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# Friendship Community Church: An Intercultural Faith Community of Creation

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## FRIENDSHIP COMMUNITY CHURCH - AN INTERCULTURAL FAITH COMMUNITY



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McLain spent his childhood in  
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for 12 years.

*...the cultural meaning  
of “white” overrode in  
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meaning designating  
her skin color...*

One day a few of us were helping a family in our neighborhood move out of their apartment. The kids were in the truck, the older sister pestering her brother, William, when suddenly he yelled at her, “You *whitey!*”

On another occasion, during youth club with largely African American participants, an eight-year-old named Michael leaned over and said something to his friend about one of the teachers, finishing with “and she’s white.” Kathy, another Caucasian adult youth club teacher, caught his eye. “Oh, Michael, you mean, white like me?” Looking her full in the face, Michael said, “No, Miss Kathy, *you’re* not white!”

These two verbal exchanges took place in the life of Friendship Community Presbyterian Church, a Christian community that for more than 60 years has been trying to live out their faith as an interracial church family. Michael’s confident statement of fact echoes in the memory, first, of course, because he was looking directly into the face of a white woman. As he looked up into her face, the moment in which the cultural meaning of “white” overrode in his mind the literal meaning designating her skin color illustrates how collective cultural experience can shape and reshape the meanings of words. Was the derogatory connotation implied in William’s “whitey” a meaning also in Michael’s mind, and the one behind Michael’s inability to see Miss Kathy as “white”? If so, in Michael’s word (and indeed, William’s “whitey”), we can feel decades of accrued associations passed down through families’ and neighbors’ accounts of white behavior toward African Americans.

Michael’s declaration to his youth club teacher could, on one level, be understandably felt as a moment that demonstrates effective intercultural Christian relationship. Michael could look right in his teacher’s white face and completely miss any association of her with the people intended by his other understanding of the word “white.” That that was his experience points most likely to good intercultural connection, not only by this particular youth club teacher, but by others in her faith community, both white and black. Michael’s “*you’re* not white” and moments like it function in our community in another way, too, and that is as an object of desire. We, especially white people in multiracial community, whether we admit it to ourselves or not, *desire* to be people who not only are not



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racist, but who are not even experienced by our black friends as “culturally white.” Though we know better, we still desire “post-racial” connection. We long to be “just people.”

We *are* white, of course – not only physically white, but also culturally white. So in this essay, we the authors locate ourselves as white, which is simply an acknowledgment of a limited perspective, our located and embedded lived experience. Even though in such a community we honestly try to see things also from the cultural perspective of the other, in the final analysis we rarely really transcend our limited perspectives. Although cultures *do* learn from one another, we as limited broken people usually only share what we know in the ways we’re used to, that is, from our own cultural vantage points. In describing our church, we would like to adopt Fr. Anthony Gittins’ phrase, “intercultural” community. To call Friendship Church intercultural, however, must be qualified. Often in practice we have only been what Gittins calls “cross-cultural,” or even in some ways only “multi-cultural”; but as a matter of conviction, and more deeply as a strong heart-felt desire, we think of ourselves as, and truly want to be, an *intercultural* faith community.<sup>2</sup> In this essay, we will present a picture of our church family life, viewing it largely through this lens of Fr. Gittins’ definition of an intercultural faith community. In sketching this picture of Friendship, with its good points and it’s not so good, we hope to present a study that will help to deepen our readers’ understanding and practice of intercultural, faith-based mission.

### **Roots of Today’s Friendship Community Church**

One of Fr. Gittins’ primary criteria is that an intercultural community is made up of cultures in relationship and united in a common purpose. Our purpose and sense of mission as a church have a strong history. Friendship Community Church is a small, interracial community in Christ located in a little Pittsburgh neighborhood, sandwiched between the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center in Oakland on one side, and the Hill District on the other side. Around 1990, at the height of its programming, Friendship had not only a thriving Christ-centered congregation, but also an after-school tutoring center, a housing nonprofit called Breachmenders that rehabbed houses and sold them to first-time homeowners, a school-to-career center orienting youth toward work, a daycare enabling single parents to hold down jobs, and a lively youth club that met in the nearby low-income housing community then called Terrace Village (now Oak Hill).

As a congregation gathering for worship services, Friendship began in the mid-1950s. By the 1970s it had dwindled to

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a handful, but by the end of that decade, it experienced a rebirth which shaped the church character it has today. But our story as a small church living out intercultural mission in West Oakland, Pittsburgh, really begins well before the church was even born—and this beginning did not even take place in Pittsburgh. Friendship's roots reach down into 1930s and 40s rural Mississippi where a young African American boy was born, grew up, and chafed under the grinding poverty of his daily life.

His name was John Perkins. Early on, he became acutely aware of a stark division that seemed to decide everything. He came up against the absolute division between those (mostly white folks) who owned things – the farms, the wagons, and the means of production – and those (mostly black folks) who did not own much of anything, who had to ask for jobs from the hands of those who did. As a teenager, the young Perkins grew determined to escape from the racist, dehumanizing conditions that surrounded and shaped his life.

He made his way to southern California, where he found a job and he rose, economically, into the middle class. Later, when his young son, Spencer Perkins, attended a Sunday school, John began noticing a dramatic change in his son. Spencer had committed his life to Jesus Christ, and the change in him made a strong impression on his father. John began going with him to church, and he in turn met Christ. John was welcomed into the church and disciplined one-on-one by a white brother.<sup>3</sup> As he grew stronger in his faith and love for God, John began to feel a call to return—to go to the one place he deeply resisted—to his home in a rural poor area in Mississippi. God broke down his resistance, and his family did return—with a mission. John and his wife, Vera Mae Perkins, developed a model of doing ministry among the poor in which the church was at the center of an effort to develop and lift an entire community. Yes, they engaged deeply in the practices you would expect from a Protestant salvation-focused church at the time—committed preaching of the Bible, evangelistic efforts to lead individuals to Christ, Sunday School classes—but they also were teaching people how to read, working on finding them jobs, eventually trying to build economic vitality into their local community. They even found ways to own stuff, stuff that makes money—like the thrift store they developed. God was definitely moving through them and among their neighbors. In addition to literacy, biblical formation, and economic empowerment, the Perkins did their part in the freedom movement of the 1960s. John Perkins was one of the many heroes of the voter drives, and he suffered because of it, in one instance, in fact, jailed and beaten close to death by prison guards.

Perkins articulated what they were doing in community development by using what he called the “Three Rs.” The first *R*, *Reconciliation*, was grounded as a practice in 2 Corinthians 5.17-19:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them.

*...racial reconciliation as a specific example of the horizontal, blacks and whites becoming one in Christ.*

Reconciliation, for Perkins, was threefold. First, vertically between humanity and God. Second, horizontally, love between neighbors generally. Third, Perkins emphasized racial reconciliation as a specific example of the horizontal, blacks and whites becoming one in Christ. In partial contrast to many black empowerment voices of that day and ours, Perkins deeply believed that racial reconciliation was a necessary and key feature of effective ministry to the poor.

The second *R* of Christian community development as Perkins practiced it was *Relocation*. This call was grounded in Phil 2:5-8:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

*...insisted on folks leaving the places of residence that their economic position might make possible, and “relocating” to live among the poor.*

Just as Christ did not insist on his privileged location, but instead “relocated,” taking on the flesh and life of a human with and for us, John Perkins and the co-workers he led into this ministry, insisted on folks leaving the places of residence that their economic position might make possible, and “relocating” to live among the poor. Relocation enables middle class Christians to get to know what their brothers and sisters in poverty really face, to face it (to some extent) alongside them, to make the served community their own home, and to invest their lives alongside their new neighbors in at-risk neighborhoods. The poor are accustomed to charity from afar, or quick missions that disappear. One day a neighbor approached a white relocater at Friendship after he had lived on their street for 14 years, and said, “So, you’re going to stay then?”

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In the beginning, relocation was more the practice of *returners*, men and women indigenous to the community who had taken their first opportunity to get out, but later, like the Perkins, felt called to move back and be used by God to help build the community. The movement came to identify and correct two key misunderstandings of the word relocation. First, Native Americans responded strongly against the word because for them it evoked the imperialistic rounding up of their peoples and displacing them, repeatedly, into other locations. Second, relocation “can be interpreted as supporting a paternalistic approach to community development.” Rev. Wayne Gordon and Rev. John Perkins explain it as follows:

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the root causes of  
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to redistribute wealth,  
means of livelihood,  
and social capital,...*

Relocation as we want it to be understood is not about wealthy people from the suburbs going into poverty-stricken areas to save the day with their supposed expertise. It’s certainly not about white folks treating ethnic minorities like projects or problems to be solved. In fact . . . we believe that the people in the best position to propose and implement meaningful solutions to problems in a community are those who are struggling the most—regardless of what those coming from the outside might think.<sup>4</sup>

*...redistribution is done  
by Christians fully  
motivated by love and  
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to redistribute resources  
in order to empower  
those less fortunate  
than themselves.*

The third *R* in Perkins’ model of Christ-centered ministry to an at-risk neighborhood is *Redistribution*. From his early experience, Perkins knew that ministry must address the root causes of poverty and find ways to redistribute wealth, means of livelihood, and social capital, indeed all the forms of economic well-being that are so unequally distributed in our late modern society. Again, Gordon and Perkins clarify that redistribution, as the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA, [www.ccda.org](http://www.ccda.org)) defines and practices it, is not a political stance, supporting, for example, economic socialism imposed by a government. Instead, redistribution is done by Christians fully motivated by love and Christlike compassion to redistribute resources in order to empower those less fortunate than themselves.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the Three *Rs*—Reconciliation, Relocation, and Redistribution, the CCDA puts front and center the following principles: leadership development, listening to the community, being church-based, a holistic approach, and empowerment. Today, the CCDA movement that began with the Perkins family in the mid-twentieth century is an international organization with hundreds of churches and nonprofits banding together to make a difference in at-risk neighborhoods. When people attend a CCDA international conference, they are struck by the fact that this larger Christian

community is deeply intercultural and diverse. It's not a Caucasian organization with small minority groups also in attendance. Visually, it looks like the church, surely, as the Lord intends it.

*When these young couples learned that Friendship Church was in danger of closing, they felt called by God to relocate, to buy houses in the neighborhood, and commit their lives to this calling.*

Taking up again the Pittsburgh story of Friendship Church, we note that in the 1970s a group of young evangelical Christians moved into the neighborhood, including five couples who still live there to this day (four white couples and one black). Through their leader, the Rev. Dana Shaw, they had gotten to know of John Perkins' work, and some of them visited Mendenhall, Mississippi to meet John and Vera Mae and experience their model of ministry for themselves. When these young couples learned that Friendship Church was in danger of closing, they felt called by God to *relocate*, to buy houses in the neighborhood, and commit their lives to this calling. The group they came alongside of—a small number of deeply committed African American members of Friendship—welcomed them as partners in ministry.

### **Some Indications of Interculturality at Friendship**

For forty years now Friendship has embraced the CCDA model of ministry as the main purpose drawing its two primary cultures together. Recent demographic changes to the immediate neighborhood around the church threaten to make this purpose obsolete: 1) an aging African American resident population, 2) these older residents selling their houses to speculators who then pack university students into them (often breaking zoning laws), and 3) rising prices of real estate in the area, which increases taxes and prices poorer residents out. Under the cover of market forces, the poor are being moved out. Yet the church is holding onto its historic mission, in part because in the mixed-income housing community nearby, there still resides a large number of people living at poverty level and struggling with some of the issues we have felt called to help address.<sup>6</sup>

Is Friendship intercultural? Fr. Gittins, as we have noted above, defines intercultural faith community as one that has at least two cultures, that is united in a common purpose, that develops genuine relationships with each other across cultural lines, that finds both cultures submitting to their God-given purpose—and both submitting to being transformed by the God who gives them that purpose. In what follows, we will give snapshots of Friendship life as “evidence” to put on the table for interculturality.

The first image that arises is our Sunday morning “greeting time” during worship. People turn to those close by to hug and greet them warmly. They tend to start conversations, as if they

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*This friendly greeting time is so lively (almost unruly) that the leaders have to use an energetic worship song to bring us back to the pews.*

*With a 60:40 ratio of white to black, there is also diversity of age,...*

were meeting at the beginning of a meal together. Many walk all the way across the sanctuary, greeting and hugging someone on the opposite side.<sup>7</sup> There are little “every Sunday” encounters that you are sure to see; for example, a certain young white woman always goes to two black senior ladies—these three always greet. In fact, there are several of these cross-generational groupings during greeting time. But as we said, people move around the entire sanctuary, and toward visitors as well (though this has been known to scare the visitors). The salient identifying feature of visitors to Friendship Church is that they are the two or three people standing still in one place, doubtless wondering what in the world is going on. This friendly greeting time is so lively (almost unruly) that the leaders have to use an energetic worship song to bring us back to the pews. Even then you can hear people talking well into the song. At Friendship, people like each other. It’s unmistakable: surely this connection across lines of four generations, across lines of race, across lines of economic class is something that cannot be faked. And it is something that changes you, after you have been a part of the community for a time.<sup>8</sup>

Our diversity, for such a small church, is striking. With a 60:40 ratio of white to black, there is also diversity of age, spanning generations. Until just recently we had a 100-plus year old. We have seniors, middle-aged and young adults, teens, children, toddlers and infants. This range of ages is notable for a church of our small size (about 100 members on the books). We have as members two visually impaired couples who, especially in recent months, are active and visible in ministry. We have interracial married couples, and a new senior interracial couple has just started attending because, as they put it, our church is the only one where they are made to feel comfortable.

We delight in humor at Friendship, a kind of humor that often surprises with the pleasing flavor of a culture not your own. Again, sometimes edging into the category of the unruly, laughter often occurs during the worship service. Somehow we have been able to keep a worshipful tone and continuity through all this joy in being together. We even dare at times to laugh at our cultural differences, related to how warm the sanctuary needs to be and the dishes we’ll be serving at church events.

Beyond the Sunday morning worship, individuals from across our cultures work together in leading the church, meet for fellowship and fitness activities, and study Scripture and pray together in small Bible study groups, mostly in people’s homes. As with any church, strong personal relationships exist that the leaders may not even know about, but here are some examples of close, ongoing, intercultural friendships.

*...part of what black people learn and experience is the full humanity of white folks, that, for example, despite the way it can sometimes look, “not all white folks have it going on...they need help, too.”*

*...“the spirit of a church that creates the atmosphere in which a woman will feel free to state out loud in the group that she just got out of the penitentiary—that spirit is the hallmark of Friendship.”*

Families who gather each year for Christmas brunch, women who host family celebrations together, friends who care for each other by grocery shopping and providing transportation to doctors' appointments, friends committed to praying regularly for one another, professional women who meet on their lunch hour, friends who stay in close contact even after some of them have left Friendship, two women who have found strength in each other for thirty years, two men in recovery who phone each other every single day, and another pair of men, one of them having been incarcerated, who have been strongly connected for many years, often watching sports together. There are others.

The stories of how people come to Friendship also shed light on our interculturality. One African American leader relates how in the 1960s his mother first brought him to the church. A visionary during the civil rights movement, she had decided she wanted to learn more about white people, so she brought her family here to worship. The same leader will tell you now that part of what black people learn and experience is the full humanity of white folks, that, for example, despite the way it can sometimes look, “not all white folks have it going on...they need help, too.” Another point of entry is that often evangelical Christians who feel a call to social justice and who come to Pittsburgh to do university study, discover Friendship to be a place with a deep spiritual attraction for them. They feel called here.

Others connect with us from a place of urgent need. We have a time of open prayer requests and praise reports during Sunday morning worship. Several times a visitor has said something like the following: “I want to share that I just got out of the penitentiary, and I am so happy!” This is an actual quotation. Or, “Today I am one year sober.” At which point the entire congregation erupts in applause and joy for them. People will also report that a family member, a cousin, or a friend of a friend, was shot and killed in street violence. The silence after these moments is palpable with fellow feeling, in the presence of God. One African American church leader has repeatedly asserted, “the spirit of a church that creates the atmosphere in which a woman will feel free to state out loud in the group that she just got out of the penitentiary—that spirit is the hallmark of Friendship.”

### **Struggle**

Just as the positive signs of intercultural faith community

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*Perhaps these struggles themselves are also positive indications of our interculturality as a congregation, showing that in our interpersonal relationships we are fighting against the current,...*

*“Friendship is a place where everyone can feel uncomfortable!”*

give us intense joy, other dynamics among us cause intense sadness. In this journey in God’s grace that is the Christian life, we regularly struggle with the sin that each of us, as broken brothers and sisters in Christ, must address. Everyone struggles with their own individual sin, and every society also has structural sin. Because we are intercultural at Friendship, though, we must also struggle with structural sin, *in us*, personally. We bear in our personal relationships at our church the burden of America’s history of racism. This country’s legacy—indeed the recent condoning of racial violence—makes living in interracial community very difficult. Perhaps these struggles themselves are also positive indications of our interculturality as a congregation, showing that in our interpersonal relationships we are fighting against the current, dealing with things people in racially homogeneous groups rarely have to face.

As with the positive indications, we will share some snapshots of our struggles. The struggle to which we refer is not mere awkwardness at being in close relation to a culture different from your own; one leader playfully brags, “Friendship is a place where *everyone* can feel uncomfortable!” It goes beyond that. *Relocation* itself, understood and expressed in a certain way, can be felt as an insult. A neighbor once told us that she never wants to hear again about a white person “sacrificing” to live in West Oakland. Understood. Undeniable, too, is that some relocators—black and white—have actually given up something to live here. And black parishioners often pay a cultural price to attend Friendship Church, sometimes being called “oreos” (implying that inside they are not culturally black) and being asked why they attend a “white church.”

The perception from outside that Friendship is a white church is not without some basis. Some members have noted, vulnerably, the reality of “white bossiness” on the one hand, and on the other hand a hesitation at times by African Americans to stand toe to toe with other leaders. Even though our rules of governance require proportional representation, the real distribution of influence and power can be uneven. This results in part from an inequity in formal education that can give white leaders’ voices more weight than even they themselves consciously intend. That is less so today because several additional black leaders have joined Friendship in recent years. This dynamic will remain, however, because our mission is precisely to people in our geographical area who are struggling, many of whom are African American. Many have not been encouraged (or they have been actively discouraged) to take advantage of formal educational opportunities. To address this power imbalance, we have tried with modest success to establish discussion practices on the board of elders that bring all voices

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*A major outcome of the last session was that our church needs to be more intentional about leadership development at all levels.*

more fully to the table. Also, equity in leadership at Friendship is complicated by the difference between Presbyterian Church polity and that of many African American Baptist churches. Black Baptist churches, at least historically, have strong senior pastors able to carry out what they want without much elected opposition or debate. Presbyterian Church polity, on the other hand, requires strong lay leadership—government by a group of “ruling elders.” Coming not only from different racial backgrounds, then, we also run up against different understandings of how a church is governed and where authority is located.

Twice in the last ten years, we have had church-wide “racial reconciliation” discussions. During one of these, we divided into racially homogeneous groups to make sure each culture’s voices had a space to express their experience of our life together freely and safely. Someone in each group took notes, and then we reported to the larger group what we had shared (without names). We are told that these discussions, for the most part, felt empowering to black folks, and deeply disturbing to white folks. A major outcome of the last session was that our church needs to be more intentional about leadership development at all levels.

One snapshot from the middle of these racial reconciliation talks is particularly beautiful. During the homogeneous groups, some African Americans apparently expressed some real feeling about racially inflected bias they felt at Friendship. One woman, a strong and beloved personality for many decades at Friendship, was having trouble, herself, listening to this talk of unfairness. She stormed out of the room, angry. She may not have understood that the purpose of the separate discussions was to work toward unity, not to divide. But the strength of her feeling against a discussion that she perceived as divisive is a wonderful Friendship moment. In fact, this woman who died just this past year, has been revealed to the rest of us by her dearest friends in her funeral, *to have adopted Friendship Church*. She was tireless and consistent in representing to all her family and friends that Friendship Church was *her family*. Some already knew, but many of us only fully realized at her funeral the extent to which she had made us fully *hers*.

In addition to intercultural difficulties, Friendship also experienced institutional loss. Particularly poignant was the closing of our nonprofit, called Breachmenders, due to the shrinking of the funding environment and an embezzlement by an outsider brought in to provide accounting services. From those ashes, however, we have created a new community center called The Corner. It has developed into a place where community members design and lead their own activities,

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where the neighborhood block club meets, where many forms of local Pittsburgh artistic expression find a venue (jazz, spoken word, dance, poetry, visual art), where we have had social justice discussions (Black Lives Matter, “the new Jim Crow”—mass incarceration, bullying in school, etc.), where we have a small coffee shop, and artistic activities for young and adult alike. Additionally, outreach efforts now include: 1) regular biannual trips to the same village in rural Haiti, establishing a similar intercultural relationship with their church, 2) ministry to a local women’s shelter, 3) ministry to young men who play basketball, 4) a new support and recovery group, and 5) a new ministry to young women in the church and neighborhood. Friendship has hired two African American fulltime staff: a Youth Ministry Coordinator and an Executive Director of the Corner. These two women have contributed significant new energy, vision, and capacity in outreach ministry.

### **Prospects**

We as writers remind you of our own cultural location as white. We are aware that this material might sound very different in the voice of even some of our closest African American friends at Friendship. They would likely introduce dimensions of our Christian life together of which we ourselves are not at all, or only dimly aware. We share, vulnerably, these moments and dimensions of our church family experience because, much like a strong marriage going through tough times, we try to face these moments and learn from them.

The exercise of writing this essay and looking at Friendship Church through the lens of interculturality has been encouraging. Friendship has felt a rich joy and been used by God to create new life: we still do so in our small groups, in our personal relationships, and in our Sunday morning worship services. One of our leaders always stressed that none of this is possible without the saving sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, who brings together both our cultural groups in gratitude for forgiveness and grace. Gittins points to this central condition for intercultural Christian mission when he features, from Ephesians chapter 2, the Christ whose blood has brought us “near,” the Christ who “in his person is actually destroying the hostility between us.” Christ makes it possible, and in Christ we are resolved to continue on this road together. In describing how intercultural ministry requires a new form of communication, Fr. Gittins once again looks down the road that is ours at Friendship in a way that gives tremendous hope when he writes:

In ministries that require a new language,  
the most effective are not always the most

fluent or brilliant, but those most dedicated to the process of trying to learn a little and never giving up in the face of difficulty. So with learning the art of intercultural living: perseverance may be a better witness than expertise.<sup>9</sup>

*...perseverance may be a better witness than expertise.*

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Gittins, Anthony, *Living Mission Interculturally. Faith, Culture, and the Renewal of Praxis*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2015.

<sup>2</sup>Anthony Gittins distinguishes 1) **monocultural and bicultural**: bicultural being the experience of someone so truly at home in two cultures behaviorally and linguistically that she can go easily back and forth; 2) **cross-cultural**: someone who “crosses over” into a foreign culture and remains there as the minority, an outsider, neither fully assimilated, nor in a culturally mutual relationship; 3) **multicultural**: people from different cultures “equally at home but separately rather than together,” not really entering into deep relationships or mutually enriching interactive influence; “differences may be eliminated...tolerated...or managed” (page 19); and 4) **intercultural**: “an intercultural community shares intentional commitment to the common life, motivated not by pragmatic considerations alone, but by a shared religious conviction and common purpose.” It is a faith-based and lifelong process of conversion with the goal of creating “a *new culture* in which all can live fruitfully” (page 22).

<sup>3</sup>Referring to Perkins’ brother in Christ as a “white brother” may sound odd. This essay will often designate a person’s skin color (and cultural marker) which could even feel offensive to some, but we do it precisely because we are looking primarily at Friendship’s intercultural life. Our purpose is to talk about how the cultures relate, with some specifics. In our daily church life and interaction, of course, we don’t actually refer to each other in this way—always attaching a racial or cultural label.

<sup>4</sup>Gordon, Wayne, and John M. Perkins, *Making Neighborhoods Whole: A Handbook for Christian Community Development*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013. 47-48.

<sup>5</sup>Gordon and Perkins, 75-76.

<sup>6</sup>This essay focuses primarily on the intercultural character of the church fellowship, and not as much on its specific missional outreach efforts to the poor.

<sup>7</sup>The sanctuary is shaped “in the round,” with the central altar and pulpit area forming a thrust stage surrounded by three sections of pews.

<sup>8</sup>Recently, a young woman reported that while visiting her home church, she reached out during their greeting time and began to hug someone nearby. When she encountered a surprised and less

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than cooperative response from the other, she suddenly realized:  
“Friendship Church has really changed me.”

<sup>9</sup>Gittins in the article above, "Beyond International and Multicultural"  
(here p. 70).