



Inter-Ethnic Coordinating Committee

EPISCOPAL CANDIDATE RESPONSES

The Western Jurisdiction Inter-Ethnic Coordinating Committee (IECC) wants to make sure our episcopal leaders demonstrate competency in intercultural relationships needed to effectively lead our racially/ethnically diverse jurisdiction and conferences as we work toward an inclusive church. The IECC invited episcopal candidates to respond to questions important to ethnic communities and leaders. All responses have been compiled and are now shared with Western Jurisdictional Conference delegates for their reading as they continue to learn more about each episcopal candidate.

2022 Western Jurisdictional Conference, UMC

October 24, 2022

Dear Western Jurisdictional Conference Delegates,

Thank you for your ongoing and careful preparation for the Western Jurisdictional Conference and election of bishops on November 2-5, 2022, at Christ UMC, Salt Lake City, Utah. Your careful discernment of episcopal candidates is important to all of us. The Western Jurisdiction Inter-Ethnic Coordinating Committee (IECC) offers you this packet as you continue to learn more about each episcopal candidate and do your own discernment.

The Western Jurisdiction Inter-Ethnic Coordinating Committee (IECC) provides leadership and consultation for ministry important to racial/ethnic and multicultural communities and ministries as the church continues to work toward an inclusive church. It serves as a forum for persons working in racial/ethnic ministries to network across the jurisdiction. The IECC is composed of representatives from each jurisdictional racial/ethnic caucus, a representative from each conference ethnic ministries council, and each conference's staff who have a major responsibility for racial/ethnic ministries.

The IECC wants to assist jurisdictional conference delegates to discern which episcopal candidates demonstrate a level of competency needed to effectively lead our racially/ethnically diverse jurisdiction and conferences as we work toward an inclusive church. The IECC crafted questions that can offer insights into an episcopal candidate's learnings, experience with racial/ethnic communities, and plans for how they will lead as a bishop. These questions were shared with episcopal candidates, and they were invited to respond to each question in no more than 300 words. This packet includes all responses received from each of the 32 episcopal candidates. These are the questions that the IECC asked the episcopal candidates:

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

The IECC wants to make sure our episcopal leaders demonstrate competency in intercultural relationships needed to effectively lead our racially/ethnically diverse jurisdiction and conferences as we work toward an inclusive church. As you read this document for the purpose of discerning our new episcopal leaders you might consider how these questions inform your thinking about the candidates' experience, passion, and abilities. To assist you in evaluating the candidates' responses, the IECC identified some questions that might help you.

- What cultural values support the candidate's beliefs and practices?
- Can the candidate articulate a theology of inclusion and addressing racism?
- What is the missional foundation of inclusion for the candidate's call to the episcopacy?
- How does the candidate describe their identification or integrations with ethnic communities?
- How critical is the mission with and among ethnic communities that the candidate articulates?
- Is the candidate's plan for centering leadership an inclusive model?
- If the candidate identifies other options of leadership, are they inclusive and uphold the decolonization of the church?

The IECC is also reviewing all of the candidates' responses in preparation for in-person conversations with candidates in Salt Lake City.

We appreciate your careful discernment and the time you are committing to this process. If the IECC can be helpful to you in an additional way, please let us know by reaching out to Felicisimo Cao, IECC chairperson at felicisimo.cao@numc.org.

Working with you in Decentering Whiteness, Dismantling Racism and Decolonization,



Rev. Felicisimo S. Cao, DMin
Chairperson, Inter-Ethnic Coordinating Committee

SUNNY AHN

Ethnicity: Asian American (Korean)

Annual Conference membership: Cal-Pac

Current ministry appointment: Kona UMC

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

The phrase “Welcoming the Stranger” reminded me of the Scripture when Jesus said, “I was a stranger, and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35). When I immersed myself in this scripture to respond to the given question, I couldn’t help but remember how I was welcomed by many Godly people when I was a stranger or felt like a stranger. The first person who came to my mind is Mrs. Melgan, who embodied “welcoming the stranger.”

I met Mrs. Melgan in my first English class at school in America. It was two months after I immigrated to America from Korea when I was 15. She spent time with me to learn about me. She realized I was not incompetent even though I looked and talked differently. She guided me through school life based on what I loved to do. First, she encouraged me to join a school acapella choir since I loved to sing, and she felt that I could work on my dictions through singing. Second, she introduced me to a study group of her honor class students. So, I joined the study group to learn, teach, comingle with my age group of people, and make friends. She extended her welcoming, caring spirit to my family by inviting us to her family Thanksgiving gathering. The big “roasted bird” on the table shocked me, but the warmth around the table was very comforting for me. I was not a stranger any longer.

I embody “welcoming the stranger” like Mrs. Melgan. I spend time with people who don’t look, talk, and think like me. I try to learn who they are as a person, respond to their needs, and break bread with them. Sometimes, I intentionally become a “stranger” to stretch others’ comfort zone. It’s my daily living.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

I am a Korean American who was raised in a conservative Presbyterian Korean community where no woman's call to ordained ministry was affirmed. So, I didn't know women could be ordained until I met Rev. Kuh-Chung Kim when I was 18 years old. He recruited me as a Christian Education Director at Woodland Hills Korean UMC. Rev. Kim and the church nurtured me and affirmed that I was called to the Ordained Ministry.

Since my ordination, I have been appointed to churches made with diverse ethnic groups. All churches I served considered me as an Asian Woman first before considering me as their pastor. It took them a while to see me as "Pastor Sunny," who could lead the church. This has made me think about Asian Women's leadership in the church. What does it mean to be an Asian Woman in the leadership of the church? So, I have been studying, reflecting, and praying about it with my sisters in ministry who are Asian American and Pacific Islander clergywomen.

According to the study done on UMC Bishops' race and gender by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women in 2016, 72% of bishops are male, and 28% are female. According to the demographic study, 63% of bishops are white, and 37% identify with a minority racial/ethnic group.

Among 37%, UMC bishops are Asian (13%), Black (20%), and Hispanic (4%). The UMC has Black and Hispanic women bishops but not an Asian woman bishop yet. We wondered why. Maybe now is the time for The UMC to do something about this exclusivity. So, I, as one of The UMC, have decided to do something about this by making myself available for God to utilize me in that capacity in such a time as this.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

I am a 1.5 generation, or '일-점-오세 (il-chom-ose)' as it is called in Korean. It describes immigrant children who are not quite first- or second-generation Korean. I am uniquely positioned in relationships with Korean immigrant communities as a 1.5 generation who translates English to Korean for the first-immigrant communities and Korean to English for non-Korean speakers to help them understand their unfamiliar communities or cultures.

My strong calling tied to immigrant communities as a 1.5 generation was awakened somewhat provocatively through the experience of the 1992 Los Angeles Riot when I was 20 years old. I vividly remember how injustice was served on immigrant and ethnic minority communities. I was furiously upset to contact all news media and even the White House regarding the injustice I witnessed.

Since then, I have been speaking up for those who cannot speak up for themselves. I was involved with immigrant communities to bridge the gap between the western and eastern cultures as a 1.5 generation. By joining the executive team of the National Association of Korean Caucus in The UMC (전국 한인 연합감리교회 총회) as the vice-secretary through its president Rev. Jonathan Lee's invitation in 2013, I learned more about immigrant churches and their communities. I participated in the events of immigrant communities and marginalized groups to show my respect and learn about their communities.

From this, I've learned to consult the matters with the first-generation leaders in the community before taking any action on any issues. I've learned that hearing the community's voice is the crucial first step that cannot be neglected or overlooked. I have become more of a listener than a speaker in working with immigrant communities and marginalized groups within the church and beyond as a 1.5 generation.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

The calling to advocate for ethnic minorities and immigrant communities was awakened through the experience of the 1992 Los Angeles Riot when I was 20 years old. This riot is also called the "Rodney King Riot," "엘.에이. 폭동 (L.A. Pok-Dong)," "사-이-구 폭동 (Sa-I-Gu Pok-Dong)" meaning "Four-Two-Nine" in Korean (4.29), referring the day the riot started. I vividly remember how furiously upset when I witnessed the injustice that was served on my beloved Korean immigrant community and other ethnic minority communities.

The racial conflict between the whites and blacks that caused these civil disturbances was portrayed as the racial conflict between the blacks and the Koreans in the news media and publications. To support

this white colonial behavior, the LAPD protected the whites and their livelihood in Beverly Hills while letting looting, assaulting, and arson occur in Korea Town and other ethnic minority communities adjacent to Beverly Hills. The whites played innocent over this uprising while brainwashing the public to see it as the event caused by the racial conflict between the backs and the Koreans, which was not valid.

So, I wrote many complaining letters to all news media, asking them to have fact-based coverage of the news. I wrote a petition to the White House regarding racial justice issues, particularly for my Korean immigrant community. I joined the White House Debriefing as one of the representatives of an Asian American and Pacific Islander community under the Obama Administration. From the advocacy training in the debriefing, I've learned that I am not just a Korean American but an Asian American who is called to speak up for Asian Americans and other racial minorities, such as Pacific Islanders and Blacks. So, I've joined the NAACP, and the movements of Stop AAPIC Hate and Black Lives Matter.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

The margins are where people experience themselves as out-of-syn with the center or, worse, excluded. Marginalization can occur anywhere without mindfulness about including the people on the margins. Centering leadership from the margins is about inclusive leadership, cultivating the inclusive culture of the organization.

Creating an inclusive organization starts with leaders. According to Harvard Business Review, what leaders say and do makes up to a 70% difference in whether an individual reports feeling included. So, my plan for centering leadership from the margin starts with identifying my personal biases and the biases of my leadership team. I would have our leadership team and I take an Implicit Association Test (IAT) designed by Harvard researchers to test our biases and provide feedback on where our vulnerabilities are and how they may impact our decision-making.

I would like to have my leadership team and I declare our commitment to leveraging diverse perspectives and back it up by devoting time, energy, and resources to creating a more inclusive ministry. With my leadership team's support, I would ensure that underrepresented and marginalized individuals have exposure to the opportunities, relationships, and resources critical to the advancement and be willing to advocate on their behalf.

I would have centering the margins as a spiritual practice. It's a practice of deep listening to new stories by setting my ego aside and being willing to show vulnerability. It's a practice of trusting and believing people who are courageous enough to speak about how they've been wounded, the ways they've felt excluded, and the ways they've been relegated to the margins. I would be willing to share cultural and spiritual space and be willing to change. I would strive for humility to center my leadership from the margins.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

The basic definition of a prophet is one God inspires through the Holy Spirit to deliver a message. The purpose of having a prophetic voice is to point people toward God. A prophetic voice is the ability to tune into what the Holy Spirit is saying and then communicate the message.

To become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism, an Episcopal leader must tune in with God first. Each person has one's unique ways of tuning in with God. Each Episcopal leader must find one's ways to connect with God. In my case, my daily tuning-in with God process starts from my devotion time. I practice Lectio Divina, becoming immersed in the Scriptures personally. It's a practice of spiritual reading, meditation, and prayer intended to promote communion with God and increase the knowledge of God's word. In a particular context of racism, I would seek what God is saying about this context and the people in this context.

I would encourage my leadership team to practice Lectio Divina with me or find each person's ways to discern the voice of God speaking in an environment of racism. I would do this because I believe God's ministry is not about a "one-man" show but teamwork and collaboration in God's "kin-dom." After finishing an individual discernment, a group discernment process would begin.

Group discernment involves prayerfully reviewing and reflecting on each person's experience of connecting with God in the context of racism to clarify two questions: "What is the Holy Spirit calling us to do?" and "How can we best do it?" Starting by reflecting and discussing together, an Episcopal leader not only becomes a prophetic voice, but the whole leadership team also would become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism.

PIULA ALAILIMA

Ethnicity: Samoan

Annual Conference membership: California-Pacific Conference

Current ministry appointment: Wesley United Methodist Church Honolulu

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

Embodying “welcoming the stranger” lies central in the Samoan culture and community from where I was born and raised. It is grounded in communal relationships not only in extend-families but inclusive of the natural world. We are all a system and web of relatives, family, intimately connected to the earth and mystery of the universe. The catalyst that fuels and energizes the life-force of community and all relations is alofa, love. Love that is hospitality — that honors and respects the sacred of Akua (“A” - Breath, “ku” — stand, awake, alive), God, the Creator, as Sacred Breath that awakes and enables one to stand, to come alive. There’s a saying, “All Samoans are related!” In reference to foreigners and strangers, non-Samoans, “They are all our Samoan cousins and relatives we haven’t yet met.” Therefore, an essential tenet in Samoan culture is the embodiment by all of “welcoming the stranger”. Why? Because everyone is a relative. Our Samoan navigator-ancestors embraced the winds, squalls, clouds, etc. as sacred guides leading them “home” to new islands across Oceania throughout the vast Pacific Ocean. As a youngster I grew up convinced everyone came from Samoa, and that has been confirmed throughout my life as I continue to welcome the stranger.

I’m reminded of our sojourning ancestors in the faith who depended on the kindness of strangers; and thus the call: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it (Hebrews 13:2).

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

I consider my first two appointments to Othello and Leavenworth, WA, in the Pacific-Northwest Conference, both white congregations, as ethnic communities. The dynamics of vastly different cultural entities found connection in Jesus’s command to “love one another”. It transformed these congregations into wonderful glimpses of beloved community. Upon leaving these congregations there was emptiness and loss, sadness and pain, in leaving family, home.

I was appointed to Lahaina UMC, a historical Japanese congregation, and Honolua UMC, formed by Japanese and Filipino plantation workers — both on Maui. We welcomed two Tongan fellowships, one in each congregation. Also visitors from around the world made up a major part of our worship community. This setting led to conflicts that required inclusion of representative leaders from each group. Collaboration was key to insure that all decisions were supported unanimously for the sake of the community and mission of the church. The same scenario played out in three ethnic communities here on Oahu, twenty-two years since I left Maui.

Experience in the local church is essential in all levels of leadership, including the Episcopacy, to help close the chasm between the hierarchy of the institution and the context, ground, of the local church.

I’m also influenced by Church’s failure to truly see all the people, particularly Native Peoples. We have neglected Native Peoples’ contributions of presence, wisdom, leadership, cultural values, and way of

being in the world in loving relations with all. Current challenges facing Native Peoples, calls for inclusion of Native Peoples in positions of leadership in order to affect meaning change, apology, healing and restoration of Beloved Community. Yet, no Native American or Native Pacific Islander has been elected into the episcopacy in the Western Jurisdiction, and perhaps the US.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

My experience as a youngster in a culture where boys, as young as 6-10 years old, are thrust into leadership roles of responsibility, helped prepare me as an immigrant in this country at the age of 13, when my family moved to Hawaii. I also grew up in the Samoan Methodist Church, with my father as pastor, and was involved in most all areas of ministry. These experiences have expanded my understanding beyond Samoan culture to include other ethnicities, cultures, and communities that are connected to my own.

As chair of the Hawaii District Acts of Repentance Task Force, we drafted an Apology Resolution calling on the United Methodist Church to apologize to Native Hawaiians for the Methodist Church's role in the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, to engage in raising awareness of Native Hawaiian community, and work to restore and together build Beloved Community. The Apology Resolution is before the 2024 General Conference for approval.

My work with the Conference Commission on Religion and Race addresses systemic racism and racial inequality in our Conference and providing training towards becoming an anti-racist Conference. Finally, as a board member of the General Board of Discipleship Ministries, I raised concern about the effects of European white supremacy colonization influencing our education curriculum resources, etc., and for us to engage in the work of decolonizing our UM education and worship resources, theology, mission, hymns, etc.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

I have served on the Hawaii District Committee on Ministry for a number of years. We conduct interviews with candidates, including those preparing for ordination. Occasionally, ethnic candidates (Tongan, Samoan, and Korean) have had difficulty with the English language and therefore unable to communicate clearly. I commented the system is unfair for those whose primary language is not English; and suggested we have clergy and laity on the committee interpret the questions and the candidate's response. Especially explanations of the Quadrilateral and Wesley's Means of Grace.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

My hope is to ground the current hierarchical structure of leadership from the "ladder" to the "circle" and center of community. It is at the margins that Jesus is found eating and celebrating with those who were cast off and separated from the established community. As such, collaboration and commitment of time and trust to the process, would be key. Everyone is included, has equal say, is trusted, and has the freedom.

On the margins were those Jesus ate, celebrated, and hang out with; those separated from society, by the establishment. Centering leadership sits and is present with those on the ground and open space (of salvation).

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

It is the focus on justice that determines the role and voice of the prophet. In an environment of racism is the absence of justice — imbalance, injustice, white supremacy, inequality, dominance, and separation of people by the color of their skin. The Episcopal leader to become a prophetic voice will lower one's self and stand in solidarity with the poor, and refrain from proclaiming the one story narrative of the Empire and colonization. But sing the songs of freedom for the oppressed, and tell the many stories stories of God's love. And all flesh, all creation, will sing and echo with joy.

CEDRICK BRIDGEFORTH

Ethnicity: African-American/Black

Annual Conference membership: California-Pacific

Current ministry appointment: Director of Innovation & Communication

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

My grandmother often said, "Be kind because you are always entertaining angels." I was well into my teenage years before I realized she was quoting a version of Hebrews 13:2, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (KJV). She imprinted the idea that strangers were angels by what she said and by how she conducted our household. I grew up with extended family members and random people residing at my grandparent's home whenever there was a crisis. My grandparents welcomed them and by extension, so did I. When I was a teenager, my mom became a union organizer, and our home doubled as a huddle space for many campaigns. People from all walks of life were at our house any day. All I knew was that they worked hard, demanded better pay, and did what was necessary to bring about change.

With those formative and positive experiences in my youth, I enlisted in the Air Force for four years. While doing so, I was near new people all the time. It was the nature of the environment – people migrated and itinerated. I already knew the importance of listening to people's stories, honoring their space, and responding with kindness and compassion. I grew up in a small, southern town and knew most of the people in the city. Moving to a new place piqued my curiosity and made me more aware of the similarities across the spectrum of people and communities. I witnessed it in Botswana as much as I did in Boston. People want to be known but must feel safe and brave enough to invite others into their narrative. I welcome strangers by showing myself hospitable and holding to what my grandmother taught me, "...you are always entertaining angels."

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

I offer myself at this time because all communities need to see themselves actively and powerfully engaged in liberating work within and beyond the church. As a Black man in America, where anti-blackness rules the day and one who is "othered" in the UMC, it is imperative that our leaders lead with faith, hope, and love toward a future where all God's children are valued and included. All my appointments gave me direct access to various communities that cut across race, ethnicity, class, religion, homelands, and identities. My upbringing in Alabama and my current service in California demonstrate our day's theological and political extremes. In those settings and environments, I have found favor with God and humans through unfettered integrity, grounded theology, and unquestionable commitment to see those on the margins move to the center.

Whether we examine my service in a multi-ethnic, multi-site, multi-lingual ministry or my service in a predominantly African-American church context, I lift issues facing many people and people facing many issues. I draw on the lived experience of the people to shine a light on scriptural texts and ancient truths relevant to our current realities. As an episcopal leader, the zeal that's been with me for many years will compel me to do even more to end policies that perpetuate racism, anti-blackness, and white privilege within our structures and behaviors. I want to live in a world and serve in a church where love does not

require qualifiers or footnotes. I am open to doing my part to lead the UMC and the Western Jurisdiction in that direction.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

My consistent strategy for building relationships with immigrant generation communities and communities of color involves listening and feeling. I listen to their stories and empathize with their pain and suffering. My pain and suffering are different, but I know how it feels to be separated from family and a stranger among many. Having served in multi-ethnic/cultural contexts as a pastor, conference staff person, and district superintendent, I am aware of one key learning: let people tell their own stories without interruption, interpretation, or apology. Each immigrant's journeys are as unique as the individuals willing to share; therefore, creating an inviting space to listen to the pain and feel the joy that may come is precious.

The lessons from listening and feeling serve me in all ministry settings. As we experience the aftermath and ongoing trauma of the pandemic, I believe our immigrant communities can teach us about survival and perseverance. I think congregations of color can teach us cash-based accounting and how to live within our means. I believe the "spiritual but not religious" and "the nones" among us can teach us plenty about online gatherings that have profound impacts and why it's essential to have a nimbler faith or nomadic meeting practices. Those are practices and realities they live with daily. The church is only now arriving at a place where it must grapple with it. I arrive at this point of understanding as a listener and one who feels deeply about and amidst the suffering we see among our unhoused siblings, outsized edifices, and unsustainable ministry models.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

While serving as Chair of Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR), 2013-2016, I was a member of a denomination-wide coalition of groups that came together to address General Conference legislation. The coalition's objective was to remove the language discriminatory against LGBTQIA+ persons from the Book of Discipline. That was not the expressed mission of BMCR, but it was something BMCR espoused in some of its policies and previous work. When it came time to release a statement supporting various legislation, BMCR was clear it was not ready to move on any plan that did not center on eradicating racism. As the chairperson, I could have easily pushed for our board to come to the point of agreement and move ahead. However, the central tenant of BMCR since its inception has been to tear down systems of oppression based on race.

Since I was not willing to forge ahead on my agenda, I worked in coalition with the leaders of the other four racial/ethnic caucuses to agree on what we could support as a group. We could not let the political will and power of the coalition pass us by without advocating for other legislation and priorities centered on immigration, pensions, and ordination policies. Those policies impact immigrants and communities of color in quick and profound ways. We worked within that coalition to get support for resolutions and legislation that would include changes to benefit the UMC's non-English speaking and non-U.S.-born members.

The changes made and the relationships we built made it possible for us to remain in the coalition and help others see how we cannot focus only on one harmful paragraph or policy. We must take a long and broad view to free more people at a faster speed and with greater dignity.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

My plan involves listening to and with those on the margins. I want to learn what is missing, what is working, and what is needed. Even as one with several intersecting and marginal identities, I do not presume to know what makes sense in every community, including those with whom I most readily identify. Any plan for centering leadership also must include a process for raising and preparing leaders to lead in this ever-changing environment. It will be crucial to undertake a plan that respects the voices of leaders who have a sense of who is being called to lead within or from their community. Along those lines, I would be keenly aware not to hinder a community's growth or depth by constantly removing the best and brightest from their context. Sometimes bishop's attempts to lift a person or community backfire because the community does not have significant numbers of persons ready to assume greater responsibility or assignments beyond the immediate community.

I find one-on-one conversations and group dialogues within culturally significant spaces as life-giving for me and those involved. Centering the significance of space, culture, language, and food is also a consideration for bringing those on the margins closer to the center of leadership. In valuing one's culture and home, we can sincerely invite them to invite us into their gardens and valleys where their most profound truths reside.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

An episcopal leader becomes a prophetic voice in an environment of racism by committing to be anti-racist, never ignoring anti-blackness, and ceasing to center whiteness. I find those to be noble truths regardless of the race or ethnicity of the bishop. That matters because the policies and structures that shape our denomination stem from codified practices harmful to native people and their land, Black people and their humanity, and queer people and their dignity.

A prophetic episcopal leader must understand that no person or community of color or immigrants identifies with only one form of oppression. In the case of racism, when I speak of being anti-racist, that means working to address and eradicate the intersectionality and effect of interpersonal, internalized, institutional, and structural racism that shows up in policies and behaviors. Equally, being aware of anti-blackness and calling attention to it is not a practice of lifting blackness above all else. It is choosing to elevate blackness to the same level as everyone else. Prophetic leadership is required to unseat the status quo and usher in the reign of God.

TOM CHOI

Ethnicity: Asian (Korean)

Annual Conference membership: California-Pacific

Current ministry appointment: Senior Pastor, First UMC of Honolulu (Hawaii)

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

One of the best stories that I have heard about encountering a stranger was about one of our United Methodist bishops, who was new to the episcopal area. It was late in the evening, and entering the building was an African American man not known to the bishop. Through the window of the bishop's office, the bishop gave a friendly wave to the man. It turned out that the man was the evening custodian. He was, however, so grateful that the bishop did not act suspiciously but extended a wave of friendship. A small gesture, but it spoke volumes. I try to reflect this attitude as I encounter people new to me.

In meeting someone new, especially from a different ethnic group, I try to refrain from trying awkwardly to connect by speaking the few words I might know about that person's ancestral language. I prefer to begin from my own context and primary language (English). As I learn more about the person and that person learns more about me, I may feel I have the permission to share what I do know about that person's cultural background.

Finally, it is important to know that I am often the stranger or newcomer to a place and that many others have been residents much longer and more significantly than I. If elected bishop, I would make it a point to inquire about the history of a place where we would have a meeting, and honor that history, especially if we are meeting on land that was settled originally by indigenous people.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

Working with many different ethnic communities has shaped my awareness and sharpened my multi-cultural competency. This means that cultural awareness goes beyond ethnic cultural competency; but the principles are similar. It requires learning, for example, if a culture is more formal or more informal, whether time is fixed or more flexible. Is this a direct communication culture or indirect?

I have been learning the Korean principle of nunchi, which literally means "eye measure," the ability to observe, size up a situation and be able to respond correctly in the cultural context. nunchi requires a person to observe, learn, reflect, in order to make a decision or response.

As I contemplate God's calling to the episcopacy, I feel a sense of readiness that I can step into an episcopal area - most likely a brand-new setting to me - using my learnings over many years and apply them to the many different cultures - ethnic, rural/urban, younger/older, low tech/high tech, socio-economic - and minister effectively as I observe, learn, and reflect.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

I have been blessed to have worked with many immigrant generation communities and congregations of color during my life and ministry, beginning with my home church, an immigrant Korean congregation, and school life, which was Hispanic, White, Black, and Asian. I have worked as a youth director at a Japanese American church, started a second-generation Korean congregation within a white church, and since coming to Hawaii, have served in multi-cultural settings, especially ministering to and with different Asian groups, as well as Pacific Islanders, including Tongans, Samoans, Fijians, Native Hawaiians, and Marshallese.

As a pastor serving in Los Angeles during some racially turbulent times, I have worked to ease some of the tensions that exist between African Americans and Korean Americans, the latter accused of opening businesses in African American neighborhoods without adding any benefit to the community. My response has included a self-conscious effort to support black owned businesses, coordinating some dialogue sessions with Korean American and African American leaders. I also coordinated a pulpit exchange with an African American congregation and the second-generation Korean congregation I led.

As a district superintendent I learned, for example, that the same word may have a different meaning depending on tone. When conducting SPRC meetings before charge conferences, I would ask how things are going in the church with the pastor. The answer in one immigrant culture was often the word "okay." I quickly learned that "okay" sometimes meant, "not satisfactory," or that it meant that things were genuinely okay, or something else. I had to ask follow-up questions and pick up little clues as to what the meaning of "okay" truly was, as in this culture, you rarely criticized the pastor directly in public. Observing the subtexts in situations is essential.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

My daughters are part Native Hawaiian and as a family, we have been supportive of and advocated for addressing the issues that have affected Native Hawaiians since the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii in 1893. Many children of the Christian missionaries sent to Hawaii to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to the islands brought about instead an illegal coup and virtual colonization of Hawaii.

My family and I have been a part of the Acts of Repentance Task Force in the Hawaii District of the California-Pacific Annual Conference, specifically in support of Native Hawaiians. This task force will bring legislation to the 2024 General Conference, seeking an apology for the treatment of Native Hawaiians in the aftermath of the overthrow of the kingdom.

My current appointment is to the First United Methodist Church of Honolulu (First Church), which was established in 1955 through a royal charter by King Kamehameha IV. On the other hand, the church went dormant for several years and was brought to prominence by Pastor Harcourt Peck, who was one of the military sharpshooters who helped the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii. Our church lives in tension, having a legacy of proud Hawaiian heritage from its birth, but knowing that the current church owes much of its success to a person who participated in the overthrow.

Despite this, First Church has helped birth new communities. In 1970, the first Tongan ministry outside of Tonga was organized at First Church. This ministry has grown to one of the largest Tongan ministries in the United States and birthed several other Tongan ministries.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

The greatest ability of a bishop to center leadership from the margins is through appointment making and nominations. The first appointment that I worked on as the Hawaii District Superintendent (DS) was to appoint a Korean clergywoman to an immigrant Korean church, which is extremely rare. Later, I was able to initiate the appointment of two clergywomen as the co-pastors of one of the larger churches in the district that had never had women in primary clergy leadership, including over the immigrant Tongan ministry of that church, a traditionally male led culture.

As a DS, I designated the first Tongan to serve as lay leader for the Hawaii district, as well as assistant lay leaders from other immigrant congregations.

I was also able to work on the appointment of the first ordained deacon to be appointed to a Hawaii District church, as well as the first known ordained deacon to a Korean church. On my current staff, there is a provisional deacon serving fulltime.

In addition, as chair of the conference board of ordained ministry, I've always been mindful to build leadership teams with marginalized people in mind. The Leadership Team of the Cal-Pac Board is comprised of women in the majority, and about half are people of color, including the first Tongan laywoman to serve as vice-chair. The overall membership of the Board is 43% non-white and 63% are women; 24% are laypeople; 3 local pastors are included, slightly above the required number.

In this and other ways, I would continue these practices of including marginalized people into centering leadership if elected bishop.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

An Episcopal leader must combat racism by being relational, building bridges, and being prophetic: telling people the truth about themselves, systems, and attitudes.

Starting with the existing church culture, an Episcopal leader must be willing to make strategic appointments that begin to change racist attitudes. This may be to appoint non-white persons to major leadership positions, such as district superintendent or director of connectional ministries, as well as important pulpits.

In some areas, it may be a longer process, and the appointment of more open-minded clergy to historically racist or racially biased churches may help change the environment so anyone could serve that church.

The development of nesting congregations of different cultural groups in existing churches is a long-standing tradition of the UMC and can still work in many settings.

In the public arena, I am admittedly less optimistic about bridging the political divide in our nation. Nevertheless, I continue to believe that building relationships has the best chance of addressing racism in our society and believe bishops can influence this by the relationship building efforts.

Finally, advocating for justice-oriented change in our laws, using the words of the prophets, can be a powerful way bishops can slowly turn the tide of racist practices and bring about structural change.

STACI CURRENT

Ethnicity: African American

Annual Conference membership: California Nevada

Current ministry appointment: District Superintendent-Bay District

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

One of the greatest compliments I've received was from four young men from Africa University. They were visiting the United States as part of the Africa University Choir US Tour. Several families opened their homes to host the students. It was our joy to welcome these young men into our home for a few weeks. They became like family as we spent many evenings around the dining table laughing and sharing stories. Our home was a parsonage built in 1910 with much deferred maintenance. Our furniture was second hand and the meals were not elaborate. Yet on the last night the four young men spent with us they told us that out of all the places they had stayed throughout the United States ours was the best. They said even though they had stayed in large, fancy places those were only houses, but ours was a home.

I also understand that welcoming includes creating space for people to be their authentic selves to make their unique contribution. Not only to invite them to the table but also ask them to be a cohost. When I welcome the stranger, I am not only giving, but I am also receiving a grace that cannot be calculated.

Central to my efforts to embody welcoming the stranger is knowing what it feels like to be left out, discriminated against, and marginalized. I cannot forget the kindness given to me while I was a stranger. Exodus 23:9 reminds us, "Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners because you were foreigners in Egypt." I recently read a quote on Instagram by Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber that resonated with me. She said, "All I know is that a shared alienation can bond people like a shared privilege can never do."

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

As an ethnic woman my experiences within ethnic communities have deeply influenced my call to episcopal discernment. The Methodist Church has always benefited from the countless contributions of ethnic communities regardless of whether it has fully acknowledged them. Understanding the profound contributions that ethnic persons have had in enriching The United Methodist Church is fundamental. It is also critical to understand the deep racism that mars the history of The United Methodist Church.

Ethnic communities of faith contributed so much to our church and have had to fight for the ability to be full participants. Nevertheless, ethnic communities have persisted. The ethnic churches that I have served motivate me. The abiding faith and devotion to expanding the reign of God that I observe in ethnic churches humbles me. These churches are all too often housed in dilapidated buildings that they have inherited after white members left. Yet, they persist. These communities of faith contribute their apportionment and tithes faithfully in spite of the fact that few people who look like them serve in higher level leadership positions. Yet, they persist. These communities of faith develop training in their native tongue when none are offered. They recruit and nurture youth and young adults and have robust

programs on their own. Their successes often go unnoticed when there is conversation around decision making tables about how the church has no youth.

The brilliance and beauty of our ethnic churches is a largely untapped resource that holds one of the keys to unlocking the doors of The United Methodist Church's future. In the eight years that I have served on the Cabinet, I have become sure of this. My calling to service at any level of our shared life together will always include amplifying the voices of the marginalized.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

I am a person of color and have always sought to foster relationships within my own community. I was also raised in a diverse suburb of Los Angeles immersed in a beautiful tapestry of cultures and first-generation immigrants. I appreciate the challenges as well as the strength and beauty of being a first-generation immigrant.

In many ways, our experiences were similar. My grandparents migrated to California to escape the Jim Crow South to give their children the opportunity for a better life. This was true for my friend's parents who immigrated from other countries as well. Together, we strived to fulfill their dreams. I grew up being a part of a Filipino dance troupe at school, developing a love for Korean food, and dreaming of visiting my favorite music group's (The Jets') home in Tonga. In turn I shared my culture and we created a new way of being together.

This background undergirds where I begin in building relationships. I have appreciation of the rich culture that we each bring. I have been graciously welcomed as I strive to learn the values so that I can be an advocate in spaces of decision making.

In my work as a district superintendent I have advocated to incorporate the fruitful work of ethnic communities into our mission strategy. We have Lay Servant classes available in Fijian and Tongan. During the last clergy leadership event for the Bay District, we centered the wisdom of highly effective churches by having a panel discussion where five pastors could share their learnings. Four of the five clergy who shared were ethnic pastors. There is still much work that needs to be done and I remain eager to engage.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

Shirley Chisolm once said, "If you are not offered a seat at the table, bring a folding chair." Throughout my life and ministry, I have worked to provide such 'folding chairs' to make sure that the voices of the marginalized are including at the decision-making table and worked for the transformation of systems that uphold such suppression. I have intentionally sought to ensure that youth, LGBTQIA+ persons, persons of differing abilities, and ethnicities are a part of the decision-making processes of local church and district leadership.

At annual Conference Session in June we celebrated our first Fijian United Methodist Church which is in the district I superintend. San Rafael First UMC had been a predominately White congregation that declined to a very small handful of White members yet had a robust Fijian community. Like other

churches that are becoming more multicultural, the decision making was held primarily by the few White members. With intentionality around the strategic appointment of a new pastor four years ago, much holy conferencing, prayer, excellent leadership from the Pastor, and holy, hard work by the members, the church has been transformed. In recognizing that the church had become primarily Fijian, we could joyfully claim the truth that this was now a Fijian Church and space was made for the full participation of everyone. One of the White members who was a pillar of the church preached her first sermon on laity Sunday at the tender age of 92. Even though she had been a member of the church for over 60 years she had never been asked to speak! Bringing those on the margins to the center benefited so many! There is now full participation in the decision making and the church is thriving to and for the glory of God!

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

As we envision a life-affirming future, first, there must be a complete transformation of the system currently in place. Our first step is to begin the difficult but necessary work of de-centering whiteness. This will mean that those who have historically been in the center will have to do the work of stepping aside to create more space for those who have been marginalized to be heard. Any strategy for centering marginalized voices will fail without our White siblings' willingness to make this shift away from being centered.

The next step is the work of decolonization. We must ensure the decolonization of geographic locations and mental locations. There is a particular need to work to decolonize those who have been oppressed. The impact of colonialism causes the oppressed to see themselves through the definitions of the dominant White culture. The critical step for those of us on the margins is to decolonize our minds. This provides the foundation for marginalized groups to work together in their shared struggle and strengthens their resolve to refused to be pitted against each other by those in the center.

The aforementioned work serves to dismantle Internalized superiority and internalized inferiority. That is to say that we must do intentional work around the ways in which people are socialized to feel that they do or do not deserve to take up space. Miguel De La Torre, Professor of Ethics at Iliff School of Theology, reminds us that the end goal of this work is not about the "dominant culture exchanging social locations with the marginalized but completely leveling and dismantling racist, sexist, and classist power structures." Building a new church institution is the work enormous, essential work before us. I give thanks that with God all things are possible.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

The Book of Discipline, Paragraph 403d states that one of the duties of a Bishop is to possess "A prophetic commitment for the transformation of the Church and the world." We live in a country where racism is pervasive. Therefore, the task of being a prophetic leader against the sin of racism must permeate every facet of the work of an Episcopal Leader.

An episcopal leader is called to be a prophetic voice. The prophet makes people uncomfortable, disrupts the status quo, and calls us back to God. It is tempting prefer to be non-confrontational only tell the good news, because the truth is that prophets are not always liked. No one wants to hear what the prophet has to say because it is a word that runs contrary to popular opinion. However, in an

environment of such racism we must be certain and clear that the calling is to be a prophetic voice that does not concede to evil.

In order to act upon deep convictions a prophet must have courage. I share this quote by Brené Brown to illustrate my thoughts. "Courage is a heart word. The root of the word courage is cor - the Latin word for heart. In one of its earliest forms, the word courage meant "To speak one's mind by telling all one's heart." Prophetic voices speak honestly and openly. The risk is that it will not be welcomed particularly as it pertains to dismantling racism. Jesus was the most prophetic voice and his commitment to speaking from the heart led to crucifixion. And yet God's commitment to Jesus caused him to rise again. We also need the courage to believe in the resurrection as we speak from the heart and trust that truth crushed to earth will rise again!

GEORGE EDD-BENNETT

Ethnicity: European-American

Annual Conference membership: California Nevada

Current ministry appointment: Lodi 1st UMC

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

I find it important to see within myself the very characteristics of those called “The Strangers” in our communities (i.e. Heb 13 “Let mutual love continue. 2Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. 3Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.”) I have taken a course offered by Dr. Monica Coleman Ph.D. which informed students about theologies that are meaningful to those suffering with mental illness. The spectrum of struggles with mental disease is present in most of our lives and acknowledging this connects me with many who would be called the stranger.

Dr. Jon L. Berquist Ph.D. taught classes at the Claremont School of Theology during my doctoral process. His class on the Theology of Immigration helped us to decenter dominant cultures and demonstrated how this work was rooted in scripture. Part of the journey is to know the migration stories of our personal family histories. My family was fleeing religious persecution and starvation. The Quakers were unwelcomed in European countries in the 17th century and landed on Red Island which later became Rhode Island after the Dutch Trading Company made a deal with the English colonialists. In the 18th and 19th centuries, my Irish ancestors had to choose between starving and migrating. The unwelcome stranger is embedded in my own heritage. I personally feel the value of honoring the heritage within me that was not welcome in our historical dominant culture expressions. Music, poetry, authors like Jonathan Swift, religious expressions, and folklore deepen my life and I can appreciate how these assets deepen the lives of all of those that experience life as the stranger.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

Though the California Nevada Annual Conference has within it great diversity of cultural expressions, many of the cultures, voices, and languages within our conference are not experienced well enough in the regular work of the conference. This is even more true when we consider the strength of ethnic lay ministries.

As a teacher for lay speaking and lay servant ministries, I have witnessed courses filled with Spanish speaking lay speakers, Hmong speaking lay speakers, and powerful lay ministers in multiple cultural expressions. I feel that the strength of our Wesleyan heritage is found in the impassioned work and ministry of lay people supported by ordained clergy (This is the rock from which we were hewn and the quarry from which we were dug Isaiah 51:1). The modern expression of the United Methodist Church (especially in dominant culture churches) is more often visible as ordained clergy supported by lay people. It occurs to me that celebrating the accomplishments in Lay Servant Ministries may lift the voices, languages, and ministries of our conference and improve our ability to turn towards one another and delight in one another the way God delights in each one of us.

I feel called to help annual conferences move toward broadening our experience of ministry and mission. The bishop helps the committee on the Annual Conference Session set the tone and tenor of this important conference event. I believe that bishops can do more to decenter whiteness, and dismantle racism and colonialism by guiding the planning of this committee to add more focus on our ethnic cultural expressions through the lifting up of lay servant ministries.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

One of the most prominent immigrant generation communities in the Central Valley of California is the Hmong community. Most of the families began arriving as refugees in the early 1980's. Each generation had a very different experience of living in California.

One of the most important leaning is that the migration story is powerful and important to each family. Honoring these stories is an act of gratitude for the family members that struggled and suffered for the lives the current generation get to live today. Also, language and songs bring comfort and inclusion into the room. Hmong people have different dialects. When the room is filled with familiar language and songs that were sung in and before the migration journey, the families of the immigrant generation communities come alive and feel both loved and honored.

I had the opportunity to teach lay preaching to a class of Hmong Lay Servant Ministers in Fresno and Clovis. We decided as a group that all praying, and speaking could be done in whatever language or dialect was the language of the heart of the LSM speaking. I paid attention to tone and body language and the multi-lingual members of the class were happy to help when needed. I believe that this class was improved by the act of loving more than it suffered from a lack of clear oversight in editorial form.

Now as a circuit leader, we always include the option of speaking in the language of one's heart. This makes our times of prayer and sharing of concerns quite powerful. Should a member of the group need to clarify (by translation), I find welcoming the passion of the statement in the original language to be an important first step in the communication process.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

Merced church leaders realized our community had gone through significant demographic change. Merced boasted a majority population of Latinx heritage, and homes closest to church were popular among people who migrated from the Michoacan region of Mexico. Our goal: to turn toward the community around us and listen for God's calling upon the church. We started with an organization called We'Ced – a youth organization funded by the California Endowment that gave voice to marginalized students. We'Ced and the Boys and Girls Club partnered to write poetry with the youth of Merced. These young poets read their poems in church during worship. This opened the hearts of the church to the experiences of Latinx youth who lived in our neighborhood. Members became regular subscribers to the We'Ced newspaper. Next, we connected with PICO and NAACP, two organizations that were working on issues of the burdens on migrant families. The community needed space for education around immigration issues. An immigration event was organized, with classes on "knowing your rights when ICE comes to the door", an immigration lawyer and DACA applications on site, and Notary Publics volunteering to certify custody plans to be enacted in cases of deportation. The church

and the community learned to share our lives with one another. At Christmas 2017 the church was led by the community in its first celebration of La Posada; days of making tamales together, decorating the Wesley Hall, and learning songs. On the night of La Posada, we were truly community connected in hope and song by our faith in Christ.

The Merced Church is currently very well lead by Rev. Ella Luna-Garza who continues working closely in ministry with the Latinx community around the church, expanding ministries to end food insecurity, and deepening connections with Latinx leaders in Merced.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

The work of the annual conference in which I am connected happens almost entirely in English. Discussions and debates rarely include the great multitude of cultural expressions that are present in the conference. Even though the election of leaders shows a clear intention of making diverse leadership groups, nothing else about the way these groups operate demonstrates an embrace of cultural diversity.

I plan to ask our committees to be more intentional about doing the work of the annual conference with a commitment to connecting with God and with one another. Let us see agendas written in the language of the chairperson. Allow us to use the tools that minority cultures often use to make sense of languages that are not native to us. Welcome prayer in the language of one's heart so often that we all become more comfortable with diversities of language in the room. In important meetings, we should have technology for translation that is needed for all members not just members of the minority cultures. In smaller meetings, we can help one another after we listen to points made in the language of one's heart.

I believe that changes like these will make our meetings less efficient and more about honoring the process of inclusion. That said, there is much to be gained from honoring process. I am certain that God could have taken the people of Israel across the desert much more efficiently than by wandering in the wilderness for forty years. The fact that God was present for every part of a struggle that defined a people tells me that God very much appreciates process. Like an artist painting a masterpiece, every layer of the process has transformational value.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

An episcopal leader first must own the responsibility for decentering whiteness, dismantling racism and colonialism. We all have this responsibility and choosing to own it is an important first step. Many systems within the institutional church are deeply entangled in colonial and racist systems. Noticing the systemic exclusion in practices like Robert's Rules of Order and agendas written for sessions of meeting through prayer, debate, and discussion in English without translation creates a starting point for addressing the needed changes.

As a person who looks like the dominant culture, my actions are extremely important to the process of decentering whiteness, dismantling racism and colonialism. Too often, well meaning people in the dominant culture feel unempowered to take the lead in this work. We step back and leave the work to the oppressed because of the false belief that only the oppressed can effect change. The opposite is true. The oppressor needs to be seen doing the heavy lifting in this work. By leading with intention, a person like myself can empower more members of the dominant culture to open the paths to inclusion.

To be called to be a prophetic voice and to be recognized as a prophetic voice is different. I believe that becoming a prophetic voice only happens when the episcopal leader actually leads the church toward reformation in thought and practice. The process of becoming a prophetic voice is a journey of courage, faith, and action which brings healing to our broken systems. It happens through deep connection with God and with all parts of the body of Christ. By earning trust through acts of love that break down the racist and colonial systems, the episcopal leader becomes a leader for the whole body of Christ.

DOTTIE ESCOBEDO-FRANK

Ethnicity: Mixed Latinx

Annual Conference membership: Desert Southwest Conference

Current ministry appointment: Paradise Valley United Methodist Church

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

I hope my embodiment of Christ is so apparent that “welcoming the stranger” is first-nature for me. I am involved in work to welcome those that have experienced exclusion from society and the church. For example, I have walked alongside the community of people living on the streets in Phoenix, and in Tucson. Our church in Phoenix provided a Saturday morning breakfast, and a worship service for those who wanted to stay. In the years of that work, some became friends, some became members of the church, some served on committees and one person became the Lay Delegate to Annual Conference.

I work closely with the migrant communities that come to us through our southern border. I helped to establish The Inn, one of the first United Methodist places of refuge for those who had crossed the border, entered into detention, and now were freed to go meet their families.

And perhaps here, with the immigrant community, is where the word “embody” is the closest to me. My grandmother crossed the Rio Grande River when in labor with my father, so that he could be born in a country that had a greater expression of religious freedom. My very body is a representation of the cruzando (crossing) between two peoples.

Those without economic resources, people of ethnic variety, those who are not valued in society or in The United Methodist Church, are the people I stand with, learn from, and share life with. It is my hope that I embody “welcoming the stranger” in all I do, in what I say, and in the way I live. I hope that the words of Jesus, “I was a stranger, and you welcomed me,” are embedded in my soul and flow out of my life.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

I don't really know life without people of ethnic variety. So, my experience is wide in the cultures of our day. To me, the fullness of God's kin-dom is only seen when all of God's people are present.

At one church, we moved from being an anglo/senior church to a community with great diversity. Over time we became 1/3: white, black, and latino. We also grew to become 1/3 children; and a good representation of LGBTQIA, people of differing abilities, and a wider socioeconomic status. When this happened, we became a church that reflected God more accurately, and we became a church with significant differences and complications. It wasn't a simple church, but a deeply diverse and varied church. This expression of church felt most like the call Jesus has given us to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”

If I become a bishop, I will make a clarion call to all churches to reflect the deep diversity that is around us. Because only then are we a church that is reflective of God's dream for us. And only then, will society pay attention to us because they will see our love for each other. Only then can we work together to

transform our world for God's good.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

While most of the churches I have led have been mainly dominant communities of faith, I have worked regularly to include and diversify into the communities of color around us. I do this by being embedded in the neighborhood or city and speaking the gospel message of inclusion.

In congregations, I have often been the first person of color to lead as pastor. And in most cases, we grew more diverse over time because of the natural relationships we developed. While sharing life stories, eating together, supporting each other, and diversifying leadership. When we do the basic steps of inclusion, the church grows in that manner.

In one church, we had a large group of Latino/Mexican families. When they joined some of the family members needed a Spanish language service. So, we added a Spanish language service. In this way, we were able to address the needs of different generations

I have worked diligently to apply what I learn from each culture to my leadership style, in this way expanding and growing as I lead. For example, when one family with two gay dads (and 12 foster/adoptive children of varying cultures) became an integral part of our church, we grew in love and in respect for the work they did with the children in their home. One of my favorite days in ministry was when I baptized all of them together: the two dads, and the twelve children. The dads had explained baptism to their children, and the children could tell me for themselves what it meant that they were being baptized as a family. Our church learned that these men had much to teach us about love. There weren't many dry eyes in the church that day as the Spirit moved among us.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

My first months as a District Superintendent, I was involved in the response to the thousands of unaccompanied children crossing the southern border of Arizona. They came across the port of entry at Nogales, my hometown. As the numbers of people crossing grew large, the Border Patrol officers began dropping off large groups of people at the bus stations. The UMC churches in Tucson were part of the responses to the bus stations. One time, for example, a large group of families (more than 70 people) were dropped off at a bus station in the heat of the summer months. I called some churches in my district, and they opened their doors immediately to house the families, including many small children, until they went on their way to meet their families.

As this was happening, Bishop Hoshibata's office received a call from Border Patrol, and I returned the call on his behalf. Border Patrol wanted to know if we had any churches who could house the asylees until they went to their families in other states. One church opened up their doors, and other churches volunteered and provided food and necessities to care for the people. We named this project "The Inn" because we opened in December, and we were honoring the nativity story.

Today The Inn is still running, and there are currently two other United Methodist churches in the Phoenix area, that are open as places of refuge for the travelers.

I have travelled to Washington D.C. to speak at a rally for immigrants. And I have spoken at local rallies. There is much yet to be done to change our laws so that the migrant communities don't suffer abuses when they are at their lowest point of hope.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

I do have a plan for centering leadership from the margins. It is written in my heart, and I hope to bring it to pass wherever I serve. I believe that good leaders are found everywhere, and that when we look to the edges of society, we will grow in leadership.

First, I would want to be surrounded by a diverse group of district superintendents and conference staff, so that I am receiving wisdom from all God's people.

I would want our churches, including our largest churches, to be led by the diversity of pastors. This means people of color, women, people with differing abilities, people who are LGBTQIA, and others will be sought in positions of leadership.

This inclusion also extends to the laity who lead. As a District Superintendent, I invited a Latina from an immigrant family, to lead as the District Lay Leader. She led us with a passion for Christ and for the people who follow Christ. Her enthusiastic spirit and wisdom led us in a new way, and we were better for her presence. I hope to continue to find lay leaders who are from the margins of society; and I hope to encourage churches to do the same.

Others who are on the margins of the church, and who have been left out of leadership, are people who live in poverty. It has been my experience that those who struggle economically have been leading in their neighborhoods just to survive. And they could bring their experienced leadership gifts to our churches. With their help, we could become better at caring for others and valuing those who struggle for food and the basic necessities. With their help, we could begin to solve the problems that lead to poverty, hunger, and homelessness.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

Episcopal leaders are able to speak to wide audiences, to world leaders, and to the inter-faith communities. When the opportunities arise, it is crucial for episcopal leaders to raise their voices to point out, call for the end to, and provide a hope for a future without racism. This future of the beloved community is a preferred hope but not-yet reality. In order for the reality of valuing all to occur, we need to make clear the description of "heaven on earth" which includes the valuing and respect for all of God's people.

Our episcopal leaders also need to watch and be ready to make a call for change without invitation. When we see evil and injustice happening in our world it is important to speak out against the harm, and to call for justice, reformation, and restoration in our systems and in our world. Episcopal leaders have the unique opportunity to pay attention and use their voices to live out our baptismal vows to resist evil and oppression in all forms of racism.

Episcopal leaders can also speak to the churches in their conference about systemic racism. They can point out the fact that our churches are 94% white in the United States, and call for churches to reflect the beautiful colors of people in their communities. This challenge will be difficult for churches, but it

also could bring about the needed change for our communities. Perhaps we will even grow in numbers as we grow in diversity.

Bishops could also work with other jurisdictional and connectional leaders to imagine and implement ways to end racism. It will take all people to go to task together to name, call out, and dream a new future of God's beloved in the United Methodist Church.

AARON M. GRAY

Ethnicity: Black

Annual Conference membership: Mountain Sky

Current ministry appointment: Christ UMC, Fort Collins, CO

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

This is the right question for today. I believe we will not have the resources we need until the Church has the spirit of openness and a belief in new beginnings. And so, we welcome the stranger, and it's honest and sincere when we bring all of ourselves to the table to have a real conversation.

The next step is hospitality, and it is radical when we become the host and the stranger becomes our guest. Whatever the moment looks and feels like, we are trusting the Holy Spirit to allow us to ask the most difficult question to our guest, "What is your story?" The question comes from the confidence that someone asked us our story and then listened while we were able to answer.

For our guest, the question is important because they do have a story. It may be filled with pain and grief. Or maybe they were blessed with many gifts, but instead of making a difference, they took advantage of others -- or maybe they did nothing at all. Or possibly, our guest is not at peace, and so we are concerned to the point where we would not want our guest to hurt themselves or, God forbid, to hurt others.

We have listened to the place where we can tell our story and our assurance is that God is a God of grace instead of judgement. We can listen to our guest and assure them that, along with grace, comes forgiveness and second chances. We will never completely know our guest, and yet, we believe they are now in a whole different place as they welcome the stranger -- and will ask them, "tell me your story".

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

I have served in cross-cultural appointments for the past thirteen years and in majority white communities. It has been important for me to stay in touch with colleagues who serve churches and live in ethnic communities. I have worked to keep in touch with issues that affect communities of color, such as:

1. At the height of the Covid-19 crises, Hispanic communities were suffering the most.
2. The test score disparity among kids of color in public schools. The gap between reading and writing has continued to grow.
3. The hate crimes towards the Asian community did not attract the notice that it should have in our society
4. If mass shootings are considered five or more dead, then they are common in communities of color.

I served on the Denver Public School Board as desegregation orders were lifted and the goal was to return to neighborhood schools. The Board really wanted to bring into focus the mistakes that had been made in the past. It was not easy as we found even integrated communities were not open to their

schools being diverse. It was important for ethnic communities to make the investment in their local schools. I believe that affirmation and support is important within the community as well as those around it.

As Episcopal leader, first and foremost, I do have a passion for being present. I try not to come with the answers, and this would match my overall desire to be a servant leader and to be a Pastor to Pastors. I want to encourage our Laity that the Church is about people, and they are not only necessary, but they need to be empowered for leadership.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

This is a very important question and concern for me. The key word is relationships which, sadly, I have not been in a position to form. I certainly have some concerns that I would identify as promises made and promises broken. The communities are real, they continue to grow and are having an enormous impact on our culture. I would want to lead in finding ways to broaden and strengthen communication with these communities, in a creative way that affirms we are a global Church, and our connection is strong. We can respond beginning with love.

Secondly, the need for resources is broad and will take many different forms. Communication can clarify what the needs are and how every local Church can respond through our mission and ministry as a whole. To reach new generations, as our overall passion, is crucial to staying relevant.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

I have been more active at our Annual Conferences recently as there've been issues that I've supported, as well as those I have opposed. At our Annual Conference that followed the 2016 General Conference, where no changes were made to the language on human sexuality, our more progressive Conference decided we would have a new way of paying our mission shares. Our local Churches would have the option of designating their mission shares Not to go to our conservative Central Conferences. I strongly objected to this for three reasons:

1. In our culture and government, we often punish those nations with whom we disagree by withholding resources from them. Our Conference appeared be doing the same thing. I strongly believed then, and believe now, that as a connectional Church, we should not be conducting ourselves in this way.
2. We were denying ourselves the processing of a new generation. As we should realize, the most staunchly held beliefs can be changed as we allow people to grow and learn for themselves. They understand what hurts others and how the love of God can work to bring about healing.
3. The communication gap was wide in our Conference leadership with this decision, which was aimed at pleasing a few. There were local Churches that the Conference leadership had wanted to encourage to pay a full amount of mission shares. By allowing them to be selective in their giving, we opened the door for others to do it also.

Our Conference leadership realized this process was wrong after one year. As we think about next steps, it will take time and learning together to be faithful stewards to God, building what I hope will always be

a passion for spreading the gospel to the whole world.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

My plan begins with calling on Conference leadership to end the denial and, possibly, the grief, that we feel -- but which never leads to change. To understand that people on the margins are not there by choice. We do share a common understanding that people on the margins, for whatever the reason, can be beaten down to the point that they don't feel it anymore.

My vision for leadership is to invite and affirm that people on the margins can come to the table. Prayerful we will have diversity and we will be blessed and have peace -- when we are able to affirm that we are different. And, that we are only made whole when everyone is valued, and the gifts they share are a shared value. The word and the meaning behind it are not something we take for granted, for we are at the table of love.

“Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest”. These words of Christ invite all of us to see the way in which we were all on the margins, but now to be at the table of transformation.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

Prophetic and the meaning behind it is crucial. It affirms that the status quo is in place, and it is unacceptable. Racism is systemic and one of the many dangers is that it allows systems and the people that support them to feel comfortable. Another issue with racism is that it continues to spread its boundaries with a hate-filled message of one race being superior to the other.

In some cases, extremists will use the scriptures to justify what they do to others. An Episcopal leader must be loud in rejecting this nonsense by teaching, preaching, organizing and most of all, living out the great commandment.

Words like justice and freedom and now, voting, not only have value, but are significant in the change we desire to see and sustain in every community of color. An Episcopal leader must support and form efforts to speak for these values.

An Episcopal leader can remind people of their history and heroes in the struggle for civil rights for everyone. Perhaps most of all, the Episcopal leader must speak of hope, and what appears at that moment will not remain always but can change for the better. If I am blessed to serve as an Episcopal leader, I would know that I am not fulfilling my call if the extremist is saying I seem very comfortable with him.

EUGENE HAN

Ethnicity: Korean

Annual Conference membership: California-Pacific

Current ministry appointment: Christ United Methodist Church, Hawaii

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

One of the primary ways we embody welcoming the stranger is in the way we practice our sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion that shapes the rest of our faith and practices as a church and ministry. No one is excluded or disqualified from being able to enter into our community to receive from God's grace in these means. My utmost belief, emphasis and formation of my congregation is to always practice hospitality, especially to those who are not yet in our fellowship and even those who may be at odds against us. A large portion of my preaching and teaching is focused on how as disciples of Jesus Christ, we must be peacemakers and reconcilers; not just in the church ministry but in all our lives and society. Our church invests heavily on training and supporting our welcoming ministry, evangelism ministry, our newcomers ministry, and our smallgroup ministry where each individual may be deeply cared for and nurtured. Moreover, we dedicate many events throughout the year designed to spur our members to not settle in our comfort zones and social circles, but to remember the forgotten in our community and always extend our fellowship in Christ with our neighbors.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

I come from an ethnic minority in America, and I have walked in the shoes of many ethnic groups and immigrant communities, such as Korean and American congregations, as I answered God's call to ministry. I have emphasized and witnessed both the strengths and gifts of each ethnic communities and also the hardships, needs and issues these communities struggle with. With my gifting, experience, and wisdom, I have served to help rally and strengthen and bring together these ethnic communities so that together as the body of Christ, we might rise above our circumstances and be transformed as leaders who enact the gospel of Christ in the world. I have seen that even small communities of ethnic minorities and immigrants can rally together by faith in God to break impossible barriers and testify to the glory of God. As a bishop, I want to continue this important work of uplifting, building bridges, and uplifting ethnic communities to be a blessing to our society and world. If the Lord wills it, I will use all the resources and strength of the episcopacy to help the body of Christ flourish in all of its beautiful and diverse ethnic communities.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

While I have my strong roots and beginning in the Korean immigrant communities, I always strived to expand and maintain the connection with fellow church members and leaders from many different backgrounds. Being cross-culturally appointed to Barstow First UMC for 3 years and Grace UMC for 3 years were invaluable experiences that showed me the absolute importance of learning new cultures and people of various upbringings that were different from my own. It showed me that each immigrant or culturally unique community helps us to see more fully the manifold wisdom and glory of God. While

pushing one's comfort zone may be uncomfortable at start, I believe we mature greatly in our faith and in our character as we continue to stretch our connection and relationships with different immigrant and cultural backgrounds. In this way, we grow in our capacity to love and of faith.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

In my experience working with many Korean immigrant communities, I have seen both highly successful and also deeply struggling congregations and communities. Throughout the pandemic, this divergence was widened. Scripture instructs us to carry each other's burdens and that as one body in Christ, others' struggles and needs matter to us. About 6 years ago I was one of the founders of the "Partners In Ministry (PIM)" initiative for our Western Jurisdiction's Korean immigrant churches. I was excited to give and serve in this initiative because it helped to network and pair up successful and struggling churches so that they can form a three-year financial support relationship. When I became the chair for PIM this past year for the next three years, I was able to help this initiative to scale up to 20 giving and 24 receiving churches for the next three years. Moreover, I believed that our collaboration and connection efforts needed more than just financial support, so I created the first PIM conference for the new churches to gather in Hawaii, so that the pastors can meet and be inspired together. Spurring one another, now, even the receiving churches are motivated and committed to becoming giving churches themselves for others in three years. This maybe a small effort but I believe the sacrificial generosity and heartfelt care for our fellow immigrant congregations has created an exponential movement of passionate ministry and mission for the generations to come.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

I believe that great leadership is one that has strong team work. Moreover, not just any team work, but a team that is able to include the voices and the concerns of those in the margins. I have always been one who strives to first be a listener to all parties involved in a community or congregation. Instead of falling into the many traps of being pulled into taking sides with a particular group or faction in the community, I believe in strong leadership that brings an order and stability to the community so that the voice of the minorities are not silenced by the majority. I am passionate about working with all people and always believe that all people can be motivated and persuaded to choose greater love and vision that is beyond what one can see and understand. It is too easy and convenient to miss or ignore the voice of the margins or minority but I will make the room for all voices to be equally important and represented.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

Racism grieves the heart of God who has created all people and loves all of his people with the same value and care. Furthermore, it is tragic when people cannot see the beauty and glory of God through the diversity of people of different colors. Racism is a fruit of our deeply sinful and broken self-centered human nature. As an episcopal leader, I will not shy from calling out racism and instructing our community to repent and practice laying our lives down for one another so that we may share our gifts, instead of neglecting and hurting others with prejudice and judgements. It is our highest calling as Christians to learn to love and to that end, as an episcopal leader, there is no reservation in speaking the

truth in love and making sure the church shows our country and society destroyed by racism, a new and better way that reflects the harmony and unity of heaven.

CALVIN YASHIE HILL

Ethnicity: Navajo, Native American

Annual Conference membership: Mountain Sky

Current ministry appointment: Blackfeet United Methodist Parish

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

Most visitors we get are Native Americans. So, we usually ask their full name and what is their Tribal affiliation, so we understand their tribal customs. In addition, we ask if they have a Native name and how would it be pronounced-usually there is a story behind the name, so we take time to hear the full story. When gathering after morning service or mid-week Bible study, we always give them food to eat and pack take out plates, so they can feed their family who may not have attended the services. The sending home with extra is just a Native custom showing hospitality. As we are in conversation, we ask who their family might be, as it again is customary in each Tribe. It shows connection and belonging to a ceremonial gathering.

We also acknowledge White people as "English" because we recognize they have a cultural background that deserves respect. And when other racial groups come, we do ask what their Nations approaches, and customs are to show respect in welcoming them. Most are caught off guard because it is a strange question when assimilation effected their worldview. But as they understand our reason in asking, it being a cultural sense of respect, they feel acknowledged as important.

The compassionate conversation approach gives us the ability to listen to who they really are, and they feel we take them seriously. The tribal affiliations give us great insights to their complete identity, tribal differences, and makes them feel appreciated, where they are more willing to share in our compassionate awareness of the needs of others. It also gives face-to-face availability that acknowledges a special place for them in our congregation. We see the importance of respecting each other's differences and acknowledge that God has created them as they are.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

The experience has great influence on my call to Episcopacy because I see how God has created human identity. I am answering the call because most foreign peoples to the English ideology of the colonized Christian faith have not felt welcomed. The Church talks about inclusion or radical hospitality but has not really shown it. If real inclusion is to be shown, then we need to identify three areas that keep the systemic exclusion movement active.

1. Theology of every ethnic community should be welcomed and considered anointed by God. The dominate English culture cannot keep believing that their theology is the truth of God. We need to remember that theology is only interpretation of God's Word and not God's Word. I have come to understand that inclusion means ethnic theology is also anointed by God.
2. Doctrine of every ethnic community also should be welcomed and understood as anointed by God. Each ethnic community has a set doctrinal standings and tasks, sometimes more Christ-like than that of the Christian community. We need to welcome ethnic doctrine too.

3. Policy, procedures, and by-laws of the ethnic community should be known that God anointed their communities governing ability. Romans 13:1 does not just give anointing to the English but all humanity's governing practices.

All three consist of full inclusion, which we should be accepting as our identity now and in the future.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

Being from a Native reservation and Native decent, we always create different ways to communicate in similar family languages and settings. The family settings are very basic in every ethnic group. We see the leadership roles, nurturing roles, teaching techniques, ethical guidelines, and how they all form the community organization. We acknowledge similarities of family and community that engages steps towards authentic relationships to where we are able to share personal experiences and needs.

The approach helps bring awareness and leads us to formulate concrete approaches that address long term solutions that provide life changing services.

With my parliamentary knowledge, I help formulate procedures to petition legislators at the immigration justice courts to help keep their family together or employed. I have showed them parental rights, employment rights, emergency health procedural rights, and deportation rights.

As a Native pastor, I have shared with my Blackfeet congregation the importance of knowing legal rights of immigration and the importance of cultural context to give and share space both personal and communal.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

I was serving in Kalamazoo, Michigan. A large number of the migrant workers rallied down main street, confronted by many English protesters, the migrants needed a spokesperson that was able to speak truth of who's land they both are sharing. I educated all by saying, "We shared our land, and the hospitality was misused. We shared our resources and they too have been misused. When will all American settlers, who say their country is of Christian origin find in their faith to extend the love of God to all people. Unless, to believe your own hypocrisy is more important to worship than God?" After I gathered with all immigrants at the Hispanic Center to help support direction to petition local legislators of employment rights, immigration rights, deportation rights, and visa rights. I helped formulate them as immigrants that can integrate into a societal movement that will give them voice as they petition the local legislators.

We showed them how to use social workers to strengthen their family context in parental expansions, leadership roles, employment and education. This work helped empower the local immigrants working in the fields of Kalamazoo.

We developed a mobile health care unit that traveled to the local fields to care for pregnancies, injuries, and illnesses that most could not afford or get time off from work.

As a Native, I have stood for many Native American water rights, food sovereignties, and clean affordable housing. I have spoken and petitioned for many Native families to receive their children's remains from unmarked graves from traumatic deaths of residential schools. I have translated legislation for many non-English speaking Native American, so justice would be provided to them.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

My main plan is to "maintain justice and do what is right, for salvation and deliverance is at hand (Is. 561). The first step is to never let the foreigners to the English ideology ever say, "surely God will separate me from God's people (vs. 3). The next step is to view the Church leadership's identity to find what barriers that may cause foreigners not to be welcomed. We will examine our theology, doctrine, policies, procedures, and by-law asking if we need to change our ideology. Visiting our identity in the justice and righteousness that Isaiah is pointing to, will help us to corporately be led by God's justice and righteousness to formulate a Church and not institution. If we don't formulate as a church, we will continue the systemic colonization with all marginal groups. We need to come away from believing that the English theology, doctrine, and by-laws are the only cultural context anointed by God.

In order to move forward to change, we have to visit our identity and find the barriers that hinder our great mission statement of creating disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We have got to see in our own image what are the obstacles and what are the reinforcements to our mandate. Some of our theology, doctrine, and by-laws are good and make for a good foundation. But we are not the only people God inspires. To be inclusive means to hear with great value of the marginal's theology, doctrines, and by-laws. This shows God's grace has and is moving among all people and not just one cultural group.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

Religion, power, and politics have been a battlefield since the creation of humanity. And the powers that be will always have the privileges to determine direction. Although, I will continue to tell them that God did not anoint them only but has inspired all cultural peoples to have knowledge of God's covenant and justice, where their sabbaths, offerings, and sacrifices are acceptable to God as well. But I'm finding that sometimes this confrontation doesn't always work, in fact works the least.

A leader will need to lead compassionately on a journey with both the victims and persecutors. Compassionate, meaning to suffer along with them. Understand the illness of the persecutors and understanding the risk of losing privileges of power. Yet, holding the truth of racism, it is evil, and the evilness is enduring in our churches and society.

In order to come out of the curse Paul writes in 1 Cor. 15:56, "the sting of death is sin, the power of sin is law." We will have to point out racism is sin and evil. To deny a human person their dignity as children of God and their God-given rights to be treated as children of God in all parts of society and the Church is pure sin. And we developed discriminatory laws in church and society that enforce segregation.

Although the racial victims, will need to stop the lateral persecutions and violence that stems from the systemic racial patterns instilled within the institution's theology, doctrines, and by-laws. We need to understand that racial systemic patterns are unjust and evil.

A prophetic voice speaks to all, giving hope or judgement. Isaiah 58:9, shows hope "if" we take off the yoke, "then" the light will come, then God will answer, and we will rebuild.

SAMUEL DAVID HONG

Ethnicity: Korean American

Annual Conference membership: California-Nevada Conference

Current ministry appointment: District Superintendent, El Camino Real District

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

I believe at the core of welcoming is the acknowledgement of the equal value of every human being before God. If we truly believe that everyone is equally valuable to God, then tokenism can never come up to the Christian standard. True welcome always means full inclusion of all, especially strangers and the marginalized, in every aspect of ministry and every level of leadership.

I have seen so many churches proudly say that they are a friendly, welcoming church, when in reality many of them are friendly and welcoming only to their friends and “equals.” As a result, the church remains as a homogenous group socio-economically, ethnically, and culturally. Even when there are some “strangers,” their voice is minimal, their presence is symbolic, and key leadership positions are not shared.

When those “strangers” who are financially stable and well respected join the congregation, they quickly bypass the uncomfortable stage of “stranger” into the stage of “friend.” In contrast, those strangers who are poor and marginalized tend to remain in the “stranger” stage for quite a long time (perhaps never having the chance to leave it), experiencing only repeated unequal treatment and hurtful favoritism against them.

Seeing this discrepancy between our core value of “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” and our inability to practice a true welcome, I have always felt a special concern for the strangers and the marginalized. To help solve that chronic problem, I preached each year on the subject of welcome and often spent quality time with them for pastoral conversations and spiritual nurturing. I also intentionally involved them in various committees and church functions to help them move towards the center of ministry, and strategically helped develop their leadership skills and invited them to key leadership positions.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

Since the mid-1990s, I have been blessed with a variety of experiences serving ethnic churches and people of color in different settings. These include serving at a rural Japanese church with 10 Caucasian members (attendance 50), a suburban Caucasian church with 20 Filipino members (attendance 170), a downtown Korean church with 30 Caucasian members (attendance 200), a suburban Korean church with 40 English language ministry members (attendance 500), and now a district in which ethnic churches constitute more than one third of the total number of churches.

Working for and with these churches has made me realize that each ethnic group has a unique set of values and methods of communication. If we want to have any meaningful ministry with them, we must truly know them—their pains, fears, hopes, dreams, values, and perspectives.

As a first-generation American who immigrated to this country in my mid-20s, I know the many limitations and challenges that ethnic persons experience every day. But I also know what great gifts and graces they can offer to help our church grow and thrive. Ethnic persons provide new perspectives; they share a great zeal for evangelism; they value community over individuals. Most of all, they have the resiliency to serve the Lord and the church in all circumstances, especially in those difficult situations where those at the privileged center could not and would not effectively serve.

I have grown up in and come from the margins and, thanks to the opportunities to serve in various ethnic churches, developed keen cultural sensibility and adaptability. My unique background, I believe, has inspired and prepared me to be a more experienced ecclesial leader for the work of antiracism and for the culturally and ethnically balanced growth of the church in the midst of white supremacy.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

My twenty-four years of experience as the main leader of various local churches, as well as the district, has allowed me to develop strong working relationships with those with different ethnic backgrounds. Each experience has taught me an immense amount about each ethnic community's distinct cultures and values.

The key to building healthy relationships with those of a different ethnicity, I believe, is a humble attitude to learn from them, and this attitude comes from an acknowledgement of their absolute equal value before God. For example, if I felt that Tongans were not as valuable as White people, I would not have learned from their custom of giving the pastor the place of honor at a special table during certain cultural celebrations. If I did not believe that Japanese people had equal worth before God, I would not have valued their nuanced and thoughtful way of communication. If I did not agree that God created Filipinos as equally valuable, I would not have appreciated their foundational intergenerational family values, by which three generations live together in the same house.

I believe that every ethnic group is equally important to God and that there is a lot of good that they could teach us. This belief has led me to intentionally invite and empower them to use their gifts and graces to make us a better holistic church. But this invitation or empowerment does not automatically translate into their actual leadership, and so I have also taken a strategic approach regarding whom/when/how to encourage, invite, or empower them, all depending on where they are in terms of their aptitude and leadership skills and the right timing. With this strategy, I have included many ethnic laity and clergy in various leadership positions throughout local churches and the district.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

From 2014 to 2017, I served as the chair of the Conference Committee on Ethnic Ministries and Outreach. During this time, I helped create a policy for funding key projects of ethnic caucuses and churches. I also led the discussion to make a proposal to the conference leadership for promoting and implementing best practices of sharing ministries and facilities between congregations, often between an existing White congregation and an ethnic congregation that shares the facility.

The main concern of ethnic congregations was their experience of unfair and un-Christian treatment from host congregations, as if their relationship were nothing more than that between the landlord who owns the property and the tenant who pays monthly rent. As this practice destroys the basic fabric of connectionalism of The United Methodist Church, one cannot expect a true collegial partnership in ministry between these congregations. Based on this finding and understanding, our committee asked for a change in both the system and culture in the area of shared ministries and facilities.

In addition, I supported systemic change for ethnic churches and their constituents when bishop Carcaño was assigned to California-Nevada Conference in 2016. From November 2016 through the end of 2017, I arranged and participated in monthly meetings for the bishop and each ethnic caucus or conference ethnic committee for deep conversations. In those meetings, the hopes and concerns of each ethnic group were openly shared, and various ways of moving forward as the Annual Conference were discussed. Two major topics repeatedly raised during these conversations were how to include and empower the ethnic clergy and laity in the conference leadership, as well as how to best support churches sharing the same facilities to share not only buildings but also ministries of The United Methodist Church.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

Centering leadership from the margins does not happen without an intentional strategy. If there is anything that we can learn from history, I would highlight the aggiornamento (updating the church) of Vatican II (1962-65). When John XXIII was elected Pope, he was 77 years old and no one imagined something like this could happen. But thanks to his great vision and strategy, the Roman Catholic Church could make one of the greatest strides in history with respect to the inclusion of the ethnic in major decision-making processes. The Pope not only invited to this Council many visitors from other faith traditions, but he also designed the Council in such a way that bishops from third-world countries comprised 42% of all participants.

I believe it is time, now more than ever, to update our church to better meet the changing needs of the world. One important area of such an update is the intentional empowerment of those from the margins. Local churches need to develop a strategy to raise the leadership of women, ethnic, and young people, and empower them in all ministry settings. The District and Conference must create and implement policies to nurture, empower, and include those from the margins in major leadership positions, not as a token but as true members with equal rights and authorities.

At the same time, we need to develop ongoing immersion programs to help non-ethnic persons experience ethnic cultures and communities both here in the States and in their home countries of origin. For without knowing the other, it will be practically impossible to be one body of Christ. So, I would provide the church with intentional opportunities to learn and understand ethnic cultures and people, such that our church would fully include and support leaders from those in the margins.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

One clear message of the Bible is that the church belongs to God, not to people, and that we are all equal members in it. Hence, there is no place in God's church for white supremacy. "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Yet there have always been people who denied this basic biblical principle by favoring

the privileged few based on race, sex, or wealth, and further systemizing the unequal relations with a misguided ideology.

When this happened in the past and the system began to destroy the lives of marginalized people, the prophets arose and spoke boldly to the issue. This prophetic tradition continued with Jesus and his disciples and also with the Early Church. Indeed, when the Roman Empire persecuted the early Christians, one major reason for the persecution was the early Christians' prophetic teaching and practice against the Pax Romana which could only be sustained with its system of slavery.

The office of the bishop is not only administrative and pastoral, but importantly also prophetic. Given the recent rampage of white supremacy and racism against Black, Latino, Asian, and other communities of color, it is absolutely necessary that the bishop take an active role in addressing racism through educating the clergy and laity about the social responsibility of the church and mobilizing them to advocate for equal relations among all communities. Moreover, it would be quite appropriate and prophetic that the Western Jurisdiction form a diverse college of bishops, because it will speak to the issue of racial equality as vocally as other major advocacy actions. People will see that it is true that The United Methodist Church practices what it believes.

JOEL HORTIALES

Ethnicity: Hispanic

Annual Conference membership: California Pacific Annual Conference

Current ministry appointment: Director of Hispanic/Latino Ministries and Border Concerns

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

I've been working for four years as a GBGM missionary with many projects that offer services to migrants at both sides of the south US/Mex Border. I have the privilege to listen, pray and meet migrants with resources that migrants need. I deliver and gave to shelters, organizations and migrants all kind of donations that I collect from people, churches, and organizations. The simple act to share my time and what I have is always my way to welcome the stranger. To accept the stranger as the "imago dei" is my practice to embody welcoming them.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

My experience with ethnic communities influence my call as servant leader for all. I am a Mexican migrant that has been working with Samoan, Anglo, Filipino, African American and Hispanic/Latino communities. As I been pastoring all these communities, I affirm my call to ministry to all. In recent years, participating in advocacy movements with MARCHA, I've enriched my understanding of a call to be a servant leader of All.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

I am a first generation migrant. I have been living at immigrant generation communities and pastoring congregations of color. In these experiences, to be a good listener is the way I start and build my relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color. My personality is incline to listen, I'm a natural listener, and I use this gift to build relationships. I'm blessed to learn from what I listen and I ask questions to go deeper into a relationship. From those listening experiences I use ideas, concepts and cultural approach to enrich my leadership. For example, working all these years with Hispanic/Latino and Latinix I understand that each generation has their own characteristics, values and practices then, my leadership has been enriched during all these years.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

Twelve years ago, Cal-Pac Conference started a process to write and develop a strategic plan to work with Hispanic/Latino. After all this was completed and approved, the position to resource and lead the plan among the Hispanic/Latino was empty. Then, I was appointed to this position. After advocating for changes within the Hispanic/Latino communities, ten years after, we submitted a positive report to the Conference. In this report we can find a response to uplift the work of Hispanic/Latino leaders and congregations. It was a team work result, where the Bishop, Cabinet, Connectional Ministries staff, the Conference Hispanic Committee and the District Hispanic Committees participated.

On the other hand, before the pandemic, I was involved (in person) with Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE) and I participated in some protests and vigils in front of LA ICE detention center. Those actions brought changes in the treatment inside of the detention center.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

My priority of a plan to centering leadership from the margins is to be inclusive. All the voices need to be heard and all the communities needs to include in the decision making process. The United Methodist Church today is facing an imminent collapse if the leadership is not more inclusive. Communitates of color need to be listen, support and welcome to enrich the leadership in all levels of the structure of the church. My plan then, is to invite people from the margins to participate in leadership. I know that the UMC needs to have deep changes to welcome people from the margins to be a church for all.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

Martin Luther King said “We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.” An environment of racism it is very disappointed, but must change. An Episcopal leader than never lose infinite hope has the ability to be a prophetic voice to denounce racism and work to dismantling it. This is a life’s commitment that include decentering white privilege and decolonization. The institutional and systemic racism is part of the UMC today and we need Episcopal Leaders who pay the price to be a prophet to denounce any type of racism inside and outside of the church.

THEON JOHNSON III

Ethnicity: African American

Annual Conference membership: California-Nevada

Current ministry appointment: Downs Memorial UMC

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

Identity politics are at play when considering questions related to both “who” and “how” strangers are identified. Who is a stranger? Who determines “stranger vs. native” statuses? How do stranger vs. native dynamics impact our understanding of belonging (e.g. Who belongs? What are the qualifications for belonging? When can someone belong? Why belong? How can someone belong?)

I embody welcoming the stranger by searching for the divine image in all people. Searching for God in others reminds me of the ways the image of God has been “othered” in both the past and present.

Actively searching for the divine image in all people shifts both our perspective and vision. Searching for God in all people makes even the strangest person seem less strange. Realizing that all people bear the divine stamp challenges us to reckon with the reality that every person we encounter is a beloved child of God. Because we will never look into the face of someone whom God does not love, we are challenged to investigate our theological task.

In addition to naming the theological significance of welcoming the stranger, I embody welcoming the stranger through intentional efforts to leave space (literally and metaphorically). Whether in worship or a meeting, it is important that dedicated space is created to both acknowledge and anticipate those who are not yet present (but we hope will be). Making space in this way positions us to participate in the work of giving God a good name. Welcoming others as Christ has welcomed, glorifies God (Romans 15:7).

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

My discernment to explore a call to the episcopacy is rooted in my experience as a person who has been both formed by and served within an ethnic community (African American Methodism). From walking alongside college students at a Historically Black College and University (Jackson State University) in Mississippi to serving on the pastoral team of one of the most culturally/ethnically diverse ministries in the Western Jurisdiction, I have been privileged to learn from so many ethnic communities and been a beneficiary of the wisdom of elders from many ethnic communities who have created a culture of welcome. This gift of creating a culture of welcome resonates deeply with my experiences among our ethnic communities.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

From every congregation to church-related entities with which I have served, I have actively worked to create space to engage our immigrant communities and congregations of color. From serving as a speaker/preacher with our Tongan United Methodist community in Northern California to engaging a Korean new church start serving as a speaker, I give thanks for the ties that bind us and the many

opportunities I have had to apply learnings from our broader United Methodist Family.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

During my time as a member of The United Methodist Hymnal Revision Committee, I was privileged to serve on the Theology and Praxis work team – a team that worked to review submissions offered to the new hymnal project by discerning what music reflected a “Wesleyan perspective.” As we moved through this project, I was privileged to join colleagues who served alongside caucuses within the United Methodist Church (i.e. MARCHA and BMCR) to ensure that we made space to include in our theological reflection works that reflected messages of liberation, justice, and equity that come from underrepresented communities.

Because we sing what we believe, I give thanks for the opportunity to have been part of the team that was actively working to ensure that we build an inclusive project with opportunities to be expended by future generations.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

Engaging leaders from communities whose center is on the margins to help the church reflect more of our diversity.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

Through both naming the sacred worth of all people and centering the voices of those whose center is on the margins, episcopal leaders become prophetic voices in disrupting the sin of racism. Our ability to become the people whom God has called us to be is inextricably linked to our capacity to see all people, love all people, and serve all people.

Because God loves us with a faithfulness far more expansive than the mere letter of any law, episcopal leaders have a unique opportunity to help people see God in others. In doing so, we resist the evil, injustice, and oppression perpetuated by naming a deeply ontological issue (i.e. racism) and actively dismantling this system which benefits some at the expense of others.

OUK-YEAN KIM JUENG

Ethnicity: Korean

Annual Conference membership: California-Nevada

Current ministry appointment: Campbell United Methodist Church

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

God's people are called to extend the hospitality that we first receive from God to those around us. Paying it forward is something that comes to mind for me when I think about welcoming the stranger. I had the blessing of experiencing radical hospitality when I arrived as a foreigner to this country 33 years ago, and I've continued to experience it in all the ministry fields I have been sent to throughout my 29 years of ordained ministry. Cherishing these memories of being embraced with open arms, I try to pass it on by helping the stranger God sends my way to feel at home.

One way I do this regularly is by making every effort to help our church visitors feel genuinely welcomed during their time with us. It is my practice to follow up within a day or two of their visit. As my current church has a growing number of first generation immigrants from West Africa, I can often engage our guests not only as a pastor figure, but also as a fellow immigrant.

I also embody welcoming the stranger through my church's outreach to the unhoused. Through the Safe Parking program that we host in partnership with neighboring churches, we not only offer the least among us a safe place to park while sleeping in their cars, but also the opportunity to enjoy much needed table fellowship. The meals offer those experiencing homelessness a chance to feel like themselves in what is a turbulent time in their lives.

Finally, I embody welcoming the stranger through my church's reconciling ministry. I am privileged to be in ministry with a Deacon who is a queer person. Together, we have led the congregation in making our church a place of welcome for our LGBTQ siblings.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

Ministering to ethnic faith communities both as district superintendent and as pastor (in my current appointment) has given me the opportunity to learn about the unique gifts and contributions they make for the whole family of the United Methodist Church. The ethnic communities/congregations bring cultural diversity, fervent spirituality, and youthfulness into our denominational life.

And yet, the sad truth about the United Methodist Church in America is that we are not a denomination with rich ethnic diversity. Our denominational membership in the U.S. is still more than 90 percent white, and most of our denomination's non-white members live outside of the United States. Though many of our annual conferences boast about the wonderful ministries of their ethnic congregations, they remain at the margins, and the United Methodist Church in America ranks at the bottom of the list in actual ethnic diversity of membership.

My experiences with ethnic faith communities and my concerns about the current state of ethnic diversity among the United Methodist churches in the United States have inspired me to envision growing ethnic diversity and racial inclusivity as one of my ministry focuses as an episcopal leader. And I

believe my identity and life/ministry experiences as both an immigrant and ethnic minority will prove invaluable for my work as a denominational leader.

I believe it is imperative that our churches reflect the changing demographics of the communities we worship. This will require going outside our comfort zones and meeting people where they are, which includes embracing their cultures. Thanks to my cross-cultural ministry experiences of almost 30 years, I can easily relate to both Anglo and ethnic minority groups and serve as a bridging figure. And I sense that God has purposely equipped me for such a time as this in our denominational history.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

When I served as the District Superintendent, I had two immigrant communities and one congregation of color in my district. The way I built relationships with them was through the ministry of presence. I diligently showed up for their gatherings. While I visited all the churches in my district throughout the year for various occasions, I paid special attention to those three churches. I frequently worshiped with them, ate with them, and marched with them. Listening to their stories of pain and joy, I cried and laughed with them. Their stories of living in America as immigrants and people of color resonated with me as they were also my stories. As time went by, they began to exhibit deep trust in me, and we developed a strong bond with each other.

A ministry of presence has been crucial in the building of my relationships with the African members of my current church. They were respectful and friendly to me, but I could also feel the distance that existed between us. So I approached them in the same way I did to the immigrant faith communities and churches of color in the past. I went to their gatherings. I ate and danced with them at their parties. I went to their choir rehearsals and sang with them. I visited the sick and dying and prayed with them. I even visited their home country, which greatly enhanced my understanding of African culture and improved the African members' acceptance of me.

What I have learned is that building relationships takes time and intentionality, especially with immigrants or people of color. There are many cultural and socio-economic differences, as well as language issues that can act as a barrier. The experience has helped me become more patient and open-minded in my leadership.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

When I served as a District Superintendent, one of the churches in my district was an African-American congregation, which was the only Black United Methodist church outside the city of Chicago. It was a small congregation, and they shared a pastor with another small United Methodist Church in town. When the time for pastoral leadership change came, its leaders asked the Bishop to send them a Black pastor, someone who could help them restore their identity as a Black congregation. Unfortunately, no one was available, so the Cabinet appointed another Anglo pastor to them. I was heartbroken, knowing their vision and missional needs.

While visiting this congregation in transition, I met a man who was highly regarded by his fellow church members. In the absence of pastoral leadership, the man, who was in his late 50's, was acting like their

pastor, visiting the sick and homebound and leading worship. I learned that he had felt called into ministry when he was young, but none of his Anglo pastors had encouraged him to pursue his calling. When I asked him if he would be willing to become a pastor, he said yes with great joy and tears in his eyes.

I explained the situation to the Cabinet and suggested that he be appointed as the pastor of the church after attending local pastor's licensing school. The initial response was not favorable. I was told that this would be incompatible with the Book of Discipline. But, convicted, I kept advocating for the congregation and their potential Black pastor. Finally, the Bishop made an exception for that church and allowed the man to become their pastor.

The result was astonishing. The appointment change lifted the congregational spirit, and under the leadership of their new pastor, the ministries of the African-American congregation thrived.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

My plan is to follow Jesus' example. Jesus' ministry focused on the margins of the community. He reached out to the marginalized people of his time – women, children, the widow, the sick, Samaritans, and so-called sinners – and made them all feel included. He proclaimed, “The last will be first, and the first last” in the reign of God and lived out this principle (Matthew 20:16). As disciples of Jesus, we are called to follow as he dislocates us from the center and leads us to the margins where the suffering is in our day. Part of this journey will require constant vigilance, a keeping watch over the human tendency to gravitate to the center in our lives, where we can remain in our seats of power, control, and comfort.

I believe centering leadership from the margins begins with holy listening that allows the voices of the marginalized to be heard. This requires creating a safe environment for those who are at the margins to tell their stories, for sharing the truth of who we are is a vulnerable process that can be quite intimidating for any of us. And fostering a space where people feel free to be seen and heard also requires the humility of those who are at the center, for hearing the stories of the marginalized can feel threatening to them. Thus, centering leadership at the margins will also require grounding ourselves in contemplative practices, as we pause to reflect on the ways our egos trigger our defense mechanisms and our rush to prescribe solutions is often self-serving and patronizes those who are marginalized. It is perhaps from a place of inner stillness that we might truly hear the voices of the people at the margins and be transformed by them.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

An episcopal leader can become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism firstly by shedding light on our denomination's complicated history when it comes to race. Despite John Wesley's life-long opposition to slavery, naming it as one of the major sins of his day, the reality is that Methodists in the American colonies largely embraced this unjust and inhumane system of human exploitation. Our theology of impartial grace and the unconditional love of God for all God's children did not match up to practice, as the lives of many Methodists reflected the white supremacist attitudes and behaviors of the time. For us to live into the Kingdom of God, we as a denomination, much like our nation, must repent. And this will require a truthful accounting and confession of the sins of our collective past.

Secondly, an episcopal leader can become a prophetic voice by exposing the systemic racism that still exists within our denomination. Yes, systemic racism and injustice exist in our Annual Conferences. For example, ethnic minority pastors experience discrimination in the appointment process. International seminarians in the ordination process face prejudice and discrimination. Some of them are forced to find their own churches to serve, having to seek out appointments well beyond their home Annual Conferences. As a denomination, we must name the broken realities that are causing harm to our very own Methodist siblings.

Thirdly, an episcopal leader can become a prophetic voice by calling United Methodists and churches to stand against racial discrimination in concrete ways. This means participating in the denomination-wide movement of anti-racism and practicing racial justice in their own lives. Because the work of addressing structural sin requires sweat equity. And it will take working in collaboration with episcopal colleagues, the general agencies, and other denominational leaders.

JOE KIM

Ethnicity: Korean-American

Annual Conference membership: PNW

Current ministry appointment: Bothell United Methodist Church (Bothell, WA)

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

I appreciate how Leviticus guides in the way of welcoming the stranger, a posture that I work to embody.

In Leviticus 19:33-34, it says, “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself.” Each Sunday at Bothell United Methodist Church, I name that everyone is welcome, that everyone belongs; I also name, though, that there are places in our world, in our communities, and even in places of worship, where that is not true. And so, each Sunday, each and every person worshiping with us hears that message of welcoming and belonging, especially if they have been marginalized or oppressed or kept out of spaces. We boldly name identities, like race and ethnicity, sexual orientations and gender identities, marital and economic status, gifts and abilities, so that each person knows that they are welcome and that they belong.

For me, though, welcoming the stranger cannot end there. Welcoming the stranger must be a way of being. Later, it continues in Leviticus 25:35, “If your [neighbor] becomes poor and cannot maintain [themselves] with you, you should support [them] as though [they] were a stranger and a sojourner, and [they] shall live with you.” In addition to the many ways we are supporting our community, Bothell UMC has placed special emphasis on addressing the issues of housing in our region. Working closely with community partners, Bridge Housing and Habitat for Humanity, Bothell UMC is working towards making housing for all a reality.

Welcoming the stranger is not and cannot be a singular act, but rather must be a commitment to belonging, one I strive to live into each day through my life and ministry.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

When I had decided to leave my work at the General Board of Church and Society, it was because I felt the conviction to bring healing to God’s church; and for me, healing happens in the communities where people gather. I truly believe that it is in the commitment to journey together when we experience healing. It is in this space that I find my calling.

My first assignment was to Salem UMC in the heart of Harlem, New York. It was through the Bishop’s encouragement that I began my ministry there, working with the established leadership in the Black Community. It was this amazing community that nurtured my call, centering people on the margins, learning to be collaborative, and continuing to shape in me the understanding of healing that happens in community.

This call has stayed with me while serving Bothell UMC, a large and predominantly European-descent church. I lead, cognizant that I serve as a person of color, myself, and this shapes the lens through which

I understand my ministry. I am intentional in creating relationships, in centering non-White voices, and in celebrating all cultures as expressions of God's beautiful mosaic in creation.

It is through experiences like these that influence and propel me to continue living into a call of healing to the Episcopacy. I believe that we are in a unique moment in the history of our denomination, one that does need healing from generations of systemic and institutional sin, from greed and reliance on American capitalism, from the divisions that work to keep us apart, and from a secularism that prevents us from living more fully into God's good news. I truly believe that we are being called into God's preferred future, and that we can get there, together.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

As a son of Korean immigrants, immigrant communities and congregations of color hold special significance in my life. While every immigrant story is unique, there are some undergirdings of commonality that resonate with me and with a shared hope for a world that could be.

Locally, I am active, along with my family, in the work of Korean Community Service Center (KCSC), a non-profit that promotes the health and well-being of the Korean American community in a culturally and linguistically appropriate environment through education, support services, advocacy and community. The organization began in the 1980s to address the immediate and urgent needs of Korean immigrants and continues to work with the first-generation, 1.5 generation, second-generation and beyond. Through organizations like KCSC and Families of Color Seattle (FOCS), I have built relationships with immigrant generation communities and have remained connected to them, sharing in programming and in fellowship, growing together.

I have also continued to build relationships throughout the region with congregations of color through my support for and active participation with the PNW Christmas Institute, through a relationship with the predominantly Filipino congregation of Beacon UMC and in solidarity with Philippine human rights, and in connecting the youth groups of Bothell UMC, Beacon UMC and the predominantly Japanese-American congregation of Blaine Memorial UMC for fellowship and conversation.

These relationships have been invaluable to my growth as a leader. I have learned to reaffirm honor and respect as the cornerstones of intersectional work between cultures and generations, while continuing to seek models of collaboration and "journeying with" as foundations for moving forward. Through these relationships, I have also learned to keep community at the forefront of all I do, prioritizing people over processes in my life and in my ministry.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

Before entering local church ministry, I had the privilege to serve the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) at the United Nations Office and on Capitol Hill. It is through this work that I learned to live into God's call for justice, to bring together the Wesleyan emphasis of personal piety and social holiness.

One of the first assignments I had through GBCS was to collaborate with the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA in its initiative to pass the Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006. The original Voting Rights Act of 1965 was designed to ensure the basic fundamental right to vote for every American. The 2006 version extended those protections for another twenty-five years with more safeguards, particularly for Black and African-descent and Latinx and Brown communities to protect their right to vote.

When I served the Director of Children’s Rights Advocacy, I also worked to pass both the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2013 and Safe Harbor Policies in individual states, protecting children and women, especially children and women of color, who have been commercially sexually exploited.

Today, I continue to advocate for systems change in a variety of different ways. I continue to support organizing efforts for the Philippine Human Rights Act, working with local communities and congregations, and I am working through Bothell UMC to bring forth a culture of Anti-Racism. Our purpose is "Becoming Christ in the Community", and I believe that we cannot be more like Christ if we are not committed to becoming more Anti-Racist. Through programming and funding, like passing a budget for the first time in its history with monies dedicated to diversity, equality and inclusion, I believe we can more fully live into God's call for us.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

I appreciate what Dr. Miguel A. De La Torre writes in “Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins”. He writes, “Only from the margins of power and privilege can a fuller and more comprehensive understanding be ascertained, not because those on the margins are more stute, but because they know what it means to be a marginalized person attempting to survive within a social context designed to benefit the privileged few at their expense.”

This aligns with Alicia Garza as she writes in “The Purpose of Power” to ensure the full participation of all. She writes, “Diversity is what happens when you have representation of various groups in a place. Representation is what happens when groups that haven’t previously been included are included. Intersectionality is what happens when we do everything through a lens of making sure that no one is left behind. More than surface-level inclusion (or merely making sure everyone is represented), intersectionality is the practice of interrogating the power dynamics and rationales of how we can be, together”

It is not enough to have diversity or representation from the margins in positions of leadership.

Instead, I believe it is important to not only invite those from the margins into the center of decision making processes, but to have the imagination and creativity to increase the number of seats traditionally considered “enough”, expanding the table so that intersectionality and authentic diversity might lead.

I will enter each conversation and decision with new and fresh eyes, examining the power and the culture created through that power that prevents people from the margins from fully participating in leadership, and working to reshape culture so that the table might be welcoming and inclusive for all,

including being a psychologically safe space for those who have experienced trauma and harm in systems.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

To become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism, I believe that an Episcopal leader must first publicly acknowledge the environment of racism that engulfs our church and our society today.

In Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's book, "Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community," he wrote, "We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together. And you can't get rid of one without getting rid of the other." I believe that we are not far removed from those stirring words today. Even as I write this, our world reconciling God's preferred future not yet realized with the brokenness that is our reality today: the effects of the war in Ukraine and other conflicts that have destabilized economies globally, the impact of climate change and the need for climate justice rooted in exploitation and racism, the rise of White Christian nationalism... and the interweaving of these evils persists, only mildly reprimanded by faith leaders.

Episcopal leaders must be willing to speak truth - to name the environment of racism that plagues our communities and to be willing to challenge the status quo, even and especially when it might challenge one's own power. They must not be afraid to repent of institutional and systemic sin, including their role in perpetuating that sin, and to offer a new vision for the world.

Part of that willingness must also include a commitment to collaboration. I imagine the role of Episcopal leader to be one that unifies from the micro to the macro, from local churches within the annual conference to national and global connections. Part of that imagination includes ecumenism, for it is when we band together rooted in our most core values might we see racism dismantled.

KAH-JIN JEFFREY KUAN

Ethnicity: Chinese-Malaysian American

Annual Conference membership: California-Nevada Conference

Current ministry appointment: Appointment to Extension Ministry as President and Professor of Hebrew Bible at Claremont School of Theology

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

As a first-generation Chinese-Malaysian American, I am an immigrant, a stranger in a foreign land. I have the lived experiences of being welcomed as well as being NOT welcomed in the United States. Hence, I have worked hard in embodying welcoming the stranger. When 9/11 happened, I was the serving on the California-Nevada Conference Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns. I led CCUIC in reaching out to the Muslim community in the San Francisco Bay Area. Since we have a church located next to an Islamic Center, we began to have dialogues with them to learn as much as we can about the Muslim faith.

As President of CST, welcoming the stranger has been a deep commitment. In this context, I began to address how CST needed to extend hospitality to our international students. I was appalled when I learned that we had left it to our international students to find their way to the campus when they arrived and that student apartments were empty and the school had expected international students to furnish it after their arrival. We had failed in welcoming the stranger! I immediately implemented meeting international students at the airport and taking them to campus. We furnished the apartments with basic but comfortable furnishing. These two actions had led to students feeling more welcomed.

As the church, we need to re-evaluate how we treat people who are different than us. The U.S. context has a long and horrid history of othering—from the massacre of Native Americans, the slavery of Africans, forced deportations of Mexicans, the Chinese Exclusion Act, the internment of Japanese Americans, to the discrimination of Arab Americans and South Asians. As a biblical scholar, I have preached against othering and the lack of hospitality that faith communities have participated in.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

As a Chinese-Malaysian American, my identity and lived experience as a member of the broader Asian American community has been one in which I see myself as living in the midst of multiple “worlds”—the “homeland” of our ancestors in one of the Asian countries and our present “world” in the United States—where my cultural identity is constructed and reconstructed.

As Asian Americans, we experience all too often the pain of our cultural identity. Our identity is hyphenated and hybrid; we are both Asians and Americans, yet never viewed fully as Asians nor Americans. BIPOC have had a long history of being discriminated in the U.S. White supremacy and White Christian Nationalism are on the rise. Racism has gotten worse. Anti-Asian hate has increased exponentially. One evening, last August, my wife and I were taking a walk in Berkeley, CA (one of the most progressive cities in the U.S.) and going to a grocery store. We walked past a car coming out of the parking lot and I glanced at a White family—a woman driving with her children. The son, who is probably 10, looked at me and said as they were driving away, “China, what are you staring at?” I feel more sad

than anything else that kids are learning racist behaviors at a very young age. As an Asian American, I have lived a hybrid existence of being treated as a “a perpetual foreigner.”

My identity as an Asian American and participating in the lives of ethnic faith communities compel me to commit to continue to address the discrimination that BIPOC communities face constantly. The church needs to focus on systematically addressing issues of racism and the resourcing of these communities of faith for their continuing ministries and growth.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

Since I began my ministry in theological education, I have developed a close relationship with the Pacific Islanders communities. Directing the Certificate of Ministry program where a large number of students were Pacific Islanders, I worked closely with Tongan and Samoan students and began to learn their cultures. I learned how to pronounce their names correctly. I visited my students’ churches. I participated in many luaus. I have attended memorial and funeral services, including one for a student who died suddenly, as well as misinales, the traditional, annual celebration of donations of money to the church.

I have learned from my relationship with the Pacific Islander communities key lessons. (1) There is a depth of spirituality in their practice of faith. They worship from the depth of their being. I see this evidenced through their singing as well as their prayers. (2) These communities are some of the most generous communities I have ever had the privilege of knowing. In the misinale, the community gives not out of abundance but out of a deep sense of gratitude to God’s blessings. (3) Because they are communal people, hospitality is at the heart of who they are and their communities.

Pacific Islanders are one of the newer immigrant communities. They have their challenges but they have much to contribute to a multicultural society. However, as leaders, we too need to find ways to support the Pacific Islanders communities as they participate in nation-building here in the United States and in the life and well-being of the UMC. One of the issues I have engaged the leaders of the Pacific Islanders communities is higher education. This is where UM-related colleges and universities can play a role to provide access to higher education for the younger generation.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

In 2009, when I was the chair of the California-Nevada Conference Commission on Religion and Race, I participated in conversations with a group of Native American leaders to organize and launch CONAM in the conference. Over the years, I have seen CONAM leading the conference in addressing significant issues impacting Native Americans and their faith communities. My commitment to the ministries of the Native American communities remains strong. We need a strong CONAM to hold our conference accountable in its responsibility to the Native Americans. Much work still needs to be done, including the work of returning land and property to Native American communities, much like the work that has been started in the Oregon-Idaho Conference. If we acknowledge that we are residing on Native American land, the UMC must begin to work more earnestly to return some of the land and church buildings to Native American communities for their ministries and livelihood. What if our conferences begin a serious and systematic process to work with Native American communities that when occasions

present themselves, to honor their communities by returning land and property to them? This will be the kind of restitution beyond acts of repentance necessary for the healing of the church.

My other commitment to the Native American communities is the training of clergy leadership for their churches. At the Western Jurisdictional Conference in 2016, as president of CST, I made a public commitment to provide any Native American at CST a full tuition scholarship. To date, CST has provided 3 such scholarships, to a D.Min. student from the Mountain Sky Conference, to a D.Min. student from the California-Pacific Conference in Hawaii, and to an M.Div. student from the California-Nevada Conference. These are small but important actions to uplift the communities.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

Centering leadership from the margins takes a lot of intentionality. Diversity and representation are not enough. It is not sufficient to ask “Who is at the table?” We must also ask “Whose voice needs to be heard and taken seriously?” When I chaired the CCUIC and the CORR, I made sure that women and BIPOC voices are included and taken seriously. In the early 2000s, when I was invited to put together an anthology on Asian American biblical interpretation, I decided that I would not perpetuate a male privilege and insisted to the publisher that I would undertake such a project only if I could invite an Asian American woman friend and colleague to serve as a co-editor. When the anthology was completed, we made the decision that her name would be listed before mine.

At CST, I have had the opportunity to rebuild the faculty and administrative leadership of the school. The CST faculty is now 57% BIPOC and 43% women. I have appointed faculty of color to key positions—the project director of our \$1 million Lilly grant is a Brazilian woman; the associate dean of assessment is an Asian American woman; the associate dean of students is a Mexican-Chinese American man. They are empowered to make important decisions that impact the school. They all now sit on the Executive Team where important matters are discussed and decisions made. Together, we are creating a community of compassion, justice, and belonging, a multicultural context where all privileges are scrutinized and questioned.

What I have done in the context of theological education can be done in the context of an annual conference. It will take a determined effort to have a leadership team, in the appointive and extended cabinets, that is not only diverse but clearly empowered to exercise leadership.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

I have become convinced that among the many “isms” that plagued our world today, racism is perhaps our biggest sin. An episcopal leader must consistently and constantly speak out against the sin of racism. In my ministry career, I have continued to speak out and to write on racism, including anti-black racism and anti-Asian hate. Last year, I participated in GCORR’s podcast on practicing anti-racism, entitled “Theologians Explore the Roots of Anti-Asian Racism and What the Church Should Know,” where the panelists addressed the history and the systemic discrimination that Asian Americans have experienced throughout their history in the U.S. This year, I also participated in video series of “Transformative Hope: Religious Responses of Asian American Elders to Racism” to share my experience as an Asian American dealing with anti-Asian hate in the context of COVID-19. I have also participated in conversations with both African Americans and Asian Americans to address anti-Black racism, including racism perpetuated by Asian Americans.

A prophetic voice must lead in dismantling the structures of racism. A strategic and systematic plan to address racism in the conference should be put in place. Such a plan must have the buy-in of the clergy and laity of the conference. Resistance to such work must be addressed and dealt with. Such a plan should begin with deep listening to the pain and hurt of racism. A year ago, I participated in a year-long conversation organized by the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon on “Reckoning with Racism.” There was a lot of listening to communities of color who had been subjected to racism. Deep listening should be followed up with concrete plans to address and dismantle racism. It may be necessary for the conference or a local congregation to hire a consultant to lead this important and critical work.

KATIE M LADD

Ethnicity: White

Annual Conference membership: PNW

Current ministry appointment: Queen Anne UMC/First UMC Tacoma

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

I don't know how well I welcome "the stranger." It is, however, a commitment of mine to do so. Biblically, along with the widow and orphan, the stranger is to be given special care and protection because they don't have the usual societal protections. The widow, orphan, and the stranger exist amid particular vulnerabilities, and God's people will be known by how they protect and care for those who are most vulnerable within society.

My approach is built on honoring relationship, valuing the voices of those unlike me, not smoothing out difficulty, and by remaining curious. I try to be humble. On good days, I can recognize my shortcomings, name how I fail, and try to do better. As a white US citizen, I am aware how society is largely built around me. As a Queer woman, I notice where society doesn't center me. This evokes empathy; also, empathy is a limited tool. Education, practice, discipline, attention, patience, humor, and steadfastness are all needed. I hope they are present in me.

"The Stranger," of course, applies to those who are physically new to an area and to those who are in any kind of exile, whether physical or spiritual. A ministry I run called The Well reaches out to people in spiritual exile, particularly those experiencing spiritual trauma. We provide a safe place for people to ask questions, express anger and grief, and journey someplace new. Bearing witness is one way to embody welcome.

My current congregation has offered transitional housing for people, including a mother and son with immigration status issues, and they walked with the mom through her naturalization process. Additionally, we became part of a network housing and supporting undocumented immigrants and their families. Hospitality is one way to embody welcome.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

The UMC erroneously behaves as a white US church. We have a task before us to interrogate how we can honor but move beyond the cultural specificity of our beginnings. In examining our ethnic and global diversity, we must keep before us those who have been pushed to the margins. We can better embrace the church that Christ has "opened to people of all ages, nations, and races." Leaders need to know when to lean in and when to lean back when reshaping the church.

Experiences with other cultures have led me to learn when to take up less space and when I need to make a mark. This has been a difficulty in my episcopal discernment process. With two retiring bishops being men of color, is it the right time for a white woman to assert herself for the office? I know the presented question is asking how ethnic communities inform my call TO the episcopacy, but, I also ask whether I should be, and I give myself to the wisdom of the community to make that determination.

I was in Israel/Palestine once as part of an interfaith cohort. I remember being at the Western Wall watching folks touch it in prayer. I couldn't do it. It just seemed to me that that wasn't my religious space. I needed to stand back.

Yet, from the Black Church in the South, where I grew up, I learned how important it is for leaders, especially those underrepresented in leadership, like women, to make their mark. We have been too quiet as a church on issues affecting our society and our world, and we need public theological speech and prophetic speech to boldly proclaim the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ. Here is where I lean in.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

We are living amid global catastrophe and denominational fracturing. Pain is overwhelming. Many cultures have had to learn how to deal with generations long disappointment and grief. Relationships with other cultures have helped me learn how to lead amid times of grief and loss.

I grew up in the South during a time when cultural differences were mostly Black and white. I grew up immersed in the blues and jazz. The theological resilience of the Black Church is very much a part of me. Through relationships with Korean immigrants I have learned about the rich Korean concept of "Han." Through relationships with Indigenous Peoples, I've learned about the patience of moving at the speed of spirit, which can be circular and expansive. These and so many other lessons help displace the experience of the white US middle class person as normative, and they provide rich teachings for living through times of deep trouble.

These relationships have been built by consistently showing up. Whether it's forging relationships with Muslims so that when a mosque is defaced I'm invited to stand with them - to put my very handprint on their new sign - or whether it's standing outside of immigration detention with my Latino/Latinx friends, or whether it's attending an AME church every time I have a Sunday off so that when another AME congregation is the victim of a shooting I am asked to help read the names of those who died, or whether it's becoming friends with Indigenous Peoples so that I am asked to speak at events in their cultural centers, I believe in showing up. This is the first step in creating relationships of trust that enrich us all for these difficult times.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

I will offer two examples: immigration and Covid.

I served as part of an interfaith clergy leadership team advocating for the release of people detained due to immigration status. Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Unitarian - we met with elected officials and their staff, and we called for executive action where possible. We agitated outside of detention centers and advocated for those detained to receive legal support and spiritual and other resources.

As part of my liaising with the public health department in my county, I helped with the Pandemic and Racism Community Advisory Group (PARCAG). What began as a way to get vaccines and other supports to communities of color transformed into a much broader working group of community navigators dealing with all sorts of barriers to Covid safety. PARCAG advocated for research on cultural

discrepancies on Covid responses and for physical help for communities of color like filtration systems, language resources, supplies and vaccine clinics, and more. Even though I remain connected to PARCAG, my participation has significantly lessened (this is one of those places where I have leaned back), but I remain connected in order to support wherever and whenever I can and to amplify the work of those most implicated.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

As our denomination unravels, we have an opportunity to better reflect the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ, which has always centered and privileged those on the margins. If we don't do this then we have not remade the church closer to the goal of the Beloved Community. We need to reimagine how we do work. Currently, we function not as a connectional church that reduces the burden of those on the margins but as a denomination and jurisdiction that prioritize individualism and competition. I would like to change that. We place the burdens for salaries, insurance, buildings, and other infrastructure on the individual congregations rather than sharing the burden across our annual conferences. We charge rents to communities using facilities owned by our annual conferences. And so on. My plan is to reframe the culture of our church to be connectional and communal rather than individual and competitive. This would center the voices of those who are made poor through injustice and those who need help to find purchase in a society of unchecked capitalism. We would ask for every ministry choice, "How does this center the ones most harmed by society? How does this further liberation?"

I worry that our church will not sufficiently address racism, white supremacy, and homophobia in an attempt to smooth the rough edges of this time of change. I would add to this classism and regionalism. This is primarily why I am a candidate in this process. For our church to be faithful, we must address our history, our present, and orient ourselves for our future.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

Silence is not an option. Whether it's anti-Blackness, anti-Asian hate, antisemitism, anti-Muslim behavior, anti-immigrant rhetoric, the church has an obligation to be present in the public square. One of the main jobs of an Episcopal leader is to set culture. Another is to be a public theologian.

Currently I serve as the Seattle convener for the Poor People's Campaign. It has been an honor to make sure the aims of the PPC are addressed in the Seattle area and throughout Washington. The PPC has learned the power of collective prophetic action. The UMC could well learn from this and other organizations that when prophetic speech meets prophetic action that the world will take notice. People, even those outside of our organization, will pay attention. Action and speech, when consistently aligned, do matter.

We have been overshadowed in the public commons by others who call themselves Christian but who do not share our values. They do not profess the Christ of liberation but the God of fear. We have ceded the public commons to these voices. As a bishop I would want to bring to the public a United Methodist witness of prophetic speech and action, celebrating internally and promoting externally those ministries making a difference in people's lives and working change for all of society.

Additionally, prophetic speech matters little if we are not doing the transformational work inside of the church itself. The church is rampantly racist. White supremacy is endemic to our institution. Even as we speak and act in the larger society, we must also address racism and white supremacy within the church.

BRIAN SUK-BOO LEE

Ethnicity: Asian (Korean-American)

Annual Conference membership: California-Pacific

Current ministry appointment: Kum Ran United Methodist Church

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

I meet many strangers through my life and ministry. I welcome them and am used to working with them. I have talents to help me understand cultural diversity. I have been trained and educated for ministry and spirituality in Seoul, South Korea and the U.S. I understand cultural diversity toward unity. My experience will help the Episcopacy welcome our whole community.

I have gained leadership experience while making decisions beyond our local churches. I served as the President of the Alumni/ae Association and as a member of the Board of Trustees at CST. I lead the Council of Alumni/ae and practice at various leadership levels to make decisions. I used my spiritual gifts with passion and enthusiasm as a leader for CST. At that time, I worked together with many people to make connections.

I have experienced many different cultural practices through my different ministry settings and through my spiritual journey. I have learned new concepts of pastoral care and counseling, leadership, and authority in my cross-cultural ministry. I have experienced “disadvantages as well as opportunities,” and “rejection and acceptance.” As a multicultural and cross-cultural person, I have learned in this cross-cultural/racial ministry that effective leadership in ministry depends on the guidance of the Holy Spirit to open hearts, open minds, open doors in people’s cultures with God’s direction.

I embody welcoming people with my open mind with the love of God as a multicultural and cross-cultural person. Our churches will be welcoming communities with our radical hospitality to include people within a community without the expectation that they will fully conform to it. I want to say, “how can I be with you” to approach them across all cultures for welcoming them in the love of Jesus Christ.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

I believe that God has called me according to God’s will for ministry beyond my own ethnic background. God provided me with a vision to serve the multicultural community of faith in God’s purpose.

I was appointed for the cross-cultural/racial setting, Bardsdale UMC on 1999. After I served for four years at Bardsdale UMC, I was called from God to go to the Alaska Missionary Conference for the new mission in multicultural settings in 2003. Then, I came back to serve for the Pacific Korean UMC in South Pasadena, California. Before I was appointed to this current church, Kum Ran UMC, I served for 12 years at the Artesia-Cerritos UMC, which was an English-speaking, multi-cultural community.

My ministry style is communication through spiritual leadership for reconciliation. For that, I have some advantages and gifts for my ministry. My special gift is to speak both English and Korean in my preaching and Christian practice. I can serve at multi-cultural settings in any situation because I understand each ethnic tradition and how they can create ethnic harmony in our community by God’s grace.

I believe that God calls me to serve as a more effective pastoral position as the Episcopacy. It is time to use my gifts and experiences. I would like to build bridges to link many cultures through my communication. I can play an important role in the reconciliation of a community as a spiritual leader. I would like to care for broken communities and congregations through my pastoral ministry. I contribute to our mission, education, worship, fellowship, and service with them. I would like to share in their suffering and loneliness as well as the joys with churches and people.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

In my multi/cross cultural ministry for immigrant generation communities, I keep good friendly relationships with people. I think that I need a different style when I meet with different groups, members, situations, and outside my church. Leadership needs to fulfill a group's goals. Leadership should be changed to match the new goals. A pastor has to think about having a more dynamic leadership style. I always check on feedback about my leadership from the congregation, and I review the congregation's suggestions for effective leadership. I will continue to do so if I am a bishop.

I have always focused on spiritual pastoral care because our members needed their pastor's prayer and visitations. I did not wait for their phone call. I called them and visited them first. I discussed with them my ideas for ministry because I wanted to work together with them. I opened my mind too. I thought our church would grow spiritually as a result. Our congregation members called me "the spark plug."

I am a leader who sparks ministries with our congregation to provide new direction and vision. Of course, I can't do everything alone, therefore I ask for their help and prayers. The role of my leadership is to encourage them. Our lay leaders are involved in our programs. They found their roles as part of Jesus' body for the church. They pray for the church's ministries and visions, and work together.

In my ministry, the predominate style of leadership is through connection. My leadership style gives me a chance to have better relationships between the minister and laity. I communicate with God through my prayers to know God's vision for the church's ministry. I set my goal of ministry through my connection with God.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

When I was appointed to Bardsdale UMC, I was the first ethnic minister who was appointed as a cross-cultural/racial pastor for this congregation. Therefore, different spiritual perspectives in different cultures existed in this congregation. The members of the congregation are proud of their church that has their own history and stands in the tradition of the UMC. They want and strive to follow exactly the tradition what they are doing as far as they possibly can. However, they did not ignore their own context as they dealt with an issue. They struggled between history/tradition and the present context. Those two generations as well as three generations are present in the church as members work together. There are so many cultures present even when they speak the same language. Therefore, congregations and Conferences need to figure out their identity as a spiritual group in order to be effective in spiritual ministry.

As a parish pastor, I study and take seminars about leadership for my effective ministry. I can say without hesitation that my theological perspectives come from John Wesley. I think that he was a dynamic preacher, evangelical minister, and spiritual leader. His theology came from his practical experiences, and it became his standards for ministry. I have one more special reason why I like him. The reason is Wesley's social contribution as a minister. His social ministry was very much a product of his historical context. He preached and acted on social issues such as poverty, economic and political situations, anti-slavery, and money. I know that his social ethics is for the renewal of both individuals and society. His works for social reformation guide my theology and practical ministry. I embrace Wesley's theology and social ethics, and to revolutionize the role of church for mission.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

There are many issues in this world such as injustice, violence, and racism. Our UMC churches continue to work in our diversity for ethnic, language, cultural, and multicultural communities. We work together to center leadership to focus on the marginalized.

Leadership begins with people creating a way of working as needed and creating appropriate paths to share vision. In the church, it means to serve with vision as a role model and spiritual leader. As a leader for effective leadership in the church, I need two important personal skills with others: fidelity and integrity. For cross-cultural ministry, leadership depends on the guidance to encourage and challenge people to do God's work beyond cultural diversities in their lives toward God's will with God's direction.

For centering leadership, I would like to apply two books. First, Eric H. Law's work *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community* is recognized as a practical theological manual useful in multicultural communities or multicultural gatherings. Eric Law approaches in a practical way the methods and strategies for dealing with problems/conflicts arising from cultural difference and inequality of power. He tries to resolve the problem of power inequality through mutual invitation. I agree with him.

Second, Jung Young Lee's work *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* is interested in cultural pluralism in North America and himself as a marginal person under the influence of the Yin (陰: 음) - Yang (陽: 양) teaching of Chinese religion. I apply the new marginality for understanding the church as a community of new marginal people.

My leadership is formed in my ministries with practical reflections on our traditions and experiences in both the Bible and our rational thinking. This means theological harmony between theological thoughts and practical reactions through my practical ministry.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

When I was child, I asked the questions, "Why do we have color? Why did God make us like this?" Until now, I have asked these questions from different theological perspectives. Humanity was created in the image and likeness of God. However, there is another side to this coin: the humanity of the racist.

In the racist context, the issues of liberty and equality are raised. The racist uses law to deny people their liberty. Furthermore, the oppressors themselves lose their freedom in the process. However,

theology has something to contribute to the search for true liberty, and should never be allowed to be a prefabricated system.

To overcome racism, the churches must work together on new patterns of comprehensive partnership. We are closer to real unity in the church because we have available to us common spoken and written words. Within the churches, each person must be known by their personality and their value as a human being. The church's role as light and salt in our community is to recover from racism. All divisions of the church are struggling against the tides of history to develop a perspective on life that includes all people. There is the Holy Spirit in our midst.

I am convinced that racial reconciliation is a key to revival because it validates the Gospel. The world can look at the Church and see Christians of all nationalities and skin colors working together, worshipping together and loving one another. People will know that God is alive and well when they see the love flowing among them for reconciliation in diversity. I would like to explain the marks of the Christian life in three words: Faith, Love, and Discipleship. Christians must comprehend and learn to work together for ministering effectively and faithfully in God's guidance.

ELLA LEAL LUNA-GARZA

Ethnicity: Merced

Annual Conference membership: California Nevada Annual Conference

Current ministry appointment: Merced United Methodist Church

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

Jesus tells us to love our neighbors. It is a mandate. As a disciple of Christ, I am called and commanded to love my neighbor. Love has many expressions: hospitality, welcome, forgiveness, mercy, accompaniment, humility, patience, kindness, care, concern, compassion, and countless others.

Neighbors include all of humanity, and consists of all ethnicities, races, genders, sexual identities, cultures, political affiliations, social economics, abilities, capabilities, faiths, non-faithed, ages, intellects, all persons.

I understand welcoming the stranger as loving neighbor. Some of the ways I intentionally live into loving neighbor is by being willing to share space, valuing each, and being aware of the sacred breath in each. I care for each divine life. I am concerned for wholeness of mind, body and spirit. I seek to understand by listening, asking questions and learning.

Over the years, I've learned simple phrases in different languages to extend a gesture of care and hospitality. In various churches where I have attended or served, I have taught English as a second language, and programmed the teaching of Spanish, Hmong, and Portuguese.

I've been intentional in learning of cultures, worship styles, family traditions and histories; hosting events for many communities and sharing facilities with Jewish, Muslim, Hmong, Laotian, Filipino, Japanese, various Latino communities, African American and Black communities, refugee and immigrant communities.

I am affirming and welcoming of LGBTQ+ communities, acting as ally, spiritual leader, and community advocate within my congregation, the broader community and the denomination.

I've made it a priority to live into the greatest commandment by accepting and loving all with a sense of hospitality and genuine care for the welfare of my neighbors. Some days, I do well. Some days, I fail miserably. Every day, I try to do better.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

There are many ways in which experiences with ethnic communities have influenced ministry, as well the call to the episcopacy. In my over 40 years of experience as a professing United Methodist, I have had the express joy and challenge of being an anomaly in The UMC. I am a third generation United Methodist of Mexican American heritage. As such, I have spent the better part of my life explaining, defending, and balancing culture with faith. My guess is that many persons of color, minority categorized, and interethnic persons have had similar experiences, if identifying with the UMC, a denomination that is predominantly white.

I was raised in the Rio Grande Conference, an Annual Conference originally created to provide intentional space and welcome for the inclusion of Spanish speaking Methodists. The Rio Grande Conference no longer exists, merged with the Southwest Texas Annual Conference to become the Rio Texas Conference.

Through the process of merging, I was made aware of the great need for minority voices in the places of decision making. I have since yearned for and appreciated space for varied expressions, differing perspectives, diverse voices and the intentional space for shared participation of all. The richness and contribution of ethnic communities is to be celebrated, embraced and encouraged.

My calling to the episcopacy, is an opportunity to further celebrate the diversity within and growing in The UMC.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

I began my journey of relationship building with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color while working in the Mexican American Program at Perkins School of Theology, specifically working with persons desiring to be in ministry with Spanish and Portuguese speaking persons. I worked with persons who served immigrant communities, persons who they themselves were immigrants, and churches who wanted to serve immigrant communities. Since then, I have worked with new Hispanic ministries, house churches, mission initiatives and small groups for first, second and multigenerational immigrants.

Serving a Latino congregation, a collaboration with a black UMC was developed and we celebrated world Communion together, alternating church sites for shared worship. We coordinated shared community events, bible studies and Holy week services. At the same church, the main outreach program was Todos Juntos, an early childhood development program for immigrant children (Over 30 countries represented), with life skills, English and parenting classes for the children's parents also provided.

Interactions and developing relationships with immigrants, our black siblings, and their communities and families, led to becoming more aware of the challenges, needs, hopes and dreams. I learned to appreciate diversity, understand a little of the struggles, listen to the histories and stories and how to respectfully respond when necessary. Most of all, I was able to see the divine image of God in each and embrace my siblings in Christian love.

I am hopeful my leadership gives evidence to the valuing of relationships, diversity and the willingness to learn from others. I hope my willingness to listen and understand, care and be concerned, love and lead are hallmarks of my leadership. I continue to learn and grow in hopes of serving God well.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

Over the past 4 years serving at Merced UMC, I have worked on several initiatives with PICO, CIVVC, Faith in the Valley and others. I have worked on Deferred action of Childhood Arrivals, Black Lives Matter, Migrant workers' rights, vaccination clinics specifically for field laborers, coordinating the

ecumenical, multiethnic response to the synagogue shooting, and the community memorial response for the recent killings of four Sikh family members. In each of these instances, calling civic leaders to respond systemically to the issues presented, holding elected officials, government leaders, politicians, decision makers and stakeholders accountable.

Today, I am working in holding Merced County accountable for the failings of providing accurate voting ballots to zip codes with higher percentages of non-white constituents.

Over pandemic, when Merced County residents, majority minority, were left without food provisions, or assistance, I advocated on behalf of the hungry by addressing the Mayor, City Council Members, County Supervisors, our Senator, Congressman, Assemblyman, and the religious communities and corporate sector to find ways of feeding our people. The result? We arranged for over 250,000 family distributions over two years, providing 50-80 pounds of food with each distribution and feeding over 1 million persons in 4 counties of the Central Valley.

In my own congregation, here we seek to share the love of God, walk in the ways of Christ and serve our neighbor through the power of The Holy Spirit, UMC Merced is constantly seeking to better address and include immigrants. We have held DACA legal clinics, begun holy conversations centering on becoming a sanctuary faith community, and continue to encourage our Hmong members through worship and pastoral/faith community supports. We host and participate with Faith in the Valley and PICO.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

To center leadership from the margins, two things are needed:

- 1- A ready pool of capable leadership at the margins
- 2- Knowing who is at the margins and what their gifts for leadership they possess.
- 3- A desire to place persons from the margins into leadership.

The UMC is not representative of current demographics and thus needs increased diversity across all levels of The Church. Some reasons for this are: systemic racism, the suppression of capable persons, smaller pools of readied leadership, and fewer voices for promoting leadership from the margins.

Addressing racism is necessary. Please see my answer to the next question posed.

Maintaining, developing and implementing pathways to strengthen leadership skills for persons at the margins should be a priority of the Conference. As minority majority continues to increase in percentage, ministry with and for minorities is a pressing need as potential to grow and sustain The UMC. Providing training, resources, expectations and conference culture that encourages leadership development and continued education are necessary for having skilled, knowledgeable, effective and prepared leaders. For this to happen, a variety of tools are needed for identifying, evaluating, developing and celebrating potential leaders. This will create a pipeline and steady pool of active and capable leaders from the margins.

Identifying and lifting up prepared and capable leadership requires intentionally communicating the gifts of minority leadership in general communications with frequency and consistency.

Data collection on each pastor's gifts in leadership specifically including each minority leader should be obtained, maintained, frequently updated and consulted when looking to fill any and every leadership position.

And lastly, episcopal leadership should know the leaders within their episcopal area, taking care to be informed of talents, skills, needs and gifts of the leadership at the margins.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

I think the first step in leading through an environment of racism is to speak truth to power and the power of truth. It is being aware the racism exists and that we have a divine calling to eradicate all things that hinder pure and authentic love of neighbor. This requires the boldness to call racism out for what it is- a sinful tactic to divide and malign the body of Christ and the possibilities of unity and peace in the world.

Secondly, there is a responsibility to do something about it; to actually respond in ways that are edifying, supportive and advancing of change. This requires systemic and individual change, stemming from teaching, modeling, holding accountable and correcting the undesired behaviors. It is teaching, preaching, living and expecting the kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. It is clearly communicating racism is not to be tolerated and holding it as standard for all to uphold across all levels of The Church.

Lastly, it is a process of holding self accountable and to the standards of valuing each person as created in the image of God with sacred worth.

ELIZABETH TAY McVICKER

Ethnicity: Chinese American

Annual Conference membership: Mountain Sky Conference

Current ministry appointment: District Superintendent Utah/Western Colorado

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

At the recent Mountain Sky Clergy retreat, I often found myself serving as an usher to people who were alone. I am the kind of usher who watches vigilantly for people on the margins. I meet them where they are. I get to know their name and their life story as I lead them in. I help them find a place where they are comfortable, and I introduce them to others nearby. At the first meal, I did not sit down until most everyone had arrived. That put me in the position to greet people as they arrived and help people who are new to find a place. I was not asked to serve in this role. I assumed it. It is who I am. It is what I do. One of the new pastors in my district (and new to the annual conference and the United Methodist Church) arrived just as the program began. She is African American. I was able to greet her and found her a seat at a table where I thought she would be warmly received, and I introduced her to her tablemates. While this may seem like an insignificant incident, I remember being new to the clergy retreat. I remember the feeling of intimidation and loneliness of being a in a room full of people who seemed to know one another. The words of Exodus 22:21, "...remember, you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt" inform my mission to welcome strangers.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

I have experienced and witnessed the harm that institutional racism exacts on racial/ethnic persons. In fact, my commitment to address institutional racism fuels my desire to serve as an Episcopal leader. As I work with racial/ethnic pastors, I see the ways they are excluded from full inclusion and access to power within the church. A few of the struggles which have motivated me to seek to serve as an episcopal leader are:

Inequity in appointments: A high proportion of racial/ethnic pastors are appointed to lower-paying churches, part-time appointments, and contexts which do not match their ministry gifts. As a district superintendent I have had tremendous influence through the appointment-making process to foster greater inclusion for racial/ethnic pastors. When I began as a district superintendent, 5 of the 50 churches in my district were served by a clergy of color. Two years later, 10 of those churches have pastors of color. Placing clergy of color in pastoral settings where they may not have been considered is an intentional approach I take to my role as a district superintendent. Being an episcopal leader will afford greater oversight and influence.

The expectation to assimilate is overwhelming: While ethnic pastors are sought for conference positions and recruited for ministry, their credibility is judged within the values of Anglo culture. They must adopt Anglo communication styles in order to be heard and valued. The current White-centered ordination process produces ethnic pastors who can survive in an Anglo-dominated culture,=; the others are weeded out. Code-switching is exhausting for clergy of color. As an episcopal leader, I will foster environments that will equalize the burden of communicating so that marginalized voices can be heard.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

My pastoral appointment at Asbury UMC in Phoenix, AZ was specifically charged to develop ministry to, with and for racial/ethnic communities. I developed relationships with racial/ethnic communities and individuals, and ushered them into church activities and membership. As they accepted leadership positions in the full spectrum of ministry, I continued to mentor and support them. I worked with the Anglo leaders to deepen their allyship by intentionally inviting, listening, and accepting the leadership of racial/ethnic persons. This created safe space for the racial/ethnic persons to assume greater leadership roles.

In my district, there are Tongan congregations, a Native American fellowship, multicultural ministries, and a budding Spanish-language ministry. I greatly value opportunities to develop relationships and deepen my understanding of their cultural contexts. I regularly attend missionale's, Tongan funeral services, worship and other events. In August I toured the Four Corners Native American Ministries based in Shiprock, NM and attended a Gourd Ceremony.

Recently, the Mountain Sky Conference held a 2-day session with Lydia Muñoz, the Executive Director of the National Hispanic Plan. I had the opportunity to learn about the programs and approaches of the National Hispanic Plan. I also had the opportunity to meet many of the Hispanic pastors in the conference for the first time. I learned about their ministry contexts, their joys in ministry as well as their struggles and pain as they sought to dwell within the Mountain Sky Conference. Talking with the Hispanic pastors helped me understand how misunderstood they have been.

My main learnings:

- Authentic presence and commitment to building relationships is critical.
- In order to create space for racial/ethnic persons to lead, Anglo leaders must intentionally release power
- Seek to understand before "diagnosing" the situation. Listen to the perspectives of racial/ethnic persons.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

In both annual conferences where I have served, I have been elevated to serve on conference committees, but, with the exception of the Religion and Race Commission, I was never asked to chair or take the lead role. In fact, at one point I served in 12 different capacities at district and annual conference levels. I was invited into those roles because I was not considered to be a threat. I also knew that many of my colleagues of color were being overlooked for leadership positions. So I decided to step back from many of my positions when I could recruit a person of color to take it on. It is my greatest joy to see other clergy of color holding leadership roles. I continue to pay special attention to opportunities to nominate people of color to conference leadership. Last year, I successfully recruited a clergy of color to chair one of the largest boards of the conference. I interpret this as my efforts, working with the Holy Spirit, to give the person the confidence to serve in a high capacity.

As a student at Yale, I advocated for Asian American Studies classes with the Yale College Dean, professors, the Asian American Students Association (I served as president), and Asian American professors. The process confronted the Yale academia who operated with the stereotype of Asian Americans as the “Model Minority” whose experience of racism was ancillary to the story of the United States. We successfully fought for courses after much public organizing, demonstrations, and negotiating with the Dean’s office. The Asian American Studies Working Group at Yale was established in 2009.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

My plan to center leadership from the margins includes:

--gain status as a bishop: My very presence as an Asian American woman is an expression of leadership from the margins. My experiences as an Asian American woman have given me a personal perspective of the harm that is happening in our church which will inform the work of centering leadership from the margins. While I don’t wish to be elected simply because I am an Asian American female, I know my presence will create opportunities to expose racism and address them. My spirit, which is fiercely hope-filled, compassionate, and collaborative, is what I offer to the Western Jurisdiction and the denomination.

--develop leaders from marginalized communities. Be intentional about equity issues in each and every appointment. Build racial/ethnic pastors’ trust in the cabinet through intentional listening, transparency and collaboration. I believe we can affect the current trajectory of decline within the church by developing leaders who resonate with the larger community in their values, cultural and racial backgrounds, and ethos of the wide and deep inclusiveness of God’s love.

--shape the denominational conversation about the emerging United Methodist Church. Develop relationships with bishops and leaders in Central Conferences to gain understanding and build solidarity. Other parts of the connection look to the Western Jurisdiction, with its culture of collaboration and transparency, the bold leadership shown regarding LGBTQIA+ justice, and its diversity, to be a leader in shaping the emerging church.

--evaluate the assets and investments of the annual conference as to their usefulness for making disciples in today’s world—specifically for supporting existing racial/ethnic churches and new church starts.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

The privilege of straight, white men within every institution of our country, including the church, is something that I have personally witnessed, been limited by, and strive to transform. The church has fallen into the same patterns as the religious institution of Jesus’ time where power was hoarded and the preservation of the institution took precedence over the mission. The Bible itself is translated and interpreted with a deep preference for straight, white men. The ordination processes are geared for the success of straight, white men. The church structures center heterosexual, white culture. The allocation of resources uses white-centered values to determine funding priorities.

The book of Isaiah mentions “the voice of one crying in the wilderness”. I have often felt like the lone voice with an idea or opinion that is neither popular nor shared by others. In a racist system, my voice as an Asian American woman has often been ignored. I have found that the most effective use of my prophetic voice has always involved a collaborative approach. Other partners were involved in giving me a platform to address issues and in doing the hard work of engaging those in power to make change. As an episcopal leader, I anticipate resistance to my voice and know that I must develop allies and partners in the various spheres of influence I will be working—annual conference, local churches, general boards and agencies, the College of Bishops, the Council of Bishops and the ecumenical and secular worlds. The status of episcopal leaders conveys influence and authority to speak to the mores and values of our church and society. The prophetic role is essential to the impact of a bishop.

KIMBERLY MONTENEGRO

Ethnicity: Mix Raced African America

Annual Conference membership: California Nevada

Current ministry appointment: Director of Religious and Spiritual Life at University of the Pacific

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

I am a mixed-raced African-American woman, married to a Mexican-American man, and our children look like the growing demographic of America, beautifully diverse. Because of my racial identity, I have always been the stranger. I grew up in an immigrant community, where my mother was the only white woman in our neighborhood. I was often the outsider, and I learned to live in the liminal space, being nurtured in the lessons of cultural humility before there was a national focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work. This diverse immigrant community raised me, taught me, and molded me. It showed me that, when going to the Matsu's home, I needed to take off my shoes and bow. When I visited the Orozco's house, their mom would make me eat before I played, no matter what. I can go house by house, and remember each lesson I learned about each cultural community from my neighbors on the street where I grew up, neighbors that included Pacific Islanders, Latinex, Black, Japanese, and Filipino families. I absorbed these early life lessons into my personal life and ministry organically, and one of my gifts in pastoral leadership is being relational. I welcome the stranger by first being relational and recognizing each person as an individual. I have learned to meet people where they are. Relationships among and between the people of God are the places where I most see God alive and moving. The gift we are all given when we open the circle a little wider and welcome each other in may require us to move at a different pace, but we are richer for it.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

Like for so many others that come from historically-minoritized communities, leadership in preeminent institutions felt like it was not for me. As marginalized communities, if we want to succeed in these established institutions, there is a cost to assimilation, whether that assimilation be because of an internal expectation or an externally imposed one. For those of us who meet the qualifications of leadership on paper, but who somehow don't know the coded insider language or customs needed to navigate the systems, there is also a constant struggle with imposter syndrome, which can have us questioning our place inside the institution, and even our call. Ethnic minoritized communities who have seen, affirmed, and confirmed my call throughout my life have kept me in this discernment process precisely because of those shared struggles and awareness that your call is from God and affirmed in community through the Holy Spirit.

When I first received the email announcing that my name had been lifted up for the Episcopacy, my first thought was, That isn't for people like me. Folks in ethnic communities reminded me, "If not you Kim, then who?" When I took a moment for deeper analysis of my own unconscious bias, I realized this was my own internalized racism, sexism, and ageism at play. I began to realize that it was precisely because I've never seen the Western Jurisdiction College of Bishops consecrate someone like me that I could not conceive that God was moving in such a way. As we all know, God calls in all of us in ways and in times we don't fully comprehend, and beyond borders we didn't think we would cross, and that is why we are

people of faith— we live into the mystery.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

It is essential that we acknowledge varied experiences of immigrant communities across generations. I respect my Aunties and Uncles, and honor the sacrifices they have made as elders to provide a better life for themselves and their families in the United States and at home. Often first generation immigrant communities are seeking survival in a foreign land. My role in with first generation communities has been as guide/advocate to help them navigate systems that do not exist, or exist differently, in their previous homeland. The second generation, who have seen their parents work so hard for “The American Dream,” may know America is not the land of milk and honey, and so they come demanding justice and living fully into the hope of Exodus 12:49 “The same law applies both to the native-born and to the foreigner residing among you.” This generation is often filled with social activist, justice-seeking, politically-aware folks who want the best for not only their particular ethnic community but all people on the margins. Their personal commitment to justice is informed by their lives. Their behavior may be seen as objectionable to their parents, who find them to be “causing too much of a fuss.” When I have had the honor to be brought into those intergenerational conversations, I point out to the parents that it is precisely their deep faith that is emboldening their behavior. I remind them to look at Jesus and how he was with the authorities. I ask them to tell me the story of the Exodus. I help them see themselves in the biblical story, and recognize the tensions that existed then and now. After all, if we don’t want our children to fight so hard for justice, we should have stopped taking them to Sunday School years ago.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

In 2018, the Trump administration began rounding up long-term immigrants from Vietnam, Cambodia, and other countries, and preparing to deport them. Some of the targeted immigrants had green cards but had not been naturalized as citizens. The vast majority of them had at some point committed crimes — roughly 7,700 of the 8,000 or so of the Vietnamese immigrants who were classified as deportable, according to the Department of Homeland Security. Vietnamese who had arrived before July 12, 1995 (the date the formerly warring countries re-established diplomatic relations) could not be deported. Most of those immigrants had come to the United States as a result of the Vietnam War. Many came as small children or babies, and didn’t have any memories of life outside of the United States. If they had committed crimes in the United States, it was ten to twenty years ago, and in the intervening years they had become productive, law-abiding members of society. The decision outraged the American ambassador to Vietnam, Ted Osius; he characterized the deportation effort as a broken promise to South Vietnamese families who had been allies of the United States during the war and who would not be safe in Vietnam. He said they were “refugees from a war that we were prosecuting.” I advocated for folks throughout that time, I was in solidarity with families throughout the Central Valley of California, and I had an audience with Governor Newsom and his staff, alongside the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, to ask for justice.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

Inclusive leadership always requires being centered in Christ's message. The gospel is a message that leaves no one out. In order to do gospel work to the best of our ability, we must always be doing our own personal developmental diversity work. We confront our internalized biases, and when we are triggered, we deconstruct them. As an episcopal leader, I will offer training throughout my area to equip the people to do this work well. I would also make sure that my cabinet and conference leadership reflect and represent the diversity of the region I would serve. As a leader it is important to make sure you are not surrounding yourself with people who think like you and confirm your preconceived notions, but instead with people who hold a perspective and worldview that is different than your own and who aren't afraid to speak their truth in the face of power. When people see you are open to a variety of thoughts and ideas, it creates a culture of permission giving. The culture shifts from organizing around "What does the Bishop want?" to "What is God calling us to do in this time and in this place?" While we must work across differences, we seek commonality through story. As Christians and people called Methodist, there is a shared story we all honor, and we can work to find the common thread that binds us regardless of our particular circumstances. I have done this work since I was in seminary within and outside of our annual conference. I am a trained Intercultural Development Inventory trainer and have worked with public schools, Boys and Girls Club of Colorado, and local congregations to address how to do exactly this over the last seventeen years.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

A episcopal leader must be a prophetic voice in America and beyond on the subject of racism, because America's first and original sin was racism. We each took baptism vows to "fight evil and oppression in any form it presents itself," and racism is woven systematically throughout the fabric of our existence in the United States. In turn, America has exported this racism through culture, media, and influence to other countries as well. In order to be a prophetic voice about racism, an episcopal leader must first be rooted in the word of God. They must know this work comes with great personal peril, but also hear their call to join a long line of prophets that have called the truth out in places where it was needed but not wanted. Second, they must be amongst the people in community. You cannot be part of a movement if you are not with the people. People must understand you see the situation on the ground, you can empathize with their trials and tribulations, and also are able to take a 30,000 foot view to see the long term visioning that is needed to address the issues. This issue must be addressed in our local churches, in a cabinet, and also in our mainstream society. The prophetic voice of an episcopal leader must not be limited to a pulpit but on social media of TikTok, Discord, and social media that younger generations are accessing.

LLOYD NYAROTA

Ethnicity: Black-African-Shona

Annual Conference membership: Zimbabwe East Conference

Current ministry appointment: Ecumenical Appointment at St. John United Anglican Church in Alberta, Canada

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

Welcoming the stranger is when we accept all of God's children. Especially those who will be far from their homes of origin due to disaster situations.

In this day and age we have a lot of human migration happening due to several challenges facing communities all over the world. Many people are victims of domestic violence, internal and international wars, political violence, bad economic and social conditions. Many people are being forced by circumstances to crossing international borders into strange lands where they become strangers as refugees, asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking and many others conditions. The people in the receiving countries have responsibility to welcome all of these God's children into our communities and seek ways to help and support them to settle and pursue their life's dreams through providing opportunities.

To welcome the stranger is to support, and make someone comfortable in order for them to be able to put their lives back together again. Help them to go through recovery from trauma and other challenges that would have destabilized their lives.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

The experience with ethnic communities has helped me to understand how much we need to be represented at all levels of the church leadership. As an Ethnic minority I would like other ethnic minorities to be motivated when they see that we can all be serving God in whatever way God calls us. Issues and concerns of ethnic groups are sometimes relegated to the periphery and I think we need to keep call the church's attention to the challenges faced by ethnic communities. Having people like me as episcopal leaders would motivate and stand as reminder that all groups of people needs to be attended and listened to.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

I have build some relationships through networking and participating in intercultural ministries. I have been leading discussions around intercultural ministries programs in The United Church of Canada and Canadian Council of Churches.

My wife and I were send to Canada to specifically work with Immigrant communities and congregations of Africans particularly Zimbabwean United Methodists in Canada, my wife is a GBGM missionary working in Canada.

I am part of the Theology and Research Sub-committee of the Forum for Intercultural Learning and Leadership that has developed the Intercultural and intersectionality discussion document for the Canadian Council of Churches. In all the places I have served in Canada I have worked with immigrant groups and worked on making them part of the congregations. I have taken courses in Deeper Understanding Intercultural Ministry, and I have facilitated discussions and webinars on the subject. All the experiences I have gained through providing leadership to migrant communities and the learnings have become part of my leadership as I do ministries at different levels in the Church.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

I have advocated for the support of ethnic congregation by the General Council of The United Church of Canada. The General Council is the equivalent body to the General Conference in The United Methodist Church. There are resources being provided to plant ethnic and indigenous congregations of which I have become of work as I work with my wife in supporting role in addition to my own appointment.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

I plan to engage with all people and see that those usually in the margins are brought to the center during discussions and decision making. Listening to those in the margins so that their voices are heard and also taken serious. I plan to have deliberate pushes to have people in the margins become part of the leadership of the church at all levels. Training more leaders from the margins, equipping those in the margins so that they become part of the center. Sometimes we may need to do radical transformation of structures and systems in order to construct equitable center that affords all of God's children to realize their full potential in the leadership of the church. Always we need to have Jesus Christ at the center so that all are able to be comfortable to become part of that center.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

By challenging those who are getting privileges knowingly or unknowingly and becoming complacent to the racialized system. Pointing out systemic racism whenever it unveils itself. Work to dismantle racism through taking actions and speaking about it, challenging racism and racist tendencies through preaching, teaching and making public statement. Standing with victims of racism and going public about incidences of systemic racism.

SANDRA K OLEWINE

Ethnicity: white

Annual Conference membership: California-Pacific

Current ministry appointment: DS - South District

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

Embody - 'to give a body to.' In my body, I carry whiteness, privilege, and colonizer. I carry age, autoimmune disease, and femaleness. And I carry the Jesus story. Sometimes that story convicts and challenges. Sometimes it comforts and restores. Always it claims and redeems, holding in grace all of the stories my body bears, sending me into the world 'to give a body' to Christ.

I first learned what that meant by watching my mother. Whether cooking at church, hosting dinner parties for choir members or inviting seminary students for meals, my mother lived out Mt 25:35b, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." In feasting, strangers became family as she gave body to God's gracious and abundant love.

Following her example, I have invited congregations into embodied discipleship. In one congregation, we provided hot meals for families twice a week, including taking dinners to the nearby mountains and a freeway rest stop. Whole families would appear from out of the woods to feast and those living in cars would often bring offerings of food and drink to add to what we brought. At another congregation, at the beginning of the New Sanctuary Movement, with ecumenical partners, we provided a safe location, furnishing a small apartment and contributing food and supplies regularly. When the Minutemen showed up to protest, we provided physical support and security. In my last congregation, when anti-Muslim hatred was particularly high, the congregation provided space for the Islamic Center's Friday prayers. This relationship blossomed to include joint study, worship, and mission projects. After the mass shooting at a mosque in New Zealand, the congregation created a safety line outside our facility so that community could worship without fear.

These are among the ways I have sought to embody welcoming the stranger.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

One moment with a laywoman at Holman UMC, an African American congregation, fundamentally shaped my ministry and influences my call to the Episcopacy. Mary was deeply affirming of me, often concerned that I worked too hard. One day I was sharing that I was indeed overwhelmed and what I was going to do about it. Besides being the associate pastor, I was completing Ph.D. course work, on the SCLC Task Force for Stopping the Violence, and serving as registrar for the Board of Ordained Ministry. I told her I had decided to resign from the Board of Ordained Ministry. She cried out, "No!" I know my face registered surprise at her adamant response. She explained, "Yes, you need to give up some things. It just can't be BOOM. We do not have ready access to those places of authority, power, and decision-making in the church. You have access. When you are at the table, we know you bring us to the table with you. We trust you to bring our voice, our concerns, and our hopes. You cannot walk away from such a place of privilege and influence when you carry more than yourself to that place. Others can step up to some of the other work you are doing, but you need to stay on the Board."

That was a powerful wake-up call and charge. Who is not at the table? Whose voice and story must be centered? What am I doing to upset the status quo on matters of racism, colonialism, full-inclusion, and care for the earth in the church and world? How am I leveraging power and access I have due to my privilege? Mary's admonition to my life continues to challenge and guide me and will ground my work as a bishop.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

I have an unusual appointment history for a white pastor as over 25 years of my ministry have been in cross-cultural contexts. My first congregation had eight different nationalities within it, many first- and second-generation immigrants. It was then the only ethnically diverse congregation in a town that had been the home of the KKK. My work on addressing that history of racism took me to Holman UMC, serving through the uprising following the acquittal of the white LAPD officers in the Rodney King beating. My interfaith peace and justice work at Holman, lead me to Palestine and Israel with GBGM. For the last five years there, I served as associate pastor at a Palestinian Lutheran congregation in Bethlehem, living in a war zone among an occupied people. Returning to California, I went to a new ministry that developed among undocumented folks from Mexico. In my last local church appointment, the church changed designation from a white congregation to a multi-ethnic one due to the new members brought into fellowship while I was the lead pastor.

These years of living with communities of color, of those oppressed by a brutal military occupation, and of undocumented immigrants challenged me to face my white privilege, the imperial powers of my nation, and the unjust treatment of migrants we use for labor but ignore as human beings of worth. I have been graciously received, lovingly confronted, and made welcome. From them, I have learned to listen, to check my assumptions, to apologize and ask for forgiveness. I have learned to value community over production, slowing down processes to make space for differing ways of making decisions. I am humbled by the trust extended and the hospitality offered. I seek to honor their trust and stories in how I lead.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

One side of the facility of a new ministry I began in Long Beach was an area with 100-year-old homes. Most were rentals with multiple generations of Mexican families living in them, many of whom were undocumented. The other side was undergoing urban renewal with condos luring mostly single, ethnically diverse, professionally-employed young adults. The Conference hoped I would connect with that new population.

Those who responded to this new ministry, however, were primarily from the older section. Because there were three Title 1 elementary schools within walking distance, we began an after school program for children, with numerous family events. Not long into this ministry, I received notice from the funding committee that I was spending too much time with poor people, doing mission work but not starting a new congregation. Funding would not be forthcoming after that year.

What I learned then and continue to share today is that we often do ministry to the poor, caring for immediate needs. We sometimes engage in ministry with the poor, coming alongside them to do joint

projects, though usually the institution maintains control. But what we don't know how to do is ministry of the poor. We fail to see people on the margins as people with agency. Their ability to support a full-time elder may be limited, but their discipleship is not. Our models of ministry often are wrapped in white, middle-class economics. Folks who live on the edge too often are looked upon as those who only need our help, not as those who are called and gifted of God, able to lead and carry out their own ministry. There is much about how we do church that has to be challenged and upended to truly celebrate and support the ministry of those on the margins.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

Initially, observing and learning who is leading in the Annual Conference would be critical. In each region, the people perceived as in and out will be different. Race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identify, and gender expression are key realities to assess on matters of inclusion. And age level, first language, immigrant generation, rural and urban location, differing abilities, and socioeconomic position would also be critical lenses through which to begin to understand who is missing or deliberately excluded from the leadership that exists.

In the first 120 days, I would want to meet with as many groups as possible, particularly those who have historically been and presently are excluded. I would want to be intentional about discovering who the wisdom keepers within the various communities are and spend time with them to learn who is understood as bearing the truths of that community and how leadership is expressed within those communities.

A second step tied to the previous one would be discovering what barriers to diverse leadership are created due to the prevailing leadership style. Throwing wide the table so more perspectives, experiences, and people are at the table does not guarantee transformed leadership. How leadership happens matters as much as who is leading. Is there a culture of courageous conversation, speaking truth in love, and graciously bearing with one another that can help transform the current approach to leadership?

A third step that could happen simultaneously with the first two is learning how leadership in the Annual Conference is identified and who generates names for consideration for leadership. This would help me both learn how the system is operating within the conference and guide the conversations about how and what people perceive needs to be adapted to create a culture of centering voices, stories, and peoples from the margins.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

My ministry has been shaped in and with communities that live with the realities of racism. From them, I have learned three primary ways that prophetic leadership is embodied.

The first is having a grounding in biblical frameworks that illuminate the gospel's call for justice, repentance, and reconciliation. Our General Rules, to do no harm, to do good and to stay in love with God, amplify Micah 6:8's ancient call. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus reminds us that in serving the least, we serve him. A bishop's teaching and proclamation can recall how the gospel is political in that it is concerned about the well-being of humans and all of creation. The laws we enact, the budgets we pass, the communities we plan reflect how well or how poorly we are becoming beloved community.

The second is establishing relationships of integrity and trust. Who are those cast aside? Who are those at risk and being harmed? As a white, cis gender, straight woman, I have to be mindful to seek out and prioritize relationships with such communities in order to listen and learn. Relationships with civic and elected leaders also make a difference. The church needs to be known as a partner for doing good in communities so that when times of critique come, there are relationships that can act as bridges to help transform society.

Lastly, there is the need to act. Sometimes teaching and relationship-building has to be accompanied with joining in public demonstrations to stand in solidarity with others. It may mean participating in civil disobedience, even being arrested, for the sake of standing with Christ who is standing with those who are oppressed.

My ministry has incorporated all of these and would continue to guide how I lead as a bishop.

CARLO A. RAPANUT

Ethnicity: Filipino

Annual Conference membership: PNW (membership); Alaska (appointment)

Current ministry appointment: GNW Assistant to the Bishop

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

How I embody welcoming the stranger is rooted in Jesus' words in Matthew 25 where I welcome a stranger or one who is different from me as if they were Christ. That welcome is informed by my being a stranger myself as an immigrant and having experienced many expressions in varying degrees of welcome and "unwelcome". I draw from these experiences to discern what to do and what not to do in welcoming the stranger who comes to me. My welcome is also grounded in my Filipino culture's expression of hospitality that goes above and beyond for friends and strangers alike.

In my ministry, my welcome of strangers has been embodied in the following ways:

- Openness to learn from the ideas, leadership styles and ways of being church from ethnic groups different from my own and allowing these to inform my own leadership and views of ministry. For example, from our Samoan congregations, I have learned an alternative way of raising funds for a need that is grounded in a celebration of culture and community.
- Creating places in mainstream leadership structures for immigrants, people of color and LGBTIA+ people to hold leadership and lead from their uniqueness.
- Advocating for and protecting ethnic and clergy of color in situations of discrimination, abuse and harm from their own congregations and white clergy colleagues because of their culture or the color of their skin.
- Advocating for and supporting clergy and families navigating the immigration process and helping explain this to their congregation and the conference.
- Creating a safe harbor for LGBTQIA+ clergy from other conferences by offering them appointments and continuing to advocate for their safety.
- In the local church, modeling a spirit of genuine welcome for all.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

I have a firm conviction that ethnic communities have many things to offer to the denomination. We offer different worldviews and mindsets, mostly from a less privileged perspective. As such, we offer an alternative to the many systems of our church that are rooted in centering whiteness, many of which are no longer effective and continue to cause harm to the ethnic, BIPOC, and LGBTQIA+ communities.

We in ethnic communities are part of the diversity that is celebrated yet the leadership in many levels of the connection lacks this diversity that we tout. Our leadership systems, including the episcopacy, need to reflect this diversity, not for diversity's sake for that is tokenism, but for the church to fully experience and integrate many facets of leadership, ministry and culture that we ethnic people have to offer.

Beyond token representation, the denomination needs to allow the ethnic people it raises to prominent leadership roles to lead from their authentic selves, bringing the richness of their cultural heritage into their roles and not be expected to lead as one from the dominant culture would, forcing them to think, act and lead white.

I look with curiosity at what it would look like to lead in the episcopal role from the many different marginal perspectives that I bring. I wonder, too, what message the Western Jurisdiction could send to our immigrant and ethnic communities by electing one of their own as bishop. Ethnic communities want to be seen and acknowledged. We want to be valued for what we bring from our own cultures, not for the ways that we assimilate. And what message does electing a person who was educated and raised in ministry in a central conference send to central conferences and the global church, especially during this critical time of denominational fracturing?

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

I am a first-generation Filipino immigrant and have a deep sense of connection and affinity with immigrant and ethnic faith communities.

While my first pastoral appointment in Alaska was to a predominantly white congregation, I helped organize a fellowship of Filipinos who attend UMC churches in the Anchorage area. There was no desire to be a separate ethnic congregation for they were already embedded in their own local churches. There was, however, a desire to celebrate culture together and so we gathered monthly for worship in Tagalog, prayer, fellowship and a meal. I pastored this fellowship on a volunteer basis for many years even as I transitioned into the Superintendency.

As Superintendent of the Alaska Conference, I had under my care and supervision a Korean congregation, a Samoan congregation, two blended Alaska native and white congregations, a Samoan fellowship and a white congregation served by a Filipino immigrant pastor.

These connections have broadened my perspectives of leadership and ministry. I witnessed how ethnic churches have struggled to balance their desire to be part of the UMC system while preserving their cultural traditions of church life. I have strived to stand in the middle of those differences to hold the tension, trying my best to interpret systems of the denomination and find ways of contextualizing these to an ethnic church's systems so that they do not feel marginalized but respected and celebrated.

Another aspect of ethnic church life that has informed my leadership is the relational dynamics between the first-generation immigrants (1.0; came to the US as adults), the 1.5s (came to the US as young children), and the 2nd-generation immigrants (2.0; born in the US to 1st generation parents).

Understanding these dynamics has helped me in my work with immigrant churches and even in my family life.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

I would like to share two instances in my ministry in the Alaska Conference where I have helped work for systems change in order to lift up ethnic or immigrant congregations:

1. With not about – There was a situation where the building that used to be owned by a UMC congregation that has since closed was being shared by an ethnic fellowship and an Alaska native church start. The leadership team and some prominent white leaders of the conference were having conversations about how best to use the building and coming up with varying proposals that were potentially harmful to the ethnic congregations currently using the space. Proposals ranged from one that benefitted one ethnic congregation over the other to selling the property for profit and disadvantaging both congregations. These conversations initially happened without consultation with even the leaders of these ethnic congregations. I called out the approach that assumed that we knew what these ethnic congregations needed without having consultation with them. I encouraged a “with not about” approach where we would talk with them not about them in making these decisions. These conversations are now ongoing.

2. Contextualized approach – For years, we have identified one of our predominantly Alaska native congregations as a mission congregation. We have also expected them to pay full apportionments and have assessed them an amount based on the regular formula that has resulted in a figure that was beyond their capacity to pay. As a result, this congregation has failed to meet its financial obligations, and this has affected their self-esteem as a congregation. I worked with conference leadership to encourage conversation about how apportionments for mission congregations might be contextualized so that they can still participate in supporting the connection but in ways that are they are able to fulfill.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

I am a person and voice from the margins, and it is from that perspective that I strive to lead. I am a person of color and an immigrant who came to the US as an adult. I grew up in a third world country and was raised in ministry in a central conference. I was not educated in the United States and English is not my first nor my second language. I speak with an accent and have an odd-sounding last name. Yet I have been privileged to hold positions of leadership that have allowed me to take part in decision-making processes. I think about the ways that I have been given space and voice to lead as a marginalized person and hold that value as I look around the table to see who is not there. I come at it from a place of solidarity and empathy.

In forming teams and nominating people to leadership positions, I have and will continue to hold the value of diversity as a priority. For example, in forming the Alaska Mission District Task Force, we were intentional about nominating young, BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ people to comprise a significant part of the team.

As one who has been tokenized many times, however, I strive to move beyond token representation to full participation of people from the margins, especially those who are not of the dominant culture. This includes giving space for the type of leadership that those from the margins have to offer instead of expecting them to assimilate to the dominant culture ways and methods of leadership.

The denomination, too, has to agree that in order for us to truly repent from our sin of racism, the system needs to learn how to fully welcome the leadership of those from the margins.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

In general, episcopal leaders of any color need to acknowledge not just the environment of racism in society, but more importantly our denomination's complicity in perpetrating that environment because of the sin of racism that continues to plague the United Methodist Church through its systems that privilege and center the dominant white culture.

Bishops have a powerful platform of influence and authority from which to speak prophetic truth to this evil if they so choose. At the very core of our church's disfunction is the worldview that one category of people can lord it over everyone else. There lies the intersection of all the systems of discrimination prevalent in our church.

To those in the church, bishops are the spiritual and temporal leaders and can teach biblically and theologically against racism and all forms of discrimination and call people and churches to action. They can also provide a lens in which to see a vision of how God's kingdom can truly "come on earth as it is in heaven" and lead in systemic change that would make that vision happen in practical ways within their areas of influence.

To society in general, bishops are seen and recognized as leaders and representatives of the denomination and what they say in public forums about racism carries weight. Their positional authority is also respected by many in secular elected positions, some of whom are members of the UMC, and would pay attention to a letter or a call from their bishop.

A bishop of color has a stronger and unique voice in which to speak out against racism because it comes from lived experience of discrimination, bias and abuse. Their voice comes from a unique perspective that those who have experienced racism in its many forms can resonate with.

BOB RHODES

Ethnicity: Caucasian/White

Annual Conference membership: California-Pacific

Current ministry appointment: La Jolla UMC

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

I find the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch essential to understand welcoming the stranger. There were so many ways that Philip could have judged or dismissed this stranger, and yet instead he took time to listen and ask questions. Even more, Philip observed God's Spirit in the eunuch and responded prophetically. With all the good to be learned from this story, it is essential not to take v31 to mean that Philip is somehow elevated above the Ethiopian official. In the end, I believe both are transformed as they learn and grow together.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

My current appointment is in a neighborhood that is limited in its diversity. Even so, we discuss matters of inclusion and diversity; and even though this community wrestles with ideas about privilege, we find ways to challenge assumptions and patterns to bring new perspective.

The most influential experience that informs my overall call--including that to the Episcopacy--was in my time in Nebraska. A growing community of Christians from South Sudan worshiped each week in Arabic. We celebrated worship and Holy Communion, sought opportunities to combine the Sudanese and anglo congregations, and did mission work together. Particularly instructive were in times of pastoral care as I heard stories about walking from South Sudan to Egypt; stories about the scarcity of resources; stories about community and history and song; and stories about overcoming the dramatic change of moving to the United States. I continue to hold these stories in my heart.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

I have the honor of serving in a widely diverse Annual Conference as the Conference Secretary. Like many, we have been forced to vary our ways to Conference understanding the necessity of safety alongside the challenges of access to technology. We have included diverse persons in leadership to help guide processes and perspectives to ensure inclusive Conferencing. These experiences and relationships have been essential in helping me to gain broader perspective.

I also provided pastoral leadership for a weekly program in my previous appointment providing meals and surrounding services for people experiencing homelessness and food insecurity. An essential part of the program was establishing the inaugural site for the UCSD student-run free clinic. While the clinic initially served people experiencing homelessness, the Affordable Care Act necessitated a change, and now the primary constituents for the program are undocumented persons. This essential work is provided in recognition that healthcare is a human right regardless of documentation status.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

When I served the South Sudanese community within the congregation in Nebraska, a tragic situation arose that involved police and courts. It was a difficult thing for members of this faithful community to navigate. The euro-centric systems in place were limited in their ability to adequately guide those unfamiliar with processes and systems in the U.S. As a pastoral team--and indeed it took the whole team--we used our privilege to not only guide community members through the process but also to teach officers and attorneys about the assumptions being made and ways to improve communication and processes to better serve the wider community.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

I believe the most essential task in centering leadership from the margins is to listen. I would further suggest that passive listening is insufficient and that those with the privilege of leadership must intentionally invite voices from the margins. Of course this is only the first step. Listening is a good thing, and listening followed by response is even better.

I understand that U.S. culture has taught that the best leaders always look like me: a straight white cis-male around middle age or older. Therefore, the tendency is to continue to look for effective leaders in this demographic. It is incumbent on leaders to break free of this systemic teaching to intentionally seek out effective leaders in marginalized and/or minority communities. A basic understanding of intersectionality is also critical as compounding margins make some persons in our community even more invisible.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

I think boldly speaking the Gospel is essential to a prophetic voice. I realize this is a basic response, and yet I suggest that being bold as a public figure isn't necessarily easy. Our most prophetic leaders had to choose boldness. Indeed, prophetic leaders across our Christian history had to choose boldness, and I suggest that Philip choosing to baptize the Ethiopian official was acting boldly. This includes the listening and intentional invitations I spoke about above.

I would further say that something especially difficult is finding the balance between speaking boldly and remaining silent and opening space for other voices to be heard. I confess that I wrestle with this balance, and suggest that all leaders must wrestle in the same way.

JESSICA ROOKS

Ethnicity: White

Annual Conference membership: Mountain Sky Conference

Current ministry appointment: District Superintendent, Mile High Metro District

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

When I read scripture, I hear God calling me individually, and us collectively, towards inclusion: to love God, love neighbor, and love self; to welcome the stranger; to feed the hungry and care for the poor; to create laws that are just for the most marginalized in society; and to recognize the divine within each person. Inclusion means we understand the connectedness of God's creation, and we cannot help but work to assure that all of God's creation is cared for.

Welcoming the stranger is more than an action, it is an attitude and an approach to life. It is a willingness to hear experiences outside of one's lived reality and believe them to be true. Too often someone's lived experience is disregarded and disrespected by those who have not experienced another's reality. Welcoming the stranger means we listen to one another's realities and let ourselves be impacted by them. Let ourselves be motivated to work towards change, even if we ourselves haven't experienced a need for it.

Welcoming the stranger means prioritizing someone else's voice, safety and comfort over our own at times. It is seeing when the dominant culture's norms have become standardized for all people, and a willingness and ability to step outside that norm and create something new with others.

Welcoming the stranger is actively creating a space of welcoming and belonging, knowing that individuals and communities are changed and transformed for the better when strangers are welcomed in, and believing this to be a blessing for all.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

I believe we are created to be in community. From the moment of birth, or even before it, we need others. We need others to survive and grow. We are created for relationship and community.

The United Methodist Church has been, for me, a life-affirming community. I was born into the church, baptized, raised, confirmed, called into ministry, married, and baptized and raised my own kids in the church. The church has helped me to become the best version of myself, the person I believe God knows me to be. Or at least, the church has been the place where I work to become the person God's knows I can be.

But that isn't true for everyone, and I recognize that. The United Methodist Church has not been a life-affirming community for all people, for lots of people. Instead, it has been a community that has excluded, oppressed, marginalized, and done significant harm to people and communities throughout our history and still in the present, and the realities of this have become tangible for me in a more profound way after working with ethnic congregations as a district superintendent.

My call to Episcopal leadership is a call to lead the Church, clergy, and local churches into becoming life-affirming communities in which all people find a sense of belonging and a space where they can grow into their best selves, into the self God knows them to be. Developing relationships with historically marginalized individuals and communities has impacted my call to ministry, whether I am ever elected to the Episcopacy or not. There is a need for people at all levels of the church and community to engage in anti-racism work to achieve systemic and organization change, and I am committed to this work in whatever role I can serve.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

My previous appointment was Lead Minister of Community Life in a large, white, suburban church south of Denver. As part of our anti-racism work in the church we attempted to develop a relationship with a historically black church in Denver. I already had a connection and friendship with the clergyperson, who is a clergy of color, and we both thought this could be good for our churches. It failed miserably. Members of each church attended a few events at the other church, but we were never able to figure out how to develop relationships - personal and communal relationships. I learned that this type of forced communal relationship was neither helpful nor effective because we hadn't figured out how to develop trust, understanding, and connection amongst the people.

As a District Superintendent, I have spent time developing relationships with clergy and laity from ethnic congregations. I have heard frustrations around the differences in first, second and third generation communities, and the struggles in churches around developing ministries that connect across the generations. I have grieved with laity as they talked about a loss of culture and history, and their attempt to pass these along to their children amidst the cultural divides.

These relationships and experiences have changed my thought processes, especially when making decisions. Before a decision is made about programming, structure, organizational leadership, and personnel, I ask (myself and others) how the decision might be understood and experienced in immigrant generation communities and congregations of color. There is intentionality to think beyond my own experiences and to see beyond my own lenses, followed by modeling relationships and engaging others in the discussion. Most importantly, I've developed a renewed commitment to lifting up leaders from these communities and changing the voices around the table.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

I was appointed as the Mile High Metro District Superintendent on July 1, 2020 and began working with the District Committee on Ministry right away. At that time, the candidacy paperwork was only available in English, interpretation meant finding a clergy person who spoke the candidate's first language, culture was not widely considered when assigning mentors, and there was very little awareness or acknowledgement regarding evaluation of non-dominant culture candidates based on dominate culture standards.

Within the first year a new chairperson was approved and together we introduced the Intercultural Development Inventory, LLC to the DCOM and required every member to participate in intercultural competency work. We are working to have all the candidacy paperwork available in languages spoken

by the churches in our district – Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, and Tongan. We offer professional interpretation to candidates who choose it. Finding mentors within our conference who can understand and connect with a candidate’s cultural experience has been our biggest struggle, and we are now engaged with denominational leaders to find mentors from across the UM connection.

When interviewing and discussing candidates from ethnic communities, we have begun to recognize when our standard questions are unhelpful and how to ask questions and listen to answers differently. We are still learning, but we are now at a place where questions about cultural differences are commonplace, and our DCOM members are newly aware of this importance.

There is now an increased number of clergy and laity from ethnic churches on the District Committee on Ministry. We also are seeing an increase in the number of ethnic candidates beginning the process in our district. I won’t claim this is a direct outcome of our work, but I do pray their process is more life-affirming now than it would have been in the past.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

I believe a leader should always ask the question, ‘Who’s voice is missing?’ Paying attention to who is missing, who is silenced, and who has not yet been welcomed is important in centering leadership from the margins. Creating space for diverse voices and those who have been marginalized isn’t enough if we don’t create equity in those spaces. Simply having diverse voices around a table isn’t enough if those voices aren’t listened to, believed, and respected.

Anytime I step into a new leadership position I pay attention to who is not represented by those already in leadership positions, and I ask why. Members of the dominant culture often fail to recognize the barriers and roadblocks that exist for historically marginalized communities – we simply don’t see the barriers until we begin paying attention. Ensuring full participation begins with understanding the barriers and roadblocks, and then working to dismantle them. Unfortunately, convincing people of a need to pay attention to realities outside of one’s own experience can be difficult.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion work is vital in our annual conferences, districts, and churches. We know that this work is just a beginning, and that the goal reaches beyond diversity, equity, and inclusion to belonging and full participation of all persons.

Centering leadership from the margins means making changes to who is in leadership roles and making changes to the roles themselves - it is both about personnel and organizational structure. It means lifting voices and stories from those previously unheard. It means letting go of cultural norms based on the dominant culture and making space for new norms and new traditions. It means including voices from the margins in the decision-making process.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

A first step for a leader to become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism is speaking aloud the truth of racism. Too often leaders shy away from speaking hard truths because of the discomfort and anxiety it will create. The potential discomfort of those in power is prioritized over the daily injustices of those who experience racism.

In the current context of the United States, there is an effort to minimize the reality of racism, especially historic and systemic racism. Nothing puts people in power more on edge than phrases like white privilege, entitlement, implicit bias, and micro-aggressions. Those in power are fearful of losing their power if they acknowledge the truth of racism. That fear is the motivation to deny the historical and current injustices of racism. We see this happening across our country to the point of leaders changing history books so that our children will not learn the hard and ugly history of our past. That fear is the motivation behind the defensiveness and inability to engage in the real and hard conversations around racism. That fear is what keeps many people silent.

Scripture reminds us that prophetic voices are rarely appreciated in the moment. Prophetic voices disrupt the status quo. Prophetic voices demand change. Prophetic voices lead to prophetic action. Prophetic voices shine light on behaviors, attitudes, entitlements, and injustices others want to hide. Prophetic voices stand up to the fear.

Episcopal leaders need to lead by example, being the prophetic voices who speak the truth of racism and encourage others to speak this truth as well. Episcopal leaders should set the tone for clergy and laity to be prophetic voices in their settings, and then offers the support and care that will be needed by clergy and congregations who embody this courageous leadership.

ANTHONY TANG

Ethnicity: Asian-American (Chinese-American)

Annual Conference membership: Desert Southwest Conference

Current ministry appointment: Desert Mission UMC - Scottsdale, Arizona

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

When I was young, I attended a church that held “closed” Communion, reserved for church members only. Every single Sunday, I sat in my pew watching the trays of Communion crackers and small cups of grape juice being passed by me as if the Grace of God was passing me by.

Later, when I first visited a United Methodist Church and saw Communion, I was invited up and responded, “I can’t; I’m not a member” and unexpectedly heard, “Yes, you can receive Communion here where all are welcome.” I walked forward in the church with tears streaming down my face to receive a gift I was utterly undeserving of... and so overwhelmingly grateful for. This to me, is the complete expression of the unconditional grace of God that represents Christ’s mighty acts of salvation, not because we have faith in Christ, but because Christ has faith in us.

This memory and experience of Welcome is what I carry with me in every fiber and cell of my body and how I strive to serve and lead as a pastor, not only in welcoming every guest and stranger to our church, but also in Communion when I stand before the gathered congregation and those connecting online and announce, “Here at our church, we celebrate an open Communion Table, where all are welcome to come and receive this gift of Jesus Christ.”

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

In Las Vegas, while serving as lead pastor for University UMC, I simultaneously served for a year and a half as the pastor for First Filipino American UMF. Furthermore, a part of our ministry was being in close relationship with Las Naciones, a Hispanic congregation; A Grain Of Mustard Seed, a Korean congregation; and a ministry serving refugees from various countries from the continent of Africa.

This was helpful preparation for me when I was appointed as the Director of Connectional Ministries for the Desert Southwest Conference and oversaw our ethnic community ministries. During my service in that office and position was the first time we released letters from our Conference office in more languages than English to our ethnic communities and established a new standard for communication.

I have seen how a priority of making sure people can read a letter in their own language not only embodies hospitality, but challenges our own assumptions and privileges which are great values.

On the flip side, I have also worked with others struggling through the challenges of financial restraints and cultural differences that can complicate translation and interpretation endeavors. Nonetheless, these are struggles worth having again and again as we strive to move forward together as the body of Christ.

I am both aware of the challenges and the rewards of walking with various different ethnic communities and as an Episcopal leader, my goal is that we may all learn and grow together on this shared journey of

faith.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

While I was serving as the Director of Connectional Ministries, we invited clergy and lay leaders from all of our ethnic churches to join us at the conference office, along with interpreters to assist us in our time together. Time was provided for ethnic communities to meet separately and all together.

As we listened to various participants speak about their concerns and challenges, we noticed trends and ways in which communities both diverged and ran parallel. Between and within each ethnic community, we found differences in cultures, values, and priorities. We also found generational similarities. Immigrant generations found connections in their concern around both holding on to the traditions of their homeland as well as questions around assimilation. They had concerns that their children and grandchildren were losing cultural heritage. Some of the second and third generations shared challenges of experienced racism, questions of identity, and balancing family with individualism. Many had concerns about younger generations losing their faith to secularism.

Of course, there were no perfect matches of experience and we didn't solve any of the concerns that were expressed, but in listening to each other and sharing in both our differences and similarities, we discovered a connection in our journeys that helped everyone not feel so alone or isolated. Some new friendships were formed between communities that had never been in conversation before.

For my own leadership, I learned that there is power experienced when people gather, share, and make connections. This does not eliminate differences, nor can leaders assume that all experiences are the same. Nonetheless, even when we speak different languages, the times that we are able to bring people together are Pentecost moments for the Holy Spirit to work through the body and give us hope for the future.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

I believe that the shame-based systems that tie self-worth to productivity (or church size in this context) is unhealthy for all of our churches and has been particularly devastating to ethnic or immigrant communities. These shame-based systems place extra attention on high potential locations that are growing "fast enough" or "rich enough" to potentially produce the next mega-church, which often overlooks rural areas, urban areas, and ethnic or immigrant concentrations.

These shame-based systems make church growth so important that pastors and lay leaders burn out trying to find magical fixes to grow. In the meantime, lay members too often sit waiting for someone else to announce the next program.

The system change I have advocated for is a shift from a productivity focus to a health focus that lets go of trying to find magical fixes and instead encourages communities to do what they do best, which is for every member to be in ministry. When every member is in ministry working together to advance the mission of the church, then we honor different leadership styles and cultures and we respect that good

ideas may come from anyone, there's a place for everyone to be in service and leadership, and the entire community is activated to make a difference.

When I worked with our Native American Communities, this focus sought to uplift every voice and led to deeply personal conversations about boarding schools and educational systems that forced children into unfamiliar educational styles. It was a humbling and sacred moment to receive those stories and emphasized how important it is to continue to honor the story, culture, leadership, and ministry of each person. I believe that United Methodists can again flourish by listening to the people in our communities who know best and supporting them as the Holy Spirit inspires.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

I am fully committed to honoring the diversity of our communities in leadership without practicing tokenism.

As someone who has experienced being tokenized, I know how devastating it can be. Tokenism is when we choose someone who is mismatched for a role, but press for their selection as a symbol of the organization's commitment to diversity, which often sets that person and the organization up for conflict or failure. Tokenism is when we choose someone to represent an entire culture or community while disrespecting their individual voice and contribution, which often leads to silencing or disrespecting the individual. Tokenism is when we designate one day a year to honor an entire culture or community, while otherwise ignoring them. None of these practices are helpful and kill motivation, enthusiasm, and passion.

My plan that centers leadership from the margins is about emphasizing healthy leadership deployment that knows the unique perspectives different people have and works to match their skills, abilities, and passions to positions in which they may both thrive and be challenged. Furthermore, by maintaining a commitment to diversity, the organization can grow by always considering different perspectives.

If there are communities that are under-represented in various positions, then continued conversations are warranted to address necessary questions. Is the organization clearly communicating what competencies and skills are necessary, or do those competencies and skills need to be reevaluated in regards to cultural assumptions and anti-racist priorities? If someone is not yet perceived as ready for a particular role, what is the organization responsible for changing and what is the individual responsible for learning and growing in order to create a good fit and a meaningful experience? How can the organization and system be better oriented in order to help everyone—in all of its cultural diversity—to thrive and grow?

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

An Episcopal leader has an important, prophetic voice to speak against racism, beginning with their own. Whether it is privilege, systemic racism, internalized racism against oneself or one's people, or racism pitting one disadvantaged group against the other, it is every person's individual responsibility to hold oneself accountable and to be open to being held accountable by others. Especially, it is the episcopal leader who must set the tone and example for everyone in the organization.

Furthermore, an episcopal leader cannot be held accountable by others unless checks and balances are maintained and strengthened and unless there are protections for every member against unjust punishments and retribution. Likewise, the episcopal leader must make it uncomfortable for others to not speak up.

If the Western Jurisdiction elects me as bishop, I will be committed to honoring every voice; I may not always agree or do what others want me to do, but I will ensure that their voice is heard and their dignity is respected. In this way, I do not just preserve my own voice as being prophetic, but we can ensure every prophetic voice is heard.

Second, it is the responsibility of the episcopal leader to give significance and legitimacy to the work of the conference. In the same way that General Conference is the voice of the United Methodist Church and not the Council of Bishops, it is the Annual Conference that is the voice of the conference and not the bishop. As an episcopal leader, I will support and honor the collective voice of the members of the conference.

Finally, whenever I see acts of racism and other forms of oppression, I will use my position to appropriately speak to a vision that calls us from the shortcomings of today toward Christ's kin-dom.

SIOSAIA FONUA TU`ITAHU

Ethnicity: Pacific Islander, Tongan

Annual Conference membership: California-Pacific Annual Conference

Current ministry appointment: East District Superintendent

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

"Stranger" is a learned concept for me. As a Pacific Islander growing up in the Pacific, no one is a stranger, as everyone is connected to each other; I may not know someone, but he/she belongs just as I belong, as we are both a part of a bigger body or community.

Meeting someone for the first time, is not a time of meeting a "stranger" but a time of re-connecting with a "kaunga-fononga" or a sojourner or co-traveler in life. To have an opportunity to meet anyone for the first time is tied to God allowing all of his children to connect with each other. Jesus said it best when he told his disciples in Mathew 25:35, "I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me." And always, I am guided by the general guiding principal of "love your neighbor as your self" and "do unto others, as you would want them to do unto you." Respect and hospitality flow from this basic belief and way of life; I have an obligation to show hospitality, to welcome, feed, house, love and care and ensure the comfort of the other, because the other belongs just as much as I belong. This kind of embodiment informed the way I approach my clients in my former career in Probation, respecting them, and meeting them where they were, even while I tried to bring healing to them. I offer the same respect to those who I have met through the variety of social justice ministries. I am there with them as sojourners, not as a "savior" or one in authority.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

As a member of an ethnic group, I see more clearly how the gifts and graces that I bring as a Pacific Islander, along with the those brought by other ethnic groups, can strengthen the whole, or The UMC. I believe that the call on my life to be in this episcopacy journey is an opportunity to shed light on the numerous underrepresented communities that often remain in the margin of society and the church and perhaps highlight different types of leadership that may not be present or valued in the mainstream. It is also a testimony to the diversity of our denomination and of God's creation. Every ethnic group have age-proven practices that can enrich the life of the denomination, but there are few opportunities to offer them to the 'mainstream' UMC family. Tongan society, for example is guided by four core values, Fefaka'apa'apa'aki (mutual respect), Feveitokai'aki (sharing, cooperating and fulfillment of mutual obligations), Lototoo (humility and generosity), and Tauhi vaha'a (loyalty and commitment). What would servant leadership guided by these values look like? By answering the call to the episcopacy, these practices can be introduced as part of the solution to some of the issues that we are facing as a church. The overall result will not only be a more equitable UMC structure and a more enriched toolset for the denomination in deciphering answers to this ever-changing environment, but a more accurate reflection of who God is, and the fullness of God. Thus far, we have limited ourselves to appreciate only a particular type of leadership, and in doing so, fail to reflect God's fullness in our midst.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

My leadership is very much grounded in my identity as an immigrant from the Pacific Islands. Life is lived out in a communal setting that is held together by mutual reciprocity. Imbedded in the communal life, are codes of ethics on how to relate to other members of the family, the society, as well as inter-generational relationships. For instance, the respect of elders and others begin in the household. All younger generations are expected to honor and respect all generations above them. This code of ethic guides the practice of the 'kainga' or extended family, as there is no Tongan word for nuclear family. Within a Tongan home, there is always multiple generations of grandparents, fathers, mothers, aunts uncles, cousins, and children and other members of the community who need a home. So when I have the opportunity to lead, I refer back to this upbringing. I want to build an extended family type of community where mutual reciprocity is valued and practiced. In the district, it means developing opportunities for mutual sharing of responsibility in a mission or circuit area, to lessen the load on local pastors. Mutuality sets some accountability on finance, and budgeting, as I seek to ensure that financial responsibility are shared evenly and strategically. It is not a solution per se, but it is moving to a way of life with one another, that holds everyone accountable to each other, and above all to God.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

I had the opportunity to serve a multi-ethnic, multi-language, and multi-generational church where I encountered a deep level of underlying institutional racism. The fact that 5 different language ministry was happening at one church, was admirable, but the structure and leadership placed power primarily in the hands of the few white members. It did not help that a white senior pastor was adamant about her role to develop a "multicultural" ministry, which essentially meant bringing everyone together as one body, and devaluing the different parts. I found myself challenged on many fronts at this appointment. I struggled to bring voice and self determination to immigrant groups who had long accepted their lot was to listen and follow. I struggled against a strong power base that did not want to give up any power. And I fought constantly with a superior colleague who projected her own vision that valued the numbers, color, and energy of the different ethnic groups, but did not value their desire to worship and live out their faith life authentically. Challenging this system was not easy, and after much pain and suffering (with many scars), we were able to build a system that shared power, as well as develop leaders that were able to participate in authentic leadership. At the end of my time at this church, many of the leadership positions in the church were taken up by first generation immigrants, as we were able to ensure that each ethnic group are not only represented at the table, but that they they lead at the table.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

As noted earlier, my call to enter into this episcopal discernment process, is a call for centering leadership from the margins. By definition, this call is rooted in the fundamental need to create wholeness, that can only be achieved as an act of spiritual discipline. In that sense, it is not simply a goal, objective, or need, but it is the very definition of beloved community where the margin and the center are relational and accountable to each other and to God. Structurally speaking, although our mission statement names the local church as the center of disciple making, it is often in the margins,

disconnected from the center of power within the UMC structure. The local church, their identity, pain and struggles, must drive how we make decision, how we allocate resources, to name a few. Immigrant leadership often found on the margins, are needed to inform the way we lead in a world that is diverse and constantly changing. Immigrants who live under the poverty line, yet give joyfully can teach the center about living out a theology of abundance, not scarcity. Young people who are often in the margins need to be leading the conversation on how to get younger people into the church. The experience of LGBTQ+ people, and the resilience and determination that they have is a gift to the denomination and should be celebrated. Decolonization is a process of centering the margins, and allowing healing for everyone, by providing avenues for deconstruction and liberation. Dismantling racism is a way of living that centers margin by seeking to heal the historical pain carried by the entire body. Ultimately, leading in this manner is a sacred duty, that must be carried out as part of our baptismal vows to live and follow Christ.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

The prophetic voice of a an Episcopal leader is grounded, once again in spiritual discipline, and the leader's accountability to God. It is a call to speak with clarity and singular purpose.

The most important declaration a leader need to affirm is that all forms of racism are contrary to the will of God revealed in scripture, incompatible with the gospel, and need to be called sinful. In this sense, prophetic announcement is lived out with intentionality. There is much power vested in the episcopacy, which can be used strategically to undo the racism that is embedded in structures and policies and cultures of institutions. Developing that voice amount to a constant and on-going individual and public repentance from this sin. And then actively participating and leading the work mandated by our faith, as Micah puts it, to love justice, seek mercy and walk humbly with God. Holding the entire body accountable to this charge must be done on every level. Being prophetic during the Black Lives Matter movement, meant preaching against police brutality and calling racism a sin from the pulpit, joining civic and religious leaders on the city level to find solutions. I worked with immigrant young people to center their pain and stood with them, in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, but I also had to work with their parents to help them understand their anti-blackness as a sin. All this was good work, but it must continue, and worked into the structure of the church, even when it is not happening in the media and around us.

JOHN TUCKER

Ethnicity: White

Annual Conference membership: Oregon-Idaho

Current ministry appointment: District Superintendent of Crater Lake

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

I attempt to live by two principles. The first I call the principle of vulnerability. Whether I am in direct relationship with someone or in conversations with others I attempt to identify the most vulnerable person who would be impacted and place any authority or privilege I may have behind that vulnerable person. The second is what I have heard referred to as The Platinum Rule which means I attempt to provide the kind of support the vulnerable party as indicated they need rather than the kind of support I think they might need. I also approach "the stranger" with my own vulnerability because despite being privileged, I too am often a stranger in church circles. I have never felt I belonged but now see that as a gift rather than a weakness.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

While I have experienced working with people from African American and LatinX communities, my most direct recent involvement with and influence by is with Pacific Islanders. I have a pastor in my district from Samoa. He also happens to be a former parishioner of mine who started a Samoan Fellowship at the church I served. He is a Licensed Local Pastor and I have had to be a voice against white normatively with the District Committee on Ministry who evaluates him on an annual basis. Pastor Tau is a genuine soul serving two white congregations in addition to the Samoan Fellowship. I value diverse perspectives and asked his daughter, Soteria Galo, to serve as my district lay leaders. Ria is a fantastic resource and leader and her presence reminds me of the gracious hospitality her culture has extended to me in various settings and convicts me of how white culture is often not so gracious even when it is well intended. I would seek similar diversity in the role of bishop and would try to de-center the bishop role so that cultures who value reverence for authority are provided ways of speaking truth to power in ways that are acceptable to them. We need truth spoken to power and I never forget that.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

My main experience is with the Samoan Fellowship at Medford that features first generation immigrants from Samoa. Their leader was a member of the church I served and approached me with a desire to share worship space for the small and developing faith community. It was a blessing to be invited to attend special events that they hosted which included a Pacific Islanders Conference that was attended by people from all over the west. The challenges we faced were around how to be mutually committed to relationship between the small developing Samoan fellowship and the large white congregation that felt possessive of the property. I worked with both groups to make sure hospitality was centered so that each group experienced the best of the other without the larger group asking the smaller group to appropriate its ways. The Samoan Fellowship occasionally provided music in the larger and predominantly white worship service and I and others worked to support them in ways the Samoan

fellowship defined. I learned the grace that comes from receiving more honor and respect than I was due from the Samoan Fellowship. I learned more about Jesus from them than they did from me though I tried to embody the gospel of grace and hospitality in the relationship. The principle of vulnerability and the platinum rule were formed during that time, as well as my growing awareness of white normativity.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

I annually seek support funding for the Samoan Fellowship because it is a vulnerable community that shares a larger part of itself with us than we deserve. I have also sought to appoint pastors of color but have experienced how difficult that is within white congregations. Our entire system is built on the assumption of white normativity and this has made us inhospitable not only to persons of color but also to any who think differently or take risks to bring change. My entire superintendency has been devoted to dismantling the status quo though it is often done in non-obvious ways. I did culture assessments at almost all of the churches in my district helping congregations identify blind spots, sacred cows, and other preferences that are rooted in white middle class assumptions. This helps me create what my colleagues call the "Tucker Quadrilateral" which is really a way of getting different kinds of clergy into congregations so change can occur. I admit that it took me a while to understand that much of what I was criticizing was white privilege. I just thought it was Methodist reluctance to change but I now see it runs deeper than that. One other specific example that I deserve no credit for other than staying out of the way was the giving back of closed church property to indigenous people in southern Oregon in my district. I applaud Bishop Stanovsky's leadership in that.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

First, by de-centering the role of bishop. Where the bishop is central, the limitations of that bishop become the limitations of the conference or area that bishop serves. Second, by clarifying the roles and responsibilities in our system so people from the margins do not have to guess or decode the institutional language about how processes work. Third, by explicitly seeking out voices that have not been heard and asking them to serve in positions of influence. Fourth, by re-establishing trust so those leaders from the margin are trusted. In my experience, trust is necessary for empowerment. Empowerment leads to authenticity and authenticity leads to an authority that can be held accountable in healthy and transparent ways rather than in the controlling and opaque ways our white institution frequently employs.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

This is different based on the Episcopal leader. As a white person, my leadership would be expressed through invitation to persons of color into leadership and presentational roles. This promotes the spacing of truth to power whether the power be me as the bishop or the conference as the normative creating space. As a white person, I would lead by vulnerability that would be expressed publicly through confession and repentance. This confession and repentance would be my routine way of operating, not just regarding issues of race but also of other wounds the white institution has inflicted upon the vulnerable. Making this routine keeps it from being the occasional performance that makes white people feel better about themselves rather than actually changing behavior. I have seen well

intentioned white progressives adopt condescending and self-satisfying postures toward people of color that are cringeworthy at best and harmful at worst.

SIONE TEIAPA'A TUKUTAU

Ethnicity: Tongan

Annual Conference membership: Mountain Sky Conference

Current ministry appointment: Tongan United Methodist Church Salt Lake City, Utah

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

One of our main goals is to be a people who provide hospitality for strangers. Jesus challenges us to strive to be a people that will practice real hospitality in which strangers feel welcome.

As Children of God, we should have real fellowship, love, and hospitality towards others. True hospitality has a way of uniting society, creating new bonds of interest and affection, as we show kindness to the strangers and to the poor.

Hospitality helps strangers feel at home. Most strangers who come into our churches need to be invited into friendships with others. They need to know they belong and they are appreciated. Sometimes our friendship circles are closed circles. We hug our friends, talk to our friends, and spend our time with only our friends. We may smile and speak, but we leave strangers feeling like outsiders.

A hospitable united congregation in worship draws strangers. The church should be a place of hospitality. It should be a place of love for the strangers. In a hospitable church, the greeters and ushers perform their assigned tasks of shaking hands, passing out bulletins, and collecting the offering. They must truly care and be sensitive to the needs and feelings of strangers.

Jesus invites us to welcome the strangers and the least among us. We are not alone. We stand with God. We stand with each other. We stand in unity with those who need us to stand with them. So, I challenge you to allow God's compassion to inspire you to rise up, speak out, and take action. May this be the blazing glory of God's justice and love shines through us and begins to bring healing to the world.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

My ethnic communities have affected my call to episcopacy. We have three different ethnic communities with their own individual culture, and they speak in their own native tongue. The Tongan community is the main one, and the other two are the Samoan and the Fijian. These three ethnic communities are growing in numbers, especially the younger generations, and they are also creating new cultures.

I have been in the United States for 37 years and our ethnic communities have been part of the United Methodist Church for over 50 years. I grew up back home in the Tongan Methodist Church, and most people of all three communities also grew up in the Methodist Church. When all three of the communities arrived in the United States, they all went to the UMC for worship.

As the ethnic communities grew in numbers and worshiped in their own native tongues, I noticed that they are in need of teaching and assistance at different levels. The people of my ethnic communities came up with different ideas of thinking and interpretations of how to worship in a foreign land.

The ethnicity affects our pattern of thinking, our approach to different situations, our behavior and most importantly our looks. For instance, the way us Tongans approach a problem is very different in comparison to the approach of Americans. Americans are more open-minded to certain areas than us Tongans. It is not because we are less literate than Americans. It is because our subconscious mind reacts like that due to our traditions, less exposure, and different national views or mentality.

All I am trying to say is that the way people think, react, and behave are mostly influenced by their education, background, nationality, ethnicity, and traditions. So, my experience with ethnic communities influenced my call to the Episcopacy.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

I came to the United States 37 years ago with a student VISA and as an immigrant. When I arrived to the US, I learned that I had limited benefits financially. So, when immigrants are able to fully participate in the economic and social life of their adopted country, it benefits them and their communities. These opportunities give them and their children the chance to improve their lives.

I have learned that many immigrants find their progress blocked by barriers to education, training, and support services. These barriers keep many immigrant families from achieving independence and prosperity.

I have built relationships with immigrant communities and congregations of colored people for 27 years. I have connected with the key people of the immigration department, and they volunteered to come and help my people of color by identifying promising practices, key policy devices, and to discuss these critical issues.

As a pastor who has experiences and new learning about immigration issues, I have used and applied all those experiences and new learning in my leadership. I have used my bilingual experience to help immigrants for interpretation and filling out some of their immigration and financial forms.

So, adopting the progress of immigrants can be challenging. But I have learned that bringing together the government officials, we can tackle this complex problem and bring out solutions.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

It is a crucial time for learning when I have advocated for systems change or a system response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations/communities. Sometimes our voices are unified, diverse, distinctive, collective, powerful, and strong. But we must speak out on the critical importance of high-quality for systems change that uplift ethnic or immigrant congregations/communities.

As I have strongly advocated for a change in the system that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations/communities. I have also spent time and effort with immigrants to ensure that they have all of the benefits. I also follow and support the systems change in order to bring progress for the immigrants. The immigrants' stories are important, and they are a testimony, a letter to the editor, a viral video, and much more.

The COVID-19 pandemic has improved how the housing systems were planned on racist ideas and policies producing unfair outcomes. It is important for charity to take a lead in the response and recovery efforts. So, each recommendation that we have outlined will only be successful long-term and result in true systemic change if the systems we work within are reformed with more racial justice.

Systems change requires a sector wide approach of engaging in public policy and advocacy at all levels: local, state, and federal. The charity has a vital role to play in not only just supporting and influencing reasonable systems change, but also pushing for this change as part of a long-term vision and plan that continually puts racial justice at the forefront.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

I think my plan for centering leadership from the margins is a positive situation. It is a positive situation because my leadership is centering and focusing from and in the margins. The margins are the places outside where the boundaries and borders are located. They are the places where the poor, the lost, the needy, the weak, the homeless, and the least are residing. As a pastor I seek for the poor to focus my style and skills. I want to draw my leadership techniques and center on the margins.

My leadership is centering from and in the margins. If leadership is assured by logical relations of a finite collection of sets, anyone could lead. My leadership is based on my personal experiences as well as those of my past. It must be a part in the manner of followers which assured by the purpose around the team is focused.

My leadership style is to delegate responsibility, not accountability in the margins. So, this allows followers to follow in their own the mission and lead in their manner and accountability. I am the leader to answer to those above my level for the success or failure of the mission. Accountability cannot be delegated.

In my leadership I would enable individuals with the power to make decisions as we do ministry in the margins. I also trust in their experience and skill to move the ministry forward. I ensure them to know that I will stand beside them after each individual successes or failures in their support.

My plan for centering leadership in the margins is to do my fair share and respect others in a positive and supportive manner. When people experience my manner, I ensure they walk away with a respect for the ministry of Jesus Christ.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

I believe an Episcopal leader should have a strong prophetic voice in an environment of racism through boldly speaking and preaching out God's word with justice and truth. This is hard work because you are challenging the people who live in an environment of racism to change their life and do something different. Life is a choice but it is important to tell the people that racism is not accepted in the Christian life and in God's sight. "Racism is a sin!"

Like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr; an Episcopal leader should speak strongly about freedom for all and criticize discrimination that crippled so many of our citizens. An Episcopal leader must take the challenge of Dr. King Jr. one step further. He/she must have a dream that children would not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

About two years ago, there were ongoing issues of racism in our society which led to the tragic, brutal, and senseless deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and others. So, racism is a sin. It is a sin to treat someone less for they are poor, color of their skin, have no political power, and have a disability.

I believe an Episcopal leader should lead and become a strong prophetic voice in an environment of racism. We have seen an unrest protests and marching and shouting that lead up to violence and maybe riots in our society because of the racism. It is because of the judgement and hatred. It's a sin that roots itself in many hearts. Racism has no place in the Church, no place in the heart of Christians, no place in the hearts of the UMC, and no place in the Kingdom of God.

KEN WALDEN

Ethnicity: African American

Annual Conference membership: California Pacific

Current ministry appointment: Senior Pastor of Holman UMC in Los Angeles

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

Webster’s Dictionary defines stranger as “foreigner; a person or thing that is unknown or with whom one is unacquainted.” As Senior Pastor of Holman United Methodist Church I made the decision to hire a student intern and selected Mr. Francis Serrano – a young man of Filipino ethnicity, to join the pastoral staff at Holman UMC, a historically African-American Church.

I embody welcoming the stranger, daily, in a variety of ways. Most of my ministry has been in multicultural settings in relation to ethnicity, gender, race, nationality, immigrants, among other demographic demarcations. Some of the ways I welcome the stranger include:

- a. Inviting the stranger to attend, participate, and become a member church
- b. Inviting the stranger to my home to share a meal
- c. Inviting the stranger to be in relationship with me as a friend

As an African-American male, I am the stranger in most settings. I also participate and support advocacy organizations that prioritize the stranger on their agenda such as the following:

- a. CLUE: Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice educates, organizes, and mobilizes the faith community to accompany workers and their families in their struggle for good jobs, dignity, and justice.
- b. Los Angeles Urban League: To help African Americans and others in underserved communities achieve their highest true social parity, economic self-reliance, power, and civil rights. The League promotes economic empowerment through education and job training, housing and community development, workforce development, entrepreneurship, health, and quality of life.

I invite the stranger to participate in different decision-making processes, by intentionally and systematically inviting various demographics to the table to share in community building. I am referring to the table of communication, the table of employment, the table of influence, and the table of collegiality to name a few.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

My pastoral experience with ethnic communities includes the African-American Church in addition to other ethnic churches. I was also appointed to Wilshire UMC at the time when four congregations worshiped in the form of the English Ministry, Filipino Ministry, Hispanic Ministry, and Korean Ministry sharing one building. I was Senior Pastor of the English ministry and served closely with the Pastors of the other congregations and together we participated in shared worship experiences, pulpit exchanges (we preached for a different congregation on Sunday other than our assigned congregation), community meals and community service opportunities.

My experience with ethnic communities includes the reality that many feel they are not full recipients to all benefits of The United Methodist Church. Unfortunately, many ethnic communities are not reflected in the upper leadership of our church. Consequently, often they lament for more representation within the Episcopacy. Fortunately, I have been mentored by some African-American United Methodist Bishops such as Bishop James King (retired) and Bishop Charles Jordan (retired) to name a few, and their witness and position has reaffirmed to me that episcopacy leadership of color is possible in addition to often necessary to promote racial fairness.

My experience with ethnic communities influenced my call to the Episcopacy in several ways, which include the following:

- a. A need for African-American Bishops in the Western Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church and the larger denomination
- b. Ethnic Communities and Non-Ethnic Communities need Ethnic Episcopal Leadership for much needed perspectives and similar lived experiences

I believe representation matters and having an episcopal leader that reflects ethnic communities of color is important for our churches, communities, and the denomination. Episcopal ethnic diversity helps to visibly demonstrate The United Methodist Church is inclusive and fair.

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

Throughout my congregational and military ministry, I have built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations. For example, at Wilshire United Methodist Church in Los Angeles, California I helped build bridges between the English Ministry, Filipino Ministry, Hispanic Ministry, and Korean Ministry, as we all shared one church building and common facilities. This collaborative working environment fostered constant dialogue, exchange of ideas and shared worship experiences. This opportunity gave me an appreciation of different perspectives in decision making, cultural influences and social constructs based on lived experiences. The relationships I built with my immigrant colleagues has expanded my world view and my commitment to social and economic justice for all.

As President of Gammon Theological Seminary, I made it a priority to help immigrant generation communities and congregations of color gain admittance into theological education, including helping to provide scholarship opportunities, student internships, and permanent placement opportunities upon graduation. In my current role as Senior Pastor of Holman UMC, I also build relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color, fostering relationships and creative ways to serve those in our local community and the larger city of Los Angeles.

I have also applied learnings in my leadership by authoring a book entitled “Practical Theology for Church Diversity: A Guide for Clergy and Congregations.” In the book I describe various ways to help promote equity and equality for all of God’s children and not only the majority in population or the majority in financial resources and political resources through advocacy events.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

I was contacted by my clergy colleague in the person of Rabbi Jocee Hudson from the LA Voice organization, several days ago in relation to the racist telephone conversation by Los Angeles City Council Members that went public. Upon request by Rabbi Jocee Hudson, I agreed to advocate for a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities when I signed a petition along with other actions reflecting justice along racial lines.

I always support organizations such as LA Voice, which is a multi-racial, multi-faith community organization that awakens people to their own power, training them to speak, act, and work together to transform our [Los Angeles] County into one that reflects the dignity of all people.

I have always advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities. One example is that it has been my experience when helping to lead congregations is to always try to have a representative on the board or in the planning meetings from the demographic you are attempting to help participate in discussions contemplating solutions that impact them. For instance, try to get an ethnic representative or immigrant representative involved in the discussions if you want to develop solutions to serve them effectively.

This approach helps to create a dialogue rather than a monologue. This approach encourages the ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities' voice(s) to be heard and their wisdom to be acknowledged in respectful ways.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

My plan for centering leadership from the margins includes the following:

- a. Establish Open Lines of Communication: There will be several ways for all marginal groups to communicate with me such as In-Person Listening Sessions, Virtual Listening Sessions, Surveys, and other forms of communication.
- b. Create a Diverse Staff and a Diverse Cabinet from marginal communities: Hire ethnic persons and immigrants to provide a variety of perspectives and talents.
- c. Draft Strategic Plans with major input from ethnic persons and immigrants from marginal communities to increase equity and equality to promote fairness.

The margins that consist of ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities are usually systematically excluded in substantial numbers from economic wealth, political power, and even religious executive leadership. Therefore, it is essential for the margins to have an episcopal leader that has deeply lived experiences in the margins.

Many leaders in the Old Testament and New Testament came from the margins such as David the little shepherd boy, along with Jesus born in a manger, and also Mary Magdalene that followed our Lord and Savior in the person of Jesus, to name a few. The margins are important components not to be ignored, and I will continue to make it a priority.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

An Episcopal leader can become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism by utilizing his or her voice by preaching, speaking, and teaching in opposition to racism. A prophetic voice should do the following:

- a. Recognizes racism
- b. Calls out racism as wrong
- c. Works to eliminate racism from the environment

Another option for an Episcopal leader to become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism should be to recommend and utilize various resources that are anti-racist such as books, websites, in-person trainings, and virtual trainings to name a few to help inform policies and procedures for a more inclusive church, community, and world.

Being an advocate of all people also includes listening to the concerns of all perspectives of others. In my experience as a leader, in the academy, church, and military, it has been hearing the stories and sharing human experiences that has made me aware of the struggles of others.

ROB WALTERS

Ethnicity: White

Annual Conference membership: Oregon-Idaho

Current ministry appointment: Nampa First United Methodist Church

How do you embody welcoming the stranger?

Welcoming is a precursor to honoring, loving, and affirming. It is a first step toward seeing others as Jesus sees them, not as our centralized whiteness and embedded racism tend to see “the stranger.” The question, “how do I embody welcoming the stranger” is challenging because it implies I have arrived. In reality, it is a journey in checking myself, evaluating how I view others, a journey in anti-racism and a journey in sanctification. Welcoming is not colonization or white savior complex, but rather intentional relationship building.

Embodying welcoming the stranger began in my home as my family welcomed, honored, loved, and affirmed multiple children in foster care, children who often felt like the stranger. This was a choice for us not out of an inability to have children in other ways but because it is following Jesus.

Later, my family and I were approached by an organization seeking placement of HS students from majority Muslim countries who wanted safe welcoming space to study in the US. We chose to go on the journey with this teen in a state not known for “welcoming the stranger.” This occurred again when my conference sought churches and homes for BIPOC interns in predominantly white communities. They felt like a stranger at first, but we developed great relationships as they lived with us.

All churches claim to be “welcoming” but the issue is that “welcoming” often means you are welcome to conform. In my experience, “welcoming” means you are welcome to be the unique person God created you to be. If elected as a Bishop, I commit to working side-by-side with those the church labels a stranger, to name the embedded racism within the church and do everything possible to create truly welcoming, honoring, loving, and affirming churches.

How has your experience with ethnic communities influenced your call to the Episcopacy?

I confess my upbringing was filtered through the lens of white privilege. My earliest experience with ethnic communities came when I served as a police officer in greater Kansas City. My experience, as much as I dislike this, involved seeing distrust and fear in the eyes of those I encountered in ethnic neighborhoods because of what the uniform represented to them. I quickly had to confront my own privilege as I grew in my awareness of the embedded racism in the criminal justice system. God called me from there to ministry full-time so I completed an MDiv with a specialization in prison ministry and restorative justice. This was my anti-racism work to name the experience ethnic communities often had with the justice system.

This influenced my call to episcopacy as I have seen first-hand the injustice ethnic communities face. Our churches must name these injustices and work toward systems that are just regardless of ethnicity, race, culture, first-language, or immigration status.

Another relationship building moment occurred as I was serving as pastor and cultivating relationships at Window Rock, the governmental seat of the Navajo Nation. Over years, indigenous persons stayed with my family. In turn, I completed two Native American immersions and led groups to learn customs, history, and study theology through the eyes of the elders. Rather than a typical mission trip, this repetitive, intentional, and non-colonizing approach to relationship building was powerful for me to educate myself and others on the importance of serving side-by-side with indigenous people.

These experiences represent just a few of several in which I have been in relationship with ethnic communities. If elected, I commit to intentional non-colonizing relationship building that helps us embody what it means to truly be the “body of Christ.”

How have you built relationships with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color and applied those learnings in your leadership?

Building relationships over time with immigrant generation communities and congregations of color has helped me envision a church that is more inclusive and representative of the image Dei the church is called to be.

As a musician, much of my early ministry life was in shared cross-cultural experiences of music and fine arts. Each of these allow for the full and unique expression of immigrant generation participants as well as persons of color. Sharing culture through musical art and visual art was a powerful experience in relationship building.

Later in ministry, the church I was serving on a pastoral team built an intentional partnership with a predominantly black church paving a way to address justice issues in the community together. In another ministry setting, these relationships took a new form as I served in an area with a large number of migrant workers who were often first-generation immigrants, some without documentation. As a pastor and as a church, we began a slow process of developing relationships. It was initiated by my doctoral work, but proceeded beyond that. Another experience involved developing a partnership with a Jamaican Methodist Church to share worship unique to the Jamaican culture.

Applying these learnings were a primary focus of my doctoral research which called the predominantly white church to increase its multicultural awareness through education. Through the intentional building of multicultural relationships, through speaking truth to white supremacy, and through uplifting the voices of both immigrant generation communities and congregations of color, the study produced increased awareness as assessed by the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale.

The true gift was not the academic results, though. The true gift was seeing that change can happen in our churches if they begin with relationship building.

Describe a time when you have advocated for systems change or a systems response that uplifts ethnic or immigrant congregations or communities?

Working for systems change in the church begins by asking, “How is the local church affected by its own whiteness?” One example of my work in the local church is in addressing the imagery of white Jesus, an image that is neither accurate nor uplifting. I have shepherded churches toward displaying accurate depictions of Jesus as a person of color.

In addition, I have challenged the descriptions we use such as “traditional worship” which is only traditional in a Euro-centric sense. It is not the powerful tradition in Filipino churches, does not carry the richness of tradition in a predominantly black church, and does not reflect the beauty and grace of Latino/a tradition. I have challenged these embedded forms of whiteness masquerading as “traditional” as they are not uplifting of ethnic communities. To be the body of Christ, we must name the beauty of other forms of tradition.

While the area I serve remains 93% white (as cited in my doctoral work), I have worked toward systematic change by stepping back and affirming BIPOC leaders in key roles and instead challenging the church to educate themselves on anti-racist behaviors. Prior to the pandemic, I shepherded a team to fully include a refugee organization in the worshipping life of the congregation. During the pandemic, we partnered with a predominantly BIPOC community near the church to launch a food ministry with leadership from persons of color. A final example was launching a ministry in Uganda to support 65 orphans. This ministry, running now for 10 years, was an intentional effort to avoid colonization, but rather a partnership mindset where Ugandans were key decision-makers with Americans serving as a support system.

As a bishop, I would remain committed to systemic change that uplifts ethnic communities, de-emphasizes whiteness, and resists colonization.

What is your plan for centering leadership from the margins?

Jesus addressed the margins. Jesus called women to first preach the good news of resurrection, but churches excluded (and still exclude) female preachers. Jesus crossed ethnic lines of exclusivity when he modeled a love for the Samaritan but churches today oppress those without white skin. Jesus loved at every opportunity but challenged the religious/political authorities who refused to follow an example of grace and love. Over 2,000 years later, in the name of “church” we continue to engage in practices that create marginalization rather than ensure leadership from the margins.

I believe the first step on the journey to center leadership from the margins is to recognize Jesus’ example and strive to live it out. This calls us personally and as a church to humility, ready to listen and recognize the ethnic and cultural richness possible in the UMC is a gift. My plan begins with recognizing the lens through which I see leadership may be different than others with different cultural backgrounds. I commit to listen, to seek to understand, and to be open to the experiences of others. I wholeheartedly share the vision of centering leadership from the margins.

As a Bishop, I would encourage us to seek that vision to be faithful to the gospel and serve as an example to the larger church. Centering leadership from the margins must avoid tokenism. Rather, it should instead intentionally develop relationships with those that find themselves on the margins. I would seek the best candidates for leadership roles on the cabinet and other key leadership areas, ensuring those roles are representative of the rich diversity present in the jurisdiction. Intentionally creating dialogue with organizations like WJIECC is critical in that relationship development. An evaluation of cross-racial appointments is also important, where appropriate for the pastor and the church.

How does an Episcopal leader become a prophetic voice in an environment of racism?

My heart has always felt a call to prophetic ministry, even though I grew up in a different denomination as a child that would have termed social justice as “political” and left it aside. What drew me to the UMC instead of my childhood denomination was attending a local church that understood that Jesus challenged the political and social structures, and we should too.

Seeing that zeal in a local church unafraid to challenge the “status quo” of society was what cemented my decision to become United Methodist clergy. As an episcopal candidate, I recognize a prophetic voice, though, is much more than simply a critical voice. It is a voice that speaks truth to power, a voice that speaks justice into injustice, a voice that speaks the heart of Christ into a political, social, and economic climate that limits the embodiment of the Gospel. One of the most important roles of the Bishop is to engage this prophetic voice in a church that has historically been complicit in systemic racism and white supremacy.

We are nothing without a Christ-centered vision. When the institution and the gospel are in conflict, a Bishop’s prophetic voice calls us to adjust our institutional view to match the paradigm to which Christ called us. The Bishop must engage opportunities to be this voice in the local episcopal area and in the larger church through speaking with media, addressing churches and church leaders, engaging in activism, being in relationship with those society has left aside, and truly living into the work to which Jesus and the jurisdiction has called a Bishop.