



## Tools to Sustain Our Missional Congregations

*A topical newsletter for Pilot Series teams*

Presbytery of Genesee Valley

Know Christ ■ Live Christ ■ Share Christ

*Roderic P. Frohman & James S. Evinger (Eds.)*

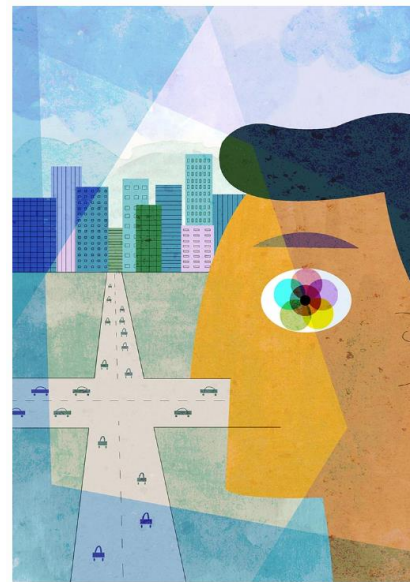
*#1 in a series (January 1, 2018)*

## Your Missional Identity & Intersectionality

*(or cultural traffic jams on your mission street)*

### Rod & Jim Had a Problem

Remember your exploration of Missional Identity? Pilot Teams appreciated the results when they discovered the histories and stories of their congregation. Teams valued their Interviews with long-time and recent members, events built around a prominently displayed time-line, and crafting a brief narrative of what they learned. We've kept and refined those assignments. They work well!



However, there were problems with the Identity text about race and ethnicity, education, and income. It did not connect. People did not see the relevance with what they are doing. Sometimes in later workshops, examples did emerge of difficult relationships between the social mission volunteers and people served. Anecdotes surfaced of awkwardness or tensions related to differences in race, age, income, education, gender... The topic is relevant, but our approach had to be better. Just like you, we are trying to improve! Here is our effort. Start with the Missional Identity Wheel Exercise on the next page and respond to the questions. May God's Spirit guide us!!

Covington United Presbyterian Church, *Pavilion*

First Presbyterian Church, *Batavia*

First Presbyterian Church, *Pittsford*

First Presbyterian Church, *Chili*

Central Presbyterian Church, *Geneseo*

**Figure 1. Missional Identity Wheel<sup>1</sup>**



*Enter your answers below each question.  
Select from either the inner and/or outer rings.*

**Your Self**

1. Which 3 identity factors do you use most frequently to describe yourself to others?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Which 3 identities do you think about least often in relation to yourself?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Which 3 have the strongest effect on how you see yourself as a person?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Your Congregation**

4. Which 3 identities most accurately reflect your congregation?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Think about your congregation’s social mission project which is your favorite.  
Which 3 of the identity factors best describe the people whom the project serves?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Now, we begin to consider how Identity’s demographic markers can be both very relevant and very significant factors in your social mission projects.**

## **A Pilot Team’s Anecdote**

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In 2016, Central Presbyterian Church, Geneseo, responded to a request from the Geneseo-Groveland Food Pantry to relocate its Pantry to Central. The Pantry received food collected from the community and distributed it to people in need. Central said “Yes!” Volunteers...

- redesigned the education wing,
- built shelves to store non-perishables,
- re-wired the area to handle large appliances, and
- connected 2 divided rooms.

Every week, clients are better served in a bigger, more welcoming environment.

As they came to know their clients, the volunteers created educational flyers to add to food bundles. Healthy, nutritious recipes became a regular feature.

However, some clients had **literacy** issues, preventing them from using the recipes. Pantry volunteers had not recognized this fact before.

Suddenly, like cars on a street, the difference in the two groups’ **income** status **intersected** with their difference in **education**. This reality could have led to a wreck of unintentional shaming or alienating comments by the Pantry volunteers.

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## **What does research tell us about Presbyterians, Education, & Income?**

Let’s walk through some facts from the 2010 National Survey of Congregations in which 11,000+ congregations participated.<sup>2</sup> They were representative of all U.S.A. congregations.

- An estimated **30%** of people who regularly participated (18 years & older) were college graduates.
- Of 4,800+ Protestant congregations, including the **Presbyterian Church**, an estimated **40%** of regular participants (18 years & older) were college graduates.
- In the **Presbyterian** congregations, the average estimate of regular participants (18 years & older) who were college graduates was **48.2%**.<sup>3</sup>

To summarize: Of adults who were regular participants in congregations, **Presbyterians** were **much more likely** to be college graduates (**48.2%**) than the national average (**30%**) of all adult participants.

In our society, **education** is a significant factor affecting one’s status because of how dramatically it **intersects** with **income**:

“American workers with a college degree are paid 74 percent more [in 2012] than those with only a high school degree, on average...”<sup>4</sup>

## Another **intersect** for Presbyterians: Race / Ethnicity

In addition to **income** and **education**, consider another demographic factor of Identity – **race / ethnicity**. Here are recent national survey findings regarding how Presbyterians describe themselves. The surveys were conducted by the Pew Research Center, Washington, D. C.<sup>5</sup>

	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Latino</u>	<u>Other / Mixed</u>
<b>2007</b>	91%	4%	2%	2%	1%
<b>2014</b>	88%	5%	3%	4%	1%

Nationally, we Presbyterians are becoming more diverse (but slowly).

One way to see ourselves nationally as Presbyterians is our statistical profile for the demographic markers of **income**, **education**, and **race / ethnicity**. How these **intersect** in our lives has implications for the how the same demographic markers **intersect** in the lives of the people served by our social mission projects. Will there be a collision at this cultural intersection?

A very large percentage of our Pilot Teams engage in at least one social mission project in which the demographics of people in the congregation and the volunteers differ in multiple ways from those of people who

are served. (We exclude Charity projects in which there is no direct interaction between your volunteers and the people who benefit.)

When demographic markers like **income**, **education**, and **race / ethnicity intersect** in the lives of social mission volunteers AND also in the persons served, and when the two groups meet in person-to-person encounters in the project, a collision could occur. The meeting of these differences may create sources of discomfort or problems for either the volunteers or the individuals who benefit, or both!

### A Pilot Team's Anecdote *continued*

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Wise social mission volunteers thoughtfully and prayerfully attend to **intersections** both in themselves and the people in their projects. Central's volunteers in Geneseo responded to their Food Pantry clients who had reading or language issues by offering them respectful, personalized

opportunities to increase their literacy. The Central volunteers also added signage in Spanish. As important as it was to address the literacy needs for the sake of people's improved nutrition and health, respecting and preserving their dignity was the first need to be recognized and honored. No cultural collisions here!

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## All this raises some big question for social mission volunteers.

- What happens when an **intersection** in our life – combined factors affecting our status – meets the same combination in the life of another, but the factors result in a different status for that individual? When **intersections intersect** – Is it a collision or a connection?

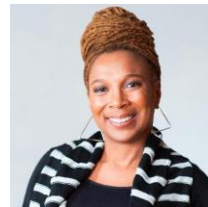
Return to **Figure 1., Missional Identity Wheel**, on pg. 2. Continuing the exercise in awareness, study the identities and think about your congregation’s social mission projects. Answer the following questions, and again enter your responses.

### People Served through Your Congregation’s Social Mission Projects

6. Which 3 identities most accurately reflect the people served?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. For projects where people are served directly, which 3 identities capture the greatest degree of difference between your volunteers and the people served?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Which 3 identities involve the greatest difficulties or tensions in interactions, or lack of interactions, between your volunteers and the people served?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Was there an incident in which these difficulties or tensions were experienced?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## What is Intersectionality?

“Intersectionality was a lived reality before it became a term... Intersectionality is an analytic sensibility, a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power.”<sup>6</sup>



Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw

In a groundbreaking article, Crenshaw analyzed how racial and gender discrimination overlapped for Black women at General Motors Assembly Division in St. Louis, Missouri, in the 1970s. They lost jobs slotted for Black men, e.g., factory floor work, because they were women, and lost jobs for

White women, e.g., secretary slots, because they were Black. Overlapping race and gender doubled their exclusion from the job pool.<sup>7</sup> Crenshaw coined **intersectionality** to name this doubling of negative consequences when two forms of discrimination merged, creating a powerful, new form of discrimination.

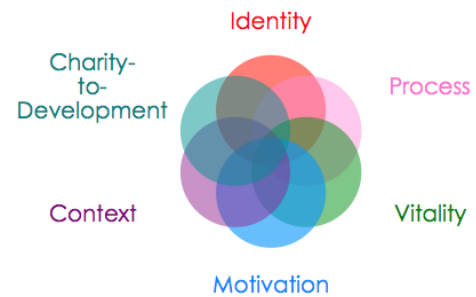
Gather your Team to discuss this topic!

You can connect **Intersectionality** to...

*Activating Our Missional Congregation*

- Workshop 2 – Missional Identity
- Workshop 6 – Missional Context
- Workshop 7 – From Toxic Charity to Development

## Ecology of Missional Culture



Do you have a topic you would like to see explored?

Do you have a question other Pilot Teams are asking, too?

Let us know! [cityrevRochester@gmail.com](mailto:cityrevRochester@gmail.com) 727-2676 (cell)

## Save this Date!

Saturday, January 27, 2018, 10:00 to Noon

Pilot Congregations Support Workshop # 1

at the First Presbyterian Church of LeRoy

Childcare & 9:30 a.m. continental breakfast are provided.

“...to **equip** the saints for the work of ministry,  
for **building up** the body of Christ...”

*Ephesians 4:12*



## Intersectionality Newsletter – References

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- <sup>1</sup> The wheel image was accessed 11/18/17 at the library system of Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York: <http://infoguides.rit.edu/c.php?g=526859&p=3602420>
- <sup>2</sup> The survey, also known as FACT 2010, was conducted by the Cooperative Congregations Studies Partnership. Accessed 07/24/17 at Faith Communities Today: <http://faithcommunitiestoday.org/overall-findings-2010>
- <sup>3</sup> Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (No date.) 2010 survey of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations. Louisville, KY: Author. Accessed 10/16/17: [http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/research/pdfs/fact\\_2010\\_pc%28usa%29\\_sqar\\_&\\_summary.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/research/pdfs/fact_2010_pc%28usa%29_sqar_&_summary.pdf)
- <sup>4</sup> Porter, Eduardo. (2014, September 11). Education is simple: Education = Income. *New York Times*, (New York Edition, Economic Scene column):B1. Accessed 07/24/17 from the World Wide Web site of the *New York Times*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/11/business/economy/a-simple-equation-more-education-more-income.html> Porter's data source was the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's annual collection of education statistics for industrialized nations. For more current statistics, which report the same 74% result for the U.S.A., see: OECD. (2016). *Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators*. Paris, France: OECD Publishing, pg., 125, Table A6.1., Relative earnings of full-time full-year workers, by educational attainment (2014). Accessed 07/24/17: <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/download/9616041e.pdf?expires=1500919850&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=61E787B0B9A29901D1908C7DDC917803>
- <sup>5</sup> Pew Research Center: Religious Landscape Study, Members of the Presbyterian Church. Accessed 11/25/17: <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-denomination/presbyterian-church-usa/>
- <sup>6</sup> Crenshaw, Kimberlé. (2015, September 24). Why intersectionality can't wait. *The Washington Post*. Accessed 11/18/17: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-theory/wp/2015/09/24/why-intersectionality-cant-wait/?utm\\_term=.6d129f62120a](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-theory/wp/2015/09/24/why-intersectionality-cant-wait/?utm_term=.6d129f62120a) Currently, Crenshaw is a professor of law with appointments at Columbia Law School, Columbia University, New York, New York, and School of Law, UCLA, Los Angeles, California. Her work internationally addresses civil rights, Black feminist legal theory, and critical race theory and law.
- <sup>7</sup> Crenshaw, Kimberlé. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex. A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, (1989)1:139-167. Accessed 11/18/17: <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=ucif>