

FORMATION WORKSHOP - ANGLICAN CANADIAN ASIAN MINISTRY (ACAM)

Over a four year period, beginning in June of 2011, Anglican Asian churches in the Diocese of New Westminster have been journeying towards a collective, institutional presence for their unique ministries. Over the four years, the group's journey has evolved from "being an invisible group" to becoming "a wisdom group." As articulated for the group by Bishop Melissa, the mission would be "creating a new thing," which would be "life giving for you, and a need of the Diocese." She encouraged the group to aspire "to be a lab" (for multiculturalism), and realize that it was "not just about you, but how you teach others." Bishop Melissa made these remarks with an opening address at the first workshop held by the group. It was held on June 27, 2015, at St. Michael's Multicultural Anglican Church in Vancouver, with the Rev. Ruth Monette facilitating for the day.



Bishop Melissa addressing the ACAM Workshop – with thanks to Shirley & Lily for the Flowers & Settings

Five churches were in attendance; Holy Cross Japanese Canadian Church, St. Mary South Hill, St. Michael Surrey, St. Matthias/St. Luke, and St. Michael's Vancouver. Sixteen people attended, with an equal split between lay and ordained. By the end, the strong consensus was that the workshop met/exceeded all expectations. The participants were (clockwise, from the Bishop, in the picture above): Bishop Melissa, the Rev. Louie Engnan, the Rev. Wilmer Toyoken, the Rev. Expedito Farinas, the Rev. Arvin Amayag, Bart Alatan, Terry & Marg Cutforth, the Rev. John Shozawa, Greg Tatchell, Grefa Pinera, Julie Atkinson, Felly Farinas, Michiko Tatchell, and the Rev. Daebin Im (photographer).

The proceedings are organized under the following five headings:

1. Bishop Melissa's Reflections
2. A reflection on 40 years of Episcopal initiatives in this area
3. 4 Critical events leading to today
4. Learnings from the Histories of the Churches and the Diocese
5. The Next Chapter: Goals and Next Steps

I. BISHOP MELISSA'S REFLECTIONS

Bishop Melissa provided 5 'nuggets' for the group to consider in this act of 'creating a new thing;' THANKFULNESS, MUTUAL SUPPORT, LEARNING HOW, TEACHING OTHERS, and ADVOCACY. Her essential remarks are included in the introduction above. After concluding by telling the group that she will help us achieve a new beginning, she asked for feedback from the group on what they had heard. The feedback included "Gratefulness for advocacy from the Diocese," "Don't be invisible," "Become a Wisdom Group," "Understanding other cultures is important," "Being yourself," "Mutual support is essential," and "It is important to teach our cultures to Canadians."

II. A ROLE MODEL: REFLECTIONS ON 40 YEARS WITH THE EPISCOPAL EAM *(the Rev. John Shozawa)*

The Rev. John Shozawa provided the group with his reflections on 40 successful years of this type of Ministry in the Episcopal Church down south. He began by introducing a theme that would be reflected by many during the day: Isolation and Loneliness. Father John's BEGINNINGS in the Diocese of New Westminster was as Priest of Holy Cross Church in 1965. His DIFFICULT TIMES were when he experienced isolation and loneliness from the white ordained clergy. This isolation and loneliness continued through to 1973 until he became involved with the newly formed Episcopal Asiamerica Ministry (EAM) in the United States. He continued his fellowship in this affirming and inclusive organization for the next 40 years. It met a need that had no equivalency in Canada.

- From the perspective of racism, his GLORY DAYS began with his EAM Fellowship opportunities. This led directly to Father John being offered a job with a Japanese-American congregation in Los Angeles in 1978. He found that while they had significant racism problems of their own, at least they talked about it, and he particularly appreciated the Institute of Racism that he was able to participate in.
- TODAY, Father John's last direct involvement with EAM was in 2011. On that occasion, him and his wife Lynne invited Michiko and Greg Tatchell to join them at a Convocation in Los Angeles. He made the point that Michiko and Greg experienced the same sense of multi-cultural fellowship and inclusion that he had first experienced in the '70's, and which all these years later, still did not exist in Canada.

The Facilitator asked the group to reflect on Father John's presentation. The strongest response was to his observations about his isolation and loneliness amongst his clergy brothers (no women priest's then). One priest shared their story about being excluded (sent home) from the first clergy conference they attended. Further comments focussed on how the meetings of the last 18 months in Vancouver have helped today's clergy feel comfortable (expanded upon in section III below). A further question was whether there was any budget for Asian ministries in the Diocese. The hope was expressed for a Canadian National Program for Asian ministries, along the lines of the National EAM unit in the Episcopal Church. This was accentuated with the question, "are there national programs for Asian ministries in Canada?"

III. REV. DR. WINFRED VERGARA – EAM EMPOWERMENT LEADING TO TODAY'S WORKSHOP

The Rev. John Shozawa's discussion about Canadian participation in the 2011 EAM event in Los Angeles represents the first of 4 critical events that led to today's workshop. These 4 events were referred to during separate 'reflections,' and have been summarized here to provide perspective on 4 years of evolution/chronology. For the first 3, the Rev. Dr. Winfred Vergara, EAM Missioner for the Episcopal Church, was a strong pastoral presence.

1. **June 2011** - Invitation to 4 Canadians to participate in the Japanese-American EAM Convocation in Los Angeles. A TOPIC article on this experience appeared in the October 2011 issue (p.10). Two 'Genesis' quotes from that TOPIC article are prophetic:

*"The model (of EAM) would seem to have potential in furthering the ministries of Asiacanadians in the Diocese of New Westminster" ... and ... "They (all) came home motivated to work towards developing a similar fellowship focus in our country."*ⁱ

Dr. Fred Vergara, National Missioner, was particularly encouraging and welcoming. His motivation became apparent in Resolution 5 at CoGS 21 months later.

2. **Mar 2013** - The following quote (from a ratified report) summarizes the comments made about CoGS:

"On 14 March 2013 the ACC's CoGS (Council of General Synod) passed a 6-point motion which included:

5. *Recommends that the Council of General Synod study the Episcopal Church's Asiamerica Ministries (EAM) to explore ways of our participation in it.*ⁱⁱ

*Acting on this motion, a day later, the Rev. Dr. Winfred Vergara, the Episcopal Church's Missioner for Asiamerica Ministries (EAM) extended an invitation to the Canadian Anglican Church. It was passed on to the JC-VCC immediately afterwards by Michael Thompson, General Secretary of the Anglican Church of Canada."*ⁱⁱⁱ

Dr. Vergara's swift proactive actions led to Canadian participation at EAM's 40th Anniversary event 3 months later, in San Francisco, and an article in the National ENS (Episcopal News Service).^{iv}

3. **June 2013** - The Episcopal Church celebrated the 40th Anniversary of EAM in San Francisco^v (for a sense of their start-up history, and the arc of 40 years, see Appendix II). 8 delegates (up from 4 in 2011) from the Diocese of NW attended in 2013 (including 2 youth). 6 of the 8 were to provide the motivation to call the first meeting of what for a time was referred to as 'EAM North.'



EAM 40 - June 2013 - Seven Canucks with the Rev. Dr. Fred Vergara (leftmost) and the Presiding Bishop (3rd from left)

A TOPIC article on this experience appeared in the November issue^{vi}, along with the picture at the bottom of the previous page. It shows the Canucks who attended EAM 40, along with Dr. Vergara and the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church of the US. It exemplifies Fred's ongoing superlative pastoral care of his 'orphans' from Canada. This third interaction with him finally led to fruition in Canada 4 months later.

4. **Oct 2013** - The first meeting of 'EAM NORTH.' It occurred in the Rectory at St. Michael's Vancouver, and was attended by the retired Rev. John Shozawa and his wife Lynne, Holy Cross, St. Michael's Surrey, St. Matthias/St. Luke, and St. Michael's Vancouver. Working towards the October 2011 TOPIC prophecy of "*developing a similar (EAM) fellowship focus in our country*" had begun.^{vii}

The group met 7 times over the next 18 months; throughout, the discipline of minutes was provided by Michiko Tatchell. A 1st achievement was to meet the pastoral need discussed by Father John in section II above. A 2nd achievement was to find a Canadian equivalent for the Episcopalian EAM name; **ANGLICAN CANASIAN MINISTRY (ACAM)** was agreed upon as the name of our equivalent Anglican organization.^{viii} The 18 months of discernment led to a 3rd achievement, meeting with Bishop Melissa on 16 March 2015, when Ruth was introduced to the group as the Diocesan representative. The workshop today, and the Bishop's presence, followed three months later.

IV. LEARNINGS FROM OUR HISTORIES, + A DIOCESAN PERSPECTIVE

The Rev. Monette, as Facilitator, had four of the churches break-out for an hour and develop a history of their church. She did the same from a Diocesan perspective, with a focus on Asian Ministries. She organized these reflections with four categories in which to frame their thoughts: BEGINNINGS, GLORY DAYS, DIFFICULT TIMES, and TODAY. The one representative from St. Matthias/St. Luke joined St. Michael's Surrey for this exercise. A high level summary of each of the subsequent presentations follows, in the order in which they were presented.

A. HOLY CROSS JAPANESE-CANADIAN ANGLICAN CHURCH (*the Rev. Daebin Im and Michiko Tatchell*).

GENESIS for Holy Cross began with Anglican Missionaries from Canada who went to Japan in the late 1800's. Holy Cross was established in 1905, although the Mission began in 1903 at St. James. THE GLORY DAYS for Holy Cross was in the 1930's, when the two Vancouver churches had 1500 parishioners, and over 250 in Sunday School. In their long history, the second set of glory days was in 2010 and 2013, when the Diocese and the National Church, respectively, apologized for the secret sale, and the diversion of the funds, of the two Japanese Canadian churches in 1945 and 1949.

- For the Japanese Canadian Anglicans, indeed for all Japanese Canadians, the truly DIFFICULT TIMES began in 1942 with the exile of 22,000 of them away from the coast. This was after a 30 year period of difficulty when endemic racism was a constant problem. The second great difficulty for Holy Cross was during the same-sex debates of the early 2000's, when their priest led them out of the Diocese.

- The thankfulness TODAY has come from two events. One, when the church was re-established in 2005 by the great efforts of the two Wardens (Gwen & Basil) and the Rev. John Shozawa (returned from Japan and retirement). And, two, when the Rev. Daebin Im was hired in 2012, with the growth in their multi-cultural focus and the inclusion of Koreans in the congregation (Father Im speaks both Japanese and Korean).

B. ST. MICHAEL`S SURREY *(the Rev. Louie Engnan and the Rev. Arvin Amayag)*

St. Michael's Surrey has a relatively recent history, especially compared to Holy Cross, St. Mary's and St. Michael's Vancouver (all of whom are over 100 years old). St. Michael's Surrey's BEGINNINGS were in the 1960's when a group of families got together to establish a family ministry, beginning in an Elementary school (where many members were teachers). THE GLORY DAYS for St. Michael's Surrey was the '70's and '80's, with a new building, active Sunday School, and an expansion because of a lack of space. These days continued into the '90's, with an ever larger congregation, and the building of a much bigger "Millennium Hall."

- DIFFICULT TIMES came when the founding congregation started to age, the children grew up, and some leaders slowed down in their ministry. People were moving due to work, the community started to change significantly, and church policy issues became divisive, especially the debate over same sex blessings. Retirement of the rector of 17 years caused much anxiety to members, and was exacerbated by perceptions that the interim priest was sent by the Diocese to close down the church.
- TODAY, the Ministry Plan is focussed on membership growth, renewal/reactivation of the Sunday School program, formation of a new youth group, and attracting new and young families from the neighbourhood, with different ethnic backgrounds. The new rector "gives hope" and brings "new life." Most helpful has been the Bishop's articulation of new parish development (this helped a lot in direction setting).

C. ST. MARY`S SOUTH HILL *(the Rev. Expedito & Felly Farinas, Julie Atkinson, Grefa Pinera).*

A BEGINNING: St. Mary of the 12 Words (the Parish of Bishop Hills Memorial Church of St. Mary the Virgin!) began in 1910, in honor of the first Bishop of the DoNW. The parish was incorporated in 1989, still comprised mostly of members of European roots.

- THE GLORY DAYS of St. Mary's were as a family oriented church (pre-war and post-war), with a full house on Sundays, and active Youth (Scouts), Ladies Auxiliary and Men's groups. Over 100 children were in Sunday School every weekend. TROUBLED TIMES began when the Rev. Dennis Morgan retired in 2006; he had been the Rector for 35 years, since 1971. The number of parishioners declined, with no permanent priest, no men's or women's organizations, and no Sunday School. Financial problems and a lack of manpower led to discussions about closure.
- TODAY, prayers are being answered, as membership is increasing, Sunday School (4 volunteer teachers) and Choir are active, along with a Youth Group (with a dedicated co-ordinator). This has all happened in less than two years since the assignment of a permanent priest in October 2013, the Rev. Expedito

Farinas. The new vibrancy includes active participation in organized community events, a good relationship with other faith-denominations within the community, and plans for restoration of the ACW and men's groups.

D. ST. CHAD'S (*the Rev. Paulina Lee*).

While not in attendance, the Rev. Paulina Lee offered to provide a short insight from the perspective of St. Chad's, partly to clarify St. Chad's inclusion in the list of churches presented to the workshop by the Rev. Ruth Monette (in section F below).

- "In 1947, St. Chad's started as a small Anglican neighbourhood church to meet our neighbour's needs, starting with baby-boomers needs. After 4 decades, one major change in neighbourhood's needs in the Arbutus area arose from demographic changes, with a lot of new immigrants from Hong Kong at the imminent political change-over in 1997. To meet that need, St. Chad started to offer ESL classes, Citizenship classes and other related pastoral-care ministries. By mid-1990s, we worshipped with liturgy in English but the leaflets were printed bilingually.
- We continued to meet our neighbour's changing needs: new immigrants started to come from Taiwan and then Mainland China. Since mid-2000, we have 3 weekly Sunday Services in Mandarin (9.30am), English (11am) and Cantonese (2pm). Our one unique feature is that we always seek to be one congregation using the same liturgy through three services in three languages: in God there is no East or West, and parishioners attending different Sunday services worship in oneness, melting cultural/language differences in the love of God and each other."

E. ST. MICHAEL'S VANCOUVER (*the Rev. Wilmer Toyoken, Terry & Marg Cutforth, Bart Alatan & Greg Tatchell*)

BEGINNINGS: While St. Michael's was first established in 1889, the St. Michael's presenters began in 1907, with the infamous Race Riots in the Downtown Eastside in Japan town and China town. One of the key moderating speakers the first day of the riots was the priest of St. Michael's, the Rev. George Wilson. His words, from the local papers, were used to show the workshop participants the endemic racism that existed at that time, along the full West Coast of North America, and which continued unabated for another 30 years.

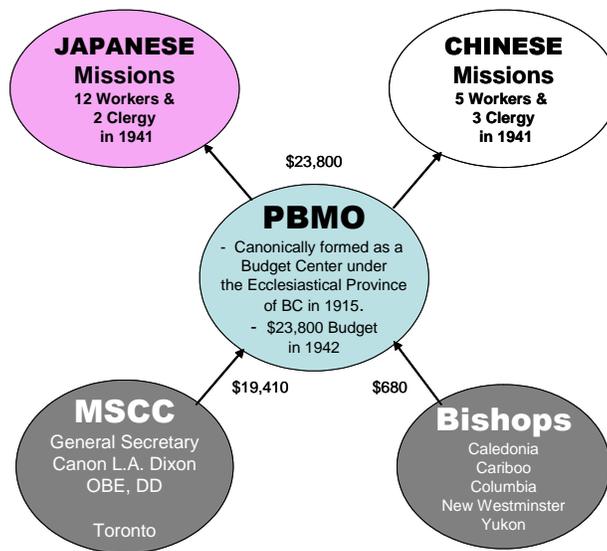
- THE GLORY YEARS for St. Michael's were during his 44 years at St. Michael's (1903-1947), when Canon Wilson and his son, Alderman Halford Wilson, were leaders in the Executive Council of the Diocese, and at General Synod back east. The glory years continued through the '50's and '60's, when Sunday Schools were full and building projects plentiful. THE DIFFICULT YEARS came in earnest with the retirement after 22 years of another long term priest, the Rev. Walter Bayley, at the turn of the new millennium. Five years later, St. Michael's was projected to exhaust funds by 2006. TODAY: The challenge of these years became opportunity, as St. Michael's developed a vision of 'From 2 to 52 to 152,' with an accompanying Charter for Racial Justice, both finalized/ratified at the February 2007 Vestry. Warden

James Baldo’s presentation of this vision to Bishop Michael Ingham in March 2007 can be thought of as the turning point for St. Michael’s.

- Bart Alatan, President of BIBAK in ‘07 (and a member of St. Michael Surrey at that time!), overviewed a strategic alliance (initiated in ‘07, renewed in ‘14) with the BC chapter of the international Filipino BIBAK organization. This greatly facilitated ultimately exceeding the vision of growth presented to the Bishop by James in 2007, as St. Michael’s approached becoming a ‘triple/triple’ church seven years later. A Nov 2014 TOPIC article (written by former BIBAK President Caesar Castro) captured the sense of the Spirit at work in bringing these two organizations together.^{ix} The Rev. Wilmer Toyoken concluded by summarizing activities since he was hired in 2011, with particular focus on the establishment of two Sister Churches in the Philippines, in 2014 (assisted at the time by our facilitator today).

F. THE DIOCESAN PERSPECTIVE *(the Rev. Ruth Monette).*

By way of BEGINNINGS, both Ruth and Father John highlighted the Provincial Board of Missions to the Orientals. This was a body canonically established by the ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia. The PBMO oversaw governance of Japanese and Chinese missions from 1915 to 1967, with 90% of funding provided by the National Church (the MSCC in the diagram below). The Rev. John Shozawa spent the first three years of his career under the PBMO (where he was paid less than white clergy). The following graphic provides a snap-shot of the Asian Ministry organization in 1941/42.



The Provincial Ecclesiastical PBMO Organization for Asian Ministry - 1915-1967^x

- THE GLORY DAYS in the Diocese when Asian ministry thrived was from the early 1900’s to 1941. The Japanese Canadian churches in particular thrived (1,500 parishioners, 250+ in Sunday School). The times over the decades when solidarity happened included; when the ACW women joined the Japanese in exile in 1942; the selfless merger of St. Peter’s and Holy Cross in 1988 (Gwen again); the formal apology to the Japanese

Canadians in 2010; and St. Matthias/St. Luke. Asian Ministry evolved; Japanese Canadian communities thrived in the 20's and 30's, the Chinese Canadian communities in the 80's and 90's, as the Filipino Canadian communities took their turn in this millennium and are now thriving with an influx of immigrants.

- Racism was the primary focus of DIFFICULT TIMES for Asian Ministries in the Diocese. Participation in the Asiatic Exclusion League of BC ('exclude, but don't persecute') was highlighted in Vancouver's Asia Riots in 1907. Even in this millennium, conversations occur like "our neighborhood is all Chinese now so that's why we are not growing" and "people with such strong accents shouldn't have speaking roles – no one will understand them." The exile of the Japanese during WW II was a particularly dark time, as was the era of same-sex deliberations in the Diocese when all the Asiatic churches left the Diocese.
- In beginning her discussion on where the Diocese perceives thing to be TODAY, Ruth listed 11 churches as having an Asian Pacific element; Holy Cross, St. Chad, St. Matthias/St. Luke, Good Shepherd, Emmanuel, St. Margaret of Scotland, St. Anne of Steveston, St. Michael Vancouver, St. Michael Surrey, St. Mary the Virgin, and St. Anselm's.
- TODAY, while still racist, it is now more subtle, usually more covert. The anti-racism training is a beginning. The Diocese is trying to recognize and include Asian languages and people at Diocesan events, but we are still perceived as a white church. This is changing, however, especially at the parish level. We now have seven parishes led by Asian Canadians; three Filipino-Canadian led parishes, one Japanese-Canadian led parish, and three Chinese-Canadian led parishes.

NOTE: Members of ACAM gave high marks to the Diocese for being so open today in naming racism. It is an interesting insight that during the church history presentations, not one of them used the 'R' word, other than in the context of an Anti-Racism Charter. Only the retired Rev. John Shozawa, and Ruth and Greg, felt empowered enough to address the subject directly and use the 'R' word. In side conversations over lunch, however, dark stories were told of racism in our Diocese, stories that we eventually need to share publicly. As Bishop Melissa encouraged us, it is "*not just about you, but how you teach others.*" To that end, in an Appendix, we include several attendees personal encounters with racism within our church(es), stories they did not yet feel safe enough to share, even in a (safe?) Asian Ministry group get together like today.

V. THE NEXT CHAPTER: GOALS AND NEXT STEPS

With the histories finished, Ruth re-organized the break-out groups. They were assigned the task to think about what the 'Next Chapter' might look like, not from a church perspective, but from an Asian Ministry perspective.

The following six points were brought back to the group by the four teams.

1. Cease being invisible; find a way to become a UNIT in the Diocese, with an associated budget that covers both lay and ordained (Ruth advised us that a process existed for this [see Appendix III], and that she could help us aim to have a Mission & Ministry Development application ready for submission by September 8).
2. Build on the CoGS resolution of March 14, 2013, and go National, as EAM did in 1973 (after #1).
3. Along the lines of the Korean EAM event in October, and St. Michael's sister church program, build international relationships.
4. Pursue incorporating Asian cultures into existing Diocesan programs, including Leadership Training and Racism Training.
5. Be clear in defining for whom we exist (Asian congregations, Asians in white congregations, Diocesan Advocacy, National Advocacy, Anglican Communion bridge building, or all of the above?).
6. Finalize a Mission/Vision to go along with the September 8th application, drawing on the EAM vision, along the lines of EAM's four areas of priorities (Congregational Life, Advocacy, Support Group, and Training^{xi}), and their articulation that the *"core vision of the EAM is to give a harmonious voice to the diverse Asian voices and help enable the Episcopal Church to truly become an intercultural Church."*^{xii}

VI. WRAP UP

The hopes for the day were established first thing in the morning. There were seven:

- i. Know the history of Asian ministries in the Diocese (learn from our past)
- ii. Know the history of racism in Vancouver
- iii. Learn how Asian ministry and parish development go together
- iv. What are the existing programs re: Asian Ministry?
- v. Learn about the history of EAM and how it might serve as a model
- vi. Find a way to become a recognized group in the Diocese
- vii. Establish a Mission/Vision

Five of these items were achieved, to varying degrees. Only items iii and vii remained unaddressed.

The Rev. Louie Engnan led a brief time of reflection on how we did relative to these objectives. On a scale of 6, the consensus was that we achieved a 5.4, with the observation that this good beginning bodes well for the good end to the process defined by Bishop Melissa as *"creating a new thing" ... "a wisdom group;"* an institutional Asian Ministry presence in the Diocese of New Westminster and beyond.

APPENDIX I – Bishop Melissa's Workshop Material

APPENDIX II – A thumbnail sketch of EAM's 42 year history (1973-2015)

APPENDIX III – The Diocesan form/process for ACAM to become a Diocesan Unit.

APPENDIX IV – Stories of Racism Experienced/Witnessed by Members of the Workshop

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| A. CLERGY CONFERENCE: An Ordained Priest told to Go Home (1992) | [Expedito Farinas] |
| B. CONGREGATIONAL: New Congregants Ignored for Years (2000 forward) | [Margie, Caroline, Grefa] |
| C. SEMINARY: Observing a Seminarian Being “Made Invisible” (2002) | [Greg Tatchell] |
| D. DIOCESAN: Three Attendees at a Diocesan meeting “Being Pushed Out” (2007) | [Brigette, Sandra, Lyn] |
| E. SYNOD: A Synod Attendee aggressively being told “It’s Finished” (2013) | [Michiko Tatchell] |

- ⁱ Diocese of New Westminster **TOPIC** Newspaper Article, ‘*Episcopal Asiamerica Convocation in Los Angeles*,’ Oct 2011, p.10
- ⁱⁱ **TOPIC** ARTICLE, ‘*A Journey of Justice & Reconciliation*,’ May 2013, p.17
- ⁱⁱⁱ ACC OFFICIAL REFLECTIONS (Holy Cross, St. Michaels Vancouver & JC-VCC) on the 2013 EAM-40 CONFERENCE, June 2013, p.1
- ^{iv} Episcopal News Service, March 2013
- ^v ASIAMERICA MINISTRIES IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH: Remembering the Past, Celebrating the Present, Visualizing the Future History of EAM – 1973 to 2015. The Rev. Dr. Fred Vergara, p.1, & 10-12 (extracts, in Appendix II).
- ^{vi} **TOPIC** Article, ‘*Episcopal Asiamerica Ministry 40th Anniversary Consultation Report*,’ Nov 2013, p.18
- ^{vii} **TOPIC** Article, ‘*Episcopal Asiamerica Convocation in Los Angeles*,’ Oct 2011, p.10
- ^{viii} ACAM Minutes, Meeting #7, 4 March 2015, page 1.
- ^{ix} **TOPIC** Article, ‘*St. Michael’s Vancouver & the BIBAK BC Organization Renew Partnership Agreement*,’ Nov 2014, p.18
- ^x RELINQUISHED: *The Seate of Deitie Supream Us Dispossest*, Gregory Tatchell, Nov 2009, p. 11
- ^{xi} The Episcopal Church: ASIAMERICA MINISTRY in the 21st CENTURY. Dr. Winfred Vergara, p. 4
- ^{xii} *ibid*, p.5

Basis of Bishop Melissa's Remarks to the ACAM

ASIAMERICA MINISTRIES IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Remembering the Past, Celebrating the Present, Visualizing the Future

In 1973, Asian Episcopalian clergy and lay leaders, with the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Winston Ching as first Asiamerica Missioner, gathered in San Francisco, California and organized their work into "Episcopal Asiamerica Ministry." Over time, EAM has evolved into a three-fold ministry: ministry to Asian immigrants in the United States; ministry to Asian-Americans or Americans born and raised in the United States from Asian ancestry; and ministry of bridge-building to churches in Asia, especially those belonging to the worldwide Anglican Communion and churches in concordat with the Episcopal Church.

In 2013, the Asiamerica Ministries Network in the Episcopal Church, with the leadership of the Rev. Canon Dr. Winfred Vergara, its second Asiamerica Missioner, celebrated its 40th anniversary and "remembered its past, celebrated its present and visualized its future."

On September 29-October 5, 2015 the EAM Consultation will be held in Seoul, Korea. Set to coincide with the celebration of the 125th Anniversary of the founding of the Anglican Church in Korea, the theme is "Celebrating our Partnerships; Uniting our Missions." The Consultation hopes to put in practice the lessons learned in America and set into motion a closer, broader and deeper partnership with Asia.

This article narrates the immigration history of Asians in the United States; the beginnings of Asiamerica Ministry in the Episcopal Church; the lessons learned and the challenges Asiamerican Episcopalians face in the context of growth and diversity in American Church and Society.

Establishment of Episcopal Asiamerica Ministry

The American Immigration Reform of 1965 relatively eradicated the overt and structural racism and hostility of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the anti-miscegenation laws against the Filipinos, and the Japanese internment camps. It also increased the quotas of immigrants from Asia. As the United States rose as a super power, it became a magnet for many immigrants from Asia seeking a better future and escaping the grinding poverty in their home countries. As Asian immigrants began to settle in the U.S., they sought spiritual communities. It was a perfect environment for Christian evangelism and church growth.

The few Episcopal Asiamerican churches, which were mainly Chinese and Japanese, were not only recuperating from the nightmares of their past but were also struggling to find their places in the largely white American mainstream. Meanwhile, the unparalleled positive impact of the American civil rights movement led to the emergence of advocacies among the black, Native American, and Hispanic caucuses within the mainstream Episcopal Church. The Asian Episcopalians were few and far between.

So it was providential that in 1973, Canon James Pun was called to serve as priest of True Sunshine Church in San Francisco. He had just come from Hong Kong and understood the sense of isolation of Asian clergy. He saw the need for a national Chinese ministry in the Episcopal Church to reach out to the increasing number of Chinese immigrants moving into the various parts of the country from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China. Pun began to communicate his sense of loneliness, reaching out to other Asian clergy.

In their first meeting, in March 1973, the Rev. Canon John H.M. Yamasaki, rector of St. Mary's Japanese Church in Los Angeles and representative of Province VIII to the Executive Council of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, affirmed the sentiment of James Pun and proposed an ad hoc committee to study the matter. It was agreed that Asian clergy should not only serve as chaplains to Asian Episcopalians, but that they should develop a strategy to enable mission and evangelism among the Asian peoples who were immigrating in record numbers to the United States. It was also imperative that a national plan to develop "Asian and Pacific Island Ministries" be recommended to The Episcopal Church.

The members of the ad hoc committee were the Rev. Canon John Yamasaki, who took the recommendation to the Executive Council and then to the General Convention of the Episcopal Church; the Venerable Lincoln Eng, who was then rector of St. Bartholomew's Church in Beaverton, Oregon, and served as executive secretary of the ad hoc committee; the Rev. Winston Ching, who was vicar of St. John the Evangelist in San Francisco and chair of the ad hoc committee, and who presented the proposal to the executive committee in Louisville, Kentucky, just prior to the General Convention. Other members included Mrs. Betty Lee, a lay leader from the Diocese of California; the Rev. Victor Wei, who was then the executive administrator of the Diocese of California; and Canon James Pun.

The ad hoc committee drafted and finalized the resolution and submitted it to the 64th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, which met in Louisville, Kentucky, September 29 - October 11, 1973. The resolution called for the establishment of "Episcopal Asiamerica Ministry in order to deepen and strengthen the existing ministries of the Episcopal Church involved with Asian and Pacific Island peoples as well as to establish new ones." The word "Asiamerica" was invented to include both American-born as well as foreign-born (immigrant) persons of Asian ancestry.

The response of the General Convention was overwhelming. The resolution was unanimously adopted with a corresponding initial budget of \$50,000 to fund the development of Asian ministries and to hire a staff officer. At the first meeting of the Episcopal Asiamerica Ministry in San Francisco, following the General Convention, Canon James Pun declared, "I only asked for a bicycle; but they gave us a bus and hired a driver!"

Congregational Development and Advocacy

The Episcopal Asiamerica historical experience demonstrates the truism that congregational development and political advocacy are inextricably intertwined. Where there is hostility and lack of advocates for their inclusion, immigrant faith communities will not survive as in the case of the first Chinese Episcopal Church (Ah Foo) during the Chinese Exclusion Acts of 1882 and the many Japanese Churches during the Japanese Internment era. But where there is hospitality and advocacy for their inclusion, as in the establishment of Episcopal Asiamerica Ministry, the immigrant churches will survive and flourish.

The correlation of congregational development and political advocacy is acutely true with Asian immigrant churches in the United States. Asian immigrants are generally passive-aggressive and do not show their displeasure openly. Their wheels seldom squeak, they hide their tears and are experts in self-deprecation. In churches, they do not often self-volunteer but are quick to comply with ministry when asked to serve. They vote with their feet, that is, when they sense hospitality and welcome, they stay but when they sense hostility and racism, they quietly leave. With the history of Chinese Exclusion, Japanese Internment and Filipino anti-miscegenation, these reactions to the attitudes of the mainstream church is understandable.

This is another way of saying that in many cases, the Asian immigrants would gladly have joined the mainstream white and black Episcopal churches. But having Ethnic Asiamerican churches provided them with a safety net to work out their faith in their own languages and cultures as well as to shield them from being rebuffed in the mainstream and dominant American churches.

Since its establishment by the General Convention in 1973, the Asiamerica Ministries office has been actively involved in planting, strengthening and expanding ministries of The Episcopal Church among the Asian and Pacific Islanders. In the west coast, the Dioceses of Hawaii, California, El Camino Real, San Joaquin, San Diego, Los Angeles, Olympia, Nevada, Arizona and Colorado have been active. In the east coast, the dioceses of New York, Long Island, New Jersey, Newark, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Massachusetts and Maryland have been active. In the midland, the dioceses of Chicago, Fond Du Lac, Georgia, Fort Worth, Texas and Minnesota have been active.

In its earlier years, the Episcopal Church "Venture in Mission had provided "seed grants" for the planting of congregations. In the ensuing years, grants have been given for the translations of the Book of Common Prayer in some Asian languages such as Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Hmong.

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