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Governing Board Webinar – Envisioning the Future of MCC
July 8, 2014

“What will MCC look like in 2025 if we knew we could NOT fail?
Theologically? Organizationally? Financially? Culturally?”

Theology:

I won't begin to provide my views on theology as learned in seminary as most of us here are familiar with Biblical, historical, systematic, practical and the other theologies taught in while we were in school. My reflection of theology concerns the traditions of faith, and therefore their theologies, experienced by those in our congregations.

I believe that by 2025, we will have churches in or will be in the process of planting churches in many more areas both outside as well as inside the US and Canada. In order to be welcomed by these other areas, our understanding of opening our churches to those with faith traditions outside of the Christian religion will need to be addressed.

According to our Bylaws, MCC is a Christian denomination which follow the Apostles and Nicene Creeds. It is a requirement that only Baptized Christians may join our church; those who are not baptized Christians may become “friends” of our church but not hold a board position in our churches.

From what I've observed, people in the US (and possibly other countries) are allowed to join MCC while still maintaining membership in their “home” churches. This policy works great as long as the “home” church was also a Christian church. What will we do when people from non-Christian churches wish to become members of MCC? Do we insist that they totally leave their faith tradition in order to become a baptized Christian?

Some churches are questioning the requirement that only Baptized Christians may become members of MCC. Post-modern theology, which is understood of Progressive Theology, believes in God's All Inclusive Love for everyone, no one is excluded because they aren't baptized or because they their faith tradition didn't affirm the Apostles or Nicene creeds.

I attended REVM with in-care students from the west coast. One student was from the Philippines and didn't know there was a requirement to be a baptized Christian until part way through REVM. Apparently the MCC church who recommended him into MCC ministry didn't force the issue that one had to be baptized in order to not only join MCC but also to become clergy of MCC.

I believe we will face similar issues as we continue in our quest to become a welcoming and global church. Not only will our new churches have members from different cultural backgrounds, they will also bring with them different theological faith beliefs and traditions. Do we truly wish to reach out to people who are from different faith traditions such as Native Americans, the indigenous people from Alaska and Canada, Buddhists, Taoists, Hindus, etc.?

What does it mean that we offer an "Open Communion Table" where anyone can participate, regardless of their faith background and yet they have to change their theological faith tradition in order to join MCC?

On a seminary trip to Haiti a couple of years ago, I saw first-hand how difficult it was for new Christians to integrate their former faith tradition into their new Christian faith. It doesn't happen right away but takes years to leave their old ways of believing behind so their faith and practices are indeed, Christian. My question will be, do we accept those from other faiths into our Church with the HOPE that one day they will WANT to become a baptized Christian OR do we insist that they become a Baptized Christian first and then help them to move beyond their former faith tradition?

Our faith traditions within the church in the US affirm the MCC bylaws; however, many churches are beginning to question if these statements and requirements are still relevant.

Our members who came from denominations which mandated the use of creeds and dogmas agree that we follow the Apostle and Nicene Creeds – some churches still recite them. However, many other churches do not acknowledge the creeds in any way. Will we continue to state that we believe and follow these creeds when many of our church members come from faith traditions that don't acknowledge the creeds?

I admit that I struggle with the answers to these questions. Our belief is based on Christ and we are Christians. If we open ourselves to accepting ALL people from ALL faith traditions into MCC, have we become a church similar to the Unitarian Universalists?

Will our message be more about a theology of global justice or will it be about following the teachings of Jesus to become Christians who love our neighbor and ALL of God's creations: the land, air, sea, creatures, and humankind?