

**W**e enter our mission field as we leave our homes each day. Who are these people around us? According to a dem and will be more so in the years to come. The State Demographic Center reports that, "Between 2005 and 2015, the no percent for the white population." To reach our community we must first understand it. Members of our congregation

**First Word: What benefits does diversity bring to the body of Christ?**

– McDonalds

We think it gives us a taste of what Heaven will be like...every tribe, every tongue, every nation...

– Hollidays

Diversity challenges us in the area of compassion and that's why it's so important in the body of Christ.

– Carlos Garcia

Diversity gives us the opportunity to learn new things and get a different perspective. For example, one reason I started attending First Free was to improve my English.

– Hong Gu

I believe God wants us to grow in diversity so we can see His graceful love and be inspired by different cultures, backgrounds and personalities. We can also bear the fruit of the Spirit in patience, love, and unity in accommodating the difference.

– Juarezes

First Free has been refreshing to us because of the wonderful older members, who love unconditionally and always reach out to those of us who are different. They come from a heritage of service and passion for souls throughout the world.

– Carlos Garcia

It meant a lot to me that the people at First Free were very friendly. They seemed like they really cared. The greeters invited me downstairs for coffee, and introduced me to others so that I felt comfortable. I was also invited to meet other new people at the pastor's house. This was really nice because I was able to share what was going on in my life and connect more deeply.

– Hong/Bob Gu

My experience with my host family at FEFC through Glen Kenadjian's China Outreach ministry played a significant role in my seeking God and becoming a follower of Christ. It was because of them that I met the first Christian in my life and witnessed how joyful and meaningful it was to be a believer. I can't over-emphasize how powerful the friendship, love, and discipleship that I developed with my host family is in changing a person's faith and life.

Belonging **UNITY**

**FW: Do you have an example of a way that you have been ministered to that has been particularly meaningful?**

– Hollidays

Before we arrived at Bible College we were the "hot topic" because we were a mixed race couple. The first night we were at church, the student body president approached us. With his thick southern accent, he asked us to join him and his wife for dinner. He not only paid for the meal, but offered his friendship as well. We were honored to be a part of his ordination in a small church in TN. Having us at his ordination spoke volumes of his character, because it went against what some of his family and friends believed. His actions spoke to others as well because the following year, the student body voted Troy to be the next student body president.

**THE HOLLIDAYS**



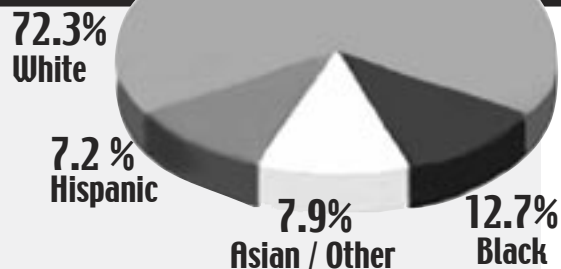
**FW: What unique challenges do diverse families face?**

– McDonalds

Whenever we go anywhere, we "see the wheels turning" in someone's mind as they look at us and try to figure out (if only one parent is present) the scenario in our demographics. It bothers the kids, but we try to help them not get upset about it when they see people stare. We tell them, God put you in this family and He doesn't make mistakes. If someone else can't handle that, it's not our problem. Another challenge is dealing with the "black culture" vs. "white culture" vs. "God's culture". What the world expects and what we try to teach clash on a daily basis. Anita was raised in "God's culture" and that is how we are trying to raise them.

ographics study for FEFC, our community is considered “extremely diverse”  
 onwhite population [statewide] is projected to grow 35 percent, compared to 7  
 have shared in this newsletter to help us better understand our community.

## COMMUNITY BY RACE & ETHNICITY



– Hong/Bob Gu

Culture is the No.1 thing that came to my mind. One example is hugging. People from Asia are not very comfortable hugging even regular friends or family. It could be effective in welcoming new international visitors as long as people are aware of this culture difference.

– Carlos Garcia

It is challenging to do everything in a second language including studying scripture and praying in English.

**FW: What do you think we can do as a church to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse community?**

– Hong Gu

I have been challenged in how to make the Chinese in FEFC mingle with Americans who are not in the Seekers’ class or at the pot luck. It seems difficult for the young Americans. I think people may start appreciating different cultures by learning and understanding the cultures. Good opportunities for Americans to share their culture with Chinese and other internationals are meeting together for Chinese New Year, Thanksgiving, Easter, and Christmas celebrations.

– McDonalds

Get out of our comfort zone and get into the community in whatever way possible. We are talking to ourselves as well because we are homebodies.

THE MCDONALDS



BOB & MAGGIE GU



ALICIA JUAREZ

– Alicia Juarez

When people learn about and experience racial reconciliation, they will develop a desire for authentic relationships with people who are different. As people change one-by-one, the church as an institution will also change. It is my hope and desire that our church will become racially reconciled. I believe when this happens the community that surrounds us in Minneapolis will see that the church is a safe place for anyone to experience the love of God and authentic relationships among Christians.

## Family RECONCILIATION

– Garcias

If each person in our congregation works to increase their boldness in befriending others, we will have greater impact on the community around us. It is hard to find time for building new relationships, but this is critical to our purpose as Christians.

– Hollidays

The most important thing we can offer is God’s love through honesty and friendship.

– Juarezes

We hope that diversity at First Free can become a little like it will be in Heaven where there will be a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb (praising Him in a loud voice) Rev 7:9.