the church. Clearly one of the reasons why some non-white members have attended the church is because they are comfortable having white friends. As white members of HBIC also diversify their social networks, they may find more people of color who are comfortable coming to this church. Non-whites favored Republicans less than whites (4.2 versus 4.586), but were more favorable of Democrats (5.487 versus 5.257) and the NACCP (6.733 versus 5.597) on our favorability scales. These differences can potentially be much greater than as noted so there is some political convergence between church members in different racial groups. Thus, non-whites currently in the congregation may be more comfortable around whites than non-whites in general due to their tendency to agree with some aspects of majority group identity. However, in time the church will likely attract non-whites who are more radical in their political viewpoints and it is important that the church is ready for the influx of such individuals.

Analysis of the focus groups indicated that both whites and non-whites perceive the multiracial makeup of the church as an aspect of the church that makes it distinct from other churches. The message that has been sent to the members of the congregation about the importance of racial diversity has been well received. The focus group participants also indicate a great deal of satisfaction with this commitment. They look at the diversity in the church as a representation of the diversity in the larger community and as a way to obey Biblical dictates. This commitment did not significantly differ between the white and non-white members nor did it differ from the young and old members of the church.

However, individuals in the focus groups tend to accept many of the roles in the church and at time felt overworked. These individuals participated in many of these activities out of a sense of commitment to the vision of the church, and desire to help achieve the goals of the church. There was a sense from some of the white members of the focus group that there were too many ministries in the church and that individuals were too spread out to make the ministries effective. There was also frustration from both white and non-white individuals in these focus groups at the lack of help they receive from other members of the church and many of the individuals in the focus groups also suggested that they felt overworked.. The pastoral staff also indicated a certain degree of fatigue in that they were tired from their activities this summer. Such a tendency among the clergy and active laity may inhibit the development of future outreach ministries, which can help reach more individuals from the community.

⁶ Ideally we would not lump all the nonwhite members of the group together. However, the small number of any particular non-white racial group forces us to do this, even with our interval-ratio measures.

The white members in these groups tended to locate the church's inability to attract a sufficient amount of help to the lack of institutional organization of the congregation while people of color tended to link this problem due to the lack of relationships that have developed within the church.

Finally, members of the focus groups were asked about what they would be willing to change in order to make the congregations more racially diverse. Both whites and non-whites were unwilling to alter the general theological values of the church. This is not limited to the basic ideal of salvation and human depravity, but it also includes some of the values unique to the denomination such as simple living and pacifism.⁷ A racial difference was noted beyond this theological distinction is that people of color were open to any other changes in the structure, worship or organization of the church while some of the white members wanted limitations to potential changes to the worship service. For example, there were some whites concerned about the possibility of church services becoming much longer. Such issues were not brought up within the focus group of people of color.

The outreach ministries developed by the church has accounted for a great deal of the growth of people of color at HBIC. These ministries meet important community needs and also allow for the development of the type of interpersonal relationships important for helping people of color feel welcomed in the church. Furthermore, Pastor Washington has valuable skills that she has used to make connections with those in the community. The children and youth ministries have also been solid endeavors in that Pastors Patterson and Hart have created an atmosphere that accept children and youth of color. Pastor Hart has made it a point to reach out to the neighborhood youth and help them to integrate into the youth group. Pastor Patterson has also adjusted aspects of her ministry, such as the child dedication ceremony, so that the needs of some of the individuals in the community could be met.

The décor of the church is fairly sparse. This was the case both inside the sanctuary and on the walls outside of the sanctuary. This may be due to the tradition of the church to not be extravagant. However, it may also reflect the current economic situation within the congregation and the fact that the church is still in transition from the move. There is naturally little in the way of decoration in the areas of the church that are currently under development. There was a beautiful work of art that greeted those who came into the foyer, but there was little in the way of other decorations. However, the youth room and the children's room did have some basic decorations in keeping with the population being served.

The worship service was fairly inclusive of non-white elements. It is our understanding that there are three worship teams and the team that did the worship the Sunday Dr. Yancey was in town was the gospel team. Thus it may be possible that the worship observed was more "ethnic" than normal due to the

⁷ These distinctions are outline in a handout of describing the core values of the Brethren in Christ that was found at the church. In addition to basic Christian doctrine this pamphlet included aspects such as Serving Compassionately, Pursuing Peace and Living Simply.

fact that Dr. Yancey was there when the gospel team ministered to the congregation. The order of the service was quite traditional, but there was a powerful message by Pastor Dalton that resonated with some of the people of color who were in the church. Once again it is impossible for us to determine if this was a typical message, but messages like the one delivered will aid the church in its efforts at racial inclusiveness. In speaking with Pastor Dalton it was learned that he has altered content in his sermons to address more of the issues that people of color face. Such attention to the needs of people of color will be important as the church continues to racially diversify.

It is also important to take into account the Anabaptist tradition as we assess the challenges HBIC face. This particular denomination developed, in part, as a response to some of the dominant religious and governmental structures of its day. This helped to establish a tradition among the Anabaptists as a group distrustful of authority. This tradition has emphasized the freedom from the government so that their traditions can be preserved. Thus the Anabaptist have also tended to de-emphasize working for societal change. While we acknowledge that churches must be careful not to emphasize social activism over spiritual issues and evangelism, one of the consequences of this Anabaptist tradition is a hesitation on the part of the members of this movement to engage in the social problems of the day. If Christians are not careful then this attitude can lead to a passive approach to racial issues. Such an approach is ill equipped for dealing with contemporary racial issues. This is a problem that is particularly acute for dealing with racism in Harrisburg because it is a politically and racially charged city.

To its credit HBIC has not taken a passive approach to racial issues. This can be seen in its ministries of outreach, which attempt to address the concerns of their neighbors. Furthermore, we have also pointed out that the leaders of the church tend to trust Democrats more than Republicans, although there is little evidence that HBIC is active in political struggles. However, it is still important to be aware of the theological traditions that discourage social engagement and is part of this church. This theology must be confronted as it can hamper the church's efforts to deal with racism.

The church has also been active in its participation of the Mosaix conference. At the time of this analysis, several individuals had indicated an interest in attending the local Mosaix conference. This participation is likely to lead to opportunities for the church's leaders to gain more social support in these new endeavors. Also because this church has reached a status as being multiracial, this congregation will also be in a position to provide support for other congregations in the general region.

We contend that this church will continue to racially diversify in the foreseeable future. This diversification is likely to occur regardless of our consultation. Many of the mechanisms that have been put into place within the church will continue to bring in people of color from the local community. As HBIC's reputation as a multiracial congregation continues to grow, it is likely that they will even attract

people of color from outside their local community. However, there is a danger that as the church diversifies that a type of “white flight” will take place that will rob the church of its white members and this its ability to maintain its multiracial makeup. As such we offer reforms in the following pages of this report for two reasons. One is to better aid the racial diversification already occurring in the congregation. The second reason is to offer some measures that may help to retard, or even eliminate, the possibility of a future white flight from the church.

Potential Reforms for Harrisburg Brethren in Christ Church

In this section of the report we will explore some of the potential reforms that HBIC can consider in an effort to boost their efforts at reaching individuals of different races. We tend to provide more reforms than a church will be able to implement. Our policy is to offer many possible reforms and then allow the leadership of a particular church to select the reforms that best suit its current situation. This maximizes the flexibility of the leaders to find the best possible path towards growth and racial diversity. Given the perspective of some church members that there are already too many ministries sponsored by HBIC, it may be wise for the leadership of the church to consider the reforms that take up less time and effort first, and to examine reforms that require the establishment of new ministries with a more critical eye.

Before we address possible reforms, we want to provide a quick word about the attempts at reforming the organization of the church. We were not hired to assess the organizational structure nor were we present when the original decision was made to undergo the reorganization. As such we have no opinion about the need for this reorganization. A couple of individuals inquired about whether there is a type of church organization more conducive for racial diversity. Unfortunately the state of the literature on multiracial congregations has not developed to the point so that it is possible to determine what such a style of organization may be. Thus, we are silent as to how the church should reorganize its leadership structure other than to state that obviously any structure must allow for representation from minority group members.⁸

The vision statement of HBIC explicitly lists becoming multiracial as an important goal. Recognition of efforts to become racially diverse is an important step for multiracial churches. However, research has indicated that multiracial churches do not tend to become racially diverse by making

⁸ It is our understanding that about a year ago there was a new organizational pattern that had been proposed but some of the people of color were dissatisfied with it. It was felt that this new organizational pattern was too hierarchical. Since that time more people of color are on the committee to provide input for the new organizational pattern. As such the new organization is likely to be less hierarchical. Regardless of whether it is more egalitarian or not, the fact that individual of color gained an opportunity to have input into the new organization is likely to make it more acceptable to the entire church body when it is unveiled.

diversity their primary goal. Rather they have an overarching goal that drives the energy of the church members towards becoming multiracial. Yet, HBIC has enjoyed a good deal of success with its focus on multiracial ministry. We speculate that attaching that emphasis to a larger goal may further build on this success. Furthermore, there is a danger when a predominately white church begins to make a transition to a multiracial congregation that the white members of the church may begin to flee as they lose their majority power. We have not picked up any such movement, but do believe that it is important to develop measures that limit the possibility of such “white flight” occurring in the foreseeable future. Therefore, we suggest that HBIC finds an overarching goal that can legitimate the desires of this church for a multiracial congregation.

The focus groups provide a possible source for such an overarching goal. Members in both the white and people of color focus groups indicated that they appreciated the emphasis on pacifism, social justice, and community service emphasized by the denomination. This emphasis is generally more important to the members of the focus group than even the desire for racial inclusiveness. Many of the members of the focus groups noted that their churches desire to reach out to the members of the community was a major reason for the relative success HBIC was enjoying in attracting members of different races. Finally, several members in the focus groups also tied their desire for racial inclusiveness to the need to reach as many people for Christ as possible. The combination within the Brethren in Christ denomination of evangelism and pacifism/social justice can help to create an ideology that can be the needed core to justify HBIC’s push for racial inclusiveness.

As such we recommend that the leadership of HBIC begins to shape their vision more towards a reinterpretation of the core doctrinal values of Brethren in Christ. These values are an evangelical support of issues of pacifism, community service and social justice. The leaders of HBIC can make an argument that to fully meet such values that it is important to create a racially inclusive community. For example, the leaders can argue that pacifism should be exhibited through a process of racial reconciliation. They can also point out that community service in a racially diverse community means a racially diverse congregation.⁹ Finally, in the United States social justice has long been connected to issues of racial justice. Tying the need for a multiracial congregation to the overarching goal of the Brethren-in-Christ core values will provide motivation for church members who question the need to deal with racial diversity and help the church continue to make contacts in the community that will promote that diversity. Such an overarching goal is less likely to encounter resistance from church members than a more specific goal of racial diversity. It will act to slow down possible exodus by majority group members as they will

⁹ Even though we did not directly assess the degree to which this is true for the entire congregation, many of the individuals we interacted with indicated that they lived fairly close to the church and thus they live in the racially mixed neighborhood. This has help to feed the notion of community that is a part of these core values.

not be asked to seek diversity for its own sake, but rather for the sake of creating a more authentic Brethren in Christ witness.

Perhaps the core area most challenging to justify efforts to reach people of color is the call for simple living. As we understand it, this is a call to resist materialism and to live relatively inexpensively. Doing so will free up resources that allows one to help raise others out of poverty and support Christian ministry. While such a position does have scriptural backing, it is a position that many disadvantaged minority groups will have a hard time accepting. From the point of view of these groups, they and their ancestors have had to endure generations of poverty and economic exploitation. To now be required to forgo the opportunity for wealth can seem like a cruel trick to them. However, we suggest that it is possible to connect the ideas of simple living to the need to create a multiracial community. The building of the community means that it is important to help those with the least resources to escape their poverty. In this way, the call to simple living does not have to indicate economic sacrifice for those in poverty. Rather the call for simple living can mean that those in poverty should work with those with financial means so that they can escape their poverty.¹⁰ Only when individuals have escaped poverty, do they have the option of living simply. In this way the notion of simple living means a community effort to enable everyone to have the means to choose to sacrifice for others in the community.¹¹

We know that this brief exploration into how a unique Brethren in Christ interpretation can justify the need for a multiracial congregation is not adequate for fully developing the legitimization of a racially diverse church. The lack of development of such a justification is due to our own lack of knowledge of Brethren in Christ theology. We can envision the outlines of what such a justification may look like, but it will require those who have lived with this theology for years to fully establish this justification. Thus it will be the job of the leaders of HBIC to more fully develop and enunciate a Brethren in Christ understanding about the importance of a multiracial atmosphere in the scheme of the values developed within the Brethren in Christ denomination. A more developed form of this rationale can then be preached and taught to members of the church.¹² It can also be used to help socialized new members who seek to join the congregation.¹³

¹⁰ Such a call is not without precedent within the African-American community. As some African-Americans have been able to gain middle class status, there is a concern that they leave the black community and take their economic resources with them. This sort of flight of wealth has been one of the sources behind poverty in poor black communities. HBIC may be able to connect with this criticism of some middle class African-Americans to fashion a call for simple living that is palatable to people of color.

¹¹ You may want to check out the work of John Perkins to gain even more support for such an approach. We recommend the book *Beyond Charity: The Call to Christian Community Development* as his best book on the subject. He advocates an approach that emphasis the importance of middle class individuals relocating to poor urban areas and thus living a simpler life. Since he is an African-American, his material may be more easily accepted than the material generated within the Brethren-in-Christ denomination.

¹² In footnote 7 we noted that we received a pamphlet that outlined the core values of the Brethren in Christ. There were 10 stated values on that pamphlet. It may be advisable for Pastor Dalton to have a preaching series where he takes all ten of the

If the justification is more fully developed and taught to members of HBIC then it will become easier to challenge individuals to make changes that encourage racial diversity. One of those challenges is that some of the white members of the church will have to develop an understanding about the structural nature of racism. The book that best describes this difference is Emerson and Smith's book *Divided by Faith*. We recommend that the leadership read a copy of the book if they have not done so. Having read the book will provide the leadership material for helping other members of the church to see the value of challenging institutional racism. Furthermore, there may be great value in leading a study in that book for some of the members of the church. This can pave the way for a discussion of a more holistic approach towards issues of racism among members of the congregation. All of this conversation needs to be couched within a Christian ideology and should not be too heavy handed.¹⁴ The church's bookcase in the front of the church offers many books that can produce the needed knowledge. We encourage the use of this bookcase and hope to see it grow over the coming years. One suggestion we add is to consider finding books written by non-black people of color or that deal with issues of non-black people of color to add to the collection as well. Some possible suggestions include *One New People* by Manuel Ortiz, *Yellow* by Frank Wu and *Racial Conflict and Healing* by Andrew Park. These books will help to signal to non-blacks people of color that the church wants to include their voices as well.

The church has done a wonderful job with its ministries aimed to the local community. These ministries include those such as Celebrate Recovery, single mother's ministries, food pantry and computer training classes. They have been a major factor in helping HBIC attract some of the people of color from the community. In addition to meeting the church's desire for more racial diversity, such ministries also fit into the church's desire for social justice and community service. In this way, these ministries are efforts to produce racial diversity and do so within the framework of the overarching core values of HBIC.

However, these ministries also produce the possibility of future misunderstandings. Many of the early attendees of color tend to be those who are already somewhat comfortable with whites. This is quite normal in the development of multiracial congregations. Yet, many individuals, previous to their

values of HBIC and how that value is related to the desire for a multiracial congregation. In this way, the leadership of the church will reinforce not only the desirability of being racially diverse, but also the core values of the congregation.

¹³ It is also vital to remember that this is also an opportunity to bring the Brethren in Christ core values into the communities of color. We met several individuals of color who became convinced of the value of simple living and pacifism because of their interaction with the members of the church. Majority group members who grew up with such values may find the sharing of them with people of color a sufficient overarching goal that will help them to remain committed to the vision of the congregation.

¹⁴ For example, although the white members of this church are less trustful of Republicans than white Christians in general there is still enough warm feelings towards Republicans that we would not advise harsh attacks on Bush or other prominent Republicans from the pulpit. Rather, addressing some of the institutional consequences of certain political actions, without naming specific politicians, may be a more acceptable way of illustrating institutional racism.

introduction to HBIC, who come into this church due to these outreach ministries are not likely to have had a great deal of exposure to members of the majority race. The concerns, values and attitudes of these new church members will differ from people of color who have previously joined the congregation. As such there is a danger that the white members of the church may overestimate the degree to which they understand the cultural background of the new members of the church. As a result of this tendency, we contend that efforts are made to insure that majority group members of the church are encouraged to not make assumptions about their level of understanding of the new people of color who will join the congregation in the future. Furthermore, when they are ready for service, we also recommend an effort to encourage the inclusion of some of the newer individuals of color who come from a disadvantaged economic setting into the leadership of the congregation. Their voice will likely be different from the voice of the current church members of color.

There are also important cultural concerns that often need addressing in a multiracial congregation. During interviews and discussions with some of the individuals of color, it was clear that some of them felt that their culture was not respected. The cultural issues that were brought to our attention were not those that can be tied to sinful behavior; however it is the tendency of Christians to sometimes make attributions of sin towards cultural practices that are not common within their own racial group. We suggest two principles for handling such cultural differences. First, it is important to teach that cultural differences are not indications of sin. Training members of the congregation to understand what sort of practices are cultural and what sort of practices are truly sinful will go a long way into sorting out some of the possible misunderstandings that can develop. Second, we recommend that generally the majority group have to make more cultural accommodations than the minority group.¹⁵ Members of the minority group already are making an adjustment by their attendance at a church where they are a numerical minority. It is not always possible to defer to the cultural concerns of the minority group, but when that deference is possible, then it is our suggestion that it is made so that the minority group members will feel more at ease in the church.

One of the cultural differences that may need to be discussed is a white/nonwhite difference in how to conduct ministry. Many of the whites in the church focused on institutional organization and programs as a source of ministry while people of color were more likely to talk about the development of relationships. This is in keeping with a cultural difference that has been noted between whites and non-whites in general. It is our opinion that a focus on organizational structure and relationships are both important for successful ministries. However, how to balance the effort and time that should be placed upon structure and relationships is an issue that needs to be negotiated between the whites and non-whites

¹⁵ Pastor Dalton preached this advice during the sermon he delivered when Dr. Yancey visited.

of this church. We merely wish to bring the issue to the foreground at this point so that it may be easier to discuss it in the near future.

A concern we picked up among some of the leaders at HBIC was the inability of the church to include people of color in general, and African-Americans in particular, into the leadership structures of the congregation. Finding leadership of color is quite tricky as it is important to find such leaders without compromising the leadership requirements of the church. The church has already had some success with the placing of leaders of color into a variety of positions. But it is important not to become complacent and to continue to push for racial diversity in the leadership of the church. To meet this need, it is important to look for current barriers that may inhibit the inclusion of people of color into leadership roles. Some of the individuals in the focus group made up of people of color suggest that the fostering of relationships may be helpful in developing such leadership. They suggest that people of color need relationships with individuals in the church before they will be comfortable taking on leadership roles. This once again reflects differences between whites and non-whites on the importance of relationships in conducting ministry. We contend that any effort at facilitating social fellowships that help to develop such relationships may play an important role in developing more leaders of color.

Some indicated a concern about the burning out of the leaders of color currently active in HBIC. This produces a sort of catch-22 for the majority group leaders of the church. If they fail to find leaders of color then they may be accused of neglecting voices of color in the church. Yet, using people of color in leadership may produce the claims of burning out minority leadership. We suggest the following approach to handle both complaints. After establishing relationships with individuals of color, various leaders of the church should feel free to invite those individuals into leadership positions. If the individuals of color turn down those positions then no further pressure should be put on them. There must be patience to allow these potential leaders of color to take the reins of leadership when they are ready to do so. However, those that do take on the leadership positions are responsible for letting others know when they are overloaded and pulling out of positions if necessary. They must know that if they indicate a need to reduce their responsibilities for some time then they are free to do so without having guilt placed upon them. But it should be made clear to those people of color that they are responsible for pulling away from leadership if they need to guard against burnout. In this way the current majority group leaders can acknowledge that it offered positions of authority to people of color. In such a situation, criticisms about “exploiting” people of color will lose their weight as the leaders of the church are merely allowing them to exercise their responsibilities as adults, but leadership opportunities are still being offered to people of color.

Another area that has to be dealt with is the worship service. We understand that the current worship service is still a work in progress. There have been changes in the worship service and there is the promise of future changes. In fact the worship service that was attended by Dr. Yancey was quite blended in its cultural mix and indicates a service that is quite racially inclusive. It is our understanding that all worship services are not so inclusive, but that there are other services that are more Eurocentric. It is natural that the church is taking its time to alter the worship service since rapid change may produce unneeded conflict. It may be the case that mixing some of the more multiracial services with some of the more Eurocentric services will be necessary for some time to come. Indeed some of the white members of the focus groups indicated that while they were open to changing the worship in the church service, but they did not want to see change that is too radical. However, it is important that progress continues to be made in this area so that people of color who visit and join the church will believe that their concerns are being heard. So we offer some suggestions that members of the worship committee can take into account as the worship service continues to evolve at HBIC. They may want to experiment with these suggestions as they carefully search for a worship style that meets the needs of most individuals possible.

First, there is value in thinking of racial minorities other than African-Americans. Using Spanish in some of the worship songs signals a level of cultural and racial acceptance of Hispanics in the worship service. To this end there may be value in putting some of the lyrics to the worship songs in Spanish. After singing the song in English, individuals who do not speak Spanish will be able to sing the same tune in Spanish if guided by a knowledgeable songleader. However, it may also liven up worship if a songleader attempts to lead the congregation in a Tejano worship song every once in a while. These suggestions will help produce a level of comfort for any Spanish speakers who attend the service and create a cross-cultural worship experience for non-Spanish speakers.

Second, there is value in decorating the worship area in a way that is more conducive to the multiracial emphasis of the church. There is a certain practicality that is attributable to the approach of HBIC to its sanctuary area. As such there are few, if any, posters in the sanctuary area, and thus there is not a strong opportunity to show racial representation through pictures of racial minorities. While such pictures are useful, there are other ways in which the worship area can be more culturally inclusive. For example, some multiracial churches hang flags for every nation represented in the congregation. When a first or second generation individual joins the church, another national flag can be placed from the rafters or is put on the wall. Such an approach may suit HBIC well. If future decorations are placed in the sanctuary, it will be important to make sure that such decorations are representative of those who are not in the majority.

Finally, we contend that there may be value in recognizing the different cultural settings of the worship teams. For example, most gospel choirs have robes that help distinguish them from others in the congregation. This is a cultural tradition that many African-Americans can appreciate. If a Latino/a group is formed then finding dress that is representative of their culture may be used as well. Such cultural markers should not limit majority group members from joining these worship groups, but it will help to mark them with a recognition of their cultural uniqueness.

It is also important to consider the decorations adorning the walls of the church. We were impressed with the beautiful artwork that was in front of the church, which represented not just our multicultural nation but also our multicultural world. As artwork is found for the walls, such an emphasis must be maintained. We also contend that it will be useful to be mindful of potential language issues. For example, the restrooms will ideally be labeled in Spanish as well as in English. While there are relatively few Spanish speakers in the congregation today, we hope that this will change in the near future. Such signs signal to all Hispanics the relative acceptance that HBIC has for members of their culture.

HBIC is developing a solid reputation in the community as a place that is welcoming of people of color. The outreach ministries at the church have provided it with a good image. While word of mouth advertising is powerful, we cannot help but wonder if the church will benefit from some intentional effort to spread information about the church.¹⁶ Because of the multiracial vision of the church, and because of the successes the church has enjoyed thus far, it is feasible to produce brochures, doorhangers and literature that promote the racially inclusive nature of the church.¹⁷ Discussing the value of attending a church that looks like the rest of the world will be attractive to individuals of many different races. There is already some evidence that many of the individuals in the church are attending it because they desire to experience more racial diversity and a relative simple advertising program may help bring in more such individuals. Such brochures and literature should be made available in the church but also at activities where such information can easily be passed out.

A number of students from Messiah College attend HBIC. In many ways the church is a natural fit for some students. Students who seek a more multicultural experience will naturally be attracted to the values of cultural diversity that the church promotes. As such it may be possible to strengthen the ministry to such students with a bit more effort. While admittedly the students who attend the church are

¹⁶ To try our hand at slogan-making, we think that HBIC can adapt a slogan such as “A Church that Looks like the Harrisburg.” Such a message would clearly communicate the racial diversity that is part of the congregation.

¹⁷ We note that the doorhangers does have pictures of people of different races. However, many non-diverse churches also showcase pictures of those of different races. It is likely that individuals who receive the doorhangers do not automatically make the assumption that HBIC is a multiracial church.

predominately white, there is the potential to also reach out to some of the students of color at Messiah through a ministry to students. Students of color at Messiah may feel isolated at this university due to the relatively racially homogenous makeup of the college and can find a reprieve in the multiracial atmosphere of HBIC, although they can also prefer to seek out a church of their own ethnicity. We suggest that the church may benefit from a more intentional effort to minister to the college students. Pastors Hart and Patterson are clearly too busy to lead such a ministry. However if a layperson is interested in investing the time to create a college bible study and/or Sunday School class and to periodically host fellowships for the college students, then we contend that the college ministry is likely to grow.

This growth can eventually provide important dividends for the efforts of HBIC to reach out to those of different races. For example, college students are more likely to desire racial diversity than older individuals. Their presence in the church will likely produce more public support for efforts towards a multiracial outreach. Furthermore, while college students generally do not bring a lot of money to a congregation, they do produce a lot of energy for the right sort of ministries. For example, Pastor Washington indicated that there is an important need for a ministry to help tutor some of the children of the single mothers who come to the church. Such a tutoring ministry is a natural fit for some of these college students, particularly those who are seeking education degrees. This ministry provides them an opportunity to develop their teaching skills and to teach them about reaching out to the less fortunate. Of course some college students will be too busy to become highly involved in the ministries of the church, but there may be opportunities to channel some of the youthful energy and enthusiasm of other college students who come into the church, if the college ministry is better developed. Finally, the development of a college ministry can also provide a place for some of the youth of color when they graduate from the youth group. One of the issues of developing a multiracial youth ministry is that often the youth of color do not stay with the church after they graduate. A college ministry that is active can provide 18-22 year olds who can become peers for such individuals. Naturally for this to happen the person, or couple, who decides to take on the college students will have to maintain sensitivity towards reaching out to people of color.

There are other ways HBIC can use the local presence of Messiah College to its own advantage. In conversations with Dr. Burnley, he indicated a willingness to work with HBIC. He has spoken at the church and is impressed with the efforts of the congregation to reach out to people of color. An idea that he expressed is to have the church support programs for a “transformative” dialog among college students and individuals in the communities. These types of conversations will be “safe spaces” in which

individuals of different races can experience the freedom to air out their racial concerns and fears.¹⁸ In the appendix we have provided a document containing suggestions for helping individuals promote safe interracial dialog. Furthermore, there is value in developing community programs whereby students of all races can be invited to minister in the neighborhood.

It is also possible that HBIC might inquire about working with Messiah with their international program with South Africa entitled the “Racial, Ethnic and Cultural Reconciliation Immersion Experiences (RECRIE). Part of the RECRIE program is to allow some of the students from South Africa to be hosted at Messiah. It is advisable to provide homes for these transfer students and/or to invite the students over to a cultural or ministry event at HBIC. Doing so will provide more cultural exposure to the members of HBIC which will help sharpen their cross-cultural skills and deepen the reputation of HBIC as a place that welcomes people of all races and cultures.

Working with Messiah, such programs will introduce some of the students of color to Messiah and allow the members of Messiah to interact with the university. HBIC could further develop their reputation as a good place for people of color and this will attract even more college students into the congregation. If some of these students are of color, then this will also provide fertile ground for finding young leaders of color who are at Messiah. As those leaders develop, they will prove to be invaluable in helping HBIC to reach other individuals of color in their community. Students of color will have a cultural experience useful for ministering to those individuals. Thus, we suggest that as students of color begin to attend HBIC that it becomes important to seek out positions of leadership for them that their maturity dictates what they can handle.

Finally, it is also important to think about the possibility of also working to reach out to some of the faculty members who attend Messiah. Like college students, faculty members sometimes are prone to leave a church after a relatively short period of time. However, unlike college students university faculty members can provide significant financial support as well as leadership skills. Most faculty members already have a desire to engage in issues of racial inclusiveness and social justice. Such priorities can help them to be more sympathetic to the vision and goals of Messiah. To this end, we suggest an annual fall event in which new faculty members of Messiah are invited to a free dinner at the church. There is not a need for a heavy-handed sale pitch, but merely a presentation of the vision of the church. Those faculty members who are sympathetic to the vision will be likely to start attending the church and thus to provide leadership in strengthening this vision. Such an event will have relatively minimal cost in time and finances, but it will help put HBIC on the radar for the incoming faculty members at Messiah.

¹⁸ For more information about such possibilities HBIC would be well advised to contact Dr. Burnley directly.

The relationship with CCU is another opportunity for HBIC to reach people of color. It is important to connect with the community with programs offered by CCU. However, since CCU is generally run by leaders from mainline Protestant denominations, this organization likely has a philosophy that emphasizes a powerful ideal of cultural pluralism. So that cultures of color can be preserved, advocates of cultural pluralism sometimes disdain efforts at creating multiracial congregations. This may not be the case for the leaders of CCU; however mainline Protestant denominations have a poor track record at developing multiracial congregations. Thus, while participation in CCU can prove to be fruitful, HBIC should attempt to better use this participation by incorporating an outreach mentality in its participation with CCU. Within the boundaries set by CCU, HBIC can further develop relationships with other Christians of color and to inform racial minorities from the community about its own programs and ministries.

Attempts to deal with political racial issues must be selective due to the racially charged atmosphere in Harrisburg. While there are notable exceptions, successful multiracial churches generally do not become heavily embroiled in controversial political issues. This does not mean that racial issues can be ignored by HBIC. The church has made the attempt to incorporate discussions on racial issues into its programs and we encourage the church to continue to do this. However, it is important for the church to be careful in choosing to participate in external racial issues. Political activism on racial issues can feed a general Afrocentric attitude in the community, which makes it harder, not easier, to attract people of color into the congregation. Furthermore, there is a danger in political engagement in that it forces individuals in the church to take sides in political debates, which can often challenge the unity based on spiritual agreement within a church. This is not to state that the church should forgo all political activism, but we do suggest that the church does not make political activism a high priority in its outreach to people of color.

The more fruitful engagement that HBIC can participate in is with the variety of ethnic cultural events occurring in Harrisburg. The participation of HBIC in these events can produce more positive visibility of the church in the African-American community. It can also help the church develop relationships with people of color in Harrisburg, some of which may be willing to visit the church in the near or distant future. Participation may be the setting up of a booth at the events or supplying volunteers to help the event to run. In 2007 the potential events that HBIC may have participated from was the Art Contest from December through February, the Harambee Foundation Program in April through July, the Summer Enrichment Program from June through August. There was also a Black History Gala that was thrown February 3 of this year. It is unclear whether such events will be held in 2008 or even how much participation is possible in all of these events. However, it is advisable for HBIC to look for opportunities

to participate in cultural ethnic events. The ideal event will be a festival or carnival in which HBIC is allowed to set up a food or information booth.

It is also possible for HBIC to sponsor its own cultural events. For example, over the past year the United Methodist Church celebrated Juneteenth with a three-day event from June 19 to 21. HBIC can decide to organize its own Juneteenth celebration or it can celebrate another day that is important to people of color such as MLK day, Cinco De Mayo or, if HBIC's theology permits, Kwanzaa. We suggest that if such an effort is made that it is done so in concert with other community organizations and with advice from the local people of color. This allows the church to gain from further development of relationships with the racial minorities who help organize the events as well as gain the visibility of hosting the event. Finally, whether HBIC produces a presence at the cultural events sponsored by other organizations, sponsors its own cultural events, or does both this is an excellent opportunity to use some of the new advertising literature that we suggested in the preceding paragraphs.

We have already noted that even if HBIC does not become overly involved in political issues, that racial topics can not be ignored among members of the congregation. There must be outlets by which people of color are able to channel some of their racially based frustrations. Pastor Dalton has done a good job of listening to some of the complaints that have come from some of the people of color, however it is not realistic that he can serve as the major outlet for allowing people of color to express their frustrations. Some multiracial churches have allowed people of color to have their own support groups within the church. Other congregations have promoted racially integrated discussion groups that allow for the airing of concerns.¹⁹ We noticed that there was an extension to the racial reconciliation studies that may developed into an ongoing conversation that allows individuals of color to bring up racialized challenges that they may be facing. This may be the answer to the concern of finding new outlets for people of color. With any solution it will be important to establish ground rules to make sure that the discussion that come out of these events are productive.

Finally, we encourage HBIC to maintain its involvement with Mosaix. Since there are few other Brethren in Christ churches that have achieve the level of racial diversity that is part of this church, there will be a need to dialog with other churches committed to the similar vision that HBIC possesses. This network will allow for the development of supportive social relationships for the clergy and laity leadership in HBIC. It also will provide HBIC an opportunity to help mentor other congregations that have not achieved the levels of racial diversity that HBIC currently enjoys.

¹⁹ We recognize the existence of the racial reconciliation classes that have been conducted for four years at HBIC. While these classes are useful for helping members of the church understand some of the basic info necessary for racial reconciliation, they may not provide the outlets needed for the HBIC's people of color.

The Future Promise of A Multiracial Outreach for HBIC

There is significant promise for HBIC as it concerns reaching a multiracial audience. However, this promise is not unlimited. The politically charged environment surrounding the church will make attracting non-whites more difficult. The church will have to be very politically astute as it deals with various political organizations. To its credit, HBIC has been very intentional in its efforts to reach out to people of color. Such efforts have paid off in that there is racial diversity within the church, however these current efforts will not be enough to achieve the ultimate diversity goals of the church.

The financial struggles of the church will limit its ability to engage in some of these reforms. We have tried to keep these limitations in mind as we considered possible suggestions. As people of color join the church in larger numbers, many of them may not have a good deal of financial means. In fact many, at least initially, will consume more of the church's resources than they will contribute.²⁰ Thus, it may be a while before the increased racial diversity of the church helps to add enough new financially stable members to meet some of the needs of the church. However, research has shown that over time that multiracial churches are quite likely to attract individuals who are better educated and have higher incomes. If HBIC can be successful in creating a racially diverse congregation, then at least some of its financial pressures should eventually ease.

The success of HBIC has relevance for more than just this particular church. Because the Brethren in Christ denomination has traditionally been a predominately white organization, the success of HBIC can help encourage more Brethren in Christ churches to seek racial diversity. The manner in which HBIC is able to marry some of the core theological elements in the Brethren in Christ denomination to the call for a multiracial congregation will help to further the desire of other Brethren in Christ churches to become racially inclusive. Furthermore in a racially polarized city, such as Harrisburg, multiracial churches are vital bridges that can be used to ameliorate some of the racial tension in the city. Finally, the lack of multiracial churches in general is an appalling witness for the Christian church. For these reasons, and for the welfare of HBIC, we want to encourage the continued efforts that the clergy and laity of HBIC have already put forth in reaching out to members of different races.

²⁰ Fortunately, the core values of HBIC may allow the church to more easily accept such individuals than the values found in many other evangelical congregations.

Appendix - Toward Authentic Interpersonal Relations between Blacks and Whites

Source: Bread for the World

Assumptions Whites Make

Assumptions Which BLOCK Authentic Relations

- Color is unimportant in interpersonal relations.
- Blacks will always welcome and appreciate inclusion.
- Open recognition of color may embarrass Blacks.
- Blacks are trying to use Whites.
- Blacks can be stereotyped.
- White society is superior to Black society.
- “Liberal” Whites are free of racism.
- All Blacks are alike in their attitudes and behavior.
- Blacks are oversensitive.
- Blacks must be controlled.

Assumptions Which FACILATE Authentic Relations

- People counts as individuals.
- Blacks are human-with individual feelings, aspirations, and attitudes.
- Blacks have a heritage of which they are proud.
- Interdependence is needed between Whites and Blacks.
- Some Blacks are angry.
- Whites cannot fully understand what it means to be Black.
- Whiteness/Blackness is a real difference but not the basis on which to determine behavior.
- Most Blacks can handle Whites’ authentic behavior and feelings.
- Blacks want a responsible society.
- Blacks are capable of managerial maturity.
- I may be part of the problem.

Assumptions Blacks Make

Assumptions Which BLOCK Authentic Relations

- All Whites are alike.
- There are no “soul brothers” among Whites.
- Whites have all the power.
- Whites are always trying to use Blacks.
- All Whites are racists.
- Whites are not really trying to understand the situation of Blacks.
- Whites have to deal on Black terms.
- Silence is the sign of hostility.
- Whites cannot and will not change except by force.
- The only way to gain attention is through confrontation.
- All Whites are deceptive.
- All Whites will let you down in the “crunch”

Assumptions Which FACILATE Authentic Relations

- Openness is healthy.
- Interdependence is needed between Blacks and Whites.
- People count as individuals.
- Negotiations and collaboration are possible strategies.
- Whites are human beings and, whether they should or not, do have their own hang-ups.
- Some White can help and “do their own thing.”
- Some Whites have “soul.”

Behaviors of Whites

Behaviors Which BLOCK Authentic Relations

- Interruptions
- Condescending behavior.
- Offering help where not needed or wanted.
- Avoidance of contact (eye-to-eye and physical).
- Verbal focus on Black behavior rather than White behavior.
- Insisting on playing games according to White rules.
- Showing annoyance at Black behavior which differs from their own.
- Expressions of too-easy acceptance and friendship.
- Talking about, rather than to, Blacks who are present.

Behaviors Which FACILITATE Authentic Relations

- Directness and openness in expressing feelings.
- Assisting other Whites to understand and confront feelings.
- Supporting self-initiated moves of Black people.
- Listening without interrupting.
- Demonstration of interest in learning about Black perceptions, culture, etc.
- Staying with and working through difficult confrontations.
- Taking a risk (e.g., being first to confront the differences).
- Assuming responsibility for examining own motives-and where they are.

Behaviors of Blacks

Behaviors Which BLOCK Authentic Relations

- Confrontation too early and too harshly.
- Rejection of honest expression of acceptance and friendship.
- Pushing Whites into such a defensive posture that learning and re-examination is impossible.
- Failure to keep a commitment and then offering no explanation.
- “In-group” joking, laughing at Whites-in Black culture language.
- Giving answers Blacks think Whites want to hear.
- Using confrontation as the primary relationship style.
- Isolationism.

Behaviors Which FACILITATE Authentic Relations

- Showing interest in understanding the White point of view.
- Acknowledging that there are some committed Whites.
- Acting as if “we have some power”-and don’t need to prove it.
- Allowing Whites to experience unaware areas of racism.
- Openness.
- Expression of real feelings.
- Dealing with Whites where they are.
- Meeting Whites half-way.
- Treating Whites on a one-to-one basis.
- Telling it like it is.
- Realistic goal-sharing.
- Showing pride in their heritage.