Becoming an Intentionally Intercultural Church

A manual to facilitate transition

Second Edition

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WEA
World Evangelical Alliance

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NATIONAL EVANGELISM
TOGETHER DISCIPLING OUR NATION TO CHRIST

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Foreword

I have been involved in mobilizing the church for missions almost my entire adult life. While there are many elements in encouraging the people of God to engage in His mission, I have come to this simple conclusion. If we want to make an impact on our community, our nation or the world, we have got to get out of the house more often.

Here's a thought: We all tend to live in a little slice of the world where we feel comfortable.

Consequently we spend our lives going to school, working, going to church or simply hanging out with people who are just like us.

Our society divides people up into different categories. Sometimes the differences are subtle, other times the barriers are clearly obvious to all.

In reality, as long as we don't get out of the house, people who are different from us, those with a different language, a different accent, a different skin color or live in different economic conditions are not on our radar screens.

Jesus asked his disciples and us to pray the Lord's Prayer. One request in the most famous prayer is, "Your Kingdom come."

What does this mean? What does it mean for God's Kingdom to come? What would our world look like if God's reign were fully evident? While it can be difficult for us to imagine what full alignment might look like, we do have some clues. We have pictures of what the future Kingdom is to be.

In Revelation 5:9-10 we read:

> And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

If this is one of the pictures of the future Kingdom and we are to pray for this Kingdom to come to earth as it is in heaven, what does it mean? While there should be many expressions of God's Kingdom in this world, one of the most obvious is the cultural diversity that is reflected in Revelation.

Because of the rich cultural diversity of our nation, we in Canada have a wonderful opportunity and responsibility to reflect this future image of worshipping the Lamb around the throne.

How will this picture become more of a reality in the church across our land? Quite simply, through intentionality. We must first be willing to "get out of the house;" to get out of the comfort of predominately mono-cultural churches. Second, we need to be equipped for the task. It is a matter of heart and mind.

Research has shown that the most effective short and long term missionaries in the world are the ones who have received effective and practical training.

This is why I am so enthusiastic about *Becoming an Intentionally Intercultural Church*. These experienced authors have provided us with practical and biblical strategies for becoming the kind of church that reflects the imagery in the book of Revelation. I encourage church leaders to use this resource to assist in making necessary changes in their congregation.

In a world that seems to be growingly conflicted around ethnic and religious diversity, the Christian church can stand in the gap and demonstrate that there is another way. Our churches can increasingly become communities of grace that mirror God's acceptance of all people.

It is my hope and prayer that this toolkit will be used by God to help us become more intentional about developing intercultural churches. And consequently, begin to see the Lord's prayer, "Your Kingdom come," answered in profound and life transforming ways.

Geoff Tunnicliffe, Director, Global Initiatives
Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

Geoff Tunnicliffe serves as the director of Global Initiatives for the **Evangelical Fellowship of Canada**. In addition, Geoff serves on the Global Leadership Team of the **World Evangelical Alliance Missions Commission** and is Vice-Chair of the North American council of the **World Evangelical Alliance**. From 1975 to 1996, he traveled to over 85 countries as a missionary with and later president of **International Teams** of Canada. He also is the co-chair of the **Micah Challenge** campaign and helps lead **Churches Together on AIDS in Africa**.

Preface

Urban Christians realize that the church must change, but new challenges emerge weekly: ethnic diversity, urbanization, postmodernity, youth disenfranchisement. To each of these new and different worldviews the church must bring Christ's message of hope.

We struggle with including other cultures in our lives. Christians migrating to North America have kept culture pure through church. They might live beside others, and even share similar biblical beliefs, but they have drawn the line at crossing culture at church. This separation has forced immigrants—from countries our own churches evangelized—to begin ethnic churches when they arrived. At dinner we accept our kid's cultural values, but as church boards, we maintain ideas, programs and styles as 'acceptance entry points.' Those gates say, "You don't belong." We've told that to secular neighbours as well, and it has rarely had a thing to do with theology.

Beginning with the Great Commission, then through Pentecost, the first deacons, the Antioch Church, the Jerusalem Council, and European expansion, the book of Acts is about cultural inclusion. The theme continues throughout the New Testament; for example, Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians to help them reject cultural legalism and become inclusive. In this manual, the authors provide thought-provoking application of these relevant passages of Scripture through adult learning activities, role-plays, and opportunities for reflection-posing questions Jesus might have asked. As church leaders interact with the lessons, they will be far better prepared and enriched to work through the actual changes needed if the nations who have come to our land, our neighbours, and oncoming generations are to be embraced by the Church. Sessions in this manual seem to ask us to keep in mind that . . .

Jesus Christ destroyed cultural walls at Calvary. Power to accept people of other cultures is still available. The supernatural forces that resist God, Paul says, stand back in fear of the unity of the Church. How much more will the non-Christian world respond when they see the power of cultural fragmentation broken by Christians?

Jesus taught the greatness of humility. Whatever the situation–when we meet God, be humble; when pain, poverty or injustice touches us, live humbly; as we pursue purity and peace–even in persecution-act humbly. We must act humbly when change bugs us: on urban freeways, with neighbours with different values on the length of lawns, when African brothers teach European 'Brahmans,' or when *wa-wa pedals* appear in worship services. The world will then be attracted to Christ.

Jesus invites to discipleship. Building unity means following a road of understanding our cultures. This road includes understanding one another's worldviews in order that we can each be ourselves without judgment.

This is truly a practical, godly pursuit—to learn and apply Christ's inexhaustible wisdom to discern the weaknesses of our own cultures and the strength of the real Christian life.

Hundreds of churches across North America *have* embarked on this voyage of inclusion. Many steps are *not* taken, however, out of fear that an action might be wrong. It is my prayer that *Becoming an Intentionally Intercultural Church* will encourage you on your journey to accepting Christ's whole body, and building his future kingdom.

Brian Seim
Chair, Intentionally Intercultural Churches – Canada
Mississauga, Ontario
August 2004

Brian Seim is the Director of Culture Connexions, SIM Canada's ministry that equips churches to reach the nations in their neighbourhoods. He has helped initiate nine church-based community centers in cities across the country and has helped some three hundred different churches who have sought this ministry's direction in the past 5 years. Brian is the author of three books on culturally-diverse ministry, and last year, published two book chapters and ten articles for national magazines. He has recently completed a new book entitled, "Mixing Whites and Colours without Making Them Run."

How to Use this Manual

*B*ecoming an Intentionally Intercultural Church is an important tool for helping congregations transition from a fundamentally mono-cultural membership that may or may not have intercultural composition, to one that intentionally seeks to reach and incorporate those from other cultural groups. It is a guide that facilitates process—helping church members and leaders to examine their closely held assumptions, values and attitudes in order to create self-awareness and change. At the end of the course, the group should have a good start on a plan that can help the church become more intercultural in God-honouring ways. The manual is best used as the basis for group work.

Because this manual seeks to facilitate a process of attitude change and development in a whole congregation, it is important that church leaders participate in the course. It assumes that the need to address intercultural realties is already present in the leadership and that there is a willingness to explore adjustments and changes that may be needed in order to become an intentionally intercultural congregation. If change is to happen, important decisions will need be made that affect the direction of the church. This is too important a process to simply relegate to a committee that has no direct influence on the overall direction of the church.

The course is organized into five sessions. Each session is designed for about 1.5 hours of group interaction. Each group participant should come to the meeting having read the article in the session that is being covered. A facilitator moderates the time and leads the group in several activities. The group will first review the content of the material using a power point presentation (available on CD or from www.wearesources.org) or a video presentation by each author (available on DVD or VHS). Next, the facilitator may lead the group through a series of "Questions for Reflection." The "Learning Activities" follow and require full group participation. Learning activities are based on simulations, role-plays, and self-evaluations and are designed to produce the desired "self-awareness" that will lead the group towards growth in understanding and important attitude shifts. These activities are the "meat" of the course.

Group Leadership

Each group should have one or more persons who can act as "facilitators." The facilitator's main role is to hold members of the group accountable to prepare themselves by reading and reflecting on the session articles, and to conduct each group session as effectively as possible. Additional resources and materials needed for some of the "Learning Activities" are available in Appendix A at the back of this manual.

Ultimately, the facilitator tries to assure that the outcomes of the course are achieved. Desired outcomes include:

♦ Participants will deepen their understanding of the importance of becoming intentionally intercultural, and understand the organizational dynamics required to reach this goal.

♦ Participants will achieve greater self-awareness regarding culturally determined assumptions, values and intercultural competence.

♦ Participants will determine what opportunities are available to reach other groups in their community and create a tentative plan to become an intentionally intercultural church.

Group Accountability

One of the most important keys to successfully conducting this process is making sure that those who are working through it are committed to it. This commitment can be fostered by a group covenant such as the one that follows.

Study Group Covenant

I commit myself to this process in the following ways:

♦ I will come prepared to enter into the discussion and learning activity by studying the assigned reading for each session and reflecting on the content and questions provided in the manual.

♦ I will attend each group session when physically able to do so.

♦ I will participate in the discussion--sharing insights the Lord gives me.

♦ I will support the work of the group and the church leadership in becoming intentionally intercultural through prayer, commitment to the plan that emerges, and the exercise of my gifts.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Steps to Follow During Each Session

1. Open in Prayer: Ask the Holy Spirit to guide the discussions and activities of the session. Bring specific situations to prayer that are affecting the congregation's ability to become more intentionally intercultural. (5-10 min)

2. Review the Content: The facilitator will lead the group through a review of the article for that session. The facilitator may choose to expand on this material through personal study and reading. A Power Point® presentation on the course CD is available to guide this activity. A DVD with short presentations by the authors of each session may also be used for this purpose. (15 min)

3. Discuss the Content: Using the questions in the manual (or those prepared by the facilitator), discuss the main ideas that the material presents. (20 min)

4. Conduct the Learning Activity: Follow the instructions for the suggested learning activities. Worksheets and supplemental information are available in Appendix A for these sessions. (20-30 min)

5. Debrief the Learning Activity: It is very important that participants be allowed to express feedback after each learning activity. Simulations and role plays may arouse feelings that if left unspoken, can leave a person angry, anxious, or confused. When debriefing a session, it is important for people to be able to express how they "felt" and not just what they "learned." Both are important and need to be "heard." (10 min)

6. Preview the Next Session: As time permits, review the topic of the next session. The author's video presentation (DVD or VHS) can also be used for this purpose. This serves to "prime the pump" and motivate participants to prepare for the next session.

7. Close in Prayer: Be sensitive to what has happened during the session. Pray for each other, for lessons learned, for the work that has to be done and needs to be done.

Change is never easy, and this manual is designed to facilitate change. We believe the Holy Spirit will use it to help church leadership discover the way forward in becoming intentionally intercultural. But it will take a willingness to humbly accept the need to change and grow as leaders and congregations. With prayer and diligence, you can become part of God's plan for reaching the "nations" that have come to you.

Definitions

Assimilation

an act, process, or instance of *assimilating*.

Assimilate

to absorb into the culture or mores of a population or group.

Culture

1. the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. 2. the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group. 3. the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes a company or corporation.

Ethnic

of, or relating to, large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background (*ethnic* minorities, *ethnic* enclaves).

Inclusive

broad in orientation or scope.

Integration

the act or process or an instance of *integrating* : as incorporation as equals into society or an organization of individuals of different groups (as races).

Integrate

1. to form, coordinate, or blend into a functioning or unified whole 2. to end the segregation of and bring into equal membership in society or an organization.

Intercultural

shared by, involving, or derived from two or more … "cultures."

International

active, known, or reaching beyond national boundaries (an *international* reputation).

Interracial

of, involving, or designed for members of different races.

Multicultural

of, relating to, reflecting, or adapted to diverse cultures (a *multicultural* society, *multicultural* education, a *multicultural* menu).

The Dynamics of Transition

David Wells serves as District Superintendent of the BC/Yukon district of the PAOC (Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada), overseeing nearly 200 churches. Before that David was Divisional Director of Ministries where he coordinated specialized outreaches of the PAOC within Canada. David also served six years as Senior Associate at Broadway Church, a strong intercultural church in Vancouver. He has previous pastoral experience in Ontario and Alberta.

It is one thing for a church to have a number of ethnicities represented in attendance at a Sunday worship service, it is another thing for that church to include people of these ethic backgrounds in leadership and decision-making, using both biblical principles and pragmatic realities that impact churches in transition towards being genuinely intercultural.

This session asks leaders to deal in a biblical, honest and interactive manner with the inevitable tensions that will occur as their church transitions towards an intercultural identity. By noting some of the common tensions that arise in intercultural churches and by applying a model for application of biblical truth within their context, church leaders are equipped to understand the tensions they are facing and to respond with godly wisdom.

Understanding the Tensions: Facing Issues in Becoming Intentionally Intercultural

David Wells

Etched in my mind is a group of church leaders sitting around a conference table discussing a critical agenda item—the finalization of adding a staff member to pastor one of our church's cultural language groups. The next thirty minutes was traumatic to my mind and heart as the questions were asked, "Is this the best value for our dollars?" "Are we targeting the right group?" "Will he fit in to the existing culture of the church?" In my naiveté I thought the discussion would revolve around honouring the existing ministry the candidate was having with over 100 people in our congregation, and making sure we established his salary appropriately, to match the existing salary grid. Instead I

discovered there was more being considered than just my predetermined concepts rooted in a deeply held ideal of the "New Humanity" -- something to be soon evidenced in our pastoral staff makeup.

Churches or ministry organizations that are transitioning to become intentionally intercultural face multiple issues that are not a part of their normal experience. Not all of these are immediately apparent. And most of them are hard issues to face. But by "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:16), church leadership can come to grips with these challenges.

Issues Clouding Intercultural Transitions

Cultural ignorance – multiple cultural backgrounds are thrust together, often resulting in vast differences of preferences and expectations.

Language barriers – with one language (often English) serving as the primary means of communication, persons who are less fluent in that language often struggle to be understood.

Ethnically-based stereotypes – the "host culture" has a tendency to relegate other cultures to their "appropriate" roles based on preconceptions of that culture.

Passive racism – judgments that have been formed about other cultural language groups are now tested within the context of a Christian community.

Economic partiality – many newcomers from other nations find themselves "underemployed" and therefore not viewed as holding the same status as those who are economically well established.

Exclusion of minorities from leadership groups – due to long established relationships within the host culture or restrictive appointment policies, sizable visible minorities may find themselves not represented in the leadership circles of the church even though they are very active in church programming.

Distinct differences in worldview and spiritual expectations – expectations of what is appropriate behaviour or of what is "spiritual" will vary between the host culture of the church and other cultures, often leading to judgment and disillusionment.

Social partition – the niceties of being greeted within the church foyer may not translate into consistent relationships outside of the church building.

The Four Poles

The challenge for a leadership team is to engage these issues in a biblical, God-honouring manner as they wrestle with the four poles that surround each discussion. (See Figure 1:1.)

- ♦ **The Ideal** – Those principles in Scripture that generate a passionate picture of what the intercultural church should be.
- ♦ **The Real** – The pragmatic factors that inform the current situation as the church seeks to fulfill its mission.
- ♦ **Define** – To be able to chronicle and explain the theology, philosophies and worldviews which are influencing decisions being made by transitioning churches.
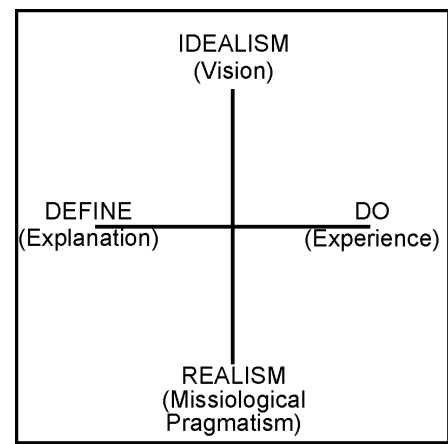

Figure 1:1 The Four Poles

♦ **Do** – Actions, whether motivated by idealistic passion or pragmatic realism, which a church applies to their multicultural situation.

This model illustrates the four poles that factor in to discussions and decisions made by transitioning churches and ministries. A leadership group will need to consider the ideals that the principles of Scripture generate.

Ideals Proposed for Becoming Intercultural

Being Intercultural Coincides with the Mission of the Church: to reach every ethnic group with the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20). Knowing that God has placed persons from nations worldwide within the proximity of a local church invites a missional response from that church. Acts 17:26-27, "From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us."

Being Intercultural Corresponds to the Nature of the Gospel: to reconcile the world in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:14-21; Galatians 3:28). Without partiality the local church reaches out to those around them as "ministers of the reconciliation".

Being Intercultural Concurs with the Nature of the Church: to be a redemptive community reflecting the new humanity in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:11-22). The local church with persons from various ethnicities and backgrounds has the privilege of demonstrating how Christ's work within them has removed dividing walls of animosity and hatred.

Being Intercultural Conveys a Picture of Multicultural Worship: every nation, tribe, people and language will worship together before the throne of God (Rev. 7:9-12). The local church has the opportunity today to demonstrate aspects of the unified worship of the future heavenly community. (See Figure1.2)

Acts 6:1-7	Seven Greeks are elected to be deacons in the life of the early church. It is important to note that an essential part of the deacon's role was to ensure impartiality in the distribution of care to two ethnically distinct groups of widows.
Acts 8:26-40	Philip is supernaturally enabled to bring the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch as the message of Christ moves quickly across national lines.
Acts 10	Peter is prepared by a vision from God to recognize that the Gentiles are not "impure" and that he should respond to the enquiry by the God-fearing centurion, Cornelius. Peter witnesses the Gentiles receiving the Spirit in a similar manner to which the believers at Jerusalem had.
Acts 15:1-19	At the Jerusalem Council the apostles and elders wrestle with what restrictions should be placed upon the Gentile believers as they are responding to the gospel of Christ. In the end the highest priority as expressed by the Apostle James is that "we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God". A short list of restrictions is placed on the Gentiles but one that is greatly moderated by the Spirit-prompted dialogue that is held.
Gal 2:11-18	Paul contends with Peter when he begins to withdraw and separate himself from the Gentile believers. Paul ensures that a strong commitment is maintained within the early church to the truth that, no matter what an individual's ethnic or spiritual background is, all are justified by faith in Christ alone.

Figure 1:2 Further Biblical Support of Intercultural Churches

Each leadership team that sincerely desires to engage the diverse cultures in their own community must seek to understand the Scriptures that portray the people God is calling them to be.

My expectations of how the meeting I participated in was going to go were naïve. The leadership group had been exposed to very little interaction regarding scriptural ideals for intercultural churches. Nor were they excited, as I was, about becoming a more tangible representation of "God's New Humanity." Later, comprehension grew as we had more study and prayer centred on these topics that focused on God's ideal for his Church, which helped balance the more pragmatic discussions.

The Process of Transition

As leaders interact with these biblical foundations they will then be ready to engage in the decisions for which the reality of their context calls. For the church in Acts, the all-inclusive unifying work of Pentecost was quickly put to the test. Acts 6 and 15 reveal to us the early church wrestling with its intercultural tensions. Preferential treatment being given to Jewish widows over Grecian widows was the concern expressed in chapter 6. Likewise, application of Jewish law to the new Gentile believers was the issue "hotly disputed" at the council in Jerusalem. The fact is that most of the participants in these critical moments of church history firmly believed that their actions were rooted in God's revelation to his people. It was only after they bored down to non-negotiable values—such as God's impartial care for those in need, or that his people should not make it difficult for those turning to

God—that they were able to reach decisions that were both true to God's Word and to meeting the needs of their situation. In the end, deacons ensured widows were equally cared for and Gentile believers were welcomed to come to Jesus with the understanding that they would respect their fellow Jewish believers in a couple of key areas.

The council of Jerusalem is also an example of the experiential "doing" pole interacting with that of the need for explanation so that clarity can be reached by all parties. Those working with the Gentiles were experiencing God at work in ways that defied commonly held understanding. Paul, Peter and others had seen the Spirit clearly evidenced in these new believers. The Jewish-based church in Jerusalem wrestled to understand what was happening, especially in the context of their closely held definitions of valid spiritual experience. Those who had experiences with the Gentiles openly dialogued and debated with the other elders regarding the definition—insisting that this new "church" was to truly be "intercultural." A clear statement explaining this new definition was then circulated to the churches so that harmony between these diverse peoples could be realized.

While pragmatic factors that impact the church must be intentionally addressed, idealism must not be lost. Issues can quickly become fogged with the realities of multiple languages, diverse worldviews, available budget, over extended facilities and limited personnel. This is often where the dialogue between the "doers" and the "definers" takes place. Like the early church, leadership groups must determine what will be the non-negotiable values that will be expressed in their ministry and then prioritize the practical means to implement those values. No one church can reach all or do all, but each church must do well what they are called by God to focus on.

Questions for Reflection

1 What are the issues your leadership group is dealing with as a result of transitioning to an intercultural church? How are they being dealt with?

2 What are the non-negotiable values that are providing a foundation for your discussions?

3 Is there a healthy balance of idealism and realism in your decision making group?

Learning Activities

1. Together identify an issue your church is facing as a result of the transition towards becoming an intercultural church

2. Discuss what scriptural passages and principles apply to the issue you have identified.

3. List the pragmatic factors to be considered regarding the issue (e.g. budget, space, attitudes, training, awareness).

4. What are the priorities and preferences of those directly involved in seeking a solution?

5. Based on the previous points, determine 2 possible courses of action to deal with this issue.

Conclusion

Becoming an intentionally intercultural church is hard. Many issues will surface for leadership that are not a normal part of their experience. Hidden attitudes and biases will quickly reveal the weakness of the "New Humanity" which the local church is to express, as it incorporates fellow "heirs of the promise" and "brothers" from East and West, North and South. Tensions are likely to surface between the "ideal" and the "practical," the "doers" and the "explainers." It may feel more comfortable to simply avoid the issue and maintain distance. But the mandate to make disciples of all nations is as powerful and urgent for local churches as it is for the missionaries they send out. When the nations come to our neighborhoods, we can do no less than to present them the opportunity to know God. Becoming intentional in that effort is what God calls for.

The following sessions will lead you through a process of becoming more "self-aware," a necessary step in overcoming biases and weaknesses, and growing in both understanding and the ability to address issues frankly and creatively. This is an adventure that God wants each church to take.

Examining Assumptions

Rob Brynjolfson is pastor of Esperanza Multicultural Church (Mennonite Brethren), a bilingual Spanish/ English Church located in Burnaby, B.C.. His missionary experiences include church planting and leadership development in South America, Europe and Africa. Rob is also the program director for Gateway Missionary Training Centre.

As the previous session made evident, the leadership of any church has to face a number of tensions in its own decision-making process. As a church moves towards becoming intercultural, the "issues" involve much more than differences in personalities. They are more profound, involving belief and attitudes based on ingrained assumptions about what is real, true and right. Collectively, these deeply held, largely subconscious convictions are known as *worldview*. For cultural groups, their distinct worldview is the "glue" that creates cohesion. Disrupting this worldview provokes tension and distrust that often lead to conflict.

Worldview deals with ultimate universal realities (like the existence and nature of God) and is built on "assumptions." Assumptions are often stated as "fact" (as a proposition, axiom, postulate, or notion) and are largely taken for granted. These assumptions are the building blocks of one's worldview and beliefs, and are reflected in personal and cultural behaviors and practices. They are usually learned at an early age and heavily reinforced by social relationships.

Because one's worldview and its "rightness" operate at an unconscious level, examining its validity is an unnatural process that only occurs when underlying assumptions are challenged. It raises the questions: What is really true? What is really right? In this session, Rob Brynjolfson will lead us through a process of examining worldview assumptions. We will discover that this is an essential part of the rich, though challenging, context of intercultural Christian relatedness.

Examining Assumptions

Rob Brynjolfson

Prior to dealing with this subject in a decidedly Christian and Biblical manner, it is important to understand how cultures are built on assumptions. All cultures face the chaos of a world full of mysteries and unanswerable questions. Over time cultures seek to reduce the chaos and bring understanding by giving explanations to the experiences of life and the question of existence and purpose. Such attempts to explain the good and the bad, suffering and pleasure, life and death, produce a working model that explains reality and truth through the eyes of that culture. These systems of explanation will provide the foundational understanding people use to interpret the physical world around them, how they should interact socially and how everything relates on a metaphysical level. This final area, the metaphysical, is what leads to a society developing a comprehensive religious system that gives basis and understanding to the previous two. As this process recedes into the distant past, people no longer focus on these systems of explanation. These are taken for granted. The systems of explanation become assumptions and form the essential ingredients of a culture's worldview.

The basis of a Christian worldview is revelation. It is the firm belief of Christians that through the Holy Scriptures God provides the system by which we understand man's relationship to the physical and social world in which he interacts. It is antithetical for a Christian to accept that the worldview he or she operates on emerged from societal or cultural assumptions. Unfortunately, the infusion of the cultural worldview surrounding the Christian is unstoppable. The system of explanation derived from Scripture is a mere skeleton, on top of which our cultures heap layers of assumptions that are sometimes *a-biblical* and occasionally *non-biblical*.

One might fear that this assertion forfeits the possibility of a universal Christian worldview. Surely divine revelation allows us the certainty of grasping a system of explanation that is based on God's truth?

Yes, absolutely! This is why we can affirm basic tenets or broadly held beliefs and convictions and state them as Evangelical doctrine. We have much to agree on. Yet, the fact that we can all affirm the doctrinal statement of the World Evangelical Alliance, or recite the Apostles' Creed, does not unify our cultures into a one-size-fits-all Christian worldview. Hence, the skeleton might be universal, but the flesh and sinew we apply looks strikingly like our own cultures.

Recognizing the Elements of Worldview

Carley Dodd describes what he calls "elements of cultural worldviews." These are listed in Figure 2:1 with brief descriptors[1]. These elements of worldview should be seen as continuums, two pairs or two sides to a concept, and any given worldview will offer its perspective corresponding to some point along the continuum line.

Evangelical Christians reading this list of elements of worldview may determine few of these have any bearing on their theology or understanding of the Bible. Even so, these elements play a significant role in the formation of the Christian worldview,

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[1] Carley H. Dodd, *Dynamics of Intercultural Communication.* Fourth Edition. Madison, WI: SCB Brown & Benchmark, 1995, pp. 105-111

Elements of Worldview Continuums
Developed from Carley H. Dodd,
Dynamics of Intercultural Commuincation

Worldviews can be seen as relating to a number of elements. The following pairs of elements are set on a continuum because some worldviews may only identify partially with one side or the other. This continuum can be used for each worldview under examination (e.g., North American, Biblical, Mexican, etc.).

Shame and guilt cultures: Some cultures can be characterized by their perceived sense of personal guilt (usually found in individualistic cultures) and shame (usually found in collectivist cultures).

Individualistic/Guilt Culture   **Collective/Shame Culture**

Task and people cultures: Some cultures emphasize task accomplishment over relationships, while other cultures emphasize relationships over task.

Task Oriented Culture   **People Oriented Culture**

Spirit and secular cultures: A culture can be evaluated by its cognitive cultural world view, which involves whether or not the culture accepts the notion of a cosmos filled with spiritual beings and forces or whether a spiritual dimension plays a lesser role or any role at all.

Secular (Non-spiritual) Culture   **Spiritual Culture**

The role of the dead to living: Some cultures are characterized by their view of the relationship between living and dead.

No Relationship   **Strong Relationship**

The nature of humankind: According to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) cultures perceive humans in one of three ways … basically good, mixed good and evil, and basically evil.

Basically Good   **Mixed Good & Bad**   **Basically Bad**

Humans and nature: Another element of world view is the amount of control over nature one believes (i.e., subject to nature, in harmony with nature, and controlling of nature.).

Controlling Nature   **In Harmony with Nature**   **Subject to Nature**

Doing and being cultures: The doing and being duality is another world view difference between cultures. Doing emphasizes goal setting and producing achievements while being focuses on inner personal development in character, knowledge, etc.

Doing/Goal Oriented   **Being/Inner Growth Oriented**

Life cycle: Life is viewed as linear or cyclical.

Linear   **Cyclical**

Fatalism: Rogers with Svenning (1969) defined fatalism as "the degree to which an individual recognizes a lack of ability to control his future." [2]

Much Control   **Less Control**

Figure 2:1 Elements of Worldview Continuums

[2]Ibid

whether by affirmation or disagreement. These elements are like a continuum, and a Christian position will slide to one side or the other depending on the position determined from Scripture. For example, the element called *spirit and secular cultures* is clearly one where Christians will identify themselves as leaning toward the *spirit* side of the continuum, recognizing the existence not only of a spiritual world, but the existence of a personal and sovereign God.

The relationship of the *dead to the living*, for example, is a subject of little concern in biblical revelation. Western Christians are very quick to claim there are no ghosts. Even as this postulation is affirmed, a position has been taken and this element of worldview is now given a Christian definition. However, this element is not merely concerned with existence of ghosts. It also identifies the influence of the dead to the living, as expounded in ancestral worship. Christians from an Eastern culture may discover they view their relationship to the dead in a different light, largely impacted by their surrounding culture, but also finding in their reading the Old Testament the Hebrew respect and deference paid to the Patriarchal families. A Western Christian would not see these Scriptural references as licence for ancestral worship. But an Eastern believer would possibly see parallels in Scripture that an Occidental Christian would never observe, and might

Reaching Across the Cultural Divide

therefore become either more sympathetic or defensive, seeking to explain these passages in ways that counter the possibility of ancestral worship.
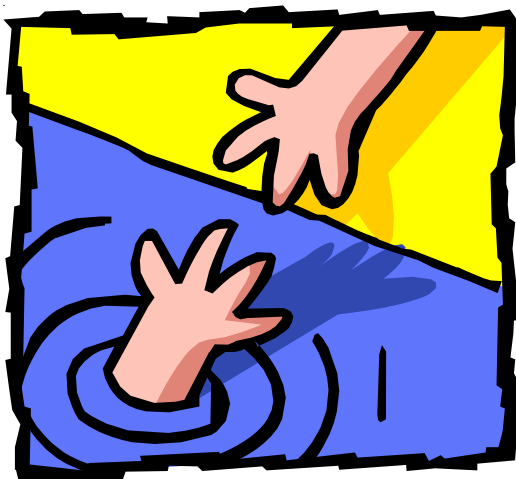
While these elements help to understand the makeup of a worldview, they also serve to demonstrate that Christians assume they hold a universal worldview. However, when analyzed in greater detail, they discover that their assumptions are not precisely unified. In fact, defining the universal Christian worldview can really only occur when a wide body of culturally diverse Christians come to dialogue over the matter, because only someone from a different worldview can observe the blind spots in another's perspective.

Admitting Assumptions Are Fallible

Due to the scientific and secularist environment, the Western Christian worldview is strongly naturalistic. Christians know a spiritual world exists, but largely it is the physical natural world that holds greater sway. When Christians from a Northern European cultural background seek to understand the meaning of illness or trials in the Christian life, naturalistic explanations are given. The illness has a scientific explanation. The trial has a natural explainable cause.

An African Christian worldview, on the other hand, strongly influenced by the animistic assumptions common to that part of the world, gives greater weight to the importance of the spiritual (invisible) world, and will likely find meaning and purpose for sickness or trials from spiritual influences like demonic or angelic activity. European doctors do their utmost to explain the illness in scientific terms and remain frustrated to discover the African Christian disregards this explanation and assumes it is a spiritual attack.

One assumes that the natural world holds priority and the other assumes it is the spiritual world that is "more" real. Malaria is a widespread disease, causing over one million deaths a year. People from the West know that malaria is caused by a parasite borne by the female anopheles mosquito. What is the prescribed treatment and procedure by both doctors and Church workers? Get a blood sample;

determine the cause of illness and treat with appropriate medicine. When an African falls ill, the visit to the doctor is frequently the last resort. The African assumes there are other factors influencing his physical condition. As one Bible-believing pastor once said, "You Europeans always try to tell us why we are sick, but we know why we are sick." That statement demonstrates that he disagreed with the Western interpretation of reality based on the scientific method. Each party is absolutely convinced that their interpretation of reality is true and the other is wrong!

Christians know there is a spiritual world. They disagree on what causes illnesses, even though they will agree that some illnesses in the Bible were caused by demonic activity. So, what should a Western Christian do when faced with an African brother suffering from malaria? The situation requires humility, discernment and more than likely a two-pronged approach, offering both spiritual assistance and medical attention, because no one has the liberty to insist that the health and well-being of a victim remain bound to a treatment determined by a worldview that does not fit the model of Scripture.

In fact, *rubbing shoulders with one another produces tremendous opportunities for growth.* How else can a scientific and naturalistic Western Christian discover that his or her system may be blind to some spiritual realities? Unfortunately, it takes quite a bit of rubbing before one becomes aware of some of these fallacies. The problem is that we automatically limit this rubbing because it is a painful experience.

Understanding the Tensions Diverse Assumptions Create

Every culture is built on a worldview, rarely examined or clearly defined, but always defined by the assumptions held. Intentionally Intercultural Churches ply the channels of chaos and disorder by bringing these different worldviews or assumptions into collision. The concerns that increase levels of tensions in a multicultural ministry are not merely differences of values or preferences but usually concern matters seen as right and wrong. The question is, who is right and which assumption is wrong?

There is no greater fear than that brought on by the sense of confusion and chaos when one's understanding of truth and reality is questioned. This is one of the factors provoking the experience known as culture shock, the sense of loss that occurs when one realizes that what one had assumed to be concrete and absolute may not be as solid as previously thought. This gut-wrenching feeling is what can keep someone from embracing Jesus Christ. When a person from a different belief system or a strong sectarian background approaches the truth of the gospel, this truth is resisted because the individual senses that his or her whole worldview will be thrown open and laid bare and they fear they will be lost, without the means of knowing what is true or real.

Developing a Plan to Release Tension

Transitioning churches perceive the dangers and feel the fright. They can choose two paths: fight or flight. Fight, in this case, is not to oppose the different assumptions but to fight for unity and understanding amongst Christians and new believers from other cultures. Flight, on the other hand, is the natural path. These are the churches that say, "If you come here you must become like us! We will not change; you must be the ones who do the changing." The degree to which a church succeeds at becoming intercultural will be determined by their willingness to courageously face these issues and not merely ignore them. The fact that a congregation is a kaleidoscope of colours does not mean that these tensions were faced and resolved.

If these tensions are inevitable and if the choices are fight – to resolve them, or flight – to avoid them, what can a transitioning church do to ensure growth towards unity and harmony? The following points are considerations for developing a plan to resolve the tension that a church faces when worldviews collide.

1. Understand the worldview assumptions underlying intercultural dialogue and conflict resolution:

a. Separate ideas and emotions. Leaders must develop the ability to examine a thought, opinion or idea without reacting emotionally. Emotions need to be identified and ideas distinguished from the emotional reaction. However, even the expression of emotion is subject to worldview. All cultures are emotional, but some cultures hide emotions or attempt to diminish them. A Latin American will suspect an idea is fallacious if the presenter lacks emotional enthusiasm, while a North American views an emotional presentation as suspect.

b. Separate the problem from the person. Frequently when opinions collide it is easy to view the person as the problem. Men and women take their opposition to an idea or opinion and transfer it to the person. They begin to see the person as the problem. When this happens the next step is almost automatic. Eliminate the person and you eliminate the problem. This is hardly the road to unity, harmony and interculturalism.

c. Disconnect the motives from the meanings. In most dialogues, whether mono-cultural or cross-cultural, misunderstandings of meaning are frequent. The avoidance of misunderstandings might be impossible, but one can diminish the emotional reaction by assuming that the other person means well and giving them the benefit of the doubt. Once either side begins to question motive or intention, trust is broken and little dialogue can occur.

2. Develop and implement a plan to resolve power-distance issues.

The power-distance index refers to the way cultures develop concepts of equality and hierarchy. High power index cultures are more vertical, less egalitarian and strongly hierarchical. People in these cultures expect authoritative communication and leadership styles. This does not mean, however, that they necessarily respect those in leadership, or render unquestioned servitude. Generally speaking, Asian, African and many Latin American cultures are high power-distance. Low power index cultures tend to be more egalitarian, horizontal in relationship styles and leadership. North America, Europe, Israel, Australia and New Zealand tend to be very low power index cultures. Problems and concerns will always be approached from the perspective of one's own power-distance index. A typical English-Caucasian church leadership team will attempt to empower ethnic leadership and be frustrated by the seeming lack of desire to rise to the challenge and take their turn at bat. The problem is that high power-distance cultures instinctively believe they enter an unfair playing field. Even when empowered and made equal, they will continue to see themselves as subject to the dominant culture group. When the predominant culture or host culture is low on the power-distance index, a conscious and intentional effort must be made to hear, listen and value the input of those from high power cultures The high power minority must overcome incredible personal real or perceived obstacles to participate as an equal.

Eric Law in his book *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb* [3] argues that the only viable solution to the problem of power-distance is the road of the cross. As Christians approach their relationships in an intercultural church, the ideal must be one of the strong serving the weak, of self-abnegation and a demonstration of true Christian meekness.

3. Initiate round table discussions using the elements of worldview continuums to compare assumptions with God's revelation.

The elements of worldview continuums can be used in a round table forum to openly discuss the predominant worldview and those worldviews already present in the congregation. This experience can be wonderfully challenging to any culturally diverse group, and is especially valid for churches when coupled with an open-minded and thorough study of Scripture. This iron-sharpening-iron approach will only work when there is real openness and power-distance issues are minimized. The result will build trust and confidence and cause all cultural groups to grow in mutual understanding and begin to see that no worldview can claim the authoritative higher ground. Such an atmosphere will foster the environment in which a church can become truly intercultural.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Using the continuums from the "Elements of Worldview," can you determine which elements are identifiable areas of tension at present? Can you determine which elements might become areas of tension while reaching out to the immigrants in your community?

2. What is the motivation that drives your church to transition and become an intentionally intercultural church? How "inter-cultural" are you willing to become?

3. If the way of the cross is voluntary sacrificial love, in what ways will your church intentionally seek to accept people from different cultures and empower them in your church structures?

4. What can your church do to communicate the message that people from different cultures do not have to become like us to be fully accepted into every aspect of church life?

5. What plan can your church develop to foster an atmosphere of acceptance and appreciation for differing worldviews?

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[3] Eric H. F. Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community,* (St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press, 1993).

Learning Activities:

1. Puzzling Conclusions: participants try to solve the puzzles and come to understand how easy it is to jump to mistaken conclusions.

2. Small group discussion using the "assumption" questions:
   ♦ Culture is unbiblical. Culture is what divides us. Christ unites. What we need is more of Christ and less of culture!
   ♦ Why do immigrants want to be different? They came to this country and should become "Canadian." We wouldn't have misunderstandings if they would become like us!
   ♦ When new converts mature they will see that our culture is based on a Christian worldview. We do things this way because it is the Christian way.
   ♦ Red, yellow, black and white is the goal! We will be an intercultural church when we achieve ethnic diversity.
   ♦ Becoming ethnically diverse is fine as long as it doesn't change us. In the past twenty years my neighbourhood went through a dramatic transformation. Please, tell me this won't happen in my church!

Conclusion

To become an intercultural church means much more than simply opening our arms and saying, "I accept your colour." As a mono-cultural congregation transitions into an intentionally intercultural church, it may be surprised to discover conflict around issues regarding what is real and what is true. When beliefs and "principles" are at stake, the natural response may be for both sides to dig in. But if instead of defensiveness a healthy dialogue can be produced, both sides of a transitioning church may discover that some of their assumptions may need to change. A real benefit from this process will be a more complete understanding of Christian revelation, as our own society and culture places blinders on our perspective that can only be removed through this kind of constructive Christian dialogue. This kind of Scriptural exposition from different perspectives will help generate the paradigm shift needed to fulfill the vision for a truly intercultural church.

Defining Values

Dr. Laurel McAllister teaches cross-cultural ministries at the ACTS Seminaries of Trinity Western University. She also serves on the Global Mission Roundtable of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Before moving to British Columbia, Laurel was active in missionary training and staff development in Michigan and Colorado Springs.

If worldview is the deeper structure of culture, values are what is evidenced at the surface. Values are expressed in terms of our priorities—where we spend our time, resources, and where we place our focus. Societies tend to predispose their people towards a common set of "culturally determined" values. Thus, when two cultures meet and mingle, tensions and even conflict can emerge. Values, like assumptions, are deeply held and are often judged as "right" or "wrong." But in most cases, these categories are not "right" or "wrong" or even "worse" or "better." Most values are *preferences* and understanding this important truth is a key to dealing with the tensions they may cause. In this session, Dr. Laurel McAllister will lead us through exercises to help us identify culturally determined values, and how to gain greater appreciation for those whose preferences are different from ours.

Facing Cultural Conflict: Becoming an Intentionally Intercultural Church

Laurel McAllister

The Spirit of God is moving many Canadian churches to look beyond their own cultural boundaries and reach out to their increasingly diverse communities. In recent decades, Christians have watched people from many different countries and ethnic backgrounds choose to come to Canada, settle here, and become citizens. For example, at a recent swearing-in ceremony in British Columbia, the group of new Canadians included people from 39 countries. This diversity is demonstrated in the variety of ethnic restaurants and stores. Numerous different languages are heard on Canadian streets as well as in playgrounds and parks. Canada's experience reflects the global phenomenon of cultural hetero-

geneity—true in many countries of the world, as well as in Canada.

Canadians often pride themselves in being friendly to newcomers and being open to different cultures. For example, they find it fun and interesting to eat at a charming, ethnic restaurant in their neighbourhood where the host/owner advises on specialty entrees and his children help with the serving. They participate in various ethnic festivals that are celebrated throughout Canada. They also encourage and value the ethnic churches that grow up within the communities of new Canadians.

Canadian Christians have a history of showing interest in and concern for peoples of other cultures. They pray for and support missionaries who minister in difficult places around the world. In addition, many accept the challenge of the Great Commission by giving up their vacations to serve on short-term mission trips. However, their churches remain quite homogeneous.

When their pastor encourages them to reach out to newcomers in their community, many Chris-

tians agree that this is an important, practical way to love and obey Christ. They also see the need to minister to oncoming generations, rather than losing them once they reach young adulthood. They don't want their church to wither and die, so they plan evangelistic outreaches to such groups as new immigrants and Generation X youth. But the positive response they have prayed for and worked toward can bring unexpected results.

Church consultants, Shawchuck and Heuser, explain it this way:

"Successful evangelistic efforts can destroy the homogeneity of the congregation, causing increased tension and conflict, as persons of various cultures come together around matters of their common faith—but uncommon traditions."[1]

The church which was so eager for growth and new life may become discouraged and disgruntled. Its members need help to prevent, as well as begin to resolve, such tensions and con-
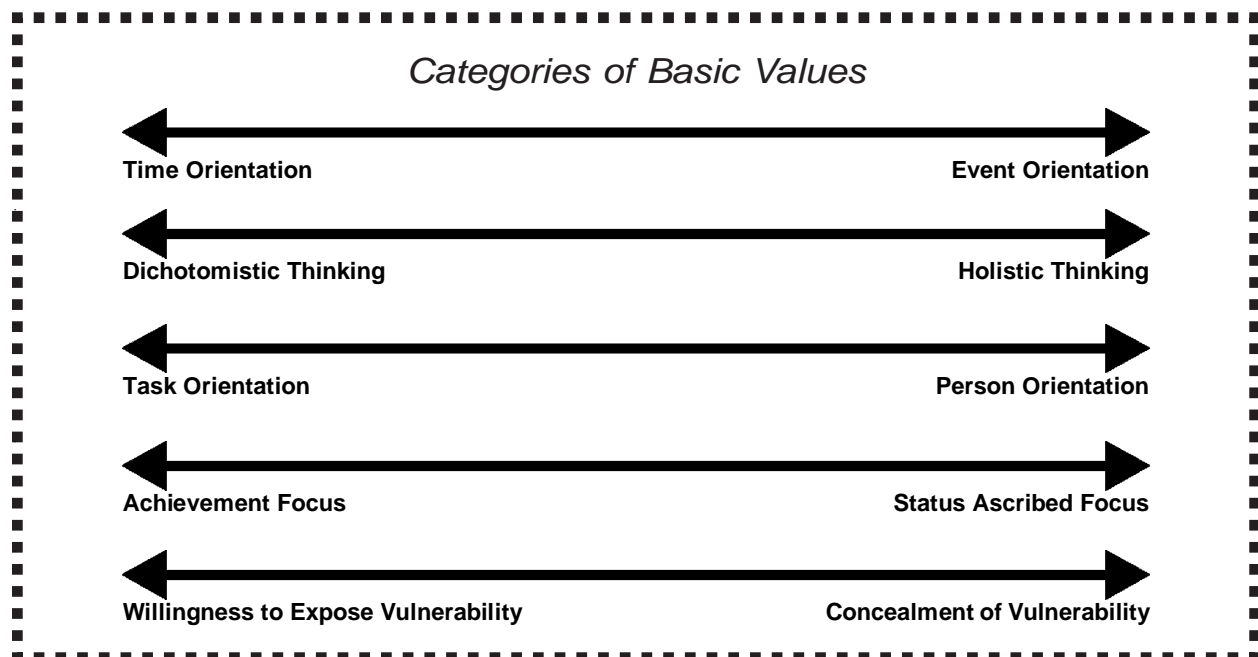

Figure 3:1 Categories of Basic Values

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[1] Shawchuck, Norman and Roger Heuser. *Managing the Congregation: Building Effective Systems to Serve People.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996, 254

flict. They also need to gain understanding of what is involved in this conflict of cultures and traditions. This is true for all churches that are trying to become intentionally intercultural, whatever their ethnicity.

A fact that may be unexpected to Christians is that conflict may occur—among godly people—because of the clash of cultural values. **What is meant by cultural values?**

A "cultural value" is a learned pattern that a particular group of people share. It makes sense to them, is of worth to them, and contributes to their identity. Let's discuss this further.

Cultural values are learned from family and community throughout childhood, and thus they become deeply ingrained and form an important part of behaviour patterns. Those who share these values regard them as normal and find a significant part of their identity in them, even though they are not innate. It is, therefore, to be expected that a clash with others who have different values will involve strong emotional reactions.

Value Categories

A helpful set of value categories has been identified by anthropologists, Lingenfelter and Mayers, in their book, *Ministering Cross-Culturally.*[2] Differences in these categories can easily cause conflict. Each of the categories below is on a continuum, thus demonstrating a possible range of behaviour within each grouping (See Figure 3:1).

Time/Event Orientation

♦ Time-oriented people evidence a concern for punctuality and the amount of time expended in an activity. They participate in tightly scheduled, goal-directed activities and tend to focus their energies on one activity at a time.

♦ Event-oriented people, on the other hand, show concern for the details of the event, regardless of the time required. They have a "let come what may" outlook, not tied to any precise schedule.

Dichotomistic Thinking/Holistic Thinking

♦ The judgments of dichotomistic thinking people are black/white, right/wrong. Their security comes from the feeling that they are right. They systematically organize information and their experience on the basis of what they perceive is the relationship between the information they have and their experience.

♦ By contrast, the judgments of holistic thinking people are open-ended. The whole person and all circumstances are taken into consideration. Information and experiences are seemingly disorganized, and details stand as independent points complete in themselves.

Task Orientation/Person Orientation

♦ Task-oriented people focus on tasks and principles. They find satisfaction in the achievement of goals.

♦ Person-oriented people focus on persons and relationships. They find satisfaction in interaction with others.

Achievement Focus/Status Ascribed Focus

♦ For achievement-focused people, prestige is attained; that is, personal identity is determined by their achievements. The amount of respect they receive, and expect to receive, varies with their accomplishments and failures.

[2] Lingenfelter, Sherwood G. and Marvin K. Mayers. *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships.* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986.

◆ By contrast, for status-ascribed focused people, prestige is ascribed. Personal identity is determined by formal credentials of birth and rank. The amount of respect people receive is primarily fixed. Attention focuses on those with high social status in spite of any personal failings they have.

Willingness to Expose Vulnerability/Concealment of Vulnerability

◆ A willingness to expose vulnerability indicates people's willingness to talk freely about their personal lives. They readily admit responsibility, weakness, and shortcomings. They are open to alternative views and criticism.

◆ Those who conceal vulnerability are vague regarding their personal lives. They tend to deny responsibility and withdraw from activities in order to hide weakness and shortcomings. They refuse to entertain alternative views or accept criticism, and find it hard to forgive or admit weakness.

Assessing Cultural Values

The following generalization may be useful here. Mainstream Canadian culture tends to value the left side of this grouping of value categories, e.g., time, task, etc. New Canadians (mainly from nonwestern cultures) tend to value the right side, e.g., event, person, etc. In an intercultural church, the result is often conflict, the inability to minister and worship together, and, inevitably, broken relationships.

The phrase, "tends to" is important to emphasize here so that everyone from a particular cultural group is not put into a category and "tarred with the same brush". All people do share some cultural values with others of a similar ethnic background, but each one also personalizes values in their own way. That is to say, each person has a personal culture and value system, the product of their family values, cultural/national heritage, and the interaction of accepting or rejecting the forces that have shaped them.

It is helpful to assess cultural values and practices using the four categories developed by Sandra Mackin, a missionary experienced in working with intercultural teams.[3] She suggests the following evaluation criteria. A *value*, *practice* or *tradition* is:

◆ Clearly right when measured against Scripture, e.g., Filipino hospitality (I Peter 4:9);

◆ In direct conflict with Scripture, e.g., child sacrifice in some cultures;

◆ In a gray area, e.g., drinking alcoholic beverages

Questions for Reflection

1. Describe a conflict of cultural values that you have experienced, or seen, in your church. Was the conflict resolved? If so, what made the resolution possible? If not, why not? What impact did this conflict have on the church?

2. How would you describe your own cultural values? Where did you get them from (e.g., your family, the country where you were born and reared, your ethnic background, etc.)?

3. What will you do differently to accept people who are different from yourself? What might accepting people with different cultural values look like in your church?

[3] Mackin, Sandra. Multinational Teams. In *Missionary Care*, ed. Kelly O'Donnell. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992, 158.

♦ In a neutral area, e.g., the amount of space that is proper between two people conversing.

When cultural values are in conflict, and emotions are rising high, one possible way to look at the issues in question is to ask, "In which category do these values fit?" They usually involve cultural or personal preferences—in areas of food, language, leadership, etc. Power issues are also often involved, as well as the reality of human fallenness. Conflict issues are rarely theologically-based.

The issues underlying such conflicts sound formidable. No wonder the human tendency is to avoid dealing with them. It is necessary, however, to take steps to resolve and move beyond the conflict of cultural values in churches—in order to have an effective, credible witness in the community, and to bring glory to God. How can this be accomplished? Is it possible to move to an acceptance of cultural difference? To real appreciation?

The healthy intercultural church must nurture an environment that encourages people to gain understanding of their own personal and cultural values, and to seek to understand the causes of the clash of cultural values. They also need to make a commitment to accept people from different cul-

tures and traditions—and then begin to enjoy and appreciate them! A good start is to intentionally build a relationship with someone from a different cultural background.

Learning Activities

1. Introductory Role Play, "Eastside Christian Church Goes Intercultural."
   Choose one of the following options depending on your church:
   a. Setting: an Anglo Canadian church wanting to become intercultural
   b. Setting: an ethnic church wanting to become intercultural

2. Discussion of cultural values based on five categories of basic values:
   ♦ Time/Event orientation
   ♦ Dichotomistic thinking/ Holistic thinking
   ♦ Task orientation/ Person orientation
   ♦ Achievement focus/Status ascribed focus
   ♦ Expose vulnerability/Conceal vulnerability

3. Simulation, "Eastside Church Faces Conflict"
   Participants experience the conflict of cultural values, and gain self-understanding of their own cultural values.

Conclusion

Tensions over values and traditions tend to emerge and escalate as a church becomes more intercultural. Through the process of understanding categories of basic values, we can learn to appreciate other cultures and become better prepared to understand tension and resolve potential conflicts before they escalate. The objective of this session is not simply to avoid conflict, but to understand that culturally determined preferences are equally valid. Often, we can learn to appreciate these differences in values as a means of addressing our own weaknesses. Having people in our congregation who are much more interested in relationships than task, for example, can makes us a stronger congregation if we are basically task oriented. The key is to gain appreciation for those with different values and let them enrich our fellowship and worship.

Them, Us and "We"

Dr. Jonathan Lewis is an Associate Director of the World Evangelical Alliance Missions Commission. He has served as a missionary in Latin America for over 20 years. From 1998-2003, Jon was a Professor of Intercultural Studies at ACTS seminary in Langley, B.C. He is the author of several missionary training manuals.

Ken Peters is in his eighth year as Lead Pastor of the Killarney Park Church (Mennonite Bretheren) located in Southeast Vancouver, a 41 year old congregation that is becoming intentionally intercultural. He has a M.Div. from MBBS Fresno and previous pastoral experience in California and Alberta.

The first three sessions of *Becoming an Intentionally Intercultural Church* have created an awareness of the tensions and potential conflicts that can arise from attempting to become a truly intercultural church. The greater the distance in worldviews and values systems, the more likely potential problem areas will develop. The solution, of course, is to engage a process for creating both understanding and appreciation for each cultural perspective. This will also help reduce tensions and minimize conflict. The first step in this process is to create "self-awareness" of existing attitudes and affirm the legitimacy of other cultural perspectives. We trust that these first three lessons and their learning activities will have achieved this important first step for you and the other members of your study group.

In session four, we will address two related themes: targeting for effectiveness, and what it takes to create an intercultural "ethos" for the church. Intentionality demands strategic thinking that leads to action. Best intentions by themselves are not sufficient to achieve desired results. To be intentional, we must understand who God is leading the church to reach. Then we must build bridges to these people based on their felt needs. But as these bridges are built, we must also make sure that our congregation grows in its ability to be culturally inclusive. Only in that way can we erase the us/them barriers and become "we."

Them, Us and "We"

Jonathan Lewis and Ken Peters

"Ready, Fire, Aim!" What's wrong with this sequence of actions? Yet many churches do just that through lack of planning and intentionality in their approach to reaching out to other cultural groups.


"Ready" implies that motivationally the church leadership desires to be used of God to reach those outside their predominant cultural milieu. And to a certain extent, they have counted the cost and are willing to proceed. This seminar is a part of this process.

"Aim" or "targeting" is deciding what specific group or groups the church will focus on reaching. This may include geographic, nationality, ethnicity, language, and generational definition. This decision may be determined mostly through circumstances—i.e. the group that seems to be most interested in attending or is most dominant in the neighborhood—or it may be that the church intends to draw in a group or groups that are not so obvious—i.e. second generation Sikh young people. Targeting also involves the philosophy under which the church will function—i.e. to encourage multiple ethnic congregations, or perhaps the desire to only focus on attracting immigrants who know or want to learn English and assimilate into the church and greater culture.

"Fire," of course, is what we do after we know who we are targeting. If we "fire" before we answer this question of where we want to aim, we are much more likely to experience either failure or conflicts with potentially destructive elements. The decisions made during "targeting" will definitely influence what we do when we "fire."
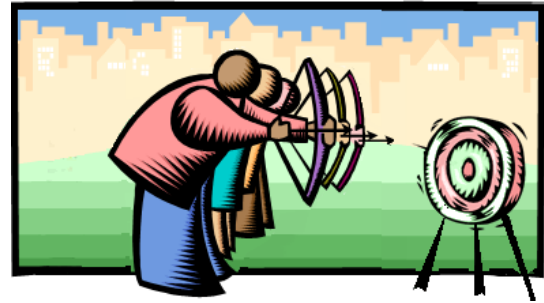
Some Things to Think About

The Great Commission commands the church to make disciples of "all nations," and some of those nations have come to us for the express reason of being exposed to the Gospel (Acts 17:25-26). Some of these, like Koreans, already have thriving congregations and seem to need little help from us in reaching their own group (25% of Koreans claim to be Christian). But other groups are "hidden peoples" because there is little or no Christian witness among them. One of God's highest priorities are those who don't have the opportunity to know Christ.

Targeting also involves understanding God's timing for a people. Missiologist Jim Engel developed a scale to try to measure where a people is in their journey towards knowing God (See Figure 4:1). Understanding where a people is in their progression is important to understanding what we are to do in reaching them. With this understanding, our strategy is to gently nudge them to the next stage in this progression. For example, if a group of mainland Chinese were identified to be at stage –5, a church offering English classes would be sure to teach the significance of major Christian holidays such as Easter and Christmas. At the next level, -4,

they would be taught about the life of Christ, and at the next, -3, what it means to be a follower of Christ. Level -2 & -1 might be passed through a personal crisis in which the English teacher, through their relationship, is used as an instrument of the Holy Spirit to lead the person into relationship with Christ.
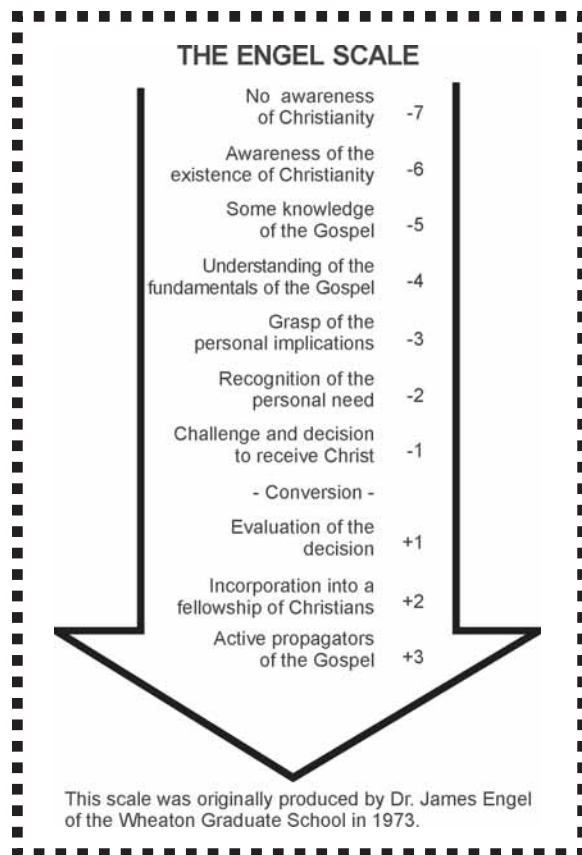

Figure 4:1 Where Is This People in Their Movement Toward Christ?

Identifying Needs

Most people come to Christ through personal crisis and need. It is no different with people groups. Christ has an answer for all of man's needs, particularly those deepest needs to know God and to understand one's worth in His eyes. But there are also physical and sociological needs that can be met as a way of creating bridges to another culture.

Too often, believers are so convinced of the "solution" that we don't take time to appreciate people for who they are. We not only miss the joy

in these relationships, but our "witness" has little effect because it doesn't address the needs they most feel. In order to address felt needs, we should:

♦ Get to know them and appreciate them for who they are in their cultural matrix.

♦ Attempt to understand their real, felt needs and address these.

♦ Communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ in ways that make sense in their culture.

The Other Side of the Bridge

Becoming intentionally intercultural is like building a bridge over a chasm that separates us from the people God is asking us to reach with his love. Becoming "intentional" means that we may need to take the initiative to build most of that bridge. But once it is built, will the people use it to come to us? Why would they come?

Interestingly, *Becoming an Intentionally Intercultural Church* team member, Pastor Ken Peters, has observed that when pressed with the question, "Why Will People Come to Our Church?" participants' answers focus more on their congregation's self-image and identity than on programs and planned outreach events. It is clear that while programs and events are an important part of the "bridge" by which the newcomer may be introduced to the church, the personality and culture of the church is ultimately the most important element to incorporating them. The unchurched are looking for genuine, caring relationships, not just a new religion to adhere to. It is out of relationship with us that they will want to enter into the ultimate relationship of their lives, a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The difficulty lies in that it is much easier to design and plan an event or program than it is to create and shape congregational identity and culture. If the church is not open to culturally diverse people, they won't stick around in great numbers. The exercises in this workshop are designed to help break down stereotypes and help members of your congregation begin to embrace people *because* they are of other cultures, not in spite of that fact.

Creating an Interculturally Friendly Environment

Every intentionally intercultural church works hard to make sure people of its target group or other internationals feel welcome. This goes well beyond a perfunctory handshake by greeters on Sunday morning. It includes both internal changes in the way the church staff and congregations thinks, as well as external evidences of cultural appreciation. Perhaps the only way to really overcome cultural barriers is to gain experience with the culture. That takes determination and per-

sistence. A church's leadership fosters its corporate culture. If the pastor and other leaders are sensitive to people of other cultures, congregants will soon pick up on this "ethos" as well.

Dr. Milton Bennet[1] has proposed a six-stage model that is helpful in understanding how people transition through stages from actual hostility or indifference to other cultures (ethnocentricity), to understanding and appreciating other cultures (ethnorelativity). Adapting Dr. Bennet's model, we might classify churches (i.e. their leadership, congregation, programs, etc.) as follows:

Stage 1—Deny: The congregation as a whole has almost no experience with other cultures. Their culture is the only real one. Forms and custom intentionally maintain psychological and/or physical isolation from other cultures. Members are disinterested in cultural difference but will act aggressively to eliminate a difference if it impinges on their cultural preferences.

Stage 2—Defend: Congregants' experience with other cultures creates acknowledgment of their existence, but one's own culture is experienced as the only good one. An us/them mentality prevails where "our ways" are superior and "their ways" are inferior. Church leaders and congregation are highly critical of other cultures, particularly if they find themselves in the role of hosts.

Stage 3—Diminish: The congregation has experienced enough cultural differences to explain them away. Cultural differences are minimized, trivialized, or romanticized. Elements of one's own cultural worldview are experienced as universal, obscuring deep-seated cultural differences. The leadership's goal is to correct cultural behavior to match their expectations.

Stage 4—Accept: The church and its leaders have finally accumulated enough experience to recognize that one's own background is only one of a number of equally complex and perhaps

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[1] Bennett, M.J. (1986). "A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 10, no.2: 179-95.

Bennett, M.J. (1993). "Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity." In M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

valid cultural outlooks. This does not mean total agreement with or approval of different cultural behaviors, but the congregation expresses respect and perhaps curiosity towards other cultures and includes them through special events and recognition.

Stage 5—Adapt: The church and its leadership have come to the point where their experience with another culture allows them to enter into that experience with behavior appropriate to that culture. They are able to look at the world, at least partially, through the eyes of that culture and will intentionally change their own behavior to communicate more effectively in another culture. The church expresses its cultural diversity in appropriate ways and leadership and resources are shared.

Stage 6—Integrate: People from different cultures feel comfortable in each other's culture. This is not "assimilation," which is what most often happens to non-dominant minority groups entering dominant culture churches. People who are forced to assimilate will be dealing with issues re-lated to their own cultural marginality and may feel they are not wholly accepted in either culture. This is particularly true of second generation immigrants. Although many immigrants exhibit great competence in moving between cultures, this is an unrealistic expectation for most dominant culture congregants. If achieved, the leadership and membership of this kind of church would have the ability to move readily between their own culture and other cultures present in the congregation. This kind of mobility implies a great degree of cultural competence including bilingualism.

Having persons with this highest degree of intercultural competence on the church's leadership team is desirable. Such people lead many of the most effective intercultural churches. In most cases, Stage 5 (Adaptation) will be the highest achievable goal for congregations. In time, however, it is reasonable to expect that the leadership of the church will include highly competent, intercultural leaders that can move readily between at least two cultures.

Questions for Reflection

1. What kinds of opportunities does your church have to reach those from other cultures?

2. Has your church built cross-cultural "bridges" into your community?

3. How effective is your church in both welcoming and incorporating those from other cultures? How could this be done more intentionally?

Learning Activity

How sensitive are you to other cultures as an individual and a congregation?

Gather in groups of 4-6. Review Dr. Bennett's six stages and evaluate which stage you feel you fall into as an individual and as a congregation.

Conclusion

We must be intentional about our efforts to reach those of other cultures. God wants it. But it is not enough just to put together a good program. *Our character* as a congregation deeply affects whether or not we are attractive to those standing on the other side of the bridge. We must intentionally create the bridge and then as we gain experience in relating to those of other cultures, allow God to grow us corporately into an inclusive congregation—one that values the richness of intercultural diversity. This will take time—years, perhaps. But it is worth the effort. Let us in this way render our "reasonable service of worship" to the God who created us for His own glory in all sizes, shapes, colours and cultures.

Moving Forward

Dr. Jonathan Lewis is an Associate Director of the World Evangelical Alliance Missions Commission. He has served as a missionary in Latin America for over 20 years. From 1998-2003, Jon was a Professor of Intercultural Studies at ACTS seminary in Langley, B.C. He is the author of several missionary training manuals.

Y ou would not be involved in doing this coursework if you weren't facing the realities of becoming an intercultural church. Perhaps you have experienced a benign "invasion" of your church by another cultural group. Perhaps you are an ethnic minority church that wishes to attract people from the dominant culture. Or perhaps you are simply seeing a host of opportunities and God has moved you to engage one or more of these intentionally. Whatever your case may be, it should be clear by now that becoming a truly intercultural church will require change. This change is towards greater understanding and acceptance of people who may think quite differently about realities and function with a very different values system. One thing we hope you are realizing that the suggested change will produce growth and maturity. Ultimately, it brings glory to God as the nations come together in worship.

In session 5, Dr. Jonathan Lewis will provide some guidance for developing plans that will allow you to move forward in the development of the intercultural vision. He builds on the last session, assuming that you have a definite idea about the people with whom your church is building its intercultural congregation. Perhaps this is not "cast in stone," but planning can only happen as the vision for what "will be" is clarified. The session focuses on six steps in planning. They follow conventional wisdom and apply some well-known tools to assess the environment. While the learning exercise can be done as a "simulated" planning session, don't be surprised if what emerges is dynamic and do-able.

Strategizing for Effectiveness

Jonathan Lewis

A strategy is an overall approach, plan, or way of describing how we will go about reaching our goal or solving a problem. Some Christians believe that in performing God's work, strategy and planning conflict with prayer and the spontaneous leading of the Holy Spirit. If this were categorically true, a discussion of strategy would be useless. We are convinced, however, that when strategy and planning are properly understood and implemented, God uses this process to provide guidance. We are aware of the dangers of merely using human intelligence to implement God's work, for "unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Ps. 127:1). It is our responsibility to plan, and God will guide our steps. "We should make plans—counting on God to direct us." (Proverbs 16:9, Living Bible)

Strategy is part of responsible stewardship. In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), each servant was entrusted with a certain amount of money, and each one was expected to invest that money for the master's gain. The unfaithful servant was judged for failing to develop even the simplest investment strategy (such as putting the money in the bank), so that he could see growth for his Lord. The other two servants developed and followed investment strategies, doubled their money, and were received "into the joy of [their] master" (Matt. 25:21, 23).

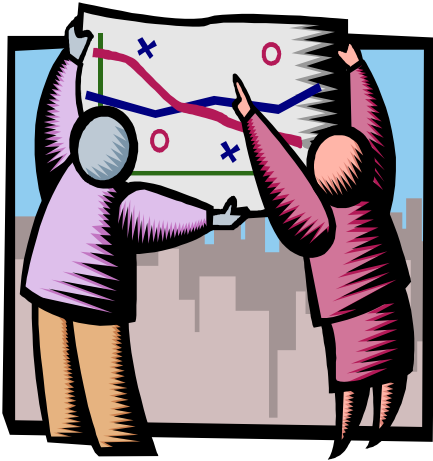Strategy in kingdom work is important because it employs faith. Hebrews 11:1 tells us that "faith is the substance of things hoped for . . ." When we attempt to do a work for God, we hope for a future that is different for a people—one where members of that group will come to know God through Christ and become part of the great throng who will worship Him around the throne throughout eternity. We carry forward our plan with this hope and in faith that God will do it. Unless God is thoroughly involved in our efforts, our work will be in vain.

The following process steps (Figure 5:1) will lead to effective planning and its implementation.

Steps to Planning

1. **Envisioning**:
   What people and what will the results look like?

2. **Defining your Mission**:
   What will we do to make our vision reality?

3. **Reverse Planning**:
   How will we do it, in what order, and how will we know we are on track?

4. **Assess Resources:**
   Who and what are available to implement the vision?

5. **Implement the Plan**:
   Who is committed? Who is responsible?

6. **Review and Adjust**:
   Is the plan working? What must we do to improve it?

Figure 5:1 Steps to Planning

ministries to their community including tutorial help with their children's schoolwork, ESL classes, and childcare. We will involve our young people in these ministries and train them to pray for their Sikh friends and be faithful witnesses. We will involve and support persons skilled in Sikh evangelism for training and advice. We will also organize an active, on-going prayer ministry for this effort."

1. Envisioning: The envisioning process usually produces a vision statement—a picture of the future in a defined time period. For example, a church that becomes burdened for the Sikh community that surrounds them might come up with the following vision statement:

"Five years from now, we see a thriving youth group that includes 30 second/third generation Sikh background youth who have committed their lives to Jesus Christ and are growing in their faith and testimony."

2. The Mission: This step usually produces a mission statement that squares with who you are as a congregation and the opportunities God is giving you to reach your vision. You can't do everything but you can probably do some things well. Coming up with a mission statement involves a serious analysis of your organization as well as the circumstances surrounding the group you are targeting. There are two parts to this--commonly known as a SWOT analysis (Figure 5:2):

From this information, you will write a Mission Statement that explains *how* you will accomplish the vision. For example, a mission statement for accomplishing the vision statement in Step 1 could read as follows:

"In order to reach Sikh youth and disciple them, we will engage in the following activities: offer needs-based

SWOT Analysis

1. ***Assess Strengths and Weaknesses:*** Examine your own history as a congregation and examine your successes. What is the church is known for? Ask questions like: What are our advantages? What do we do well? What do other people (like the target group) see as our strengths? What do we need to improve? What should we avoid? As you create your mission statement, you will want to play into your strengths and overcome weaknesses that would impede reaching the goal.

2. ***Assess Opportunities and Threats:*** Look at the target group's social needs. What needs offer access that coincides with our strengths? What obstacles do we face? Look not only at private opportunities but understand what the government and other groups may be trying to do for them that you can also utilize to minister to them.

Figure 5:2 SWOT Analysis

3. Reverse Planning: This step will produce a timeline that works from the farthest point out in your vision statement back to the present. The idea is to keep the end in mind and then envision what needs to be achieved during each period of time (usually year to year) to reach the goal. In a vision with a five-year timeline, you would ask what needs to be happening at year 4, year 3, year 2 and year 1 right down to the present. If the mission statement focuses in on *how* you will achieve the vision, this timeline will allow you to track *what needs to happen sequentially* and how you will know you are on track. For example, for the mission statement in the previous step, you might produce a timeline as in Figure 5:3.

4. Assess and Allocate Resources: This step will eventually lead to determining who will be responsible for and involved in different aspects of the plan as well as creating a budget for it. Start by brainstorming a list of the human and other resources God has given to your congregation to fulfill this dream. This will include people who will administrate programs as well as those who may be able to provide services. There may be business people who can contribute expertise and resources or skilled professionals. Look at financial potential for meeting budget needs from your own sources as well as other potential sources like public funding and private grants. Evaluate your own and public facilities and other physical resources that may be available to you. Begin recruiting people and exploring resource availability. It is at this point that faith really needs to be exercised. You will need to depend on the Lord to call, equip and provide for the vision to be fulfilled.
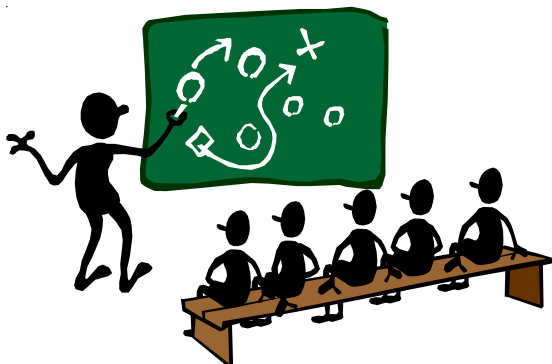
Year 5 Goal: 30 disciples
1. Weekly discipleship meetings
2. Three outreach events planned and led by Sikh disciples
3. Outreach to parents of Sikh young people
4. Prayer chain

Year 4 Goal: 15 disciples
1. Weekly discipleship meetings
2. One outreach event planned and led by Sikh young people
3. Outreach to parents of Sikh young people
4. Prayer chain

Year 3 Goal: 6 disciples
1. Weekly discipleship meetings
2. Weekly outreach to Sikh young people
3. Prayer chain

Year 2 Goal: 2 disciples
1. Weekly discipleship meetings
2. Weekly outreach to Sikh young people
3. 60% of the congregation visits Sikh temple
4. Two Sikh evangelism-training events

Year 1 Goal: 1 disciple
1. Weekly outreach homework tutorials
2. 30% of the congregation visits Sikh temple
3. Two Sikh evangelism training events

Figure 5:3 Reverse Planning

5. Implement the Plan: The best plans won't work unless they are implemented. With careful, strategic planning that involves those who will have to bear the responsibility, momentum will be gained for the plan. Launch it and then stick to it. Little is ever achieved of significance over the short haul, but faithfulness will be rewarded.

6. Review and Adjust: This step is ongoing. You will need regularly scheduled times to review and evaluate the effectiveness of your plans. You will no doubt need to make tactical adjustments. Find out what is proving effective. Shore up weaknesses in the program. Look to God for wisdom and He has promised to supply it.

Planning isn't a perfect process. It is simply a way of organizing our resources to work towards a common objective. Even the best of plans can fail. Good ministry planning is always done in dependence on God and in recognition of His sovereignty. And as with any faith activity, it works towards hoped-for objectives based on the certainties of God's grace and favor in pursuing His purposes and will. Faithfulness in executing the plan is the surest way to achieve its success.

Pray as if we could not plan, and plan as if we could not pray!

Questions for Reflection

1. What is the most challenging aspect of articulating a vision for the ministry?

2. How is a vision statement different from a mission statement? In what ways is each one used?

3. Is it realistic to develop five year plans in a local church context?

4. Discuss why most people seem to develop some goals that are too small for the long term and other goals that are too large for the short term. What dynamic does this produce?

Learning Activity

It is unlikely that during this seminar, you will be able to work through the steps necessary to create a good *Vision Statement*, *Mission Statement* and *Plan*. These are best done in two or more sessions with adequate time between each for research and prayer. But this simulation planning exercise should give you a feel for this dynamic process and how it works:

Step 1: Write a simple *Vision Statement* that states the target group ***of your choosing***, and what you envision doing with them in a given time period. (Caution: We tend to be too ambitious in our goals for the short term, and not ambitious enough for the long term.)

Step 2: In light of your vision, who you are and who the target group is, discuss your *strengths and weaknesses* as well as *opportunities and threats* to this vision. Assess your resources and creatively suggest what methods you will use to reach your goal. Sum it up in a brief mission statement that says "how" you will achieve the vision.

Step 3: Create a timeline. Work backward from the date established in your vision statement year by year. Attach a measurable goal for each year and the kind of activities you will be conducting during each of those years that will enable you to accomplish what you envision by working backwards from your goal to the present.

Follow up this activity with the following debriefing questions:

1. How did you feel about this process?
2. What kind of time frame is needed to really engage effectively in a planning process?
3. What kind of expectations did this simulation raise?

Conclusion

The tools presented in this session should help any leadership team develop the vision and plan that can lead them to becoming truly intercultural. There are so many variations of intercultural church expression, that no one size will fit all—even in the planning model. But with no planning at all, it is unlikely that your church will move significantly towards becoming meaningfully intercultural.

As we conclude this course, the authors hope that you have *personally* experienced intercultural growth. Increasing understanding is one important course outcome. But growing in personal maturity and grace is where the work really lies. We must not only understand the world of intercultural relationships, but we must change in some very basic ways to both live this out and guide others in the process of becoming an intentionally intercultural church. We know that the God who multiplied cultures across the face of the earth is the One who will enable us to become who we must be to serve Him in this great ministry. We are compelled by the vision of that day when the full choir is enlisted from every tongue and tribe and people and nation, and we all stand before the Throne of God in praise to the Lamb.

Facilitator Helps

Session 1: The Dynamics of Transition

Session Objectives:

As a result of this session, participants will:
- Gain insight into the importance of becoming more intentionally intercultural,
- Discover tools to work through the tensions of transion.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Review the Content (15 minutes)

Use the following outline of the article, DVD presentation, and/or the PowerPoint presentation to review the content of the article.

Issues clouding intercultural transitions:

- Cultural Ignorance
- Language barriers
- Ethnically-based stereotypes
- Passive racism
- Economic partiality
- Exclusion of minorities from leadership groups
- Distinct differences in worldview and spiritual expectations
- Social partition

The Four Poles around which to wrestle with intercultural tensions in a biblical manner:

- The Ideal
- The Real
- Define
- Do

Ideals proposed for becoming intercultural:

- Being intercultural coincides with the mission of the church (Matthew 28:18-20)
- Being intercultural corresponds to the nature of the Gospel (2 Cor 5:14-21, Galatians 3:28)
- Being intercultural concurs with the nature of the church (Eph 2:11-22)
- Being intercultural conveys a picture of multicultural worship (Rev 7:9-12)

The Process of Transition:

- Examples in Acts 6: The *Ideal* from Scripture of God's impartial care for those in need meets the *Real* need of appointing deacons to oversee care for Greek widows.
- Example in Acts 15: The experience of Gentile believers evidencing the Spirit of God so clearly ("*To Do*") needed to be explained and communicated to the rest of the believers ("*To Define*").

3. Discuss the Content/Questions for Reflection (20 minutes)

1. What are the issues your leadership group is dealing with as a result of transitioning as an intercultural church? How are they being dealt with?
2. What are the non-negotiable values that are providing a foundation for your discussions?
3. Is there a healthy balance of idealism and realism in your decision-making group?

4. Learning Activities (20-30 minutes)

Hand out or display the following questions and discuss them in small groups of 4-6:

1. Together identify an issue your church is facing as a result of the transition towards becoming an intercultural church?
2. Discuss what scriptural passages and principles apply to the issue you have identified.
3. List the pragmatic factors to be considered regarding the issues (e.g. budget, space, attitudes, training, awareness).
4. What are the priorities and preferences of those directly involved in seeking a solution?
5. Based on the previous points, determine 2 possible courses of action to deal with this issue.

5. Debrief the Learning Activities (10 minutes)

1. List together some of the issues identified that surface as a result of transitioning towards becoming an intercultural church.
2. Ask each group to share a possible course of action for the issue they identified.   Discuss the biblical ideal and the practical realities. Discuss the need to explain or define action taken to the congregation.
3. Solicit input from other groups about each issue presented.

6. Preview the Next Session (as time permits)

7. Close in Prayer

Session 2: Examining Our Assumptions:

Session Objectives:

As a result of this session, participants will:

- Understand that our underlying assumptions form our worldview,
- Know that we gain awareness of our unexamined assumptions when the assumptions are questioned or conflict with other differing assumptions,
- Begin to appreciate how intercultural dialogue causes us to examine our own assumptions more critically,
- Begin to develop the ability to examine our own assumptions without becoming defensive.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Review the Content (15 minutes)

Suggestion: Facilitator may want to begin with Learning Activity #1, "Puzzling Conclusions" before reviewing the content.

Use the following outline of the article, DVD presentation, and/or the PowerPoint presentation to review the content of the article.

Cultures are built on assumptions:

- Cultures seek to bring understanding to mysteries and unanswerable questions.
- Systems of explanation provide the foundational understanding people use to interpret the physical world around them, social interactions and metaphysical relationships.
- The systems and assumptions used can be called a "worldview."
- Christian worldview is revelation: however the infusion of the cultural worldview surrounding the Christian is unstoppable.

Elements of Worldview (Carley Dodd):

- Shame and guilt cultures
- Task and people cultures
- Spirit and secular cultures
- The role of the dead to living
- The nature of humankind
- Humans and nature
- Doing and being cultures
- Life cycle
- Fatalism

Examples of how worldview assumptions cause different interpretations even among evangelical Christians:

- The relationship of the dead to the living: Western Christians, seeing no reference to any relationship of the dead to the living proclaim there is none, while an Eastern Christian may be inclined to identify the Old Testament reverence to the patriarchal families with ancestor worship.
- Spirit and secular cultures: Western Christian worldview is strongly naturalistic and views illness as a result of physical causes, while an African worldview is strongly spiritual and may view illness as a result of spiritual causes (malaria, for example).

Elicit dialogue and interaction by asking questions similar to the following:

♦   What do you think - which of these two answers is right?
♦   What causes the illness of malaria? What role does the spiritual realm play in sickness and illness?

After some interaction that hopefully illustrates differing points of view ask the next question:

♦   Explain how you know your answer is right.

Diverse assumptions create tension:

♦   Fear brought on when one's understanding of truth and reality are questioned,
♦   Sense of loss when what is presumed absolute is determined to be less solid than previously thought,
♦   A non-believer from a different belief system may resist the gospel because of a sense that his or her whole worldview will be lost, without the means of knowing what is true or real.

Transitioning Churches can develop a plan to release tension:

1. Understand the threats to intercultural dialogue and conflict resolution:
    ♦   Distinguish between ideas and sentiments,
    ♦   Separate the problem from the person,
    ♦   Disconnect the motives from the meanings.
2. Develop and implement a plan to resolve power-distance issues.
3. Initiate round table discussions using the elements of worldview continuums to compare assumptions with God's revelation.

Conclusion:

♦   Churches will discover many surprising conflicts around issues they regard as real, true and important.
♦   Assumptions previously held may be found to be untenable both with Scripture and the new intercultural vision.
♦   Introducing change proactively and not reactively provides a welcoming environment in which multicultural newcomers will believe they are welcomed, embraced and accepted.

3. Discuss the Content/Questions for Reflection (20 minutes)

1. Using the continuums from the "Elements of Worldview," can you determine which elements are identifiable areas of tension at present? Can you determine which elements might become areas of tension while reaching out to the immigrants in your community?
2. What is the motivation that drives your church to transition and become an intentionally intercultural church? How "inter-cultural" are you willing to become?
3. If the way of the cross is voluntary sacrificial love, in what ways will your church intentionally seek to accept people from different cultures and empower them in your church structures?
4. What can your church do to communicate the message that people from different cultures do not have to become like us to be fully accepted into every aspect of church life?
5. What plan can your church develop to foster an atmosphere of acceptance and appreciation for differing worldviews?

4. Learning Activities (20-30 minutes)

1. Puzzling Conclusions: participants try to solve the puzzles and come to understand how easy it is to jump to mistaken conclusions.

Display the "Picture Perfect Puzzles." Ask the participants to resolve the puzzles individually. Once they have each tried to answer the puzzle they are free to compare their answers with other group members.

Unpack the Puzzle: Display the "Puzzling Conclusions" solution to "Picture Perfect Puzzles." Our eyes are blind to certain illusions because the human mind adds the missing information that the eye cannot see and causes us to jump to conclusions. In other words, we make assumptions that may or may not represent true reality. In relation to culture, our minds fill in the blank. The mind provides cultural information based on past experiences or learned cultural clues; this causes us to make assumptions that may not represent the reality.

2. In groups of 4-6, discuss the following "assumption" questions: Ask each group to assign a secretary/presenter to take notes and present to the whole group their thoughts and conclusions. In order to address as many of these questions as possible, make sure that each church group starts at a different question with instructions to work in ascending order until they cover as many of the questions as possible (some groups may have to cycle back through the 1st question).

- Culture is unbiblical. Culture is what divides us. Christ unites. What we need is more of Christ and less of culture!
- Why do immigrants want to be different? They came to this country and should become "Canadian." We wouldn't have misunderstandings if they would become like us!
- When new converts mature they will see that our culture is based on a Christian worldview. We do things this way because it is the Christian way.
- Red, yellow, black and white is the goal! We will be an intercultural church when we achieve ethnic diversity.
- Becoming ethnically diverse is fine as long as it doesn't change us. In the past twenty years my neighbourhood went through a dramatic transformation. Please, tell me this won't happen in my church!

5. Debrief the Learning Activities (10 minutes)

- Each group is asked to make a brief presentation summarizing their thoughts and reactions to the assumption questions.
- The facilitator should attempt to provoke further dialogue in the larger group should time allow.

6. Preview the Next Session (as time permits)

7. Close in Prayer

Picture Perfect Puzzles
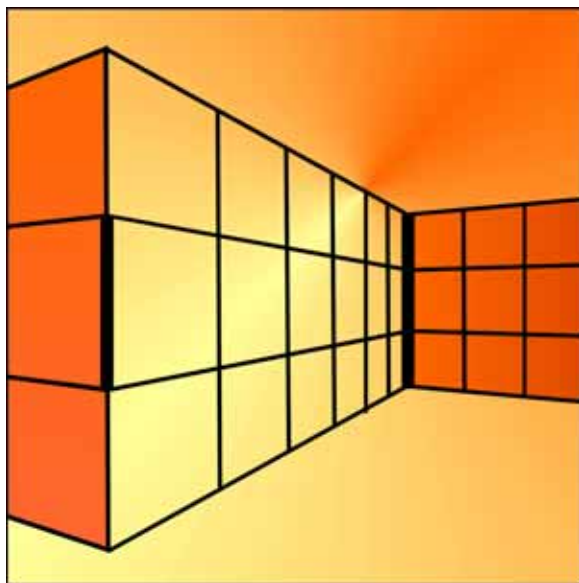
Indicate which bold vertical line is longest. Is it the Left or the Right line?

How many triangles and circles can you count?

Puzzling Conclusions

Neither the left nor the right is longer. The lines are equal.

There are no complete triangles or circles here.

Elements of Worldview Continuums

Developed from Carley H. Dodd,
Dynamics of Intercultural Commuincation

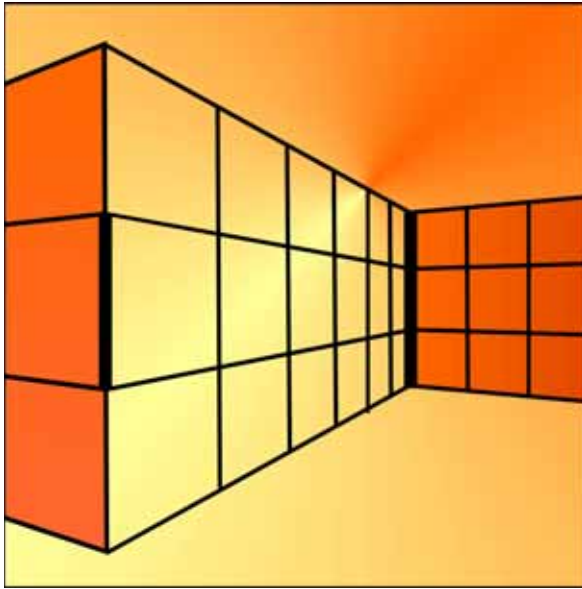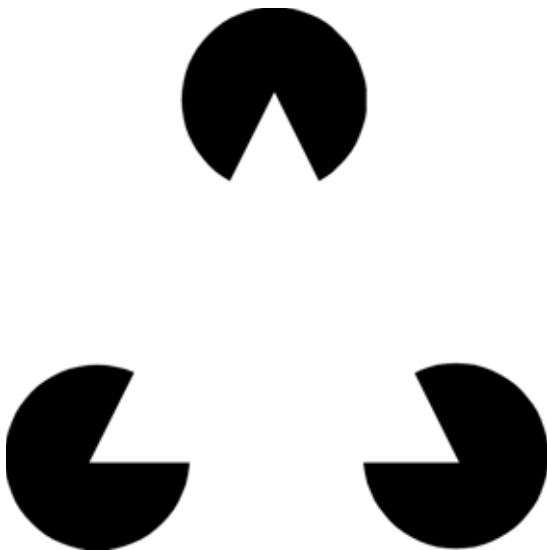Worldviews can be seen as relating to a number of elements. The following pairs of elements are set on a continuum because some worldviews may only identify partially with one side or the other. This continuum can be used for each worldview under examination (e.g., North American, Biblical, Mexican, etc.).

Shame and guilt cultures: Some cultures can be characterized by their perceived sense of personal guilt (usually found in individualistic cultures) and shame (usually found in collectivist cultures).

Individualistic/Guilt Culture   **Collective/Shame Culture**

Task and people cultures: Some cultures emphasize task accomplishment over relationships, while other cultures emphasize relationships over task.

Task Oriented Culture   **People Oriented Culture**

Spiritual and secular cultures: A culture can be evaluated by its cognitive cultural world view, which involves whether or not the culture accepts the notion of a cosmos filled with spiritual beings and forces, or whether a spiritual dimension plays a lesser role or any role at all.

Secular (Non-spiritual) Culture   **Spiritual Culture**

The role of the dead to living: Some cultures are characterized by their view of the relationship between living and dead.

No Relationship   **Strong Relationship**

The nature of humankind: According to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) cultures perceive humans in one of three ways … basically good, mixed good and evil, and basically evil.

Basically Good   **Mixed Good & Bad**   **Basically Bad**

Humans and nature: Another element of world view is the amount of control over nature one believes (i.e., subject to nature, in harmony with nature, and controlling of nature.).

Controlling Nature   **In Harmony with Nature**   **Subject to Nature**

Doing and being cultures: The doing and being duality is another world view difference between cultures. Doing emphasizes goal setting and producing achievements while being focuses on inner personal development in character, knowledge, etc.

Doing/Goal Oriented   **Being/Inner Growth Oriented**

Life cycle: Life is viewed as linear or cyclical.

Linear   **Cyclical**

Fatalism: Rogers with Svenning (1969) defined fatalism as "the degree to which an individual recognizes a lack of ability to control his future." [1]

Much Control   **Less Control**

[1] Carley H. Dodd, *Dynamics of Intercultural Communication.* Fourth Edition. Madison, WI: SCB Brown & Benchmark, 1995, pp. 105-111

Session 3:   Defining Values

Session Objectives:

As a result of this session, participants will:

♦ Understand the concept of cultural values that cause conflict,

♦ Gain understanding of their own cultural values, and

♦ Appreciate the importance of accepting people with different cultural values.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Review the Content (15 minutes)

Suggestion: Begin this session with Learning Activity #1, "Introductory Role Play." Then begin reviewing the content of the article using the following outline, the DVD presentation, and/or the PowerPoint® presentation. After discussion of the value categories, begin Learning Activity #2, "Simulation." Be sure to follow the simulation with the debriefing questions.

What do we mean by values? A cultural value is a learned pattern that a particular group of people share and is, therefore, of worth to them, and contributes to their identity.

Briefly describe the value categories:

Time/event orientation:

♦ Time orientation: Concern for punctuality and amount of time expended; tightly scheduled, goal-directed activities; focus energies on a single activity.

♦ Event orientation: Concern for details of the event, regardless of time required; a "let come what may" outlook not tied to any precise schedule.

Dichotomistic thinking/holistic thinking:

♦ Dichotomistic thinking: Judgments are black/white, right/wrong; security comes from the feeling that one is right; information and experiences are systematically organized on the basis of perceived ordered relationship between them.

♦ Holistic thinking: Judgments are open-ended; the whole person and all circumstances are taken into consideration; information and experiences are seemingly disorganized; details stand as independent points complete in themselves.

Task/Person orientation:

♦ Task orientation: Focuses on tasks and principles; finds satisfaction in the achievement of goals.

♦ Person orientation: Focuses on persons and relationships, finds satisfaction in interaction.

Achievement focus/status ascribed focus:

♦ Achievement focus (prestige is attained): Personal identity is determined by one's achievements; the amount of respect one receives varies with one's accomplishments and failures.

♦ Status ascribed focus (prestige is ascribed): Personal identity is determined by formal credentials of birth and rank; the amount of respect one receives is primarily fixed; attention focuses on those with high social status in spite of any personal failings they have.

Willingness to expose vulnerability/concealment of vulnerability:

♦ Willingness to expose vulnerability: Willingness to talk freely about personal life; ready admission of culpability, weakness, and shortcomings; openness to alternative views and criticism.

♦ Concealment of vulnerability: Vagueness regarding personal life; denial of culpability, withdrawal from activities in order to hide weakness and shortcomings; refusal to entertain alternative views or accept criticism; hard to forgive or admit weakness.

Remember the following:

♦ Each category is on a continuum.
♦ Mainstream Canadian culture *tends* to value the left side of this grouping, e.g., time, task, etc.
♦ New Canadians (mainly from non-western cultures) *tend* to value the right side, e.g., event, person, etc.; however, each culture *tends* to have its own way of practicing the value.
♦ The result is conflict, inability to minister and worship together, broken relationships.

Evaluate cultural values with Scripture. A value, practice or tradition is:

♦ Clearly right when measured against Scripture, e.g. Filipino hospitality (I Peter 4:9);
♦ In direct conflict with Scripture, e.g. child sacrifice in some cultures;
♦ In a gray area, e.g. drinking alcoholic beverages;
♦ In a neutral area, e.g. the amount of space that is proper between two people conversing.

3. Discuss the Content/Questions for Reflection (20-30 minutes)

1. Describe a conflict of cultural values that you have experienced, or seen, in your church. Was the conflict resolved? If so, what made the resolution possible? If not, why not? What impact did this conflict have on the church?
2. How would you describe your own cultural values? Where did you get them from (e.g., your family, the country where you were born and reared, your ethnic background, etc.)?
3. What will you do differently to accept people who are different from yourself?
4. What might accepting people with different cultural values look like in your church?

4. Learning Activities (30 minutes)

1. Introductory Role Play, "Eastside Christian Church Goes Intercultural." Choose one of the settings (predominately Anglo-Canadian or ethnic church). See the Facilitator Guide and Participant Hand-out on page 44 or 45.
   "Eastside Christian Church Goes Intercultural" (5 minutes)
   Purpose: to introduce the issues of cultural values that typically cause conflict in the context of churches wanting to be intercultural
   Setting: an informal conversation among church leaders just after a meeting that was intended to encourage outreach to their community, in partnership with a predominantly Anglo-Canadian church in their area.
   The participants stand at the front of the auditorium/classroom. The facilitator introduces the role play, "And now we go to an informal conversation in the parking lot of Eastside Christian just after a joint meeting with this predominantly Anglo-Canadian congregation that has approached their church desiring to partner together in outreach to their neighbourhood."
   Then members share their thoughts. The atmosphere is emotionally charged.

2. Discussion of Cultural Values

   What attitudes and values did you observe during the role play? List values on white board or overhead.

Determine the categories of the values based on the five categories of basic values:

Time	Event
Dichotomistic thinking	Holistic thinking
Task orientation	Person orientation
Achievement focus	Status ascribed focus
Expose vulnerability	Conceal vulnerability

3. Simulation, "Eastside Church Faces Conflict"

See the Facilitator Guide and Participant Handout on page 46.

Participants experience the conflict of cultural values, and gain self-understanding of their own cultural values.

"Eastside Church Faces Conflict" Simulation (15 minutes, including briefing)
Purpose: to give participants the opportunity to experience the conflict of cultural values and gain self-understanding of their own cultural values

Participants are divided into groups of 4 or 5. In each group, participants will take different cultural roles. One will take the role of leader.

Situation: a committee in an intercultural church meets for the purpose of planning an outreach to their community.

Discussion involves purpose and type of outreach, time frame, leadership, food, language to be used.

Conflict emerges as value differences surface. Any attempt to resolve conflict never quite succeeds.

5. Debrief the Learning Activity (10 minutes)

1. What feelings did you have as you listened to the instructions? As you participated in the simulation?
2. What issues triggered conflict/disagreement? (Each person share one) Group the areas of disagreement into categories: biblically and absolutely right; absolutely wrong; gray or neutral.
3. Which category did most (or all) of the disagreements fall into?
4. Describe any insights you had during the experience.
5   Each group shares highlights of the experience with the entire group, OR with another group.

6. Preview the Next Session (as time permits)

7. Close in Prayer

Facilitator Guide and Participant Handout

Introductory Role Play: "Eastside Christian Church Goes Intercultural," Anglo-Canadian Church Scenario

Time: 5 minutes. Role Play is set up, and practiced by the participants, before the session that it introduces.

Purpose: to introduce the issues of cultural values that typically cause conflict in the context of a church wanting to be intercultural.

Participants: 4 or 5 women and men role play church leaders of Anglo-Canadian cultural background.

Setting: a meeting of church leaders to discuss how to encourage their relationship with the ethnic church meeting in their church building.

Procedure: The players will sit at the front of the auditorium/classroom. The facilitator introduces the role play, "And now we go to a leadership meeting at Eastside Christian where the main agenda item is how to connect better with the immigrant congregation that is using their facility on Saturday night." At this moment, the chair of the meeting is finishing a prayer, " . . . for unity and love to prevail as we seek to fellowship and work with our friends." He/She then briefly introduces the reason for the meeting—to discuss how they might fellowship and minister with the ethnic church meeting in their building.

Participants share their ideas. As each speaks, the atmosphere becomes increasingly charged with feeling, and their cultural values are very much in evidence. The following statements may be used:

♦ "If we try to plan a meeting together, we'll never be able to get going on time. You know that they are supposed to meet from 5 to 8 pm, but they don't start till 6 and they go on to 10 pm!"

♦ "Yes, it would be good to meet with them—just as long as they don't cook in the church. We'll never get rid of the smell of garlic."

♦ "I don't know what they really believe or stand for. They don't seem to know right from wrong."

♦ "And have you heard them pray? I don't know what we are endorsing—it seems like some kind of strange theology to me."

♦ "They have to greet everyone in the room and ask about the whole family. They don't seem concerned about getting the important things done."

♦ "Have you seen the way they treat their Pastor? You'd think he was God!"

♦ "But I had a hard time getting a straight answer from him when I reminded him to have the fellowship hall cleaned up after they used it. He didn't look me in the eye, but just moved away as soon as he could."

Further instructions to participants:

♦ Try to be as natural as possible as you interact with each other.

♦ Be sure to show disdain for, or lack of understanding of, the following cultural values that are different from "mainstream Anglo Canadian" culture, including:

1. Minimal concern for punctuality or keeping to an exact time frame.
2. The tendency to consider a situation from all sides, rather than making a right/wrong or black/white judgment.
3. Relationships are more important than getting a task done.
4. Respect is given to individuals on the basis of their age or social position. For example, a pastor is highly honoured.
5. It is important to "save face" rather than to expose one's weakness or vulnerability.

Conclusion: The facilitator interrupts the meeting after 3 or 4 minutes, "This is a group of usually nice, godly people. What in the world is going on?"

Facilitator Guide and Participant Handout

Introductory Role Play: "Eastside Christian Church Goes Intercultural," Ethnic Church Scenario

Time: 5 minutes Role Play is set up, and practiced by the participants, before the session that it introduces.

Purpose: to introduce the issues of cultural values that typically cause conflict in the context of a church wanting to be intercultural.

Participants: 4 or 5 women and men role play leaders of an ethnic church in Canada.

Setting: an informal conversation among church leaders just after a meeting that was intended to encourage outreach to their community, in partnership with a predominantly Anglo-Canadian church in their area.

Procedure: The participants stand at the front of the auditorium/classroom. The facilitator introduces the role play, "And now we go to an informal conversation in the parking lot of Eastside Christian just after a joint meeting with this predominantly Anglo-Canadian congregation that has approached their church desiring to partner together in outreach to their neighbourhood."

Participants speak their minds without hesitation. The atmosphere becomes increasingly charged with feeling, and their cultural values are very much in evidence. The following statements may be used:

♦ What a difficult evening that was!
♦ Yes, the leader kept asking me what I thought about everything—very rude.
♦ And one of the women tried to be very friendly—she seemed to feel guilty for not being friendly enough with us . . .
♦ But no one thought to ask our Pastor to pray during the meeting. They just wanted to get the meeting over with.
♦ Did you notice the strange looks when Kim came in and greeted everyone? What's strange about that?
♦ I waited for a chance to speak, but no one noticed.
♦ Yes, I was waiting too, but now I think, why bother? They will never listen anyway.

Further instructions to participants:

♦ Try to be as natural as possible as you interact with each other.
♦ Be sure to show disdain for, or lack of understanding of, cultural values different from your own.
♦ The following values should be evident:
  ♦ Minimal concern for punctuality or keeping to an exact time frame.
  ♦ The tendency to consider a situation from all sides, rather than making a right/wrong or black/white judgment.
  ♦ Relationships are more important than getting a task done.
  ♦ Respect is given to individuals on the basis of their age or social position. For example, a pastor is highly honoured.
  ♦ It is important to "save face" rather than to expose one's weakness or vulnerability.

Conclusion: The facilitator interrupts the meeting after 3 or 4 minutes, "This is a group of usually nice, godly people. What in the world is going on?"

Facilitator Guide and Participant Handout

Simulation: "Eastside Church Faces Conflict"

Time: Briefing: 5 minutes; experience: 15 minutes

Purpose: to give participants the opportunity to experience the conflict of cultural values and gain self-understanding of their own cultural values

Participants are divided into groups of 4 or 5. In each group, participants will take different cultural roles (as indicated below).

Situation: a committee in an intercultural church meets for the purpose of planning an outreach to their community.

Procedure: The committee meeting discussion involves purpose and type of outreach, time frame, leadership, food, and language to be used.

Conflict emerges as value differences surface. Any attempt to resolve conflict never quite succeeds.

Note: This type of exercise may be difficult if people have not participated in such an exercise before. Coaching in each role will help all participants play the parts more easily and quickly.

Participant Roles:
1. A person who believes that meetings should begin on time and follow an agenda, tries to keep the discussion moving, tries to get input from everyone, very time-oriented, thinks in "black and white" terms.
2. A person who likes smooth, harmonious interaction, is offended if someone disagrees directly or is blunt, has definite ideas regarding the outreach (such as, a structured program, more than enough food, use of English with translation, etc.).
3. A person who arrives late (after the meeting has begun), concerned that each issue is thoroughly discussed, wants to hear everyone's ideas, has concern that leadership be given to one who has been shown to have respect in the congregation.
4. A person who is very focused on getting the task organized, becomes impatient with the indirect style of others' communication, mentions an example of personal achievement at organizing a similar event.
5. A person who hesitates to disagree and speak directly, instead may respond in these ways, nods a little, or says, "sure," or "that might work," speaks less and less as the meeting continues.

Instructions to Participants:
♦ Each participant will choose a role that is different from your usual way of behaving.
♦ One participant will play the role of leader for this meeting.
♦ Try to be as natural as possible as you interact with each other even though the role may not be comfortable. Try to "put yourself into someone else's shoes" as you play the part.
♦ Since the roles are somewhat stereotypical (for impact), it is helpful to be sensitive and not to offend.

Session 4: Targeting & Integrating

Session Objectives:
As a result of this session, participants will:
♦ Understand the concept of targeting,
♦ Gain insight into its importance in becoming more intentionally intercultural,
♦ Practice using some questions to help determine a church's receptivity to other cultures.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Review the Content (15 minutes)
Use the following outline of the article, DVD presentation, and/or the PowerPoint presentation to review the content of the article.

Be sequential in how you approach reaching out to other groups:
♦ Ready: motivationally ready
♦ Aim: deciding what specific group or groups the church will focus on reaching
♦ Fire: implementing the plan

In reaching out to others:
♦ Consider where this people group is in their movement toward Christ (Engel scale).
♦ Get to know the people group, appreciate their cultural matrix, and understand their real and felt needs.
♦ Find ways to address real and felt needs and to communicate Jesus in ways that make sense in their culture.
♦ Ask, "Why will people come to our church?" and focus not just on programs, but also on genuine caring relationships and an environment of acceptance.

Review the six-stage model (Dr. Milton Bennett) in understanding how your congregation responds to other cultures:
1. Stage 1 – Deny
2. Stage 2 - Defend
3. Stage 3 – Diminish
4. Stage 4 – Accept
5. Stage 5 – Adapt
6. Stage 6 – Integrate

3. Discuss the Content/Questions for Reflection (20-30 minutes)
1. What kinds of opportunities does your church have to reach those from other cultures?
2. Has your church built cross-cultural "bridges" into your community?
3. How effective is your church in both welcoming and incorporating those from other cultures? How could this be done more intentionally?

4. Learning Activity (30 minutes)
How sensitive are you to other cultures as an individual and a congregation? Review the Group Worksheet with Dr. Bennett's Six Stages in small groups of 4-6. Evaluate which stage you feel you fall into as an individual and as a congregation.

5. Debrief the Learning Activity (10 minutes)

Summarize the importance of embracing other cultures *because* they are different, not *in spite of* that fact.

6. Preview the Next Session (as time permits)

7. Close in Prayer

Session 5: Vision, Mission, and Planning

Session Objectives:

As a result of this session, participants will:

♦ Understand the concept(s) of a vision, mission and planning process,
♦ Be convinced of the legitimacy and necessity for strategic planning to carry out God's work,
♦ Have a feel for the dynamics of the proposed process,
♦ Be equipped to carry out the process in their own church context.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Review the Content (15 minutes)

Use the following outline of the article, DVD presentation, and/or the PowerPoint presentation to review the content of the article.

Strategy is part of responsible stewardship. Review the Steps to Planning:

1. Envisioning: What people, and what will the results look like? During this step, a church should create a vision statement to develop a picture of the goal.
2. Defining your mission: What will we do to make our vision reality? A church should do a SWOT analysis and use the results to define a mission statement.
3. Reverse planning: How will we do it, in what order, and how will we know we are on track? Starting with a big five-year goal, work backwards year by year to determine the short-term steps.
4. Assess resources: Who and what are available to implement the vision? Take an inventory of human, financial and other resources.
5. Implement the plan: Who is committed? Who is responsible? Launch the plan and stick to it.
6. Review and adjust: Is the plan working? What must we do to improve it? Schedule regular times to evaluate the effectiveness of your plan.

3. Discuss the Content/Questions for Reflection (20-30 minutes)

1. What is the most challenging aspect of articulating a vision for the ministry?
2. How is a vision statement different from a mission statement? In what ways is each one used?
3. Is it realistic to develop five-year plans in a local church context?
4. Discuss why most people seem to develop goals that are too small for the long term and goals that are too large for the long term. What dynamic does this produce?

4. Learning Activity (30 minutes)

It is unlikely that during this seminar, you will be able to work through all of the process necessary to create a good *Vision Statement*, a *Mission Statement* and a *Plan*. These are best done in two or more sessions with adequate time between each for research and prayer. But this simulation planning exercise should give you a feel for this dynamic process and how it works:

Step 1: Write a simple *Vision Statement* that states the target group *of your choosing,* and what you envision doing with them in a given time period. (Caution: We tend to be too ambitious in our goals for the short term, and not ambitious enough for the long term.)

Step 2: In light of your vision, who you are and who the target group is, discuss your *strengths and weaknesses* as well as *opportunities and threats* to this vision. Assess your resources and creatively suggest what methods you will use to reach your goal. Sum it up in a brief mission statement that says "how" you will achieve the vision.

Step 3: Create a timeline. Work backward from the date established in your vision statement year by year. Attach a measurable goal for each year and the kind of activities you will be conducting during each of those years that will enable you to accomplish what you envision by working backwards from your goal to the present.

5. Debrief the Learning Activity (10 minutes)

1. How did you feel about this process?
2. What kind of time frame is needed to really engage effectively in a planning process?
3. What kind of expectations did this simulation raise?

6. Close in Prayer

Additional Readings

Dancing with Elephants: Obstacles to Achieving True Interculturalism

By Rob Brynjolfson

During a global consultation on missions, Miriam Adeney described the tenuous emergence of the two-thirds world missionary movement and its relationship with the West by using an African parable: It is like dancing with elephants. An exhilarating experience for sure, but sooner or later you are going to get crushed. Unless we address critical issues and crucial attitudes responsible for cultural insensitivity, alienation and ethnocentrism, we will never achieve true multiculturalism. We will leave pockets of immigrants in our apparent multicultural churches wondering if they will survive this dubious dance.

In order to finish this dance without crippling the very people we are trying to reach we must begin by appreciating our diminutive partner and lighten our step. Our churches are weighted heavily in favour of the dominant Northern European cultures. The Caucasian populations of our congregations have melted into the pot, but visible minority groups will never assimilate in the same way that immigrants from Northern Europe did. They will continue to see themselves and feel like fragile partners flung around the dance floor or trampled under foot. The road to true intercultural or multicultural churches is fraught with obstacles that our churches must break down and climb over.

A Flawed Theology of Culture

Inwardly, quietly and with little reticence, we visualize our transitioned multicultural church as an image that looks, feels and smells the same as it is right now but miraculously morphed into a colourful congregation, an aggregate of ethnicity while remaining comfortably embedded in cultural values of Northern European Origin. If we continue to ignore the centrality and significance of culture to this movement, we would do better to continue our search for a more appropriate name. I would suggest the use of the words "inclusive" or "interracial" or "international" to avoid the misuse of the word culture. Is this a problem?

As a matter of fact, it is a real problem. Many of our transitioning churches, having already experienced some tensions stemming from cultural differences, wrongfully conclude that culture is the problem. "Christ unites, but culture divides." "Brother, we don't want culture, we just want Christ."

"Leave your culture at the door." Such naïve statements are simplistic to an extreme, and harmful in the long run. Next time I hear a response like this I shall ask, "Then which Christ will we follow, mine or yours? What divides the body of Christ is what we do with culture. And since we all have one, brother, what are you doing with yours?"

Unfortunately, we do not see the forest for the trees. A couple of years ago I enjoyed a practical example of our typical blindness to culture. A visiting Russian Jewish Evangelical pastor enthusiastically assured me that in Christ there are no cultural differences. We are all the same. What he hardly lacked in confidence, he certainly made up for with enthusiasm. I confess this kind of comment provokes some irretrievable force from within me. However, we had just met. I represented the host as we fellowshipped over a meal. It was no time to exchange petty arguments. So I suggested he could return thanks for the food. In the next breath, I was reprimanded for my unbiblical practice. As it turns out, I have been sinning these many long years because the biblical practice would require that we bless the food before we eat and give thanks for the meal once it is concluded. Oh, now which Christ shall we follow?

Humour me with your patience and allow me to define culture. Paul Hiebert tells us that culture is "… the integrated system of learned patterns of behavior, ideas, and products characteristic of a society" (Hiebert, 1976: 25). Richard Brislin adds that these shared aspects of a society are passed on to the next generation (Brislin, 1981: 51-52). Mark Young tells us that culture has three dimensions (Young , TEDS, 2000: *Lecture Notes*). The perceivable dimension of culture is observed from the symbols cultures use (e.g., language, dress, gestures, etc.). The organizing dimension is evident because we take the symbols, the forms and organize them, integrate them and pass them on to others. The conceptual dimension of culture is the aspect of worldview, the unquestioned assumptions, basic (primary) values, and allegiances of the group. What we may not know is that culture has a purpose. We organize our observable characteristics based on our unquestioned assumptions because we want to survive and prosper. Why do immigrants of a particu-

lar feather flock together? Because they want to survive and prosper. (Survival is probably more predominant here!) Why do some immigrants integrate into English churches? Because they want to survive and prosper. (Prosperity is probably more predominant in this case!) Understanding this will greatly affect the way we do multiculturalism in our churches.

Rarely will any of us achieve such a degree of cultural understanding that we could separate our theologizing or interpreting from our own culture. In fact, it is only with constant and intimate interaction with other cultures that we begin to dislodge some of our blind assumptions. This, however, is a natural consequence that results from a process of dialogue and encounter between cultures. Unfortunately, at the first sign of discord we disallow any true dialogue and insist that our practice or view is right, and the other new or foreign practice is wrong. No dialogue, and therefore no growth through the expansion of our minds, worldviews and culture, can occur unless we foster an environment that is open and free. This can happen only if we intentionally develop in our churches a biblical and thoughtful theology of culture. At present, what we have is flawed because we received it by default, by accident, by presumption. It is not intentional.

A Coin Has Two Sides

When we studiously develop a theology of culture we will discover that it is like a coin with two sides. One side is tainted, polluted, corrupt and fallen. Every culture exudes evidence that there is no such thing as a perfect culture. Humility is called for on this basis alone. The other side is beautiful, poignant, appropriate and acceptable. Culture is a socialized work of art. Soon we will see that culture is an abiding expression of the *imago dei*. It comes to us from the Creator. He gave us the gift of culture. We give it expression.

A theology of culture will begin to wrestle with two critical issues. The depravity of man affects culture in its totality. This, however, does not mean that any variant expression of culture that we find disagreeable is the product of sin or disobedience. As we develop a theology of culture we must come to accept man's fallen nature, but contrive to remem-

ber not to throw the baby out with the bath water. All too frequently we find some disagreeable trait in another's culture and we point this out as an example of "cultural bondage."

The other critical issue is what Kraft calls sociocultural adequacy, which simply means that "though no cultural way of life is perfect, each is adequate and to be respected" (Kraft, 1996:76). This is where Kraft speaks of the cultural golden rule: "Do unto other cultures as you would have them do unto yours." Kraft assures the reader that this term does not claim that "… every way is right, only that every way that survives has met enough of the required criteria to be respected" (Kraft, 1996:76). Kraft and Nida (Nida, 1954:49) claim that this was the apostle's attitude (1 Corinthians 9:19-22, especially 22b-23, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.") and brazenly they tell us that this is the attitude of the Holy Spirit.

Where does this take us? The doctrine of depravity, as it extends to culture, must produce an attitude of humility. If a different culture appears to be fallen and gives evidence of some bondage, what about my own? The pointing hand has three fingers aimed back. Can I really have the soft and comfortable assurance that "we're ok?" Do I harbour hidden attitudes of presumption when I come into contact with a different cultural value and immediately assume that the depravity, in this case, applies to the other value and not my own?

Limited Relativism

When we develop a biblical theology of culture and if we are truly humbled by the depravity of our own, and as we come to respect other cultures in our attempt to practice the cultural golden rule, we will begin to traverse the ground of intercultural dialogue. Many, no most, people will find this dialogue extremely threatening, because it will allow a controlled relativism. This cultural relativism or limited relativism (limited by the nonnegotiables found in the word of God) is the round-table of intercultural dialogue, and will be the camp of the true multicultural church. Study the book of Acts and look for the intercultural dialogue and you will find that the steady progress from

a mono-cultural (Hebraic) church to a full blown multicultural church (Gentile), produced a leadership re-structuring (Acts 6:1-7), suspicion amongst the status quo (Acts 8:14, 11:2, 11:22-24, 15:1), and eventually a negotiated acceptance (Acts 15:1-35). Failure to arrive at this level of an intercultural hierarchy will lead the church to the only other option, cultural imperialism. "My way, or the highway."

Churches moving towards multicultural transition will never be able to avoid inquiry regarding the motivation behind this movement unless significant work is done in this area. The transitioning movement of mono-cultural churches will remain under the suspicion that it is merely a body grab, motivated by desperation, a last ditch survival tactic for our challenged urban churches, unless a well developed and thoughtfully expressed theology of culture emerges as the pillar of the movement. In other words, we transition to become multicultural because we value culture, not because we want to experience heaven on earth or rescue dying urban churches.

Lack of Concurrency and Acceptance

When our lingual-specific ministry chose independence from the larger congregation, it was essentially due to a lack of concurrency, or acceptance. We gradually came to the conclusion that we were better off on our own because we could not obtain the assurance that the vision of the larger church, values the needs of the lingual-specific congregation. Essentially, we felt tolerated, but never accepted. Frequent reminders of this came in the form of veiled threats implying that the door was open. When this attitude prevails, the eventuality becomes obvious.

If you have never been an immigrant or an international sojourner, you will never understand the life of a foreigner. Again, if you are not a visible minority, you will never understand what it means to be an immigrant in our land. They live under constant pressure to adapt and to adjust. They need to know that they are unconditionally accepted. The plethora of ethnic churches meets a need in the life of the immigrant that is rarely understood. We assume that ethnic churches exist because immi-

grants don't accept Canada. Ethnic churches spring up in our cities because we do not accept immigrants. After a 6-day week of adjusting, adapting and struggling with English, few immigrants are ready to do it again on their day of rest (if it is their day of rest).

Missionaries do not necessarily contribute to our understanding of this problem. They need to be reminded that the attitudes they carried with them to the mission field pertaining to adaptation, language learning and becoming bicultural were part of the job description. Failure to adapt brought direct consequences to their overall effectiveness. No immigrant comes to Canada with that job description. Worse, true refugees didn't even want to come.

Furthermore, generalizations from previous waves of immigrants are not necessarily helpful. Europeans make the mistake of equating the sojourn of people from Asia, Latin America or Africa to that of their own pilgrimage. A church comprised of Caucasians from a Northern European culture extended a warm embracing welcome to our Hispanic congregation because the leadership told us "we know what it is like to be an immigrant population." Later, we were pressed towards assimilation into the larger congregation under the reasoning that this is what they had to do. It is fallacious, however, to argue that visible minorities will follow the same model. Studies demonstrate that Northern European immigrants assimilated and disappeared. No one else has.

I would suggest that a multicultural church will take intentional steps to alleviate the insecurities and fears of immigrants by providing an embracing environment that allows the sojourner in our midst to feel truly accepted. We need to ensure that a target people group is never seen as an obstacle to the vision of the church. We need to go beyond toleration and embrace full acceptance.

A Lack of Sensitivity in the Decision-Making Process

Transitioning churches struggle with the issue of representative leadership. The fear that most churches harbour is that any attempt to staff or stuff leadership with different colours and ethnicities smacks of shallow tokenism. Though tokenism needs to be avoided, multicultural leadership transition is definitive of the movement. The leadership of a multicultural church will adapt intentionally to ensure that the decision-making process is sensitive to other cultures, not just to be representational. Like the development of a theology of culture, culturally sensitive decision-making will not happen by default. Transition might be provoked, but it will never happen spontaneously. It will take a bold vision from the leadership of the transitioning church to pursue egalitarian leadership.

Intercultural leadership requires sensitivity around a number of issues. First, the process of decision-making is itself a cultural product. Diverse cultures approach decision-making with an even greater diversity of process. It is not a question of right or wrong, but sensitivity around issues that impact specific cultures. Inclusion of new Canadians in the process does not necessarily reduce the level of dissatisfaction because they approach every issue already convinced that they are powerless to make any change. Eric Law, in his book, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb,* speaks to the issue of power-distance, and how minority cultures are hindered in this process.[1]

Second, minority cultures are already on the losing side and some overcompensation is needed to restore equality in the process. The degree of diversity on the leadership team directly reflects attitudes about and towards immigrants. As someone described a church recently, "From the platform it looks multicultural, but from the pew it looks monocultural."

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[1] Eric Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community,* (St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press, 1993),pp. 13-28.

A lingual-specific ministry wanted to develop an evangelistic radio program for their language group and were mystified and completely alienated during the decision-making process of the larger church. The initial hesitation to embrace this ministry by the leadership team was interpreted by the sub-congregation as an "obstacle." In many parts of the world, obstacles merely mean, "find another way," which is a necessary attitude in countries where stonewalling and bureaucratic labyrinths appear designed to impede progress. When the final decision descended from the powers that be, the sub-congregation was shocked and hurt. There was no face-to-face dialogue over the issue. Surely, this was a mistake? How could anyone make a decision impacting their zeal and vision without at least hearing the passion, or understanding how their immigrant population spends 5 to 6 hours a day listening to the radio, or how technical advancements in communications come later to immigrant populations and that radio ministry is still very appropriate for immigrant populations. Not only was there a lack of representation, but also a disregard for the dignity of a sizeable percentage of the church.

Undoubtedly, moving towards multicultural leadership feels more like a threat to the stability of our church than a pillar on which to build. A multicultural leadership team will spend more time pondering issues and will be forced to work on interpersonal relationship skills. Fortunately, there are resources to help churches in this process. Missionary agencies have been working in multicultural contexts for years and some significant materials and seminars were developed and can be adapted for the local church. (Check out http://www.itpartners.org)

Forced Homogenization

Forced homogenization is a polite word for cultural imperialism. The underlying assumption is that immigrants coming to Canada must adapt and become Canadian. My father, or great grandfather, had to do it, and now you will have to do it. We have established our church based on predominant Canadian values and you must now adapt and become like us. We do not agree with the homogenous unit principle and do not think that you should

gather in social, cultural and economic groups similar to your own; we think that you should become like us and do church our way.

I do not expect that any church will readily admit that they practice forced homogenization. It is, however, almost inescapable unless intentional efforts are made to combat the expectation that newcomers must adapt to the predominant cultural values and standards. The church in transition needs to recognize that it must adapt and accommodate the new target groups, not vice versa. Until now, this prospect has been unthinkable. We believe that the process of adaptation to fit the organizational cultures of our churches is a normal discipleship process. Obviously, the daunting task needed at this time is a clarification of what it means to be a disciple of Christ and what elements are peripheral cultural forms that need not be required.

Forced homogenization is an automatic process that results from two fallacious ways of thinking. First, it assumes that our culture remains the predominant culture to which people need to adapt. Evangelicals in Canada largely remain in a defensive stance as we face the recent cultural and philosophical shift to post-modernity. We have not faced the reality of what it means to live in an irreversibly pluralistic society. Now, when people suggest that immigrants need to settle and adapt to Canadian life and culture, I immediately ask, "Which Canadian culture do they need to adapt to?" To be "Canadian" is now more illusive then ever. It is a moving target. An immigrant newly arrived from Southeast Asia will be adapting in a very different way than the first Chinese migration of workers did when they went to the gold fields or half-constructed railroads a hundred and twenty years ago. The day may approach where a sufficient critical mass is achieved for a language group to remain viable generation after generation. I bit my tongue, two weeks ago, and am still embarrassed when I think of how I used the word "Canadian" to describe Anglo Saxons to a naturalized citizen from Colombia. "I'm Canadian too," he rightfully responded. When will we stop insisting that the inherent right to remain on top is ours?

The other error in our thinking is that we do not see the plank in our own eye. Unfortunately, we

ourselves practice the homogenous unit principle in our churches. It is alive and well in various forms. We can observe the principle at work because we have not yet eliminated the socio-economic barriers that exist in our churches. We can observe its existence when we see who attends which Bible studies or home fellowships. Or, who gathers in which clumps around the fellowship hall over coffee.

My suggestion is that we be honest and recognize that these walls and barriers exist in our churches already. These boundaries need to be resisted, but they are best handled by developing intercultural dialogue. Even transitioning multicultural churches recognize the need to allow lingual and ethno-specific groups to gather in Bible studies or home fellowships. When a cultural majority inflicts their opinions and decisions on ethnic minorities, they are forcing a homogenization contradictory to the very purpose of the Intentionally Intercultural Church movement.

No Conclusion, Just the Beginning

Following the path of dialogue and understanding will produce an exhilarating dance. The experience will be unforgettable in the eyes of the world. Whether or not anyone gets hurt in the process depends largely on the host culture, the elephant, not the immigrant population. A final obstacle of ethnocentrism is frequently identified as a problem we all face. Ethnocentrism is the cultural equivalent of egocentrism, and is not mentioned here because it is a sin we all share. However, it is the job of the host to be welcoming and gracious towards the guest. It is the job of the elephant to watch where he places his feet. Host intercultural churches and transitioning churches must develop the grace and poise of intercultural dialogue, understanding and sensitivity if this movement is to go beyond tokenism and the occasional one-sided success story.

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Intentionally Intercultural Churches: The Biblical Basis

By Rob Buzza

Is the concept of a truly intercultural church just a heavenly ideal? The Revelation describes "a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" worshipping together (Revelation 7:9). Is this just a picture of the universal church of the future or is it a model for the local church today? Is it God's intention to have heaven on earth by bringing the nations together right now within our own congregations? While some church growth strategists who promote a more focused approach may recommend otherwise, what does the Bible say? To develop a truly biblical perspective we need to retrace this convergence of the nations in the Revelation back to the origin of the nations in Genesis.

From Babel to Babble

There is really only one race – the human race. The weight of scientific opinion today would support the idea that every ethnic group descended from one common ancestor, dubbed "Eve" by a Newsweek magazine article (46). At the Advancement of Science Convention in Atlanta in 1997, one scientist stated, "Race is a social construct derived mainly from perceptions conditioned by events of recorded history, and it has no basic biological reality" (Ham, Wieland and Batten 48). So-called "racial differences" are really only minor variations. The basic genetic differences between any two people from anywhere around the world, even between those from the same people group, are typically 0.2 percent. But the physical differences of skin colour, eye shape, hair, size, etc. account for only 6 percent of this 0.2 percent variation, which amounts to a mere 0.012 percent difference genetically (Ham, Wieland and Batten 50).

The Bible doesn't even use the term "race" but instead clearly states that every nation of mankind is made from "one blood" (Acts 17:26 KJV). Scripture is bold in providing answers to age-old questions, like the origin of nations. The context of the book of Genesis calls for a simple, literal interpretation – every people group in the world today descended from one couple: Adam and Eve originally, and Noah and his wife eventually. After the account of the global flood, the Bible provides a detailed genealogy of Noah's family, known as the Table of Nations (Genesis 9 – 11). Bill Cooper, in his book *After the Flood,* states that in his twenty-five plus years of research, 99% of the names listed in the Table of Nations have been verified by extra-biblical sources and that "no other ancient historical document of purely human authorship could be expected to yield such a level of corroboration as that" (12).

This same reliable source explains how the descendants of Noah were dispersed to form the people groups we know today. The story is found in Genesis, chapter eleven, which opens with the sentence, "Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words." Contrary to God's commandment to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" given to both Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:28) and Noah's family (9:2), their descendants had decided to band together in the fertile crescent between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. They didn't seem prepared to grow up and leave what has been referred to as the Cradle of Civilization. Not only were they not interested in obeying God's command, they were apparently not interested in God. Their desire was to make a name for themselves by building a city and tower that could "reach into heaven" (11:4). Most likely this was to be an astrological observatory where they could circumvent their Creator and consult His creation, the stars, to chart their future plans (Chittick 45). Fortunately, God had another plan for their future, our history. What was happening at Babel was the beginnings of the ancient occultic religion that would characterize the Sumerians, Babylonians, and Chaldeans, the practices of whom God strongly condemned (Deuteronomy 18:9-14). Technologically, man was exceptionally advanced at this time in history, as re-

vealed in the structures they left behind. God recognized that if they came together as one people that "nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them" (Genesis 11:6). For these reasons and for others yet to be revealed, God gave them different languages. The division of languages effectively put an end to their elaborate building project and plans for a one-world order. As common language groups banded together and moved away to establish their own cultural identities, mankind was "scattered . . . abroad over the face of the whole earth" (11:9).

This strategy by God was not an afterthought. The Great "I Am" transcends time and space, and is well able to both foreknow and predetermine each phase of His one master plan. The formation of the nations must have been God's idea from the beginning. Stephen Rhodes, in his book *Where the Nations Meet*, explains that "the God whom we worship is a God who loves and values diversity" (20). The Bible tells us that He created both the heavens **and** the earth, the sun **and** the moon **and** the stars, day **and** night, land **and** sea, fish **and** birds, animals **and** man, male **and** female. "Our God is not an either–or God; rather, our God is a both–and God" (20). Psalm 148 invites praise to God from the full spectrum of creation, including all the people groups around the world. It is God's plan to redeem a family from every nation (Acts 17:24-28). Unlike the citizens of Babel who determined to build a city and a name for themselves, God's family will come together to build His Kingdom and lift up His name.

Babel Reversed at Pentecost

The next phase of God's plan begins with the call of Abraham. At seventy-five years of age, Abraham was challenged by God to leave home and become His first missionary. The people of Babel sought to "make a name" for themselves, but when "God approached Abraham, He promised him not just a name, but a great name" (Rhodes 43): "No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations" (Genesis 17:5). Abraham wasn't interested in a city like Babel built for men by men – He was looking for a city whose "builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). God prom-

ised to make through Abraham "a great nation" and that through this nation "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:2, 3cf; 22:15-18; 26:4). It was not God's intent that Israel should be the end result of His plan but a means to the end. At the time He gave them the law, God said to Israel, "you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5,6). As priests they were to mediate between God and the other nations. The Psalmist understood that when he prayed on behalf of Israel,

> "God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us – that thy way may be known on the earth, thy salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; let all the peoples praise Thee. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy." (Psalm 67:1-4)

Ultimately, this was achieved through Israel in the birth of the Messiah, the Saviour of the world (John 4:42). Those from other nations who recognized and responded to the God of Israel were not only welcomed into God's family, but some were even included in the lineage of Jesus, such as Rahab the Canaanite and Ruth, the Moabite (Matthew 1:5). As Rhodes observed, "Unlike other nations that could and would live for self-interest and self-preservation, Israel would always be a nation set apart for the blessing of all" (39).

The same statement could be applied to the church, which is the next stage of God's plan to redeem the world. In words almost identical to His declared purpose for Israel, God says to His church through Peter, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (I Peter 2:9). Jesus was clear regarding our call: "go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19); "go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15); "repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). His disciples were told to wait in Jerusalem until they received the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. They were prom-

ised that from that point on they would be His "witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Ten days later, these disciples were gathered in an upper room on the Day of Pentecost. The event that followed was Babel in reverse. The arrival of the Holy Spirit was strategically planned for Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost because dispersed Jews from "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) were there for the festivities. While the disciples came together to exalt God's name (not their own), God brought on another episode of confusing languages, but with an entirely different result. Instead of dividing the crowd that gathered, this Spirit-inspired "babbling" actually communicated the hope of the gospel in each person's native tongue. Peter addressed the amazed crowd with the promise from the prophet Joel that the Spirit will be poured out "upon all mankind" and that "every one who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:17, 21). The nations dispersed at Babel now have the hope of one day coming together again as the redeemed family of God.

"Babble On" – One World Order

While the church carries on its end-time commission to preach the gospel of the Kingdom "in the whole world for a witness to all the nations" (Matthew 24:14), the god of this world has his own counter-strategy. Lucifer fell from heaven because he wanted to be like God (Isaiah 14:12-15). He has successfully packaged and sold that same temptation to man, over and over again. He began with Adam and Eve – "you will be like God" (Genesis 3:5) – and inspired the same kind of pride at Babel. Babylon, the city that emerged from Babel, became the religious centre for the region of Babylonia. The nature of their religion was polytheistic, worshipping nature and their own inherent divinity, while practicing astrology, fortune telling, necromancy, channeling, magic, witchcraft, and human sacrifice.

As the people groups were dispersed throughout the earth, we see evidence of similar types of religious practices among most ancient civilizations, such as the Egyptians, the Incas in South America, the Mayas in Central America, and the Druids in

northern Europe. Variations of these beliefs have appeared in the successive dominant powers since the Babylonians, including the Chaldeans, Medes, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. While these and other nations have had significant impact over the course of human history, the entire world has not yet been dominated by this kind of perverse and pervasive deception since Babel. Fortunately, language barriers and national borders have contained or at least restrained its global influence. That is, until now. The prophecies foretold in The Revelation include the formation of a new world order, with one prevailing religion, described as, not surprisingly, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots (Revelation 14:17-18). Many Bible scholars and prophecy specialists have speculated as to which denomination, cult, sect, or religion this term is referring. The name "Babylon" and the description of her "abominations" and "immorality" seem to provide obvious clues. It will likely be a syncretistic spirituality that embraces the basic tenets of the Babylonians and accepts most every other religious idea, with the blatant exception of Christianity.

Battle for the Nations

The Revelator says that Babylon the Great will make "all of the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality" (Revelation 14:8). It seems that the final period of time just before Christ's second coming is characterized by the nations coming together again. Until this last century, apart from wars, the nations have kept their distance from each other. Barriers of language, culture, and geography have pocketed and isolated thousands of people groups. God's plan for multiplying and populating the earth has worked, and worked well. The worldwide rebellions of Noah's day and the time of Babel which provoked God's intervention in the past have since effectively been contained. That is, again, until now.

Today is a different story. For the first time since Babel, the world **is** coming together. An explosion of technology has leveled the communication barriers between nations. Leonard Sweet says of our postmodern world that "we have an interdependent, interlocked economic system in which everybody in the world participates. Global integra-

tion is becoming almost universal, with the Net the main medium" (121 – 122). The pace of change has accelerated to the point that it is beyond our control. New ethical dilemmas surface so often in the fields of politics, jurisprudence, education, social services, health, medicine, and science, especially in the field of genetic engineering, that there is simply not enough time to think of the future consequences. We've started down the now well-oiled slippery slope and there is simply no stopping.

All is not doom and gloom. Just like the expansion of the Roman Empire paved the roads for the disciples to take the gospel to their world, the technology of our day can help make possible the final fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission. It is now feasible for the church to be truly international. Jesus said that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come" (Matthew 24:14). The world is coming together, one way or another. Many will collaborate to make a name for themselves before their ultimate self-destruction. But the church has an unprecedented window of opportunity to encourage the nations to gather together for a better purpose, to lift up the one Name which is above every name.

From the perspective of His Story of the nations, it's time now to consider the future of international integration in both society and the church. It seems our world is ready for the nations to come together. Certainly Canada has a global reputation for peacekeeping, pluralism, and multiculturalism. This is one of the reasons that the immigration rate in Canada, on a per capita basis, is predicted to become three times greater than that of the United States (Cambridge 2), which currently accepts more immigrants than all of the other nations combined (Sweet 368). They are coming here to become Canadians. Could it be that this postmodern trend toward interculturalism is providing a new target group for the "church growth experts"? We know God's intention is that "the church be a multicultural, multinational community – a church of all languages, ethnicities, nationalities and peoples" (Rhodes 20). The issue is not about whether the church has a mission. "It is God who has the mission, and the missionary of God is the Holy Spirit. The question is whether the mission of God has a church" (Rhodes 38).

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Multicultural Ministry & Missions in the 21st Century

Kathryn Antil

Few Christians in Canada can deny that the faces in our community have changed. Between 1986 and 1999 Canada received 3.5 million immigrants, many of whom have not received the gospel of Christ. The church has a tremendous opportunity to reach out to immigrants and demonstrate Christ's love. One writer from Ethnic Harvest put it this way:

"God brought the world to us! You don't have to travel halfway around the world to have a ministry with 'unreached' peoples! God can use you to bless the nations starting in your home town." [God has brought the World to Us, 1999:1]

Unfortunately, many Canadian churches have not understood this powerful opportunity we have to spread the gospel to the nations. Many Canadian immigrants come from societies which are family- or community-orientated, rather than focused on the individual. The potential for the Good News of Christ to spread is phenomenal. If the head of the household comes to Christ, it is probable that the entire family will become Christian.

Charles Foster, author of *Leadership in Multicultural Churches: Embracing Diversity,* has observed different levels of commitment within churches to serve immigrants. The first is simply a matter of church survival. Space is rented out to immigrant groups, or services such as day-care, are offered with the intention of bringing new families into the church. Foster does not criticise this approach, as he sees it as a step above the church moving to an entirely new community to avoid the encroaching growth of immigrant populations. However, most have noted that relations based on pure economics are not generally good ones.

The second level of commitment is a missionary approach, which strives to be obedient to the Great Commission by making disciples of all nations. Actions are taken by the church to reach out to their ethnic neighbours. Some churches have been able to bring members of different ethnic groups into their congregations by being obedient to the Gospel. However, it is often noted that these churches, while appearing "diverse," may actually

feel "white." Usually, this is a result of the church not striving to make additional changes to bring people of diverse cultures into the main life of the church by including them in leadership, worship, church educational programming, etc. [Foster, 1997:8-10]

Foster calls the third level of commitment to multicultural ministry the catalyst/hospitality approach. These churches strive to welcome the stranger within their midst and believe the words of Christ:

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in…l tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matt.25: 35,40)

These congregations believe strongly that the strangers that come into their midst often are God's special envoys to bless or challenge them, like that of the three strangers visiting Abraham. John Koenig points out that the major festivals of the church - Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost-- "have to do with the advent of the divine stranger. In each instance a stranger brings blessing that cannot be understood, and yet when received, brings hope and transformation to our human experience." [in Foster, 1997:52]

Congregations that fit into the category of hospitality/catalyst commitment to multicultural ministry are often impacted by the stranger who enters their midst. Yet similar to churches that are obedient to the Great Commission, they may fail to make institutional changes that will allow for foreigners to be incorporated fully into the different areas of leadership within the church.

The fourth level of commitment to multicultural ministry is one that has a theological vision. Churches in this category are intentionally multicultural and generally their mission statement will reflect this. For example, there are multicultural churches which base their ministry on Revelation 7, in which people of every nation, tribe, and language

are worshipping at the feet of the Lamb of God. A multicultural church called Northwood uses a description of itself that reflects this theological vision: "The Church where the World Worships." [Foster, 1997:11-12] This type of church often strives towards racial reconciliation, and stresses aspects of the Apostle Paul's writings, which emphasise the church as being members of one body. Paul "tells us that we need each other (I Cor. 12:12-27) and that one part cannot tell another, 'I have no need of you.'" [Ortiz, 1996:39]   Manuel Ortiz challenges the idea that people are best served in their own cultural and linguistic unit. He believes that although Peter Wagner's homogeneous unit principle (HUP) may bring about greater church growth within ethnic communities, it also creates segregated and often racist churches. He states: "I believe HUP has been a hindrance to race relations and to racial and ethnic reconciliation in the Christian community." [Ortiz, 1996:45]

As the church enters the 21st century, it must once again learn how to serve its community. Change is not easy. It demands time, energy, and thought. It is encouraging to recall that it was not easy for the early church to incorporate non-Jews into its midst. Peter needed to receive a vision from God and observe how the Holy Spirit came with power upon Cornelius and the other Gentiles with him, before he truly understood that "God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right." (Acts 10:34-35) After Peter's experience it took time for the church to recognise that God had accepted the Gentiles as His own, and it took much more debate and discussion before a decision was made at the Council of Jerusalem that the Gentiles did not need to become Jews before becoming Christians. This decision essentially not only facilitated the spread of Christianity, it also made it clear that "within the church, no race, culture, gender, or nationality was to have superiority or dominance, nor could one group determine the behaviour for any other group." [Barndt,1991:129] It is important to note, however, that despite official changes decided upon by leaders of the first Christians, power struggles between Jews and Gentiles continued to exist.

The church of the 21st century must come together, just as the first church did at the Council of Jerusalem, to decide if congregations are including those of other nations and race within our membership. Is the church demanding they adapt to the "traditional" ways of doing church practice, or is the church open to what the Lord is doing by bringing them into our midst? What attitudes and practices prevent immigrants from taking active roles within the church?

There are many attitudes that turn our ethnic neighbours away from the Christian church. Some of these are paternalism, racism, ethnocentrism, discrimination, scapegoating, oppression, and indifference.

Indifference is often a contributing factor to the lack of immigrants within many Canadian churches. Many immigrants would love to have a Canadian friend, or get a chance to experience a church service in a Canadian church. However, many Canadians are too busy to take heed of their ethnic neighbours. Work, social engagements, entertainment, and church allow them little time to reach out to the foreigner within their midst.

On the other hand, there are church members who love ethnic food, dance, music, and crafts of immigrants living in Canada, but they view the foreigner as being like a little child who needs to be looked after and cared for. Immigrants are "encouraged to concentrate on personal matters or matters internal to their groups rather than meddling in matters belonging to the majority group." [Isajiw,1999:140] This *paternalistic* attitude can be quite frustrating for an immigrant who wishes to be treated like an equal. Just because they have an accent and make some grammatical errors when speaking English doesn't mean they are unable to think, reason, and contribute to the church and society.

Stereotyping refers to the beliefs or images we assign to a particular group of people. They are generalisations about the way a certain group behaves. For example, it may be assumed that all Spanish people love Salsa and Meringue music and eat nachos. Stereotypes tend to depersonalise members of a particular group. While at times people may not be displeased that their group's characteristics

are recognised (if they are positive), I am of the opinion that most people prefer that they are viewed as individuals, rather than the representative of Spanish, Punjabi, or Asian behaviour.

Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's culture is superior to another. For example, in the church there may be the perception that the theological training of a pastor from another country is inferior to training done in Canada. Or perhaps that Canada's style of church leadership is superior to church leadership styles in other parts of the world. Having an ethnocentric attitude will disallow for positive contributions that a foreigner may bring with him or her. Basically, it is the attitude that the immigrant must learn "our ways" because they are the best ways of doing things.

Immigrants may feel psychologically oppressed because they are expected to do everything the "right way," and at the same time they are often under pressure to "keep their place" within society. Church members might promote this type of oppression in which the immigrant is expected to be both the model citizen/church member, and at the same time pressured to "keep one's place" by not assuming to a position of influence. The following quotes demonstrate this type of oppression:

"(You) are welcome, as long as (you) are prepared to embrace the (Canadian) way of life… as long as (you) make the learning of the English language a top priority… as long as (you) are not robbing (Canadian) jobs and other opportunities… as long as (you) leave (your) own racial and cultural tensions behind… as long as (you) do not lower (Canadian) standard of living by imposing too much strain on our urban infrastructure, or on our welfare system." [Hanson, 2002:3]

"It is time for the silent majority of Canadians to speak up and put these demanding immigrants in their place, the place every immigrant -new or old had to take for the first hard and tough years: keeping your mouth shut and working hard at whatever job you can find regardless of what position you have held

back at home… Immigrating does not mean travelling to a foreign country and expecting to be welcomed with open arms and conveniently being put into a position that you find suitable… It more often than not means heartbreak and struggle for many years, learning and accepting differences and finally building a new life for oneself and one's family and finding one's rightful place in society." [Toronto Star, 1978]

Isajiw writes that generally the people who hold the belief that immigrants should "keep their place" are children of immigrants "who have been socially mobile and have been successful." They observed their parents working extremely hard when they were growing up, and feel that "all new immigrants should also 'work hard' and be satisfied with poorer jobs." [1999:139]

Other attitudes that cause distress to local immigrants are racism, discrimination, and scapegoating. *Racism* is an ideology based on the idea that a particular race is superior to another in areas such as human abilities, character, etc. *Discrimination* is racism that is acted upon. For example, it might be denying someone the right to sit on a board because they are of another race. *Scapegoating* is finding someone to blame when something goes wrong or if there is a crisis. For example, if a church's rug is starting to look worn, the "x- group" may be blamed for its wear and tear.

It would be wonderful if racist and prejudicial attitudes did not exist in the Christian church. Unfortunately they do. The church needs a tough reprimand in this area. James writes,

"With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in God's likeness… Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the spring?" (James 3:9,11)

In addition to hurtful attitudes that surface within the church, there are also practices in the Christian community that make multicultural or multiethnic ministry difficult. For example, many pastors receive little or no training on how to conduct multiethnic ministry. Seminaries may offer courses on cross-cultural leadership, but few stu-

dents take them. This is very unfortunate as it keeps church leaders out of touch with the many immigrants within their communities.

The image of having a "successful" ministry is not usually perceived as one that reaches out to people of all different ethnic backgrounds. Charles Foster writes: "Denominational policies and programs promote models of successful congregations drawn primarily from the organisational structures, traditions, and experience of their dominant cultural groups." [1997:17] It is time that the church redefine its theological vision of what "the church should look, feel, and act like." [Foster, 1997:11] Congregations need to take time to reflect upon whether they are reaching out and being truly welcoming to their ethnic neighbours.   Institutional structures must be examined to see if they discriminate and prevent the full participation of those who come into their midst. Leadership, administration, liturgy, education, and church programs must be scrutinised.

Understanding the Immigrant Experience

When immigrants arrive in Canada they experience a number of psychological stages often defined as honeymoon, culture shock, initial adjustment, mental isolation, and adjustment.

The *honeymoon stage* refers to the initial excitement that many immigrants feel when everything is new, fascinating, and delightful. It should be noted that not all recent arrivals experience the honeymoon elation. Political refugees and even some immigrants that come to Canada with their families enter the culture shock stage almost immediately.

Culture shock is the experience of feeling completely overwhelmed with all the problems that arise when living in a new country. These may include housing, transportation, shopping and learning a new language. Usually, mental fatigue sets in as a result of making these adjustments, and due to the additional strain of always trying to understand those speaking in a different tongue. The University of Texas has a website that teaches individuals how to recognise when someone is suffering from culture shock.

"People who are experiencing culture shock worry and complain about all as-

pects of life-- the food, the weather, the people, etc. They worry about minor ailments and pains. They often become frustrated and angry over minor problems, and some even refuse to learn the new language. Overall, they feel helpless and homesick, and want to go home to see relatives and to talk with people who 'make sense.'" [Stages of Cultural Adjustment,2002:2]

Initial adjustment refers to the experience of being able to move somewhat more freely and comfortably within the new country. For example, housing and shopping may no longer represent great difficulty. Usually, at this point enough of the local language has been learned to express basic ideas, and feelings.

Mental isolation is the stage in which an individual can experience a tremendous amount of loneliness and frustration. The immigrant has been away from their home country for a significant amount of time and often misses family and friends in their country of origin. Frustration and a loss of self-confidence can arise, as a result of not being able to express oneself as well as one would like in the new language. As well, perceived and real barriers such as the lack of equal opportunities (i.e., employment) and having few or no positive relationships with Canadians can prolong the stage of mental isolation. Emotions range from anger, hatred, frustration, hostility, confusion, and anxiety, to fear. These tend to manifest themselves in struggle, discrimination, violence, withdrawal, denial, depression, and ailment/illness. It should be noted that some immigrants remain at this stage.

One definition of the *adjustment stage* is as follows:

"A routine (e.g., work, business, or school) has been established. The visitor has accepted the habits, customs, foods, and characteristics of the people in the new culture. The visitor feels comfortable with friends, associates, and the language of the country." [Stages & Symptoms of Culture Shock, 2002:2]

Isajiw breaks the adjustment stage into a number of external and internal phases (some of which are not achieved by all).

External adjustment is divided into three phases:

1. Adopting styles of dress, foodstuffs
2. Participating in holiday celebrations, attendance at various functions in the broader society, and observing rules and regulations
3. Learning a new language as a means of communication

Internal adjustment is divided into two levels:

1. Understanding the tastes, likings, opinions, attitudes, biases, and ideologies of the mainstream culture.
2. Learning the norms, goals, and values of the host country. [Isajiw,1999:170]

Isajiw believes that an individual who fully adjusts to the mainstream culture needs to experience four factors. The first is for the person to have "a conception of oneself as being a member of the broader society, and the perception that the broader society accepts oneself as 'one of ours.'" [1999:176] The second factor is the need for the immigrant to develop an emotional connectedness to others in mainstream society (i.e., empathy/ sympathy). The third is the immigrant needs to make a commitment to the broader society by learning the language, sending children to school, etc. The fourth factor is described as a feeling of trust and solidarity with the host society. "It involves a subconscious reliance on a relationship of interdependence… .i.e., If persons are hungry or starving, they can assume that their family or the society at large will try to feed them." [1999:177-179]

It should also be mentioned that the children of immigrants also go through levels of adjustment of how to relate to the ethnic community and broader society. Isajiw identifies five common strategies used by the second generation of an ethnic group:

1. Keeping the "two worlds" apart
2. Pushing the world of the broader society aside, and engaging oneself primarily in the ethnic world
3. Pushing the ethnic world aside, and engaging oneself primarily in the broader society
4. Pushing the ethnic world and the broader world of society away and involving oneself in alternative activities (i.e. Socialist or Marxist organisations, unorthodox religions, such as Hare Krishna)
5. Bringing the two worlds together in creative activities [1999:197]

Ideally, the second generation of an ethnic population would learn how to positively relate to both communities. Unfortunately, the attitudes and the relationships already established by the ethnic community and the broader society can have a powerful influence on a young person. An identity crisis is the norm for the second generation of an ethnic population, and it is the third generation that ends up trying to rediscover their ethnic roots.

Reaching Out to Immigrants in Our Community

It is important to recognise that immigrants do have particular needs, and I believe the church has a wonderful opportunity to bring the gospel to many of our ethnic neighbours as they adjust to life in Canada. However, this will not occur unless serious thought, prayer, and planning is made to serve ethnic communities. For example, I have observed that some well-intentioned churches have made the effort to reach out to immigrants by offering English as a Second Language classes, yet these projects lack careful long term thought. For example, what is the overall aim of their ESL school? If churches plan to run an English Training school are the teachers they have qualified to instruct? Community service centres usually offer English as a second language classes with well-qualified instructors, so realistically if it is English that these immigrants want to learn, they would be better off going to these places. If there are qualified teachers, will the school incorporate Christian instruction into the curriculum? How will this be done? Will students be invited to church? Will they be welcomed? How will church members become involved in the project? Will a buddy system be set up between Canadian families in the church and the local immigrants attending the classes? When immigrants start attending the church, how will the congregation incorporate them into the active lifestyle of the body?

Clearly, there is great potential for a project like this, but all too often long term thought is not given to the outreach ministries we begin.

Multicultural ministry above all else needs to be intentional and carefully planned. Elements that need to be considered are: which ethnic community do you hope to reach, how well do you know this community, what would be the best outreach program and how will it be implemented, how will you prepare the congregation for multicultural ministry, what structural changes will need to be made within the congregation for newcomers to feel welcome and fully incorporated into the lifestyle of the body.

To decide on a particular group to serve, the church may wish to study demographics of their community, find out which churches already have multiethnic ministries and who they serve, and most importantly seek the Lord's will on which ethnic community would be the best fit with their particular church. Perhaps the Lord is already bringing immigrants into the congregation.

In order to learn about the ethnic community God has put in the church's heart to reach out, it is advisable to do research into the basic elements of the ethnic group's culture and to attempt to discover what their needs are. A writer from Ethnic Harvest gives the following advice:

"Develop a level of understanding of local people and their needs. What is their religion and philosophy of life? What do they know about Christianity and the Gospel? What are the most important things in life to them, and what do they see as their own greatest needs?" [How to Start a Cross-Cultural Ministry at Your Church, 2001:2]

To facilitate this process it is a good idea to invite different members of that community to share about their culture. During a session like this it may be useful to examine the differences that exist between the two cultures. Cultures are often referred to as "icebergs." The tip of the iceberg that one can observe above the surface is similar to the observable elements of culture, such as music, clothing, art, food, etc. The larger portion of the iceberg is hidden from view and represents the norms, values, philosophies, etc. of the culture that are more diffi-

cult to discover. Two excellent books for discovering the different values that cultures have are *Ministering Cross-Culturally* by Lingenfelter and Mayers and *Transforming Culture* by Lingenfelter. A list of the areas explored is as follows:

-time	-social order
-judgement	-property
-handling crises	-labour and productivity
-goals	-generosity and exchange
-self-worth	-authority and family
-vulnerability	-authority and community
-disputes, conflicts and communication	

One creative idea for preparing the congregation for potential conflicts is to have church members do some mock problem solving. Below are three examples that could help prepare a church that wishes to minister to Spanish immigrants.

Case Study #1: Greetings:

It has come to the attention of the church leadership that many of the Hispanics in the congregation feel unwelcome. What should you do?

Cultural Note: "The communication style of Hispanics is much more formal than that of Anglos. Respect is highly valued and shown by using formal titles. Hispanics tend to show affection through touching. Friends can kiss, males hug, shake hands or pat each other on the back." It is also good to keep in mind that most Hispanics like to talk about their family. [Hispanic Culture, 2002:1]

Biblical examples: 1 Th. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14

Case Study #2: Planning For the Future:

The church leadership has become hesitant to invite the Spanish elders to planning sessions because with their inclusion nothing seems to get done. It appears that it is almost impossible to come to an agreement on set goals.

Cultural Note: "For most Hispanics, present time has more value than the future. For them, the time-dependent ways of the Anglo often look rather like a misappropriation of the present. Hispanics focus more on present needs and little on change." [Hispanic Culture,2002:1]

Biblical example: Mark 6:30-46

Case Study #3: Time

Quite a few complaints have been made about the Hispanics causing a disturbance by arriving late for church services, Bible studies, and other events.

Cultural note: "People from Spanish-speaking countries generally feel that a relationship is more important than being on time. If they are entertaining someone, they will often delay meeting at the appointed hour instead of excusing themselves to their guest. It is difficult for them to adjust to (Canadian) time schedules." [Understanding Ethnic Groups: Hispanic Americans, 2002:3]

Biblical examples: Matt. 14:13-25; 16:21

After a congregation has become acquainted with the ethnic group they wish to reach out to, it is important to devise a plan that lays out how the ethnic group will ideally be incorporated into the church. Jim Pleuddemann suggests that planning begins by describing what the current state of the church is, then to write out what the church would look like if God were to richly bless their ministry, and finally to lay out steps of action to reach their goal. Dr. Jonathan Lewis suggests it is a good idea to create a five year plan, working backward from the mission statement.

Some strategies for evangelism that can be developed are: sports ministries, hosting cultural events, tutoring, English as a Second Language classes, training workshops (job training, para legal services, financial guidance), childbirth classes, a buddy/ friendship program, etc. [Seim, 2000:119]

If a multicultural ministry is to be a means of racial reconciliation, the entire structure of the church must be examined to ensure immigrants are able to fully participate within the life of the congregation. Eric Law, author of *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, stresses that the church spend serious thought on how to equally distribute power and privilege. He writes:

"In an ethnocentric way, most whites believe that inequality can be countered by simply physically including the powerless and the disadvantaged. They think that by inviting an individual representative from the powerless group to join them, they are able to redistribute power more evenly. The assumption is that everyone is equal to each other as individuals and everyone is expected to participate 'fully' -being able to speak for himself or herself. The truth is that not all believe they are equal to each other. Another reality is that not everyone is an individual who can speak for himself or herself. Many people of colour come from countries that emphasise the collective over the individual. It is hard for them to speak as individuals. This explains why tokenism doesn't work. Inviting only one representative strips the power of the person by not including a collective group from which he or she comes." [1993:34]

Charles Foster believes that "ground rules must be made up for the formal conversations of committee meetings, educational experiences, even liturgical and social events." [1999: 89] For example, a formalised pattern of turn-taking could be developed, or a pre-decided upon agenda could give different groups a set time to participate in meetings. Eric Law is of the opinion that the dominant group must be willing to bear the cross and give up power, while the ethnic community must come to group meetings with the belief that they have the power of their resurrected Lord. [Law, 1993:76]

Bonding activities are also very important aspects of multicultural ministry. For example, ritual patterns of acceptance such as taking time to greet each other in the middle of a service with hugs, handshakes, and exchanged words can be very effective. Another type of ritual could be to join hands in prayer or while singing. Media can be used to display photographs, artwork, and writing, which share joint experiences of the congregation. Eating together, taking time to share stories, visiting each other's homes, and seriously committing to pray for one another are all ways to assist a multicultural church to bond together in love.

Creating a multicultural church is the challenge for the church of the 21st century. It takes a great deal of work and planning, but it is worth it. Prejudicial attitudes and practices must be confronted,

cultural sensitivity must be cultivated, outreach strategies and intentional communication practices must be laid out. All of this requires a strong belief in the unity that is possible in Christ through the Holy Spirit, which joins us mystically together in one body. Clearly, this type of ministry reflects the glory of God, for it is written: "Every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God." (Rom.14: 11) Isaiah 48 also provides great promises for a ministry that intentionally reaches out to the foreigner who is often oppressed in our society.

> "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose water never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings." (Is. 48:10-12)

Let us reflect on what happened when a small group of Jews accepted the Gentiles as equals in God's church two thousand years ago. What could be the result of bringing large numbers of Canadian and North American immigrants into the Lord's family?

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