



THE SGI JOURNAL

OF LEADERSHIP

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DIVERSITY

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THE SGI JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP

MISSION STATEMENT

Leading the United Pentecostal Church International to think strategically about future growth.

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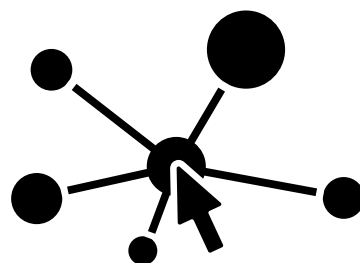
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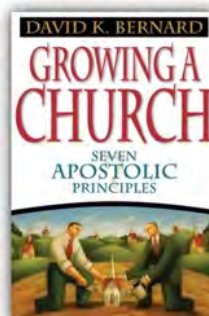
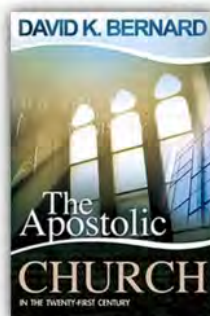
Strategic Growth Initiative (SGI) Resources



The Strategic Growth Initiative (SGI) was born in the heart of General Superintendent David K. Bernard as God gave him a vision for growing the North American church. The General Board of the UPCI approved the forming of SGI for the purpose of highlighting growth in the areas of the number of churches and ministers in North America. The four focus points of SGI are outlined below along with resources available through the Pentecostal Resources Group.

Multiply the number of churches

SGI will assist districts by providing promotion, planning, and training with the goal of enabling every district to at least double the number of churches (including preaching points, daughter works, autonomous church plants, multicultural church plants, integrate independent Apostolic churches, etc.) in one decade.





A Diverse Church

Darrell Johns, SGI Committee Chair

The church that Jesus Christ died to redeem is a culturally diverse church.

The Holy Spirit has been poured out on all flesh (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). The church pictured in Heaven represents people from every culture (Revelation 5:9, 7:9). There is no debate that the gospel is for “whosoever will” (Revelation 22:17).

**The challenge
is not in the principle,
but in practice.**

In this issue of the *SGI Journal*, we hope to provide insights that will equip you to continue to build a church on earth that reflects the diversity of the church in Heaven. Thanks to the contributors of this issue for lending their expertise to this important theme. Let’s seek the Lord for a great “all flesh” ingathering in 2024.

Darrell Johns

Darrell Johns serves as pastor of Atlanta West Pentecostal Church, assistant general superintendent of the Eastern Zone, UPCI, and chair of the Strategic Growth Initiative Committee of the General Board.



Ministering with Sensitivity

Dr. David K. Bernard, General Superintendent

As an evangelistic church in a diverse society, we seek to minister effectively to people of all backgrounds and walks of life. To accomplish this purpose, we must foster an atmosphere that welcomes people of every race, ethnicity, culture, age, social location, and political persuasion. Our worship and church life shouldn't merely reflect our personal preferences and comfort. We need to consider people who are not like us, including those who don't share our cultural or spiritual heritage. We should be sensitive to the situations and needs of others. We shouldn't assume that our traditional methods are always the best or the only authentic ways to be Apostolic. While we should always follow scriptural teachings, in our styles of worship and modes of operation we should consider what is most effective in our community.

Cultivating Spiritual Sensitivity

Cultivating sensitivity must be intentional. Sensitivity first comes through prayer. As we pray and develop a burden for souls, we will become more sensitive to others. Sensitivity also comes through love for people as we become more aware of their needs and desires. Instead of focusing on what we think and feel, we cultivate an awareness of the thoughts and experiences of others. What are they thinking and feeling? What do they understand and perceive? What touches them? How are they responding? Finally, we need to submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit will guide us so that we are effective in touching minds and hearts.

Hindrances to Sensitivity

Here are some hindrances to ministering with sensitivity.

- 1. Self-Absorption:** focusing on ourselves, what we like and think, and what pleases us.
- 2. Lack of Burden:** lack of care for others; focusing on family, friends, and our cultural comfort zone.
- 3. Traditions, Programs, and Rituals:** believing that our way of doing things is the best or only way; resisting new ideas and methods; insisting on doing everything according to our plans; relying more on programs than the work of the Holy Spirit. We have a wonderful Apostolic heritage from the twentieth century, including how to conduct worship services and how to respond to the presence of God. Nevertheless, we must remain sensitive to the leading and presence of the Holy Spirit. We must also be willing to evaluate our plans and practices in light of current social conditions and needs. We must distinguish scriptural teachings from cultural and personal preferences, recognizing that there can be various ways of fulfilling biblical principles. While we should plan, practice, and prepare for services, we shouldn't be bound by a program or a ritual, even if it's unwritten.
- 4. Human Expectations.** We can limit the work of God by our expectations and assumptions. Sometimes, God wants to work in unexpected ways. His thoughts and plans are far above ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). He wants to reach people outside our comfort zone and beyond our expectations. (See Luke 14:16-24.)
- 5. Human Zeal.** While zeal is good, we can become so intent on our efforts that we miss what God wants to do. Human promotion, excitement, and exuberance are not the same as a move of the Spirit. Sometimes, they can hinder instead of help in creating a spiritual atmosphere and following the Spirit.
- 6. Lack of Prayer.** If we don't seek God, we may not be sensitive to the needs and opportunities around us. For this reason, we should seek God in prayer for each service.

Appreciation of Diversity

We need to cultivate an appreciation for diversity, not to be politically correct but because people are diverse. God created people in their diversity, and God loves people. Therefore, it's good to celebrate the diversity that exists in our communities and churches and recognize the diversity that can result as we reach out to our community. Just as people have different personalities so groups have different cultures, ways of thinking, and modes of expression. These differences are not necessarily better or worse, just different. We naturally tend to prefer what is familiar and comfortable while rejecting what is different. Although it's fine to have preferences, we should open ourselves to new ideas and experiences and learn to accept people and cultures as they are.

When we do, we will discover that some ways are just as good as ours or perhaps even better.

The main point isn't to judge other people or cultures but simply to understand and relate to them on their own terms. In this way, we learn to communicate effectively in spite of differences. We learn to appreciate different personalities and cultures.

The same is true of ministries. Not everyone has the same ministry, talent, ability, or gift. Different ministries aren't necessarily better or worse, but they are just different. We need all the ministries in the body. For example, the body of Christ needs both the pastor and the evangelist. Likewise, not every worship service is supposed to be the same. Just as we may have very different meals that together form a healthy diet, so we learn to appreciate the different ways God works from service to service and month to month in the life of the church. Some people think every service must have the same level of exuberant, demonstrative worship, but God doesn't always work the same way. Instead of trying to create a certain type of service or imposing our expectations upon a service, we should come with expectancy to see what God will do.

Practical Application

Speakers, emcees, worship leaders, and other participants need to consider what is most effective and appropriate in a particular service. They must evaluate the setting and accept its limitations. They should fulfill their specific role for the benefit of the whole.

1. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, but accept the realities of time, place, and culture as well as your own role, influence, and credibility in the setting. Evaluate the occasion and your place in it to determine what is most effective and appropriate. Don't try to do something that isn't suited to the occasion. For example, as a guest speaker, you may observe some problems in the church, but you probably won't be able to solve those problems in one service. Let God lead you to minister according to His will in the situation because only He knows what is best.

2. Don't try to imitate others or do the work of others; fulfill your own ministry. If you are not the pastor, don't try to do what the pastor is supposed to do. You will be most effective when you understand your identity, ministry, call, and gifts, as well as your role in a given situation. Be confident in your own spiritual identity. Instead of ministering out of a need for affirmation or a desire to produce certain results, be sensitive to what God wants to do.

3. No matter the circumstances, always respect people. Respect doesn't mean agreeing with them but treating them with kindness, courtesy, and love as human beings. Even if someone is living in a sinful lifestyle such as adultery or homosexuality, treat that person with the same courtesy as others. If someone disrupts the service with grossly inappropriate behavior, address the situation in an appropriate way. Often this

can be done discreetly by ushers. Train workers to deal appropriately with special-needs children so that the church can welcome and minister to these families. In short, approach people in a positive manner with hope. Stand for righteousness and against sin, but accept people as they are. Acceptance of a person doesn't mean approval of a lifestyle. It means not disparaging or despising them, such as by disapproving looks or snide remarks. Instead, welcome them and teach the church to welcome them. After all, they need the influence of the gospel. Where else should they go? The sick need a hospital and sinners need the church. If the church doesn't welcome sinners, what hope do they have?

4. Maintain a positive, faith-building approach. You cannot afford to act in frustration. Sometimes you may need to correct people who speak or act contrary to the teachings of the church, especially when they represent the church. In every situation, however, pray until you have a Christ-like spirit and can deal with people as the Lord would. There is a time to take a stand, but not out of frustration, personal antagonism, or vengeance. Hate the devil and what he stands for, but don't hate people. Don't be drawn into a personal conflict. Instead, wage spiritual warfare by emphasizing the Word and the Spirit. Proclaim the Word of God in faith and allow it to work. Pray for a move of the Holy Spirit and likewise give time and opportunity for God to work. The Holy Spirit is God Himself in spiritual presence and action; the Spirit isn't to be equated with human zeal, action, noise, or physical demonstration. The Spirit can work quietly as well as demonstratively. Don't focus on a particular physical demonstration but on the reality of the Spirit's work. God may communicate through an earthquake or a still, small voice.

5. When making an appeal, whether from the pulpit or personally, don't manipulate or coerce. Instead, invite people to respond based on what is best for them. Invite them to pray as a response of faith to the Word of God. Sometimes an invitation can break barriers and draw people to prayer, but it's only effective if it recognizes people's free will. Don't use tactics that put people on the spot, make them defensive, or force them to cooperate. Such methods are not effective in the long run.

Evaluating Results

We naturally want to see great results from our ministry, but we are part of a process. No matter who we are, everything does not rest on us. One person plants and another waters, but God gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6).

We are accountable to be faithful, not successful by human measurement.

Of course, being faithful includes being a good steward of resources and opportunities and using good methods. Nevertheless, the human will of others is also involved. Our job is to function as part of the body, with Christ as the head.

Not all results are visible. Sometimes we don't see the results we desire, but we have sown seed, and we know God's Word always produces fruit and accomplishes His purpose (Isaiah 55:11). If we rely upon the Word with the anointing of the Spirit, it will have an effect. When we speak the truth in love, we aren't responsible if some reject truth. The Word has acted as intended, but they have chosen not to accept it. And even so, visible results may come later.

We can learn from every situation. Perhaps we hindered the process or failed to do what was needed. If so, we can pray for God to make up the difference by His grace and give us another opportunity. These experiences can teach us to be more effective in the future.

Don't expect the results of someone else, but just do what you are called to do.

For example, if you are not the pastor, then don't expect the results of the pastor. Sometimes, a pastor can speak with authority in a certain situation, and people will respond. Evangelists or assistants may not get the same results because they don't have the same authority, influence, or relationship. On the other hand, sometimes, an evangelist preaches the same basic message that the pastor has been faithfully proclaiming for a year but gets a much greater response. The pastor shouldn't resent this fact but capitalize on it, recognizing that it's part of the ministry of an evangelist. People tend to respond to something new, different, or exciting.

In short, we are all part of a process. In the end it is God who causes the church to grow.



Dr. David K. Bernard is the general superintendent
of the United Pentecostal Church International.





Diversity: God's Plan for a Unified Church

Dr. Melvin Reddy

As Apostolic Pentecostals, we believe that it is our responsibility to reconcile the world to Christ before His return for His bride. As such, the mission statement of the United Pentecostal Church International is to carry the whole gospel to the whole world by the whole church. Society tends to build walls that separate people based on cultural and socio-economic differences. Unfortunately, these barriers often extend into the church as well, based on a host of distinctions and preferences. Things like age, race, politics, cultural norms, worship styles, and so many other issues divide the church today. These divisions weaken the church. However, what if there is a better way?

What if the church could celebrate the unique qualities and contributions of its congregants, thereby establishing a healthy, united church culture focused on its common purpose rather than focusing on their differences? What if the church could reflect Heaven on earth as an alternative to the divisiveness demonstrated in the world around us? What if the church could be a place where differences are seen as a starting point for friendship and connection rather than suspicion and division? As leaders, it is our responsibility to follow the biblical mandate to cultivate true unity through celebrating diversity.

Our Biblical Mandate for Diversity

So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.
– Romans 12:5 (KJV)

In this verse, the apostle Paul calls the church to interdependence in lieu of independence. No single Christian can function effectively or appropriately in isolation. The New Testament church saw health and growth by acknowledging this principle. Yet this commitment to living as “everyone members of another” requires intentionality in celebrating the diversity within the body of Christ.

Many churches desire for their congregation to reflect diversity; however, cultivating an environment that fosters diversity has its own challenges. Being in proximity to people of different racial backgrounds doesn't automatically produce positive outcomes. When it comes to loving and serving fellow Christians, God has called us to more than just proximity; He has called us to unity. Unity was the foundation in the Book of Acts for becoming the church that God had destined it to be.

Unity Through Diversity

God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.
– 1 Corinthians 12:18 (KJV)

The apostle Paul uses a metaphor of the human body to illustrate the purpose of diversity, and describe how each member of the church is valued and needed equally. The body is comprised of various organs, each with its unique function, but working in harmony to maintain the body's overall health and function.

It is the same within the church. Members of the body of Christ each have unique elements that contribute to its completeness, all while maintaining their individuality. There are real differences among believers: different gifts, talents, ministries, and ideas about worship. However, these differences should not prevent us from achieving unity. Instead, we must strive for a unity that embraces these differences, rather than seeking to eliminate them. We are brought together not just for a utilitarian purpose, but because it brings joy to our heavenly Father. In fact, true unity is built solely on embracing our differences. If we achieve this type of unity, we will truly be the church that God has called us to be.

Diversity is a Life-Giving Calling

How then should the church respond to this admonition to pursue the biblical mandate for diversity? Paul offers further insight as we read on in Romans 12:

*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love;
in honor preferring one another.*
– Romans 12:10 (KJV)

A diverse church must become a deliberate church. The key to true unity is to walk in brotherly love, preferring one another over ourselves. This means our diversity is celebrated, not simply tolerated. The mission of God supersedes our preferences, and we unite around the love of God.

The church is not a human creation. The church has come about through the ordering and creativity of God. He has brought each of us together, given us individual gifts to be used through the church, and brought us into a relationship with one another. We exist as the church because God has designed it this way.

It has been said that true unity is the result of uniting through differences. Diversity is God's gift for the church to become iron sharpened by iron. (See Proverbs 27:17). To pursue this holy calling, we must keep our focus on Jesus, who gives us a sense of community, purpose, and destiny. We are stewards of God's calling and gifts, so we collectively offer them in service of God's kingdom. As such, we help every believer see his or her value and worth in the body of Christ as a beautiful tapestry woven together by God's love.

Questions for Reflection:

- *Does my church have a clear strategy for embracing a biblical model of diversity?*
- *Are recruitment practices for hiring and inviting volunteers sensitive to a biblical model of diversity?*
- *Is diversity represented at the highest level of leadership in my church?*
- *Do any individuals from non-majority cultures of my church share the pulpit?*

Melvin Reddy

Melvin Reddy is the founding pastor of The Sanctuary Church in Cedar Park, Texas. He and his wife, Lisa, planted a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-generational church deep in the heart of Texas. He holds a Doctor of Ministry degree from Asbury Seminary, a Master of Theological Studies from Urshan Graduate School of Theology (UGST), and a Master of Arts in Counseling from Regent University. Mel is an adjunct professor at UGST and Urshan College and serves as the North American Missions director for the Austin Metro section of the South Central Texas District. He is the proud father of Jude.



FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO FULFILLMENT IN MINISTRY

Dr. Cindy Miller

IDEA IN BRIEF

*BE SUSTAINED BY A
SACRED CALL*

*DEVELOP A PERSONAL
DEFINITION OF
SUCCESS*

*SURROUND YOURSELF
WITH A NETWORK OF
SUPPORT*

*PURSUE
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT*

*WOMEN IN MINISTRY
MAINTAIN FEMALE
DISTINCTIVENESS*

Several years ago, I was privileged to lead a research study on the experience of women who pastor within the United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI).

While the study was specific to women, the findings were, for the most part, generalized and applicable to all pastors.

This study sought to identify factors (if any) that exist to guide clergywomen to successfully tap into a truer sense of what it means to be a woman in ministry and understand the internal and external components that contribute to women pastors within the UPCI successfully fulfilling their ministerial calling.

At the time of the study, clergywomen made up less than four percent of the credentialed ministers of the UPCI. This phenomenological inquiry explored how female pastors of the UPCI described their experience of being a female in a profession where men significantly outnumber women in both pastoral and leadership positions. The goal of the study was to identify factors that guide clergywomen in a truer sense of what it means to be a woman in ministry.

Five main findings emerged from this study. Four findings were applicable to all ministers and pastors and one finding was specific to women in ministry. To experience longevity and fulfillment in ministry, pastors who succeed will a) be sustained by a sacred call, b) have a personal definition of success, c) surround themselves with a network of support, and d) pursue professional development. The one factor specific to women found that women who stayed true to themselves and e) embraced a female distinctiveness in ministry, were more likely to have longevity in ministry.

SACRED CALL

Not everyone experiences a call to preaching and/or pastoral ministry as a dramatic event. Yes, some have the story of a vision or a dream to guide them while others may experience the certainty of God's will as more of an internal awareness. Their ministry flows from a deep desire that could only have come from God. Others describe knowing God's calling, understanding His will more clearly because others, significant people such as parents, pastors, or mentors, recognized the call of God upon their lives. However, it is the knowledge that no matter what happens, God has called them, and that call keeps them even in times of confusion, hurt, personal or ministerial challenges. A sacred call can keep you.

The experience of a sacred call not only starts you on the path of ministry but can also keep you on that path as you discover what that call means to you as an individual. Not only will calling keep you in ministry in times of crisis, confusion, or discrimination, you may find you become more reliant on the knowledge that you are called, even more than personality, gifts, or training. Do you know and are you able to share your story? Remembering what led to the understanding of being called by God for His purpose, whether an event, an awareness, and/or recognition by others, will keep you as you navigate the ministerial journey.

NETWORK OF SUPPORT

Creating and maintaining a network of support is crucial for thriving in ministry. Surrounding yourself with relationships that nurture you and support the work you do is vital for survival. You will need a loving partner in your spouse, true friendships, the support of pastors and leaders, and connections to others, like a counselor or a wise advisor, who can stand with you in unique times. These people are the means for your continued strength to do the work you love.

We know that *who you marry matters*. Your spouse (if married) will hopefully be your greatest supporter and cheerleader. We also know that a healthy marriage requires time, attention, and intention. Pay attention to your spouse, invest in your family, create a healthy homelife. Your public ministry will only be as healthy as your private life.

While many say that ministry is lonely, and it can be, that does not mean it should be. Whether you have one to two good friends who are part of your day-to-day life or an extensive network of people you stay in touch with, you need friends. You need someone to share the idiosyncrasies that occur in the work of pastoring. You need people who will lift you up, laugh with you, and pray for you. If you do not have close friends, choose to include friendship in your network of support. Encouragement should not be the sole responsibility of your spouse or family. If you have neglected friendships, make people a priority. If people have hurt you, understand that not everyone is out to ruin your life and destroy your ministry. Let go of any bitterness and anger, allow healing, and open yourself up to let others in. Pray for faithful friends.

Every pastor should have a pastor. Be accountable to someone whose opinion matters to you. You need pastoral care to serve as a buffer against discouragement, poor decisions, and faulty thinking. Too often, the pastor/minister neglects his or her own mental health while taking care of others. Do you have a counselor or a trusted advisor who is able to provide you with healthy coping strategies?

Family support, friendships, pastoral care, and a wise counselor are not optional if you are planning for resiliency in ministry.

PERSONAL DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

Operating according to personal values, while not comparing yourself to others, will enable you to continue to authentically pastor your congregation. Success cannot be based on the size of your congregation, amount of salary, denominational recognition, or acceptance by peers. How do you define success in ministry? Who or what do you need to make you feel your ministry is valuable? If your response is based on what others provide, you will be frustrated or discouraged most of your ministry. A personal definition of success, based on values rather than accomplishments, will relieve you of the pressure to perform for the applause of the crowd.

In order to live content and experience fulfillment in ministry, consider writing out and living according to your personal definition of success. The biblical definition of success could be stated as, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Role models, mentors, pastors, and leaders are considered necessary for continued growth in ministry. It is important to not only have role models but also to be a role model, to be responsible to live and minister in a way that encourages others to pursue the call of God and enter the ministry. While role models may be those you admire but are not in a close relationship with, the term "mentor" describes a closer relationship. Very few people have the blessing of an experienced, caring elder willing to spend time preparing them for ministry. However, most ministers have been informally mentored by leaders and pastors who acknowledged their value and provided opportunities that allowed them to develop further.

The responsibility to grow as a minister does not rest on others. You will need to be proactive to seek out continual education. Sources of professional development are Apostolic seminary and Bible colleges because, in addition to general ministerial training, the educational environment would provide access to role models and mentors. Other sources of professional development could include symposiums, peer sharing and friendship, and ministerial retreats.

Role models and mentors are important for successful role identity formation in ministry and professional development. Be diligent to carefully choose role models and secure mentors. Seek professional development from multiple sources. Who are your current role models and mentors? How can you diversify your sources of professional development?

This last finding is specific to women in ministry.

IDENTITY

From this study, we found for women that having female role models and mentors was invaluable to their ability to develop a female distinctiveness in ministry. Possessing a positive perception of self as a minister negates the negatives that may come when women are numerical minorities in a male-dominated profession. A woman who understands that God called her as a woman will see being female as a positive, allowing her to bring her unique and valuable contributions to the congregation she serves. Women should develop their own style in pastoring. Rather than adopting traditional male characteristics and strengths, women should value the feminine and relational aspects they bring to ministry. In finding their own style, women can avoid the trap of imitating male behavior.

The participants in this study adamantly desired to have a more traditional feminine style of ministry and were averse to masculine traits in other clergywomen, seeing them as a setback for clergywomen in the UPCI as a whole. The participants seemed to desire this on a personal level and perceived it as necessary for women to have continued inclusion within the denomination.

Women in pastoral ministry who embrace a female distinctiveness in ministry may possess a positive perception of their place within their denomination and congregations, allowing them to view their presence and contributions as needed and valued. This allows them to remain true to themselves as women who value their feminine side and who are unafraid and unashamed to embrace a female distinctiveness in ministry.

Fulfillment in ministry is an option. Creating a lifestyle that allows for that is not always easy, but it is something that should be sought and tended to. Whether it comes from remembering your sacred call, creating a network of support, writing a value-laden personal definition of success, or intentionally continuing to develop as a minister, always remember who you are and who you are not. Your identity should be rooted in a relationship with Jesus Christ and not the opinions of people.

Cindy Miller



Cindy Miller lives in New Jersey with her best friend, ministry partner, and husband—Stanton Miller. Together, they founded Calvary Tabernacle in Wrightstown, NJ. She holds a Ph.D. in Pastoral Care & Counseling. Dr. Miller serves as Professor of Practical Theology and program director for both the Master of Divinity and Master of Arts in Christian Ministry at Urshan Graduate School of Theology. In addition to authoring five books, she is a columnist for *Reflections* magazine and serves as host for the *Reflections Let's Talk* podcast. She travels nationally and internationally, speaking at conferences, training ministry in professional development seminars, and providing counseling consultations for UPCI churches and clergy.

Recommended Resource

This article was adapted from my dissertation research. Click the dissertation link below for a preview of the original dissertation:

Miller, C.A. (2015). What Are United Pentecostal Church International Women Pastors Experiencing: A Qualitative Inquiry.



The Work Will Take the Whole Church

D.J. Hill

Have you ever felt like you wanted to make a bigger impact with your ministry and leadership than you are making now? I know I have! At the end of the week, we reflect back with a desire to have done more. We go to conferences and classes to grow our leadership. We fast and pray to operate in His anointing and to be all that we can be for God. However, there is not enough time, nor seminars, books, prayer, efforts, or anything else that will ever allow us to fulfill what God has *for the church all by ourselves!* The emphasis is “for the church.” God has great big plans for His church, and His plans include “The Whole Church.” Too often we try to fulfill it all by ourselves. We try to be the whole church.

I grew up in a military town where people would come and go frequently based on the Army’s orders. The family that had been over the children’s ministry was stationed in a different state and it left a need in the children’s department. There I was, as an even younger minister than I am now, with a big desire to do something for God. I had little to no experience, yet there was a need at my church. The pastor allowed me to try and meet the need.

I started to teach every Wednesday night to a group of kids. Yes, I almost burned down the fellowship hall trying to reenact God answering Elijah with fire. Yes, I did not fully think through trying to recreate a river that the baby Moses was laid in and came close to flooding a Sunday school room. I have a few more missteps while leading that ministry. I had a big imagination, and I tried my best to make the story come to life to lead those kids to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and develop them into His fully devoted followers.

Through mentoring, trial and error, and experience, I started to become more aligned with the pastor’s vision for the children’s department and more effective without as many crazy mistakes. He could have easily sat me down or not even allowed me to serve in ministry, but instead he saw potential and was willing to cultivate me. He could have tried to do it all himself, but he decided to get others involved. It took time and work for him to cultivate me, but through God he received a return on his investment.

Could it be that you can actually see God’s plan for the church you serve come to pass by not trying to do it alone? I believe it is His will for His church to grow in your community. The harvest is ready! Jesus Himself declared this, but also told the disciples that they should pray that laborers are sent into the fields. In other words, the whole church needs to get involved in evangelizing and discipling!

Moses had to learn this principle in the first chapter of Deuteronomy. He was leading hundreds of thousands of Israelites to God’s future for them. He was on the brink of burnout because he was trying to do it all himself. His father-in-law, Jethro, advised him to get others involved in leading. In order for Moses to be effective in his leadership, he had to be strategic. The strategy that Moses learned, and Jesus taught, is the same one we must apply. And that is to get others involved.

We cannot do it by ourselves. Our biblical mandate is to get the whole church involved. We are leading for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11-13). It will take time and effort to train and mentor others, but that should not stop us from doing the hard work of putting laborers into the harvest.

You could have the next, extremely effective Sunday school teacher sitting on your pews. You could have the next youth pastor who is just on the fringes of the church now but will impact your city once activated. You could have a creative who does not see how their hobbies and talents can benefit the church, but you know that the livestream and social media accounts could use some work. We must cultivate the members of the church we serve for the work of the ministry. We no longer have to try and do it all by ourselves. Instead, our churches can grow through the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world! Our churches have inactive laborers waiting to be called into action.

We cannot allow what we see in people in their present condition to stop us from cultivating them to what God sees in their future. So, I urge us all to follow Jesus' pattern when He called the disciples. Let's get others involved in His kingdom. It will take work, but it will be so worth it! We cannot, should not, and are not called to do it all by ourselves. We are called to strengthen the ministry, multiply ministers, and grow His church by utilizing the whole church!

The work that God wants done within your community will take the whole church! So, let's go see the harvest being gathered in by using as many workers as we can in the field!



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Spanish Evangelism

Rene Moreno

The whole gospel, to the whole world by the whole church. In many ways, this sums up the existence of the United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI). Among those in the world (which includes our local community) are those who don't speak the same language that most of us in the United States speak, English. Among the non-English speakers is the Hispanic population, which reached 62.1 million in 2020, accounting for 19 percent of all Americans and making it the nation's second-largest racial or ethnic group, behind White Americans and ahead of Black Americans, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.*

We have heard it said in conferences, and even among our esteemed leaders, that the next great revival will be among the Hispanic population. It is one of the fastest-growing groups in the U.S. Between 2010 and 2020, the country's Hispanic population grew 23 percent, up from 50.5 million in 2010. In eight states in 2000, 20 percent or more of kindergartners were Hispanics. By 2017, that number had grown to 18 states plus the District of Columbia.*

Some might argue that there is no need for Spanish ministries because many second and third-generation Hispanics are English-speaking. However, there are several things to consider. First, there will always be a group of first-generation Spanish speakers who will arrive in our country, and they will need a place to hear God's truth preached and a place to worship of their own. And, although not all Hispanic households are Spanish-speaking only, Spanish use at home remains high.

According to the 2022 American Community Survey conducted by the US Census Bureau, Spanish is spoken at home by 42 million people aged five or older, which is more than twice as many as in 1990. The same report shared that 94 percent of Hispanic immigrants spoke Spanish at home in 2019, about the same as in 1980. Many prefer the Spanish language, especially when it comes to their worship experience, as it is so intertwined into our Hispanic culture. There are more speakers of Spanish in the United States than speakers of French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Hawaiian, the various varieties of Chinese, the Indo-Aryan languages, and the Native American languages combined.*

The Spanish-speaking population is ripe for revival, and we, as God's church, cannot afford to miss it. We must realize that many of our first-time, Spanish-speaking guests will be immigrants, and many are away from their families and will be in dire need of fellowship and community. This is an area upon which God's church can focus. Reaching out with a targeted focus on the Spanish-speaking community with the inclusion of food and fellowship afterward will be a good way to connect with the Hispanic community.

Secondly, as Jesus demonstrated so greatly time and time again, specifically with the woman at the well, we must love them (John 4). True love and compassion are not something that can be faked; they must be birthed within our hearts and spirit.

A friend of mine shared that a young Spanish-speaking lady arrived at the church he pastors. Although he often wondered why her Spanish was so broken, she was able to communicate that she was from a specific country in Central America. He offered her a Bible study, and when he showed up, to his surprise, there were six other family members ready to receive the Bible study. A few weeks later, he finished the Bible study, and the whole family came to church, received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and were all baptized in Jesus name. Eventually, he found out that the entire family only understood about 80 percent of what he was teaching them. The country they were from had some areas where a distinct dialect was spoken, thus the reason for her broken Spanish. He asked the lady why they continued the Bible study if they didn't understand the majority of what he was saying. She shared that they understood enough to realize their need, but most importantly, she said, "We never canceled the Bible study because we could tell that you cared."

If we will make the effort to reach out to our Spanish-speaking community, God will honor it. The most ideal scenario would be for a Spanish-speaking member to feel the burden and begin a Bible study that can turn into a preaching point, into a daughter work, and eventually into an autonomous church. There are a multitude of options for translating equipment, and although it is not the most ideal, something is better than nothing. You would never dream of sending someone you love who is about to have a baby to a hospital with a reputation of not caring for newborns, and neither will God. My pastor said years ago, "God is a wise businessman." God won't send us a harvest of souls if we aren't doing our part to reach them and take care of them, either.

If you would like further guidance in reaching the Spanish-speaking community in your area, please feel free to reach out to the Spanish Evangelism Ministries of the UPCI. We will gladly help you take the whole gospel to the whole world by the whole church. ¡Adelante en el nombre de Jesus!

Rene Moreno

Rene Moreno has been an ordained UPCI minister for over 26 years. He is the founding pastor of Los Pentecostales de Austin in Austin, Texas. He serves as the Spanish Ministries director of the South Central Texas District, on the Executive Committee of Spanish Evangelism Ministries, and as the secretary of the "Encendidos" International Conference. He retired from the State of Texas at the Health & Human Services Commission with the Civil Rights Office after 28 years of service. He has been happily married for over 33 years and is the father of three wonderful children and grandfather to two beautiful grandkids.

* U.S. Census Bureau Delivers Data for States to Begin Redistricting Efforts, Press Release #CB21-CN.55, August 12, 2021

* Krogstad, Jens Manuel, A view of the nation's future through kindergarten demographics, Pew Research Center, July 31, 2020

* US now has more Spanish speakers than Spain – only Mexico has more, The Guardian article, February 15, 2015.



The Importance of Diversity in the Church

Mark Thomas

The promotion and sustainment of diversity in the church is high on God's priority list. As evidenced by His great commission directives, Jesus was clear that a premium effort should be made to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature in every nation (Mark 15:16).

To assure adherence to this directive, God made special provisions for every believer to have the needed capacity to reach all souls. Acts 1:8 says, *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth* (KJV).

God's intentionality has never been on more comprehensive display than when He established the New Testament church as a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-generational, soul-reaching entity. From its inception, the Church of the Living God has been diverse, just as God intended it to be. It is no coincidence that on the Day of Pentecost, people representing every nation under heaven were present to hear the first New Testament church message ever preached.

What's even more important is that from this mixed multitude of diversity, 3,000 souls were added to the church on that same day. In addition, Peter's preceding apostolic message announced that the promise of the Holy Ghost was to those present on the Day of Pentecost, their children, and all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call (Acts 2:38-29). His message that day was anointed and consistent with the instruction that the gospel should be preached to everyone.

The importance of reaching every soul is further emphasized in Acts 10, when the Lord directed the apostle Peter to put aside his cultural and ethnic biases and preferences in order to reach the Roman soldier, Cornelius, who was a Gentile hungry to be saved and desiring to be in a closer relationship with the One True God. As was the case with Peter and Cornelius, our different backgrounds, birthplaces, and upbringing will organically produce different political ideologies and perspectives that we must each deal with and navigate in this life. This is normal and the way of mankind.

Can you name an instance when people from all over the world with different political, cultural, and socio-economic viewpoints come together and agree on everything? It is very likely that you cannot. However, this should not be an excuse to fail to pursue diversity. Just like in every other similar situation, the pursuit of diversity will cause stress in the body of Christ. We should view it as a necessary part of any multicultural and diverse church. We are built for this and can successfully overcome these challenges.

The early church experienced similar issues. Acts 6, vv. 1, 3, and 7 tell us, *And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. . . Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. . . And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.* As we can read, the church handled the issue and did not have a church split but had revival instead!

It is evident in Scripture that, although we are no different in value to God, we are each uniquely and wonderfully made in His broader image. While recognizing the reality of our differences and even celebrating our culture and beautiful heritage, we must simultaneously strive to be and represent the united church that Jesus created. Our differences should not be emphasized to the point that they cause divisions or schisms in the body of Christ. It should be further noted that our greatest identity is found in who we are in Christ Jesus. We are redeemed by His blood, we possess His name, and are a part of His church. We ultimately belong to Christ and to Him alone.

Because of that, our church doors should be open and welcoming to whosoever will call on His name out of every nation, kindred, and tongue. The church, as created by Christ, should always be teeming with diversity, just as He established it on the Day of Pentecost. If it is not, every reasonable attempt should be made to make it so. This will only happen if the church, at both the global and local level, is committed to making every effort possible to harness God's intentionality with regard to the pursuit of diversity.

A thriving multicultural and generationally diverse church is of the utmost importance to the mission of God. This church—sound in doctrine, holiness, commitment, and Christian principles of living—is postured, equipped, and prepared to successfully and effectively preach the whole gospel to the whole world. And it is diverse enough in culture, education, social standing, ethnicity, and, yes, even political leanings to reach everyone who presents themselves as hungry for God and wanting to be saved.

In other words, potential church members must be able to identify with the people commissioned to reach them. The apostle Paul said it this way in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, *For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some (KJV).*

Lastly, I want to be clear on a few final viewpoints. This article is intended to be an indictment to no one but a challenge to all who love Christ and intend to rejoice at His appearing. There are some churches that do not reflect the diversity Christ intended for His church through no fault of their own. The love, intentionality, and welcoming spirit are available to all who want to be saved. However, the reality is that some communities, cities, and even states lack the diversity seen in other parts of the country.

Keep preaching! Others may have made concerted efforts over the years and still have not experienced success in this area of ministry. Keep praying and reaching! For some, this article may encourage us to cast our soul harvest nets wider than we have ever done before. This message comes with an assumed expectation that, as leaders, we want our churches to grow and be all that God intended them to be. So, keep striving to fulfill the great commission!

Revelation 7:9-10, *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb (KJV).*

Mark Thomas

Mark Thomas is the **Building the Bridge** South Central Regional director and Louisiana District Building the Bridge coordinator. He and his wife Deena are the founding pastors of Abundant Life Christian Assembly in Plaquemine, Louisiana. They have pastored this multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-generational church for 22 years. They are blessed with 5 beautiful children and have been married 30 years.



A Global Church in a Flat World

Seth Noble Simmons

And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last (Luke 13:29-30, KJV).

The World is Flat

In 2005, Friedman's book *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* captured a lot of attention. Not to be confused with "flat earth" conspirators, Friedman used that simple, provocative title to illuminate the new realities of technological advances in a global age. Technology empowered minority cultures and created a "level playing field" or a "flat" world. For example, search engines like Google provide more access to knowledge than ever before in the history of humanity. Thus, the global interconnectedness fueled by advances in technology and communication fostered unprecedented opportunities for minority cultures to share their own stories and find broader acceptance.

Self-centered stories have been replaced with more modest narratives that recognize the limited perspectives of any single group. Cultures are complex networks of individual experiences, including language, relationships, history, values, and unique cultural norms that guide behavior. Cultures are also dynamic. They change and evolve from a shared history. So, understanding an unfamiliar culture requires prolonged interaction with individuals in the native culture. People no longer accept ego-centric narratives based on one culture. Further, formerly suppressed perspectives now challenge previous understandings of accepted knowledge.

We, as Oneness Pentecostals, are well aware of this phenomenon. A few decades ago, religious leaders attempted to suppress our views by labeling us as a cult, and some still do, of course. However, today, we continue to see opportunities to share our stories in various theological, ecumenical, political, and academic settings. In academia, for example, Apostolic Pentecostal scholars like Dr. Norris, Dr. Seagraves, Dr. Bernard, and others have noted a growing recognition of Oneness beliefs, with some scholars openly affirming Oneness. Now, it is also more common to see other faith traditions worship demonstratively and for people to acknowledge that they speak in tongues. As John Allen observed in his book *The Future Church: How Ten Trends Are Revolutionizing the Catholic Church*, traditional institutionalized religions are "being 'Pentecostalized,' in terms of both the expansion of the Charismatic movement as well as informal grassroots absorption of Pentecostal spirituality and modes of Church life" (p. 186).

Formerly ignored minority voices like Oneness Pentecostals now receive deserved attention and inclusion into broader discussions. The advancements and trends of globalization have influenced all strata of society, including the apostolic church. The world is flat.

The Apostolic Church is Global

Long before the advent of technological advances, apostolic leaders in the first-century church understood the challenges and opportunities associated with leading diverse teams in a flat world. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit "on all people" eradicated barriers and caused diversity to flourish. However, uniting diverse cultures into the church has always required diligent effort from leaders. From the church's inception, leaders addressed the cultural challenges Christians faced in the clash of Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds. The New Testament authors did not shy away from addressing these cultural concerns and encouraging diversity in the church.

For example, one primary reason Luke wrote his gospel was to validate and affirm Gentile inclusion into the early church. Gentile Christians faced extreme societal pressures from the scrutiny of the Roman Empire and the opposition of Jewish Christians. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Luke offered his account through a pastoral lens to shape the cultural values of the early church and legitimize the inclusion of the Gentiles as the divine people of God and the expansion of His kingdom.

In the time of Christ, religious leaders resisted the change of inclusion and diversity. They pridefully relied on their ethnic heritage as status in the kingdom, excluding any Jewish person deemed impure and forbidding the Gentiles from any opportunity to be a part. Conversely, Christ said the religious elite would be excluded, and people from all directions around the globe would be welcomed at His table. Those powerless people thought to be last would be the first to have a seat at the table in the Kingdom of God.

And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last (Luke 13:29-30, KJV).

The apostolic church has been global, or “flat,” since the beginning.

Leading in a Flat World

Leading in a flat world requires intercultural competence, and Christian leaders seek to be students of culture because cultures represent people. Culturally astute leaders value other cultures as equal to their own. They transcend barriers and show sincere empathy toward others. They partner with others as fellow co-laborers and avoid perpetuating egocentric models that undermine the inclusion of people from different backgrounds.

Moreover, culturally competent leaders realize the benefits of diversity. When a diverse group of people interact, they create a synergy that produces solutions that neither of their cultures would have discovered without the interaction. In a healthy environment that affirms diversity, differences become the context for creativity, collaboration, and constructive change.

At the same time, human cultures, native or foreign to the leader, do not act as the ultimate authority for Christian leaders. Christian leaders interact not according to the values and paradigms of their cultural origin but according to the cultural values of Kingdom ethics found in Scripture. Cultural insight is enhanced and reframed in the context of Scripture.

Christian leaders, then, ultimately represent a third culture, the culture of the Kingdom of Christ that transcends human cultures. They prioritize scriptural values for the well-being of followers and leaders, ensuring that any conflicting values align with the Kingdom’s principles. Christian leaders navigate diverse cultures, ensuring alignment with scriptural values for the benefit of all involved.

For that reason, moral integrity remains a crucial factor for effective leadership across cultures. Godly leaders work diligently to ensure their actions align with the values they promote verbally. They impart values through consistent, honest actions to align human cultures with Kingdom values.

Preliminary Findings from a Report on Servant Leadership in the UPCI

Value-based leadership approaches, such as servant leadership, offer guidance for leading in a global context. The United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI) has experienced record-breaking growth since its formation in 1945. We attribute this growth to the work of the Holy Spirit, the inclusive nature of our fellowship, and the shared values of our licensed ministers. UPCI ministers embrace the call to servant leadership locally, regionally, and internationally. Servanthood sustains our movement and facilitates its rapid growth.

Since value-based leadership approaches hold such importance in the twenty-first century, I was curious to see what UPCI-credentialed ministers thought about servant leadership in the UPCI. So, I conducted a quantitative research project to assess perceptions of servant leadership among ministers. Sixty-one licensed ministers participated, with seventy-seven percent completing the survey.

Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument (SLAI)

I used the Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument (SLAI) developed by Dr. Dennis and Dr. Bocarnea at Regent University in 2005. It is a 42-question survey to assess servant leadership across seven dimensions:

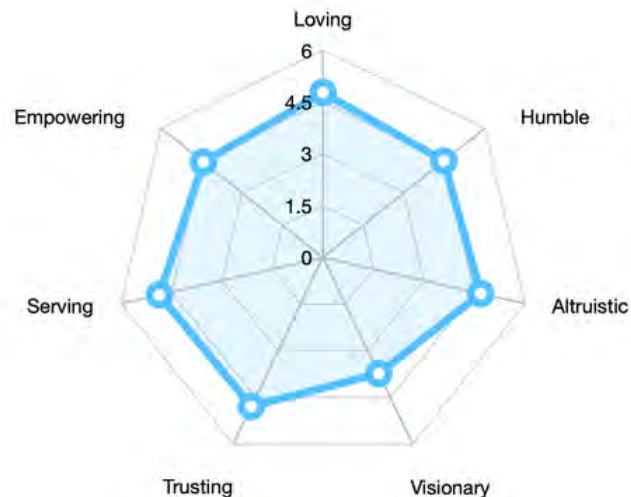
- *loving*, in a social or moral sense
- *humble*, keeping one's accomplishments and talents in perspective
- *altruistic*, helping others selflessly for the sake of helping
- *visionary*, imagining, conceiving, or unusual foresight
- *trusting*, showing confidence in others
- *serving*, exhibiting responsibility for others
- *empowering*, entrusting power to others

Then, I relied on IBM SPSS Statistics version 28 (2021) to curate the SLAI survey responses and demographic information into reportable data. Together, these tools allowed a deeper exploration of the findings to determine general and specific demographic perceptions of servant leadership.

The following chart shows how UPCI ministers scored each attribute overall.

SLAI General Findings

SLAI Attribute	SLAI Mean Score
Loving	4.77
Humble	4.48
Altruistic	4.69
Visionary	3.73
Trusting	4.78
Serving	4.86
Empowering	4.43



Overall, the results suggested a positive perception of servant leadership in the UPCI.

Two Areas of Growth in Servant Leadership

However, the initial findings also suggested two areas of growth for us to consider.

1) Cultivate Collaborative Vision

The “visionary” dimension entails how the servant leader collaborates with organizational members to cultivate a vision. This attribute showed the area in need of the most improvement. Although UPCI leaders may try to include people in shaping vision, survey participants consistently rated this attribute lower than all the other attributes. It scored the lowest across all demographics, registering an average score of only 3.62 on a six-point scale. Accordingly, it may benefit us as servant leaders to ask our followers often how to develop a more collaborative approach to shaping a shared vision.

2) Empower Ethnic Minorities

Secondly, the initial findings revealed a disparity between ethnic minorities and white participants in the overall perception of servant leadership. Ethnically, eighty-five percent of the survey participants defined themselves as “White,” leaving fifteen percent describing themselves as a minority of “Hispanic” or “Multiracial.” The small sample size exceeded the minimum requirements for the study. However, I would caution against generalizing the results to a broader audience until more participants take the survey. For comparison, the Senior Pastor’s survey issued by the UPCI included 587 participants, so this survey included about eleven-percent of that survey participant total. Future efforts may benefit from reissuing the report to a broader segment of licensed ministers and comparing the results with the current report.

Nevertheless, as the graph below illustrates, the report revealed a statistically significant difference in the perception of servant leadership among minorities. Notably, the empowering and visionary attributes scored significantly lower than their white counterparts.

SLAI Scores by Ethnicity



Many factors may cause this disparity, but the findings were too startling to ignore. Such findings naturally cause concern if they reveal a weakness in our united effort to serve our fellowship. The erosion of servanthood would lead to more significant problems and undermine our mission “to bring the whole gospel to the whole world by the whole church.” Thus, if discrepancies remain after appealing to a broader segment of participants, it may be beneficial to seek further clarity on perceptions of servant leadership among minority ministers in the UPCI through surveys and continued open forum discussions in our churches and districts.

A Global Church in a Flat World

Since the beginning, apostolic leaders have worked diligently to include diverse representation in the mission of the church. Today, we continue to empower the church through diversity. Although our efforts to lead as united servants have been successful, we desire to be even stronger. May we work diligently to fulfill the words of Christ and see people “from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south” advancing in the kingdom of God so the UPCI can continue to thrive as a global church in a flat world.

Seth Noble Simmons

Over the past twenty years, Seth has served in several ministerial and community leadership roles alongside his wife, Sarah. They have two daughters, Promise and Purity, and live in Burnet, TX, where he pastors. As an ordained minister, he serves as secretary-treasurer of the Austin Metro Section, chair of the Design/ Marketing Committee of the South Central Texas District, and managing editor of the SGI Journal of Leadership.

Recommended Resource
Click this link to participate in the [*Servant Leadership Assessment Survey*](#). It takes approximately four minutes to complete.



ISSUE 19 TOOLBOX

PRACTICAL TOOLS YOU CAN USE



UPCI Diversity Resources

Explore the many resources provided by the UPCI to foster diversity.

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