PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING MULTICULTURAL CHURCHES
For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Ephesians 2:14-18
Church development in the 21st century will take place amid two massive demographic trends: first, the numerical and cultural dominance of large urban centres, and second, the cultural diversification of the population. In an increasingly multicultural and urban society at least four types of people do not fit our traditional homogeneous churches: interracial couples and families; ethnic people who prefer speaking English; urbanites who "appreciate living, working and ministering in the midst of ethnic diversity"; and Gen Xers who often despise racial/cultural separatism. It will take new, multicultural churches to reach these groups.

The multicultural church matches a need in our society. The "nations" are coming to us here in North America. Several Canadian and American cities represent the most diverse urban agglomerations in the world. When politicians, social workers, law enforcement workers and local governments are struggling to find answers to the challenge of difference in our communities, the God of Christian Scripture has revealed his intention. That intention is create a peaceful community of Christ-followers, from all cultures and ethnicities. One new people, centred around Jesus, with many gifts and ways of seeing, expressing worship through a diversity of representations.

The multicultural church gives our neighbourhoods a glimpse of heaven on earth. "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 in front of the Lamb... 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).

In his book *Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby counsels, "Find out where the Master is - then that is where you need to be. Find out what the Master is doing - then that is what you need to be doing." God is already drawing people of every tribe and language and people and nation to worship Him for all eternity. The multicultural church becomes a living picture of what can be done on earth and a foretaste of what will be in heaven.

This guidebook is intended for those persons who sense God is calling you to do your part in creating multicultural communities of the King here on earth.
The basis of the multicultural church can legitimately start where the Scriptures start. God has displayed His creativity not only in the creation of the heavens and the earth, but in ethnic diversity, in redeeming the world, and in building His church. In a fast-forward way, we can see God’s plan through other key biblical passages. "The Lord had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation... I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you’" (Gen 12:1-3).

To this man of faith who would go on a great pilgrimage, God unveiled a plan to reach the peoples of the earth. Through this one man who left his people, all peoples on earth would be blessed.

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age’" (Matt. 28:18-20). Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. Jesus commanded His followers "to make disciples of all nations." This key command echoes in different ways throughout the New Testament (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8).

God’s great goal in history is that all peoples would encounter His love, justice and grace and would find cause to worship Him and lift up His name. In step with this goal, the Lord has allowed migration today to bring many different peoples to the megacities. In major metropolitan areas around the world, multicultural churches can be microcosms that reflect both a fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) and a foretaste of the coming reality.

The goal of this guidebook is to serve as an introduction for those seeking to develop multicultural congregations by answering these questions:

1. What is a multicultural church?
2. What are the existing models of intercultural, ethnic churches?
3. Why are multicultural churches needed?
4. Where are multicultural churches needed?
5. Who is suited to lead a multicultural church?
6. How does a church transition to multicultural?
7. How should multicultural churches be planted?
8. Why no "how to's"?
What is a Multicultural Church?

So what does a multicultural church look like? Well, that’s the dilemma, because many congregations in urban areas can "look" very diverse but not actually address the issues that develop multicultural communities. I would like to suggest that there is a difference between multi-ethnic and multicultural for the purposes of this guidebook.

The multiethnic church has many people of different ethnic backgrounds present among them, but the leadership processes follow one particular culture’s way of doing things. The multicultural church draws different cultural perspectives into the life and leadership processes of the congregation.

The multicultural church is a biblical community of believers that 1) has an intentional desire to draw together people of diverse cultural backgrounds as a sacramental, missional community in the city; 2) has reconciliatory, relational processes which accept and embrace a diversity of peoples; 3) has empowering leadership processes which draw diverse cultural voices into the decision-making structures of the congregation.

Multicultural churches need to fit their community. They are a contextual response to diverse neighbourhoods. They will not meet the needs of single-culture communities.

Over the past several decades, Christian churches have sought to address the changing demographics in our urban centres in a number of ways. Each of these models can choose to function within the parameters identified above.

A. MULTI-CONGREGATIONAL MODEL

This model starts with an existing church and facility that is host to a number of ethnic congregations that correspond to the makeup of the community. The focus is on multiple worship services, each designed to meet the needs of a particular cultural group. All the congregations work together in a unified fellowship, but each has their own pastor and lay leaders. All congregations contribute to a coordinating council in finances, ministry and governance. The host church is usually a mono-cultural congregation representing the dominant culture in the community. Periodically all the components of the fellowship will gather for combined worship and united outreach. The level of inter-involvement among the congregations would depend upon the local context and the desire of the leadership.

**STRENGTHS**

- strong, united witness to the community
- good stewardship of existing urban property
- visitors and members have a choice of languages and worship styles
- church growth principle of multiple cells and congregations
- preserves homogeneity while allowing for intercultural fellowship

B. MULTILANGUAGE SATELLITE MODEL

This model encourages the development of satellite congregations throughout a city that are
not based at the anchor church. Various, language-based congregations meet in diverse locations such as apartment buildings, community halls, homes, etc. Pastors and leaders of satellites are part of a unified ministry team and meet weekly for prayer and planning. All the satellite congregations meet several times a year in an auditorium for a grand celebration.

**STRENGTHS**
- attracts young visionary leaders who can "do their own thing," but in fellowship
- satellites better adapt to the shapes and cultures of the city
- decentralized structures allows for rapid growth
- people exercise gifts as ministries unique to each community are developed
- readily reproduces into new satellite bodies, but benefits from overall fellowship

**C. MULTICULTURAL CHURCH MODEL**
This model is a culturally and ethnically diverse group that meets together as one congregation and utilizes one language while designing worship, ministry and leadership practices that include a variety of cultural perspectives. This model would be developed to serve culturally diverse neighbourhoods where a common language is spoken. Often members are socially and economically mobile. Their children learn and socialize in the language of the church.

**STRENGTHS**
- evangelical testimony of intercultural relations and harmony
- addresses the challenge of second and third generation immigrants
- culturally diverse worship appeals to "world music"-loving urbanites
- attracts interracial couples and families
- celebrates unique contributions of different cultures to one another

**D. MULTICULTURAL INCUBATOR MODEL**
The model combines several of the above models. The multicultural church serves as an anchor congregation to multiple ethnic congregations. They may follow the facility-based model or the satellite approach, but there is an intentional sharing of resources for missional outreach to ethnic communities, and of common Christian education services for children and youth. This model reflects awareness that while parents may need an ethnic language-based congregation, their children and teenagers are learning and being socialized in the linguistic and social forms of the dominant culture. The multicultural congregation becomes the recipient of transitioning second and third generations.

**STRENGTHS**
- Includes strengths of above models
- Common sharing of resources and personnel
- Addresses intentional transition from single culture to multi cultures
Multicultural churches are needed, first of all, because more churches are needed in general. Church Planting Canada has suggested a goal of one evangelical church for every 2000 people in Canada. In many places across Canada, particularly in smaller communities, this goal has been achieved: Gananoque, ON (5,200 people/3 evangelical churches); Prince Albert, SK (36,000/22); Mission, BC (33,000/18). However, in larger urban areas - the most culturally diverse locations - there are huge needs: Gloucester, ON (107,000/5); Mississauga, ON (666,000/79); Calgary, AB (906,000/229); Surrey, BC (374,000/105).

Secondly, multicultural churches are needed because more varieties of churches are needed. We will not reach Canada by establishing more churches like the majority of those we have now. Consequently, more and different churches are needed. Many people are falling through the cracks of existing churches. In an increasingly multicultural, urban society, there are groups of people who do not fit into the traditional categories of churches.

- Interracial couples and families
- Ethnic people who prefer speaking English
- Urban and suburban people in major metropolitan areas who appreciate living, working, and ministering in the midst of ethnic diversity

We are aware that the impression some people have of church is not what God calls us to be. The people of God are not to be barrier builders, but barrier breakers through Jesus who makes us one (Eph. 2:14-15, 19). In the face of negative church perceptions, a multicultural church can serve as a gracious witness to the unbelieving world.

New multicultural churches are needed in our cities and sprawling urban areas. In the mid-90’s, Free Methodist church-planting catalyst, Jim Kesselring suggested that if we reach Toronto, we will reach the world. The formation of Tamil-language congregations in the city of Toronto has directly led to the initiation of new ministry opportunities in Sri Lanka.

In A Theology As Big As the City, Ray Bakke comments about the incredible urban growth in the past 100 years: "The spectacular growth of large cities on this planet represents an awesome challenge to the church of Jesus Christ on all six continents. In 1900, 8 percent of the world’s population lived in cities. By the year 2000, that number will be nearly 50 percent."

As believers, the "go" part of the Great Commission command is still in force. However, we are now also responsible before God on another level. The very people to whom we once had to "go" many miles to reach have come to us. This is changing the face of Canada.

<table>
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<th>1991</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2017</th>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign-born</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible Minorities</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
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The principal "receiving" cities in Canada of immigrants are Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Ottawa, and Hamilton.

The urban areas requiring the most new church plants according to Church Planting Canada projections are:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>City</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Montreal (GMA)</td>
<td>815</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vancouver (GVA)</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calgary</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Leaders of multicultural churches require skills beyond the basic skill-set of pastoral leadership. Most Christian leaders are prepared for ministry in their own cultural context - the multicultural church requires more. The following qualities are essential for anyone in leadership in a multicultural church.

- Able to envision the theological and practical reality of a multicultural Christian community. Has a picture of where the congregation is going and can persevere despite roadblocks.

- Able to embed the multicultural vision through acquired ministry practices. Has understanding of organizational culture and able to apply effective developmental methods.

- Able to embody multicultural relationships. Has deep relationships across cultures and exemplifies intercultural conflict skills in a transparent manner before the congregation.

- Able to embrace cultural diversity. Has been personally adjusted in cultural perspective and has skills necessary to acquire cultural knowledge about diverse peoples without pre-judging.

- Able to facilitate intercultural empowerment. Understands the dynamics of power analysis in intercultural relationships and has skills in facilitating diverse voices into leadership and decision-making roles.

The successful leader of a multicultural congregation will have had significant intercultural experience as well as strong training in theology, ecclesiology and the social sciences. The multicultural leader will communicate a clear picture of the vision for the church while empowering multiple leaders through a servant leadership model.
Context change. In most cases, neighbourhoods will change in their ethnic diversity long before local churches take any notice. Local churches will first notice either attendance decline or attendance change. Attendance decline in a transitioning neighbourhood means the long-term attenders are leaving and new residents do not think the church is relevant to them. Attendance change means that, for one reason or another, new ethnic residents view the church as having some value (proximity, similar religious tradition, etc.) and are starting to attend.

To respond to this context change, however it is revealed through attendance, a local church will have to become intentional and proactive if it desires to recover a relevant witness. The following changes suggest the developmental steps required to transition to a multicultural congregation.

Attitudinal change. The church begins to admit that diverse peoples are actually filling quite a few seats in the congregation. There is a desire to be inclusive and welcoming - this is the attitudinal change. Visible minorities take ministry roles but style and paternalistic practices still maintain the privileges of the dominant cultural group. The church is often visibly multi-ethnic at this point.

Analytical change. The church is more sensitive to discriminatory practices and is aware of the need for intentional intercultural dialogue. It begins to examine infrastructure and policies that give advantages to the dominant group.

Structure change. The church sees the benefits of a broader and more diverse cultural perspective in its ministries. Intentional work is done to develop new policy and to restructure the congregation in a more inclusive manner. Communications, conflicts and decisions are dealt with in a manner that recognizes the diverse approaches present in the congregation.

Inclusive practices. Drawing diverse cultural perspectives into the ministry focus of the church has become central to their identity as a community of faith. Diverse worldviews, contributions and interests form the church’s mission, ministry style, policies and practices.

There are some basics to effective church planting that are required in any new work. None of those fundamentals can be bypassed when planting a new multicultural church. There are, however, several key areas to be considered that are unique to the multicultural church plant.

TEAM

Multicultural churches must be developed by intercultural teams. There is a need for gifted leaders, of course, but the lone ranger model of church-planter will not produce a multicultural church. As a church-planting team grows in their understanding of the vision and the practical realities of getting along together across cultures (ie. learning and adjusting), then they are also living out the picture of the diverse-unified Christian community that offers hope and alternative to their neighbourhood.
VISION
Multicultural churches must be developed with a clear picture of the values and goals that the leadership team is seeking to work out in reality. A theology of diversity must be freely communicated and widely understood among church leaders. Multicultural churches are not natural, they are grace-enabled, super-natural. Without this understanding, the inevitable practical challenges may seem insurmountable.

LOCATION
Multicultural churches will be located in the midst of diverse neighbourhoods. Neighbourhoods that are culturally diverse, rather than mono-cultural, suggest that at some level people have already started to adjust their worldviews to live with difference. A faith community that seeks to live out that diversity around shared beliefs, values and heritage will find a welcome response.

WORSHIP
Public gatherings of multicultural churches are the main entry point for the community to see what’s going on. The people at the front, the order of service, the styles of music, the formality or informality, and the content of the spoken word, must all reflect the culturally diverse ways of being a multicultural congregation. Inspiring worship in a multicultural church must touch the minds and hearts of people from different cultures - and this takes intentional learning, adjusting and planning.

In this introduction to the development of multicultural churches you will notice an absence of a formulaic approach to church planting. The formulaic approach derives from the Church Growth Movement and multicultural churches are a direct contradiction to the values and methods of that movement.

Multicultural churches will be developed through teams functioning in a collaborative, learn-as-we-go model. They will respond to the unique social characteristics of their community. Leaders of different cultures will have to learn from one another and adjust to differing perspectives. This learning and adjusting is in fact one of the foundational values of the multicultural church which makes these congregations attractive to seekers and sacramental (grace-enabling) in the community.

Why No "How To's"?

So if this picture of the church motivates you, step out, take a risk... then tell somebody else what you have learned about how to do it!
**Resource List**

**URBAN MINISTRY**


**INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS**


**MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY**


**THEOLOGY AND DIVERSITY**


