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Ethno-Racial Diversity Within Religious Congregations in Indianapolis

by **Elfriede Wedam**

More than forty years after the civil rights movement began to mobilize against racial segregation, religious congregations continue to reflect the segregation Americans experience in their voluntary associations in general. Public policy has challenged segregation and promoted diversity, mostly at the federal level, in employment, education, and housing. But diversity in public and publicly-regulated institutions does not translate easily into diversity within voluntary associations.

Using data from the Religion and Urban Culture Project, we have identified how some congregations engage in what social analysts call "boundary-spanning" activities that bring "outsiders" into their previously homogeneous organizations. Our investigation suggests that diversity in congregations is created by the combined effect of the congregation's neighborhood context—its racial, ethnic, and class makeup—and the kinds of choices congregations make in response to the challenge of diversity.

Congregations orient themselves in various ways toward achieving a multi-racial and multi-cultural membership, but common to them all is a conscious decision to be diverse. The stories of these congregations point to new ways of thinking about pluralism in voluntary associations generally.

PATTERNS OF DIVERSITY

Of the approximately 300 congregations in metropolitan Indianapolis studied by the Religion and Urban Culture Project, 39 congregations, or about 13 percent, were racially and ethnically diverse.¹ A second group of 139 congregations, or 48 percent, included a modest amount of diversity (between 1 and 9 percent of members were a different race from that of the majority.) A third group of 112 congregations, or 39 percent of the total, reported that all the members of their congregations were of a single race.

Table 1

Racial/Ethnic Diversity in Indianapolis Congregations

	<u>%</u>	<u>Number</u>
Not Diverse	38.6	112
Moderately Diverse	47.9	139
Diverse	13.4	39

We found that congregations with a substantial interracial or interethnic membership, while relatively few, included large and small congregations, had a wide range of budgets, and were distributed throughout the city. This wide array reflects the complexity of the issue.

There are three major orientations that help explain how racial and ethnic diversity in a congregation occurs. In the first category, *accepting diversity*, the congregation becomes diverse by adapting to a change in the surrounding social context. Some of these congregations are in areas undergoing a racial and sometimes socio-economic change. When a rural area becomes a suburb, when an existing suburb expands its housing stock, or when older neighborhoods become gentrified, new and different people often join local congregations. Congregations falling into this category acknowledge that their diversity results from outside circumstances. While these congregations did not initiate change, they were receptive to the changes occurring around them.

A second category, *asserting diversity*, is similar to the first in that these congregations also exist in a diverse social context. For the members, diversity entails a considerable element of tension, with some members eagerly promoting diversity and others resisting it. Yet, as a congregation, they make a vigorous effort to bring the diversity existing around them into their membership. This more aggressive response to a congregation's environment reflects a somewhat different trajectory of congregational and neighborhood change. These congregations reflect a sense of urgency. Sometimes they express a moral commitment — it's what they feel they have to do, or are called to do, despite obstacles. Sometimes denominations require that congregations develop programs for a multi-cultural ministry, although the methods can vary widely. In either case, congregations are pursuing their decision despite internal conflict in its making.

A third group has a *building diversity* orientation. These members have a keen awareness that their church has been historically homogeneous, existing within a homogeneous environment; now they reach out to those different from themselves. These congregations frequently must look beyond their immediate surroundings to attract the diversity they want. This orientation reflects a fairly recent acknowledgment by members that they "lack" diversity, but also a sense that building diversity is not something foisted on them from outside; rather, it is a goal they have set for themselves.

ACCEPTING DIVERSITY CONGREGATIONS

Christians United at Soldiers Memorial Chapel is located near the former Fort Benjamin Harrison, shuttered in 1997, on the northeast side of Indianapolis. For many years, the presence of the military and its organizational support system brought people from across the United States to central Indiana. The neighborhood around the fort reflected the diversity of the military, whose members attend some of the local churches. When the fort closed, a group of ex-military personnel living in the area, together with some local residents, established a new congregation of about 40 members on the site where a disbanded congregation previously existed. This small congregation is substantially interracial, including a Hawaiian and several Asian families. Currently, the membership is solidly middle-class but they plan to canvas in the poorer sections of the Lawrence-Geist area for new members because the wealthier sections "have tons of churches," or such is the congregation's perception. Their expectations are that they will remain interracial, but the challenge will be to reach out effectively to poorer people.

Another congregation near the base, Lawrence Baptist Church, does not have any members from the former fort. Historically, the congregation had been white, but now it includes Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians² since the area around it experienced white flight during the 1970s. Its membership declined from 700 to about 150, and currently 20 percent is non-white. The church evangelizes in the area but relates to the neighborhood more as a mission field than as an extension of the church's sense of community or a principled commitment to inclusiveness. The long-time pastor of Lawrence Baptist has watched his church dwindle in membership numbers and in the socio-economic status of many of his members, but has decided to remain in this community despite the many opportunities to leave because he feels "it would be hypocritical to leave a mission area."

Catholic parishes represent a different pattern for accepting diversity congregations. While Catholic parishes

are proportionally the most diverse compared to other denominations, their diversity results in part from parish boundaries that often cross neighborhood boundaries. Some large suburban parishes encompass several municipalities within one parish. Increasingly though, Catholics choose which parish to belong to, so choice has also become a factor in the diversity of Catholic congregations.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church in Carmel, Indiana is the largest parish in the Lafayette diocese; its growth is tied to the major population explosion in Hamilton County, north of Indianapolis. Its especially large size, comprising 2,800 families or about 9,500 individual members, has strained available services, such as its school, but also expanded its parish reach. Carmel, once a farming community and now a booming suburb, attracts professional and technical workers, many of whom have relocated from other parts of the country for job reasons, and are likely to move on in a few years. As the percentage of minorities in the professions has increased, so has the minority population in Carmel and its churches. Our Lady of Mount Carmel's parish roll is about 5 percent non-white, that is, close to 500 individual Hispanic and Asian members. So many Spanish-speaking families have moved into the parish that the church recently instituted a Spanish mass and plans to institute a religious education program in Spanish. Our Lady of Mt. Carmel has responded to an expanding service economy that has brought increasing numbers of minority group members into the surrounding area and therefore into the parish.

ASSERTING DIVERSITY CONGREGATIONS

Door of Hope Church of the Nazarene, in the Haughville neighborhood on the Near West side, is an inner-city mission of the Nazarene denomination. Door of Hope is keenly aware of the needs of its neighborhood. The congregation is led by a dynamic and outspoken black pastor with a Yankee accent, reflecting his Massachusetts origins. This pastor's vision for creating an effective ministry to low-income black and white people is holistic and based in the neighborhood rather than looking outside, for example, to an urban-suburban church partnership. Despite the denominational label of "mission work" with its implication that this area consists of people who are "different," the pastor's approach is to develop support from local non-poor families—both financial and social.

While the church's membership (77) is small, it is one of the most nearly racially balanced between black and white that we found. The current membership is part of a recent growth that occurred with the coming of the pastor two years ago, when membership was only 10. Almost all the members live in Haughville, which is predominately black but with some white pockets, with a handful coming from the nearby Hawthorne neighborhood, which is predominately white.

Door of Hope tries to put the church at the center of members' lives by responding to both physical and spiritual needs. The church serves three meals each week together with their regular religious services. At the time of our observations, the pastor was assembling a planning committee to develop, among other things, a recreational program that would include mentoring relationships between older youth and children.

St. Philip Neri Catholic Church, located on the Near East side in a working class to poor area, is substantially interracial. The neighborhood experienced white flight in the 1970s, but is still racially mixed, with an increasing Hispanic population. Twenty-five percent of St. Philip Neri's 1,400 members are African American and 10 percent are Hispanic. Despite a declining budget, the parish has renovated and modernized its elementary school and maintained a strong outreach agenda for the local neighborhood.

Much of the initiative for these activities falls to a small core of clergy and lay leaders. Many older parishioners feel threatened by the changing population in the church and have resisted some of the efforts to reach out to the immigrant Mexicans. The pastor related how the "survival" mode of these congregants makes developing stronger internal leadership and new forms of outreach difficult. Nonetheless, the church has developed an increasing presence in the neighborhood among non-members and its school promises to become a magnet that attracts young, financially able families.

Door of Hope and St. Philip Neri demonstrate the important role of pastoral leadership in creating an environment in which diversity issues are directly addressed. While leadership is an important factor in all orientations toward diversity, the source of the leadership—pastoral, denominational, or congregational, varies from case to case.

BUILDING DIVERSITY CONGREGATIONS

Mars Hill, on the South side, is a poor and working class neighborhood that is almost entirely white. But within Mars Hill there is a 100-member, predominately middle-class and interracial Seventh Day Adventist congregation. SDA-Chapel West, a church with a hierarchical polity, focuses on building relationships with their denomination and other Adventist groups more than with the members of the surrounding area. Several years ago, a black Caribbean lay leader was invited by the congregation to "help out" and he decided to stay after the members "assured him that they wanted to grow spiritually." This congregation has several non-white members, both African-American and Asian, and emphasizes developing a multi-racial group of youth leaders. When the "student literature evangelists" from the denomination's interstate training program visited the congregation, they reported on their mission experiences selling SDA literature door-to-door. The group included one African-American youth from the Chapel West congregation. Of the nine student evangelists who visited the church during our observation period, only two were white. One student, who was Korean, spoke English with an accent that was nearly impossible to understand. Yet the congregation displayed an intense rapport with the youth and with the student evangelists as a group. The denomination's evangelical focus crossed all racial boundaries.

Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United Northwest Area, an historically African-American neighborhood which has become impoverished since the 1960s, has been a black congregation in a predominately white denomination. Most of the parishioners are retired professional workers. The church has begun to attract white parishioners in recent years (now at 10 percent of the membership of 165), related in some part to the assignment of a white pastor.

The new pastor's vision is focused directly on the surrounding neighborhood, particularly at its youth for whom there are few organized recreational outlets. The church initiated a summer youth basketball program as a way to launch their plans for a parish school for boys, thus addressing a pressing need in the neighborhood. The pastor is not daunted by the difficulty of raising capital for such an ambitious project despite the limited resources of the parishioners. The pastor's legal training received before attending seminary contributes to the variety of resources available to this inner city church as it seeks to effect change in the area around it.

Butler-Tarkington is a racially and economically mixed neighborhood surrounding Butler University on Indianapolis's North side. University Park Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is another example of a congregation consciously building diversity. It also reflects to what extent commitment alone is inadequate to achieve a goal. About 14 percent of its membership of 130 is black; several are the adopted black African and biracial children of white members. University Park shares a building with an all-black Disciples of Christ church, and wonders out loud, indeed agonizes, about what has prevented the two congregations from merging. The pastor speaks about the congregation's need to "simply build a better relationship with the African-American community."

While the church participates in several neighborhood activities with other local churches, only a handful of members live in the area. The church does not sponsor direct neighborhood service work, although several service-oriented groups meet in its building. This congregation is a highly educated, professional group whose social connections and interests are more cosmopolitan than local. Recently, the church began reflecting on its orientation to the surrounding area by reconsidering its mission statement and studying the internal congregational dynamics. Members have begun to consider in what ways socio-economic differences between themselves and others in the neighborhood have contributed to stubborn racial barriers.

CONCLUSION

Diversity in congregations offers glimpses into the ways religious adherents are exposed to multi-racial experiences, whether they actively seek them or passively accept them, whether the population in their local area is diverse or not. In the free market of American religion, people can choose to join a congregation. Members select congregations for many reasons, often "because this is a place where I feel comfortable worshipping." Comfort is attached to similarities in race, ethnicity, language, or class position. Consequently, membership forms around emotional satisfaction rather than for the purpose of addressing questions of racism or social inequality. But if religious congregations manifest a belief or ideology that diversity within the congregation is something they support and make a decision to institute or preserve, their actions have wider social implications.

By and large, religious congregations have participated in the segregation that typifies mainstream American society, but the cases presented here run counter to that trend. When it comes to dealing with issues of race, the larger social forces of the economy or of government are not the only, and sometimes not the most influential, things that determine what we do. The cultural features—commitments to particular ideas, for example—are also influential in the shaping of contemporary social life, and suggest areas that should be explored for clues to overcoming systemic social divisions.

ROUNDTABLE

On July 28, Research Notes hosted a roundtable discussion held at the Indianapolis Center for Congregations. Participants had been provided beforehand with the text of this issue of RN, and were invited to respond to the issues raised in the paper. Paula Parker-Sawyers is director of the Office of Neighborhood Resources at IUPUI. Angelique Walker-Smith is executive director of the Church Federation of Greater Indianapolis. Robert Aponte is associate professor of sociology at IUPUI. Sam Jones is president of the Indianapolis Urban League. Elfriede Wedam, a sociologist at The Polis Center, wrote the paper under discussion. Kevin Armstrong is senior public teacher at The Polis Center. The following is an edited version of their discussion, which was moderated by Armstrong.

ARMSTRONG: Even as American business embraces the notion of diversity in the workplace, congregations react with ambivalence to talk of diversity in the pews. Religious communities honor diversity, yet movement toward the goal is often driven by forces from outside, rather than by core values from within. Some argue that the diversity agenda fragments communities further. And yet, those congregations that are ethnically and racially diverse offer an opportunity for making friends, for learning more about another's culture, and for establishing networks. From your experience, to what extent is racial and ethnic diversity a priority for local congregations, and how does that compare with other voluntary organizations?

PARKER-SAWYERS: The religious community of Indianapolis is really a mirror reflection of the rest of the non-profit sector. There's a black church and there's a white church. There are black organizations, there are white organizations. Light of the World Christian Church and Second Presbyterian come together on an intentional basis but their congregations are separate. The 500 Festival and Indiana Black Expo each have phenomenal festivals, but share practically nothing other than the city streets.

JONES: There are desegregated parts of the larger society, but in my view it is not integration. The workforce has not integrated; it has desegregated. In my denomination, the United Methodist Church, we're supposed to have 'open itinerancy,' which means that a pastor should be able to go wherever there is a vacancy. But that's not quite so. A few black pastors have been sent out to little towns in Indiana, but you wouldn't have much success in appointing a black pastor to the major white United Methodist churches in Indianapolis. When it comes to 'one church,' we don't have it. Some of it is based on the history of relationships between blacks and whites in this country. Some of it is socioeconomic. And some of it is about church politics and control—because the black church does control a few institutions. So it's a complex situation for which I believe there is no immediate solution.

ARMSTRONG: Angelique, I would like to hear your perspective from the Church Federation. Is diversity a priority in local congregations?

WALKER-SMITH: I think it's clear what the church ought to be about. There is a written mandate from an ecclesiastical, theological perspective. From a sociological perspective, speaking of what churches actually do, diversity is not a priority. The church wrestles with the theological mandate and with the social reality and that's where we run into problems. The hostilities are there, socially, historically, and I think both theologians and sociologists underestimate how brutal that history is.

JONES: Not necessarily hostility but fear of the unknown, because people don't know each other, don't interact...

WALKER-SMITH: I really want to say hostility because the brutality of the race question has resulted in loss of life. You cannot erase that, and it has everything to do with the creation of the black church. If it were just fear, I don't think the problem would be as complex. I am not convinced that the integrated model is the only model;

that we actually have critiqued and studied it thoroughly. Do we truly believe in some kind of ecumenical understanding of what the church is, that there is some kind of universal church? Do we take that seriously?

ARMSTRONG: Let me turn to the sociologists at the table for a response. Hiding under the table is not an option, Robert.

APONTE: Well, the thought came to mind that when we die we'll find that there are actually two Gods, one black and one white. I think it's really a sad commentary when the one institution having to do with worship is deemed as racist, as I am hearing. What I'm reading in this paper is far more hopeful than what I'm hearing at this table. One interesting question to me is, to what extent does the segregation in churches exceed that which exists residentially. If it exceeds that, then some of the descriptions I'm hearing here make a lot more sense. Let's face it, a substantial portion of the population doesn't attend church, so those that do are in some sense a select group.

JONES: Where I grew up in Heidelberg, Mississippi, going to church was a day of freedom from 'the man' who always had his foot on our neck. We found relief in singing and praying and fiery sermons and Sunday school where we came together as a community and at the end of the day we went home feeling good. We were ready to face the monster come Monday morning when we had to go to Miss Ann's kitchen or went to Charlie's sawmill or to a railroad or to teach school in a segregated system. The thing you have to realize is that we were all lumped together. Didn't matter where we were on the socioeconomic scale, doctors, lawyers, the teachers that taught me went to the same church. So the black church, let's put it this way, the segregated church, provided a lot of outlets, and opportunity for interaction.

PARKER-SAWYERS: My generation was Martin Luther King and JFK and RFK; this was in my formative years as an adolescent. For myself and a number of my friends it was a very intentional choice to attend a predominantly white church. Not for the relief that Sam just spoke of but for the opposite reason, because I lived in an all-black neighborhood. Our attitude was, 'By God, we're going to make a difference, we're going to attend this church.' I'm still a member of that church, but I have to be very honest, I am tired. I'm tired of the fact that after all these many years, there are still only 18 minority members in a church of over 400. So I'm in the church-seeking position right now, because I need that comfort. I want to go some place where I'm wanted and where I'm comfortable and I don't have that in this all-white church where I intentionally went and made every effort to help them understand me.

WALKER-SMITH: I was a product of busing. But if you've been raised in the black community, you have loyalties there as part of who you are. And if you go to environments where you are not embraced, where in fact you are eschewed, you say, 'What's the problem here? Am I stupid or what? Why don't I wise up and go back to where I'm wanted?' There is an increasing level of discontent, and I think this 'educated younger generation' is saying we need to recommit to our own.

ARMSTRONG: What role then, if any, does the church play in encouraging racial reconciliation?

PARKER-SAWYERS: I think it plays a significant role but for me the history of Indianapolis plays an even larger role. Until our congregations and our city as a whole recognize that we have a tarnished history, accept it and deal with it, we're not going to get over any of the issues in this article or any of the things that we fight about. The fact is that the KKK ran the city. They didn't run it quietly, they were elected to the school board, they were elected to the city council, they were in the newspapers. They ran the city. Until we deal with that history it's just nice exercises.

JONES: The attitude toward reconciliation is that it's a two-way street and perhaps that is valid. But the reality of reconciliation is that the disproportionate reaching out has to come from the mainline churches, the white churches. People have to understand that black folk are not going to immediately accept a reaching out and we are not going to do much reaching out.

WEDAM: My main point was to say that as a method of overcoming social divisions in our society, or as enactors of a method, so to speak, churches have a role to play. What I tried to do was look at what's happening on the ground. I looked at 300 congregations in Indianapolis to see where, in fact, diversity exists within congregations. And when I found 40 or so cases, I asked, how does it happen? That's the question for me

—not should it happen or is it a good thing or is it the only thing that's important. But we recognize that as a society we have to have opportunities for expressing ourselves in a diverse setting. These congregations have developed different ways of approaching diversity. Some passively, some more actively, some just as a matter of 'Well, the neighborhood became diverse so we're going to adjust our programs and be inclusive.' But they do make a commitment. That is the most important element, because all three types of congregations accept in a very conscious way a commitment to diversity, and they support it and develop it.

JONES: By diversity, do you mean black/white, or...

WEDAM: I mean black, white, Hispanic, or Asian. It's predominantly black and white because that is the way the city is.

WALKER-SMITH: Well, I question the very assumption that integration models are the only models that speak to diversity relative to the mandate of the church or to the mandate of social inclusion. I think it's commendable that we have some examples of people who are willing to struggle with the issues that make them diverse within a congregational setting. I think that's Biblical. I think that's theologically coherent. But on the other hand, I don't think we can dismiss the history, the very real reasons why people do not come to that table.

PARKER-SAWYERS: I don't want my response to reflect that this is a one-way street. Several African-American churches that I have visited have from the pulpit characterized those 'other' churches as boring, uninviting, not the place you, the congregation gathered, would ever want to go. They create this sense of, you're not going to be welcomed over there. But there's also the fear that if I do go over there, am I going to be welcomed? There are few 'white' churches in this community where you can walk in as an African-American and not be noticed. It has to do with the attitude of the congregation. And for me that is the measure of whether or not the congregation is diverse. If it's right, it doesn't matter what color you are; when you walk in, you know that you feel welcome.

JONES: And on the other hand, there are African-American churches to which non-African-Americans can go where they'll make you feel welcome. I can count those on one hand, so it's a complicated matter. The point is we have to keep working, like the President's initiative on race. We don't talk to each other enough. We don't interact enough.

PARKER-SAWYERS: We don't have to agree. But we can at least put all of our issues out on the table and listen to each other and try to understand the other person's point of view. But we don't do that.

WEDAM: But isn't the church the place where that dialogue can take place?

JONES: It should be.

WEDAM: And why would diverse churches, those forty or so in this sample, not be places that could potentially take us to the next millennium? I see a little contradiction in some of the things you are saying.

WALKER-SMITH: I think each has its own particularity. That's part of the challenge of doing case studies. I don't know that those particularities translate to a universal model or direction for the goal of racial reconciliation. Now, what might be interesting is to take the case studies and say, 'Is there a point of entry here for reflection? Does it apply to a larger venue for racial reconciliation?'

WEDAM: That is exactly my question.

WALKER-SMITH: Well, that question is very difficult to answer. I think the church is called to find new models. We have got to start right where people are in the pain of their history and say, 'What do you think will create another model for racial reconciliation?' I simply am not convinced the integrationist congregational model has a lot of merit for us in the future. These examples of people who have the courage, the patience, the perseverance are to be honored for what they seek to do and I think the Lord blesses them for that, but the majority are not going to do that.

JONES: The problem we have additionally is that of leadership. I'm not sure that the average pastor could lead

the congregation in that direction. I'm not sure the seminaries are preparing incoming pastors to deal with the whole question of diversity.

ARMSTRONG: We need to put a point on this here. The question Elfriede is asking is about the integrationist model. It is not the only model but there are some number of congregations who have chosen to explore it. For those congregations that practice this integrationist model, what do you see are the compelling forces? The leadership of the clergy? Patience? What else?

APONTE: I don't want to be associated with the comment that 'clearly there are other models to the integration model' because I don't accept that. As far as I'm concerned there are two models. One is integration and the other is segregation. I would like to know what kind of a model there can possibly be that isn't one of those two? And between those two, I would choose the integration model. I don't think anyone at this table is going to speak up for the segregation model—other than the comments that were made to qualify that 'we were forced into this' and 'historically it was really important,' etc. etc. But this talk about looking for other models is getting a little abstract. Sam stated very forcefully, very clearly that a reaching out has to be serious, has to be sustained, and those making the effort have to expect that it's going to be received reluctantly, at least early on. What do we do to create a sustained outreach? I thought that's what this paper was about. It did not have all the answers by any means. All it did was look at why these different churches are trying different strategies. And I think that's a really good first step to see, well, who's doing it, who's sincere, what are the characteristics?

WALKER-SMITH: In Hartford, Connecticut there's a Latino congregation, and then there's another one that is English speaking, composed primarily of folks from the West Indies. But they're calling themselves a church, a congregation, as opposed to saying, 'We have to all meet together and do it this way and have common agreement on everything.' But they affirm the identity of each other and on occasion may come together for common liturgy. I think it goes back to both the sociological and theological definition of congregation. That's what I mean by there are other things to look at besides the integrationist model.

WEDAM: Those kinds of groups are more typical among Catholics, especially if they have a liturgy in Spanish or in Vietnamese or Polish. The small group phenomenon within a congregation has lots of variations, and I think it is a very helpful way of organizing church life. But what are the downsides of that? Sub-groups form very readily in congregations along a lot of lines, not just of race or language. And then the work is to not develop cliques or power struggles among those groups, but rather to find ways where they can learn to understand one another without having to agree.

WALKER-SMITH: What language is spoken and where that language is spoken is not the substance of what I'm trying to advance as a more pluralist model. What I want to say is there's a real wrestling with the identity, with the history, the culture, the particularity of those subgroups that might be a part of a pluralist model. So it goes beyond just offering a Spanish-speaking service, it's a real engagement of the identity of the people.

ARMSTRONG: Well, you've already indicated that diversity is staying at the table and you all have stayed at the table much longer than I earlier asked. Any last words?

APONTE: If we put aside for a moment Latinos and just go right back to where we started, which was black and white, and we look at Roman Catholicism in New York City and Chicago and Los Angeles, I don't think you'll find separate masses or any of that stuff. It doesn't really make sense. With newcomer groups like the West Indians and Puerto Ricans, there's a basis for dealing with language minorities. I'm not sure that we want to see separation along racial lines of two groups who speak the same language and are in the same society, and are not newcomers.

PARKER-SAWYERS: I want to thank you for the time we've spent on this subject. This conversation says to me how desperately we need a diversity institute that can keep the conversation going. This is a perfect example of four people who work in various aspects of this community who come to a table, agree to disagree, learn from each other, and still leave with hours of conversation yet to be had. And there's really not a place to have this kind of depth of conversation, so I think this was an important event. As I look to what I've been charged with at the university, this conversation is exactly what we need to be doing on the campus because we need to be leading the conversation.

JONES: I think the more conversation, the more interaction that occurs, the greater the opportunity to open

the doors of diversity and understanding and recognition of the fact that the differences among us are very few.

WALKER-SMITH: Dialogue is helpful, but right now there's a lot of frustration with dialogue. I think it can help, I think it's admirable, and I'm glad to be at this conversation, but I think we have to be realistic about how far that can take us and how far it simply won't. And unfortunately, our real challenge in working with African-American churches and other people who've been on the margins of this whole conversation, is they don't want to talk anymore. They just want to get about their business. I want to comment also that I appreciated the paper, I don't want it to sound like I didn't appreciate the paper. I found it helpful. Any time I get more information about the churches that helps me do my job. I think your assertions of the different categories of the congregations is a handle. I think there's even more there to be had. But it's a good starting point.

ARMSTRONG: Thank you all.

Author: Elfriede Wedam