

Designing Worship for Multiethnic Churches

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North America is populated by a wondrous variety of people, nearly all of whom are immigrants. And in recent decades more and diverse kinds of immigrants have arrived on our shores. The notion that America is a melting pot for all the world's ethnic groups has been revealed to be a myth. A better analogy is to see our nation as a giant salad bowl or stew pot in which each cultural component retains its own integrity and identity, yet contributes to the overall national flavor.

Immigration and rising birth rates have brought tremendous change to American society. America's total ethnic population now numbers over 100 million.¹ The nation's streets teem with over 500 ethnic groups speaking more than 630 languages and dialects (Romo 1993, 44). Multiculturalism in America is now an established fact.² Over the next fifty years, the white population is projected to decrease by 30 percent, while other ethnic groups will increase 92 percent. By the year 2056 ethnic "people of color" will collectively be in a majority in our land. No one ethnic group will be in a majority; whites will be the largest minority in a nation of minorities. By mid-century the number of blacks will have increased by 69%, Native Americans by 79%, Asians by 195% and Hispanics (of numerous nationalities) will increase in population by 199% (U.S. Bureau of Census Web site—www.census.gov). By 2050, 21% of Americans will be claiming mixed ancestry, according to some projections (Kasindorf and El Nasser 2001). We are a nation that is "browning."³

Consequently, in the 21st Century the United States will need a variety of multicultural interracial churches. Missiologist Charles Cheney observes, "America will not be won to Christ by establishing more churches like the majority we now have" (NAMB 199, 6). In an increasingly multiethnic and urban society it will take new multicultural churches to reach the full spectrum of peoples a Sovereign God has brought to our continent. In the past, homogeneous churches have been seen as most productive but in the present social milieu that is changing. Now residents of highly educated, high income, racially mixed

communities are often attracted to interethnic heterogeneous churches. So are many second, third, and fourth generation immigrants as well as those living in ethnically changing urban neighborhoods.⁴ Interethnic multicultural churches are particularly attractive to those within each ethnic group with low ethnic consciousness.⁵

The twenty-first century holds great promise and exciting potential for congregations that are intentionally multicultural. The most recent research reveals that though multiracial congregations are still “few and far between,” numbering but five and a half percent of Christian bodies, their numbers are steadily growing (DeYoung et al. 2003, 74).⁶ The cutting edge for mission and church growth in this century will no doubt be a movement toward more multiracial assemblies. A growing body of literature is now available to convince church leaders and missionaries of the biblical imperative⁷ and the many practical reasons⁸ for establishing multiethnic churches. Perhaps the most convincing rationale for pursuing multicultural congregations is the premise that these bodies “can play an important role in reducing racial division and inequality” in our land and therefore should be, when possible, a worthy goal to pursue (Ibid., 3).⁹

Despite the increased popular interest in racial reconciliation and intentionally heterogeneous churches, there has been surprisingly little study of the crucial issue of worship in multicultural churches. Yet appropriate worship remains the number one issue of concern for church planters, mission leaders, and established church pastors who are often struggling to achieve culturally sensitive and relevant ministry in our nation’s increasingly diverse urban communities. The focus of this paper is to begin to explore principles and procedures for designing worship for multiethnic churches, particularly in North American contexts. Our premise is that to be evangelistically effective and to deeply impact their communities, racially mixed churches will need to intentionally design multicultural worship.¹⁰ To build this case well we intend to: 1) carefully define key terms, 2) briefly overview the interplay of worship and culture, 3) consider prominent cultural challenges which will need to be addressed, 4) describe worship characteristics of three ethnic groups commonly found in mixed urban churches, 5) propose a blended

worship style for an ongoing multiethnic church plant, 6) explore ways to foster worship unity in the midst of diversity, and finally, 7) give recommended guidelines for church leaders to follow.

Defining Terms and Distinguishing Models

We begin with some working definitions and helpful distinctions. I would propose that a ***multicultural church*** be viewed as a biblical community of believers: (1) who intentionally recruit, recognize, and embrace a diversity of peoples, (2) is committed to racial reconciliation, and (3) is working out administrative structures and worship formats that assure the continuation of both unity and diversity.¹¹ Relying on recent sociological studies, the research team for the Multiracial Congregations Project, which subsequently authored *United By Faith*, has defined a multiracial congregation as one in which “*no one racial group accounts for 80 percent or more of the membership* (DeYoung et al., 3, italics theirs). This paper will assume these two understandings.

Broadly speaking, there are two basic models for multicultural churches found in pluralistic North American communities. One is a congregation “with two or more worshipping congregations organizationally structured under one multicultural church” (Black 2000, 4). In this model each subgroup worships separately in its own native language; only occasionally do they come together for a common multicultural service. In the second church model, persons of different ethnicities are welcomed into one combined unilanguage worship service, normally in English (Ibid). This later model will be the focus of this paper.

To better understand the overall congregational culture and characteristics of the various types of multiethnic churches, it is helpful to recognize that there are three ideal categories or models: (1) assimilated multiracial churches, (2) pluralistic multiracial churches, and (3) integrated multiracial churches (DeYoung, 164-5). In the ***assimilated model***, congregational life and worship is dominated by one racial group; all other groups are expected to simply “assimilate” into the existing culture. In the ***pluralist model***, different racial cultures are incorporated into church life and worship but social interaction and authentic fellowship across ethnic lines remains low. In the ***integrated model*** elements of the various cultures represented are maintained yet the church also intentionally creates a new hybrid

culture in order to promote corporate unity in the midst of diversity. As a result, interethnic fellowship is high (Ibid., 165-9). In this paper we will assume that this third approach is theologically and pragmatically the better option to pursue. Our goal should be to pursue authentic integration rather than mere assimilation. Truly effective multiracial bodies are those that seek to create a new and unique *mestizaje* or congregational culture that transcends the worldly cultures represented in the assembly (Ibid., 169).¹² As we shall see, this foundational premise will have tremendous implications to how we design worship services.

What is *multicultural worship*? It is worship that is inclusive of the diversity of cultures represented in the congregation. Researcher Kathy Black, who has written one of the few good books on our theme, describes it as “culturally conscious worship.” She suggests (2000,12):

The design of culturally-conscious worship intentionally works with a consciousness of:

1. our multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural society and world
2. the cultural diversity (its gifts and challenges) present in the congregation
3. persons who experience living on the margins and living with inequity of power.

Multicultural worship, then, is *blended* worship which incorporates and brings together all kinds of people in meaningful worship of the true God. It is worship that approximates the New Testament understanding of a worshipping community¹³—such as the experience of Pentecost and John’s vision of worship in heaven. Multicultural worship is *contextualized* worship that seeks to avoid the Anglo cultural imperialism and worship “Balkanization” which assumes that there is only one right way to worship for all the many cultures we see in American society today (Redman 2002, 106-107). Multicultural worship assumes that one size does *not* fill all, regardless of ethnicity.¹⁴

Researchers of multiethnic congregations point out that these dynamic churches seem to have certain characteristics in common. First, they are commonly located in older urban areas now populated by incoming younger adults and families comfortable in multiethnic urban settings. Second, they are young, recently established church bodies which are normally unaffiliated denominationally. Third, and most significant, “these churches all strongly emphasize worship as the priority of a personal relationship with God and as the primary ministry of the church” (Redman, 111-112).¹⁵ In other words, worship is

central not peripheral in the life of these growing multicultural churches! This research seems to support our thesis that worship is a vital and core activity (not just one program among many others) in these emerging multicultural churches. “Worship creates community and outreach, not the other way around” (Ibid, 113).¹⁶ Culturally relevant musical and artistic worship is a powerful evangelistic tool; as unbelievers see believers responding to God in worship they are attracted to Him.

Worship as Cultural Activity

Worship and culture can never be entirely separated. Our worship, no matter how inspired, is couched in culture—it has to be, because we are. “Culture is created through language, symbols, rituals, myths and stories, art forms (such as music, dance, painting, sculpture, etc.), and beliefs that show a people’s understanding of themselves and their relationship to the natural and spiritual world” (Slough 1994, 7:194). These building blocks of culture greatly affect our worship. Worship does not float above these shared mediums but is shaped by them and expressed through them. “Christian worship has always been culturally diverse and socially embedded” (Ibid, 7:195). It is a common misconception that worship (and its music) must be either monocultural—culturally specific or even exclusive—or multicultural. *True worship is really both*. It is culturally specific because God comes to us as we are and makes Himself accessible to us according to our own individual experience and cultural group background. He relates to us in the deepest parts of our being. Worship (and music), however, is also multicultural because our God is the Lord of all cultures and all peoples. He is interested in humanity in all its diversity, and he is deeply concerned about every individual uniquely. As His people, we are also called to be passionate about His concerns. Thus, our worship and congregational life should reflect these realities.

Worship leaders need to guide God’s people in worship styles that will enable them to grow and stretch their picture of how great God is. No one culture possesses all knowledge of God, and no one culture reflects God perfectly. From a biblical perspective, cultures are relative. Because every culture has been tainted by sin, every culture contains partial understanding of God. Some cultures have obviously been impacted by the gospel, and we can celebrate that. But since cultures are human expressions, in

some measure they express human rebellion against the Creator. Thus, we must view every culture as fundamentally fallen; no one culture can adequately celebrate God's glory. Our worship awaits the perfecting power and presence of Christ's coming kingdom. Until that time, we can expand our worship of God and our picture of his glory by appreciating what other cultures highlight about him. And as we learn to worship transculturally, we are reflecting what God's kingdom will be like (see Rev. 5:6-10; 7:9-12, etc.).

Learning to stretch across cultural boundaries and comfort zones in worship demands that both worship leaders and participants be willing to admit and lay aside their cultural biases, as much as possible. There is no hint in the Scriptures that our future worship around the throne of the Lamb will be in English, in Western tonalities or in 4/4 time! When the Holy Spirit first came at Pentecost in many different tongues, each people group heard a different language but all understood the same message. Evidently heaven will be like that but much greater. Today Anglo Americans are typically prejudiced against non-Western and indigenous (folk) music styles in Christian circles. Whites, for example, will propose a very spiritual-sounding formula: "Melody appeals to the intellect, harmony appeals to the soul, and rhythm appeals to the flesh." Analyzed, that is actually a very racist statement. The underlying assumption is that all rhythm is pagan (or from, "darkest Africa."). The truth is that all music must have rhythm or it is dead.

Worship, as used in this paper, refers to the self-expression of a particular church community in a public celebration of its faith.¹⁷ In this sense, then, worship must be "culturally specific" and even incarnational. For worship to be meaningful it has to be an integral part of people's lives and culture. Thus, if worship is not grounded in people's daily lives and cultural experiences it seems foreign, irrelevant and imposed. Significantly, Scripture prescribes no one monolithic form or language of worship. In both the Old and New Testaments we find biblical worship practice to be diverse, reflecting the various cultural and ethnic contexts of God's gathered people. No obligatory order or form for Christian worship is seen either in the teachings of Christ or the apostolic writings.¹⁸ Rather, in the early

church we see a diversity of worship patterns; new forms were evidently created to better meet the needs of an emerging pluralistic Christian community.

Cultural Issues to Be Addressed

Designing culturally sensitive worship is no easy task. Worship forms and contents are often rooted in denominational preferences, or doctrinal traditions. Worship may also be impacted by popular culture or generational issues. There are even more complex and deeply ingrained ethnic cultural factors that affect how we worship. A brief overview of some of these cultural influences will enable us to grasp how challenging the task is for multicultural worship leaders.¹⁹

One major cultural issue to be faced is people's different *orientations toward time*. In a multiethnic church some members may arrive twenty to thirty minutes "late" for the worship service; other members may interpret this to be disrespectful. The Euro-American cultural concept is based on what is called *monochronic time*. Here time is linear and is considered a precious commodity which can be wasted, saved, spent, lost or even killed! But other cultures live in what is called *polychronic time*, which is more cyclical. Time is not a commodity. Relationships and involvement with people are far more important than keeping appointments and schedules. Consequently, in these cultures, services tend to be much longer. A preacher who stops with a 20-30 minute message would be looked upon as "just getting started" or maybe too busy to fully prepare that week. Obviously, these cultural differences will greatly impact when and how we open and close worship services in a multicultural church. They may also determine how much lead time a person needs in order to feel comfortable being recruited to help.²⁰

Second, different cultures may have varying understandings of *musical harmony* and what sounds right to the ear. To European Americans harmony means singing together in the same language (in unison or in four parts) so that we all sound alike. In other cultures singing simultaneously in multiple languages may be common. To Anglos that sounds confusing and chaotic. Rhythms are also quite different from culture to culture. Some tap their feet or clap on the downbeat, while others clap in threes to rhythms that have no upbeat or downbeat. To Euro-Americans this sounds "off" or "uneven."

Each culture has boundaries that is considers *safe personal space*. This will influence how close people greet each other during or after worship. For Anglos, comfortable space is seen as about two or three feet apart. For other cultures, it can be one foot to five feet. Consequently, some ethnic people may greet with a hug and continue to converse one foot away; most Anglo Americans would see this as being pushy. One the other hand, if an ethnic person greeted us from five feet away we would view that person as aloof or possibly unfriendly.

Learning how to appropriately *greet persons* from another culture will also be a challenge in multicultural fellowships. Should it be with a bow, a handshake, a hug, a kiss on the cheek, or a kiss on both cheeks? In some cultures it is not appropriate for members of the opposite sex to hug in public; but members of the same sex may do so. A greeting gesture may even mean something different when used with persons of different ages or statuses. The best way to not offend is to ask each ethnic person what form of greeting is preferred and appropriate.

Our fellowship with others may also be affected by how we view *body language*. For example, Euro-Americans value direct eye contact when speaking to another; many Asian cultures avoid direct eye contact as a sign of respect for others. Many Anglos would view avoidance as not being interested in developing a relationship or as trying to hide something. Both of those judgments would be incorrect with Asian Americans.

Another cultural challenge, hard for European Americans to understand, is the frequent use of *indirect speech*, or what is sometimes call the “relational yes.” Anglos prefer direct speech and honestly “telling it like it is.” In other cultures, people do not want to hurt a friend’s feelings or disappoint another, so they will openly agree to a request and then not show up or come through. Anglos might view this as dishonesty and become very angry or frustrated. This difference could stifle our ability to recruit ethnic people to take some part in a worship service.

Orientations to *auditory space* vary from culture to culture. Older Euro-Americans need more auditory space—a cushion of quiet, so to speak. They would see the organist playing background music during the congregational prayer time —as is common in African American churches—as distracting. In

“low-context” European American culture we routinely engage in auditory screening to block out outside noises and to help us better concentrate. In more” high-context” cultures, people thrive on being open to interruptions in order to keep relationship up-to-date and to conduct all one’s business.

Cultural assumptions may cause groups to have conflicting expectations for what constitutes *preaching* or how one communicates the Word. In the current European American milieu, it is appropriate for the pastor to leave the pulpit and come down closer to the congregation. A more conversational or even dialogical style of communication is encouraged. In this cultural setting, authority is out, and informality is in. But, for other cultures (for example, among African Americans) the authority of “God’s man” is highly valued and the pulpit is seen as the rightful place where God’s Word is to be proclaimed. The “herald” model of preaching is still expected. Another potentially conflicting issue in preaching is whether the preacher use notes or a manuscript, or preaches extemporaneously. In many ethnic cultures, using notes is a sign of being unprepared or even being unwilling to be led by the Holy Spirit! Also, it should be noted that for some people from other cultures, it may be inappropriate to critique or even discuss the pastor’s sermon, once delivered.

Different cultural assumptions surround the use of *names and titles* in interpersonal relationships. In many cultures first names would be publicly used only for immediate family and a few close friends. By contrast, European Americans, in an effort to be more informal, collegial and friendly, commonly use first names, even to address their pastor and church leaders. But, in other cultures this would be viewed as disrespectful.²¹ In some cultures one would never address an older person—especially of higher status—by his or her first name.

Perhaps the greatest challenge multicultural churches will face is the difference between overtly *expressive styles* of worship and more *sedate quiet styles*. In many ethnic communities (such as African American, West Indian, and African settings) worship is not worship unless it involves the whole body in praise to God. Thus, hand-raising, clapping, tapping the feet, and even dancing are a natural part of worship. There is much verbal response to the choir, soloists, and preaching (more on this later).

These ten examples serve to illustrate how cultural complexities do shape the way believers worship and interact in the multicultural church. While certainly not exhaustive, this list is representative of the many challenges worship leaders face in multiethnic churches. Thus, it is absolutely essential that different expectations and preferences be brought out in the open for honest discussion. For meaningful, culturally-sensitive worship to emerge from the dialogue, members of each cultural group must feel free “to participate in the manner most meaningful for them without automatic judgment one way or another” (Black, 81). The goal is to negotiate a balance in the design of both the content and style of worship.

Understanding How Three Ethnic Groups Worship

We now turn to a brief survey of the worship perspectives and practices of three prominent groups, commonly found in American’s diverse urban settings.

African American Worship

Because African American worship is ultimately rooted in African culture and religion, and was developed under the institution of slavery,²² it is characterized by a holistic view of life. There is no dichotomy between sacred and secular among blacks, as is often found among European Americans. All of life is viewed as deeply spiritual. Consequently, African Americans place great value on the experiential, subjective, and intuitive dimensions of life. They also highly value relationship and community. Pedrito Maynard-Reid notes that African American worship celebrates individuality but always in community; worship is a highly relational and participatory event, never a spectator sport. And everybody contributes in his or her own way. Thus, individual improvisation is encouraged, especially in music; everyone is considered an artist. “It is understood”, Maynard-Reid says, “that everybody fashions his own offering of praise to God in his own way.” (2000, 60-61). Because life is seen as a whole, everything done in worship is to manifest a connectedness, an interrelatedness. Worship involves the worshiper’s total being—body, mind, and soul. “African Americans who worship with their whole person do not come to church *only* to learn something, but also to feel God’s Spirit, participate in communal

sharing, and involve themselves physically in the service” (Ibid., 61 author’s italics). Freedom of spontaneous personal expression is seen not only among the vocalists and instrumentalists; worshipers are also encouraged to clap, sway, dance, and sing along.

African American *worship music* is textually and musically passionate. According to Maynard-Reid, “It is impossible to ‘have church’ without good music. In the African American community, music is to worship as breathing is to life.” (Ibid., 69). Music permeates all of life and ministers to the whole person. The lyrics of black worship songs capture a broader range of emotions and subjects than in traditional, European American hymnology or contemporary Christian music. There are songs of joyous celebration that are very upbeat and encourage vigorous physical participation. Other black worship songs freely address profound emotions, such as sorrow, grief, lament, and even anger. Many of these, forerunners to the blues, capture pain and suffering so intensely they provoke worshipers to tears.

In the black church, there is a wide variety of musical styles. *Spirituals* and the ever popular *gospel* are known for energetic rhythms and vibrant tempos. Also enjoyed are slower African American metered *hymns* and songs. More recently, Christian “*hip-hop*,” has been accepted and appeals particularly to the youth.²³ When black Christians come to church to sing and listen to the choir, they expect to be entertained as well as to be edified. The call-response pattern, well-known in black preaching, is also found in the worship music of blacks. Music-making normally aims to provoke audience participation—whether it is singing along, humming, clapping, swaying or verbal response to selected phrases (“Amen!” “Well!” “Yes!” “Thank You, Jesus!” “Sing your song, chil’!”). Maynard-Reid observes, “In this way the song is shaped by the total community and is the property of every worshiper.” (71-72). In addition, a rich variety of musical instruments are used today to accompany black congregational song: traditionally, the organ, piano, trumpet, saxophone, guitar, tambourine have been used; more recently, the synthesizer, other percussions and electronics instruments have been added.

Preaching is another highlight of African American worship. The message always is more than “the sermon.” In the traditional black church, Maynard-Reid observes, “It is an event in which the congregation and musicians are caught up with the preacher in a highly emotional and cognitive drama

directed by the Spirit.” (86). African culture was primarily oral; thus today, “gifted black preachers, particularly, appeal to the sense of hearing”. The congregation must “hear, see, taste, touch, and feel the sermon.” (90). Black preaching is declarative as opposed to merely suggestive: people come expecting to hear a word from God. Preaching is often prophetic (thus, black pastors use Old Testament texts more than others) and in a dialogical style. Through a “call and response” approach, the congregation is encouraged to affirm the truthfulness of the message and the messenger “Preach it!” “Tell is like it is, Rev!” “Help yourself!” “Go ahead, Brother Preacher!” “Hallelujah!” are commonly heard. The musical aspects of black preaching can be heard in the repetitive cadences and rhythmic delivery of black preachers. In many African American churches, the preaching becomes musical as the preacher even chants or sings the message, often accompanied by the organ (93-96). The time for prayer in the black worship experience is as much a dialogical event as the preaching. The congregation does not passively listen to the pastor’s or deacon’s prayer; they tune it with a variety of verbal responses (97-98).²⁴

Hispanic Worship

Though there is no such thing as a typical Hispanic,²⁵ there are some common cultural elements among Hispanics that can give us insight into Hispanic worship in general. First, Hispanic worship is characterized by *fiesta* (literally “feast”). Theologian Justo Gonzalez writes, “Latino worship is a fiesta” (1996, 20). Hispanic culture, an amalgamation of Amerindian, African and Spanish cultures, is passionate about life. Thus, fiestas are celebratory, naturally spontaneous, creative, and intensely participatory (Maynard-Reid, 179-180). Like African Americans, Latinos do not distinguish between the sacred and the secular, between religious and nonreligious fiesta. Therefore, folk and popular Hispanic music, dance, traditional arts and crafts, and family celebrations can be freely woven into Hispanic worship. However, fiesta means more than just a party. It is a celebration amidst struggle. No matter how dismal one’s outer circumstances, joy and hope is always found in fiesta.

Consequently, Hispanic worship services are normally highly emotive, warm, enthusiastic, very vocal, festive, upbeat, and spontaneous. Active congregational participation is common—there is often

dance, applause, humor, laughter, and *el abrazo* (the embrace). Services tend to be long. There is much use of bright, colorful visuals: flowers are abundant; windows and walls are decorated with banners, plastics, children's art, scripture quotations, etc. To Hispanics, "Worship is a festive affirmation that life is worth living." (Maynard-Reid, 180-186).²⁶

Second, Hispanic worship celebrates **familia** and **comunidad** (family and community). Maynard-Reid observe that "when Hispanics come to worship, they come to a family fiesta ... when the extended family gathers together to praise God and celebrate having one another as family"(183). Unlike much Anglo worship, which tends to be personal and private, Latino worship is strongly corporate. Because it serves as a reminder of cultural and ethnic identity in a foreign, often hostile land, the worship service is the high point to the week.

Third, Hispanic **worship music** is rich, varied and celebratory. It draws from a variety of colorful traditions, especially African and native American rhythms, European instruments, and Spanish folk melodies. Latino music fuses together different styles into new sounds. For Hispanic worshipers, music creates a sense of cultural identity, or *comunidad*; it's a means by which people return to their roots and express their inner and total selves. Not surprisingly, music is a vital feature of Hispanic worship services, an opportunity for all to participate. Today, more and more Latino churches are rejecting European and Anglo hymnology and developing their own more expressive hymns and songs.

The most popular contemporary type of congregational song among Hispanics is the *corito*. Coritos are indigenous "heart songs". Emanating out of evangelical and Pentecostal circles, they are "short songs of praise that tell a story or whose lyrics come directly from Scripture, especially the Psalms. They are set to lively music, usually with a Hispanic flavor." (Ibid., 189-90). These newer songs often speak of the cost of discipleship and suffering, or express one's love for Christ.

Congregational worship is characterized by singing that is full-throated and energetic; often people stand continuously for 15-20 minutes (191). Today a full range of instruments are used in Hispanic services, such as pianos, keyboards, bass, Spanish guitars, electric guitars, a variety of drums (especially

congas and bongos), the *guiro* (an Indian rhythmic instrument), and the maracas (192-93). Worship bands are increasingly popular in Latino congregations.

Hispanic *preaching* has not attracted the attention of scholars as African American preaching has, but it, too, is a lively tradition. Protestant Hispanic evangelical preaching is expected to be biblical; preachers are to stick close to the text. Preachers need to make a passage come alive with meaning to worshipers' everyday lives. Hispanic pastors normally speak from 45 to 60 minutes or longer. As with African American preaching, through in a less dramatic way, Hispanic congregants enter into a dialogue with the preacher through affirmation and encouragement.

Hispanic worship is quite tactile, with lots of touching, holding hands, and hugging, even among men. Thus, it is important to have plenty of time for greeting one another. The celebration of communion is expected weekly. *Testimonios* (personal words of testimony from worshipers) are popular. Hispanic worshipers love to share their joys and sorrows, their concerns, needs and answers to prayer in order to encourage others and be encouraged.²⁷

Caribbean Worship

Caribbean peoples, for our purposes here, are English-speaking West Indians²⁸ from the numerous islands of the Caribbean Sea (Bahamas, Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, etc.) as well as Guyana (South America) and Belize (Central America). Though ethnically diverse and mixed, West Indians have, for the most part, a common "creole" culture²⁹. West Indians tend to be very religious people; most every Christian denomination, sect, and cult is flourishing in the region.³⁰ As a result, Caribbean worship is very eclectic and in a constant state of flux. In mainline churches there is a big push toward indigenization of the liturgy to better touch the felt needs of modern Caribbean society. Hundreds of thousands of West Indian emigrants have spread across urban Canada and the States bringing with them their colorful indigenous worship styles, culture, vernacular, and world view.

Caribbean secular *music* is well known for its complex melodic rhythms, antiphonal style, repetition, syncopation, simple harmonies, and use of local dialects (Maynard-Reid, 138-9). West Indian

worship music is less definable due to the varieties of cultures and church traditions represented. In some traditional circles, familiar European musical styles and idioms are enjoyed. In more progressive circles, in an effort to better reflect the African heritage of the majority, one hears more and more reggae, calypso, mento, and revival rhythms (Ibid., 139). Caribbean worshipers, particularly those with African roots, who expect more holistic worship, respond naturally to more rhythmic instrumentation. “Thus, instruments, such as drums (especially the conga), tambourines, shakers, mouth organ, guitar, flute, violin, bongo, rumbo box, and maracas are growing in popularity in Caribbean churches” (Ibid., 141). It should be noted, however, that many older generation, non-Pentecostal West Indians view this kind of more indigenous rhythmic music as carnal and sensual. Due to earlier missionary influence, many Caribbeans love to sing European and North American hymns and the more recently learned contemporary praise songs. Though “the old taboos against Afro-Caribbeancentric worship” are lifting, Euro-American traditions of worship are still dominate (148).

Preaching—and the response of the congregants—is very similar to that found in African American church circles. The one difference is that West Indian believers fully expect to hear messages in a more teaching and edificational format with less entertainment. They desire sermons that are contextually true to the Word.

A Proposal for Blended Worship

The author is currently leading a seminary church planting team which is preparing to launch a multiethnic, multicultural church in the Poconos, located in Northeast Pennsylvania. Much of the recent growth into Coolbaugh Township (the north side of Monroe County) has come from New York City and northern New Jersey and is hence quite diverse ethnically. The core group of believers our team meets with is currently composed of African Americans, Hispanics, West Indians and Anglo Americans. This mix of peoples is reflective of the community. The launch team hopes to retain and maintain this mix and to see a growing “integrated multiracial congregation” develop which can eventually become a dynamic

sending church for future planting teams going into New York City. What kind of worship will this church (Living Hope Baptist) need in order for this vision to be realized?

The above survey of African American, Hispanic and Caribbean worship suggests there are numerous similarities between these three cultures. These commonalities have been enhanced as these three people groups have often found themselves living side-by-side in North American cities. With the globalization of western culture today we are seeing a blending of various cultures in worship. Indigenous, ethnic and western (often Anglo) worship and music styles are merging, particularly in the world's multiethnic metros. As the world's cities become melting pots of cultural diversity, the churches in these places are beginning to reflect this rich diversity. Nowhere is this more apparent than in North America's big cities like New York, Los Angeles, Miami, and Toronto. Thus we have every reason to believe that groups such as the four being targeted in the Poconos should be able to worship together—if culturally sensitive worship is designed and offered.

It is, therefore, proposed that the worship style and format for Living Hope Baptist Church be characterized by the following ten essential qualities:

- 1) ***Holistic***: worship should purposefully involve the whole person—the mind, emotions and body. The cognitive, emotional, and physical should be balanced.
- 2) ***Participatory***: worship should draw in the entire congregation with moderate amounts of verbal and nonverbal interaction encouraged. The service ideally should be co-constructed by worship leaders together with the audience as it responds.
- 3) ***Expressive***: there should be freedom for people to spontaneously and enthusiastically express themselves in the worship service.
- 4) ***Celebratory***: the worship mood should be less reflective and more joyous. Taken as a whole the music and service should aim to lift people up rather than to humble them and bring them low.³¹
- 5) ***Relationship-Oriented***: sufficient time should be given for greeting one another (during and after the service), sharing concerns/needs, praying for others and hearing personal testimonies.

- 6) ***Musically Passionate and Varied***: A variety of musical styles and formats should be utilized—black gospel, traditional Negro spirituals, West Indian calypso, Spanish coritos, Anglo hymns, contemporary Christian praise, and simple easy-to-learn English choruses. Songs should be sung lustily and loudly; normally they should be sung in English though an occasional song in Spanish could be taught to all. Aim for an “upbeat urban” sound as much as possible.
- 7) ***Rhythmic Instrumentation***: music should be accompanied by a variety of instruments with a free use of percussion. If possible a praise band/team should lead the worship service and utilize as many of the following as available: electronic keyboard, electric guitars, drums, tambourines, piano, trumpets and maracas.
- 8) ***Dialogical Preaching***: the proclamation of the Word must be relevant (touching everyday concerns of the audience), enthusiastic, true-to-the-Scriptures, and full of down-to-earth practical illustrations and applications. The message should encourage lots of verbal feedback from the congregation and normally be 40-50 minutes duration. More narrative style preaching is recommended rather than pure exposition.
- 9) ***Visitor-Friendly***: worship services should be aimed at both the unchurched and the formerly churched who have been turned off by “traditional church.” The goal is to get “seekers” in the door of this multicultural church plant, provide a non-threatening visual and verbal environment, and move them toward faith in Christ. This principle seeks to balance #2 above.³²
- 10) ***Informal Structure***: rather than formal and liturgical in format. Multiethnic churches should be more in the “free church” mode, not bothered by a lack of exactitude and predictable order. “Planned spontaneity” and flexibility should be the norm.³³

Fostering a Shared Story

In a multicultural congregation, for deep unity to be experienced in the midst of great diversity, it is essential that the people work together to develop a common memory, a “shared story.” While there may be a few initial worship elements they all hold in common as children of God, members of a

multicultural church may not share a mutual understanding of the best and more “appropriate” ways to honor and praise God. Thus, it is vital they develop and foster a common worship culture. Researcher Kathy Black comments on the value of this “third” culture:

While experts in the area of congregational studies assert that every congregation has its own “culture,” this concept takes on a slightly different meaning in multiethnic congregations that take seriously the cultures represented by the various members. By all sharing their cultures, their histories and faith journeys, as well as the ways they traditionally praise God and the ways that God inspires them through certain songs and prayer forms, a “third” culture emerges out of shared memories that blends elements from each of the cultures present (90).

We have already noted that the proper goal for “integrated multiracial churches” to pursue is the creation of a new *mestizaje* congregational culture—a uniquely new culture that relies on the distinctiveness of each representative culture to create a blended hybrid culture. The concept of “mestizaje” is deeply understood by Mexicans and Mexican Americans: it is the “blending” of Native (Indian) and Spanish peoples to create a “mestizo” people and culture, one that preserves “aspects of their individual cultural pasts but [has] also internalized aspects of the culture of the other” (Black, 90). Culturally sensitive worship works in a similar way.

To facilitate the emergence of this “third” culture, leaders of a multiethnic church must discover ways to take the various individual stories shared by all and build a new common story. This is what happened at Pentecost. People from different countries and cultures, touched by the Holy Spirit, learned to listen sensitively to one another and to learn from one another. Jews and Gentiles, with little in common, discovered how to foster a close community in the midst of their great diversity. One of the keys to their unity: they began worshipping together daily. Underpinning their unity was their common belief in the biblical Story, the story of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We will now quickly review some of the practical ways leaders of multicultural churches today can establish a common bond of unity. We will limit ourselves to recommendations for the worship service since this is the activity most people in multiethnic churches share in common on a weekly basis and holds most promise. Dynamic worship is crucial to developing a congregational shared story.

Through Music

Singing together is a potentially unifying time. But often in multicultural churches people do not know the same songs or share a common hymnody. How then should leaders go about establishing a common bond? Researcher Black has distinguished four different paths multicultural churches have taken in regards to using music in worship (92-97). First, in assimilationist-type churches, all incoming cultures are expected to learn and appreciate the songs and musical styles of the majority culture; the assumption is that our way of praising God is the best way.³⁴ A second approach is to use music that is “initially new to all cultures” (93). In this model, newer contemporary, easy-to-learn, praise choruses are often used since they do not require great fluency in English.³⁵ A third approach some multicultural congregations have chosen is to find a common bond for all the groups represented by trying to identify which [western, older] hymn tunes the various cultures have in common (94).³⁶ We agree with Black that the fourth model is preferable if our aim is to develop culturally sensitive worship. In this “blended” approach leaders seek to identify music, both historical and contemporary, that is meaningful to all the cultural groups represented. Over the course of time the diverse music styles of each culture are welcomed, respected, appreciated and publicly utilized in worship services. Though this last model is more difficult to implement, it does result in more attractive and satisfying worship music for minority cultures.³⁷

Black makes two insightful suggestions that would enable worship leaders to better facilitate the blended music model in multicultural churches. First, she recommends that leaders seek out hymn tunes held in common by one or more of the church groups and incorporate them in worship “with their original lyrics (and respective translations) or alternative words may be used.” She points out that there are “many new lyrics today (sung to traditional hymn tunes) that address the issues and spirituality of multicultural churches. This allows for a common history (through the tune) and a new start for all (through the lyrics)” (96).³⁸

Her second suggestion is that someone from the cultural group to whom a new song belongs be encouraged to give a “musical testimony” when the new song is first introduced. Black comments,

If we are truly to be a community for one another, it is important that we hear the testimony of the one(s) for whom this music is foundational in their praise to God, and how this music facilitates the vertical [Godward] aspect for them. It is a gift to have someone share the personal meaning of a particular song or how his or her faith has been deepened by a particular hymn. In honor and support of that person's faith journey and presence in the body of Christ (facilitating the horizontal [manward] aspect of worship), that song (maybe a totally unfamiliar song) takes on new meaning for the entire congregation (96).

Music professor, Nathan Corbitt, reminds us of one reason choruses, praise songs, *coritos* (Spanish), and short songs (Asian) are so popular around the Christian world today. "It is not just their lively nature; they become a common musical language because of their simplicity. They take less time to teach, and they are common to many of the world's cultures, even in translated versions" (1998, 61-62). Thus, multicultural churches would do well to utilize this musical genre in particular. Corbitt further elaborates on the pivotal role worship music play in building congregational unity. He points to five ways music can foster unity:

1. Unity through texts that express community thought in light of biblical revelation.
2. Unity through music forms that express corporate emotion.
3. Unity through songs of local history of personal faith. These include gospel songs, songs of personal testimony, and new songs for the local community.
4. Unity through songs of biblical salvation history. This includes singing Scripture songs, setting psalms to music, and learning about hymns from other lands.
5. Unity through songs of broader kingdom faith. This includes listening to and singing contemporary songs of larger communities (72).

Through Ritual

Another way to create congregational worship unity is by developing shared rituals. Corbitt observes that the "content of worship must [always] be placed in some type of form. The form is the ritual or cultus of the worship" (64). Though many evangelicals, especially those of us of the "free church" persuasion, chafe at the idea of ritual, Corbitt reminds us that without some sort of ritualization we could not find our way, even in familiar areas. "Rituals help us move into a space and time that we hold sacred. . . . Form is the structure by which we organize our worship. . . . Worship forms (rituals) help us collectively express and experience the worship experience (64-65).³⁹ Doran and Troeger theorize that excellent

worship has the continual interweaving of “structure and antistructure” (1992, 96). They believe that *both* are essential to vital congregational worship.

If we came to church and no one had any idea of what the order was, we could not worship together as a congregation.

On the other hand, if the order were perfectly clear, but we just went through the motions, never feeling engaged by the elusive mystery of the living Spirit of God, then we would never say, as did the disciples returning from Emmaus, “Did not our hearts burn within us?”

[Vital worship] draws upon the orderly elements that give us a solid feeling of being related to history and tradition. But at the same time it takes us into the unexplored territory of anti-structure which renews our astonishment at the love of God and opens us to fresh winds of the Spirit. (96-97)

The lesson for newly formed multicultural congregations is that we must not neglect to balance these two elements in our worship. We must intentionally labor to set up familiar patterns of worship so that before long those of various cultural backgrounds can begin to feel “at home” in the worship service. One way to establish little rituals would be to negotiate a set way to regularly observe the Lord’s Table (communion).⁴⁰ Another would be in establishing a particular time and congregational way to greet one another in the worship service. Congregational times of celebration for selected “rites of passages” could also help bring people together around an emerging tradition. Establishing congregational traditions like these will take careful thought and planning to insure that the rituals set up are neither contrary to Scripture nor eventually obstacles to the fulfilling of biblical functions (more on this later).

Through Visuals

Visual art can also nurture a sense of unity in a multicultural church. Culmore United Methodist Church in Falls Church, Virginia (40% Anglo, 30% Filipino, 15% African, 10% Latin American, and 5% other diverse nationalities) has a large banner prominently displayed in the sanctuary. The banner pictures a church building and a globe highlighting the world’s continents. Cords of thread emanate from the center of the church outward to the various parts of the world represented by church members (Black, 92). This affirms visually a shared story of how a Sovereign God has brought each congregant to Himself and to this local body of believers. Other visual symbols that might be used: a giant tapestry or a large painting placed in the lobby or auditorium, the use of flags from various nations represented, exterior

landscaping (shaped in a globe?), the judicious use of certain colors, even how the auditorium is arranged and decorated.

Another way to visually portray our common unity in Christ and to build a congregational shared story would be through use of “artistic testimonies” in worship (Black, 100-101). A number of examples could be cited. Urban churches today are increasingly using drama (both biblical and contemporary),⁴¹ liturgical dance,⁴² and even indigenous musical instruments to allow people to express themselves culturally. For example, multiethnic congregations with members/attendees from Africa or the Caribbean may desire to occasionally bring in an African drumming group or steel drum group.

Through Sharing Faith Stories

In multicultural churches it is particularly important that people have abundant opportunities to get to know one another more than on a surface level. Black notes that while worship leaders must carefully design the vertical aspects of worship, “the horizontal aspect of worship cannot be ignored” (101). Both during and outside the worship services opportunities must be provided for people to share their lives, cultures, and spiritual journeys. Black gives at least five ways this can be done: 1) using educational and congregational fellowship times to identify and discuss cultural conflicts (for example, a Children’s Time during the worship service could be used to learn about and celebrate cultural differences); 2) through small group Bible studies; 3) during greeting and welcoming times each Sunday;⁴³ 4) scheduling a time to share with the entire church body our “joys and concerns;” and 5) encouraging diverse people to share their personal testimony of salvation and God’s working in their life (102-104).

Through Biblical Images

A final way to foster congregational worship unity would be to purposefully draw from appropriate “biblical texts, themes and images that become an organizing core for the church’s ministry” (Black, 91). For example, worship leaders could design an entire service around a scriptural theme—such

as the “Body of Christ” image. Pastors of multicultural churches should regularly preach from key texts which affirm our oneness in Christ⁴⁴ and provide other ecclesiological metaphors.⁴⁵ Especially important is that biblical texts be interpreted (accurately) through a *multicultural lens* (rather than through any particular cultural lens). In this way the biblical Story becomes the ownership of the entire congregation and helps create a shared story, a shared memory.

Upholding Biblical Constants in Worship

Though no fixed format for public worship is prescribed in Scripture, there are certain unchanging biblical constants which worship leaders of multicultural churches should seek to uphold. To design dynamic worship that is both culturally relevant and biblically correct, attention needs to be given to six biblical criteria:

- 1) The worship should be glorifying to God.⁴⁶
- 2) The worship should be Christ-centered.⁴⁷
- 3) The worship should be Spirit-empowered.⁴⁸
- 4) The worship should be expressive of and edifying to believers who are present (the church).⁴⁹
- 5) The worship should be intelligible and appealing to unchurched visitors.⁵⁰
- 6) The worship should be wholehearted yet balancing spirit and truth, as well as the physical, emotional and intellectual.⁵¹

Since much has been written on these biblical principles, we will not take the time here to elaborate further. One caution though must be given: different cultural groups may *apply* these biblical constants differently as they see through their cultural eyeglasses. Implementing these criteria for biblical worship may be challenging in multicultural churches! Grace and great wisdom will be needed.

Recommendations for Worship Leaders

In order to implement multicultural worship well, the following general guidelines may be profitable to worship leaders, cross-cultural missionaries and urban pastors.

1. *Select a Multi-ethnic Worship Team.* To ensure quality this team should both plan and lead the services, if at all possible. Ideally the team should be composed of both vocalists and instrumentalists, lay and staff. Who should make the final decisions as to the design and content of the worship service? Black's research (24-29) found that this varies among multicultural churches, but she was able to identify at least five approaches: 1) *inherited liturgy* (a book of common prayer, etc.) provides the design; 2) *pastor* designs (often found in assimilationist churches); 3) *professional team* designs (usually consisting of professional musicians, clergy and/or song leader; found most often in "seeker" churches; can lead to "choreographed," carefully planned performance-oriented rather than participatory worship); 4) *representative committee* designs (can lead to tokenism); 5) a *different worship group* designs the service each Sunday (this can lead to amateurism and lack of continuity). All in all, a merging of the third and fourth models seems best because this allows cultural representatives on the worship "committee" to share insights and information from their various cultures. Over time, as the worship team works together, a new style of worship (a "third culture") emerges which regularly includes elements (values, rhythms, rituals) from every culture.

2. *Study the Varied Cultures and Musical Styles of Your Community.* Do a heart music survey and carefully research the heart music of the various people groups being targeted. Find out how people most naturally express love, joy, confidence and deep relationships. These are the best indicators of true worship. Worship should never be stilted, cold or expressed in a way that is contrary to the nature and feelings of believers. Veteran mission musicologist, T.W. Hunt recommends that church planting missionaries discover where/ how nationals "are most likely to express intimacy. What languages do they pray in? ...What music do they sing in the kitchen or at leisure?" (1987, 128). For urban ethnics I would add: What radio stations do people listen to and what kind of music do they prefer? The worship team should clearly identify not only the various musical styles but the instruments commonly used (or listened to) by the people. Only then can they intelligently select music that is culturally appropriate.

Serious students of culture and music will want to avail themselves of the research of an academic discipline that has emerged in the twentieth century. *Ethnomusicology* is the study of the music

of various ethnic and cultural groups. It focuses on the how and why of people's musical choices, made within their cultural system.⁵² Ethnomusicology has provided us with helpful missiological insights. We now know, for example, that the Gospel must become incarnate not only in the "heart language" of a people but also in their "heart music." Heart music is the music that best communicates to a specific people and stirs them to their very core ("music that moves the soul"). Unless the music and worship styles of emerging churches are in the indigenous heart music of a people, its ethnographic core can never be reached for Christ.⁵³

3. Study the Worship Patterns of Various Groups A second academic discipline can be utilized here to glean insights into how people groups worship. *Ethnodoxology* is the study of how and why people of diverse cultures praise and glorify the true and living God.⁵⁴ Worship researcher Kathy Black in her first book, *Worship Across Cultures* (1998) has edited and compiled a very helpful handbook which overviews the basic worship practices of 21 ethnic and cultural groups found in North American Protestantism.⁵⁵ The unique emphasis, traditions and patterns of worship of each people group are delineated.

4. Study and Utilize the Dominant Cultural Theme(s) of Various Ethnic Groups. Because of their history and struggles, each people group tends to focus on a different broad theme. From the author's preliminary study, I would tentatively suggest the following:

- Latins: fiesta and family
- African-Americans: exodus/liberation from bondage
- Native-Americans: purity and personal communion
- Asian-Americans: reconciliation and restoration
- Africans: obedience and submission

The focus of worship ought to reflect a people's perception of God and the manner they can most meaningfully apprehend Him. Thus, worship leaders in multicultural congregations ought to give some attention to how these appropriate cultural themes can be occasionally woven into the fabric of worship services.⁵⁶

5. Encourage Ethnic Believers to Write/Sing Their Own Worship Songs. If music is to be truly contextualized it must reflect the dynamic faith of the current generation of believers. Thus new music must continually be written. We must encourage local believers from various cultural backgrounds to be writing new lyrics that conform to the lyrical patterns and the musical styles the worship team has selected in concert with local believers. New songs say God is doing something awesome in our midst. Interestingly, almost every revival and spiritual awakening in the West has resulted in a burst of new hymns and praise songs that express the spiritual renewal of God's people. We must also encourage talented, musically-inclined ethnic leaders to set Scriptural passages to music they are comfortable with. Encourage ethnic members to rearrange and rewrite existing songs; work at editing archaic terms from older songs selected for use.⁵⁷ Consider sponsoring hymn writing contests, song festivals, and outdoor concerts or bringing in visiting musicians and scholars.

6. Aim for culturally “blended” music. We have already discussed the need for incorporating a variety of musical styles and sounds in the worship service: black gospel, Anglo hymns, Spanish *coritos*, upbeat urban contemporary praise and even songs in other languages on occasion. The immediate goal is to achieve cross-cultural music expression.⁵⁸ The ultimate goal is to work toward development of a third culture music, where people of different Christian practices and cultures create new songs.⁵⁹ This seems to be implied in the universal Christian song of Revelation. A truly universal song is certainly an ideal, and perhaps unachievable, this side of heaven, but certainly a worthy goal to pursue.

Blended music and worship keeps everyone together and builds unity where culture divides. Would such an attempt not create conflict and satisfy no one in the long run? Charles Lyons, pastor of Chicago's multiracial Armitage Baptist Church (30% Anglo, 30% Black, 30% Hispanic, and 10% other ethnics) shares their goal, honed after years of experimentation, “We try to touch varied cultural bases and let [each cultural group] know we're sensitive to their presence and appreciate their culture.” He acknowledges that occasionally that does create some conflict. More likely visitors respond, “This was wonderful today but I didn't hear my favorites.” To which Armitage's staff and members have been trained to respond, “Come back next week and we'll be singing something different” (Howe 1994, 27).

Developing unifying blended music will not be an easy task. But then again, no genuine worship is easy. God-glorifying worship is always sacrificial worship!

The notion that European Americans will not like blended multicultural expressions of worship is not always true, especially among the younger generations. Sally Morgenthler, in her excellent book, *Worship Evangelism* quotes Raphael Green, a veteran cross-cultural songwriter and pastor of multicultural Metro Christian Worship Center in St. Louis, to demonstrate that. Green points out that “urban music” has become quite popular today with Latinos, Asians, African Americans and whites. “Urban music” has come to mean an eclectic style—it means rap, R and B, choruses, traditional gospel—it’s all of that and more (Morgenthler 1995, 215).

7. Establish a Basic Checklist for Multicultural Song Selection. Morganthaler has given music leaders two very helpful tools to assist in putting together a well-crafted, cross-cultural worship service. To help with song selection, she recommends a simple test: the “PASS” formula. A good worship song for worship evangelism has four simple, identifiable characteristics. Before songs are used they must exhibit these qualities:

- **Personal**—they relate in one way to people’s everyday lives and involve their whole being, including their emotions.
- **Attractive**—they hold people’s attention.
- **Straightforward**—both Seeker Bob and Sainly Bill can understand and latch onto them quickly.
- **Substantive**—they have a thoroughly biblical message that is faithful to the whole counsel of Scripture (1995, 214).⁶⁰

To further help those not technically trained in music to apply the “attractive” and “singable” criteria, Morganthaler has developed a “compositional checklist for cross-cultural worship songs” (see Appendix A). The checklist establishes general criteria for further evaluation, covering everything but subject content. She urges that it be used as “a guide, not [as] canonical law” (220-222).⁶¹ Using these tools, Morganthaler urges leaders to develop an initial list of usable, cross-cultural worship songs. The appendix to her book also provides a valuable “Cross-Cultural Music Resource Bank” (287-312) with a detailed list of various companies, songbooks, recordings, and other worship resources available today to worship leaders.⁶²

The great challenge for leaders of multicultural churches is to discerningly arrive at a list of usable songs that are not only culturally relevant but also biblically sound. It is natural for churches to be cautious about the introduction of new music and vocal styles. Professor Corbitt points out that “every verbal and nonverbal code carries meaning” (280). So how do we decide if a song is appropriate for Christian purposes? This author would recommend use of a process proposed initially by Paul Hiebert: critical contextualization (Hiebert 1985, 188).⁶³

8. Seek Intergenerational Participation in Worship. “Many multicultural congregations have found that it is exceptionally important to include the younger generations as much as possible in the life of the church—including worship” (Black, 110). Many Anglo churches separate out the children for “junior church.” But in ethnic churches leaders have learned the value of keeping everyone together and encouraging family worship. The youth are encouraged to develop confidence in leadership by participating in choir, dance troupes, drumming groups, or bell choirs; they may also participate as junior ushers, scripture readers, or in other aspects of the service. Leaders of multicultural churches will want to be sensitive to the family values and desires of various ethnic groups and may need to work at intentionally blending older and younger generations in worship. This has rich reward for the church today and tomorrow.

Other Suggestions for Worship Leaders

1. Give attention to “rites of passage and incorporation.”⁶⁴ For example public baptismal services may be utilized for witness to the larger extended family and could become more a family celebration.
2. Consider a monthly or quarterly “Songs of Heaven” evening concert where choirs sing in various languages.
3. Consider celebrating national holidays and festivals with use of national costumes and foods as a part of or following a worship service.
4. Have Scripture read in several languages occasionally.
5. Allow use of both vernacular and standard English.

6. Incorporate the best technology your multicultural church can afford and train ethnic leaders to use various media.
7. Expect some degree of discomfort.⁶⁵
8. Consider allowing for bilingual and multilingual worship.⁶⁶

Conclusion

Worship must be central in the life of a biblical congregation. God is seeking after worshipers. Every growing church is a worshipping church. Biblical churches worship in the “heart language” of their people(s), that is, in culturally relevant ways, intelligible to worshipers. Culturally relevant musical and artistic worship is a powerful evangelistic tool; as unbelievers see believers in a multicultural church responding passionately to God in worship, they are attracted to Him. They are far more receptive to hear the Word of God. Worshiping in people’s heart language requires trained and culturally-sensitive leaders. A worship leadership team increases the outreach and overall effectiveness of emerging multicultural churches, especially new church plants. Worship that is biblical will encompass the full range of human emotion and expression. It will be holistic. God-pleasing worship will be from the inside out, not outside in. It will be wholehearted, balancing spirit and truth.

Worship forms (styles) should be selected that allow people to express both the *facts* of their faith in God (truth) and the emotions and *feelings* of their relationship to their Lord (spirit). Forms should allow people to draw nearer to God. Worship forms (patterns) should expedite fulfilling biblical functions (purposes).

Genuine worship in a multicultural church will take hard work, great wisdom, and deep sensitivity to the many people(s) God has brought to the congregation. As Charles Foster suggests in *We Are the Church Together*:

The task persons in these communities face is *not* that of becoming bilingual or multilingual or multicultural in the sense of mastering the multiple languages and cultures in currency. Rather, their task is to *appreciate* and *live in* rather than *master* or *resolve* the multiplicity of languages and cultures among them (1996, 158).

There will always be some uncertainty and ambiguity because these dynamic churches will always be nontraditional and changing with their local contexts. At times their leaders and members may be heard to say, “We really don’t know what we are doing.” At other times they may say with an expectant smile, “You never know quite what is going to happen here.” In other words, these unique churches see ambiguity and uncertainty as both threat and promise. Knowing God is at work in their midst helps create a posture of dependency.

For a congregational worship event to be considered a success, it must be planned, approved, and participated in by persons from as many cultural groups as possible. Black reminds us,

“In many ways, designing worship is like a work of art, or a carefully choreographed dance or a well-directed play. We don’t want to over-choreograph so that there is no room for the movement of the Spirit during the service itself, but at the same time we want to be Spirit led as we prayerfully design the service and choose the various elements. . . .” (2000, 113).

The end product—the worship service itself—will be unique to each congregation. And each multicultural congregation is unique.

The task of relating worship and culture is ultimately concerned with finding the balance between relevance and authenticity, while avoiding syncretism and/or eclecticism. More important than being totally relevant is being biblically authentic. Rather than asking, “How can we attract unchurched ethnics to our church?” we should start with the question, “How can we be real in everything we do?” Unbelievers, above all else, want to see genuine Christian faith lived out by genuine Christians in real, loving church bodies.

For worshiping congregations that are intentionally multicultural the rich reward is that they provide a watching world a sneak preview of heaven. They are a prophetic witness to our divided world and a beacon of hope. Multicultural churches that worship well are microcosms that simultaneously reflect a fulfillment of God’s Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) and foreshadow the reality of His heaven (Rev. 5:9-10; 7:9-10; 14:6-7).

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Notes

¹ The 2000 Census revealed that our total ethnic population includes 36.4 million African Americans, 35.3 million Hispanics, 10.2 million Asian Americans, 2.9 million Native Americans, 5.1 million Americans who count themselves as "multiracial," and another 15.4 million who belong to "other races." These figures reflect the author's adjustments. The 1.7 million Americans who claimed to be black and another race are included under the African American category; the Asian and Pacific Islander numbers are combined; Native Americans include Hawaiian and Alaskan. This actually adds up to *105.3 million ethnic Americans or 37.4%* of the 2000 population of 281.3 million!

² This *fact* of demographic multiculturalism must be carefully distinguished from the relativistic *ideology* that goes by the same name and is seeking to transform America's educational and political institutions. Conservative Christians can accept the first while rejecting the second.

³ The 2000 Census for the first time gave people the opportunity to choose more than one race to describe themselves, and 2.4% of the country's 281.4 million citizens did so. Multiracial or mixed race Americans currently number at least 6.8 million. As this "blending of America" continues, racial lines may blur until the "melting pot" becomes a harmonious "we-are-the-world" reality. The U.S. is mestizing! That is to say, we are a "browning" nation which is shifting rapidly toward being a polyglot of brown, yellow, black, white and mestizo (mixed). For example, California's population is now predominately "minority" – Hispanics, African Americans, Asians and "mixed" groups now comprise 50% of the state's population. This will be a reality in Arizona by 2005, in Texas by 2010, and for the entire nation by the year 2050.

⁴ As our American society continues to change, at least four types of people will not be comfortable in traditional homogenous churches: interracial couples and families, ethnic people who prefer English, urbanites who appreciate living, working and ministering in the midst of ethnic diversity, and Anglo Generation-Xers who often despise racial separation. For a good summary of other reasons and motivations a growing number of Americans are seeking out multiethnic churches, see Kathy Black (2000, 18-21).

⁵ For example, those in an ethnic group who are socio-economically upward in mobility tend to associate themselves with Anglos and other ethnics, feeling comfortable among them. Tetsunao Yamamori defines ethnic consciousness as "the intensity of awareness of one's distinct peoplehood based on race, religion and/or national origin." (1979, 182). This Christian social researcher has given a valuable index scale that would help church planters identify the relative intensity of ethnic consciousness among any potential targeted ethnic group (Ibid., 182-184) and thus arrive at the best approach for reaching them. There will always be some within an ethnic group – those with high ethnic consciousness – who will be repelled by a church intentionally seeking to mix groups. Other models ("identificational" or more homogenous church models) will be needed to reach them. Those with high ethnic consciousness are sometimes referred to as "nuclear ethnics." Oscar Romo, former head of language missions for the southern Baptists, has given a helpful spectrum that enables one to see the *differences within each ethnic group* (1993, 72-74). The point is that different kinds of churches will be often needed to reach everyone within a particular ethnic group!

⁶ Actually DeYoung et al. calculate that overall just 7.5% of America's 360,000 *religious* congregations are racially mixed. But the percentage for *Christian* bodies drops to 5.5%. Furthermore they calculate that half of these racially mixed churches are mixed only temporarily as they transition from one group to another (2000, 2). For specific examples and descriptions of the growing number of multiracial churches in America, see DeYoung et al. (71-96); Redman (2002, 111); Emerson and Smith (2000); Foster (1997); Foster and Brelsford (1996); and this author's journal article, "Multicultural Church Planting Models" (Davis 2003, 114-127).

⁷ Scripture is clear in its description of God's house as "a house of prayer for all nations (=people groups)." God's purpose for His people has always been that through them "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (see Genesis 12:1-3 and Isaiah 56:7). To build biblical conviction regarding why we should have multicultural churches, the author recommends study of these core passages: Genesis 12:1-3; Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 6:1-7; 11:19-26; 13:1-3; Eph. 2:14-22; Gal. 3:26-28; Rev. 5:9-10; 7:9-12. For a full discussion of the biblical/theological basis for both racial reconciliation and the need for multiethnic churches see DeYoung et al. (2003, 9-37); Norman Peart, *Separate No More* and Stephen A. Rhodes, *Where the Nations Meet*. To understand the biblical rationale for reaching unreached ethnic groups (or *ethne* = peoples = "nations") see John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!*, Baker, 1993, 167-218. Piper (1993) best summarizes God's overarching missiological purpose: "God's great goal in all history is to uphold and display the glory of His name for the enjoyment of His people from all the nations."

⁸ For solid current discussions of both the demographic and sociological rationale for multicultural churches see Manuel Ortiz, *One New People: Models for Establishing a Multiethnic Church* (1999); George Yancey, *Beyond Black and White: Reflections on Racial Reconciliation* (1996); and Stephen Rhodes, *Where the Nations Meet: The Church in a Multicultural World* (1998). DeYoung et al. gives one of the better recent summaries of the rationale for homogenous churches, citing historical and present-day arguments commonly used by Asian Americans, Native Americans, African Americans and white church leaders for racially separate churches (2003, 99-127). In response, they present a solid case for multiracial churches, citing numerous pragmatic, theological, cultural and sociological reasons (128-144). Most of the pragmatic reasons for building multicultural churches can be boiled down to one basic premise: culturally and racially mixed congregations make a stronger statement to a watching world about the power of the Gospel. For other arguments for maintaining racial boundaries in congregational life/worship, see Lincoln (1999, xxiv), and Wagner (1978). By contrast, others see homogenous churches as contributing to the "racialization" of society (Emerson and Smith 2000), and a concrete denial of the biblical call for a community of faith in which worldly boundaries of class and race are dissolved (Padilla 1982; Fong 1996).

⁹ The release of *Divided By Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race* (Emerson and Smith 2000), raised lots of concern in the evangelical Christian community showing how theology, history, and the very structure of religious organizations often combine in powerful ways to divide American Christians along racial lines. This book also demonstrated how the consequent separate congregations have many negative consequences perpetrating division and inequality. The recent publication of *United By Faith: The Multiracial Congregation As An Answer To The Problem of Race* (DeYoung et al. 2003), is meant to show that multiracial congregations can have the opposite effect. The book is based on the multiethnic team of authors' three years of intensive research studying both multiracial and unracial congregations.

¹⁰ Throughout this paper the author assumes that churches grow best when they heterogeneously match their community. In short, the cultural character of churches in interethnic communities should normally follow the interethnic pattern of peoples outside the church. This means that if several homogenous groups in the surrounding community are essentially friendly and mutually respectful, it is wise to evangelize them through a church which is consciously multiethnic. If there is animosity among the HU's, and especially if they use different languages in their homes, it may be wiser to evangelize them with initially separate churches (or at least separate language services) designed for each group's styles and preferences. Significantly, McGavran referred to non-Christian groups which distrust one another, are not normally friends, and do not interdine or intermarry, as "unassimilated contiguous homogenous units." Ethnically diverse churches are not meant for them but are best for mixed urban communities which are intentionally and comfortably diverse and where groups are mutually respectful/supportive. (For these distinctions I am indebted to Dr. William Smallman, "The Homogenous Unit Principle," unpublished class notes, n.d., 1-3).

¹¹ Defining a multicultural church is not an easy task. Scholars and practitioners seem to have widely differing understandings. To compare five definitions gathered by Ortiz as well as his own observations see *One New People*, 86-91, 149-150. For a well-thought out definition used by the Southern Baptists' Multicultural Church Network see *A Guide for Planting Multicultural Churches* (p. 16). My proposed definition is purposely broad to include both multilanguage and English only churches as well as congregations with multiple services or a single blended worship service. Careful readers should note that with my understanding of an intentionally heterogeneous church we are not calling for: 1) *assimilation* (the blending of one culture into another, usually the majority one), 2) mere *integration* (being just "open" to everyone to come, or 3) *syncretism* (the bringing together of two or three cultures – or religions—to create a new culture/religion. The goal is not homogenizing or Anglo-Americanizing the group until the expression of Christian faith is incredibly tasteless, offending no one, and satisfying to no one. By multicultural churches we are calling for a new paradigm of church which makes "intentional choices to mix, accept, represent, and manifest racial and ethnic differences, but at the same time [magnifies] ... the oneness of believers in Christ..." (Peart, 2000, 140). Very helpful is Dr. Peart's "reconciliation continuum," consisting of five types of churches or models (pp. 129-142.)

¹² The authors of *United By Faith* illustrate the integrationist multicultural church by likening it to a "choir with sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses [producing] a richer sound than can a single voice range alone The individual sections of the choir do not give up their uniqueness to create their music. Instead, they integrate their distinctive qualities into a cohesive whole" (DeYoung et al., 169). Thus authentic integrationist churches create a unity far more complete than could be done by following other approaches/ models.

¹³ Definitions of biblical worship abound. My favorite is: "Worship is a life-consuming sacrificial response to God whereby I offer to Him my head, my heart, and my hands for the purpose of bringing Him pleasure." This properly shows the holistic nature of true worship yet focuses on God not the worshiper. Throughout the centuries, various ethnic peoples and cultures have stressed different aspects of worship. Black (2000, 83-84) lists some of these: worship is giving honor and praise to God; it is offering up our whole selves to God; it is "the event in the present where God's past acts of salvation history and the living out of God's future eschatological promises come together."

¹⁴ Though many remain skeptical that this kind of inclusivist/ integrationist worship is possible today, a growing number of worship scholars are calling for a renewal of worship that welcomes and involves all kinds of peoples. For example, African American worship researchers such as Malva W. Costen (1993, 127-34) and Brenda E. Aghahowa (1996) are encouraging white pastors and church leaders to watch and learn from the black church, and also begin worshipping together for a more inclusive approach to worship.

¹⁵ Interestingly, Redman also found that many growing multiethnic churches also "feature a contemporary, urban musical sound (gospel, R & B, soul, jazz, funk, and hip-hop)." Many of these churches are Charismatic and multigenerational (2002, 112).

¹⁶ For more on the vital role of music in the multiethnic church, see Foster and Brelsford (1996, 137-39) who studied three mainline culturally diverse churches in Atlanta. Their conclusion was that worship provided the impetus for both congregational identity and mission. In all three bodies worship was "intensely intergenerational" and fueled their missionary involvement in the surrounding community.

¹⁷ It should be noted that the term "worship," as used in this paper, refers to the entire worship service and involves the participation of all of God's people present. Worship is not to be limited to the extended time of singing at the beginning of the service before the message, as it is popularly understood. Properly understood, worship has both vertical and horizontal dimensions: it involves one's relationship both to God and with fellow worshipers. We gather to glorify God *and* to edify one another. Worship is a community event.

¹⁸ To say that there are no required forms (or patterns) of Christian worship is not to say there are no New Testament worship functions (purposes) prescribed. A careful reading of the New Testament indicates that there were some unchangeable constants when God's people gathered: the preaching of the Word (doctrine), prayer, praise, singing of psalms and hymns, fellowship, "breaking of bread" (communion?), the public reading of Scripture, testimonies, edification of the body through ministering one's spiritual gifts, free will offerings, etc. (see Acts 2:42-47; I Cor. 12-

14; 16:1-2; Eph. 5:18-20; II Tim. 4:2-5; I Tim. 4:13-14, etc.). What is *not* prescribed is whether all of these elements of N.T. worship must be in every service, or in what order they are to be observed.

¹⁹ The ideas on cultural complexities in this section are largely taken and adapted from researcher Kathy Black's excellent discussion of cultural nuances (2000, 63-81). Space does not allow us to explore all the ramifications of these challenges.

²⁰ For more on lead time, see Black (2000, 66-7).

²¹ Some historical insight helps us understand this issue among African Americans. During the slave period and later, blacks were only called by their first names or were called "boy" or "hey you." Their identities were stripped from them and they were not allowed to keep their last names. Names the master's could not pronounce were changed. Thus using last names today affirms their individual and familial identity and shows respect.

²² For more on the characteristics of African American culture and worship as well as the lasting impact of slavery and the "Invisible Institution (the brush arbor meeting), see Maynard Reid (2000, 53-68), Malva W. Costen (1993), Leone Bennet, Jr. (1995), Henry H. Mitchell (1997), Brenda Aghahowa (1996), and C.E. Lincoln and L.H. Mamiya (1990).

²³ For a good discussion of African American vocal music as well as the rich variety of genres and their histories, see Maynard Reid (2000, 69-85), Eileen Southern (1997), Cone (1991), plus the volumes referred to in the previous footnote.

²⁴ For a discussion of the vital role of other congregational forms of response in black worship services—such as dancing, shouting, testifying, etc.—see Maynard Reid (99-107).

²⁵ The term "Hispanic" includes 26 nationalities (each with their own subculture) resident in the U.S.: Mexicans, Central Americans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, other Spanish-speaking Caribbean people, and South Americans, etc. Each national group has its own *sazon* or flavor. Hispanics are also religiously diverse; Hispanic popular religion is usually a mix of European (Roman Catholic), African, Amerindian, and Pentecostal elements.

²⁶ According to Maynard Reid (186), the concept of fiesta is best summarized in the expression "*Tenemos vida!*" ("In spite of everything else, we still have life!")

²⁷ For more on Hispanic worship, particularly in its historical development in North America, see Maynard-Reid (161-202), Montoya (1994), Gonzalez (1996), Solivan (1996), and Gutierrez-Achon (1996).

²⁸ The Caribbean region is actually composed of many language groups and dialects. Most prominent are Spanish, French, and Dutch-speaking islands. These peoples will not be considered in this paper.

²⁹ Caribbean peoples are biologically and culturally mixed. The majority have African heritage but a significant minority (especially in Guyana and Trinidad) are East Indian (i.e., from India originally). Then there are smaller numbers of Amerindians (Native Americans), Chinese, Portuguese and European peoples. The resultant mixture of African, Asian, Native American and European genes and mores has produced a rich cultural blend that still retains elements from the dominant cultures.

³⁰ Church groups that are commonly found in the West Indies, ranked in order of their size and influence: Anglicans, Baptists, Catholics, Pentecostals, Adventists, Presbyterians, Wesleyans, Moravians, and Congregationalists. In addition there has been a resurgence of non-conventional, often cultic, worship communities—such as Orisha (or "Shango"), Revival Zionists ("Poco"), Spiritual Baptists ("Shouters"), Shakers, and Rastafarians ("Rastas"). For a good descriptive and historical overview of these semi-Christian West Indian sects, see Maynard-Reid (2000, 114-37). Reid has a wide perspective since he is himself Jamaican-born and has lived in Puerto Rico, Mexico and U.S.

³¹ European-American worship typically draws from Isaiah 6 from which the individual worshiper is presented as silent and face down before a holy God. To Anglos worship is reverence, and reverence is silent. Thus, the white

model of worship is typically hushed reverence. By contrast, African Americans have an alternative view of worship. Worship is more often viewed as a community rejoicing and dancing like David before the Lord. Worship involves the body in motion. It is loud and emotional. To whites, worship should humble proud sinners and bring them low. To blacks, worship takes the suffering, afflicted, stigmatized, and down-trodden and give them hope and joy; it lifts them up. To blacks, being in God's presence means worshipers should get a good feeling about themselves. (I am indebted to Robert J. and Kersten B. Priest's yet unpublished article, "Divergent White Practice in the Sunday Morning Hour" [2003] for this insightful comparison/contrast).

³² Because the traditional style of worship focuses heavily on participation, it may seem too threatening to seekers. Thus, in a multicultural church plant, care needs to be taken to balance congregational participation with platform performance. In other words, major more on special music (choir numbers, soloists, etc.) than on too much congregational singing (especially where the unchurched may be unfamiliar with our Christian songs.). Andy Langford in *Transitions in Worship* (1999, 128-30) identifies *performance-oriented worship* (influenced by aesthetics and the enlightenment) and *entertainment-oriented worship* (influenced by pop culture). Both are often used by those targeting seekers only. Some ethnic churches (African-Americans in particular) are often overly oriented towards entertainment. What we are proposing here for multiethnic churches is a *balance between congregational participation and platform performance* with some (though minimal) entertainment in the worship. We must distinguish between joyous celebration (God-focused) and carnal entertainment (man-focused).

³³ As Nathan Corbitt (1998, 69) points out, "Informal structure allows for a much wider latitude of behavior within the worship event." He calls this the "freedom of 'antistructures'" and points out that this is directly related to the "crisis orientation value" of different cultures (cf. Lingenfelter and Mayes 1986, 69ff). Our Western concept is for an "expectation of predictability." Corbitt comments, "In African societies, there is what we call the *expectancy of the unexpected*, or a non-crisis orientation to life."

³⁴ While the assimilation model maintains, respects and affirms the musical history and tradition of the dominant majority cultural group. Its weakness lies in the fact it ignores and denies the way God has been experienced and incarnated in other cultures. In reality God is boxed into a particular cultural framework. Also, the burden of learning new music is placed entirely on the newcomers.

³⁵ This "equal treatment" model attempts to deal with every culture (and people group)—even the unchurched—on the same level. The strength of this approach is that it does keep God unboxed and in the present (since it uses the musical genre of contemporary pop culture). Its weakness is that it seems to lose all sense of God's *past* dealings with his people. Church history and tradition are discarded in search of a common present.

³⁶ The problem with this third approach, seeking to create a shared memory through a common hymnody, is that it is too focused on the past. It assumes a theology of God mediated through Euro-American culture, since it seeks out mostly 19th century hymns and tunes taken by Western missionaries to overseas cultures. Then too, the theology and imagery of these older hymns will probably be foreign to ethnic cultures today. For example, hymns with pastoral (fields and pastures) images may not resonate with inner city ethnics living in an asphalt jungle!

³⁷ The blended model results in a rich variety of musical forms and styles, exposing everyone in the multiracial congregation to the many ways God is praised and honored in different cultural communities. This approach may feel inharmonious to some regulars and visitors, and the choice of which music goes where in a service may feel haphazard. But in our opinion this model is best because it focuses on both the cultural past and the present, thereby proclaiming a God who is not boxed in or limited by any one culture or time period. It points to a God who delights in a multitude of avenues of praise!

³⁸ In *Culturally-Conscious Worship*, Black provides leaders with a helpful list of traditional hymn tunes with new lyrics now found in mainline Protestant hymnals (see Appendix C, pp. 141-47). Hymns of this type keep people rooted in the familiar tunes that missionaries disseminated around the world while providing more contemporary images and themes for multicultural urban churches today. In *Trouble at the Table: Gathering the Tribes for Worship*, Doran and Troeger (1992, 99) argue that the use of new lyrics to familiar tunes combines structure and anti-structure simultaneously, and "the conflicting messages cancel the potential strength of either element." I disagree. Throughout church history, hymn writers of the past have often used familiar tunes of the culture to

accompany their Christian lyrics. Furthermore, as mentioned above, familiar tunes keep us rooted in a sense of God's abiding presence in our past while the new lyrics open us to new ways God may be acting in our present context.

³⁹ Sociologist Stephen Warner, in his essay "Religion, Boundaries, and Bridges" (1997), argues that if we wish to build bridges across ethnic and ideological divides, we must focus, not on belief, but on embodied ritual. He points to the "emotional power of doing things together" (224) which produces solidarity, often even in the absence of ideological consensus (225). He also explores the bonding power of music (226ff) and even describes the unifying effect of peoples' bodily actions and synchronized repetitive/rhythmic movements (231-2). While all this may be true—as evidenced in many African American worship services, which he highlights—it is crucial that we not minimize the biblical role of sound doctrine and belief to unify God's people (see Eph. 4:3-6, etc.).

⁴⁰ Kathy Black (2000, 112) has a brief summary of how communion practices vary from culture to culture. Worship leaders would, of course, need to arrive at a plan for serving the communion elements which is in line with their congregational convictions in regard to the Lord's Supper. (Is it a memorial or sacramental, etc?) For a more detailed description of how Asian Christians observe communion—particularly how the communion elements may differ—see Robert Webber (1994, VII: 220-221).

⁴¹ Contemporary dramas can be created that deal with life issues people in multicultural settings are struggling with today. It's vital, however, that input be gotten directly from people from various cultures to insure that concerns of congregants and targeted seekers are being dealt with in the dramas. For example, the concerns of undocumented immigrants are quite different from that of third generation immigrants. Another caution is to select drama participants from a wide range of racial/ethnic backgrounds so that church attendees don't get the idea that all biblical personalities were white!

⁴² Keep in mind that dancing (whether liturgical or not) may be unacceptable in some church circles or cultural settings. For example, Korea has rich dance traditions within its culture, but dance is inappropriate during Sunday worship. However, in some African settings, dance is commonly used in religious contexts as an expression of joy and life. Along with the drum beat, it is the heartbeat of the African community.

⁴³ We've already noted that various cultures greet others differently. Early Christians used a "holy kiss" of peace. Today others prefer a hug or a handshake. In multicultural churches it is vital the various members be asked to *demonstrate how* they greet in their particular culture. Some multicultural congregations teach a different way of greeting each Sunday; others use the newly learned greeting several weeks in a row.

⁴⁴ Texts which might be used: Galatians 3:27,28; Revelation 7:9-11; Ephesians 2:14; Luke 14:16-24, etc.

⁴⁵ When a diversity of persons are united around common identities such as children of God, heirs of God's promise, members of the family of God, or the community of the faithful, a new congregational culture is created.

⁴⁶ I Corinthians 10:31; 14:33,34; Romans 12:1-2; I Peter 2:9; Psalm 146:1,2; 63:2-5, etc. Cf. I Chronicles 16:8-36.

⁴⁷ John 5:32; Hebrews 12:2; I Corinthians 11:23-27; I Peter 2:5; Revelations 5:9-13, etc.

⁴⁸ Ephesians 4:30; 5:18; I Thessalonians 5:9, etc.

⁴⁹ I Corinthians 14:5, 12, 26; Ephesians 4:10-13, etc.

⁵⁰ I Corinthians 14:23-25, etc.

⁵¹ John 4:24; Deuteronomy 6:5-6; I Samuel 16:7; Psalm 51:10, etc.

⁵² Ethnomusicological research has shown us, for example, that though music is universal, *music is not a universal language*. No one universal music language exists. To learn more about how evangelicals and missiologists are utilizing ethnomusicology see the June 2001 issue of *Frontier Missions*; Dr. Roberta King's article,

“Ethnomusicology” in *The Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (2000, 237) and her book, *A Time to Sing*. Other internet helpful resources are: www.worship-arts-network.com; www.skyfamily.com/gracew/index9.htm. Schools which have ethnomusicology programs: Southwest Baptist Theological Seminary (in conjunction with SIL), Bethel College, Prairie Bible Institute, and Fuller Theological Seminary.

⁵³ Put another way: the success or failure of any indigenous church planting movement will often rise or fall on the kind of music a people group is using. The goal of biblical missions (and missionaries) must be threefold:

- 1) to establish *indigenous Christianity* (that reaches the members of the ethnographic core) not “fringe Christianity (that only reaches the “outside” members of the targeted people group).
- 2) to establish *independent Christianity* (that flourishes on its own through means readily understood and reproduced) not “dependent Christianity” (that can only progress with outside interventions).
- 3) to see *Christianity penetrate* to the core of people’s being—not just surface Christianity.

Thus generic or Western music styles, which are only skin deep, will not accomplish these objectives. We must strive for heart music because it goes all the way to the core!

⁵⁴ *Frontier Missions* 23:2 (June 2001), 11

⁵⁵ Black covers the worship practices of African-Americans, Cambodian-Americans, Chinese-Americans, Euro-Americans, Fijian-Americans, Filipino-Americans, Formosan-Americans, Ghanaian-Americans, Haitian-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, Hmong-Americans, Indian-Americans, Japanese-Americans, Korean-Americans, Laotian-Americans, Liberian-Americans, Native-Americans, Palestine-Americans, Samoan-Americans, Tongan-Americans, and Vietnamese-Americans. And her appendix compares words for “God,” “Jesus Christ” and “Church” in various languages. She also gives a helpful multicultural calendar listing special holidays and festivals for different peoples.

⁵⁶ A helpful resource for the study of various cultures and their worship practices is *The Complete Library of Christian Worship*, edited by Robert E. Webber (1994). See particularly vol. 4 (pp. 130-36; 347-64) and 7 (pp. 207-33).

⁵⁷ For a good discussion on whether to use hymns and songs with “Thees” and “Thous” and other King James English, see Morgenthaler, pp. 218-19.

⁵⁸ Sally Morgenthaler, in her excellent treatment of *Worship Evangelism*, points out, “Cross-cultural worship music comes in a multitude of flavors: country, soft rock, hip-hop, rap, ‘unplugged,’ rhythm and blues, reggae, jazz and others” (1995, 214). She also assures us, “Cross-cultural worship music is possible, and it does exist, fortunately in larger amounts than one might think. One just has to know where to look. Some of the largest worship companies are venturing into this market, more every year.” (213)

⁵⁹ Corbitt illustrates this “third culture” music goal with mention of a monastic community in Taize, France which began in 1940. “Today thousands of people from every nation visit Taize weekly to experience the community’s worship. This dynamic community has “composed chant like songs that provide a new Christian music that appeals transculturally to its many visitors” (1998, 74).

⁶⁰ For a fuller description of the “PASS” principles and examples of how they could be applied to specific songs, see pp. 214-17 of Morgenthaler recommended book. Interestingly, she does open the door for using some songs which may not pass all four of these criteria and gives guidance on how to use these “in-betweeners.” Her point is a good one: “The simply will not form the core of your worship repertoire” (217). She also suggests that some excellent cross-cultural worship songs may have sections that are “too musically and/or lyrically challenging for Seeker Bob (and even Saintly Bill!) to sing!” Her recommendation is to build in a “worship interchange” where the worship team sings the more difficult sections and the audience joins in on the more user-friendly sections. This allows unchurched guests to at times just listen and learn (219-220).

⁶¹ To see how Morgenthaler would apply her own criteria to examples of specific songs, see her helpful “Song Selection Lab” with insightful comments on the strengths and weaknesses of six song selections (222-234).

Interestingly, of the six, the praise song she rates the highest (“great”) for cross-cultural worship is “Lord, I Lift Your Name on High.”

⁶² Morgenthaler’s appendix also lists several excellent hands-on worship conferences held annually or semiannually across the United States (304-08). These training events are probably the best way to learn the nuts and bolts of culturally relevant worship—how to develop a worship team and rhythm section, select and work a sound system, learn the fine art of using MIDI and synthesizers, etc.

⁶³ To see how Corbitt recommends church leaders apply and adapt Hiebert’s *critical contextualization model* to music, see his discussion (278-81). It should also be noted that one of the thorny issues in using songs and styles first used in “secular” circles is the problem of *associations*. Corbitt points out, for example, that “in Haiti rachine beat and large drums are used in voodoo worship. To many Haitian Christians, these beats and drums are too closely associated with former pagan religious practices to be used in worship” (280). Some American Christians likewise question the use of hard rock music in the church because of its association with drugs and promiscuous sex. These are certainly serious issues which call for “critical contextualization.” Ultimately, many of these questions are best grappled with and answered by mature indigenous church leaders who both know the Word and their own culture. Often Anglo missionaries are not the best qualified to judge these matters.

⁶⁴ For help on this, see Foster, 138-9.

⁶⁵ Pastor James Forbes, of the multiethnic (and very theologically liberal!) Riverside Church of New York City, has arrived at a “75 percent” philosophy on compromise and comfort level at his church: “A truly diverse congregation where anybody enjoys more than 75 percent of what’s going on is not thoroughly integrated.” He suggests that we must teach our people to be “content with less than total satisfaction with everything (DeYoung et al., 82).

⁶⁶ The multicultural makeup of some congregations necessitates conducting the worship service in two or more languages. Services are often in one dominant language and then interpreted into others. How translation happens in bilingual or multilingual services varies. For a good description of four models for translation, see Black, 31-33.