

California-Nevada Annual Conference
Annual Conference Session
Monitoring Report
June 18, 2010

Bishop and members of the Annual Conference, my name is Shan McSpadden, a Euro-American member of the Conference Commission on Religion and Race. I appreciate the opportunity to bring you the monitoring report from the Commission's observations of yesterday's sessions. As we stated yesterday, our purpose is to support and assist in our journey toward "total inclusiveness in our Annual Conference."

Today we have three main points.

1. In our reporting – as well as in the broader work of our conference, we struggle with the term "racial-ethnic" to describe persons. In the great diversity and complexity of ethnic identities, there is no terminology that captures both the dynamic of dominant/non-dominant or minority relations. No terminology captures the realities of our many ethnic identities. Unfortunately, the use of the term "racial-ethnic" to describe people of color masks the fact that Euro-Americans also are an ethnic group – a fact that we Euro-Americans typically do not grasp.

In this regard we appreciate the efforts of the Bishop last year asking us to identify ourselves ethnically when we spoke. We acknowledge that this was new and uncomfortable for some and would recommend that we reflect individually upon why persons were uncomfortable with claiming an ethnic identity.

We also acknowledge that the term "racial-ethnic" puts all "persons of color" into one undifferentiated group thus ignoring the many varieties of ethnic identities among us – including biracial persons. Therefore, I will be using the term ethnic minority to indicate that we all have an ethnic identity but we are still in a dominant/non-dominant reality.

2. The Memorial Service participation was again an experience of diversity. Along with the presence of the array of identities, the music came from different cultural traditions engaging our senses. The use of water is an universal, inclusive symbol.

We especially note and appreciate the important and lively participation of the very diverse group of youth. As we experienced their presence, we rejoice and see the face of the church of today and of the future. We are inspired and heartened by the serious efforts to support and include the youth.

3. In the plenaries there was a good balance of women and men presenters. In both the plenaries and legislative sessions 75-80% of the presenters and speakers were Euro-American. These persons also represented a very small percentage of all clergy and lay members. This is what we reported yesterday and during the last two annual conferences. We sense that we will be reporting the same fact in the future unless some significant changes are made. We also understand that effective participation is not just reflected through persons speaking on the floor but in active engagement in the issues before us.

Therefore, regarding dealing with legislation, we raise the question of whether we are using the best methods to ensure broader participation generally and of ethnic minority persons specifically. It does not seem that we are very effective in reaching this goal. Although we do not have a particular solution, we raise this for your serious consideration, response, and action.

Submitted by Shan McSpadden