

CULTIVATING MULTICULTURALISM & INTERCULTURALISM - Resources

PAOC Mission Canada Cultural Language Guiding Group

Prepared by: Balan Swaminathan (MAR Rep.), Dan Murphy (MNWONT Rep.) & Charles Hermelink

Purpose: Consider resources for helping cultivate multiculturalism in local congregations as our multilateralism continues to increase in Canadian society and our churches.

Caveat: The path of growing from monocultural - in congregational membership and/or even just in your local church leadership team - to multicultural is a unique journey for every congregation. Why? This reflects you, your unique team, and your unique congregation and larger social and community setting. Thus, the following is not a model set in stone, but rather a set of tools, markers and pointers to assist you in your journey: You might not need or have already passed some of these, and yet discover blind spots you'd previously not realized, or need help charting your next steps. Our desire and purpose as the Cultural Language Guiding Group is to simply assist you in your process by providing some resources we have been able to locate, and found beneficial in our own journeys. If you have additional resources you'd like to recommend for others, too, please send them to us: missioncanada@paoc.org. Thank you!

Two primary aspects for cultivating multiculturalism:

1. Growing in awareness of multiculturalism
2. Transitioning from monocultural to multicultural

GROWING IN AWARENESS AND SKILL:

Awareness can be brought by providing resources that address the following:

1. Biblical Standpoint:

Developing resources that help to understand the Biblical standpoint on multiculturalism.

- God is a God of diversity.

God Loves Diversity – Pastor Jeff Philip, Legacy - Owensboro, KY

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwlp4bB0KB0>

Part of presenting the body mature in Christ is helping people to see that in Christ *there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Colossians 3:11*

- Jesus is all about multiculturalism; diversity is his idea.

Jesus is the God of all nations and cultures; He wants us to go to all nations. *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* Amen. Matthew 28:18-20

- Heaven is entirely multicultural

9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Revelation 7:9-10

- Embracing Newcomers (video resource, biblical foundations teaching):

Dr. T.V. Thomas on "Embracing Newcomers," available free at:
<https://paoc.org/canada/videos-resources/embracing-newcomers>

- "Intentionally Cultivating Multicultural Churches," an insightful [article](#) with action steps by Chicago native Jamaal Williams ministering in Louisville, KY
<https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/intentionally-cultivating-multicultural-churches>

2. Demographic or Statistical Standpoint:

- Developing resources that help to understand the need for becoming multicultural: The church must be like its neighborhood; growing in awareness of your own neighborhood.

When Jesus said, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' it is obvious that His church is expected to know its neighbourhood. The situation is so dynamic that everyday people move in and out of our neighbourhoods. It is key to know our neighbourhood to influence them for Christ. Some of the resources provided in <https://www.artofneighboring.com/> really help the churches to know their neighbourhood well. If members of the church start influencing their neighbourhood no doubt that, the church will thrive.

- An interview with Jay Pathak on his journey towards neighbouring will be a motivation for the church leaders and small groups to achieve the mission of reaching out to the neighbourhood.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gz4Bagg-vw>
- The church must be like its neighborhood. If possible, it is good to be more diverse than your neighborhood.
- This requires understanding the influx of the immigrants into the nation, how they are spread out across the nation and specifically in your own province and cities.
- Awareness on what are the language groups who have come our province and to our neighbourhoods
- Statistics Canada has enormous amount of useful data and analysis that help us to understand our far and nearby neighbourhood based on the 2016 census. The Census Program provides a statistical portrait of the country every five years. Consult the following:

- <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm>
- <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/dv-vd/lang/index-eng.cfm>
- <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2017028-eng.htm>
- <https://lovingmuslimstogether.outreach.ca/statistics>
- <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/august/challenges-to-becoming-multicultural-church.html>

3. What God is doing in other churches / denominations?

Immigrants, Refugees, and Canadian Churches. The Role of Churches in Immigrant Settlement and Integration - <https://www.tyndale.ca/sites/default/files/2018-02/Tyndale-Find-Your-Way-Resource.pdf>

- Methodist Church in Canada - <https://www.fmcic.ca/interculturalministries/>
- The United Church of Canada - <https://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/ways-becoming-intercultural-church>
- <https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/intercultural-ministries-2019-survey-findings-summary.pdf>
- Atlantic Baptist churches - <https://baptist-atlantic.ca/our-convention/departments/intercultural-ministries/>
- Tyndale Intercultural Ministries Centre - <https://www.tyndale.ca/tim>
- Anglican – Asian and Multicultural Ministries in Canada - <http://www.ammic.ca/>

TRANSITIONING FROM MONOCULTURAL and MULTICULTURAL to INTENTIONALLY INTERCULTURAL:

1. Intentional Growth in Understanding and Skill

Most church leaders come through pastoral-oriented study streams, be that for general adults, youth ministry or worship. Other than perhaps one or two required courses in missions, little intentional cross-cultural training has been part and parcel of the educational training of most pastors in the field. Fortunately in our ministry training institutions, this is improving. But what about those already in the field? What should we do?

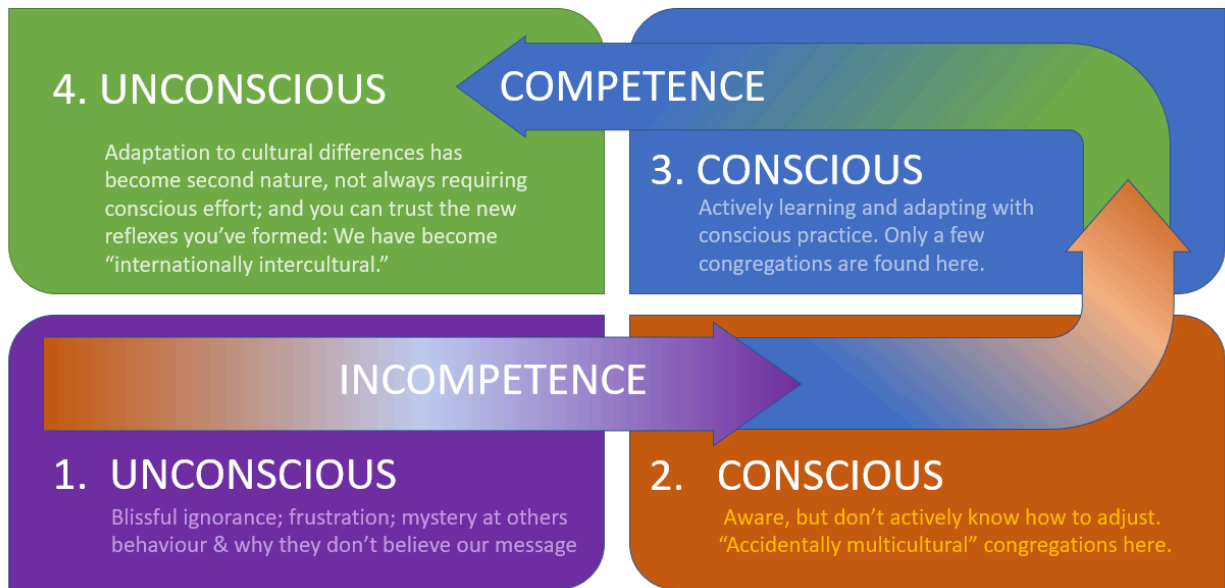
David Wells has often said many churches have become “unintentionally multicultural.” This has been quite largely true of most of our churches described as multicultural today: It just happened to them over time - thus, unintentional - with the change in the complexion of their surrounding community. Yes, some churches more recently have been intentional in their hiring to actively become visually diverse. But are we still only fitting the description of being made up of multiple cultures. What is our next step?

David Wells goes on to say we must become “intentionally inter-cultural,” and that’s an entirely different animal. With intentionality, we must change the culture and even deeper ethos of our own leadership, the leadership teams and our local church as a whole.

While there are many resources, here's a single resource to get started. W. Jay Moon and W. Bud Simon came out with *Effective Intercultural Evangelism: Good News in a Diverse World* in 2021, published by IVP. The cultural training, when applied well, in this single 200 or so pages will change your preaching, your outlook, your leadership and your church. Here's a graphic simply to illustrate the journey we're on: Locate yourself in it to help identify your next steps. Many are in stage 2. What will it take for you and your church to move internationally into stage 3 and to the goal of stage 4?

GROWING CULTURAL SKILLSET JOURNEY

Simon & Moon, *Effective Intercultural Evangelism* ©2021 p.5



Find this book on Wordcom [HERE!](#)

Consider also in this learning stage:

- *Leading with Cultural Intelligence* by David Livermore, 2022, AMACOM
- *Effective Intercultural Communication: A Christian Perspective* by Moreau, Campbell & Greener; 2014; Baker Academic
- *Cross-Cultural Connections* and *Cross-Cultural Servanthood* by Duane Elmer, IVP

2. Developing diversified Leadership

Pursuing and Leading a Multicultural Church Team EFCA article

<https://www.efca.org/blog/leading-churches/pursuing-and-leading-multicultural-church-team>

Also search "challenges multicultural" at sites like ChurchLeaders.com to find a broad spectrum of articles from across many evangelical perspectives on this topic:

<https://churchleaders.com/?s=challenges+multicultural>

And the following adapted from: *Intentionally Cultivating Multicultural Churches*, by Jamaal Williams, May 3, 2017. Source:

<https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/intentionally-cultivating-multicultural-churches>

The mantra we often hear is “diversity fuels innovation,” but that’s not always true. Diversity can also fuel conflict. Yet conflict managed well leads to learning and creativity—which is really what fuels innovation. Thus, research shows that diverse teams are smarter than homogeneous groups and that they make fewer factual errors when discussing available information.

We are often quick to judge a situation from our own personal cultural lens, but we need to replace our judgment with curiosity, asking questions to better understand what others see, think and feel about a given situation. Often, people of color have learned to carefully navigate differing cultures to avoid making waves; many can, thus, be accustomed to keeping their thoughts and opinions to themselves. Developing an effective multicultural team requires fostering a climate where people of all colors and cultural backgrounds feel safe to express their real views without fear of criticism or negative repercussions.

Culture shapes how people interact and communicate with their managers, so we have to become students of our staff. Understanding how the person’s native culture influences their view of authority and communication style is essential. Take time to learn about their story and upbringing.

The vision for a multicultural team must be deeply rooted in our conviction to live as the reconciled people of God, committed to breaking down the barriers that separate and divide us from one another. Culture formation is an essential function of leadership, and in the multiethnic team, it’s complicated and confusing because the ultimate goal is to bring different cultures together to form something entirely brand new. And it won’t come about by accident. It must be “taught and caught” through the messaging and modeling of passionate and committed multicultural leaders.

Part of presenting the body mature in Christ is helping them to see that in Christ, “there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythians, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all” (Col. 3:11).

This means being faithful to teach that God has already shattered the ethnic and class barriers in and through his Son’s body. The “dividing wall of hostility” has been broken down. Multiethnic churches are God’s eternal purpose in Christ, and we must help our members to see that.

During my time there, the Lord brought the pastors of the church under deep conviction to obey the Great Commission by working toward having our congregation reflect the demographics of our community.

Understanding who we are as a church is vital to the pursuit of diversity. To develop a multiethnic, multicultural church, we must operate out of our identities, rather than our preferences. Our identities are what unify us when our preferences threaten to divide us.

So, pursuing reconciliation means that we reject the temptation to only target people who look and think like us. If monoethnic and monocultural churches are serious about diversity, they will have to acknowledge their preferences while embracing new expressions throughout their ministry.

The pursuit of diversity is not an easy path; if it were, multicultural churches would be the norm. The process is painful for pastors and congregants, alike. Not only does it challenge heart-level issues of prejudice, but it challenges lifelong preferences regarding music, expressiveness in services, preaching style and more.

Shepherd your people toward diversity; don't force it on them. For many years we were a multiethnic church with a monoethnic staff. Becoming a multicultural church is a journey. Consider hiring bridge builders as outsiders to come in and help.

3. Developing Multicultural Characteristics

There are several characteristics that can be identified as important to the multicultural model. These characteristics address in one way or another the various barriers that prevent churches from embracing more intentionally the multicultural model. These barriers emerge out of theological, sociological and personal biases that result in a congregation not achieving their potential due to attitudinal and systemic inflexibility.

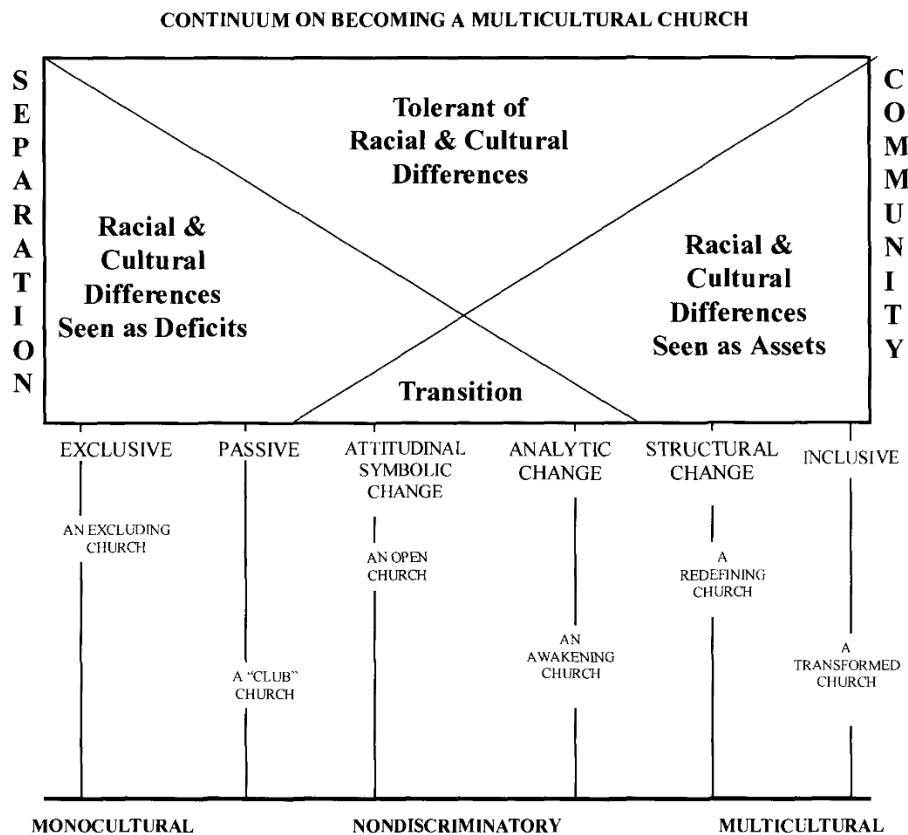
- 1) There needs to be a shared vision based on a clear biblical understanding of God's expectation that faith communities should represent the diversity of cultures.
- 2) There needs to be an intentional commitment to ministries with those living in the immediate communities around the church.
- 3) There is an awkwardness around cultural expectations and language that is a reality of church experience. The mixing of peoples from different cultural backgrounds is complicated and requires both patience and time. The barriers to communication due to language, variations in worship style, the differences in theological emphases and the expectations around family life and children's behaviors are only a few of the issues that create an awkwardness of relationship for many people.
- 4) There needs to be a commitment to building consensus out of a coalition of different cultural groups so that one cultural group does not dominate or control the ministries of the church. With the arrival of new cultural groups a church eventually realizes that the tensions being felt around the different customs and expectations of each group can be a place for dialogue and not division. This was the experience of the early church as recorded in Acts 6:1-6 and Acts 15.
- 5) The concern for being an effective community is more important than being an efficient organization.
- 6) The pastors and church leaders must be representative of the congregation and are essential to framing, implementing and living the vision of the church to be a multicultural community.
- 7) The multicultural church defines mission around the local community of faith developing natural links to the immediate community and beyond.

8) The multicultural church must be aware of the socio-economic factors that both attract and discourage people from becoming involved.

Further we recommend consulting the following: CHARACTERISTICS OF EMERGING HEALTHY MULTICULTURAL CHURCHES by Paul Pearce, 2000, which can be found at this link:

<https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/bitstream/11375/14039/1/fulltext.pdf>

In this paper, Pearce includes the graphic of a continuum developed by Ronice E. Branding in association with International Urban Associates. The continuum moves from Separation on the left to Community on the right, and labels six different stages from Exclusive on the left to Inclusive on the right, and more.



Pearce's concluding summary includes five specific actions local churches intentional in this transition can take to facilitate their journey. See his points in his paper starting on page 184.

4. Characteristics of a Healthy Multicultural Church

- 1) Embracing Differences
- 2) Being Community is a Process, not a Program
- 3) Leadership Style will be Critical to Success

There needs to be a high degree of trust and an open atmosphere of patience for the multicultural model to succeed. Foster identifies three qualities which need to be present in the leaders of multicultural churches: (1) transformative, (2) anticipatory, and (3) relational.

4) Solidarity is More Important than Conformity

Solidarity is the term some contemporary theologians have used to describe the dynamics in communities that affirm and embrace incomprehensible differences as gifts to our common life. It is based on the assumption that certain facets of our human experience cannot be caught up in consensus, cannot be experienced mutually, cannot be assimilated into the larger life of the congregation or community, when their members have not suppressed elements of their cultural (gender, class, etc) identities. Instead, they celebrate the distinctive contributions each person and group brings to their fellowship, worship and study.

5) The long-term vision must be big enough to live with the present awkwardness of building relationships with strangers.

- Characteristics that are necessary for a church to be multicultural

5. Navigating through Conflict, Friction, and Misunderstanding

- Diversity fuels conflict
- Allot time for more face-to-face communication
- Learning culture

<https://www.efca.org/blog/leading-churches/pursuing-and-leading-multicultural-church-team>