Developing a Vision and Strategy for Multicultural Ministry: Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A VISION AND STRATEGY FOR MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY: WOODBURN COMMUNITY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

Eduard Daniel Ciobanu

Adviser: Bruce Bauer
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Title: DEVELOPING A VISION AND STRATEGY FOR MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY: WOODBURN COMMUNITY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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Date completed: May 2017

Problem

The City of Woodburn, OR is home to a population of 24,223. Over half of the residents are Hispanic, while 1/4 to 1/3 are Russian Orthodox Old Believers. Adding to its diversity, 35.4% of the total population of Woodburn is foreign born.

Started as a church plant 30 years ago, the mostly White, non-Hispanic Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church has traditionally kept a membership of around a 100, with a current membership of 101 and an average attendance of 38 in 2011. Despite an ideal, central location in town, an ability to embrace and support new members and attendees, as well as yearly outreach programs, the church has not seen significant growth. Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church does not
intentionally reflect the makeup of our community due to lack of vision for multicultural ministry, therefore its mission and ministry impact is minimal.

Method

A vision and a strategy for meaningful multicultural ministry will be created by:
(a) gathering data about the makeup of our community; (b) assessment of church members’ perception of the current situation; (c) creating opportunities for visioning and dialogue on multicultural issues; (d) developing a strategy for member training, outreach and improvement of church ministries.

The following implementation steps will be taken: (a) creating a population profile for the City of Woodburn; (b) initial administration of the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale to assess members’ ability and readiness for multicultural interaction; (c) developing and presenting a training seminar focusing on cross-cultural ministry that includes diversity and intercultural communication exercises; (d) conducting and facilitating four church-wide meetings for visioning and dialogue; (e) involving the Church in identifying or creating new opportunities for cross-cultural ministry and community service, and engaging members in intentional multicultural ministry; and (f) biannual celebration of diversity and growth.

The IES will be administered again 12 months into the project, after the implementation steps have been taken, to assess any change in overall vision and readiness for multicultural interaction, followed up by a church-wide review of progress. This project will be completed by December 2012.
Results

Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church members engaged in cross-cultural activities throughout the duration of the project. The church created a vision statement as well as a mission statement as a result of church-wide visioning meetings and person-to-person interaction. The church also made changes in church structure, order of service, and the church’s name upon developing a vision for multicultural ministry. Various ministry teams experimented with new ways of reaching out to the different other in the context of applying the directions of the new mission statement. The members participated in large numbers in celebratory events scheduled around major yearly holidays, which included the different others from the community. The Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES) profile however remained virtually unchanged with no significant improvements of members’ soft competencies for cross-cultural interactions.

Conclusions

Developing a vision and a strategy for multicultural ministry in the local church is a moral imperative in the 21st century as the United States is becoming more diverse without a White majority by 2050. This task involves systemic change and soft competencies for cross-cultural interaction are essential. Even though the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church members did not register significant score improvements for the IES over the course of this project as reported, the church was willing to experiment and reached out to the different other in its community, which indicates that while multicultural ministry takes time to become reality, it is attainable in the local church.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

DEVELOPING A VISION AND STRATEGY FOR MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY: WOODBURN COMMUNITY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

A Project Document
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Eduard Daniel Ciobanu

May 2017
DEVELOPING A VISION AND STRATEGY FOR MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY: WOODBURN COMMUNITY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

A project document presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Ministry

by
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................ vi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .............................................................................................. vii

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION ...................................................................................................... 1

   Personal History ........................................................................................................... 1
   Purpose ....................................................................................................................... 3
   Statement of the Problem .......................................................................................... 3
   Justification of the Project ......................................................................................... 4
   Expectations for the Project ...................................................................................... 5
   Delimitations ............................................................................................................... 5
   Limitations .................................................................................................................. 6
   Definition of Terms .................................................................................................... 7
   Description of the Project Process ............................................................................. 8

2. TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY .......... 10

   Introduction ............................................................................................................... 10
   Oneness and Diversity in Creation .......................................................................... 11
      Oneness and Plurality Within the Godhead ......................................................... 11
      Diversity of Form and Function in Creation ....................................................... 13
   Adam and Eve ............................................................................................................ 15
   Old Testament Policies and Desired Cross-Cultural Attitudes of Israel ............. 17
   Narrative of the Stranger in Your Midst ................................................................... 19
   Pluralism and Diversity of the Stranger ................................................................... 21
   Attitudes Toward the Stranger ............................................................................... 22
   Theology and Practice of Full Inclusion and Integration ....................................... 24
   Outcomes and Ideals of Cross-Cultural Interaction ............................................... 28
   Multicultural Issues in New Testament Christianity ............................................ 30
      One God, One World, One People ................................................................. 31
      Soteriology of Inclusion ..................................................................................... 33
      Ecclesiology of Inclusion ................................................................................... 37
   The Great Commission and the Inclusiveness of the Love of God .................... 39
   Sacrificial Love: Jesus Died for All ...................................................................... 39
The Great Commission: Go to All ........................................ 40
The Great Multitude Before the Throne................................ 43
Conclusion .............................................................................. 44

3. LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................... 47
   Introduction ........................................................................... 47
   Multicultural Organizations .................................................. 49
   Defining Multicultural Ministry and Multicultural Church ........ 50
   Types of Multicultural Congregations .................................... 55
   Diversity: Challenges and Opportunities ............................. 59
   Dynamics of Change ............................................................ 61
   Leadership in Multicultural Congregations ............................ 64
   Conclusion ............................................................................ 67

4. DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A VISION AND STRATEGY FOR MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY .................... 69
   Introduction ........................................................................... 69
   Similarities and Differences: The City of Woodburn and the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church ............. 70
   The Intercultural Effectiveness Scale: Examining the Ability and Readiness for Multicultural Interaction.......................... 75
   Training for Cross-cultural Ministry: Teaching Biblical Constructs, Intercultural Communication, and Diversity Skills ............. 79
   Need and Opportunities for Multicultural Ministry: Involving the Church Board and Facilitating Church-wide Meetings for Vision Casting and Dialogue ...................................................... 83
   Celebrating Milestones, Diversity, and Growth ....................... 93

5. EVALUATION, OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS .......................... 96
   Evaluation: Intercultural Effectiveness Scale Profile ............... 96
   Outcomes of Cross-Cultural Interaction ................................... 101
   Four Stages of Multicultural Engagement .............................. 101
   Stage 1: Pure Indifference: We do not Care About Elephants in the Room; They do not Exist! ............................................. 103
   Stage 2: Reluctant Acknowledgement: Yes, There Might be an Elephant in the Room; So What? ........................................... 106
   Stage 3: Joyful Engagement: Let’s do Something

iv
About This Big Elephant in the Room! .............................. 108
Stage 4: Utter Fulfillment: No Room for any Elephants in the House; Too Many People! .................................................. 112
Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations .................. 117
Summary .................................................................................. 117
Conclusions ............................................................................ 118
Recommendations ................................................................... 122

Appendix

A. INTERCULTURAL EFFECTIVENESS SCALE AND WOODBURN COMMUNITY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IES PROFILE ............................................................................................................. 124

B. TRAINING SEMINAR: ONE GOD, ONE WORLD, DIVERSE PEOPLE .............................................................................................................. 129

C. ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE FOUR STAGES OF MULTICULTURAL ENGAGEMENT ................................................................................................... 157

REFERENCE LIST ........................................................................ 160
VITA .............................................................................................. 166
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Average Sabbath attendance, 1999-2010 ......................................................... 71

2. Total tithe, 2000-2010 ..................................................................................... 72
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Thank you Lord for life, purpose and salvation. I’m thankful for the beautiful picture of diversity you paint for us mortals to behold and become. May your grace continue to be with us as we interact with the different other in our common journey towards the Kingdom!
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Personal History

My interest in this project began, in a way, back in my childhood years when attending Sabbath School. Part of the curriculum for all Children’s Divisions was the learning by memory of the Ten Commandments. I was always fascinated by the reference to the stranger in the Fourth Commandment of Exodus 20:10. Who was this stranger? Where was the stranger coming from? Why is the stranger required to remember and keep the Sabbath holy alongside everyone else in the household?

These questions were significant for me as a child and later on as a young person as I was born and grew up in the country of Romania, which at the time was under a Communist government. My parents were faithful Seventh-day Adventist Christians who tried to raise their children in a proper, God-fearing manner, which was not easy given the pressure and sometimes persecution exerted by the Communist authorities. Anybody that was different than the ideal of the atheist “New Human Being” the propaganda attempted to promote was looked upon with suspicion, antagonism and, at times, outright hate. Even though Seventh-day Adventism was one of the 14 officially recognized churches during later years of Communist Romania, still I was part of a small minority
that society did not know what to do with. I was like a stranger to them and I felt like a stranger both at school and at play.

Communist authorities were especially suspicious of any foreigner visiting Romania, as they were perceived as potential spies, and they took precautionary measures to limit their movements, control any environment they might come in contact with, and exert pressure towards collecting as much information from their contacts about their agenda as possible. To be safe, one had to keep away from strangers, have nothing to do with them. Therefore, I was always captivated by the allowance in the Old Testament of the stranger to freely and fully participate in the worship of God alongside God’s people. No suspicion, no pressures, no limitations. As one who felt like a stranger, this gave me hope and further stirred my interest in “the stranger in your midst.”

I had the privilege to leave my home country for the first time and spend half a year taking classes at a Bible School in Norway in 1995. Classes were taught in English and I did not speak any English at first. Consequently, I had no choice but to learn it, and I had to do it fast. So, here I was, in a different country, learning a new language and having to adjust to life in a completely new, multicultural environment. There were a lot of Norwegians around, as well as people from England, Australia, Sweden, Germany, Austria, the U.S., New Zealand, Canada, Poland, and Romania. After learning enough English to be able to communicate properly, I came to enjoy the different others I came in contact with every day, which for the first time gave me a picture of what heaven is going to be like. Multicultural environments are great equalizers, and strangely enough, even though I was in a strange land, I felt a stranger no more; I was at home!
My ministry context in Woodburn, OR, where I have been pastoring between June 2003 and February 2015, provided a great opportunity for multicultural ministry. In a country where the wounds of racism are still somewhat fresh and polarization and deep divides still exist, it is imperative for God’s church to be on the front lines of healing, protecting, engaging, and change. God’s diverse people in mission and ministry together is the right way to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20), change the world, and prepare individuals for the Second Advent. Given my differentness, previous experiences in life, and personal commitment to promote love and service in making a difference, I feel that I can contribute. My journey with the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church has been part of the realization of the Kingdom of God.

**Purpose**

The task of this project is to develop, implement and evaluate a vision and a strategy for multicultural ministry in the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church. I am mainly interested in assisting church members in journeying from a place of indifference toward the possibilities of multicultural ministry to a place of engagement and fulfillment, where people seize transformational opportunities for mission and ministry in our community. This task is essential for development and growth, both individually and collectively.

**Statement of the Problem**

The City of Woodburn, OR is home to a population of 24,223 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Over half of the residents are Hispanic, while 1/4 to 1/3 are Russian Orthodox Old Believers (“Woodburn, Oregon,” n.d., para. 5). Kramer (2001) contends...
that the Old Believer population in Oregon numbers as many as 10,000 people, most of them located in the Woodburn area. Adding to its diversity, 35.4% of the total population of Woodburn is foreign born (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

Started as a church plant 30 years ago, the mostly White, non-Hispanic Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church has traditionally kept a membership of around a hundred, with a current membership of 101 and an average attendance of 38 in 2011. Despite an ideal, central location in town, an ability to embrace and support new members and attendees, as well as yearly outreach programs, the church has not seen significant growth. Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church does not intentionally reflect the makeup of our community due to a lack of vision for multicultural ministry, therefore our mission and ministry impact is minimal.

**Justification for the Project**

There is limited dialogue and understanding of biblical teachings on equality, human value and dignity, and community as related to cross-cultural issues among church members.

Opportunities for service in multicultural settings are multiple, yet barriers of communication, various customs and economic factors hinder an awareness unless people are intentional to overcome them and discover and address specific needs.

Segregation and separation by culture, ethnicity, and race has minimal redemption impact on society. Multiculturalism is part of the fabric of the American society in the 21st century, therefore churches that intentionally reflect the makeup of their communities
stand a better chance at meeting the holistic needs of all peoples as mandated by Scripture.

Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church has not experienced significant growth over the last two decades, its mission and ministry impact being minimal.

There is currently no milieu for second and third generation Seventh-day Adventist immigrants to worship in English in Woodburn, OR.

**Expectations for the Project**

This project will better equip me as a pastor with necessary skills to facilitate understanding of multicultural issues.

This project will create opportunities for dialogue and learning so that church members, as they develop and grow, may intentionally address and manage such issues.

This project will better prepare the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church for ministry to and with the diverse neighboring community.

This project may potentially serve as a resource for churches and pastors in similar multicultural environments.

**Delimitations**

I started this journey with the clear intention of seeing what happens when my church is presented with the opportunity to explore awareness in regards to multicultural ministry in our community. I knew that I cannot change people and it was not my intent to do so with this project. Consequently, I set out to develop and implement a strategy for multicultural ministry and evaluate how that impacts people in my church who have
previously been unintentional about reaching out to the diverse community all around. Individual as well as collective progress and transformational growth is the responsibility of all involved and I determined from the beginning to accept, research, and work with whatever realities, outcome, or results the interaction would offer. While as a pastor I am interested in seeing my church grow qualitatively and quantitatively, it was a burden I refused to carry throughout the project so as to be as objective as possible in my leadership and research.

**Limitations**

The current project unfolded over the course of 12 months. This time frame provided an opportunity to begin the development of a vision and a strategy for multicultural interaction. The assessment tool used for entry and exit evaluation, the IES, provides a snapshot of possible changes taking place between the administrations of the instrument within the timeframe of the project. Twelve months might not be enough for sustainable growth and meaningful change and transformation with lasting impact upon the culture of the local church.

While the project was aimed at benefitting the entire congregation, 30 individuals took the initial survey with 27 of them retaking it at the end of the year. Participation in the various learning activities, seminar, sermons and cross-cultural interaction varied and it was beyond my control.

The IES and the project as a whole provided an opportunity to reflect on where people are when it comes to multicultural ministry, to take ownership of their own learning process, and to take the steps necessary to expand their cultural tool kit and
move beyond their own comfort zone. As this component varied from individual to individual, the personal and collective impact of the project was limited to the degree of interest, willingness and commitment each participant presented in embarking on this journey of (self) discovery and growth.

**Definition of Terms**

*IES.* The Intercultural Effectiveness Scale is an assessment tool developed by the Kozai Group in 2009 that analyzes competencies in cross-cultural interactions. At the time of its usage at Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church, the survey had been taken by over 15,000 participants all over the world and was widely used in academia, business, and government for assessing intercultural competence.

*Multicultural ministry.* As Garces-Foley (2007b, p. 211) points out “while culture, race, and ethnicity are certainly not synonymous in the sociological literature, those in the pews often use these terms as if they were.” For the purposes of this project document, the phrase *multicultural ministry* encompasses any and/or all variations of multi-ethnic, multi-racial, cross-cultural, or intercultural ministry.

*Molokans.* Members of various Christian groups evolved from Eastern Christianity practicing traditions that do not conform to those of the Russian Orthodox Church. Molokans tend to call themselves “Spiritual Christians.”

*NAD.* North-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

*NPUC.* North-Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

*NT.* New Testament.
Old Believers. A Russian Orthodox split that divided the Russian Orthodox Church in the 17th Century over minor liturgical changes introduced by Moscow’s Patriarch Nikon. The tension between Old Believers and the Russian Orthodox Church grew and escalated to the point of persecution, which led to significant numbers of Old Believers fleeing Russia and establishing flourishing diaspora communities. Woodburn, OR is home to such a community started in 1964 when 40,000 Old Believers (Hardwick, 1993) arrived from China, via a short stay in Brazil where they had received free land but could not adjust to the significantly different, tropical climate.

OT. Old Testament.

Description of the Project Process

Theological reflection will explore the biblical evidence of God’s design for community with special attention to what community meant and how it was realized in the Garden of Eden, with the people of Israel, and in the NT Church. Additionally, the multicultural aspects of the Great Commission will be explored.

Current literature on cross-cultural ministry will be reviewed with special emphasis on leadership in multicultural churches, communication, change theory, and community service.

A vision and a strategy for meaningful multicultural ministry will be created by: (a) gathering data about the makeup of our community; (b) assessment of church members’ perception of the current situation; (c) creating opportunities for visioning and dialogue on multicultural issues; (d) developing a strategy for member training and improvement of church ministries. Developing a vision and a strategy for multicultural
ministry in the Woodburn Seventh-day Adventist Church will be a multi-faceted approach focusing on the following core values: (a) knowledge; (b) availability; (c) proximity; and (d) spirituality.

The following implementation steps will be taken: (a) creating a population profile for the City of Woodburn; (b) initial administration of the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale to assess members’ ability and readiness for multicultural interaction; (c) developing and presenting a training seminar focusing on cross-cultural ministry that includes diversity and intercultural communication exercises; (d) conducting and facilitating four church-wide meetings for visioning and dialogue; (e) involving the Church in identifying or creating new opportunities for cross-cultural ministry and community service and engaging members in intentional multicultural ministry; and (f) biannual celebration of diversity and growth.

The IES will be administered again 12 months into the project, after the implementation steps have been taken, to assess any change in overall vision and readiness for multicultural interaction, followed up by a church-wide review of progress.

This project will be completed by December 2012.
CHAPTER 2

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY

Introduction

From the very beginning of Creation to the last pages of recorded prophetic history, the Scriptures present a God who is actively involved in everything that has to do not only with human beings but also with all constitutive elements of our universe. Starting in Genesis 1 and 2 with the majestic description of origins before human time and immediately after its establishment, where the Creator God speaks things into existence (בראשית בראש אלוהים) and concluding with the grandiose scenes of the earth made new in Revelation 21 and 22, where the same Almighty God (κυριος ο θεος ο παντοκρατωρ) dramatically restores peace and equilibrium to the universe, thus ending the traumatic history of sin, the Bible recounts the unending love story of God and His people. God’s greatest desideratum is to be with His people and that is unchangeable, as is His character (Mal 3:6; Jas 1:17). Consequently, He constantly pursues people from the very first breath of their existence, despite their rejection of Him, continuing to reveal Himself to them as Immanuel, “God with us,” who, in the end, pitches His tent in the neighborhood (Rev 21:3), so that He could eternally be with His people.

God’s people are a picture of absolute diversity. They are young and old, male and female, black and white, and so many beautiful colors in between, rich and poor, religious and non-religious, of different ethnicities and cultures, with a plethora of dreams
and aspirations; living their lives according to their own principles and values, God-given or not. They make choices every day and face the consequences thereof, and no matter who they are or where they have been, they are the object of their Creator’s supreme attention and sacrificial care (John 3:16,17). Consequently, any theology of multicultural ministry begins and ends with God and His revealed thoughts, will, and concrete actions in the context of His interaction with His diverse people.

This chapter will examine biblical evidence regarding God’s character and intentions towards and His will for His created people. Starting with an examination of oneness and diversity in the Creation account, followed by an exploration of the narrative of the “stranger in your midst” as illustrated in Old Testament policies and cross-cultural attitudes of the chosen people, Israel, continuing with an analysis of multicultural issues in New Testament Christianity, the chapter concludes with a reconsideration of missional perspectives in the light of the Great Commission and the inclusiveness of God’s love. As the title suggests, far from being exhaustive, this chapter is just an attempt towards contouring in broad strokes who God is in His love for His diverse people and what He wants His people to become as they get ready to see Him again very soon (John 14:3).

**Oneness and Diversity in Creation**

**Oneness and Plurality Within the Godhead**

The book of Genesis opens with the primordial picture of a powerful God at work. His creative activity is the predominant topic of the first two chapters of Genesis. They clearly describe a God intensely and purposefully involved in the starting and careful crafting of a new storyline, one that includes an environment populated with new
and brand new categories: heavenly objects, a breathable atmosphere, water, plants, animals, new beings, time and seasons, work and activities, etc. The common denominator of this diversity of form and function is Elohim, the initiator of everything that comes out of the formless confusion of the elemental תוהו ובוהו.

The word Elohim appears more than 2,500 times in the Hebrew Bible. As Kidner (1967, p. 43) points out, אֱלֹהִים is used some 35 times in Genesis 1:1-2:3 alone. Even though the usage of Elohim is broad and complex, as Smith (2008, p. 12) correctly iterates, grammatically the word is a plural, which in biblical Hebrew means three or more distinct objects, ideas, or individualities—as opposed to the singular or the dual, necessitating one or two objects, ideas or individualities. Despite the idea that this might be a plural of majesty, denoting the employment of reverence, respect or worship, Albright (as cited in Wolf, 1991, p. 26) shows how the word connotes a deity’s totality of manifestation. Consequently, this Hebrew plural, often followed by a verb in the singular, underscores the idea of oneness and diversity right at the core of who the Triune Creator fundamentally is: God Three in One.

Surrounded by polytheistic nations, Israel of old stood in stark contrast with their belief in one God (Deut 4:35; 6:4; Isa 45:5; Zech 14:9). This monotheistic emphasis does not contradict the Christian concept of the triune God or Trinity, according to the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (2005, p. 29). The one and coexistent eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are frequently seen at work not only in the creative acts of Genesis, but also in the redemptive work for the people of the Old Testament. Thus, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make human beings in their own image (Gen 1:26), note how Adam and Eve become like them knowing good
and evil (Gen 3:22), get together and go out to deal with rebellion (Gen 11:7), or reveal their glory to faithful servants (Exod 3:6). Isaiah 48:16 presents all three persons of the Trinity busy in providing the means for salvation. “And now the Lord God (the Father) and His Spirit (the Holy Spirit) have sent Me (the Son of God).” And again in chapter 42:1: “I (the Father) have put My Spirit upon Him (the Messiah); He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.” This bent to love and mercy towards the different others will be explored later in this chapter.

From the very beginning, Elohim is a blueprint for diversity. Beautifully and synergistically combining oneness and plurality in both form and function, the Creator God establishes a pattern for the new world where diversity is perfection. As pointed out below, diversity is good and very good—the highest standard Divinity set for our world.

Diversity of Form and Function in Creation

A diverse God will create diversity naturally. The purpose of all things made in the first six days of Creation is to prepare an environment suitable for human dwelling. As Sailhamer (1992, p. 85) rightly contends, the primordial רָעָתָהוּתָהוּ is just a picture of an uninhabitable realm not yet ready for man to reside in. Despite the English translation rendering it “formless and empty,” a direct influence of the Septuagint (LXX) and the Greek philosophy at the time of translation of the Hebrew Bible into the LXX, רָעָתָהוּתָהוּ is just a dark place covered by waters. To prepare it for human habitation, Elohim creates a diversity of form and function intended not only to sustain life, but to maintain it at a level of perfection where everything functions at the highest of standards, according to
the divine plan, all the time. The Creator evaluates the diverse work of His hands and calls it simply מְאֹ֑דוּת, “very good.”

Commentators agree that the account of Creation is neatly organized in two parallel series of threes. Ramey (1997) shows how the first three days are days of forming, when God makes various environments, while the corresponding next three days are days of filling those environments (p. 5). Form and function beautifully meet in the diversity of Creation to craft something excitingly new. To begin with, days one to three, Elohim makes night and day, firmament (and atmosphere) and oceans, and the land. The second part of the week, days four to six, He creates the corresponding inhabitants of these environments: astronomical bodies, birds and fish, land animals and man. According to Ramey, plants are created on day three, before the sun, rather than on day six because the classification criterion used here is the capacity for movement—plants “lack the capacity for locomotion … unlike the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, the animals of the earth, and astronomical bodies,” and in that respect they belong to the classification of environments, or “places, rather than living beings” (p. 5).

Creation is dynamic. The speed at which everything is spoken into existence creates excellence and is imbued with excitement as the divine blueprint is put in motion. The lively creatures of days four to six quickly and thoroughly populate the environments of days one to three speedily fulfilling the purpose they were created for. This energetic diversity of form and function is a reflection of God Himself.

Ramey (1997) suggests:

God Himself is fully alive according to the terms of the Creation account! We first encounter God in motion – His Spirit moving across the face of the deep. The entire Creation account can be read as the result of this motion. The creative motion of God
has as its climax, a reproduction of Himself according to His own kind – humankind to rule over His creation, that is, human beings in His own image! (p. 6)

The God of Genesis is an active Creator whose word means action. He creates colors—the grass is always “green” in the Garden—textures, dimensions, air, light, water, fire, birds, stars, fish, animals, plants, trees, land, atmosphere, time, human beings and much more. And He chooses to call all of this diversity “good,” and especially “very good” at the end of day six, after Adam and Eve are created. This according to Davidson (1988, p. 11) “connotes the quintessence of goodness, wholesomeness, appropriateness, beauty.”

On the seventh day God rests from His creative activity, setting apart a place in time for Him to enter into a relationship with His newly created masterpiece (Gen 2:1-3). The Sabbath is the perfect completion of all Creation. It is now time to worship and celebrate!

Adam and Eve

Perhaps no other element of Genesis is as illustrative as Adam and Eve themselves when it comes to the diversity woven into the intricate tapestry of Creation. When God decides to make humanity (Gen 1:26), He creates them in His own image. Different commentators read different things into this comprehensive yet simple account. Davidson (1988) insists that what we have here is the wholeness of humanity.

Davidson iterates:

The Hebrew words še·lem (“image”) and də·mūṯ (“likeness”) although possessing overlapping semantic ranges, in the juxtaposition of vs. 26 appear to emphasize both the concrete and abstract aspects of human beings, and together indicate that the person as a whole, both in material/bodily and spiritual/mental components, is created in God’s image. (p. 8)
Ellen G. White suggests (as cited in Nichol, 1978, 1, p. 216) the fact that “man was to bear God’s image, both in outward resemblance and in character.” The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary also points out that this refers to their spiritual nature as living beings equipped with free will. Wolf (1991) regards the creation of Adam and Eve as the climax of Creation and emphasizes how being the only ones created in God’s image sets them apart from the rest of Creation. It is a distinctive characteristic. Wolf agrees with White in noting “man is like God primarily in his moral and spiritual capacity and was created with the ability to be righteous and holy” (p. 31). Karl Barth (as cited in Wolf, 1991) argues, “the plural pronouns us and our in Gen 1:26 anticipate the human plurality of male and female and indicate something about the nature of the divine existence also” (p. 32).

A diverse God creates the first human family (Gen 1:27) using diverse materials to achieve His purpose. Adam comes from the dirt of the ground and the Divine breath of life (Gen 2:7), while Eve is formed out of Adam’s bone and flesh (Gen 2:21-23). They are different, yet they are one (Gen 2:24). This blend of diversity and oneness is clearly defined from the beginning as a separate, new category. Therefore a man is supposed to leave his family of origin—the Hebrew word ‘ā·zaḇ is a very forceful term, literally meaning “to abandon” or “to forsake”—and invest everything in his relationship with his spouse, in absolute freedom from any external interference. This suggests not only that unity can be achieved in diversity, but also that this goal is mandated by God, as it is the highest standard for human relationships.

Sexual differentiation is an integral part of the creation order. As Davidson (1988, p. 6) emphasizes it is not part of the divine order, but it is something God creates for
Adam and Eve. The transcendent God is beyond the polarity of sex. Consequently, there is a “radical separation of sexuality and divinity” (p. 7). Thus, Elohim is way different than the gods of other Ancient Near East people, a topic of concern for the author of Genesis. This duality of sexes from the beginning, however, is a fundamental characteristic of what it means to be human.

Adam and Eve are the recipients of God’s blessing (Gen 1:28) as both of them were to jointly share the blessings and responsibilities conferred on them in equal manner (Nichol, 1978, 1, p. 217). As Davidson (1988) further notes, “there is no hint of ontological or functional superiority or inferiority between male and female” (p. 7). They are to take care of the Garden and everything in it and to rule over it. The bipolarity of the sexes in Creation is to be an advantage in their work of tending to the needs and functions of everything else on earth. Though they share equal rights and responsibilities, together they could work better as their different characteristics could render a more holistic approach to their duties. After all, two are better than one (Ecc 4:9).

Old Testament Policies and Desired Cross-Cultural Attitudes of Israel

From the very onset of their journey towards becoming God’s chosen people, God reveals Himself to them as Yahweh, “I am who I am” (Exod 3:14). Yahweh is a God who is actively involved in the lives of His people. His will is Law. His Law and all the rules and regulations given to Israel are meant to, on one hand, reveal to them the character of God, and, on the other, to regulate their daily lives and the relationships they were to develop and maintain with one another. Even though Israel started out as God’s elect for a special mission—showing the whole world the knowledge of the true God—His intentions
regarding their makeup as a people was a reflection of who He was as a triune God in relationship with His diverse creation. Israel was to reflect the non-exclusivist character of God in their dealing with the different other that happened to be in their midst.

After their experience in Egyptian captivity, Israel had plenty of opportunity to learn how to relate to the stranger dwelling with them as people of other ethnicities not only followed them out of Egypt, but also added themselves to Israel, for various reasons, at different points in their journey to the Promised land. Some might have simply been impressed by the power of Israel’s God as He was at work day and night in favor of His people and just wanted to be themselves beneficiaries of His blessings. Keil and Delitzsch (1857-78) point out that other foreigners might have simply been purchased servants, settlers, servants hired for wages or merchants with a temporary or permanent residence with Israel (Exod 12:43 section, para. 2). Whatever the reason for their close proximity to God’s people, the stranger was a constant presence in Israel.

There are numerous passages in the Torah and throughout the Old Testament referring to how they were supposed to relate to these different others:

And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. (Lev 19:33, 34)

Before exploring how Israel was supposed to relate to the stranger in their midst, we need to clarify just who this stranger was and discover some of the reasons God had for allowing them to, in many cases, even become part of His people.
Narrative of the Stranger in Your Midst

As mentioned above, there were various reasons for strangers to dwell with the people of Israel. As a way of fulfilling their mission to be a witness to the world about who God is and about what He can do, Israelites attempted to turn some of them into converts, as evidenced in Matthew 23:15 (NIV). The Greek word for that is προσηλυτος, translated *convert, stranger or foreigner*, a proselyte. Clarke (1831) cites various treatises on the religious customs of the Jews pointing to the fact that the proselyte is a person who had come from his own people and country to sojourn with another (Exod 12:43 section, para. 4). Consequently, if one were not a direct descendant of Jacob or Joseph, then one would be considered a stranger.

Based on their willingness to be naturalized, these strangers or proselytes were mainly divided in two categories. First, there were those who simply respected all the customs of the Jewish culture, but were not willing to practice them for their own. These were called “strangers of the gate.” Second, there were those who not only respected Jewish customs and laws, but also were interested in practicing them for their own. These were called “strangers of righteousness.” As Barnes (1834) points out, the distinction between the two categories was very clear: the “proselytes of the gate” approved of the Jewish religion, renounced the pagan superstitions, and conformed to some of the rites of the Jews, but were not circumcised or baptized. On the other hand, the “proselytes of righteousness” wholly and fully embraced the Jewish religion, were baptized, were circumcised, and conformed to all the rites of the Mosaic institutions (Matt 23:15 section, para. 4, 3). According to Clarke (1831) proselytes of the gate were forbidden to eat the Passover or partake of any of the sacred festivals, but the proselytes of righteousness
“had the same rights, spiritual and secular, as the Jews themselves” (Exod 12:43 section, para. 4).

There is wide disagreement in the rabbinical literature, as cited by Gill (1746-63), regarding how to turn a stranger of the gate into one of righteousness. Rabbi Meir for instance suggests that the stranger of the gate should abide by all the precepts of the Law, with the exception that they were allowed to eat of “things that die of themselves.” In the presence of three neighbors, they were supposed to take upon themselves the seven precepts commanded the children of Noah: the first forbad idolatry, the second blasphemy, the third murder, the fourth uncleanness, the fifth theft, the sixth required judgment, or punishment on malefactors, the seventh forbad eating the member of any creature alive (Matt 23:15 section, para. 4, 5).

While all rabbinical wisdom tends to agree with circumcision as the necessary condition for becoming one of their own, some have initially disputed the need for baptism, a Jewish custom that was soon to follow circumcision. Gill (1746-63) shows how in the end, it was settled that the entire process should include a careful examination where all the advantages and disadvantages of being a Jew were presented and the individual was asked to state whether he understands and accepts and is ready to proceed, followed by circumcision, sometimes even twice if hindrances were present, dipping in water immediately after the person was healed and even sacrifices (Matt 23:15 section, para. 11). The final result was that the stranger was now regarded as a native Jew (para. 5).
Pluralism and Diversity of the Stranger

There are at least four different words in the Hebrew Bible used to designate who the stranger was, as Keil and Delitzsch submit (1857-78, Exod 12:43 section, para. 2), and together they paint a compelling picture of pluralism and diversity. The first such word is *ben nekar*, בּן־נכר, the son of a stranger or foreigner, one who was not of the genuine Hebrew stock, or one who had not received circumcision. *Nekar* occurs 36 times in the Old Testament (in such places as Gen 17:12, 27; Gen 35:2, 4; Ps 144:7, 11; Is 56:3) and is applied quite generally to any foreigner springing from another nation.

The second word used to describe the stranger is *ger*, גּר, translated sojourner, alien, stranger, properly a guest. *Ger* occurs 83 times in the Hebrew Bible (in such places as Gen 15:13; 23:4; Exod 20:10; Lev 19:33, 34) and it designates a foreigner living for a shorter or longer time in the midst of the Israelites. This is the correspondent of the Greek *proselutos*, προσήλυτος, an arriver from a foreign region, an acceder (a convert) to Judaism—a proselyte. Buttrick (as cited in Parker, 2004) reveals that:

The “stranger” occupies a place somewhere between a foreigner and a native-born person. He comes to dwell in a community that is not his own, and therefore lacks the protection and benefits provided by kin and birthplace. This concept of the sojourner is found throughout the Old Testament, but, surprisingly, it is not limited to non-Israelites. It has a deeper application to the people of Israel as God’s covenant people. The basic meaning of גּּר, sojourner, is employed to express Israel’s relation to God’s favor. Israel lives by God’s invitation, “Come and live over at my place,” and by doing the will of the divine host: “This land is mine; for you are strangers [גזרים] and sojourners [חושמים] with me” (Lev 25:23). (p. 234)

The third word for the stranger is *toshab*, וֹשָׁב, referring to a dweller, a settler, a resident alien. *Toshab* occurs 14 times in the Old Testament (in such places as Gen 23:4; Exod 12:45; Lev 22:10; Num 35:15; 1 Kgs 17:1; Ps 39:12) and it designates a person
who settled permanently among the Israelites, without being received into their religious fellowship.

The fourth word employed to describe the stranger in the Hebrew Bible is sakhir, שָׂכִיר. It is used 17 times in the Old Testament (in places such as Exod 12:45; Deut 24:14; Job 14:6; Isa 21:16; Jer 46:21; Mal 3:5). This was the non-Israelite who worked for an Israelite for daily or yearly wages—a hired hand.

As presented above, the Hebrew Bible employs the use of various words to show who the stranger is. Whether referring to place of origin, the reality of sojourning along, (non) permanent residence, or a specific socio-economic status, the stranger presents a picture of pluralism and diversity in the otherwise ethnocentric, monocultural Jewish system. When giving them instruction on how to relate to the stranger, addressed later in this chapter, the Lord simply uses words like the ones described above. God does not describe the stranger in terms of ethnicity, race, culture, age, gender, status, etc. After all, what He created in the beginning was Adam, humankind (Gen 1:26) and that is exactly how He refers to mankind 527 times in the Old Testament. God makes no distinctions between people, while allowing, and even regulating diversity and pluralism.

Attitudes Toward the Stranger

For the most part, people in the ancient world lived in partial isolation. While traveling merchants and the Roman road system provided for the free circulation of information and goods, it was highly unlikely for people to move around that much themselves. Most of the times, because of the way life was structured, individuals would be born, live their entire lives, and die in or around one place. Given Israel’s way of
inheriting their territory, as a Divine allotment, life generally happened in isolation, without much movement, unless the Lord (like in the call of Abraham, Gen 12:1-20) or catastrophic events required it—like famine, or war. Therefore, seeing somebody new in town, a stranger people did not know much about, raised questions which would require the stranger to always be on high alert and ready to provide opportune answers.

People were generally suspicious of the whereabouts of the stranger “in a day when few ventured far from their ancestral hills and valleys” (Nichol, 1978, 1, p. 792). Was there a reason the stranger was so far away from home? Was he guilty of breaking some law? Was he evading justice? Was he a slave running away from his master and daily responsibilities? This was the day when if someone accidentally killed another, he could have had his life spared if he managed to make it unharmed to one of the six cities of refuge set up by God for that purpose (Num 35:15). So at the sight of a new individual in town, people would have questions like that about the identity and purposes of the stranger in their midst.

Being looked at with suspicion, continuously having the feeling that one has to explain oneself all the time, not only put the stranger on the defensive, but also turned him into a disadvantaged category. The next section of this chapter will explore several passages in the OT where the Lord gives special instruction on how to deal with the stranger. Being disadvantaged made one the object of the special attention of God’s loving care in an Eastern society that was less individualistic, placing more value on the wellbeing of the group as a whole as opposed to the individual. The stranger was protected, provided for, and placed on a path to full inclusion and integration.
In the Old Testament we discover a God directly interested in the wellbeing of the stranger dwelling among His people. This way of treating the different other challenges ethnocentric pull and the exclusivist claims to truth and salvation ownership manifested in Old as well as New Testament Israel. It was not natural or easy to accept as one’s own one that was so different. To go from “Our God is one,” (Deut 6:4) to a place of “our God is the one God for all” (Isa 56:1-8) necessitates undertaking a significant journey of faith and discovery.

In Leviticus 19:33-34, God instructs Israel:

And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. (NKJV)

Not only is the Lord commanding them to do no harm, they were to treat the different other as a native, one born among them. Moreover, they are required to adhere to the highest of standards—of love for their own selves. In the New Testament, Jesus shows how the entire Law could be summed up in love for God and love for the neighbor, and He applies the same standard—“love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 12:30-31, NIV).

They are given two reasons for justification of such a high standard. The first iterates the fact that they used to be strangers themselves. For 400 years they were slaves in Egypt (Gen 15:13) and they knew how hard that was on their identity, daily lives, and very survival. They were to remember that the Lord made provision so that they are taken care of as they left Egypt (Exod 12:36, NIV) when they not only took what they asked for, but also even plundered the Egyptians so that they have enough for a long journey.
They witnessed how God gave them the food of the angels for 40 years in the wilderness. They knew how challenging it was to be a stranger, on the run, and they were supposed to bring back to memory all of those emotions and conclusions as they related to the strangers in their midst.

The second reason given for treating the different other with such attention and generosity resides in the very revelation of God in Leviticus 19:34 and throughout God’s dealings with His people in the OT. The phrase “I am the Lord your God” (אלהיכם יהוה אני, Ani Yahweh Elohekem) alone renders any additional reasons for obedience useless. In it, we have a most powerful combination of the names of God in the OT: one is the Yahweh (used 6,519 times in the Hebrew Bible) of the burning bush (Exod 3:14), the God who is actively involved in the lives of His people; the other one is Elohim (used 2,606 times in the Hebrew Bible), the triune God of Genesis, the Creator God who gives life, thus being present both at the beginning and end of everything; life itself.

This omnipotent combination of Yahweh and Elohim creates the most powerful picture of who God is in relationship with His people. This is a God who calls humans and the entire universe for that matter into existence, but also a God who cares enough about the individual particularities and needs of these imperfect beings that He lets Himself enter into a personal relationship with each one of them. He provides for them, leads them, protects them, even sends them strangers to take care of so that they could learn what it is like to create community and have mission. This God is not indifferent to the suffering of His people. He does something about it and does not stop there. “I am the Lord your God” is the safest place in the whole universe for the stranger and the disadvantaged to be. Thus, the Lord becomes “their inheritance” (Lam 3:24, NLT).
The same command to not mistreat the stranger is also given in Exodus 22:21-22 where it is expanded to include a clause against oppression. However, the stranger here is placed in the same context of the disadvantaged together with the widow and the fatherless. Zechariah 7:10 adds the poor to the same category of people they were not to plan evil against.

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary iterates:

This precept against the oppression of foreigners is most significant, since it is unlikely that such a provision was ever made in the laws of other ancient countries. While elsewhere foreigners might be harassed, the Mosaic law forbade the Hebrews to treat the strangers thus…Although the Hebrew were to remain separate from other nations in matters of religion, they were not to isolate themselves to the extent that they would fail to show kindness to a stranger. (Nichol, 1978, 1, p. 622)

Provisions for the protection of the stranger move from general commands not to harm to more specific legal requirements. Thus, Deuteronomy 27:19 warns that justice should be fairly given to the stranger and that the one perverting justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow is going to be cursed. Moreover, in Exodus 12:48-49, Numbers 9:14, Leviticus 24:22, Number 15:15, 16, 29 Israel was supposed to have one law for the native-born and the stranger. Moreover, Zechariah 8:16-17 presents a description of the principles involved in legally dealing with the stranger—judgment was supposed to be based on core values of truth, justice, and peace. God is portrayed as One who hates any other approach, as it would simply not resonate with His character.

The next step in the process of inclusion and integration is religious in nature. As presented in a previous subsection, those willing to become like the Jews were supposed to go through a process that included circumcision. It is only afterwards that they had full access to the Passover. We see here the inclusiveness of God at work where the stranger
is allowed full access to and participation in the religious festivals of His people. The Passover was most meaningful to the Hebrew people, who have been in slavery, have seen and experienced the liberating hand of God parting the Sea, and sparing their lives frequently throughout the Exodus. However, if strangers strongly desired to identify with God’s people, treasuring God’s laws, respectfully approaching His interventions in history on behalf of His children with a deep sense of awe towards the power and character of God, and if they were willing to undergo such a painful, intimate experience like circumcision, obeying all that He had commanded (Matt 28:20), the God of the Universe was willing and ready to bestow upon them an equal status to that of His chosen people. In the end, stranger and native are equally His beloved children.

God’s concern for the stranger includes practical aspects of a well thought welfare system that guaranteed full inclusion and integration. In Deuteronomy 24:14-21, the Lord repeats His previous commands not to oppress the aliens, hired servants, poor, and needy and to make no distinction between one of their brethren and aliens or servants. They were supposed to judge them fairly, to give them their due wages because “the Lord hears the cry of the alien” (Deut 24:15). This was such a serious command that breaking it would be sin to them! Then the Lord gives them specific instruction on how to help the less fortunate: they were not to glean grains, olives, and grapes as they were reserved for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow (Deut 24:19-21). In Leviticus 23:22, 19:9-10 they were not to wholly reap the corners of their field or to glean, which was to be extremely beneficial for the poor and the stranger, as in the example of Ruth, the Moabite (Ruth 2:2, 15). With this reasonable welfare system and labor law in place, Israel was to be the beneficiary of God’s blessings (Deut 24:19).
The God of the stranger shows no partiality (Deut 10:17-19), an idea expanded on by Peter in the New Testament (Acts 10:34-48). He loves the stranger and commands His people to do the same. He’s constantly at work watching over them (Ps 146:9), providing relief for the disadvantaged. He “is a Father to the fatherless, a Defender of widows in his Holy habitation” (Ps 68:5), a Protector of the alien. He is a “swift witness against those who turn away an alien” (Mal 3:5) who are put in the same category with “sorcerers, adulterers, perjurers, those who exploit wage earners, widows, and orphans.” These are simply people who do not fear God.

As presented above, the OT Scriptures contain enough direct references to the situation of the stranger and how Israel was supposed to relate to the different others. Because He is directly interested in the wellbeing of His children, God’s ideal is for full inclusion and integration of the stranger socially, legally, and religiously. Anything less than that not only does not attract Heaven’s blessings, but will be met with God’s anger. He wants all His people to get along peacefully and develop healthy relationships with one another for it is good for them to do so. The next subsection will explore some of these advantages.

Outcomes and Ideals of Cross-Cultural Interaction

Based on OT evidence one could identify some ideals and possible outcomes of cross-cultural interactions between God’s people, current and future. Strangers are in our midst as a chance for us to grow, both as individuals and as a collective body. As Deuteronomy 15:7-18 present it, the disadvantaged—poor, needy, fatherless, widow,
orphan, stranger, etc.—are here to stay. They will never cease from our land. It is God’s will.

God’s people have thus an opportunity to become what He wants them to be—more generous, loving, caring, truthful, peaceful, etc. The way to achieve this goal is through service. Marti (2005) calls it sacrificial servanthood and iterates that it is necessary in cultivating a multicultural environment. “Servanthood reflects the nature of God and encourages people to go beyond tolerance or acceptance toward genuine, caring relationships between people who are different from one another” (p. 72). Personal and collective development and growth could be a possible outcome of such cross-cultural (inter) actions.

As people spend time together in their charity work, in the market place, at church and even in court, they get to know each other better. Consequently, true community is created. Stevens (2012) iterates, “The relational oneness of the great Three-in-One is the template expressing God’s most cherished intentions for all of humanity—relational oneness.” Reflecting the Divine community of the Elohim, the triune God of Creation, God’s people will learn to move and act together. As Stevens concludes, “God intended man to experience the ecstasy of community” (p. 48). Taking care of one another will slowly become second nature and artificially created distinctions will disappear as they are replaced by a plethora of characteristics they hold in common and celebrate often. Diversity will thus generate unity and vice versa. This will be a community of faith, where God manifests Himself often with unforeseen consequences for growth.

A diverse community can better reach out to a diverse world. It is simply better equipped to do so. Pluralism and diversity without cross-cultural interaction has no
missional value. As Power points out, “God’s redemptive mission includes both come and go structures” (2011, p. 3) and processes. Both OT and NT paradigms will be concurrently employed in order to present a unified message to the world. Enhanced mission is therefore the outcome.

As God’s people face the opportunities of dealing with the stranger in their midst, they watch God in action. They get to see directly into the heart of God at His moment of vulnerability when He takes care of the stranger. Consequently, the stranger helps us get a glimpse of who God really is. This is a precious moment of rare theophany. He reveals Himself in all the glory of His pure and caring intentions towards the disadvantaged and His people get to know Him better in the process for who He truly is—a God of love and compassion, who never disappoints, a redeeming God ready to save anyone.

**Multicultural Issues in New Testament Christianity**

In a complementary reversal of direction, from the Old Testament *come*, where God strategically sets up a nation to attract people from all over the world that would come and get the knowledge of God to take back to their own countries and people, to the New Testament *go*, where the ecclesia represents those called out to be sent out, eminently, mission is the defining mark of the Christian movement. As laid out by Christ, every one of His followers is encouraged to engage in preaching the Gospel to all: starting in Jerusalem and Judea and continuing to Samaria and the ends of the world. People of all nations are to hear the Good News, repent of their sins, be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and immediately get to work as missionaries, witnessing for Him. Mission is not an option in the New Testament; it’s a sacred duty.
One God, One World, One People

The New Testament reiterates and builds on Old Testament foundations in its understanding of the diverse nature of God as reflected in His interactions with and ideal for His people.

Paul challenges the Ephesians:

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called, one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph 4:1-6, NIV)

In this passage all three Persons of the Divinity are involved in creating the unity of love desired for God’s people. The Trinity in unity thus serves as the blueprint and motivation for the building of ideal relationships within God’s people. It is obvious that only repentant and transformed individuals, living a life worthy of the high calling of God, characterized by humility, gentleness, patience, respect for others, making every effort—unity does not come easy—with the sanctioning and under the guidance of the Spirit, the Lord (Jesus) and the Father, will be able to achieve such unity within Christian community.

To further clarify his message of the status different people have in Christ, the Apostle unequivocally spells it out for the new Christian community in Galatians 3:28. In the economy of God all are one in Christ Jesus. Paul mentions three pairs of complete opposites that take on a new identity when called by His name. Jews and Greeks, monotheists and polytheists are now one in Jesus. Slave and free lose their status in regards to freedom and become one in Christ. Male and female move past gender
differentiation issues influencing their everyday life and responsibilities to now become part of something else, something different, and something totally new.

Christian community as a microcosm of the Kingdom of God is a reality based on the use of different categories. In it there is no room for inequality, lack of freedom, or religious primacy. No more favorites, no more long hours or put-downs. God’s new world means order, unity, and love among His people. And at Christ’s Second Coming they—the scattered, the divided, the dispersed, and the different—will finally be gathered together in one (John 11:52). As Kee (1995) points out, establishing this type of inclusive community where people of all ethnic origins participate in the life of the new covenant community has been the Divine intention all along (p. 207).

God’s operating principle for saving fallen humanity is based on the fact that He shows no partiality. Anyone could be saved, provided they decided to accept God’s free gift. Acts 10:34-48 relates the story of salvation coming to the household of Cornelius, a Roman military officer, a centurion of the Italian cohort, in charge not of regional recruits, but of those from the Roman homeland—it cannot get more Gentile than that (Kee, 1995, p. 195). After a compelling vision, Peter goes to preach to a Gentile and all the various people under his command and care. When all receive the message and join the Christian community, Peter is convinced that indeed God shows no partiality. In Christ, Jew and Greek and Roman could really be brothers, because of their common destination—the Kingdom of God.

The all-inclusive character of the Gospel is shown in the language used throughout the passage. In verse 35, those of “every nation,” “whoever fears (worships) God and works righteousness (maintain a rigorous lifestyle of following God’s law and
will for their lives)” are accepted by Him. “Whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins—forgiveness (v. 43). Thus the Gospel is “proclaimed to all” (v. 37). Moreover, Jesus showed no partiality by healing “all who were oppressed” (v. 38).

The immediate, natural response and result of a people receiving Jesus in their lives as their Lord and Savior is baptism. It was evident that the Spirit of God was present and moving in the household of Cornelius (vv. 45, 46) and they all asked for and received the baptism into Jesus Christ (vv. 47). Baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ” signifies acceptance in the community and acts as an equalizer—different individuals starting a new life together, at the same time. From many, one! As they all received the same message, the same Holy Spirit, and all at the same time, there was truly no reason for claiming any sort of primacy or superiority. Salvation, eternal life (John 3:16) is free, in abundance and available to all.

Soteriology of Inclusion

The event that started it all for Peter was the vision of the great sheet containing representatives of the whole animal creation, clean and unclean, which he receives in Acts 10 and his reluctant obedience to what he knew was ultimately the will of God. As the pervasive belief and attitude went, there was no salvation without circumcision “according to the custom of Moses” (Acts 15:1). And the “men from Judea” would not hesitate to believe and teach anyone that, especially the Gentiles. That presented a problem—if salvation came through Jesus Christ and all it took was for anyone to just follow Him to receive eternal life, then anyone could be saved, including Gentiles. Could that be the case?
As the news hits Jerusalem that the Holy Spirit is active among uncircumcised Gentiles, the “brethren” are confronted with at least a two-faceted issue: what of circumcision, how can one be saved without being a Jew—a soteriological challenge, not to mention the obvious, practical aspect of it when it comes to local church life—are we supposed to open our synagogue up to just about anybody? What will the church become then? Are we, Jews, still God’s people—an ecclesiological challenge? There was a desperate need for a solution. As is the case with most organizations facing imminent change, one could not be arrived at without tension and debate.

The opportunity presents itself as Peter arrives in Jerusalem (Acts 11:2-3). He is questioned on how he could socialize with the unclean, uncircumcised Gentiles. As the Bible describes it, circumcision was on one hand a symbol of God’s election bestowed upon every male child of the Hebrews starting with Moses’s own sons. Not having it done would be a serious offense, attracting God’s punishment (Exod 4:24-26). Given at a very young age, the individual himself had of course no say in it. It was expected that later in life the individual would understand what it is and what its original purpose was, especially as adult males had to have the same ritual performed for their own children.

On the other hand, circumcision was a sign in their flesh. It was personal and painful. It was designed so in order to help them remember who they were and who God was. Like any other human beings, the Jews tended to forget easily. Even though they carried with them in their flesh the very sign of belonging to God, they chose to forget its meaning and when convenient chose to hide behind it in their rejection of those who were different than themselves, moreover thinking that they were better than anyone else, the sole recipients of God’s favor.
In their misguided religious fervor, trying to protect their overly sensitive egos and feeding their belligerent pride, God’s people managed to turn one of the main reasons for doing mission, being the light of the world, into an obstacle to it. They simply forgot and their minds grew more resistant to the truth. That is most likely one of the reasons why Jesus had to use parables (Matt 13:35). There is nothing dark about these “dark sayings of old” (Ps 78:2). The word used here, חידה (chṭydâh), does not designate something impossible to discern. It is just hard for the contemporaries of Jesus to get it—that is why He has to work hard to package it carefully. There is nothing dark or secret about it, this is just the initial revelation given humanity in the beginning that people just chose to disregard and forget. Even though God took measures to help them remember—the tabernacle, fire pillar by night and the cloud by day, parting the Sea, manna, and many other miracles, the Ten Commandments given in writing with the clear encouragement to “remember” (Exod 20:8), etc.—at the time when Peter goes up to explain to the leaders in Jerusalem that God is active in saving everyone, they remembered none of them. The sin of ethnocentrism exerted too strong of a pull.

Circumcision was not to give them soteriological primacy over the Gentiles. “Jew first and then the Greek” is only methodological (Rom 1:16). It does not establish an order of superiority or easiness of access to God. God is still the God of all peoples!

Peter explains that God’s directive was very clear, “what God has cleansed, you must not call common” (Acts 11:9). Here clearly there is no reference to food, as the word for “common” refers to the ritually impure. This is the word the Jews used to refer to the Gentiles.
All who were not Jews were viewed as the “common” rabble, shut out from God’s covenant. The practices of these spiritual outcasts, different from those of the chosen people, were called “common” things, and as these “common” things were generally those forbidden by the law, all such prohibited things or actions became known as “common.” (Nichol, 1978, 6, p. 250)

God is at work preparing Cornelius’ heart for the receiving of the Gospel. An angel of God gives him instruction (v. 13). And as the voice from heaven informs him, Peter’s mission is not only to go to the Gentile’s house, but most importantly to deliver the “words by which you and all your household will be saved” (v. 14). As a consequence, the Holy Spirit falls upon Gentiles in Caesarea (v. 15).

Change is not easy. It has a cost and carries long-lasting consequences. The apostles and the brethren in Jerusalem are confronted with a dilemma: is this real? Can we accept it as such? The sanctioning of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentile experience in Caesarea was evident, this being the same Holy Spirit falling upon them earlier in Acts 2:1-4. Even though they are not prepared for such a change, they have no other option than to accept it. Salvation is now available to anyone (v. 18). Upon this realization, they became silent—a proper attitude of reflection and repentance—and then glorified God. Worship is the natural response when realizing the inclusive nature of God’s salvation.

The tremendous results of the work among Gentiles do not hesitate to appear. Many Hellenists are converted in Antioch (v. 24). Saul joins Barnabas for a whole year and many Gentiles become disciples (v. 26). And it is here, in Antioch, that they were first called Christians.
Ecclesiology of Inclusion

Judaism was the cradle of Christianity, but it was about to become its grave too! The Jerusalem Council of Acts 15:1-29 is the new movement’s attempt to sort out the more practical ecclesiastical challenges resulting from the inclusiveness of God’s salvation arrived at earlier. Even though the issue is framed in terms of a theological problem—conflict over circumcision—in fact it is just a practical matter of how to partake of the same Christ within a diverse environment: Jews and Gentiles together, as Christians, in religious expression, lifestyle, shared resources and their common life as members of the same body, the church. The Jews needed a framework they could use to explain the new reality of salvation being made available to anyone and to manage the inherent tension with their long-held beliefs. They needed a way to rationalize the switch from “we are God’s people” to “we are part of God’s people.” Their sense of loss needed some sort of restitution to achieve closure.

When people who treasured the old ways came down and stirred up the church in Antioch (vv. 1-2), Paul and Barnabas dutifully engaged them and, as a way to resolve the dispute, went to Jerusalem to get counsel from headquarters. It is significant how the same news of the conversion of Gentiles produces joy in Phoenicia and Samaria, and concern in Jerusalem (vv. 3-4). Some Pharisee believers wanted the new Gentile converts subdued—circumcised—and commanded to keep the Law of Moses (v. 5). These are possibly people who gave as a reason for having the government kill Jesus, “If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation” (John 11:4). The Gentile threat was personal and it needed to be addressed.
Peter stood up and addressed the matter head on. He reiterated that God acknowledged the Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit (vv. 8-9). God “made no distinction between us and them.” Moreover, God had purified those previously regarded as ritually impure by giving them “heart purifying faith.” Thus the locus of the identifying mark of the people of God is moved from circumcision of the flesh to purification of the heart. This is in accord with Romans 10:12, 10, where there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. All that is necessary for salvation is heart belief and mouth confession. Faith in Jesus as personal Savior and public announcement of it in the context of mission is all it takes to be included in the loving embrace of God as His people.

Upon presentation and address of the various facets of the issue and the miracles taking place among the Gentiles, silence falls upon the audience, by now a multitude (v. 12). One of the final arguments in favor of full ecclesiological acceptance of the Gentiles is the reference to Amos 9:11-12 where it is clearly states, “the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all Gentiles.”

The fourfold solution to the circumcision problem contained abstinence from things polluted by idols, sexual immorality, things strangled, and blood (v. 20). The first two concern religious and moral issues, while the last two are matters of ritual restrictions. “The aim is to remove from Gentile Christian behavior the most obvious moral and ritual blemishes that might prevent cordial and easy relationships with Christians of Jewish origin (Kee, 1995, p. 199). This is a salutary resolution of the conflict as the zone of final agreement is located nowhere near circumcision itself! The message is clear: circumcision is not a criterion for salvation! This solution allowed for
the ecclesiastical inclusion of Gentiles and recognized their right to salvation, while satisfying the bruised ego of the hardliners in Judaism, which demanded compensation for their perceived loss of firstness or privilege.

A patient God has lead His diverse people once again to a place where they are better positioned for mission and ministry. Wherever the Holy Spirit is invited and allowed to work, miracles happen and organizational progress occurs. After the Jerusalem Council, the Gospel not only goes to all, but is allowed to work within Christianity for the mending of relationships and church growth.

The Great Commission and the Inclusiveness of the Love of God

Sacrificial Love: Jesus Died for All

In the incarnation, the Son of God crossed the great divide caused by sin in order to save all humanity. The miracle of the *kenosis* (Phil 2:5-8) shows a God who is not holding on to His divinity, but is willing to lower Himself by becoming flesh so that He could be as close as possible to those He was willing to love all the way. Calvin (as cited by Musick, 2005) simply considers Philippians 2:7 a methodological description of the way Christ acted. Whether the *kenosis* is in any way an alteration of Christ’s divine nature in order to put on humanity or not, the fact remains that Jesus willingly did it in an act of selfless love.

Leaving behind the perfection of the heavenly realm, He came down here in the greatest cross-cultural adventure of all time to be Immanuel, God with us. Those who deserved to die because of their sins all of a sudden had the possibility of receiving eternal life. As Romans 5:8 clearly states, this is proof that God indeed is love and He
God’s love is universal, encompassing all peoples. After living an exemplary life where He further demonstrated the love of God in His preaching, teaching, and healing ministry, Jesus ascended the Golgotha hill to offer the ultimate sacrifice. “There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13, NLT). Jesus thus showed that friendship is more important than differences, that love cannot only conquer self, but can also offer self for the salvation of many. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

The universality and power of God’s love to defeat sin and its consequences and provide much needed freedom is beautifully displayed in the last days, hours, and minutes of Jesus’ life. He forgives all those who have betrayed, beaten, and belittled Him, shows concern for loved ones in shock, watching Him die on the cross, and offers absolution and eternal life to the thief next to Him. “Father forgive them for they don’t know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34, NLT) is the climax of a life well lived, the triumphant cry inaugurating the Kingdom that is to come to “whosoever” takes Him at His word. His love finally conquered and won back the lost world.

The Great Commission: Go to All

The Christian church is charged in the New Testament with the responsibility of taking the Gospel to all. The Great Commission is an appeal to all followers of Christ to reach out to all peoples: “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.
Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-18). If in the Old Testament they were to represent God locally as people would come to them, in the New Testament the emphasis is on the active involvement of Christians to take the first step themselves.

As Gugliotto (2011) points out, the charge to go is based on the authority of Christ. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus affirms that He possesses “all authority in heaven and on earth.” Jesus quotes from Daniel 7:14 as the Son of Man ruling over a Kingdom that will never be destroyed, as well as from Psalm 110 where He receives a heavenly throne and the Lord promises to extend His rule from Jerusalem until the whole earth submits to Him. As Paul makes it clear, Jesus broke down the wall separating people from people, because He has the authority to gather a people for God from all families of earth (Eph 2:11-22) in order to prepare them for mission.

A significant multicultural aspect defines the Great Commission. Gugliotto further interprets the “go” in Matthew 28:19 as a call not necessarily to overseas missions, but to mission closer to home as Πορευόντες literally means “as you go your way, about your daily routine.” The word does not stand alone as a separate command, but it is attached and describes the circumstances for making disciples. He sees this as a clear instruction to God’s people to dedicate their lives at home, at work, and at play to approach everyone they can to fulfill the mission. However, given the multicultural aspect of most American communities today and the vast existent differences between various subcultures, it is hard to believe that mission will remain strictly confined to homogenous environments.
Success in achieving the goals of the Great Commission is strictly related to the presence and working of the Holy Spirit.

Burrill (1993) contends:

Each Gospel writer connects the accomplishment of Christ's mission with receiving the power of the Holy Spirit … Judaism of the first century had become an exclusive club of people who thought they possessed the truth. Salvation, they believed, was assured as long as they had membership in the seed of Abraham. Jesus came and disturbed their exclusiveness, calling them to account for their failure to fulfill His mission. Now Jesus was concerned lest the same thing happen to the Christian church…He had called this new body into existence for one purpose: to make disciples among all ethnic groups. His was a clarion call for commitment to that mission. And for its accomplishment, He promised them the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. (pp. 14,15)

The mission takes off explosively in Acts 2 under the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The universality of God’s encompassing interest for the salvation of His diverse people is reflected in the number and make up of the people that hear the message at Pentecost in their own language (Acts 2:5-11). The diverse multitude of Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs is moved and about three thousand people are added in just one day (v. 41). The power is so great that soon they stop counting and success is just measured in terms of the many who are “added to the church daily” (v. 47).

The God of the Great Commission is a God who wants to save all. No obstacle is too difficult for Him to overcome in both enabling and equipping His church for mission and preparing receiving hearts and minds of all ethnicities. His Spirit had been constantly working ever since in preparing a peculiar people that will be able to stand when Jesus
comes a second time to take them home (Luke 21:36). A diverse God, working with a diverse people to save a diverse world and to prepare those who follow Jesus for the ultimate reward—an eternal and spectacularly diverse Kingdom!

The Great Multitude Before the Throne

The last pages of Scripture reveal a God actively involved in defending His people against the attacks of the Devil and his acolytes. Satan’s attacks come in rapidly successive waves and only the final intervention of God can stop them. This is a God who makes true on His promises and the entire universe is witness to the process of bringing sin to an end. Jesus comes to rescue His diverse people (Rev 5:9) and they will finally be with their God forever.

One scene in particular sheds light on the diversity of those washed in the blood of the Lamb, who gather to worship Him. As Stefanovic (2002) correctly observes, they are the answer to the question asked in Revelation 6:17, “The great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (p. 266). The author further suggests that this group is the victorious, post-tribulation 144,000 (p. 265). This time, no one can count their numbers.

The entire Universe, around the throne, witnesses the scene: all the angels, the elders and the four living creatures. John the Revelator describes it in tremendous detail:

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” (Rev 7:9-10, NIV)
A great multitude, this ὀχλος, as Doukhan (2002) aptly points out, forms a multicultural and multinational group. *Ochlos* is used here to describe a victorious army, the use of white robes and palm branches “being part of the ritual for celebrating military victories” (p. 72). The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* agrees that this group represents the triumphant saints of all ages (Nichol, 1978, 7, p. 784). They are united in their worship, praising their God for the great salvation He made available to them. Could it be that true worship is the only endeavor that could actually unite God’s diverse people here on earth?

Heaven is not segregated. If the wolf and the lamb can graze together in peace and harmony (Isa 65:25), God’s people most definitely can too, with no artificial lines of separation based on ethnic, age, gender, economic, social, political, religious, or any other criteria. God’s method is to go beyond these artificial, man-made criteria to a place where love reigns supreme and fear is no more. There is no need to describe anyone by any of these categories anymore.

God just wants to be with His people and He is doing everything necessary to make it happen. God is one in His diversity and God’s people are one in the same way. For good and for God. What a picture of an ideal future!

**Conclusion**

The Bible details the sinuous relationship between the Creator God and His people. Reflecting the oneness and plurality within the Godhead, Adam and Eve begin a new storyline in the history of the universe marked by direct interventions of God in order to save His disobedient children from the attacks of His archenemy whenever
necessary, whatever the cost. The diversity of form and function in creation was to be a constant reminder of His love for them and an encouragement that their perilous and painful journey will one day end and all things will be restored to its initial, perfect, Edenic state.

As a way of walking and working towards that end, in the Old Testament, God’s people are charged with living with high standards in their mission to the world. They were to carefully respect and enjoy their diversity as well as treat the different others in ways that were reflective of God’s way of treating them. Inclusion and full integration socially, judicially, economically, and religiously were to be the guiding principles in this endeavor. They were to be different than the world, but not keep the world at a distance. God’s transcendence and his immanence were to be reflected in their attitudes towards those whom God wanted them to be a light to.

In the New Testament, God instructs His people to actively go to all in an attempt to make it plain that God still wants everyone to be saved. The Christian church was to be clear in its message of the universality of God’s salvation and make room at the table for any and all. They were to be a light that shines in the darkness. And as darkness falls upon the earth, God’s people will once again shine as bright as the morning stars. It is their worship of the one, true, diverse God that keeps them together and will grant them final victory over sin and the Devil. Gathered around the throne, in impossible to count numbers, the complete redeemed of all ages will spend eternity praising God and celebrating their restored relationship. And God will finally “see His offspring … and be satisfied” (Isa 53:10-11). What a scene that will be!
In preparation for the Kingdom, God’s diverse people minister to a diverse world in need. Their ministry is multicultural because their communities are highly multicultural. The next chapter will review current literature on multicultural ministry as practiced in multicultural churches in North America.
CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of American society, especially in the 21st century. According to early estimates of the 2010 Census, minorities in the United States account for 35% of the population, up 4% from 2000, a trend that, if continued, will make minorities the new majority in America by 2050 (Yen, 2010, para. 1). There are many contributing factors to the growth of multiculturalism in society like racial reconciliation started by the equality and civil rights movements of the 60s and 70s, immigration, and the 1965 Immigration Act. Diversity training at school and in the workplace, easy access to and the abundance of information available on the Internet, and inevitable substantial cross-cultural interaction in the public arena further expand multiculturalism even in countries that have traditionally been outside its influences.

Going beyond current socio-political tensions on the subject, an interesting phenomenon has taken place almost without notice. Warner (2004) points out that Christianity is no longer a white person’s religion (p. 23). Current trends suggest that the Christian church as an institution is shifting its center of gravity from the traditional
West, in the global North—Europe and North America—to the global South, where by 2050 Africa, South America and Asia will account for 80% of all Christians. Jenkins (2002) submits that as a result, only about one fifth of the world’s three billion Christians will be non-Hispanic Whites (p. 3). Warner (2004) writes that at present two thirds of the new immigrants to the United States are in fact Christian and “the new immigrants represent not the de-Christianization of American society but the de-Europeanization of American Christianity” (p. 20). The winds of change for the Christian church in the United States are blowing hard and they will continue to impact the church into the foreseeable future.

In spite of the fact that diversity is an ever-present reality in today’s world, Christianity in America in its understanding of mission is still tributary to McGavran’s homogenous unit principle, which posits that people basically like to only be around people who are like them. The homogenous unit principle had been translated into attempts to present Christianity within the boundaries of one’s own ethnicity, race and culture. As DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Kim (2004) found in their Multiracial Congregations Project, only 7.5% of all Christian congregations, and only 5.5% of Protestant churches in America are multiracial (pp. 1-5).

One corollary of this reality is the limited number of books and articles written on developing a vision for multicultural ministry. Most of the reviewed literature is either descriptive, being based on case studies of multiethnic churches, with strong ecclesiological overtones, that seeks to answer the question of what a multiethnic church is and how it functions; or prescriptive, originating in missiological contexts fueled by church growth theories and challenges, namely the mandate to take the Gospel to all the
world. Additionally, there are very few dissertations written on this topic. Given that multicultural congregations are atypical, as Emerson (2006) correctly observes, it was difficult for me to get a clear picture of what multicultural ministry is all about and how one could develop a vision for it in the local church, unless: (a) there is a hands-on, intentional, sustained effort to practically discover what it is within the context of a ministry project, which shall be discussed in a later chapter; and (b) the researcher identifies recurring themes pertaining to multicultural ministry in the available literature, which is the focus of this chapter.

**Multicultural Organizations**

As environments of diversity, multicultural churches are and function as multicultural organizations. Trefry suggests, “globalization efforts and demographic shifts mean that multicultural organizations are increasingly the norm” (2006, p. 563). Diversity in multicultural organizations presents several benefits, both to the organization itself as well as to the individuals connected with it. The organization might register an ability to apply knowledge of different cultures to current projects, matching employees with diverse clients, increased problem solving and decision making capabilities, as well as increased creativity and innovation in products and services.

Trefry (2006) points out that there are also personal benefits, including greater personal ability to cope with the unexpected, broadening of their perspectives on any given issue, greater tolerance and acceptance of others’ differences, greater flexibility in their own personal behavior, communication and interaction styles, and enhanced self-insight (pp. 568, 569). The personal benefits point to potential for personal growth and
change when one is connected with multicultural organizations.

Holvino (2008) defines multicultural organizations as environments where “the diversity of knowledge and perspectives that different groups bring to the organization shapes its strategy, work, management and operating systems, and its core values and norms for success.” Holvino also contends, “members of all groups are treated fairly, feel included, have equal opportunities and are represented at all organizational levels and functions” (p. 3). Multicultural organizations (n.d.b) are entities where multiculturalism exists and thrives. They foster an environment requiring “the existence, recognition, or preservation of different cultures or cultural identities” in their midst. These organizations are defined as environments “where employees of varied backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, and experiences can contribute freely, and achieve their individual potentials for their own and their organization's benefit” (“Multicultural Organization,” n.d.a).

As society grows more diverse, there is a pressing need to develop organizations that reflect the make up of society not only when it comes to the workforce, but in management and executive positions as well. An ideal would be to have organizations where there is no prejudice and discrimination, and where competence and personal giftedness are the main criteria for advancement.

**Defining Multicultural Ministry and Multicultural Church**

Defining multicultural ministry is critical in attempting to create a vision for this type of activity. Garces-Foley (2007b) points out, “there is no succinct way to capture the multicultural church phenomenon” (p. 212). While it is obvious that such a ministry mostly takes place in a diverse congregation context where the different others not only
coexist, but interact and engage, finding out what multicultural ministry is, what the factors influencing it are, how one recognize it when it happens, and who the people are who are involved in it remain important tasks.

Garces-Foley (2007a) attempts to answer these questions in studying the multicultural milieu of Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles, CA, where 75% of the membership is Asian-American while the rest is made up of people of different ethnicities. Research in gender and race relations conclusively suggests that a diversification of 20% represents the point of critical mass (Emerson, 2006, p. 35). Therefore, if a church has less than 80% of its membership belonging to the same race, the congregation is multicultural. After interviewing a number of attendees, Garces-Foley (2007a) concludes that it is difficult to have a unified view across the board. Some people defined their church as multicultural. The pastor had been trying to implement that vision for a while, as a natural outcome of a push for reconciliation in their community. However, other attendees saw it as a good Asian-American church. The task of defining what a multicultural church is, therefore, proves to be a subjective endeavor.

Ideally, the multicultural church would create an environment where certain aspects of different cultures are allowed and celebrated, but where a new culture emerges that “transcends all worldly cultures” (DeYoung et al., 2004, p. 171). Anderson (2004) offers a working definition that involves the idea of a racially reconciled community, a place of belonging that goes beyond the physical existence of a church building, programs, or diverse people. It is the coming together of Whites, Blacks, Latinos, and Asians, who intentionally remove ethnic and cultural barriers in their journey to knowing and trusting God. This is what makes Bridgeway Community Church in Columbia, MD a
vibrant multicultural church. Anderson’s main presupposition is that life with God is more meaningful when experienced in community.

Using the picture of a symphony orchestra with its many instruments that may be perfectly capable of making good solo music, apart and independent from the other instruments, Anderson (2004) points out that the sound is much better and way different when all sections perform together, even though it “is not always classical. Sometimes it is rocky, funky, and yes, even groovy. But it is always full of soul as the diversity of God’s instrumentation comes together on the stage of multicultural expression” (p. 14).

The community Anderson advocates, along the lines of Martin Luther King’s concept of a “beloved community,” is racially integrated and aims at creating a new culture propagated by people fully devoted to following Christ. This revolutionary thought came to Anderson as a reaction to the popular position advocated by many church consultants in the 1990s that spoke against a multicultural ministry positing that any such attempt would result in the dying out of one culture as a prerequisite of the other rising to prominence. Anderson clearly and correctly states that the solution is not advocating one culture against another, but simply going beyond ethnicity in creating a new culture, fundamentally different than any of the preceding ones that gave birth to it. This is best done by “proactive intent,” because of Christ, researching the multicultural resources within reach rather than by “reactive demand,” motivated by crisis.

Rah (2010) submits that this third, new culture is not supposed to be a suppression of the old culture. Instead, the process is more like the emergence of “a third consciousness that develops an ability to encompass the full spectrum of culture. Multiple consciousnesses allow us to navigate through the full spectrum of cultures” (p.107) and
not be stuck in one spot on that spectrum with the expectation that others should join in at that location. This expectation would be a clear indication of inequality, with the dominant culture reacting from a position of power with the marginalization of the minority culture.

Rah correctly iterates, “power in a multicultural context is rarely distributed equally” (2010, p. 123). Rah further contends, “we cannot assume that equality will be present in a multicultural Christian setting, but we can infer the reality of white privilege and power in society. Operating on the basis or supposition of equality does not make it a reality” (p. 124). Moving towards multicultural community requires a commitment to coming to the table with a willingness to listen to each other’s stories, and that only happens when participants come together as equals. “If we do not take time to reflect on each other’s history and story, then we are not ready to engage in cross-cultural ministry” (p. 59).

Creating community, (Flunder, 2005) involves making the marginalized visible and heard, not treating them as enemies of God just because they do not conform to the dominant definition of normativeness. Using the picture of a round table to show how it is possible to have everyone at the table, within equal distance from the center, Flunder concludes that in this way nobody is marginalized and all are included. This view goes along with the kind of reconciliation advocated by Yancey (1996) who defines community as an attempt to “overcome the previous dysfunctional unequal relationship between the races and develop an egalitarian, healthy relationship” (p. 53).

Relational honesty plays a major role in the process of creating a multicultural community. People on different sides need to make a commitment for honesty and
genuineness in their approach of the different other. Once that approach is visibly displayed, Anderson (2004) moves on to promulgate the idea that the church needs to “allow diverse people to cooperate” within it by “sharing power, responsibility, investment, and accountability” (p. 42). A fundamental characteristic of such a community, as Anderson suggests, is *gracism*, defined as “respecting, valuing and including other cultures…positively giving grace because of race” (pp. 105, 106). It goes beyond tolerance to a place where people actually want to be around each other. They are willing to deal with all the inherent obstacles in order to achieve such a purpose. They may have initially joined the church for various reasons, as Emerson (2006, p. 106) points out, perhaps being attracted by worship, personal relationships, location, vision of diversity, friendliness, or programs. However, in the end it is the consuming drive and passion for the diverse people of God that keeps them around and gets them actively involved in ministry.

For Foster (1997) multicultural congregations are places where people seek to employ equality in power relations among the different groups present in the church. One way to accomplish that, common in assimilated churches, is by employing what Marti (2005) calls “ethnic transcendence” (p. 172), where diverse people come together to become followers of Christ, as was the case at Mosaic in California at the time of Marti’s study. The consciousness of such a cultural diversity actively influences the dynamics of power. The end result is not only improved ways of representation, clarification of values, and change in standards, but a whole new theology of diversity, which includes elements of Christian unity, enhanced biblical understanding of the body of Christ, and interactions between members who, only together, are the church. Fellowship in such a
case happens in the right here and right now. It is a present reality, not only an eschatological expectation. Foster (1997) notes how there is a shift in language used to describe such a new reality, from “all people are the same” to “God loves us in our differences”, or “we are a mosaic of God’s creation” (p. 47). Real multicultural congregations have thus shifted from dominance to interdependence, where all people are equal and they share power equally.

**Types of Multicultural Congregations**

Multicultural congregations differ greatly from one another, mostly because of their people and resulting ministry dynamics. Some churches are intentionally started as multiethnic faith communities, while others transition into multicultural congregations. Recent studies—Foster (1997), Yancey (2003), Parker (2004) and Emerson (2006)—produce various typologies in classifying congregations depending on dynamics of power in negotiating differences, specific incipient determining factors, stages of development, and impetuses for change.

Cultural differences change the dynamics of interaction and power in any group. Starting with perceptions of time, ownership and allocation of resources, continuing with customs relating to simple things like appropriate ways of greeting and speaking to each other, and ending with issues relating to who is in charge and the established norms of dominance and vassality, the drama of power dynamics in church relationships is played out continually in congregations that are serious about becoming multiracial. Foster (1997) identifies four different types of such churches.
First, *sponsoring congregations* are communities of faith that offer a place for ethnic churches to hold services, coexisting one alongside the other where “cultural differences are assumed to be a part of God’s creation” (p. 40). Second, *transitional congregations* are churches where original members try to maintain institutional integrity in the face of change as newer members bring in varying cultural perspectives. Third, *assimilating congregations* are organizations that attempt to move people from the margins towards the center of the dominant culture. Fordham (as cited by Foster, 1997, p. 45) forewarns of the danger of suppressing one’s own particulars in order to fit in, a strategy seen mostly in churches where immigrants attend and where the dominant culture takes it upon itself to integrate the new comers by “educating” them towards assimilation into the new culture. Finally, *multicultural congregations* are assemblies where differences do not constitute impenetrable obstacles, but they are dealt with productively for the affirmation of uniqueness, development of identity and effectiveness of ministry.

There are various reasons for a church to become multicultural. Based on the members’ perception, Yancey (2003) discusses several main reasons for multiculturalism in relation to four types of congregations he identifies: leadership centered, evangelism oriented, demographic oriented, and network oriented churches. *Leadership centered* congregations are started by or centered on a key individual attracting a plethora of people, where the leader’s persona makes the difference. *Evangelism oriented* churches are mission driven, with an important message to share with the world. *Demographic oriented* multiracial congregations are the product of changing demographics. The different racial profile of the local neighborhoods becomes so prevalent that the church
either incorporates the new reality into its ministry or moves; otherwise it loses its footing and impact on the immediate community, becoming irrelevant. *Network oriented* churches, which seem to be the ones having the best chances for survival and growth, are congregations where people come because they have been invited to attend by family, friends, or acquaintances. With relationships and social ties already in place, transitioning to becoming part of the new community is easier. Consequently, people in network multiracial churches have fewer adjustments to make, thus being able to incorporate their energy, time, and resources into the ministry of the church fairly quickly.

Parker (2004) identifies several transition stages in the development of a multiracial church after studying three different congregations in South Africa. During the status quo stage, new people come in but they generally keep quiet and consequently have no impact on church narrative, identity, or practices. As newcomers are acknowledged during the assimilation and hegemony stage, they are expected to closely adhere to the vision set in place by the church prior to their arrival. As diverse others move into leadership positions and feel somewhat free to explore new ideas, there is limited integration and some original members begin to question if the church is going down the right path. This is the stage where some will leave, unable to process the new reality. As the original group declines in size, new narratives begin to emerge and during this stage of integration and disintegration hegemony breaks down and the church searches for a new identity. In the final stage of stabilization and reorganization the congregation takes on a new identity as a multiracial church, with new structures and vision in place that will ensure future growth. As Parker points out, very few congregations actually reach this final stage and remain multiracial.
Emerson (2006) proposes a different classification of multicultural congregations using the impetus for change as the main criterion. Thus, the first reason for change is mission, namely the goals, rooted in theological, cultural, or symbolical realities (p. 53). The second possible reason for change might be a process of resource calculation—shrinking church membership, inability to provide ministry at a level traditionally regarded as what the church has been called to do, with the inevitable sense of failure or loss of direction, or a sudden increase in resources that demand the reinventing of the local congregation as the place where those particular resources are offered. For example, substantial increases in available student financial aid funds will attract more families wanting to put their children in church school and if the neighborhood happens to be racially diverse, the church will thus grow more diverse. Additionally, these younger families in turn will determine change in the needs of the congregation that need to be addressed and met, which will foster more change—a continuum that can potentially completely modify and transform the community of faith. A third possible impetus for change would be external: an outside authority structure that requests the congregation to become multicultural to meet certain denominational goals. This external factor might be consistent with what the church internally is all about, but the impetus nevertheless remains external.

Moving on to identify the main reasons people join a multicultural church, Emerson (2006) shows how proximity, culture, purpose, and preexisting organizational packages play significant roles. If membership is drawn from the same neighborhood, being close to church makes it easy for people to join, especially if the church is very active in outreach and involved in the public discussions on topics relating to the
wellbeing of the community. Emerson points out that “multiracial congregations are, on average, more diverse than their immediate neighborhoods” (p. 55). This is due in part to the culture and purpose of the multiracial church that appeals to a larger population, therefore attracting people from outside the neighborhood. Clearly stated in the mission statement of the church, evident in its practice, the message, evangelization, and proselytizing constantly attract like-minded individuals. Membership diversity could also be the result of mergers, where two or more congregations unite, bringing in the preexisting multiracial membership. In Emerson’s view, the impetus for change and the source of diversification could combine to make for intriguing varieties of multicultural ministries ready to meet the needs of a society going through continuous change.

**Diversity: Challenges and Opportunities**

Multiculturalism has become the norm in American society. Even though, as Emerson (2006) correctly points out, there is a plethora of definitions for the concept, it is agreed upon that the present minority of over 126 million in the United States and the resulting impact on the lives of the 197 million strong White, non-Hispanic majority has been significant. Emerson submits that “there is value to all cultures, and so they ought to be celebrated, encouraged and nurtured” (p. 191). Is this diversity beneficial to the Christian church and society at large?

Sonnenschein (1999) defines diversity simply as significant differences among people, including such elements as race, culture, gender, physical abilities, or age. Diversity could help congregations do more for their communities. “Diversity means differences, and differences create challenges, but differences also open avenues of
opportunities” (p. 3). If correctly assessed as an advantage and enthusiastically embraced and employed, diversity and multiculturalism could take American society to a journey of self-discovery and become the new patriotism.

Besides the opportunity to create a new and better society based on the richness of contribution of the mosaic of diversity, there are also challenges. One such issue rests with the lack of room for non-indigenous races to be equally acknowledged without having to assimilate into one of the two possibilities available—Black or White. According to Emerson (2006, pp. 134-135), the United States, as a political entity, had traditionally maintained the two in opposition. Regarding Blacks as ruled by their passions, the White founding fathers defined anyone who was different from them by opposition to what the White race was all about. It is no wonder that the two races grew more and more estranged to the point of slavery and all that came with it.

The differences between the Black and White races play out in multiple ways. When it comes to communication for instance, the White culture focuses on delivering facts, citing experts, in a calm, dispassionate, almost impersonal way. This is due to the alleged separation between intellect and emotion, emphasizing cognition to the exclusion of affect (p. 136). This is not the case with the Black culture where emotional, passionate involvement is the way to articulate any public debate. The calm and collected articulation of facts is thus unsatisfying to Blacks as much as the animated, confrontational discussion is disorienting for Whites. This difference is played out time and again in multiracial congregations and evident in preferences for music, worship styles, and the inner workings of church life.
Individuals in multiracial congregations could be Indian/Native American, African American/Black, European American/White, Hispanic/Latino and Asian American/Asian or any combination thereof. Some congregants describe themselves as multiracial. Emerson suggests it takes a certain type of individual to truly experience and benefit from multiculturalism at the highest level—this mostly increases after an individual attends a multiracial church (p. 102). That kind of individual is described as a Sixth American, representing “people whose lives are significantly intertwined with each other across racial lines and who serve as bridges between groups” (p. 105). These are the people who make multiracial churches work, as they feel comfortable moving freely in a pluralistic world where there is enough room for everyone, where every human being is valuable and deserves respect, where being different is as good and interesting as being similar.

**Dynamics of Change**

Change is an integral part of everyday life at a personal level as much as at an organizational level. Regardless of what factors determine and produce change for a congregation—new leadership, change in demographics, socio-economic factors, etc.—there is an ever-present element of tension, of culture clash between the old and the new. Law (1993) observes that cultural clashes do not happen on the external, conscious cultural level, but rather on the instinctual level where the parties involved are not even conscious of why they feel and react the way they do. The author compares this reality with two icebergs apparently floating at a safe distance from each other, which could actually be near collision underwater, where most of their mass is located.
Borrowing from Darwinian theory, Tushman and O’Reilly (1997) identify two major patterns of organizational change: (a) change through evolution; and (b) growth through revolution. In Darwinian theory, incremental changes happen over time due to factors like variation, selection, and retention. It is a slow, somewhat predictable process. The dynamic of church life however allows for abrupt change to happen as a result of sudden, consistent variations of internal or external factors. How can a church deal with such challenges? The authors introduce the term *punctuated equilibria* to describe the reality of long periods of gradual change interrupted by abrupt, massive discontinuities. Congregations too “are subject to environmental pressures and they evolve through periods of incremental adaptation punctuated by discontinuities;” leaders “who try to adapt to discontinuities by making only incremental change are unlikely to succeed” (p. 22). The response to abrupt, systemic change has to be directly proportionate to the suddenness of the development. Multicultural congregations need to find their own unique rhythm in order to keep up with the realities of change and minimize the loss associated with the cost of change.

Growth through revolution happens when innovation permeates the realm of stagnant, status quo maintaining church life. Organizational culture is going to make the difference between change with positive impact and change with negative consequences. According to Tushman and O’Reilly, “actively managing organizational cultures that can handle both incremental and discontinuous change is perhaps the most demanding aspect of the management of strategic innovation and change” (p. 35). Holding on to one’s own culture with the intent of preserving the status quo can stifle innovation. Making changes in structure and systems is relatively easy compared to making changes in culture. A
multicultural church will actively employ innovation in changing and birthing its new culture.

For Kotter (1996), change is a complex, multi-step process. It starts with establishing a sense of urgency, where current realities are discussed with an emphasis on threatening realities and future major opportunities. Kotter distinguishes between leadership and management, and submits that it all begins at the top with an individual creating a guiding coalition and a team with enough power to lead the change. It continues with developing a vision and strategy, communicating the change vision through role modeling and any other means available, and then empowering broad-based action by removing roadblocks, people or structures. Important in the process is the generating and celebrating of short-term wins as a way to constantly offer satisfaction and results, while inadvertently recasting the vision. The model stresses the importance of consolidating gains and producing more change, which constitutes the next natural step as leaders bank on the credibility and trust previously gained. None of the above would make any lasting difference without the final and most important step of changing the culture itself as leaders anchor new approaches in the culture, creating new narratives, modifying behavior, and investing in leadership development and succession.

Change does not come without tension, opposition, criticism, and a vast array of other trials. However, if people are willing to work through the challenges, a new reality will emerge. Emerson (2006, pp. 168-169) submits several principles needed for vision building and change management in multicultural congregations, including a need for a clearly stated, intentional commitment to racial equality, which goes beyond simply acknowledging the intention to be multicultural and implies addressing social justice
issues. This commitment is reflected in leaders who are personally, deeply committed to social justice. Emerson also emphasizes the need to set in place structures that ensure everyone will have a voice as well as the need for internal forums, groups, and education where every voice is actually heard. Constantly coordinating the adjustments offers the fine-tuning necessary for all voices to perform harmoniously. Emerson concludes by recognizing that people process reality at different speeds. In the new multicultural environment people wait on one another, without unnecessary frustration or loss of momentum. A congregation that is serious about healthy outcomes will apply such principles in crafting its journey.

**Leadership in Multicultural Congregations**

Leadership in multicultural congregations is as diverse as the people making up such varied communities of faith. The richer the diversity, the more necessary the need for participative leadership, also called democratic leadership. As a managerial style, it requires active participation of all members of the team in establishing goals and strategies for reaching those goals. Decision-making is collective, even though some times slower, and majority vote or consensus becomes the way to move on. The role of the leader is that of a facilitator and the organization will move on when all participating shareholders give their approval. Participative leadership offers the opportunity for identifying hidden resources and creativity as well as strengthening acceptance and ownership. It boosts morale and offers superior retention.

The challenge for organizations that are serious about participative leadership is navigating the waters of institutional inequalities. Wendling (1997, pp. 165, 166)
identifies three categories of “non-pernicious institutional inequalities.” First, bureaucratic inequalities arise from the need for hierarchies of authority and responsibility, especially in large-scale organizations or societies. “Once a society becomes too large for face-to-face interactions, institutional structures become necessary.” Second, informational inequalities result from having experts and those who need their expertise. Possessing the specialized knowledge could lead to inequality of power. Third, temporal inequalities involve length of experience and commitment. The more people have been around, the more they can influence long-term policies of the organization.

In regards to embracing the diversity of such organizations, Sonnenschein (1999, p. 8) proposes several fundamentals as essential to the success of any leadership endeavor: respect, tolerance, flexibility, self-awareness, empathy, patience, and humor. Equipped with these qualities and skills, the leader gains a better understanding of what diversity is and becomes ready to communicate with a diverse constituency.

Foster (1997) underlines specific leadership characteristics present across the board, regardless of style. The author posits that the following are quintessential in embracing and leading in diversity milieus: (a) transformative leadership; (b) anticipatory leadership; (c) relational leadership; and (d) the leadership and power relationship. Transformative leadership is defined as the ability to nurture change. The process starts with a renewal of cultural identity by interaction with the otherness present in those that are different. This brings up dehumanizing and oppressive features in one’s own cultural traditions and practices, which, when addressed and dealt with, will aid in the
transformation of cultural traditions to create new possibilities for living in human community.

Anticipatory leadership is the ability to be proactive as opposed to simply reacting to change in surrounding conditions and challenges. Anticipating what is going to happen and having an answer already prepared when it happens will better position the leader in dealing with the unexpected. Foster implies that this means seeing a situation or an event from the future rather than from the past; it is asking how things might be done as opposed to how they have been done. This is critical as leaders of multicultural congregations generally have few precedents to guide their efforts. They just have a vision of where they want to go. Getting there is going to be “worked out in each worship service, each mission activity, each Bible study class, each committee meeting” (p. 120).

Foster describes relational leadership as the ability to emphasize relationality in establishing ground rules for corporate conduct and decision-making. The leader engages in seeking ways to enhance the quality of the relationships among diverse groups. This presupposes the ability to suspend personal cultural assumptions and perspectives so as to temporarily adopt someone else’s values, beliefs, and view of the world, totally immersing in the culture of the other for the sole purpose of completely and somatically experiencing life as the other person. At the end of it, leaders “return to their own ways of seeing, thinking, and doing, and yet they can never return to those patterns without the consciousness of the experience they had in relationship with someone who saw, thought, and did things somewhat differently” (p. 122). It is only when in someone else’s shoes that real forgiveness, empathy, tolerance, respect, and engagement occur for the development of true, nurturing relationships.
Multicultural congregations are the perfect environment for the play out of effervescent dynamics of leadership and power. Foster further shows how, inadvertently, the more lay leaders and pastors maintain their vision of multiethnic congregations, the more friends they are going to lose in the process, people who do not understand their commitment to creating such a community of faith. Thus, carefully negotiating the ways members engage each other is needed. This implies a persistent effort to create an environment in which all parties have the freedom to recognize their concrete otherness, leading to both mutual affirmation and critique. For Foster this is a deep spiritual exercise. Even though people discover more of their distinctiveness in the process, they become more tolerant, thus being better equipped to interact and contribute.

**Conclusion**

The reviewed literature discusses multicultural ministry as taking place within the context of a multicultural church. Even though there is disagreement as to what would be the most appropriate terminology to describe such an environment—words like multicultural, multiethnic, multiracial are frequently and interchangeably used—a community of faith where no more than 80% of the membership belongs to the same culture, ethnicity, or race seems to be the right place to start. The multicultural church is a dynamic body of believers, where energies are passionately spent and things happen as people learn more about each other with each passing day.

Driven by a deeply ingrained vision of a better tomorrow, leaders and laity of multicultural congregations have a heart for missions. They are determined to make things right, pursuing fairness and equality both in their churches and in society at large.
These are agents of change, profoundly impacted in their spiritual lives by the Gospel, impacting in turn an increasing number of communities throughout America for good and for God. An oddity in the eyes of many, they are here to stay and their churches will increasingly become the new way to do ministry.
CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A VISION
AND STRATEGY FOR MULTI-CULTURAL MINISTRY

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to develop, implement, and evaluate a vision and strategy for multicultural ministry in the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Woodburn Church has been a homogenous faith community for all of its thirty-year history. Despite sporadic attendance and membership of people of Russian or Hispanic ethnicity, the culture of the church has been predominantly White/Caucasian as none of the other people groups had represented a significant minority beyond the 20% mark Emerson (2006) describes as being foundational in achieving critical mass. A thriving church plant in its infancy, driven by a strong sense of mission, the Woodburn Church plateaued membership-wise and for the past 20 years had seen attendance decrease, with faithfully attending members inevitably aging as no new younger members joined the church.

Facing inevitable death, the church started to ask the tough questions necessary for survival and quickly realized that a change is needed if the Adventist message is to continue to be proclaimed in the ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse community of
the City of Woodburn with which it has had minimal interaction. This chapter describes the process of developing and implementing a vision and strategy for multicultural ministry in the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church as an answer to the missional challenges encountered in the local community and a perceived survival strategy.

The purposes of this chapter are to: (a) explain the missional challenge by creating and contrasting a population profile of the City of Woodburn with a membership profile of the Woodburn Church herself; (b) describe the sample selection and the instrument used to collect data in order to assess the members’ ability and readiness for multicultural interaction; (c) explain the various learning modalities employed in developing interest in cross-cultural interaction and ministry; (d) describe the procedure used to cast the vision and produce a new vision statement for the Woodburn Church as well as explain the process of involving the Church in identifying or creating new opportunities for cross-cultural ministry and community service; and (e) describe opportunities for celebration of diversity and growth.

**Similarities and Differences: The City of Woodburn and the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church**

The Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church is located in the beautiful Pacific northwest, in the North Willamette Valley, Marion County, Oregon. The congregation began as a company in April 1978 and currently meets at 1253 Fifth Street in Woodburn, OR, a central location in town situated on Hwy 214, the major road crossing the city. The facilities have been expanded over the years to presently include a
120-seat sanctuary, two classrooms, a fellowship hall, a nursery, an office, a kitchen, restrooms, and additional storage and utility space. The current sanctuary was the first section of the facilities to be built and it was initially designed as a fellowship room, being adjacent to the kitchen. As the building was expanded over the years and classrooms and the east section were added, it was the vision of the founding members to one day build a sanctuary on the lawn north of the current building that would be representative of their dedication to God and the community.

The church numbers 87 members, with an average Sabbath attendance of 35 at the end of 2009. The average Sabbath attendance had followed a downward trend from an average attendance of 44 a decade before, as shown in Figure 1. Started as a church plant over 30 years ago, the mostly White, non-Hispanic Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church has traditionally kept a membership of around 100.

![Figure 1. Average Sabbath attendance, 1999-2010.](image)

The tithing trend is radically different when compared with the declining attendance or plateauing membership trends: it is ascendant, as shown in figure 2. The total amount of tithe had roughly doubled from 2003 to 2010. This is due in part to the
change in membership, with new, more affluent families moving in and replacing outgoing families in a community that is a premier location for retired individuals. The faithfulness and commitment of the members of the Woodburn church is even more evident when the per capita tithe is compared to the tithe giving at various levels within the Seventh-day Adventist Church organization. According to General Conference (2009), the per capita tithe for the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church was $1,083.39, while the Oregon Conference number was $875.40, with $891.57 in the NPUC, $820.58 in the NAD and $120.07 for the World Church.

Figure 2. Total tithe, 2000-2010.

The overwhelming majority of the members of the Woodburn Church belong to the Silent Generation, born during the Great Depression and World War II. A November 5, 1951 Time Magazine article describes this generation as “grave and fatalistic, conventional, possessing confused morals, expecting disappointment but desiring faith, and for women, desiring both a career and a family” (“People,” 1951). With an estimated average age of over 60 and the female to male ratio of 60/40, most members are retired,
having previously come from a variety of backgrounds—professional, clerical, small business, self-employed, homemakers, etc. One in ten has gone through formal education beyond high school level. Women have generally dedicated their time to various traditional, domestic endeavors, raising children and sporadically holding clerical, cleaning, manufacturing jobs, while men had generally been involved in small business, state or federal jobs, a medical practice, or been self-employed.

As mentioned above, the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church does not compare with the larger population. According to the U.S. Census (2010), the City of Woodburn is home to 24,080 residents. The city registered a growth rate of 19.8% between 2000 and 2010. By contrast with the rapidly aging church population, Woodburn is a very young community, with 40.5% of the population under 25 and the median age being 31.7. Residents over 55 years of age make up 23.8% and are concentrated in the retirement communities or assisted living facilities that abound in the area.

Another notable difference between the church and the city is that, while Woodburn Church is very homogenous, predominantly White, the city of Woodburn is eminently multicultural, with 58.9% Hispanic or Latino population, and a sizeable (7.21%) Russian population consisting of Old Believers as well as recent immigrants. Adding to its diversity, 35.4% of the total population of Woodburn is foreign born. The abundance of agricultural jobs is the main attractant for these first generation immigrants, especially among the Hispanics, who are mostly Catholic.

The Woodburn Russian population, as mentioned, consists mainly of *Old Believers*. Their history starts in the 17th century when Russian Orthodox believers protested against the harsh and insistent reforms of Patriarch Nikon of Moscow who, in
an attempt to purify and reform the church, introduced changes in worship that were
deemed unnecessary and apostate (Hardwick, 1993). Resisting these changes, the Old
Believers were persecuted and fled as far as China, where they lived until the 1950s.
After the communist takeover, they were helped to escape and fled once again to Brazil,
which generously gave them free land for farming between 1958 and 1965. Unable to
acclimatize to the tropical climate, in 1964, about 40,000 Russians left Brazil to resettle
in the Willamette Valley, mainly in Woodburn, OR, and some made it as far as Alaska in
search of a remote location where they could keep their traditions, away from influences
and potential cultural and religious disruption.

Given their status of people on the go, as one member of the Old Believer
community shared with me, it is interesting to observe how Russian children and youth in
the area would first learn Spanish before learning English. They would make friends with
the Hispanics in town before attempting to network with the Anglo population. There is a
sense of familiarity and closeness with others perceived to be in a similar situation, as
reported, as well as a sense of distance from the perceived more established powers that
be.

In the Woodburn church, the Russian presence is virtually absent while the
Hispanics are poorly represented. Several attempts to start a common ministry together
with the sister Spanish church in town have been generally unfruitful; the only program
that ran for a few weeks in years past was when we opened our church to the Hispanic
congregation to hold a weekly Bible study for their interests in the community.

Despite an ideal, central location in town, an ability to embrace and support new
members and attendees, and yearly outreach programs, the church has not seen
significant growth over the last decade. With the overwhelmingly monocultural makeup of our congregation, the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church does not reflect the makeup of our community due to a lack of vision for a multicultural ministry. Consequently, our mission and ministry impact had been minimal.

The Intercultural Effectiveness Scale: Examining the Ability and Readiness for Multicultural Interaction

Holvino (2008) suggests, “assessment and visioning continue to be the foundations for successful diversity change in organizations” (p. 9). In order to assess the members’ ability and readiness for a multicultural interaction, a *sine qua non* condition for cross-cultural ministry, I have used an instrument developed by the Kozai Group (Mendenhall, Stevens, Bird, Oddou, & Osland, 2009) entitled *The Intercultural Effectiveness Scale* (see Appendix A for a description of the instrument). I administered this survey at the beginning of the project, using it also as an exit survey 12 months after the baseline, to measure changes in intercultural readiness attributable to this project. I invited 30 adult members of the Woodburn Church to participate (as per Andrews University’s Institutional Review Board’s instructions), which they all did. I met with them for two 90-minute sessions to administer the survey and provide individual feedback. For the purposes of this project, I mined the data to identify whether there was any change in overall scores between the first and the second time members took the survey as a quantifying indicator of variations in members’ competencies for cross-cultural ministry. The summary and conclusions of that endeavor will be presented later in Chapter 5.
The Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES) measures soft competencies for cross-cultural interactions. McClelland (1973) explored the importance of soft competencies defined as predispositions, or aspects of personality, which are relatively enduring, difficult to change, and broadly applicable. These are different than hard competencies identified as behavioral skills and abilities, which are trainable in varying degrees, and more narrowly applicable.

As Bird and Stevens (2010) point out, there are more than 120 different competencies applying to intercultural interactions. Some are more relevant than others, more central to effectiveness, as they act in non-linear ways to produce effective behaviors and results in life and work settings. The IES measures what people learn about another culture and the accuracy of that learning, how they develop and manage relationships with individuals from other cultures, and how they manage the challenges and stress involved in interacting with different cultural groups. Osland (2011) iterates that the IES is good as a first diagnosis, which contributed to its use as part of this project.

The IES is comprised of 52 statements exploring the likelihood of people working effectively with other people whose cultural background differs from theirs. Participants mark their answers on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree* and they receive a score for each statement (for most questions *Strongly Agree* answers are scored with a 5, except questions 27, 29, 32, 34, 48, 49, and 51 where *Strongly Agree* answers are scored with a 1). The IES measures three composite factors of intercultural competency: (a) *continuous learning*—how one learns about another culture and the accuracy of that learning; (b) *interpersonal engagement*—how one
develops and manages relationships with people from other cultures; and (c) *cultural hardiness*—how one manages the challenges and stress involved in interacting with people who are different.

The *Continuous Learning factor* addresses two competencies: self-awareness and exploration. Self-Awareness predispositions are explored through statements like: I'm aware of my interpersonal style and can easily describe it to others; thinking about my strengths and weaknesses is a good use of my time; and, usually I can tell what impact my behavior has on others. Exploration predispositions are addressed through statements like: I treat all situations as an opportunity to learn something; I have developed significant new skills over time; and, I learn from mistakes. Continuous learning capitalizes on the ancient Talmudic truism “we see the world not as it is, but as we are.” Continuous learning requires commitment and inquisitiveness—the most important driver in cross-cultural interactions.

The *Interpersonal Engagement factor* explores two additional competencies: global mindset and relationship interest. Global mindset is measured through answers to statements like: I routinely read, watch, or listen to international news; my friends would say I know a lot about world geography; and, every now and then I watch television programs about other countries and cultures. Relationship interest is explored through statements like: I’m not that interested in meeting people from other cultures; I like to figure out why people do the things they do; and, getting to know other people teaches you a lot of valuable things. Interpersonal engagement is about the ability to effectively and mindfully communicate inter-culturally, and to establish relationships. It is about the level of comfort in initiating and maintaining relationships with the different other. Some
people derive energy from such interpersonal engagements and find such activities energy producing, while others spend energy in the process, and find such interactions as energy depleting. In a church context, this factor would measure the predispositions towards working effectively in diverse ministry teams.

The Hardiness factor studies two more competencies: positive regard and emotional resilience. Positive regard is surveyed through statements like: I can always find something good in any situation; my friends would say I always look on the bright side of things; and, if I were lost, someone would probably stop and help me. Emotional resilience is revealed through statements like: it takes me a long time to get over a particularly stressful experience; I find that little things often bother me; and, I have never been good at coping with negative emotions. The hardiness factor reveals the fact that intercultural interactions could be mentally, psychologically, and physically demanding. Some people find few situations stressful, some worry about just about everything. People who assume the best about other people experience less stress, as they are more accepting of different behaviors. In the same way, people with elevated emotional strength recover quickly from stressful situations.

Bird and Stevens (2010) iterate that everyone’s competency profile is unique and that scores are solid and do not change without a significant amount of pain. In their view, it takes a substantial transformative experience to see any change either positive or negative. Transformative experiences are defined by the following characteristics: (a) complexity—how complex the experience is; (b) affect—what the emotional component of the experience is; (c) intensity of the experience; and (d) relevance—in what way is this relevant for participants, which is the strategic nature of the experience. This project
could be a transformative experience as the Woodburn church had gone through a complex experience over the past twelve months, where members got involved emotionally and intensely since the future of the church was at stake.

The initial administration of the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale revealed an average score of 70 for Continuous Learning, 48 for Interpersonal Engagement, and 58 for Hardiness, with an overall IES score of 176. Based on these IES scores, the IES profile fitting the surveyed group best is the Traditionalist (see Appendix A for the profile graph). Traditionalists are satisfied with the status quo, preferring familiar people and places, and are apprehensive when placed in new situations where they need to learn or develop new associations. In search of a substantial transformative experience, and fully aware of the potential for pain and conflict, I decided to take the Woodburn church on a journey to explore realities beyond the traditionalist realm and see if there are any changes in attitudes or behaviors when faced with new situations. Training for cross-cultural interaction would provide a starting point and a foundation for this journey. The next section describes modalities employed in developing continuous learning in cross-cultural interaction and ministry.

Training for Cross-cultural Ministry:
Teaching Biblical Constructs,
Intercultural Communication,
and Diversity Skills

Working with people takes time. Things do not always pan out the way they were intended to, especially in multicultural settings. As an immigrant myself, I have had the advantage of looking at our church’s situation from a different vantage point while having a heart for helping people understand what they are missing when they avoid the
possibilities offered by cross-cultural interactions. The fundamental presupposition I started with was that when seeing the potential and understanding the responsibility for multicultural ministry, church members would be interested in exploring this area of ministry further. Throughout the process, I learned to be satisfied with and enjoy “the energy of direction rather than the magnitude of the result” (Tropman, 2003, p. 149). I had not unrealistically expected the Woodburn Church to become multicultural overnight. What I had hoped for was to see progress in terms of the direction the church was going. I had hoped to move from pure indifference, through acknowledgement and engagement and beyond, to a place of utter joy and synergy where different people could work together naturally, constantly generating new ideas that would have a real impact on the community. This is the direction I had expected and the environment where I had looked and hoped for change and results.

Developing a vision and a strategy for multicultural ministry in the Woodburn Seventh-day Adventist Church was a multi-faceted approach focusing on the following core values: (a) knowledge; (b) availability; (c) proximity; and (d) spirituality. As part of the project, I put together and presented a training seminar entitled One God, One World, Diverse People (see Appendix B for a description of the seminar) focusing on cross-cultural interaction that included teaching on biblical constructs as presented in Chapter 2, as well as diversity training and intercultural communication skills with the purpose of expanding knowledge in regards to various fundamentals of multicultural ministry.

In my daily contact with church members, I observed that there is limited dialogue and understanding of biblical teachings on equality, human value and dignity, and community as related to cross-cultural issues among church members. Consequently,
Part I of the seminar focused on understanding diversity and included an exploration of diversity in God’s creation. Part II focused on offering hospitality and explored biblical teachings in regards to “the stranger in your midst.” Part III focused on creating community and included an exploration of Acts 10 and the start of multicultural community. Part IV addressed issues in cross-cultural communication and focused on Acts 15. Part V explored multicultural ministry with a review of the great commission. Finally, Part VI explored kingdom values and included a biblical exploration of the great multitude of Revelation 7.

I employed the use of various exercises to teach diversity skills and intercultural communication. Sonnenschein (1999) defines diversity simply as “significant differences among people” (p. 3). The author contends that there are certain fundamentals of embracing diversity that include: respect, tolerance, flexibility, self-awareness, empathy, patience, and humor. I have used some of the exercises he proposes like the diversity questionnaire and right hand/left hand to strengthen existing diversity fundamentals. I also addressed the need for improved communication techniques, which, according to Sonnenschein, include skills like being open, listening effectively, communicating empathy, using inclusive language, speaking with a sense of equality, being supportive, exhibiting confidence, being other-oriented, being flexible, and being able to metacommunicate, an ability that includes the use of non-verbals like facial expression, tone of voice, gestures, body language, which either strengthens verbal communication or disallows it (p. 77). I observed that as I presented these ideas, people displayed familiarity with the concepts and were comfortable accepting them as behavior regulating norms. However they expressed reluctance to apply them beyond the confines of their
own culture, and that is where the challenge is for our church. However, in light of the biblical teachings explored throughout the seminar, they were more willing to make an effort and consider applying them in cross-cultural situations and ministry.

The seminar also made use of various visual means in addressing our multicultural situation and needs. One project we worked on was creating a big World Wall Map and placing it inside the sanctuary for all to see. The map was 9 ft. X 8 ft. and was affixed on the east wall of the sanctuary. I asked all the members and visitors from that point forward to use three colored flag pins—white, red and blue—to designate their place of birth, the place of origin of their ancestry on the mother’s side as well as on the father’s side. It was interesting to see how the map got busier, more colored from week to week and how people actually took a few minutes every Sabbath to examine it and have conversations with other members by it. I have entitled it, “One God, One World, One People,” and it has become a constant reminder that we, God’s people, different people, are one because God is one.

Other visual means involved in exploring multicultural issues were videos and movies. To address the diversity factor, I have incorporated The Multicultural Classroom videos by Wurzel (1993), a two part docu-drama widely used in teaching intercultural communication, a tool containing material that facilitates provocative discussions, bridges communication gaps, resolves conflict, and expands perspectives.

To address the area of potential intergenerational conflict due to the difference in styles of worship between incoming, younger, more progressive second generation Hispanics and older, more conservative church members, the church was invited to watch Divided, a documentary that shows age discrimination in the church, where youth
ministry is a separate, specialized activity and young and old never worship together. The church took time to debrief and exchange feedback, one-on-one as well as in church board meetings and other group settings.

To address differences in cultural norms and religious beliefs, I recommended “Arranged,” a movie depicting the friendship between two women in Detroit, one an Orthodox Jew and the other a Muslim, and how they separately dealt with the different cultural norms regarding marriage. One metaphor used to describe America is the “stew pot.” What I attempted to facilitate by the use of these videos and movies was learning in regards to the fact that the stew pot is not only out there, but mainly right here, close to home, all around us in our communities and even within our own families and church. Acknowledging, understanding, and using this reality to our advantage will not only make us better people, but will position our church for increased outreach involvement and impact.

Need and Opportunities for Multicultural Ministry: Involving the Church Board and Facilitating Church-wide Meetings for Vision Casting and Dialogue

Pastoral observation revealed early on in the project that the church had no vision statement and church life unfolded by merely reacting to the urgent rather than proceeding “with the end in mind” (Covey, n.d.) and making the important happen instead. Creating a framework for improved interpersonal engagement would involve church members to ensure an effective multicultural approach by creating shared ownership among leadership and the church at large.
Consequently, I asked the board to consider submitting a proposal to the church in business meeting regarding a new visioning process. The board and the business meeting approved it unanimously. As a result, we held four church-wide visioning sessions in order to determine what we are all about, where we go from here, and how we get to where we want to be.

The first meeting was spent discovering our values and identifying those characteristics that make us unique. In a climate of open dialogue, it was not hard to bring out what we are all about—care, empathy, love, acceptance, understanding, and interest in people’s lives. It was emphasized the advantage of being a small church where people can get close with each other, even personal, with ease and with no fear of being misunderstood. Woodburn people are accommodating and forgiving, offer a no pressure environment, and at times offer constructive criticism. There is a strong desire for outreach, improvement, and change, with a need and openness towards trying new methods. The church is very friendly, offers fellowship right off the bat, and feels fulfilled when in the presence of like believers with similar values.

When asked how they perceived their church, several themes emerged. Some members pointed to their respect for and adherence to the beliefs and traditions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as well as their level of comfort with the traditional, more conservative character of the worship service. “We are a conservative church,” one member said, while another added, “I like it that we do things properly, and in order, with respect for the house of the Lord.” Some perceived the worship of the church as a “sanctuary” and a “refuge,” a place of balance and tranquility they associate with in order to reconnect with God and restore relationships spiritually. One member pointed out that
“life is so busy during the week, it’s crazy out there, but on Sabbath I come to church to be away from all that and just rest and worship.”

Members have a special connection with their local church as well as the world church when it comes to propagating the Adventist message, which provides identity and a place of belonging. They feel bound to obey and answer God’s call for mission. Emerson (2006) points out that this sense of mission in “its theological, cultural, and/or symbolic orientation…[is] the primary impetus for change” (p. 53). This characteristic should be to the church’s advantage as it develops intercultural readiness and moves towards engaging in a multicultural ministry.

In order to get our bearings, we wanted to establish where we are and where we want to go. As part of the first meeting we took an honest look at where we are as a church. Together with the previously emerged themes of commitment to propagating the Adventist message, respect and adherence to Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and traditions, and regarding church as a refuge from the craziness of everyday life, members expressed concerns regarding the fact that their church was a dying church—faithful members are getting older and that affects programs and services. Members emphasized the reality that the church does not attract young people, probably as a consequence of not employing methods and means that are relevant for the younger generations, especially in ministry areas like music, worship, outreach, service, and church structure.

Burrill (2009) is very blunt in asserting that churches with a very high median age cannot attract young people. While participants expressed concern in this regard, there was also a sense of helplessness about the current situation, which dissipated when they started exploring possible solutions to this reality. Consideration was given to the
solution Burrill offers of identifying the few younger people of the same age in our potential target group that could employ friendship evangelism in reaching out to people their age in Woodburn.

Church members also expressed concern over the evident burnout many congregants felt, as a few people had to undertake more and more tasks to fill the many church offices. This is mostly due to the realities of an aging membership. While enthusiastic about making things happen for the Lord, old age prevents most from getting involved to the level they would like to. That creates frustration as well as occasional tension and conflict.

The second meeting was dedicated to painting a picture of an ideal future. I asked questions like: if everything would be 100% ideal—material resources, human resources, denominational support, pastoral involvement, timing, etc.—where would you see this church five years from now? The answers came in as varied as they could be. Thus, some addressed people’s overall attitude, character, and values—they see themselves as having an elevated attitude of joy about themselves, as being more welcoming and genuine, with a balance between structure and spontaneity. Then, some wanted to make more room at the table, for they see the church as a mission field and have a desire to motivate others for mission. Some also wanted their church to be a place where things happen, a gravitational force where church life revolves around ministry and service. In that respect they envisioned full involvement and connection. The members wanted their church to grow so that, one day, they could finally build the sanctuary the charter members had envisioned more than thirty years before.
Others identified children and youth outreach as a priority for the church in the next five years. They wanted to use summer and the good, central location in town the church enjoys for activities like VBS, mid-week, or Sabbath afternoon children’s programs. The members also suggested several other things, like making the church more accessible, creating a comfortable environment where people could connect with God, using their spiritual gifts, creating a simpler, more meaningful worship service, being respectful and inclusive, being in tune with the community, providing opportunities to serve, creating an open church, meeting the social needs of the elderly by creating interaction opportunities, doing sing-alongs at nursing homes and sidewalk ministries, supporting educational needs of students, reaching out to nonaffiliated and nonbelievers, and having the church as an exchange center—matching needs with resources—in activities like health fairs, blood drives, simple remedies seminars, etc. This meeting ended with increased enthusiasm and I noticed a general feeling of possibilities for the future. There was definitely more hope in people’s outlook.

At the third meeting we recapped the progress made so far and quickly summarized the main points presented above. We identified worship, diversity, children and youth, and self-development as the four-fold focus of our vision. We then proceeded to outline a vision statement for our church. The end product of that work is the following Vision Statement:

At the soon coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church will be a place of ministry where, proud of our heritage and committed to our message, we treasure and celebrate diversity, support and educate children and youth, invest in individual development, and worship God in everything we are and do.
The process of vision statement formation was a highly spiritual experience in concordance with the core value of spirituality. Church members reflected not only on their relationship with God and how that translates into the collective vision they want to develop for their church, but also on their relationship with one another. Loving the neighbor legitimately reflects spirituality as much as loving God. As observed, vertical and horizontal spirituality were employed as church members put together the vision statement.

The vision statement is constantly read, referred to, alluded to, and brought up at most meetings and services of the church as well as the various ministry committees. It is printed in the bulletins and the Newsletter. It is also posted on the church’s website and Facebook account.

The fourth meeting’s purpose was to outline a mission statement, thus giving the church board a framework for developing a plan for mission and ministry in our community. Based on our Vision Statement, the Mission Statement contains four main directions for action, each followed by a catch phrase to make it easier to remember. It reads as follows:

Our Mission is to prepare ourselves and our community for the Second Coming of Jesus by creating a safe environment where every member gets involved in: (1) simple, vibrant, participatory and meaningful worship—it is all about God; (2) making new friends, healthy dialogue, dynamic fellowship, reaching out and embracing anyone, fighting prejudice and inequality—friends, not strangers; (3) supporting Christian education, creating opportunities for young people to get involved in service at church and in the community, supporting age specific educational projects and programs—because it takes a village; and (4) constantly pursuing higher goals for self-improvement and development in various areas like health and wellness, relationships, parenting, personal finance, skills and interests—a new and better creation.

This statement formed the basis and starting point of discussions for the church board.
The board took several actions to further the mission of the church in light of the new vision and mission statements. First, we formed a committee to address the flow of the worship service. The committee worked on simplifying the service by combining, dropping, adding, and rearranging components of the worship service so to create a better flow. We combined all the music in one block and coupled that with the prayer and praise section and placed it right before the sermon. We added a section entitled Mission Focus to constantly keep before the people the weekly mission stories from the lives of members. We also enhanced the children’s involvement by asking them to take up an offering every Sabbath and making sure they have a children’s story every week. Finally, we decided to ask as many people to participate in the service as possible, with priority given to willing youth and attending non-members. All these elements, even though harder to accept at the beginning, were received well after a few Sabbaths as they created not only a better flow, but also more dynamism, participation, and meaning.

Second, we made plans for activities to bring us in proximity to the multicultural environment of our city. Opportunities for service in multicultural settings are multiple, yet barriers of communication, various customs and economic factors hinder awareness unless people are intentional in overcoming them and discovering and addressing specific needs. We discovered that there are plenty of needs close to us. As Emerson (2006) shows, proximity and the culture and purpose of the congregation constitute two of the reasons people are drawn to the church (p. 54). Consequently, we started to adopt a culture of openness and availability. We opened our facilities to the city when they needed a location to host various community meetings. We invited the local police department to come and give an overview of the realities of our community, which they
did. The meeting was very informative for both the members and the officer, and the church even received advice on how to better protect the facilities against illegal gang activity in the area.

We developed a relationship with two organizations in the immediate vicinity of the church—Nuevo Amanecer, of the Farmworker Housing Development Corporation, an organization providing housing for migrant farm workers across the street from the church, which needed parking for their staff after the city made street improvements that took away some parking space they had previously used. We provided our parking lot to them free of charge, but a few months into it we received a check with a donation for the church from our neighboring organization as a thank you for our kindness. The other organization, Oregon Child Development Coalition, solicited the use of our facilities for training their employees as the previous location in town had just become unavailable. The board accepted their request and they have been very appreciative towards the church.

Other cross-cultural activities the church engaged in included inviting community friends to join us for camping, outdoor church, bowling, service opportunities to individuals, and in partnership with other local organizations—collecting and distributing Christmas gifts for the disadvantaged, making and delivering Thanksgiving baskets to Hispanic families in need, providing transportation—getting donated cars to people, giving senior citizens or the sick rides to doctor’s appointments, door-to-door Christmas caroling, offering to change smoke alarm batteries for people in the community when asked by the fire department, giving out flowers for Mother’s day, etc. All these activities
provided numerous opportunities to meet our neighbors and get to know our community better.

Third, the board encouraged young families with school age children to consider sending their kids to Adventist schools. The board put together a Student Financial Aid policy, which allowed for up to 50% of tuition assistance based on need. Several families have taken advantage of that so far. Even though this is a huge undertaking for a small church, the Lord had blessed and the funds available for Christian education have never run dry.

As we reached out to our diverse community, we quickly realized, as Yancey (2003) points out, that first generation immigrants are not likely to fellowship with mixed crowds “because they have a strong need to maintain the culture of their native countries” (p. 23). Consequently, they prefer to only use their native language for all interactions. We also noted that there is currently no milieu for second and third generation Seventh-day Adventist immigrants to worship in English in Woodburn. Consequently, the church board examined a proposal to allow a group formed mainly of second and third generation Hispanics that sporadically attended a different church at the moment to get involved in service using their talents, which included music. Realizing the cost of limiting the style of worship to only one cultural expression—sending the indirect message to the different others to either “assimilate…or leave” (Yancey, 2003, p. 78)—the board was happy when presented with this opportunity and made provision for experimentation in regards to new styles of music in worship provided by the new participants. This was one instance where the Woodburn church explored and acted out of the core value of availability offering hospitality to the different other.
Shorty afterwards, some of the younger members transferred their membership to our church and the worship services all of a sudden became more lively, dynamic, and attractive, especially for the younger generations. Garces-Foley (2007a) iterates that “conflicts over music choices are often generational” (p. 93) and the older, traditional generations did experience a certain level of discomfort over the music choices of the younger members, however they were allowed to lead in worship and appreciated for that involvement. As Yancey (2003) further contends, a diversity of worshippers means you “cannot satisfy everybody since whatever style is used will make someone unhappy” (p. 78). Unfortunately, long term the experiment did not work out, but for a period of time the church opened its arms and hearts in accepting people that were different, with different music preferences, which included electronic guitars, a bass, and sometimes percussion instruments. They also brought a more youthful spirit and even a preference for different foods.

The board decision that impacted the church in a powerful way was the one making provision for putting together a Vacation Bible School program. In the members’ estimation, it had been over 20 years since the church last held a VBS. Realizing that all the church could do was provide funding together with limited involvement from members, the board looked for leadership in our Molalla sister church. A group of talented young people was thus invited to come and lead out for a “Bible Buckaroo VBS” at Woodburn. Part of this leadership team was made up of non-Adventist youth who offered their services, which was a mission in itself, as well as several adults from the community that came and volunteered when they heard about the program for kids. We then proceeded with going door-to-door in our community, starting with the apartment
complex next-door and inviting parents to send their children to attend the program. After a slow start, we had 52 children on the last day of the program when parents and grandparents were invited to attend a program the children put together for them. Many of them showed up in church the next day where the VBS kids, the majority of them of Hispanic background, had the whole service. That event impacted the church strongly and encouraged a renewed commitment to invest in children and youth ministries.

Fourth, we made plans and invited various speakers to lead out and present seminars, provide information, and practical advice on various topics related to personal development. We opened all the seminars to the community as the issues addressed are of concern for most people as revealed by a needs assessment survey conducted. Thus, we held a natural remedies seminar, vegetarian cooking classes, a seminar on intergenerational issues, a seminar on the impact of Yoga and Oriental philosophies on Western Christianity, and a health fair. The church also hosted a Financial Peace University program, computer training programs, English classes, as well as Spanish classes for those interested in learning the language of the majority of people living in Woodburn.

**Celebrating Milestones, Diversity and Growth**

An important part of the project was to constantly celebrate small victories and milestones, diversity and growth as often as possible. Food seems to be a common denominator and a generator of a festive atmosphere. We frequently held luncheons and fellowship meals where we invited everyone to attend—members, visitors, non-member friends and family, and anyone else that happened to be in the area and who was in need
of a good, healthy meal. We turned annual holidays like Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year’s Eve, or Valentine’s Day into opportunities to organize specific programs, banquets, and celebrations of our diversity and growth.

For Valentine’s Day the church organized a special formal banquet where community members were the majority of the attendants, several of them being invited to our church by non-Adventist friends of church members. This phenomenon is an ongoing miracle for our church as our non-Adventist friends feel comfortable enough to invite their non-Adventist friends to attend church functions. Several baptisms have resulted from activities like that.

The Thanksgiving program the social committee put together included a meaningful spiritual program as well as a formal dinner. For the first time in recent history the church had turkey served in some of the dishes. This was the result of previous dialogue and planning where church members realized that some in the congregation plus most non-Adventist invitees eat turkey dishes for Thanksgiving, which was not the case for some church members that adhere to strict vegetarian diets. To accommodate such preferences, the organizing team decided to go ahead with it this time only, especially in the absence of a direct local church policy forbidding the use of meat. It was recommended that the meat dishes be labeled as such. That decision was a significant departure from the previous all-vegetarian practices for meals served in the church. As in the case of the temporary use of electronic guitars, bass and drums, the church exhibited interest in exploring the preferences of the different other.

Another significant celebratory event usually takes place on New Year’s Eve, when the church comes together for an Agape Feast, a simple meal consisting of soup,
bread, and sometimes fruit, in the tradition of our Old Believer Russian neighbors.

Garces-Foley (2007a, p. 106) notes, “food makes the fellowship flow better, but, more important, shared eating, or commensality, takes on religious significance as a ritual of the congregation.” Consequently, it seemed natural to couple the New Year’s Eve Agape Feast with a special Communion Service where members rededicate themselves to God and Christian service at the beginning of a new spiritual journey for the New Year. These opportunities helped the church remember the good of the past year, celebrate victories, and growth, recognize those who made contributions to the advancement of the church’s mission and ministry, rededicate their lives to God as a faith community, and share with one another their hopes and dreams for the year ahead. There is nothing better than a congregation in a festive mood, and Woodburn has taken advantage of every opportunity to experience it.

The next chapter will present the outcomes of the project, including the IES profile and four transformational stages of development the Woodburn Church went through in its 12-month journey as well as the conclusions and recommendations.
CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION, OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents and discusses the outcomes of project implementation. It analyzes the IES Profile of the church, it discusses four stages of development, and it presents conclusions and specific recommendations of the project dissertation.

Evaluation: Intercultural Effectiveness Scale Profile

Intercultural competence is “a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts” (Bennett, 2008). The Intercultural Effectiveness Scale Profile constitutes an indicator of where members of the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church have been and where they arrived upon entry and exit administration of the IES.

The initial administration of the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale revealed an average score of 70 for Continuous Learning (low scores are divided in two parts, part one is 0-70, part two is 71-73; moderate scores part one is 74-76, part two is 77-79; high scores part one is 80-83, part two is 84+), 48 for Interpersonal Engagement (low scores are divided in two parts, part one is 0-44, part two is 45-48; moderate scores part one is 49-52, part two is 53-56; high scores part one is 57-60, part two is 61+), and 58 for Hardiness (low scores are divided in two parts, part one is 0-52, part two is 53-56;
moderate scores part one is 57-59, part two is 60-63; high scores part one is 64-67, part two is 68+), with an overall IES score of 176 (low scores are divided in two parts, part one is 0-171, part two is 172-180; moderate scores part one is 181-188, part two is 189-195; high scores part one is 196-206, part two is 207+). Based on these IES scores, the IES profile fitting the surveyed group best is the Traditionalist (see Appendix A for the IES, the scores, and resulting profile). Traditionalists are satisfied with the status quo, preferring familiar people and places, and are apprehensive when placed in new situations where they need to learn or develop new associations.

At the beginning of our journey together in this project at Woodburn Community, I observed how people were fairly satisfied with their current level of knowledge and their own personal development when it comes to cultural and cross-cultural issues. With most of the members in their seventies, I had a sense that it would be extremely hard to bring about any significant change along those lines.

Given the fact that for 30 years our church was called Woodburn English, to distinguish ourselves from our fellow believers at the Woodburn Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church, clearly separating the two people groups, it was evident that differences in others’ race, ethnicity, or culture were not of particular interest to our members. This was surprising given the shared beliefs and eschatological vision we have in common as Seventh-day Adventists, as well as the mission we engage in, namely reaching out to all peoples, in order to prepare a diverse throng from “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” (Rev 14:6) for the Second Coming of Christ.

For most, putting themselves in new situations and learning new things or developing new relationships was usually more a result of external pressures than internal
motivation. My implementation strategy was based exactly on the potential power of these external motivators to move people from a place of indifference to one of engagement, or as Rah (2010) puts it, from hostility to hospitality, and, moving even beyond that, to a place of mutual submission present in families, namely the household of God (p. 196).

Traditionalists’ relationships will tend to be made up of family members or others who have been in close proximity to them over time and where there is clear functionality. At the beginning of the project, we had a church that functioned well: members were tired, overworked, stressed out, even burned out from accomplishing so many ministry tasks that had to be done by the faithful very few. Music was generally comprised of traditional hymns with organ or piano accompaniment, guest speakers were selected from among retired ministers in the area that had friendship connections with church members that invited them, church services began on time and ended on time, the fellowship meal was always provided, etc. However, there was no diversity, nobody tried different types of music, invited younger, unproved or unknown guest speakers, explored changes in worship services, or any experimentation that could have led to new ideas regarding mission and ministry. I noticed how people were not necessarily against the new; it was just that the centripetal forces of the old were too strong.

Rather than expend effort to develop social networks, Traditionalists are more likely to engage in solitary activities they enjoy—watching TV, taking a walk, etc. Because they have generally surrounded themselves with the familiar and do not often trust or easily accept others outside their circle, Traditionalists usually have not developed the interpersonal skills or the emotional stamina necessary to interact with and
understand people who are different from them. Whenever we would have occasional Spanish speaking guests coming through our doors for the first time, greeters would generally direct them to the Spanish Church across the freeway. Opportunities for venturing into the unknown were quickly dismissed and a return to the familiar was the method of choice.

After the implementation of the project, the exit IES scores were as follows: Continuous Learning, 73; Interpersonal Engagement, 51; and Hardiness, 57. The overall IES score was 181. These scores still place the group within the boundaries of a Traditionalist IES Profile. The overall IES score increased from 176 to 181, which indicate a minimal improvement of effectiveness in intercultural interaction as the score barely moved from low (172-180) to moderate (181-188).

The Hardiness dimension remained almost unchanged as it went from 58 to 57, which indicate that people’s ability to think positively about other people that are different than themselves as well as their tendency to avoid negative stereotypes in favor of a more positive view of human nature stayed the same. This is due in part to resistance one church member directly conveyed, “I do not want to change; I am too old to change!” At the conclusion of this project, the group’s ability to avoid getting upset, stressed, frustrated, or angry when encountering situations, people, behaviors, and ideas that are different from what they were used to was unaffected. The lower score registered for this dimension also point to the fact that it is still difficult for them to handle psychologically and emotionally challenging experiences well. The recovery from such experiences takes a long time as well. As a result, this tends to limit their ability to remain open to others and learn from future intercultural experiences.
The Interpersonal Engagement dimension score increased from 48 to 51, which indicate at least two things. First, the Global Mindset factor measuring the level of interest in other cultures was addressed as a result of the various interactions between people throughout the project. “Besides knowing one's own cultural programming, it is important to understand the values, norms, and beliefs of other cultures” (Howard, 2005). The score reveals that people are making more effort towards learning about other cultures, and, as a result, their opportunities for engagement could increase. Second, changes in the Relationship Interest factor, which measures the inclination towards seeking out the different other, as well as the desire and ability to maintain personal relationships with the different other that generates energy and drive, seem to indicate a certain movement from people placing the responsibility of initiating and developing new relationships on the other person to undertaking this task themselves. I observed how in one occasion a church member reached out to a member from the Spanish church and invited the Spanish group to come share food and fellowship. The church member initiated the invitation without any prompting from the pastor or the church board. There have been several other similar happenings throughout the project.

The Continuous Learning dimension registered an increase in score from 70 to 73. This dimension points to ability and interest to personal growth as well as motivation to understand how one’s actions affect other people. Higher scores would reflect more curiosity, inquisitiveness, and openness to new ideas and experiences. At the end of the project this dimension was still low for the Woodburn church. I observed how it was mostly the younger members who showed curiosity and inquisitiveness in cross-cultural situations, however these were in the minority.
Outcomes of Cross-Cultural Interaction

Multicultural ministry is an imperative for any 21st century church that wants to reflect divine values and fulfill the mission God entrusted His people with. “The combined forces of postmodernity and the changing demography in the United States reveal that multicultural ministry will be at the cutting edge of ministry. Heterogeneity will be the new homogeneity of the twenty-first century” as Hall (2010) aptly states. When taken seriously, ministry in cross-cultural situations will take the church places it has never been before, with a significant eternal impact for all those involved. The following stages of multicultural engagement describe our experience at Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church throughout this project.

Four Stages of Multicultural Engagement

The journey the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church went on during this project was both one of discovery as well as self-discovery. As we took on the challenges and opportunities of envisioning what multicultural ministry could be and do for us as a church, we discovered the hidden capacities for empathy, sympathy, forgiveness, and grace the Lord had already implanted in us as individuals and as a church long before.

When I became the pastor of the church district Woodburn Community was a part of, the search committee was intent on getting a pastor that spoke Spanish. I do not speak Spanish, but am from a different country and came to the United States as an international student and then an immigrant. For the first few years of my ministry I have tried to assess opportunities for mission and ministry in our community. The reality of
pastoring a three-church district meant limited time allotted for such an endeavor. However, it was clear from the beginning that any attempts at evangelism, outreach or any other activity where the church makes its presence known in the public sphere had to include the Hispanic and Russian elements. Multicultural ministry was an imperative!

It was evident that in order for our monocultural church group to have a presence in the community and be of service to our neighbors, we had to intentionally address the issues pertaining to the heavily multicultural environment in the church’s neighborhood. “The choice to welcome other people is an intentional decision” (Downing, 1996, May). This goal required a certain ability to understand and deal with the diversity all around us because “the church should, as far as is possible, reflect the makeup of society” (Leenhouwers, 1999, July). Our lack of interest and ability to do so was like the proverbial elephant in the room. Learning how to change from utter homogeneity to intentional, dynamic, organic diversity and cross-cultural communication and community was a journey that unfolded in four different stages (as illustrated in Appendix C). This model is more fluid and not necessarily chronological. Change and the inevitable setbacks make it so that the various stages could happen in any order for various individuals, however as a collective we could precisely identify which stage we were in and that in itself is a sign of progress and maturation in envisioning and understanding our multicultural journey.
Stage 1. Pure Indifference: We do not Care About Elephants in the Room; They do not Exist!

This was our starting point. Our church was called Woodburn English Seventh-day Adventist Church. It was an eminently White, homogenous church, suffering from what Burrrill (2009) calls “people blindness” (p. 40). The church failed to realize that the neighborhood had changed over the last few decades and failure to observe the cultural differences of people that surround the church led to no outreach to the immediate community.

Even though Stevens (2012) clearly states, “we simply do not have biblical justification for the intentional establishment of homogenous local churches” (p. 255), we did not think there was a problem. The church had been opened in town for 30 years and there were good explanations for why it had never grown past 100 members in the books. Nobody noticed that the demographic has changed, where, after the influx of Russian immigrants of 1964, there was a steady increase in Hispanic immigrants that had exploded over the past decades in the Woodburn area. The City of Woodburn currently grows at a rate of 1% per year (Keefer, 2013), mostly because of seasonal workers taking jobs at the multitude of farms and fruit and vegetable processing business in the area. As Warner (2004) points out, “the number of immigrants who have arrived [in the U.S.] since 1965 exceeds the millions who came at the turn of the last century.” First, second and third generation immigrants are part of our community and we were completely oblivious to that fact.
There is a Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church in town, and the general attitude among members of the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church was that the Spanish Church was the one who was supposed to minister to all the (non)migrant population in the area. Consequently, all Spanish-speaking visitors were greeted at the door with directions to the Spanish church across town. There was no engagement with newer and potential members of other cultures on the part of established membership as no steps were taken towards learning more about the different others visiting our church (Yancey, 2003, p. 69). “Cultural difference is no legitimate basis for…exclusion from the body of believers” (Douglas, 1999), yet we excluded our visitors that were different than us from our fellowship from the get go. After all, we had no children Sabbath School class for their noisy kids anyway and our sermons were in English!

Given the fact that the other significant population group, the Russians, was mostly consisting of Old Believers who had their own churches and were a close-knit community, we did not think it was our responsibility to do anything more than just be, have a church open one morning a week and the occasional Wednesday night Prayer Meeting/Bible Study. All these different others have to mind their own business, we mind ours! If the occasional person in need of a different ethnicity would come asking for help, we would give them money, food, clothing, or even transportation, but that only happened, we were convinced, because somebody else was not doing their job!

I have attempted, unsuccessfully, to reach out to the Spanish Church in town to try and find ways of working together to reach our community. I have suggested ways to achieve that—door-to-door work by mixed groups, Spanish and English speaking;
hosting bigger events in town—concerts, health fairs, etc.; using the East corner of our property, centrally located, for opening a café/book store/health food store as a way of creating space where people could come and spend some time away from the craziness of home lives and read a book or the newspaper in peace, staffed with bilingual volunteers there to initiate contact and be of service; and so on. The Spanish church showed no significant interest in working together. One possible reason could be the fact that Hispanic ministries in the Oregon Conference is regarded as separate ministries altogether to be done only by Spanish churches for the Latino communities. There has never been significant hierarchical support for combined multicultural efforts to reach communities as they come in their diversity. There is also the stated intention by Spanish groups to minister mainly to the needs of first generation immigrants; therefore interest for second and third generation is diminished, even though in my interactions with them some leaders of the Spanish group expressed concern over “losing the young people.” The only activity we managed to do was the Spanish Church offering a Bible Study in Spanish on Monday nights to the Hispanic community in our neighborhood. That went on for only a few weeks before the Spanish pastor moved and it was discontinued.

At some point we even studied the possibility of merging, where our church and a similar group in size from the Spanish church would join and start being active in outreach. The two church boards met several times after initial meetings between the two pastors and key leaders. Representatives from the Spanish Church insisted the new church be called Spanish-American or Bilingual, that positions on the Board would be evenly split between the two groups and that the two pastors would equally share the pulpit, with translation provided. After studying what were perceived as demands by the
incoming group, it was decided that it is not the way we want to go about it because that
would have been too divisive from the get go, thus it was rendered unacceptable. This
proposal widened the gap even more between the two churches and reinforced the
ethnocentric feelings of the two groups.

We therefore continued to keep a distance that meant lost opportunities and
possibly lost souls.

**Stage 2. Reluctant Acknowledgment:**
**Yes, There Might be an Elephant in the Room; So What?**

The willingness to begin talks with our Spanish brothers and sisters over such an
outrageous idea of working together and possibly uniting for increased mission and
ministry was an encouraging sign for me. Even if initially unsuccessful, it left an open
door for exploring future possibilities.

As we held various outreach programs at our church—summer concerts on the
lawn in front of our church, cooking classes, a health fair, etc. where we invited our
community to participate—as well as presenting sermons on the biblical perspective on
“the stranger in your midst” and a seminar that integrated such perspectives with
diversity issues and exercises, people started to realize that we cannot rely on other
people to reach out to our neighbors, it was our responsibility to do so. Gradually,
members realize that “intentionally…building cross cultural relationships is one of the
many disciplines God has called us to practice” (Anderson, 2010, p. 26). Consequently,
intentionality becomes key and is the factor that pushes us further into exploring ministry
possibilities.
This is a stage where we are very timid regarding this task and the steps taken are not significant. This is a time where ignorance and, on some level, even prejudice exists. As Yancey (2003, p. 142) observes, “prejudice has a way of revealing itself at inappropriate times:” some of our visitors one Sabbath were greeted at fellowship dinner by our host with a joyous “Welcome, I’m so glad you’re here today! Unfortunately we do not have any tacos on the menu. I’m terribly sorry about that!”

Throughout this stage, resistance to change was high as people realized they are not properly motivated and/or equipped for such a task. There were all sorts of fears that prevented people from reaching out to the different other, among them the fear that multiculturalism may lead to relativism” (Yancey, 2003, p. 83). To a church proud of its treasured and timeless truth, any change might be perceived as a danger to its main raison d’être. Therefore, self-preservation, not changing at all, became the chief preoccupation with complete disregard for the distance just created.

However, during this stage church members started expressing both a growing understanding that reality is different than what ethnocentric pull might have them believe and a willingness to acknowledge that this might be an opportunity to grow as a church. Consequently, the church started praying that the Lord would lead in taking ministry and mission to the next level, whatever He had in mind for us, and that He would prepare us for the endeavor. There already was a small group of prayer warriors meeting at the church twice a week that had prayed for over four years that something would change that would bring new growth to our church.
Stage 3. Joyful Engagement: Let’s do Something About This big Elephant in the Room!

As we prayed for change, the Lord had already put things in motion. Someone contacted me with the question of whether we would consider accepting a group of young people, mostly second and third generation Hispanics, searching for a new place to worship. “As cultures establish themselves in a given setting, second and third generation children begin to feel more closely linked to their birthplace than to the nation of their parents’ or grandparents’ origin” (Leenhouwers, 1999, July), therefore they needed an environment where they could experience God in a different way than their parents or grandparents, an environment that would allow them to maintain their own identity without forced assimilation. Due to events outside of our knowledge or control, this group of several young families with children, had decided to leave the Spanish church in our town and find another place to worship. We were their first option as our services were in English and happened to be in the same town.

This group of English-speaking young Hispanics was diverse enough in itself, some were church members, some had spouses that were not Adventists, and they not only wanted to go to a church where they could all worship in English, but wanted a place that was open enough to take them in non-judgmentally, as they were in their diversity. When presented with the proposal, the Woodburn Community church members unanimously accepted and identified this as the opportunity they have been praying for, some of them regularly, for over four years.

This was the most exciting of the four stages. Even though it was the most trying stage as tension and conflict was generated with regularity, the possibility of
transformation was palpable. The church members opened their arms and lives to embrace the newcomers, outreach happened, several baptisms took place throughout this time, and experimentation, the new journey together, was in full swing. “When multicultural ministry permeates a congregation, people move out through the doors of the church to serve the community in a natural way” (Rosado, 1996) and throughout this stage the naturalness we approached mission and ministry with crystalized.

The intercultural interactions led to changes in the way we did things as a church. The service was simplified. New, more contemporary music was played. There was experimentation with a Sabbath evening program geared towards attracting more youth from the community. We hosted a Valentine’s Banquet where there were more non-Adventists present than ever. Non-Adventist attendees felt comfortable enough to invite their non-Adventist friends to attend, which brought utter joy to many hearts. We also hosted a Thanksgiving dinner for friends and family. Meat dishes were allowed for the first time—we had traditionally favored vegetarian dishes for all church dinners, but did not have a voted rule in place for that. However, when some of our Hispanic members brought some ethnic food along with traditional dishes that contained turkey meat, people accepted that and most even enjoyed it. Rah (2010) submits, “there is something significant about sharing the intimate moment of consuming a meal… some of the best moments in the life of a multiethnic church is in the sharing of meals” (p. 166). He continues, contending, “a multicultural church needs to eat together. Without a shared table fellowship, a major gap develops in the church community... The power of table fellowship is the power of hospitality. An invitation to the table is an invitation to fellowship” (p. 168). Rah concludes, “food can be a distinguishing feature between
different cultures. But table fellowship can be a unifying element between different cultures” (p. 169). We have shared many meals together and have experienced this unifying element inherent in such an endeavor.

Without anyone objecting openly to it, both the Thanksgiving dinner and the previous Valentine’s banquet took place in the Sanctuary, space that was previously exclusively being used for worship services. The church did not set out to intentionally make change, but it just happened as the planning team worked on details. The size of the fellowship room normally used for meals played into it as the Sanctuary was much larger to accommodate the expected number of participants. This was significant and could only happen because of the diversity of the people present. There was, nevertheless, a subtle sense of uneasiness about the situation, at least in the beginning. As Yancey (2003) astutely observes, no church can create an environment in which one is totally comfortable (p. 33). However, real fellowship took place, which ended in the desire to have some more events like that take place in the future.

Proximity was key throughout this stage. “Communication between people in different cultures does not take place in a vacuum, but always occurs within the context of social relationships” (Hiebert, 1985). The more time people spend together, the more they communicate and share their stories, the more they get to know each other and become more comfortable with each other’s differentness, resulting in new and improved relationships. One way to hear each other’s stories we employed was scheduling entire services of testimonies, where people took turns presenting up front their thoughts and reflections on life with God and the resulting transformational experiences. The simple format required people to address what makes them sad, mad, bad, and glad. The range of
emotions and the depth of self-revelation created significant room for empathy, sympathy, love, and grace, and the impact was evident as people related to each other more and more as friends. Strengthened bonds of friendship are a good predictor of success in multicultural ministry.

Having changed the name of the church from Woodburn English to Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church, we proceeded with changing our structures to reflect not only our intentions regarding the diversity of our community we were intent on addressing by opening our hearts and reaching out more, but also the very reality of our new membership. The nominating committee proceeded to ask the church to include some of our new members in the new church board. The decision did not come naturally, so we had to “make a conscious and deliberate effort to be inclusive in [our] approach to ministry” (Rosado, 1996). Yancey (2003) agrees, “multiracial leadership is important because members of different racial groups desire to feel represented by the members of the church, especially racial minorities who historically have received a lack of respect for their opinions and perspectives” (p. 67). Consequently, the church voted three new Hispanic members on the board—an elder, the church clerk, and the head deacon. More responsibilities and opportunities for ministry were entrusted to a variety of new people who got involved in leading out in worship, in service and in outreach. The church purchased new equipment to support the younger members in their attempts to make good music together.

Another significant change taking place was the restart of our Sabbath School divisions for children and youth. Almost over night, we went from having no class available and always apologizing to visitors bringing children that we do not have a
teacher available, to having three Sabbath School classes—one for youth, one that combined Kindergarten and Primary/Juniors and another one for Cradle Roll that was offered in Spanish. Teachers offered to teach; the church acknowledged the opportunity and seized it. This translated into an overwhelming feeling of joy as the church was noisy again, which in the end did not bother anyone, on the contrary, people frequently expressed gratitude and satisfaction for all the little children and youth attending.

Stage 4. Utter Fulfillment: No Room for any Elephants in the House; Too Many People!

Culture is what defines people, but culture could also be a harsh steward. At the time it was birthed, Christianity was totally countercultural, therefore it changed the world. Judaism was the cradle of Christianity, but it was very close to being its grave too. Altering culture should be the task of any pilgrim journeying towards something better, an exciting tomorrow that gives hope and joy, motivating towards progress and continuous discovery. In this stage we reach a place of utter fulfillment where we move beyond the bounds of any one culture to a place of otherworldly synergy where people are working together for the common good of all, new ideas are formed every day that generate creativity and lead to innovation. No institution can produce and regulate it, as it is a Spirit thing.

Oneness in Christ is achieved and it goes beyond a mere doctrine to become a core, nonnegotiable congregational and personal belief (Hall, 2010). This is a point where “people find security not in stability, but in the dynamic equilibrium between holding on and letting go, holding on and letting go of beliefs, assumptions, and certainties”
(Kofman & Senge, 1993). In Christ we let go of the old, imperfect self, and hold on to His perfection. This equilibrium is as dynamic as the Spirit’s leading and the only place true oneness could be achieved.

Oneness in Christ and a desire to serve lead to experimentation. The church experimented with a variety of new ideas. In worship, we changed the order of the church service, including a children’s story, simplifying, combining the singing time with the prayer time, and placing it right before the sermon, introducing a Mission Emphasis featuring local mission stories, and included varied styles of music and instruments besides hymns with piano and organ accompaniment. We have had services that occasionally feature contemporary music with its use of instruments like guitars, djembe, electric drums, saxophone, violin, bells, and harp. Diversity of musical expression has highly enriched the worship experience.

In church structures, we decided to go for a more fluid Nominating Committees where the entire church becomes the Nominating Committee in duly called Business Meeting. That has allowed us to finalize the new list of officers in one, maybe two meetings as opposed to several meetings over the course of a few months, since all members are present and giving their Yes or No on the spot. We chose to have a better representation of our Spanish members on the Church Board, and we went from no representation to having three out of ten Board members being Hispanic. We elected two Head Elders instead of one, which allowed for increased collaboration, improved dialogue and efficiency.

We experimented with door-to-door type of outreach in our multicultural immediate neighborhood. As Sarli (1996) iterates, “the church must be intentional in
planning the outreach strategy of fulfilling its mission to people of diversity.” The basis for this endeavor was the assurance that “a culturally diverse church has the ability to embrace a wider spectrum of society and use those people to effectively evangelize among their own people groups” (Leenhouwers, 1999). We begun visiting our neighboring community composed mostly of Spanish-speaking individuals whose children and grandchildren understand or speak English. The children served as interpreters in many of these situations. Our structures are more fluid and ministry centered, as opposed to position or individual centered like before, thus allowing ministry to happen with greater flexibility and adaptability, regardless of whether the elected individual is present or not. Most members are involved in ministry at all times, taking turns as need and availability requires.

Pearce and Conger (2003) point out, “the hallmark of growth…is not increased ability to separate oneself from others but increased ability to connect oneself to others in ways that foster mutual development and learning” (p. 27). Jackson and Hardiman (2008) agree, “it is critical to build authentic relationships within and across group memberships,” insisting that “it is critical to stay in the process…[to] stay engaged and in relationship with others.” The project registered several opportunities for connecting and I have observed members keeping in touch with community participants outside of these get-togethers, both for social purposes as well as for having various needs met.

Even though multicultural ministry is difficult to initiate and maintain, “doing so holds the greatest promise for vital, vibrant congregational life and witness” (Douglas, 1999). Our life together throughout these 12 months of the project generated various ideas with impact for the community. We hosted the first Vacation Bible School in 20
years at our church. The program was very well received. We had 52 children attend, the overwhelming majority non-Adventist, from the adjacent community. We chose the Bible Buckaroo theme that thrilled the participants, young and old, as many parents and grand parents attended. Because we did not have enough people available to put it together, we asked several young people from our neighboring church in Molalla to come and help and they agreed. We were surprised when they brought along some of their non-Adventist friends to volunteer. Prior to the event, we divided up in teams and canvassed the neighborhood to advertise the program. And it happened that one of the non-Adventist young people on one of the teams was instrumental in communicating in Spanish with some of the residents who spoke Spanish only. Had she not come along, some opportunities might have been lost.

This is a stage where leadership simply happens, without being directed by someone in a formal position of authority. It is a process where, when need or ideas arise, people get together naturally and their shared expertise and common vision and mission sets in motion and pulls energies that they have never thought they had. One such process happened when one of the members on the social committee proposed we get together on a Saturday night for vespers and spend some social time with games, food, and a good time. As the committee processed this otherwise normal, common idea, someone else on the committee suggested the Spanish Church across the freeway be invited to participate. They wanted to expand their fellowship to include those who they now perceived as worthy of their friendship! This went against the conclusion drawn after the failed attempt at uniting the two churches and the hurt feelings resulting from poorly managed differences of opinion. After consulting with me and receiving an enthusiastic go ahead,
they invited the Spanish Church to participate. A considerable number of people came over and attended, we had vespers and Bible games before sundown, singing in both Spanish and English, as well as other games and a shared, good meal afterwards. People were excited about the experience and the Spanish Church invited our church for a similar program over at their church two months later. This program was completely the initiative of members acting out of their new, deeply held beliefs that we belong together as we are traveling on a journey with a common destination. This proves that something had happened in the minds and hearts of the members of the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church. Their vision for ministry has expanded to include the different other and we are thus better prepared to represent God in our community.

A Christmas program presented at the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church towards the end of the project illustrates progress made towards multicultural ministry. We presented a play written and directed by one of the church members. She is not a play writer, but the Lord blessed her with creativity, inspiration, and enthusiasm to produce a good script and have the energy to direct a multicultural cast of over twenty children and several supporting staff. It was a collaborative approach where our diverse members got involved in building stage sets, sewing costumes, providing technical assistance, music, food, acting and playing the various characters of a nativity scene, to a level that significantly impacted our community. The director invited children and parents from the Spanish Church to pitch in and participate, which they joyfully agreed to do. Members were encouraged to invite family, friends, and acquaintances to attend, and the church was packed. Brunch was served right before the program and the fellowship room that normally seats about 60 was filled to capacity. Of
the over 100 people in attendance for the program, many were Hispanic, Russian, Filipino, Romanian, Asian, young and old, Adventist, and non-Adventist. Attendees were caught up in the wonder of the First Advent, they sang together, praising God for the birth of Christ and His soon return. This is a true picture of diversity that would not have been possible just a few years before. Our life together led us to a point of celebration, a place of meaning, and a time of renewed mission.

**Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

**Summary**

Members of the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church went on a journey of self-discovery, transformation, and renewal that led them from a place of pure indifference regarding the multicultural element of their community and the opportunities for ministry and mission it offers, through a back and forth experience of acknowledgement, engagement, and fulfillment as the church navigated the tumultuous, yet equally rewarding waters of authentic living as part of the tapestry of God’s diverse people in the area. Even though the IES did not register significant profile modifications of the collective, which remains Traditionalist, the church engaged in visioning, received training on multicultural ministry, and participated in cross-cultural activities during the duration of this project. It would be beneficial to follow up within a year to administer the IES again and note if there are any changes in the *continuous learning, interpersonal engagement*, or *hardiness* dimensions.

As people live shared lives and exchange their stories, it is these deepening relationships that have the potential of changing minds (Aslan, 2011). As members
engage in continuous intercultural learning with changed minds, their predisposition towards accepting, integrating, and enjoying their lives together with the “stranger in their midst” will lead to more opportunities for mission, which will expand the Kingdom of God and create a mosaic of believers fully capable of being what God wants for them to be—one.

Oneness of spirit, purpose, and love is God’s ideal for His people. “Without openness to other cultures, our congregations will not even approximate God's ideal for His church” (Douglas, 1999). Openness to fully embrace God’s diverse people as a realization of His ideal of unity is revealed in God’s actions in Creation and the experience of Old Testament Israel, as well as in New Testamental Christian community. God’s ideal includes the redeemed of eschatological times that will gloriously step into the everlasting Kingdom of pure equality, beauty, and love.

Conclusions

At the conclusion of my involvement with members of the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church for this project, where I attempted to assist them in opening their minds towards exploring the endless possibilities for mission and ministry in our multicultural environment, after numerous discussions, meetings, and activities, the following truths have become self-evident and will guide my ministry from this point forward. First, leadership in multicultural situations is hard work, as Garces-Foley (2007a, p. 100) correctly observes, and one that requires a strong sense of calling and God-given determination to hang on, continue on, and see it through. There are plenty of
opportunities to give up, and if anything good came out of this project, it is only because of God who made it so.

Second, change takes time as attitudes change slowly, which makes it difficult and costly. The process, however, could be very rewarding. Its success depends considerably “on the willingness of those involved to bear the costs of diversity” (Garces-Foley, 2007a, p. 124). There is always a cost as some people who feel uncomfortable with change, oppose it, and decide to leave the congregation, or, even more challenging, stay and “stick it out to the bitter end.” Potential conflict is a part of any change process. It is a given that “waves of complexity and conflict will swell from time to time in a pluralistic community” (Downing, 1996). Besides losing members and the constant threat of impending conflict, there may be burn out, loss of focus and motivation, diminishing financial resources, etc. However, the rewards are worth the cost. Our church was in a better place because a core group of people decided to give change a chance, and the side effect is those involved are better people for going on this journey.

Third, I have initially considered the idea of attempting to lead the church in going from monocultural to a multicultural one as a task for this project. The idea mirrored a proposal by one of the church elders that got traction for a while with the others as well, which would have merging the English and Spanish groups as the desired outcome. It was evident that such a task would be unrealistic by the resistance and opposition expressed by church members and I did not feel a call to that. Some people do not significantly change at the core of who they are simply because they do not want to do so! However, they could change some behaviors. Altered behaviors then became my guideline, the test of how I knew they were willing to give multicultural community a
chance. As our lives together took us places of joy and sorrow, we acknowledged that it is God’s ideal for people to be open to and embrace equality and full engagement with the different other as we minister to our community together.

A monocultural church will not become multicultural unless there is a significant event that suddenly changes everything. Even though we came close to such a possibility, we did not feel that was the way to go and it did not become our focus. A changed behavior on the other hand, individuals willing to make themselves vulnerable for the sake of experiencing God in multicultural situations, was a more achievable goal. Participation in multicultural activities was an indicator with attendance for church events growing from around 50-60 participants for activities earlier in the year to over 100 for the year-end events. Church members and visitors expressed feelings of joy and satisfaction as they interacted with one another, shared meals, and initiated future plans for further ministry together.

Fourth, working towards changed hearts and minds is a long process and the 12 months I initially scheduled to accomplish it were insufficient. “It takes time before the barriers that divide cultures and ethnic groups are lowered, but when [people] know and trust one another, [they] begin to share life together” (Howard, 2005). I was able to do my project as stated in the proposal, however, I should have planned on taking more time dealing with the various aspects of what changing thinking and emotion implies. I approached this project without a clear understanding of the emotional component of change, overestimating the role of reasoning. People act and react from their emotional core, head knowledge and understanding playing a secondary role in the way human beings make decisions. Resistance to change did not come from poor understanding of
opportunities for multicultural ministry, but from a heart slow to emotionally process change.

Fifth, this journey of intentionality (Downing, 1996) in engaging the multicultural element in our community for the advancement of the Kingdom of God is marked by both progress and regress, most of the times running concomitantly. For instance, a few months into it, we changed the church’s name from Woodburn English to Woodburn Community and went on a four-session experience of visioning, trying to discover God’s will for our church. The name change received unanimous approval, and one of the two remaining church founders was ecstatic about it and stated, “this was long overdue.” Shortly afterwards, there was a need to create a new email address for the church and our church secretary went on and created a new Gmail account using Woodburn English for the account name instead of Woodburn Community. Also, while we were able to welcome a group of younger second and third generation Hispanics to our church, later opportunities to welcome and accommodate a larger group of first generation immigrants was not approved. Saying no to this second group of fellow Christians looking for a place to worship shows that regress is to be expected.

Sixth, celebrating diversity and growth brings about tremendous joy. Joy is one of the scarce elements to come by in situations of uncertainty, conflict, and chaos, which are sometimes the norm in multicultural situations. It is indeed freeing to experience the joy of calmed spirits, members appreciating diversity, working together in service, building each other up, relinquishing control, relaxing, and celebrating God’s presence in their midst.
Seventh, multicultural ministry is a moral imperative. It “is what the church should strive to accomplish on this earth because this is what the church will be in the new heaven and the new earth” (Yancey, 2003, p. 68). The redeemed will step into eternity only together, not separated. As there is only one way into heaven (Acts 4:12), multicultural ministry becomes one significant way to accomplish the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) in the diverse world of the 21st century.

Recommendations

Anyone attempting to work with a similar church group towards intentionally engaging the multicultural environment in their community might want to survey the following suggestions. First, generate enough support for such an endeavor and make sure the idea appeals to a multigenerational range of individuals. I believe my project would have had a broader impact if my church had been multigenerational. Support came from the membership, but it was mostly the older generations granting it and there were times when the newer, younger members felt their point had not come across properly in the dialogue. That was due to the de facto situation of the elderly majority, and not necessarily to a lack of interest in listening on their part.

Second, prepare for living with the disappointment of regress at times and do not set expectations too high. God has an ideal, but more important than reaching that ideal is to be on the right path towards it. The movement of direction is more important than the destination in this case, where the impact is rarely seen right off the bat.

Third, the pastor does not have the luxury of quitting, while the church members, as volunteers always do. Loss is leadership making. If some give up along the way or,
worse, turn from friends into enemies, it is all part of the process of change and growth. And if some quit, it is not necessarily a bad decision for either one of the parties. Anyone can get involved somewhere else and be successful at something else for the Lord.

Fourth, the process of altering culture and changing minds is messy, and living with the uncertainty is an important quality of those involved. People protecting the status quo, who do not like change, generally do not exhibit such a quality and they will be the last ones to get onboard. Efforts are wasted trying to change naysayers. God can do that at the right time, and most of the time it is only His Spirit who can accomplish that.

Fifth, assess early on if the monocultural church wants to go all the way to becoming a multicultural church and do not attempt to do that without critical mass and favorable socio-economic, cultural, demographic, and geographic conditions. If the church wants to stay the way it has traditionally been, focus on changing behaviors. Hospitality is a great way to start. Move at the pace of the slowest member and progress will not hesitate to materialize as God moves on people’s hearts.

Sixth, since uncertain outcomes in multicultural ministry are a given (Garces-Foley, 2007a, p. 139), if we end up in a better place than we originally planned, it is God’s doing. Learn to enjoy the scenery even on detours. When God’s people get together and are serious about mission, no one has the right idea of where to go at the onset of the journey or how it will all end, but the Spirit will lead to new territory and places where the church could be most effective. Leadership is a process and the end result of the synergy of God’s people living and working together is a highly rewarding reality. As a gift from God, it needs to be constantly celebrated.
APPENDIX A

INTERCULTURAL EFFECTIVENESS SCALE AND WOODBURN COMMUNITY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IES PROFILE
INTERCULTURAL EFFECTIVENESS SCALE

The following is the instrument used to measure intercultural effectiveness in the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church. Participants marked their answers on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree and received a score for each statement (for most questions Strongly Agree answers are scored with a 5, except questions 27, 29, 32, 34, 48, 49, and 51 where Strongly Agree answers are scored with a 1). A number of 30 church members took the entry survey, with 27 of them taking it a year later. Here below are the survey questions:

1. I’m aware of my interpersonal style and can easily describe it to others.
2. I know what I am good at.
3. I am comfortable with myself.
4. People who don't know themselves well are really doing themselves a disservice.
5. If someone asked me what my main weaknesses are, I could give them an accurate answer right away.
6. Thinking about my strengths and weaknesses is a good use of my time.
7. I can clearly articulate my personal values to others.
8. Usually I can tell what impact my behavior has on others.
9. I enjoy reflecting on my past experiences to see what I can learn from them.
10. I like to have contact with people from different cultures.
11. When I make an important decision, I look for information from as many different sources as possible.
12. I have grown over time.
13. I take advantage of opportunities to do new things.
14. I treat all situations as an opportunity to learn something.
15. I have developed significant new skills over time.
16. I seek experiences that will change my perspective.
17. I can make mid-course corrections.
18. I learn from mistakes.
19. I am able to start over after setbacks.
20. My friends would say I know a lot about world geography.
21. I regularly read the travel section of the newspaper or news web sites.
22. I can often be found reading about world geography.
23. Every now and then I watch television programs about other countries and cultures.
24. I regularly listen to the BBC or similar world news sources.
25. As a student, I took many courses on foreign countries and cultures.
26. I routinely read the international section of the newspaper or news web sites.
27. The idea of learning a foreign language is more exciting to me than it is dreadful.
28. I tend to avoid conversations with people who are not fluent in my native language.
29. It doesn't bother me to start up a conversation with someone I don't know.
30. Meeting people from other cultures is stressful.
31. Given a choice, I would rather vacation at home than go abroad.
32. Meeting people from other cultures is stimulating.
33. It is hard to find things to talk about with people from other cultures.
34. I enjoy making friends with people from other cultures.
35. People these days have pretty low moral standards.
36. The only thing people can talk about these days, it seems, is movies, TV, and foolishness like that.
37. People get ahead by using "pull" and not because of what they know.
38. Once you start doing favors for people, they'll just walk all over you.
39. People are too self-centered.
40. People are always dissatisfied and hunting for something new.
41. You've probably got to hurt someone if you're going to make something out of yourself.
42. In my experience, people are pretty stubborn and unreasonable.
43. Average people are not very well satisfied with themselves.
44. It takes me a long time to get over a particularly stressful experience.
45. I have never been good at coping with negative emotions.
46. I find that little things often bother me.
47. It's hard for me to get over my failures.
48. It doesn't take me long to get over setbacks.
49. I cope well with most things that come my way.
50. Sometimes there is so much pressure I feel like I will burst.
51. People who know me would say I remain calm in stressful situations.
52. It usually takes me awhile to get over my mistakes.

WOODBURN COMMUNITY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IES SCORES AND PROFILE

The entry IES scores (70 for Continuous Learning, 48 for Interpersonal Engagement, 58 for Hardiness, and 176 for overall IES score) place the participant group in the following quadrants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Learning</td>
<td>0-70</td>
<td>71-73</td>
<td>74-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Engagement</td>
<td>0-44</td>
<td>45-48</td>
<td>49-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardiness</td>
<td>0-52</td>
<td>53-56</td>
<td>57-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall IES Score</td>
<td>0-171</td>
<td>172-180</td>
<td>181-188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A1: Entry IES Scores

Based on these scores, the resulting IES entry profile was the Traditionalist:
A2: IES Entry Profile-Traditionalist

The exit IES scores (73 for Continuous Learning, 51 for Interpersonal Engagement, 57 for Hardiness, and 181 for overall IES score) place the participant group in the following quadrants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continuous Learning</strong></td>
<td>0-70</td>
<td>71-73</td>
<td>74-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal Engagement</strong></td>
<td>0-44</td>
<td>45-48</td>
<td>49-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hardiness</strong></td>
<td>0-52</td>
<td>53-56</td>
<td>57-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall IES Score</strong></td>
<td>0-171</td>
<td>172-180</td>
<td>181-188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A3: Exit IES Scores

The IES exit profile remains Traditionalist as illustrated in the graph below:

![IES Exit Profile-Traditionalist Graph]

A4: IES Exit Profile-Traditionalist

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APPENDIX B

TRAINING SEMINAR: ONE GOD, ONE WORLD,

DIVERSE PEOPLE
ONE GOD, ONE WORLD, DIVERSE PEOPLE

As part of developing and implementing a vision for multicultural ministry in the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church I prepared the following seminar focusing on various multicultural issues. This six-part seminar includes teaching on Biblical perspectives on multicultural ministry topics, as well as diversity training and intercultural communication exercises as learning modalities.

Part I: UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY

OUTLINE:
✓ Activity: Diversity Questionnaire
✓ Biblical Perspective: Diversity in Creation
✓ Lecture: Cultural Style Differences

DIVERSITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Objectives:
✓ To help people work out self-awareness by examining communication skills in relation to diversity.
✓ To reveal areas of potential growth people may want to work on in order to become better communicators and more effective leaders.

Instructions:
✓ Next to each question place the number that best describes your own actions and beliefs [1 = almost always; 2 = frequently; 3 = sometimes; 4 = seldom; 5 = almost never]

Questions:
1. _____ Do you recognize and challenge the perceptions, assumptions, and biases that affect your thinking?
2. _____ Do you think about the impact of what you say or how you act before you speak or act?
3. _____ Do you do everything you can to prevent the reinforcement of prejudices, including avoiding using negative stereotypes when you speak?
4. _____Do you demonstrate your respect for people who are not from the dominant culture by doing things that show you feel they are as competent and skilled as others, including handing them responsibility as often as you do others?
5. _____Do you encourage people who are not from the dominant culture to speak out on their concerns and respect those issues?
6. _____Do you speak up when someone is making racial, sexual, or other derogatory remarks, or is humiliating another person?
7. _____Do you apologize when you realize you might have offended someone due to inappropriate behavior or comments?
8. _____Do you try to know people as individuals, not as representatives of specific groups, and include different types of people in your peer group?
9. _____Do you accept the notion that people from all backgrounds have a need to socialize with and reinforce one another?
10. _____Do you do everything that you can to understand your own background, and try to educate yourself about other backgrounds, including different communication styles?

Scoring:
✓ The lower your score, the better you communicate and improve the climate in your diverse organization and the community at large.
✓ To improve your communication, increase your use of the behaviors listed above.


DIVERSITY IN CREATION

KEY POINTS:

A. Oneness and Plurality within the Godhead
✓ God at work. Genesis 1 and 2.
  o God is crafting of a new storyline,
  o Environments populated with new and brand new categories: heavenly objects, a breathable atmosphere, water, plants, animals, new beings, time and seasons, work and activities, etc. C
  o Common denominator of this diversity of form and function is Elohim, the initiator of everything that comes out of the formless confusion of the elemental הוהי.
✓ The word Elohim appears more than 2,500 times in the Hebrew Bible.
  o Used some thirty five times in Genesis 1:1-2:3 alone.
  o The word is a plural, which in biblical Hebrew means three or more distinct objects, ideas, or individualities
  o The word connotes a deity’s totality of manifestation.
✓ One God (Deut 4:35; 6:4; Isa 45:5; Zech 14:9).
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make human beings in their own image (Gen 1:26), note how Adam and Eve become like them knowing good and evil (Gen 3:22), get together and go out to deal with rebellion (Gen 11:7), or reveal their glory to faithful servants (Exod 3:6).

Isaiah 48:16 and 42:1 present all three persons of the Trinity busy in providing the means for salvation.

B. Diversity of Form and Function in Creation

✓ A diverse God will create diversity naturally.

- The purpose of all things made in the first six days of Creation is to prepare an environment suitable for human dwelling.
- The primordial הוהֹת is just a picture of an uninhabitable realm not yet ready for man to reside in.
- The Creator evaluates the diverse work of His hands and calls it simply טוב, “very good.”

✓ Commentators agree that the account of Creation is neatly organized in two parallel series of threes.

- The first three days are days of forming, when God makes various environments, while the corresponding next three days are days of filling those environments. Form and function beautifully meet in the diversity of Creation to craft something excitingly new.
- Creation is dynamic. The speed at which everything is spoken into existence creates excellence and is imbued with excitement as the divine blueprint is put in motion. This energetic diversity of form and function is a reflection of God Himself.

✓ The God of Genesis is an active Creator whose word means action.

- He creates colors—the grass is always “green” in the Garden—textures, dimensions, air, light, water, fire, birds, stars, fish, animals, plants, trees, land, atmosphere, time, human beings and much more.
- He chooses to call all of this diversity “good,” and especially “very good” at the end of day six, after Adam and Eve are created. This according to connotes the quintessence of goodness, wholesomeness, appropriateness, and beauty.
- On the seventh day God rests from His creative activity, setting apart a place in time for Him to enter into a relationship with His newly created masterpiece (Gen 2:1-3).

C. Adam and Eve

✓ When God decides to make humanity (Gen 1:26), He creates them in His own image.

- Davidson (1988) suggests this is the wholeness of humanity as the Hebrew words שֶׁ·לֶּם (“image”) and דָּ·מַעַט (“likeness”) although possessing overlapping semantic ranges, in the juxtaposition of vs. 26 appear to emphasize both the concrete and abstract aspects of human beings, and
together indicate that the person as a whole, both in material/bodily and spiritual/mental components, is created in God’s image. (p. 8)

- Ellen G. White suggests that “man was to bear God’s image, both in outward resemblance and in character.”
- The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary also points out that this refers to their spiritual nature as living beings equipped with free will.
- Karl Barth (as cited in Wolf, 1991) argues that “the plural pronouns us and our in Gen 1:26 anticipate the human plurality of male and female and indicate something about the nature of the divine existence also” (p. 32).

✓ A diverse God creates the first human family (Gen 1:27) using diverse materials to achieve His purpose.
  - Adam comes from the dirt of the ground and the Divine breath of life (Gen 2:7).
  - Eve is formed out of Adam’s bone and flesh (Gen 2:21-23).
  - They are different, yet they are one (Gen 2:24).
  - This blend of diversity and oneness is clearly defined from the beginning as a separate, new category. Therefore a man is supposed to leave his family of origin—the Hebrew word ‘ā·zāḇ is a very forceful term, literally meaning “to abandon” or “to forsake”—and invest everything in his relationship with his spouse, in absolute freedom from any external interference.
  - Sexual differentiation—Davidson (1988, p. 6) emphasizes it is not part of the divine order, but it is something God creates for Adam and Eve. The transcendent God is beyond the polarity of sex. Consequently, there is a “radical separation of sexuality and divinity” (p. 7). This duality of sexes from the beginning, however, is fundamental to what it means to be human.

✓ Adam and Eve are the recipients of God’s blessing (Gen 1:28)
  - Davidson (1988) further notes, “there is no hint of ontological or functional superiority or inferiority between male and female” (p. 7).
  - The bipolarity of the sexes in Creation is to be an advantage in their work of tending to the needs and functions of everything else on earth. Two are better than one (Ecc 4:9).

CULTURAL STYLE DIFFERENCES

Language is culture. It is such an important element of culture that cultures develop their own languages even if they also speak a dominant societal language. That is how Yiddish came into being, why we have Black English, and why each organizational culture creates its own communication styles and language. And while language defines its culture, language also communicates its culture. On a micro level, we communicate who we are as individuals. On a macro level, we communicate our cultures.

We learn our communication styles as part of our cultural upbringing, leading to culture-specific style differences. Many of these differences are nonverbal. Other
differences include our degree of directness in talking with each other, what topics are appropriate to speak about at work, whether we value change or tradition or emphasize group or individual performance, and if our culture values competition or collaboration in the workplace.

When our communication style conflicts with that of another culture, we may feel discomfort. For example, two Americans in conversation will typically choose a distance of three feet or more between each other, while that distance may shrink to less than two feet among Italians. When persons from each of those cultures engage in conversation, the differences may lead to misunderstandings.

Here are some of the major style differences between mainstream American culture and other cultures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of Culture</th>
<th>Mainstream American Culture</th>
<th>Different Cultures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication and</td>
<td>Explicit, direct communication</td>
<td>Implicit, indirect communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Emphasis on content—meaning found in words</td>
<td>Emphasis on context—meaning found around words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Eating Habits</td>
<td>Eating as a necessity—fast food</td>
<td>Dining as a social experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Religious rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships, Family,</td>
<td>Focus on nuclear family</td>
<td>Focus on extended family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Responsibility for self</td>
<td>Loyalty and responsibility to family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value on youth, age seen as handicap</td>
<td>Age given status and respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values and Norms</td>
<td>Individual orientation</td>
<td>Group orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Conformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preference for direct confrontation of conflict</td>
<td>Preference for harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs and Attitudes</td>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenging of authority</td>
<td>Respect for authority and social order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individuals control their destiny</td>
<td>Individuals accept their destiny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender equity</td>
<td>Different roles for men and women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Processes and</td>
<td>Linear, logical, sequential</td>
<td>Lateral, holistic, simultaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Style</td>
<td>Problem-solving focus</td>
<td>Accepting of life’s difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Habits and</td>
<td>Emphasis on task</td>
<td>Emphasis on relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices</td>
<td>Rewards based on individual achievement</td>
<td>Rewards based on seniority, relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work has intrinsic value</td>
<td>Work is a necessity of life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B1: Cultural Style Differences


Part II: OFFERING HOSPITALITY

OUTLINE:

✓ Activity: Right Hand/Left Hand
RIGHT HAND/LEFT HAND

Instructions:
✓ Using your non-dominant hand, perform the following tasks:
  o Write this sentence: *The sun is shining on the treetops.*
  o Write today’s date.
  o Sign your name.
  o Draw a tree.
  o If you are doing this exercise with other people, show them your work.

Questions:
1. How did you feel doing these with your non-dominant hand?
2. How would you feel if you had to use your non-dominant hand at work all the time?
3. What tasks would be easier for you to do with your non-dominant hand? Harder?
4. How long would it take you to become as proficient with your non-dominant hand as you are with your dominant one?
5. What would you do if your job consisted almost entirely of the more difficult tasks?
6. How do you think your boss would evaluate your performance? What if you were compared to others who could work with their dominant hand?
7. What hand would you use when no one was looking? When the boss was not around? At home?
8. What does this suggest about language differences (and other differences) on the job?
9. How would you assist people who are working in some way with their non-dominant hand?


THE STRANGER IN YOUR MIDST

KEY POINTS:

A. Who was “the stranger in your midst”?
✓ Text: Lev 19:33, 34
✓ After the Egyptian captivity, people of other ethnicities followed Israel out of Egypt, but also added themselves to Israel, for various reasons, at different points in their journey to the Promised land.
Foreigners might have simply been purchased servants, settlers, servants hired for wages or merchants with a temporary or permanent residence with Israel (Exod 12:43).

Israel attempted to turn some of them into converts, as evidenced in Matt 23:15 (NIV). The Greek word for that is προσηλυτος, translated convert, stranger or foreigner, a proselyte.

A proselyte is a person who had come from his own people and country to sojourn with another. If you were not a direct descendant of Jacob or Joseph, you were considered a stranger.

Two categories: strangers of the gate and strangers of righteousness
  o “Proselytes of the gate” approved of the Jewish religion, renounced the pagan superstitions, and conformed to some of the rites of the Jews, but were not circumcised or baptized.
  o “Proselytes of righteousness” wholly and fully embraced the Jewish religion, were baptized, were circumcised, and conformed to all the rites of the Mosaic institutions (Matt 23:15 section, para. 4, 3).

B. Pluralism and Diversity of the Stranger

Four different words in the Hebrew Bible used to designate who the stranger was
  o Ben nekar—the son of a stranger or foreigner, one who was not of the genuine Hebrew stock, or one who had not received circumcision (Gen 17:12, 27; Gen 35:2, 4; Ps 144:7, 11; Is 56:3). It applies quite generally to any foreigner springing from another nation.
  o Ger—translated sojourner, alien, stranger, properly a guest. Gen 15:13; 23:4; Exod 20:10; Lev 19:33, 34. It designates a foreigner living for a shorter or longer time in the midst of the Israelites. This is the correspondent of the Greek proselutos.
  o Toshab—referring to a dweller, a settler, a resident alien. Gen 23:4; Exod 12:45; Lev 22:10; Num 35:15; 1 Kgs 17:1; Ps 39:12. It designates a person who settled permanently among the Israelites, without being received into their religious fellowship.
  o Sakhir—Exod 12:45; Deut 24:14; Job 14:6; Isa 21:16; Jer 46:21; Mal 3:5. This was the non-Israelite who worked for an Israelite for daily or yearly wages. A hired hand.

Whether referring to place of origin, the reality of sojourning along, (non) permanent residence, or a specific socio-economic status, the stranger presents a picture of pluralism and diversity in the otherwise ethnocentric, monocultural Jewish system.

C. Attitudes Toward the Stranger

Lev 19:33-34—full inclusion and integration
Exod 22:21-22—don’t mistreat the stranger
Deut 27:19—justice should be fairly given to the stranger
Exod 12:48-49, Num 9:14, Lev 24:22, Num 15:15, 16, 29 Israel was supposed to have one law for the native-born and the stranger.
✓ Zech 8:16-17 presents a description of the principles involved in legally dealing with the stranger—judgment was supposed to be based on core values of truth, justice, and peace.
✓ Deut 24:14-21—practical aspects of a well thought welfare system. In Lev 23:22, 19:9-10 they were not to wholly reap the corners of their field or to glean, which was to be extremely beneficial for the poor and the stranger
✓ Deut 10:17-19—God shows no partiality, loves the stranger, is constantly at work watching over them (Ps 146:9). He “is a Father to the fatherless, a Defender of widows in his Holy habitation” (Ps 68:5), a Protector of the alien. He is a “swift witness against those who turn away an alien” (Mal 3:5).

TING

*Ting* is a Chinese word meaning "To Listen" describing a very complete way of listening so that your total focus is on the speaker. Often, when we are listening to another person, we are only partially listening while we are preparing our response. With *Ting*, you are fully present to the speaker.

**Key Points:**

 ✓ The symbol on the left-hand side is ear. I use my ear to hear the words you are speaking. The symbol on the lower half of the left-hand side translates to "king" or dominant one, indicating that the ear is the most important part of listening.

 ✓ On the right-hand side at the top is mind. I use my mind to understand the words you are saying. Below that is eye. I use my eye to watch for any nonverbal messages you are sending me. If the verbal and nonverbal are inconsistent, I can ask for clarification. The line below that is one, or “to become of one,” indicating that we can become of one heart if I listen effectively. Heart is the bottom symbol on the right-hand side.

 ✓ In other words, if I listen to you with *Ting*, I am fully attending to you. I have nothing left to get defensive with. No matter what you are saying, I am fully focused on you, not on me. The closest we have in English to this word is “active listening” or “empathy”.

 ✓ Listening in this way will almost always result in a much deeper level of understanding than we are generally accustomed to. When we do this, relationships almost always benefit and people will feel included and engaged.
Part III: CREATING COMMUNITY

OUTLINE:

- Activity: Active Listening
- Lecture: Active Listening Skills—SOLER
- Biblical Perspective: Kingdom for all—Acts 10

ACTIVE LISTENING

Objective:
- To build active listening skills that are central to effective communication, which in turn is essential for prejudice reduction activities.

Directions:
- Begin by reading the poem, "On Listening," by Ralph Houghton.
- Introduce active listening by asking participants to briefly brainstorm what they think active listening is. Write their answers on newsprint. Then ask why they think it is part of this seminar. It is the most important part of effective communication, because a person who has been listened to is likely to feel respected and more likely to listen in return. People who truly listen are the problem solvers. Caution that active listening is a skill to be used when helping another person or when a conflict has arisen and is not meant to be used in all conversations.
- Pass out the listening handout. Define the four parts to active listening: body language (including SOLER), encouragers, questions (open ended and clarifiers), and restatement (rephrasing, reflecting and summarization).
- Demonstrate the four skills by using active listening in a one-on-one conversation with a participant. First, use poor active listening skills by looking away, crossing arms and legs, carrying on side conversations and nervously fidgeting. Ask the speaker how he or she felt and then what was wrong with your demonstration. Then use good active listening skills and have the participants say which skill you are using every time you use one.
- Divide the group into pairs. Each pair chooses an A and a B person. Begin with A. Instruct the group that A is to talk for 5 minutes on a subject you will give them or on any topic of their own choosing. Some participants need to be given a topic and others prefer to choose their own. This is to be a conversation, not a monologue. The participant who is listening will use as many of the active listening skills as she or he can.
- At the end of 5 minutes, call time and give the following instructions:
  - For speakers: Give listener feedback on what encouraged your partner to talk and get more in touch with his/her feelings.
Both the listener and the speaker share which active listening skills were used.

- Reverse roles and repeat the process with a different topic. If more practice is desired, have the group form new pairs and repeat.
- Process the exercise in the large group. Ask, "What was the exercise like—easy, challenging, etc.? What did you learn? How will this affect you after the seminar? How can you use these skills?"

**Benefits:**

- This is an experiential exercise bringing into play the visual, auditory and tactile components of the learning process. Participants will have fun and learn valuable skills in a nonthreatening modality, skills that can be used immediately at work, home or play. Active listening is the foundation of problem solving whether conciliation, negotiation, arbitration or meditation.

**Poem: On Listening**

*When I ask you to listen to me and you start by giving me advice,*

you have not done what I've asked.

*When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me why*  
I shouldn't feel that way, you are trampling on my feelings.

*When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to do something*  
to solve my problem, you have failed me, strange as it may seem.

Listen! All I ask is that you listen, not talk or do ...  
just hear me.

*When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself,*  
you contribute to my fear and inadequacy.

And I can do for myself. I'm not helpless. Maybe discouraged and faltering,  
but not helpless.

*But when you accept as simple fact that I do feel what I feel,*  
no matter how irrational, then I can quit trying to convince you

And get about the business of understanding what's behind  
this irrational feeling.

And when that's clear, the answers are obvious  
and I don’t need advice.

Irrational feelings make sense when we understand  
what's behind them.

Perhaps that's why prayer works, sometimes, for some people ... because God is mute,  
and He or She doesn't give advice or try to fix things.

God just listens and  
lets you work it out yourself.

So, please listen and just hear me. And if you want to talk,  
wait a minute for your turn, and I'll listen to you.
ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS—SOLER

✓ Body Language—SOLER:
  o Squarely face the speaker.
  o Use an Open posture without crossing legs or arms.
  o Lean toward the speaker when sitting and stand at an appropriate distance when standing.
  o Use good Eye contact.
  o Use a Relaxed posture without nervous gestures and facial expressions that indicate interest. Look interested and be interested!

✓ Encouragers: Smile, nod or say something like, "Tell me more about that."

✓ Questions: Ask open-ended questions, which can't be answered simply by yes or no. "What was your relationship like?" "Tell me what happened." Ask clarifying questions to check out if what you heard is what the speaker meant or to get specific information, such as, "What time did you leave?" or "Do you mean that________?"

✓ Restatement: Rephrase by repeating what the speaker said, only in your own words. Reflect back the speaker's feelings, such as, "I'd bet you're glad that happened" or "You seem angry." Summarize what has been said.

✓ Things to Avoid: Giving advice, distracting comments, judging, interrupting, changing the subject or bringing your own experience into the conversation. To avoid giving advice, use the preceding listening skills to help the speaker explore his/her feelings such as:
  o "Tell me more about your relationship."
  o "What would happen if you confronted her?"
  o "What do you want the outcome to be?"
  o "What do you feel are your realistic options now?"
  o "It sounds like you are really angry and hurt right now."

Adapted from material by John A. Shuford, Conflict Resolution Services, 103 Dalwin Drive, Dover, DE 19901

KINGDOM FOR ALL—ACTS 10

KEY POINTS:

A. Christian Community Ideal
  ✓ Galatians 3:28—all are one in Christ Jesus.
  ✓ Christian community as a microcosm of the Kingdom of God—no room for inequality, lack of freedom, or religious primacy.
Kee (1995) points out, establishing this type of inclusive community where people of all ethnic origins participate in the life of the new covenant community has been the Divine intention all along (p. 207).

B. Salvation to Gentiles

- Peter is convinced that indeed God shows no partiality. In Christ, Jew and Greek and Roman could really be brothers, because of their common destination—the Kingdom of God.
- The all-inclusive character of the Gospel is shown in the language used throughout the passage.
- Spirit of God was present and moving in the household of Cornelius (vs. 45, 46) and they all asked for and received the baptism into Jesus Christ (vs. 47).
- Baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ” signifies acceptance in the community and acts as an equalizer—different individuals starting a new life together, at the same time.

C. Soteriology of Inclusion

- Peter explains that God’s directive was very clear, “what God has cleansed, you must not call common” (Acts 11:9). Here clearly there is no reference to food, as the word for “common” refers to the ritually impure. This is the word the Jews used to refer to the Gentiles.
- The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary points out that: All who were not Jews were viewed as the “common” rabble, shut out from God’s covenant. The practices of these spiritual outcasts, different from those of the chosen people, were called “common” things, and as these “common” things were generally those forbidden by the law, all such prohibited things or actions became known as “common”. (Nichol, 1978, 6, p. 250)
- The sanctioning of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentile experience in Caesarea was evident, this being the same Holy Spirit falling upon them earlier in Acts 2:1-4.
- Even though they are not prepared for such a change, they have no other option than to accept it. Salvation is now available to anyone (vs. 18). Upon this realization, they became silent—a proper attitude of reflection and repentance—and glorified God. Worship is the natural response when realizing the inclusive nature of God’s salvation.
- The tremendous results of the work among Gentiles do not hesitate to appear. Many Hellenists are converted in Antioch (vs. 24). Saul joins Barnabas for a whole year and many Gentiles become disciples (vs. 26). And it is here, in Antioch, that they were first called Christians.
Part IV: COMMUNICATING CROSS-CULTURALLY

OUTLINE:
✓ Activity: Second Language Walk in Their Shoes
✓ Biblical Perspective: When God speaks a different language—Acts 15
✓ Lecture: Techniques for Improving Cross-Cultural Communication

SECOND LANGUAGE WALK-IN-THEIR-SHOES

Objective:
✓ To assist one-language speakers to appreciate the effort that new second language learners and speakers exert while communicating in their non-primary language.

Process:
✓ Ask participants to choose a partner and decide who will go first.
✓ Facilitator gives the following instruction: “Now tell your partner about the town you grew up in. Start. WAIT!!! As you share this information insert a COLOR (or use any word that makes sense to the audience—animals, foods, acronyms from their organization, products from their organization) every seventh word, using a different color each time. Go!”
✓ After two minutes ask that they switch and the other partner do the same.

Debriefing Questions:
1. How did you feel when you were the speaker? What did you do?
2. How did you feel when you were the listener? What did you do?
3. How effective were you?
4. What did you learn?
5. How can you use this awareness as you interact with others who are speaking a second or third language?

Debriefing Conclusions:
1. Second-language speakers can feel awkward, can take longer to find the word they want to communicate, and may be limited in the words available to them.
2. When listening to second-language learners, the listener can get impatient and/or may try to help by giving them a word.
3. Using empathy from your own experience can increase effectiveness for both the listener and the speaker.

WHEN GOD SPEAKS A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE
ACTS 15

KEY POINTS:

A. Ecclesiology of Inclusion
   ✓ Judaism was the cradle of Christianity, but it was about to become its grave too!
   ✓ The Jerusalem Council of Acts 15:1-29 is the new movement’s attempt to sort out the more practical ecclesiastical challenges resulting from the inclusiveness of God’s salvation arrived at earlier.
   ✓ Even though the issue is framed in terms of a theological problem—conflict over circumcision—in fact it is just a practical matter of how to partake of the same Christ within a diverse environment: Jews and Gentiles together, as Christians, in religious expression, lifestyle, shared resources and their common life as members of the same body, the church.
   ✓ The Jews needed a framework they could use to explain the new reality of salvation being made available to anyone and to manage the inherent tension with their long-held beliefs. They needed a way to rationalize the switch from “we are God’s people” to “we are part of God’s people.” Their sense of loss needed some sort of restitution to achieve closure.

B. Council Proceedings
   ✓ When people who treasured the old ways came down and stirred up the church in Antioch (vs. 1-2), Paul and Barnabas dutifully engaged them and, as a way to resolve the dispute, went to Jerusalem to get counsel from headquarters.
   ✓ Same news of the conversion of Gentiles produces joy in Phoenicia and Samaria, and concern in Jerusalem (vs. 3-4).
   ✓ Pharisee believers wanted the new Gentile converts subdued—circumcised—and commanded to keep the Law of Moses (vs. 5).
   ✓ The Gentile threat was personal and it needed to be addressed: “If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation” (John 11:4).
   ✓ Peter reiterated that God acknowledged the Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit (vs. 8-9). God “made no distinction between us and them.” Moreover, God had purified those previously regarded as ritually impure by giving them “heart purifying faith.” The locus of the identifying mark of the people of God is moved from circumcision of the flesh to purification of the heart.

C. Final Decisions
   ✓ Moment of silence (vs. 12).
   ✓ Reference to Amos 9:11-12 “the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all Gentiles.”
   ✓ The fourfold solution to the circumcision problem contained abstinence from things polluted by idols, sexual immorality, things strangled, and blood (vs. 20).
The first two concern religious and moral issues, while the last two are matters of ritual restrictions.

- The zone of final agreement is located nowhere near circumcision itself! The message is clear: circumcision is not a criterion for salvation! This solution allowed for the ecclesiastical inclusion of Gentiles and recognized their right to salvation, while satisfying the bruised ego of the hardliners in Judaism, which demanded compensation for their perceived loss of firstness or privilege.

- A patient God has lead His diverse people once again to a place where they are better positioned for mission and ministry. Wherever the Holy Spirit is invited and allowed to work, miracles happen and organizational progress occurs.

**TECHNIQUES FOR IMPROVING CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

**KEY POINTS:**

1. Be aware of your own biases so they don't unconsciously control your behaviors. Research indicates that merely being reminded that we have biases will allow decisions to be made in a more bias-free manner.

2. Practice flexibility. The more choice you have in the different ways you can communicate, the more effective you will be in a cross-cultural context. Consider three important aspects of communication competence:
   - Understand your own preferences in style and process.
   - Allow others to communicate in a range of ways—without negative evaluation.
   - Use a wide range of styles and processes depending on context.

3. Slow down your response and check your assumptions. Many organizations operate at a very fast pace—and, in fact, reward quick responses. When this is added to a conscious or unconscious assumption that we are more like others than unlike them, it can lead to a quick response based on assumptions. When this quick reaction is based on an inaccurate assumption, it reduces cross-cultural effectiveness. Asking ourselves "what assumptions am I making?" and "how do I know my assumption is accurate?" allows us the opportunity to be more effective.

4. Assume positive intentions. When people say or do things that have a negative impact on us, we may assume they meant to do so. It is our experience, however, that most people mean well; most of the time negative impact on others is frequently the result of assuming that we are all alike and do things with good intentions that are simply misunderstood. Assuming that someone else has positive intentions will allow us to begin a conversation both to discover their intent and to share the impact of their behavior on us. If their intention was positive, they will be more likely to behave in ways that we appreciate based on the feedback we have given them.

144
5. Share the impact of other's behaviors on you—and ask them to do the same.

6. State your intent. Negative communication impacts often occur because the sender of a message assumes that the receiver of the message will understand their positive intent. When communicating across cultural differences, however, this is not a safe assumption. Telling someone your intention helps avoid this misunderstanding.

7. Listen with TING—listen openly and empathically. This is key to effective communication—and especially cross-cultural communication.

8. Use the process of Describe, Interpret, Evaluate (D.I.E.) when someone else's behaviors are confusing to you—or you don't like them. This is a great technique for better cross-cultural communication.

9. Ask of someone else's behavior, “Is this a difference that makes a difference?” This is an advanced technique, made possible only when someone is able to set aside their own behavioral preferences and consider how another behavior might work. If someone else's behavior does not negatively affect (a) cost; (b) people or productivity; (c) safety; or (d) legality, then it is not generally a difference that makes a difference, and allowing someone to use behaviors that are most culturally comfortable for them will increase their feelings of being respected.


Part V: MINISTERING MULTICULTURALLY

OUTLINE:
✓ Activity: The Intercultural Classroom
✓ Lecture: Communication Style Continua
✓ Biblical Perspective: The Great Commission

THE INTERCULTURAL CLASSROOM

Objective:
✓ To help participants:
  o Identify a series of cultural communication style continuas.
  o Identify the methods for being most effective in communicating with people using each of those styles.
  o Practice identifying the styles being used by speakers in a video.

Process:
✓ After reminding people about the differences of generalizations and stereotypes and the power of perception, conduct a brief lecture regarding the communication
styles continua including asking participants how someone using one style might perceive someone using the opposite style.

✓ Provide each of the participants with a list of the characters in the video and tell them they will be asked to identify which style each character is using after they watch the video. Caution that the styles they will observe are extreme for the purpose of observation and discussion and should not be used to stereotype everyone from a given culture because there are many individual differences. Nonetheless, the styles are highly normed in the cultures they are representing. Indicate they can take notes if they wish. Show the video.

✓ Place participants in small groups of 3-5 people and ask them to identify which style each character used.

✓ Re-gather into the large group and ask small groups to report what style they have decided each character was using. Challenge groups to give reasons for their decisions. Where groups disagree, discuss why.

✓ Referring back to the communication styles continua handout, discuss the behaviors that can be most effective in working with each style.

✓ Debrief.

Debriefing Questions:
✓ What part of this exercise was most difficult? Why? What was easiest? Why?
✓ What insights did you gain about communication styles and the challenges you might have communicating with someone from a different cultural style?
✓ How can you apply this information to your daily life?

Debriefing Conclusions:
✓ Cultures teach specific ways to communicate—and some of those ways are totally opposite from each other—which can affect perceptions across communication style differences.
✓ Being able to identify the style someone is using and how to adapt for that style can lead to more effective communication.

**COMMUNICATION STYLES CONTINUA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linear</th>
<th>Circular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Communication is conducted in a straight line, moving in a linear way toward the main point. "Getting to the point" is very important and the point is stated explicitly. Not getting to the point quickly is seen as a time waster.  
• Be brief.  
• Preface your remarks with "the point is..."  
• Provide only as much explanation as the other person needs.  
• Be explicit about the main point.  
• Do not deviate from the main point. | Communication is conducted in a circular manner around the main point. The point may be left unstated because the verbal and nonverbal information provided is sufficient for understanding. Stating the point explicitly is seen as insulting to the other person.  
• Be elegant and flowing with your remarks.  
• Never preface a comment with "the point is..."  
• Embellish your remarks with stories and anecdotes. Let the story make the point.  
• Let the other person infer the meaning of your comments from the story. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What one means is stated in a very straightforward and direct manner. There is no "beating around the bush." Directness is equated with honesty and respect for the other person.  
  • Respect the other person's time.  
  • Don't create ambiguity or uncertainty by avoiding the issue.  
  • Be straightforward.                          | Meaning is conveyed by subtle means such as nonverbal behavior, parables and stories, suggestions and implication. Indirectness is equated with politeness and respect for the other person.  
  • Respect the other person's feelings.  
  • Don't put the other person on the spot by being too direct.  
  • Be polite.                                      |
| **Low Context**                             | **High Context**                              |
| The context of the communication is not assumed to be known. Things must be explained clearly and unambiguously. Meaning must be expressed precisely.  
  • Always communicate clearly, completely, and unambiguously.  
  • Don't leave understanding to chance.         | The context for communication is assumed to be known. Hence it is unnecessary, even insulting to explain things and state meaning precisely. Meaning is taken from context.  
  • Always respect the other person's understanding of the situation.  
  • Leave understanding up to the other person. |
| **Attached (Emotional)**                    | **Detached (Unemotional)**                    |
| Communication is carried out with feeling and emotion. Issues are discussed with passion and commitment. Communication is very expressive. Sharing one's values and feelings about the issues is highly valued.  
  • State your views with passion and conviction.  
  • If you care about an idea, show it.  
  • Bring yourself as a person into the discussion and show who you are. | Communication is carried out in a calm and impersonal manner. This is equated with objectivity, which is valued. Highly expressive, emotional, and engaged communication is inappropriate because this is seen as personalizing the issues and as biased.  
  • State your views dispassionately.  
  • Avoid being overly emotional.  
  • Avoid personalizing the discussion—keep yourself out of it. |
| **Idea-Focused**                            | **Person-Focused**                            |
| The emphasis is on ideas that are seen as separate from the person. Thus, disagreement with another person's ideas is acceptable and even valued. It is not seen as a personal attack.  
  • Listen carefully to the ideas being discussed.  
  • If you disagree with someone's idea, say so.  
  • Because a person's ideas are wrong doesn't mean there is something wrong with the person. | The emphasis is on the person, hence great importance is attached to the feelings of the other person. Issues and ideas are not separated from the person. Thus disagreement with someone's ideas must be handled very carefully.  
  • Respond to the person. Be attentive to feelings.  
  • In your communication, be careful not to hurt the other person's feelings.  
  • Understand that an attack on someone's idea is an attack on that person. |
| **Task-Focused**                            | **Relationship-Focused**                      |
| Communication focuses on the task at hand and getting it done. The other person's feelings are secondary. Group harmony is secondary to task completion.  
  • Keep focusing on the task at hand.  
  • Don't allow too much small talk to sidetrack the task.  
  • Clarify the task.  
  • Publicly sanction slackards. | Communication is focused on relationships. Maintaining group harmony is central. The task is secondary. Task completion must not come at the expense of the group or person.  
  • Make certain that your concern with the task doesn't come at the expense of someone's feelings and the wellbeing of the group.  
  • Praise the participants for their good work.  
  • Never publicly call down a colleague. |
| **Formal**                                  | **Informal**                                  |
| Communication is governed by strict rules regarding such things as forms of address, ways to address persons of different age and status, topics that can and cannot be discussed, and so on. | Communication is less bound to specific conventions. Persons have more flexibility in what they say, to whom they say it, and under what circumstances, informal communication might also |
Communication in many respects is highly ritualized.  
- Study the rules of communication in the target society and follow them.  
- Try to find out what is allowable in the host society and follow the conventions.

**B2: Communication Styles Continua**

**The Intercultural Classroom—Characters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Style Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor Larry Ford (United States)</td>
<td>Linear, Direct, Emotionally Restrained, Intellectually Confrontive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katja (Russia)</td>
<td>Linear, Direct, Emotionally Expressive, Intellectually Confrontive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon (South Africa)</td>
<td>Circular, Indirect, Emotionally Restrained, No Confrontation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteban (El Salvador)</td>
<td>Circular, Direct, Emotionally Expressive, Relationally Confrontive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming (China)</td>
<td>Circular, Indirect, Emotionally Restrained, No Confrontation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariko (Japan)</td>
<td>Circular, Indirect, Emotionally Restrained, No Confrontation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie (United States)</td>
<td>Linear, Direct, Emotionally Restrained—at least trying to be, Relationally Confrontive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy (United States)</td>
<td>Linear, Direct, Emotionally Restrained, Relationally Confrontive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanna (United States)</td>
<td>Linear, Direct, Emotionally Expressive, Relationally Confrontive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Stringer, D. M., & Cassiday, P. A. (2009). *52 Activities for Improving Cross-Cultural Communication*. Boston, MA: Intercultural, (pp. 103–107). Materials from work by Dr. Janet Bennett and Dr. Milton Bennett, 1993. Modified by Dr. Michael Paige, 1996. *The Intercultural Classroom* Video has been developed by Dr. Jaime Wurzel and can be accessed for a fee via the Web, or purchased in Video or DVD formats from www.irc-international.com

**THE GREAT COMMISSION**

**KEY POINTS:**

A. Jesus Died for all

- In the incarnation, the Son of God crossed the great divide caused by sin in order to save all humanity.
- The miracle of the kenosis (Phil 2:5-8) shows a God who is not holding on to His divinity, but is willing to lower Himself by becoming flesh so that He could be as close as possible to those He was willing to love all the way.
- Romans 5:8 clearly states, this is proof that God indeed is love and He does not hesitate to make it known in His actions: “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (NIV).
John 15:13. Jesus thus showed that friendship is more important than differences, that love cannot only conquer self, but can also offer self for the salvation of many.

Luke 23:34. His love finally conquered and won back the lost world.

B. Go to all

- The Great Commission is an appeal to all followers of Christ to reach out to all peoples: “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-18).
- If in the Old Testament they were to represent God locally as people would come to them, in the New Testament the emphasis is on the active involvement of Christians to take the first step themselves.
- Jesus broke down the wall separating people from people, because He has the authority to gather a people for God from all families of earth (Eph 2:11-22) in order to prepare them for mission.
- The Great Commission is a call to multicultural ministry. The “go” in Matthew 28:19 is not a call necessarily to overseas missions, but to mission closer to home as Πορευθέντες literally means “as you go your way, about your daily routine.” The word does not stand alone as a separate command, but it is attached and describes the circumstances for making disciples.

C. Holy Spirit Involvement

- Success in achieving the goals of the Great Commission is strictly related to the presence and working of the Holy Spirit.
- The mission takes off explosively in Acts 2 under the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The universality of God’s encompassing interest for the salvation of His diverse people is reflected in the number and make up of the people that hear the message at Pentecost in their own language (Acts 2:5-11).
- The power is so great that soon they stop counting and success is just measured in terms of the many who are “added to the church daily” (vs. 47).
- The God of the Great Commission is a God who wants to save all. No obstacle is too difficult for Him to overcome in both enabling and equipping His church for mission and preparing receiving hearts and minds of all ethnicities. His Spirit had been constantly working ever since in preparing a peculiar people that will be able to stand when Jesus comes a second time to take them home (Luke 21:36).
Part VI: KINGDOM VALUES

OUTLINE:
✓ Activity: Value Statements Exercise
✓ Lecture: Dialogue—PALS
✓ Biblical Perspective: The Great Multitude

VALUE STATEMENTS EXERCISE

Introduction:
✓ Underlying values define our expectations, which shape our behaviors with or without our permission. We seldom discuss the basic underlying values in which we believe even though any two persons probably differ in their basic underlying values. By increasing a person's awareness of her or his own values and demonstrating that different people believe in different values, it becomes possible to understand how two people, who believe in different values, might disagree without one necessarily being right and the other wrong. This list of value statements provides specific examples to increase self-awareness and other-awareness of similarities and differences in values across individuals.

Objective:
✓ To increase awareness, at introductory level, about values people accept and values they reject, which may shape their lives with or without their permission.

Directions:
✓ Each participant should have a copy of the exercise statements and indicate individually whether they agree or disagree with each of the statements.
✓ Responses should be compared and discussed.
Possible Pitfalls:
✓ Values tend to be abstract. Two persons may believe in the same value for different reasons or different values for the same reasons. Each value statement is subject to interpretation by the individual. If the value statements are not properly debriefed, the responses may give a false impression that the persons agree when they do not or that they disagree when they do not. The group needs to delve deeper into what they mean by similarities and differences.

Benefits:
✓ Participants can be stimulated to discuss similarity and difference in their basic underlying values. The different profiles of response can become valuable in small group discussion and debriefing by the facilitator.
✓ People are not accustomed to talk about values directly, and this exercise provides an opportunity for such a discussion. The criterion of success should be whether participants use their responses as a springboard for a discussion on similarities and differences in their values or beliefs.
Value Statements

1. It is the man/woman who stands alone who excites our admiration.
2. The individualist is the man/woman who is most likely to discover the best road to a new future.
3. In most groups it is better to choose somebody to take charge and run things, and then hold that person responsible, even if he or she does some things the members do not like.
4. The most rewarding object of study any man/woman can find is his/her inner life.
5. There should be equality for everyone because we are all human beings.
6. Good group members should accept criticisms of their points of view without argument, in order to preserve a harmonious group.
7. Not to attain happiness, but to be worthy of it, is the purpose of our existence.
8. Humankind's future depends primarily on what we do, not on what we feel or what we think.
9. She/he has achieved success who has lived well, laughed often, and loved much.
10. A well-raised child is one who does not have to be told twice to do something.
11. The facts on crime and sexual immorality show that we will have to crack down harder on young people if we are going to save our moral standards.
12. There has been too much talk and not enough real action in doing away with racial discrimination.
13. Heaven and hell are products of humankind's imagination and do not actually exist.
14. Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.
15. A rich life requires constant activity, the use of muscles and openness to adventure.
16. A teenager should be allowed to decide most things for him- or herself.
17. Character and honesty will tell in the long run; most people get pretty much what they deserve.
18. The most important function of modern leaders is to bring about the accomplishment of practical goals.
19. In life, an individual should for the most part "go it alone," assuring oneself of privacy, having much time to oneself, attempting to control one's own life.
20. Human nature being what it is, there will always be war and conflict.
21. Friendship should go just so far in working relationships.
22. What youth needs most is strict discipline, rugged determination and the will to work and fight for family and country.
23. There should be a definite hierarchy in an organization, with definite duties for everybody.
24. No time is better spent than that devoted to thinking about the ultimate purposes of life.
25. Depressions are like occasional headaches and stomachaches, it is natural for even the healthiest society to have them once in a while.
26. In any group, it is more important to keep a friendly atmosphere than to be efficient.
27. A man/woman must make his or her own decisions, uninfluenced by the opinions of others.
28. Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn.
29. In choosing a husband, a woman will do well to put ambition at the top of her list of desirable qualities.
30. In a small group there should be no real leaders; everybody should have an equal say.
31. To lay down your life for a friend—this is the summit of a good life.
32. You have to respect authority and when you stop respecting authority, your situation is not worth much.
33. One should control one's bodily senses, one's emotions, feelings and wishes.
34. When a person has a problem or worry, it is best for him/her not to think about it, but to keep busy with more cheerful things.
35. We are all born to love; it is the principle of existence and its only true end.
36. When we live in the proper way—stay in harmony with the forces of nature and keep all that we have in good condition—then all will go along well in the world.
37. A good group is democratic; the members should talk things over and decide unanimously what should be done.
38. Every person should have complete faith in some supernatural power whose decisions she/he obeys without question.
39. The past is dead, there are new worlds to conquer, the world belongs to the future.
40. The most important qualities of a real man/woman are determination and driving ambition.
41. The greatest satisfaction in life is a feeling of the actuality of the present—of tireless activity, movement and doing.
42. No matter what the circumstances, one should never arbitrarily tell people what they have to do.
43. The most important aim of the churches at the present time should be to encourage spiritual worship and a sense of communion with their highest understanding.

Adapted from material by Paul Pedersen, Counseling and Human Services, 259 Huntington Hall, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244-2340

**DIALOGUE**

Dialogue is useful:

- ✔ When you want to build trust.
- ✔ When you want to learn more about another person's point of view.
- ✔ When you want to gain a deeper level of understanding to facilitate a stronger relationship or enhanced communication and/or problem solving.
Sometimes people are unclear as to when to have a dialogue. It is really anytime that you want to learn more about another person's point of view. It can occur at lunch, during the workday, or any other time that a good opportunity presents itself.

Dialogue:
✓ Is a conversation with a center but no sides.
✓ Allows us to think beyond limits.
✓ May dissolve—but not solve—problems (if you identify through listening that you actually do not have a difference of opinion).
✓ Requires suspension of status and judgment.
✓ Has a Single focus: greater understanding.

Dialogue:
✓ Is not a debate.
✓ It is not about right or wrong.
✓ It is an ideal way to learn more about another person.
✓ It is a method for gaining understanding about someone else's experiences that you might not share—for gaining cross-cultural understanding.
✓ It is not a problem-solving session. Problem solving can be more successfully done once a meaningful dialogue has taken place and greater understanding has been gained.

Dialogue is helped by:
✓ Courage to share your ideas/perspectives.
✓ Authenticity.
✓ Listening to self and others.
✓ Allowing silence without interruption.
✓ Focus/being present.
✓ Taking responsibility.

Potential expansion points:
✓ Dialogue must be real: This is not about being politically correct. If you use it that way, you will be neither genuine nor learn about someone else. Unreal conversations take personal energy and reduce trust and effectiveness.
✓ Listening to yourself is critical. When you get that "gut" feeling that something isn't right—listen to it and learn from it.
✓ Being focused/present: In a fast paced results-oriented performance culture, if you cannot be present to another person you will not learn about them. They will not trust you. While multi-tasking may have gotten you where you are today, you cannot multitask during a dialogue.
✓ Dialogue requires taking responsibility for your own listening and sharing.

Dialogue is hindered by:
✓ Minimizing differences—focusing on similarities.
✓ Blind spots—not knowing what we don't know.
✓ Performance culture/drive for results.
✓ Fear
  o Of making things worse.
  o Of loss of friendship and/or conflict.
  o Of negative career impact.
  o Of challenging our own belief system.

Potential expansion points:
✓ Avoid the temptation to “go for the safe place” and look for where you agree. There is little to learn from someone with whom you agree. Look for the places you disagree and identify how those differences might benefit each of you. You can end with similarities but don't start there.
✓ Truly believing that there is something about another person's experience you don't know can lead to interesting questions—both for the purpose of getting to know that person better and for expanding your own information base. People of color, women, lesbians and gays, as well as other “cultural outsider” groups often report that when they share a difficult experience they have had, the listener immediately discounts it or disbelieves it. Use dialogue to “step into another person's world, with belief.”
✓ In a fast-paced culture, in which productivity or task is often a primary focus, a conversation that seemingly does not have a specific, tangible outcome may not be viewed as a good use of time. When people realize that investing time in gaining deeper understanding smoothes the way to more successful problem solving in the long term, dialogue will become easier.
✓ And, of course, that monster fear! We often avoid discussing challenging issues because we are afraid. And afraid with good intent. We don't want to make things worse, lose friends, have arguments, lose our job, or challenge our own self-image in a negative way. That is why we use the PALS tool to prepare.
✓ Good dialogue often begins by acknowledging which of these things has stopped us from having good conversations before. Think about this before getting started. What has stopped you personally from being as genuine as possible and from having conversations that could allow you to share yourself with others and learn about them? Because without these discussions we will not learn about cross-cultural differences or develop effective cross-cultural communication and understanding.

The Tool:
The PALS tool helps us overcome the barriers and prepare for success. We begin with planning. We ask about the other person's perspective, listening fully, and then we share our own perspective. The left-hand column lists the four steps to dialogue. The right-hand column lists some things you might do in each step. You will not always do every item in the right-hand column, and you may add additional things. And you may not do the last three steps in the order listed. The important thing is to ensure that each step gets covered.
| Prepare | Identify your own preferences for communication styles.  
| Identify your interest/curiosity—why do you want a dialogue?  
| Identify your fears; challenge their reality.  
| Identify what you know (or think you know) and what you want to know about the other.  
| Identify and prepare to share your intent.  |
|---|---|
| Ask | How can we understand one another better? (use behavior based words)  
| How can we be more effective with each other?  
| How is your experience similar to/different from mine?  |
| Listen | Listen to understand; don’t miss an experience that is not yours or that is unbelievable.  
| Learn through empathy.  
| Listen to the words, the feelings, and the non-verbals.  
| Listen without interruption; paraphrase for accuracy.  
| Look for style similarities and differences.  |
| Share | Share your experiences, perspectives, values, and feelings.  
| Speak for yourself, not a group, and don’t ask anyone else to speak for their group.  
| Solicit feedback about how you impact others and ways to increase your effectiveness.  
| Seek multiple perspectives; think “and,” not “or.”  
| Share feedback in specific, behavioral terms when asked.  |

B4: PALS Tool


THE GREAT MULTITUDE

KEY POINTS:

A. History Comes to an end
   - God actively involved in defending His people against the attacks of the Devil and his acolytes in the ends times.
   - God who makes true on His promises and the entire universe is witness to the process of bringing sin to an end.
   - Jesus comes to rescue His diverse people (Rev 5:9) and they will finally be with their God forever.

B. Diverse Multitude before the Throne
   - The answer to the question asked in Revelation 6:17, “The great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” This is the victorious, post-tribulation 144,000 (p. 265). This time, no one can count their numbers.
   - The entire Universe, around the throne, witnesses the scene: all the angels, the elders and the four living creatures. Rev 7:9-10.
   - A great multitude, this ὄχλος, as Doukhant (2002) points out, forms a multicultural and multinational group. Ochlos is used here to describe a victorious army, the use of white robes and palm branches “being part of the ritual for celebrating military victories” (p. 72).
The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* agrees that this group represents the triumphant saints of all ages (Nichol, 1978, 7, p. 784). They are united in their worship, praising their God for the great salvation He made available to them. Could it be that true worship is the only endeavor that could actually unite God’s diverse people here on earth?

C. Heaven is not segregated.

- If the wolf and the lamb can graze together in peace and harmony (Is 65:25), God’s people most definitely can too, with no artificial lines of separation based on ethnic, age, gender, economic, social, political, religious, or any other criteria.
- God’s method is to go beyond these artificial, man-made criteria to a place where love reigns supreme and fear is no more.
- There is no need to describe anyone by any of these categories anymore.
- God just wants to be with His people and He is doing everything necessary to make it happen. God is one in His diversity and God’s people are one in the same way.
APPENDIX C

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE FOUR STAGES OF
MULTICULTURAL ENGAGEMENT
FOUR STAGES OF MULTICULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

Here below are four sets of comic strips utilized to explore and address multicultural issues as related to the four stages of multicultural engagement in the Woodburn Community Seventh-day Adventist Church.

We identified the lack of intentionality in regards to reflecting the makeup of our community due to lack of vision for multicultural ministry in our church as being the proverbial elephant in the room.

In stage 1 we are in a place of pure indifference. We do not care about elephants in the room. No matter what other people say, elephants do not exist! We continue on with life and traditions, as we knew them for generations.

![C1: Pure Indifference](image)

In stage 2 we reluctantly acknowledge that yes, there might be an elephant in the room! So what? What we’re used to makes a lot of sense, why would we want to change anything? Elephants are elephants; people are people! Separation is good!

![C2: Reluctant Acknowledgement](image)
In stage 3 change starts to take place and there is joyful engagement. We realize we need the help of other people to take care of the elephant situation. Besides, the elephant has needs that cannot be taken care of in the house. Creative flow starts to happen and there is a collective and collaborative approach to solving problems and catering to everyone’s needs.

C3: Joyful Engagement

In stage 4 there is utter fulfillment. The big problem has been taken care of and patch up work has been completed. There are no more elephants in the house; there are just too many people. It is time for celebration and planning on how to deal with elephants in other houses that are longing for freedom.

C4: Utter Fulfillment
REFERENCES


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164


Name: Eduard Daniel Ciobanu

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