

Bringing the Church to the World vs. Bringing the World to the Church.

Rise & Shine, March 1st

2 Kings 5:17-19

Then Naaman said, "If not, please let two mule-loads of earth be given to your servant; for your servant will no longer offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god except the LORD. But may the LORD pardon your servant on one count: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow down in the house of Rimmon, when I do bow down in the house of Rimmon, may the LORD pardon your servant on this one count." He said to him, "Go in peace."

1 Kings 18:21

Elijah then came near to all the people, and said, "How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." The people did not answer him a word.

Questions:

1. How do you communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ in terms people can understand in the context of their culture, in ways that demonstrate respect for people of other religions or no religion, without compromising the character of the core gospel message?
 2. When is it appropriate to fuse elements of culture with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and when is it inappropriate?
 3. Are there rites and rules at Redeemer that you think of as inclusive? Exclusive? How do they impact you? The community of Redeemer?
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In the News

Bolivia Prepares for Contested Election in Polarized Atmosphere

Eight people, including interim president Jeanine Áñez, recently registered as presidential candidates in Bolivia's 2020 election scheduled for May. Áñez took the reins of power after three-term leftist leader Evo Morales was pressured to resign and seek asylum in Mexico in October 2019 due to

allegations of election fraud. Áñez' decision to run was described by opposition leaders as a "betrayal" of her role as caretaker of the government. Last fall, during the unrest surrounding the removal of Morales from office, dozens were killed and more than 700 injured in the government crackdown on protesters. Videos on social media show supporters of the interim government tearing down and burning the Wiphala flag of native people of the Andes. Indigenous Bolivians say they fear further repression from the military under the interim government.

Prior to assuming the role of interim president, Áñez, 52, was a senate leader of the opposition, who stoked anti-indigenous statements, referring to native Aymara new year ancestral rituals as "satanic."

Morales, an Aymaran, who served as president for nearly 14 years, was Bolivia's first indigenous leader since the nation won independence from Spanish colonial rule in 1825. During his tenure, he had worked to dismantle vestiges of colonialization, recognize the civil and territorial rights of members of 36 indigenous groups, and guarantee religious freedom for all, ending the Catholic Church's status as the privileged state religion. In 2009, the constitution was changed, renaming Bolivia as the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

While Morales is Catholic, his relationship with the church, which he viewed as complicit with brutal anti-indigenous and pro-Fascist government policies, is complicated. In 2015, Morales gave Pope Francis a hammer-and-sickle crucifix, a symbol of Liberation Theology that moved progressive Latin American priests and laity to fight for the poor and marginalized against repressive regimes, even if it cost them their lives.

Conservative Christians were particularly distressed when Morales replaced the Bible with rituals honoring the Andean mother earth deity known as Pachamama in official government ceremonies. They viewed such actions as pagan and atheistic.

"This Bible is very important to us," said Áñez last November upon entering the presidential palace. "Our strength is God. Power is God."

"Bolivia for Christ, Pachamama will never again enter this palace," said Áñez ally Luis Fernando Camacho at the time as he knelt before a Bible on the Bolivian flag.

"We are believers in God," said psychologist Karina Ortiz Justiniano. "[We] don't believe in the Pachamama."

Seated at a table with a crucifix and a large open Bible, Áñez stated, "We want to be a democratic tool of inclusion and unity." But her cabinet had no

indigenous members initially, with only one added later to serve as culture and tourism minister.

About 75 percent of Bolivians are Catholic, 18 percent are Protestant, and 4 percent are practitioners of indigenous religions. Four to six out of ten Bolivians descend from native peoples.

Many indigenous Bolivians belong to Christian churches while also observing native religious traditions.

Evangelicals like Añez, who make up about 7 percent of the population, tend to take a hard line against syncretism, or the blending of beliefs.

Mariano Condori Flores, an indigenous religious elder, said "It doesn't seem like Añez understands that we exist."

Acts 15:19-21

[James said,] "Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood. For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues."

A Collect for Guidance (BCP p.100)

Heavenly Father, in you we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you, but may remember that we are ever walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.