

ITEM C.201
FOR INFORMATION

PAN ASIAN ENGLISH MINISTRIES PASTORS CONFERENCE

Dramatic shifts in demographics and generational trends are changing the landscape in the church, capturing the attention of Asian English ministry pastors at the first-ever Pan Asian English Ministry Pastors Conference in June, sponsored by [Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries](#).

The Rev. Frank Yamada — the first Asian American to serve as a president of a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seminary — delivered the keynote address: “2040 Now: What 21st Century Realities Mean in 2014.” He examined some of the broad trends in diversity and their potential impact on the church and society.

“We are currently undergoing the most significant generational shift in our nation’s history. Baby boomers were once the largest demographic group in the country but we’re rapidly shifting from boomers to the millennial generation ... Millennials are now the largest generation in our country’s history — if that doesn’t change the face of society and the face of the church, I don’t know what will,” Yamada said.

Yamada addressed a group of thirty one and half and second-generation Asian pastors engaged in English ministry who gathered in Detroit just before the 221st General Assembly (2014) for leadership development, spiritual enrichment, networking and visioning. The two-day gathering focused on the changing landscape of diversity in the United States, the impact this shift might have on the church and the need for racial ethnic leadership development and racial ethnic and immigrant new worshipping communities.

Other speakers at the conference included the Rev. Kevin Park, associate dean of Advanced Studies and assistant professor of Theology at Columbia Theological Seminary; the Rev. Mihee Kim-Kort, staff for U-Kirk @ IU, the Presbyterian ministry to students at Indiana University; the Rev. Christine Hong, associate for theology: interfaith relations for the Presbyterian Mission Agency; the Rev. David Shinn, pastor of New Hope Presbyterian Church in Detroit; and the Rev. Jin S. Kim, founding pastor of Church of All Nations in Minneapolis and field staff for Korean English Ministries in Racial Ethnic & Women’s Ministries.

Linda Valentine, Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, and the Rev. Rhashell Hunter, director of Racial Ethnic & Women’s Ministries/Presbyterian Women, brought greetings to participants on the first day of the event.

“Being an English ministry pastor is a very unique ministry and it can be a very lonely position to be in. It was great to see old and new faces who are engaged in English ministry in the Asian American context,” said conference participant the Rev. Samson Tso. “The conference helped me realize that English ministry is not dying, and that it really does empower the next generation to be leaders and disciples of Christ.”

Participants heard a presentation by Kim-Kort followed by a panel discussion with Hong, Shinn and Kim. Referencing the Book of Esther, Kim-Kort discussed the struggle Asian Americans face living in a dominant culture and concluded by inspiring the pastors in attendance to be conveners of openness,

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change and possibility. The panel discussion, moderated by the Rev. Ben Park, focused on how people of faith can live in a diverse community. Other topics discussed by the panel include:

- Issues of race and culture in the church today and in the future;
- The importance of leadership training and support for Asian pastors and leaders in the church and the importance of supporting racial ethnic new worshipping communities;
- Interfaith and intergenerational relations;
- The church as a diaspora

“Looking at the future — at the year 2040 — we will be a much more diverse people, but unfortunately, that doesn't necessarily mean that we will change the way we interact with one another. In fact, we still have a lot of work to do, even in the religious context,” Yamada said. “The world has changed so quickly it's no wonder we feel overwhelmed. You can't not read the news right now and see evidence of the world's demographics and political powers shifting.”

“We are becoming more faithful when we engage with other churches and other faiths. It's awkward and it's messy, but it's an opportunity for us to grow spiritually,” said Kim-Kort during her presentation, which examined the church as a diaspora.

The conference was sponsored by Korean Emerging Ministries, Asian Congregational Support and the Racial Ethnic Leadership Development offices of Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries. The gathering was the first of two leadership institutes sponsored by Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries that were held before the start of the General Assembly. Many of the individuals who participated in the Pan Asian English Ministry Pastors Conference remained in Detroit for the Second Asian Moderators' Convocation.