BECOMING A CHURCH FOR ALL PEOPLE – NORMAN DOCTORAL THESIS 2006
CHAPTER TWO - MAKING THE TRANSITION

There are two primary ways of developing multicultural or multiethnic churches. The first way is to start a church from its inception with a strategic focus in this area. As noted in the previous chapter, Gaithersburg Community is an example of a church that started with this focus. The second way is to take an established church that has one dominant culture and transition it into a multicultural church. Most of the churches observed fall into this category. Whether a church is attempting to bring people together of different generations, socioeconomic classes, or ethnic backgrounds, most of the principles needed to accomplish any or all of these things are similar. This study will focus on transitioning a church that has an established dominant culture into one that is multicultural. This chapter will discuss three areas: (1) the need for a church to be strategically intentional in its pursuit of transition; (2) the importance of developing an environment or ethos in the church that is conducive for unity in the midst of diversity; and (3) the examination of ten characteristics or traits of a multicultural church.

The Need for Intentionality

In every interview of a pastor or leader during the field research, the issue of intentionally was paramount. There were no examples of multicultural churches that came into being without an intentional focus by the church. Multicultural churches and ministries usually do not occur naturally. Sociologically, people tend to gravitate toward people who are most like them. This is true when it comes to generations, socioeconomics, ethnicity, personality, and in other various ways. A common church growth movement founded on the "homogeneous principle" says that because people attract and connect best with like-minded people, churches that target one type of person usually grow the fastest and are most effective.

While it is disputable whether or not churches will grow faster and be more effective if they utilize the homogeneous principle, few dispute the fact that people generally gravitate toward those who are most like them. Most people like familiarity, and most people find it easiest to relate to those who are similar to them.

> Our culture instructs us in our thought and behavior patterns, and it also colors our view of how those outside our culture should behave. We are most adept and comfortable operating within our own cultural ways. Naturally, we prefer that people from other races or cultures that enter our cultural environment act like we do. We want them to speak with the same accent, have the same values, and see the world in the same way—in short, to have the same culture. (Pocock and Henriques 2002, 102-3)

Whether or not this general truth of people naturally gravitating towards those most like them is an outgrowth of nature or nurture (biological or environmental) is a question beyond the scope of this project. Nonetheless, in most settings, developing an environment that is multicultural requires intentionality. It requires intentionality in both the developmental stage of the multicultural environment and in sustaining that setting.

> Preparing a congregation that is both ethnically and socioeconomically homogeneous for an ethnic and cultural transition is not simply a matter of having vision or of missiological stimulation. The transition must be accomplished carefully in order to help the existing congregation to be open to change, at least in the initial stages. The element of intentionality is most important. Everything that we do should be thought through carefully and open to review. (Ortiz 1996, 118)

Theologically we see the Apostle Paul advocating an intentional approach to reaching people who are different.

> Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. (1 Cor 9:19-22)

In Paul's mind, he had to "become" or think like those who were different, so that he could relate to them, bridge the cultural gap, and hopefully reach them with the gospel. This is a principle of intentionality. He was not advocating "live in sin so that you can reach sinners." What this biblical principle teaches is that if you want to reach people who are different, you must be able to learn, understand, and relate to those differences.

When this author lived in England, learning English culture was necessary to better relate to the English people. It was always easier to relate to other fellow Americans while living in England, but over time, learning the culture helped the process of relating to the English. Through understanding their culture and living in it, miscommunication and other barricades to relationship building were minimized. This would not have come naturally, however. By intentionally living and learning English culture, the walls of cultural difference came down. Others reciprocated this learning of culture as they took an intentional interest in learning more about American culture. This mutual interest and pursuit lead to many relationships that would not have naturally taken place.

In a book called <u>One Church Four Generations</u>, author Gary McIntosh addresses the generational obstacles churches face as they attempt to bring people of all ages together in unity. The premise of the book is that people must understand the tendencies of their own generation and the tendencies of other generations in order to intentionally come together.

> Generational waves can collide in a kind of riptide. As the seventy-six-million-member Boomer wave converges with the Builder wave and crashes into the Buster and Bridger wave, numerous problems emerge.
>
> Not only are these generational waves creating turbulence in our society, they are also causing turbulence in our churches. That is why it is essential to understand each generational wave and how it affects the other waves to effectively serve God's purpose today. Most of us are faced with the problem of ministering to a church that includes members of all four generational waves. We must try to understand the generations as well as how they affect each other. (McIntosh 2002, 24)

Throughout Scripture, particularly the New Testament, there are major cultural differences between the Jews and the Gentiles. The power of the gospel is ultimately the only thing that can bring enemies together. Theologically, the New Testament teaches that the gospel brings people of all cultures together. In fact, the church is to be the physical manifestation of that reconciliation.

> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. (Eph 2:14-16)

While the Spirit brings about this reconciliation between people of differences and possible hostilities, there will still be human and cultural differences that cause roadblocks to the function and practical outgrowth of this reconciliation. Although the Scriptures are clear that the gospel brings reconciliation between people of all cultures, it is also brutally honest about the difficulty cultural differences bring to the fleshing out of this reconciliation.

> When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. (Gal 2:11-13)

Reconciliation among people of different cultures, particularly cultures with a history of hostility, does not come naturally. God has ordained this reconciliation in this life and he promises it will be the future of an eternal existence. This does not discount the need to bring this about in the everyday life of society and the church through intentional effort, however. In fact, just the opposite is true. Due to the sociological reality of homogeneous tendencies as a natural phenomenon, along with the theological defense of a heterogeneous ideal through the gospel of reconciliation, the follower of Christ must be convinced and sold out to the endeavor of intentionally practicing reconciliation among people of all cultures.

Developing a Multicultural Environment

Because multicultural unity does not come naturally in society, it will not come naturally in the church as well. A good example supporting this claim is racial tension between blacks and whites in both American society and in the American church. Historically, racial tension and segregation have seen little difference in the context of society and the context of church.

> Clearly the first incentive for black spiritual and ecclesiastical independence was not based on religious doctrine or polity, but it was a response to the offensive acts of racial segregation and the stark inconsistencies between what was taught and practiced that blacks experienced in white churches. The response of black Christians resulted in “the Black Church.” The Black Church became, therefore, a symbol for and means of black independence and response. (Peart 2000, 48-49)

Understanding the difficulty of bringing people together even in the Christian context of the local church reveals the need for churches to intentionally create an environment where this can flourish. Churches that desire to transition their church from a mono-cultural church into a multicultural church must understand the importance of developing an "environment." Whether a church desires to become a multicultural church due to theological conviction or because of an increased demographic diversity in the community, developing an environment, an ethos, a culture, a philosophy, an attitude, or a spirit of multicultural ministry is the first and foundational step.

Churches may have a strong desire or a theological conviction to do many things to reach people of a different culture, and they may do it successfully. However, they will never retain those diverse people in their church if the church has not developed a multicultural environment. Most churches have a personality and a culture that are centered on the dominant culture of the congregation. If the church has an average age of sixty five, the church may reach families in their thirties but it may be difficult to retain them if the culture, environment, and spirit of the church are centered on a sixty-five-year-old culture. If a church is strong on doctrine and teaching and is mainly made up of affluent, white collar workers, it may reach several struggling, poor people who are illiterate, but more than likely the church will not be able to retain them.

Every church has a culture and environment that is usually reflective of the dominant people group in the church. For the church that desires to "reach" and "retain" people who are different than the dominant culture of the church, the church needs to intentionally create an environment and ethos in the church that fosters this diversity and reconciliation. As one example, a church that has an age sixty-five environment will probably have to be willing to play more contemporary music to retain younger families who enjoy something different than the slow and traditional hymns of the past. Music may be one of many things that create a distinct culture and environment of a church.

As this writer traveled throughout the country observing multicultural churches and interviewing pastors, nearly all of them communicated the need for intentionality and the need to foster an environment within the ethos of the church in order to preserve a multicultural assembly.

> It takes work to create and sustain multiracial churches. Their development does not just happen accidentally. Even when it seemed that multiracial churches were formed by accident, the leaders in those churches had to find ways to include the numerical racial minorities. This effort is related to the principle of intentionality. This concept indicates that a successful multiracial ministry will intentionally work at becoming and maintaining its multiracial atmosphere. Intentionality is the attitude that one is not going to just allow a multiracial atmosphere to develop but is going to take deliberate steps to produce that atmosphere. (Yancey 2003, 68)

One example is a church called Bridgeway in Baltimore, Maryland. In a personal interview with the pastor, Dr. David Anderson, he makes it clear to his staff on a regular basis that diverse representation in leadership positions of the church is very important to the ethos of reconciliation. Pastor Anderson discusses weekly with his staff areas of representation within the leadership. The issue of representation will be discussed later in this paper.

Pastor Anderson also holds various seminars throughout the year on racial reconciliation. Discussing racial issues and how to cope with them on various ends of the spectrum is another attempt at helping people who are different come together. These

intentional acts and commitments develop a specific environment and culture in the church that helps attract people who are different from each other and helps retain a diverse setting.

In order to develop a new environment in the church, which comes first—the new environment or the new people? How can a new environment be established before the new people come? At the same time how will the new people come if the environment has not been established to retain them? In other words, is it "the chicken or the egg?" While the reality is that the two go hand in hand and happen simultaneously, there is some foundational groundwork that must be laid within the ethos of the church that precedes the goal of a flourishing multicultural church.

Sunrise Church in Rialto California started to see greater diversity in its neighborhood and church and as a result began to address the need for culture transition. On the other hand, Gaithersburg Community Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland began with a multicultural focus and then went after a multicultural community.

This foundational groundwork is the beginning of establishing the necessary environment that is fundamental both at the initial stages of becoming a multicultural church and to the long-term ability of sustaining a multicultural church.

In their book, The Heart of Change, authors John Kotter and Dan Cohen give an eight-step process of helping organizations make significant changes. In the eighth step called, "Making Change Stick," the premise is that change will be temporary unless there is a long-term cultural shift within the organization itself.

> Culture is a complex concept. For our purposes here, it means the norms of behavior and the shared values in a group of people. It's a set of common feelings about what is of value and how we should act. A good test of whether something is embedded in a culture is if our peers, without really thinking, find ways to nudge us back to group norms when we go astray. (Kotter and Cohen 2002, 165)

Kotter and Cohen caution organizations to "be sure the changes are embedded in the very culture of the enterprise so that the new way of operating will stick" (Kotter and Cohen 2002, 177). Churches that are successful in their multicultural vision understand the importance of environment and culture. Apart from developing and sustaining this internal attitude and ethos, churches will have great difficulty in their quest for multicultural unity.

Ten Traits of a Multicultural Church

There are dozens of traits that could be addressed in this paper regarding developing multicultural ministry. In an interview with Jay Pankratz of Sunrise Church he emphasized the need to base philosophy of ministry and vision from theological conviction. He emphasized principles from the Good Samaritan passage and others. David Anderson of Bridgeway Church in Columbia, Maryland emphasized leadership vision and buy-in. Larry Walkemeyer from Light and Life Fellowship in Long Beach, California emphasized the need for people within the congregation to experience various multicultural settings. Charles Lyons of Armitage Baptist in Chicago, Illinois emphasized the need to pursue multicultural staff but also made the point that the standard of character should never be lowered. The interview and observations of churches and leaders not only prompted the ten traits brought out in this chapter, but also prompted many of the literary resources used.

However, there are other characteristics that could have been chosen but were not. Some examples are: safeguarding against an overemphasis on multicultural ministry, developing sister relationships with cross-cultural churches, combating social prejudices from a community or political perspective, a dominant focus on prayer, and there are others.

Based on the interviews and observation of churches, and enhanced by the literary research and the writer's personal experiences, the following ten characteristics were chosen.

Fueled by Theological and Demographic Need

The most important trait of a multicultural church is that the vision of becoming a church for all people is fueled by theological conviction. When vision is centered on revealed Scripture it becomes an anchor to the future of a church. There are many fads, technologies, and competing ministries that seem to be the latest and greatest method of advancing the church, but theological and timeless principles of Scripture withstand the test of time. Methods, ministries, technologies, and styles may and will change, but when vision is rooted in Scripture, it anchors the church, leads the church, and offers a resiliency to the church when obstacles and opposition arise.

The fundamental question that every church must ask itself and answer is this: "What kind of a church does God/Scripture say we should be?" This question can be asked even more specifically considering the context of this paper, "Does God reveal in Scripture a desire to bring reconciliation and unity among brothers and sisters of different backgrounds together within the local church?" In other words, does God want the church to actively pursue the ideal of becoming a church for all people or does God not care if a church is one age generation, one ethnic background, one socioeconomic background, one personality type, or one educational background?

One of the traits of a multicultural church is that the church sees a biblical mandate to bring people of various backgrounds together in one church. In an interview with Michael Emerson at Notre Dame University he emphasized the biblical dominance of community and reconciliation.

> The whole NT is about creating Christian community. The way Jesus conducted his ministry—he didn't convert people and walk away. They became his disciples. They became the very fabric of his community. Learning how to love together. What Paul is talking about in Romans is the formation of a Christian community. That's your witness. Loving one another is the utmost. That is why Paul is adamant that we are not going to separate around cultural differences (slave and free, Jew and Greek, male and female). (Emerson 2002)

The churches observed in this study were driven by a theological mandate. At the same time, demographics play a major role as well. If a church is in a community that is all German, it cannot bring people of different ethnicities together in one body. If a church is located on a college campus or in a retirement town, the generational diversity and unity will be impossible to accomplish. If a church is located in an affluent community or a poor community, socioeconomic diversity and unity will be impossible. A church can only be as multicultural as its community and demographics. A church following the above biblical principles will only be able to apply what is demographically feasible within its community.

> It is worth noting that a ministry may be limited in how racially diverse it can become simply because of the racial makeup of the city. Churches in small towns that are heavily white may have to accept the fact that they cannot become multiracial. However, there are other cultural dimensions (class, ethnicity, political orientation) in which such a church might introduce diversity into its congregation. (Yancey 2003, 135)

The ideal for the church is that its diversity will reflect the diversity of the community where it is located. When a church is in a community that is ethnically, generationally, and socioeconomically diverse, the power of the gospel and the conviction of the church to follow the mandates of Scripture will drive the desire of the church to be a church for all people.

Owned by Leadership and Embraced by the People

Whenever a biblical mandate goes against the grain of what is initially comfortable or natural, it requires a sense of intentional leadership. For example, when it comes to friendship evangelism, establishing relationships with others can be very natural and comfortable but transitioning relationships into evangelistic opportunities and pursuits can be difficult. Churches that are highly evangelistic usually have two things: visionary leadership that promotes and models evangelism, and an ownership by the people to pursue evangelistic opportunities. This combination of visionary leadership and ownership by the people are necessary in many ventures of the church. Developing a multicultural environment is one of those areas.

Sometimes a congregation will get the impression that being an open and welcoming church is sufficient. However, a multicultural vision must be driven by leadership and owned the people to practice the intentionality that is needed.

> There is a powerful tendency among Christians to believe that if they just welcome people of other races then such individuals will eventually join their churches and an integrated congregation can develop. But multiracial churches do not just spring up. They are the result of intentional efforts on the part of church leaders and members to create or maintain an integrated congregation. (Yancey 2003, 109)

Transitioning a church from a mono-cultural church to a multicultural church takes leadership. Leadership is required both for the transition phase as well as the on-going, sustaining phase. If the leadership is not 100% committed, the vision will either last only a short time or it will never succeed from the beginning. The leadership must view the vision much more personally than the attitude that "it's a good idea." Leadership must drive the vision. Driving the vision means there is self-awareness of the need to constantly be intentional both in personal practice and when it comes to leading others in the vision. This starts with the senior leader and filters into the rest of the leadership team.

> In every case the direction for the multiethnic church process was instituted by the one who acted as the senior pastor. The pastor was the visionary, the one who experienced the initial conviction to move toward establishing a format that would bring diverse people groups together. The pastor also solicited and engaged other pastors to join in this challenge. (Ortiz 1996, 108)

In developing and maintaining a multi-generational church, Gary McIntosh says this:

> Get senior pastor's support. It is often said that what is endorsed from the pulpit will succeed, and what is not will fail. The pastor must play the key role in planning, educating, and leading the church toward a blended ministry. For such a different emphasis to take place, the senior pastor must be committed to it and work to make it happen. No matter how strong the pressure, it is wise never to attempt to build a blended ministry without the senior pastor's full involvement. (McIntosh 2002, 218)

Once the leadership drives and carries the vision, it then becomes part of their leadership role to empower and develop ownership among the people. Leadership alone cannot create a multicultural environment. It must be lived out by the people. What percentage of the congregation must own the vision for it to be successful is difficult to answer. Nonetheless, the greater the ownership of the people, the greater success the vision will experience. John Kotter points to this same truth in the business world when addressing cultural change.

> In a turbulent world, the requirement for change is ongoing. Imagine needing to keep urgency up and complacency, fear, and anger down all the time and throughout the organization. Imagine needing to have groups guiding change efforts all the time and throughout the enterprise. Imagine the demand to develop visions and strategies for all the changes, to communicate volumes of information to everyone, to keep batting obstacles out of the way throughout the organization. To succeed in that world, how many people in an enterprise must see change as a part of their jobs? How many of us must understand change well enough to help with the waves of new product lines, mergers, reorganizations, the e-world, process reengineering, or leaps of any kind? How many of us need some minimum capability in addition to analysis-think-act tactics? Reasonable people can argue about what these numbers should be, but the figures surely are very large. Most organizations have less than half of what they need today, and many enterprises have only a fraction. . . . In successful change efforts, the vision and strategies are not locked in a room with the guiding team. The direction of change is widely communicated, and communicated for both understanding and gut-level buy-in. The goal: to get as many people as possible acting to make the vision a reality. (Kotter and Cohen 2002, 183-84, 83)

A vision will go only as far as the leadership of the church drives it and only as far as the people embrace it and own it.

In every church observed by this writer, the leadership, and particularly the senior leader, owned the vision and drove the vision. In many cases the church did not have a multicultural vision prior to the senior pastor's tenure. He brought the vision and in time he created ownership among the other leaders and people within the church. The means by which the leadership created ownership and helped people embrace it is brought out in the remaining principles.

Representational Leadership

One of the hallmark keys to developing a culture of multicultural ministry is leadership representation. In all of the multiethnic churches this author observed and

interviewed around the country, this principle was widely practiced and supported. While every pastor interviewed had varying levels of intentionality regarding implementation of this principle, nonetheless, every pastor acknowledged this as a fundamental practice of the church.

The visibility of representational leadership is a major facet to developing a multicultural environment. This is seen predominantly on the platform during corporate worship services. Most of the churches visited by the author practiced a variety of diversity on the worship teams. While many times there was not a distinct difference in style between a multicultural church and a contemporary mono-cultural church, there was a difference regarding those on the team. Not only was this visibility seen on worship teams, it was also seen in those who would preach and those who may lead in prayer or be on the stage for other various reasons.

Many of the pastors interviewed also talked about being intentional when it came to other areas of leadership in the church such as various ministry heads, elders, deacons, and particularly staff. Hiring diverse staff seemed to offer the greatest challenge. All of the pastors recoiled against an "affirmative action" philosophy where quotas were an issue. No one felt the requirement to have representational quotas; however, they all acknowledged that representational leadership was a key to the sustaining aspect of multicultural ministry.

When a church is attempting to transition into a multicultural environment it is important to make efforts at including the minority culture in the future decision making area of the church. People who come to the church who are not of the majority culture will more readily believe that the church is serious about including people of their background if they see people of their culture in visible leadership roles.

> It is vital for multiracial churches to find both clergy and lay leaders of different races. It is important that churches intentionally look for people of different races to take up leadership roles. Such efforts may seem contrived and "politically correct," but they are important for illustrating to members of racial groups who are not in the numerical majority that they have a voice. These efforts are also important because multiracial leadership is likely to become the basis for implementing other principles of multiracial ministry. Often the foundation of many multiracial churches is the effort to create racially diverse leadership. (Yancey 2003, 97)

What can happen, however, is that churches can be so bent on diversity in leadership that they set diverse leadership in place but compromise the character or doctrinal integrity of the leader. Some of the pastors interviewed by this author admitted the tension and temptation to place diverse leaders in positions prematurely.

Because of this temptation and tension, prayer becomes a very important practice in discerning the appointment of diverse leaders.

> The need for prayer in selecting leaders is affirmed by Pastor Michael Posey of the Church of the Harvest. He notes that one of the greatest difficulties he encounters is being intentional about having multiracial leadership in the church without having quotas or being preferential in preparing and selecting leaders. In his experience he has often found it easier to select whites to key leadership roles because of their greater exposure to formal Bible training and different types of church ministries. Prayer is an important part of the process when diversity in leadership is sought. (Peart 2000, 146)

Representational leadership is one of the most important but volatile practices of developing a multicultural environment. This principle must be practiced deliberately, slowly, and with much prayer.

Understanding Unity but Not Uniformity

One of the challenges of a multicultural church is in the area of unity. Multicultural churches are not looking to simply be diverse congregations. Diversity is not the goal; rather, multicultural unity is the goal. Diversity means that many people of different backgrounds congregate in one area. For example, airports have a lot of diversity. Unity, however, is about being of one mind, having similar goals, and having a spirit of oneness. In a book called Unity Factor, Larry Osborne says this:

> Deciding to make unity a priority is one thing. Figuring out what that means in practical terms is another.
>
> In talking with pastors, I've come to the conclusion that for many of us, unity is a vague term. While we easily recognize its presence or absence, few of us have spelled out carefully its essential elements. Yet that's an all-important first step in developing a unified leadership team. Before we can hit the target, we have to know what we're aiming for. (Osborne 1989, 17)

While unity does mean everyone is on the same page, it does not mean there is uniformity. People of various cultures that come together are not required or expected to give up their cultural differences. Their cultural distinctions are what make them who they are. The church must work hard at providing environments where people of similar cultures can come together and not be frowned upon if, for example, a group of Chinese Americans wants to have a small group together or a group of senior saints wants to have a ministry focused on reaching out to their age group.

> "God is colorblind. He doesn't see our color, race or ethnicity." I heard these words from a friend who invested in my early Christian life. He would say earnestly, "When we become Christians, our identity has to come from our new relationship with Jesus and the family of God. Nothing else really matters. Look at Paul's life. He counted everything as dung for the gospel."
>
> I respected my friend and valued his opinion, but something in his words did not sit well with me. The more I thought about it, the more I was convinced that God did care about every dimension of my life.
>
> This chapter posits that our ethnic identity is something we cannot avoid. Therefore, we should offer it to God and invite him to redeem this important part of us. In fact, God cares deeply about our ethnic identity and even celebrates it with us.
>
> I want to be clear, though, that culture and ethnicity are not to be set over and above who we are in Christ. My greatest joy is that I now belong to the family of God and that I am coheir with Christ. The most significant mark on my life is that I am a follower of the one true God and his Son Jesus Christ. I try to let these truths inform all I do.
>
> Yet I come to Christ in a cultural context, no matter how hard I may try to avoid or deny this reality. (Crespo 2003, 79-80)

It is important to realize that cultural diversity is not set above Christian unity. Believers are Christ-followers first. Their cultural context, while important, is secondary to their citizenship in heaven. Unity is achieved when believers of all cultures stay focused on the transcendent gospel and the biblical philosophy of ministry. This can be achieved while still allowing people to celebrate their differences and balance their love for culture and people in their culture with a love and unity in Christ of people who are different from them.

Inclusive Worship

One of the distinguishing marks of various cultures is in the area of corporate worship style. This is particularly true when it comes to various cultures generationally and ethnically. Tony Arnold of Gaithersburg Community Church felt strongly about this.

> If a church wants to transition into a multicultural church, worship styles must be addressed. A church should put in their budget the ability to bring in various music leaders to expose the church to different styles. This can also be accomplished by partnering with other churches and having joint meetings together. Once in a while doing something completely out of the norm. For example have a hip hop service sometime. (Arnold 2002)

How a church handles the music ministry and the variety of tastes people have will have much to do with whom the church reaches and retains. While cultural representation in music may be more important than style of music, style does play a factor.

> Churches where one racial culture is dominant are free to allow that single racial culture to dictate their style of worship. However, multiracial churches are not generally free to limit their worship in such ways. Churches that desire to become multiracial or to maintain a racially integrated congregation tend to look for ways to incorporate different racial cultures into their worship. For example, in one of the multiracial churches in our sample most of the leadership and congregation was Hispanic, yet the worship music was led by an African American. His presence brought in elements of a black gospel style that was combined with contemporary Christian praise and worship. This gave the church a multiracial style of worship. As a result of this worship style, the church had an atmosphere of acceptance toward non-Hispanics—despite the fact that all four of its paid clergy were Hispanic. (Yancey 2003, 72)

As this author visited several multicultural churches around the country almost all of them had a music style that would be considered contemporary. There is certain music that would be considered traditional to European whites, Hispanic Americans, African Americans, the older generation, or the younger generation; however, there are contemporary music genres that bring many cultures together. While employing a traditional style of one culture can hinder the process, it is not necessary to offer a blended style that attempts to offer one song for each culture represented. The best way at handling music for the multicultural church is to have cultural representation leading mainline genres of contemporary music that is relevant for many different cultures.

Reconciliation and Otherness

At the heart of a multicultural church is an understanding of reconciliation. Reconciliation is an intentional love for others particularly in the midst of current or historical tension or separation. The black church, as it has been known historically in the United States, arose out of racial tensions between blacks and whites, predominantly initiated by white prejudice.

To see blacks and whites not only coexisting in the church but actually unified and of one mind in the church takes an act of reconciliation due to both the historical divide and the cultural differences. Reconciliation and a true love of others is a necessary ingredient to the success of a multicultural church. "The will to give ourselves to others and "welcome" them, to readjust our identities to make space for them, is prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity" (Volf 1996, 29). Being able to make room in one's life for those who are different and to embrace and welcome people of other cultures takes a calculated love of others. It is something that is both intentional and the direct result of spiritual maturity.

Developing Lasting Relationships

If reconciliation and love of others is the key to multicultural unity, lasting relationships is the key to reconciliation. As it has already been stated, the goal is not diversity but unity. Genuine relationships will form between people of different backgrounds as they interact with one another in love. Relationships among people of like culture and like personality form naturally. Intentionality toward multicultural unity, intentionality toward "otherness," and intentionality toward reconciliation (all based on theological and spiritual conviction) will lead to cross-cultural relationships.

> Intentionality is the locomotive that drives racial reconciliation. It must become part of our attitude. We must want to know the other race, to contribute to the other person's spiritual, social, and emotional growth. Our attitude must be: *I will be intentional in pursuing a relationship with this person*. (Washington and Kehrein 1993, 127)

It is one thing to co-exist beside a person of another culture; it is quite another to move into the arena of a relationship with that person. As was said earlier, the church must not downplay cultural distinctives but must allow people to naturally develop bonds and relationships among those of like culture. However, it is equally true that the church must work hard at providing environments where people of different cultures can meet, spend time together, and develop relationships.

In one of the churches this author observed and interviewed, the children's ministry was a place where many families of different backgrounds interacted. This was in Armitage Baptist of Chicago, Illinois. The children's ministry is an excellent avenue to bring both children and their parents together. Lasting relationships can often be built among parents of similar-aged children. One of the key traits of a multicultural church is that it is a place where people of various backgrounds get to know each other and develop lasting relationships.

Communicating Cross-Culturally

It is easy to envision a blue-haired teenager sitting down with a white-haired senior saint and having a conversation that simply does not connect. Likewise, it is reasonable to imagine two businessmen talking about their latest investments while a poorer individual enters the room and lacks the ability to appreciate their conversation. At the same time, an African-American tries to explain to a Caucasian several racial slurs he has experienced in the workplace, and yet, while the Caucasian is sympathetic, he has no context of experience with which to fully comprehend. If reconciliation and love for others is the key to multicultural unity, and if lasting relationships is the key to reconciliation, then communicating cross-culturally is the key to developing cross-cultural relationships. Communication or the lack thereof can make the difference between success or failure in transitioning into a multicultural church.

> Communication with others is the most important, most natural, and yet most demanding of our daily tasks. . . . Stephen Rhodes tells of one church that learned the importance of accurate decoding the hard way. One night during choir practice, the choir director said something that offended three Asian women. "They turned to each other and one asked, what did he say?" The other replied, "I think he just called us stupid." The three women left rehearsal and eventually left the church. The incident caused so much internal turmoil in the church the choir director soon left for a new position. Those who investigated the incident, by way of a tape of the rehearsal, discovered that the director had actually used the word *stufe*, a German musical term for degree. (Pocock and Henriques 2002, 110-11)

Communication among married couples of the same culture is a challenge itself. However, when cultural differences are part of the mix, communication breakdown happens that much more frequently. As people interact in a multicultural church there must be a willingness and a desire to work at communication as well as to pursue misunderstandings.

Bridgeway Community Church hosts reconciliation seminars and during these seminars the issue of communication is addressed cross culturally. Words, phrases, and even body language can be misinterpreted when it comes from people of different cultures. These issues are addressed in these seminars. These discussions were extremely helpful in sensitizing people in the area of cross-cultural communication.

Overcoming Opposition and Counting the Cost

No church should take on the vision of becoming multicultural if it is not willing to consider the cost. There will be both external and internal opposition, and this opposition will cost the church something. The external structures of society are in place to preserve racial inequality and combat multicultural unity.

> The facts just considered, together with the findings of cognitive psychologists and macrostructural sociologists, have considerable implications for the perpetuation of racial inequality and stratification. The logic is straightforward: 1) In the United States there is racial inequality in access to valued resources. 2) Access to valued resources—such as jobs, prestige, wealth, and power—is gained in significant part through social ties. 3) As we have previously discussed, for reasons such as social categorization and comparison, people have positive bias for their in-groups and negative bias for out-groups. These

> three facts suggest that, other factors being equal, any social structure or process that both increases the saliency of group boundaries and reduces interracial ties necessarily reproduces racial inequality. (Emerson and Smith, 2000, 161)

While external opposition makes multicultural unity difficult, internal opposition warrants the greatest threat to true unity. The internal bias, prejudice, and discomfort for people who are different are the most detrimental hindrances to the multicultural church. Most people underestimate the difficulty of sustaining a multicultural church, and underestimate the sacrifice and work it takes to sustain unity. By its very definition a multicultural church will not simply appeal to the desires of one culture. Because of this, preferences and desires must be set aside for the sake of the overall good. For example, one cultural group may prefer a musical or service style that is geared for its culture but must be willing to give up that preference.

It is also assumed that when a church begins to move from a mono-cultural setting to a multicultural setting, it will be very unsettling to many existing members. Many people may perceive their church changing and being taken over by "those people." In an interview with Phil Hilliard of Bethany Church he addressed these issues. "As I look to the future with our multicultural vision I want to avoid getting discouraged when I hit road blocks and when people leave. You will usually have 10-15% of the congregation who will be reluctant" (Hilliard 2002).

A church may need to be willing to give up 10-20% of the existing membership who will oppose and eventually leave the church. Churches that begin with this focus do not have the "transition" years that can be very difficult and upsetting to an established church. This is why if the church and leadership are not sold on the theological and demographic need to change, it more than likely will not survive the internal opposition.

Persevering for the Long Haul

Change usually does not happen overnight, and when it comes to change in the church this is especially true. The larger the church, the longer it takes to change. Likewise, the older the church, the longer it takes to change. Age of the church, average age of the congregation, size of church, etcetera, are all factors contributing to the time it takes for a church to make a major change. An established church that wants to become a multicultural is a major and comprehensive change. Longevity, perseverance, a long-tenured pastor, patience, and resiliency toward obstacles are required to slowly change a church into one for all people. Just as a church that is not willing to count the cost should not transition into a church for all people, so should a church that is not willing to be committed for the long haul not commit to the transition.

A good analogy of a church that wants to transition into a multicultural church is similar to the process of discipleship in the life of a new believer. The new believer makes some initial decisions to change several things in his life right away, but the reality is that he has lived one way for so many years, comprehensive life change does not happen overnight. The journey is not a sprint but a marathon. It is two steps forward and one step back. Likewise, the transition into a multicultural church is a marathon.

Like other changes in the church, things happen slowly at first. While attitudes and intentionality may be changing from within the church, the outsider may see nothing substantive for quite some time. Over time and through consistency, changes begin to be seen and small

successes turn into cultural shifts. Jim Collins describes this kind of change in the arena of business with the analogy of a flywheel:

> Picture a huge, heavy flywheel—a massive metal disk mounted horizontally on an axle, about 30 feet in diameter, 2 feet thick, and weighing about 5,000 pounds. Now imagine that your task is to get the flywheel rotating on the axle as fast and as long as possible.
>
> Pushing with great effort, you get the flywheel to inch forward, moving almost imperceptibly at first. You keep pushing and, after two or three hours of persistent effort, you get the flywheel to complete one entire turn.
>
> You keep pushing, and the flywheel begins to move a bit faster, and with continued great effort, you move it around a second rotation. You keep pushing in a consistent direction. Three turns . . . four . . . five . . . six . . . the flywheel builds up speed . . . seven . . . eight . . . you keep pushing . . . nine . . . ten . . . it builds momentum . . . eleven . . . twelve . . . moving faster with each turn . . . twenty . . . thirty . . . fifty . . . a hundred.
>
> Then at some point—breakthrough! The momentum of the thing kicks in your favor, hurling the flywheel forward, turn after turn . . . whoosh! . . . its own heavy weight working for you. You're pushing no harder than during the first rotation, but the flywheel goes faster and faster and faster. Each turn of the flywheel builds upon work done earlier, compounding your investment of effort. A thousand times faster, then ten thousand, then a hundred thousand. The huge heavy disk flies forward, with almost unstoppable momentum.
>
> Now suppose someone came along and asked, "What was the one big push that caused this thing to go so fast?" You wouldn't be able to answer; it's just a nonsensical question. Was it the first push? The second? The fifth? The hundredth? No! It was all of them added together in an overall accumulation of effort applied in a consistent direction. Some pushes may have been bigger than others, but any single heave—no matter how large—reflects a small fraction of the entire cumulative effect upon the flywheel. (Collins 2001, 164-65)

When it comes to transitioning a mono-cultural church into a multiethnic or multicultural one it will be no one single thing that will accomplish it. It won't be because the church had a theological conviction that this is what God wants for the church, it will not be because the leadership of the church was committed to it and the people owned it, or because the church practiced representational leadership, or was committed to unity instead of uniformity, or because it practiced inclusive worship, or pursued the practice of reconciliation, or developed long term cross-cultural relationships, or worked hard at communication, or even resisting oppositions. None of these things by themselves represent the single big "key" to unlocking the mystery of multicultural unity. The true "key" is when all of these traits and characteristics, along with the element of time, work together one small decision and one small victory at a time.

One of the interesting findings of the churches observed by this writer and the interviews experienced is that all of the leaders had a long-term mindset for their ministries. None of them follow the average, tenure statistic of senior pastors at 4-5 years a church. Their long-term tenures help establish a culture of consistency and that is needed for such a massive endeavor of transitioning a church into a multicultural setting.

The church truly can become a church for all people, generationally, socioeconomically, and ethnically. Even an established church can transition into a multicultural church if the commitment, desire, and sacrifice are there. It requires intentionality, an ethos or environment that encourages this setting, and a pursuit of the following characteristics: (1) fueled by theological conviction and demographic need, (2) owned by leadership and embraced by the people, (3) representational leadership, (4) understanding unity not uniformity, (5) inclusive worship, (6) reconciliation and otherness, (7) developing lasting relationships, (8) communicating cross-culturally, (9) overcoming opposition and counting the cost, and (10) persevering for the long haul. Let us explore four of these characteristics in greater concentration.