

**Developing a Multiethnic Church Planting Ministry for New York City
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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 Chaney 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. 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,” their numbers are steadily growing. A pioneering nationwide study by a team led by Michael Emerson, a sociologist at Rice University, has found that ethnically mixed churches number five and a half percent of Christian bodies, (DeYoung et al. 2003, 74).⁴ 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 imperative⁵ and the many practical reasons⁶ 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 for Christians to pursue (Ibid., 3).⁷

In this paper I will propose an initial strategy for the preparation and launching of multiethnic churches in our nation’s largest city, New York. I will seek to first describe and analyze my particular ministry setting using seminary-based and equipped teams, identify the challenges and opportunities we will no doubt face in the Big Apple, and then lay out a contextualized strategy plan. Before we embark on this project, however, it is vital that we remind ourselves of the biblical imperative for multiethnic ministry. It is essential that our outreach motivation, strategy plans and ministry implementation be thoroughly grounded on the Word of God and not driven by pragmatism or expediency. The staggering diversity of our postmodern world will overwhelm us unless we are fortified by a careful understanding of God’s plan and purpose for ethnic diversity.

The Biblical Basis for Multiethnic Ministry

Old Testament Foundations

The foundation for multiethnic ministry and church planting can legitimately begin where the Scriptures begin. Beginning with the Genesis accounts of creation, the Old Testament progressively

reveals a God who loves and values both unity and diversity. Five theological principles emerge from a careful study of the older testament.

First, ***the human race is one***. All the diverse peoples of earth belong to one family. God's singular act of creating male and female progenitors of all peoples is foundational to our theology (Gen. 1-2). Jehovah God is the *God of Creation*. Since He is the creator of humankind we are all His offspring. Since we are His offspring by creation, every human being is our brother and sister. Furthermore, we are all made in His divine image. Being equally created by Him and like Him, we are equal in His sight in worth and dignity, and thus have an equal right to respect and justice. If God has made us all from one set of original parents (see Acts 17:26 cf. also Rom. 2:29-30), then no individual or "race" may consider itself above others. This truth of unified origin should restrain the temptation to boast in ethnic uniqueness as well as keep us from ethnocentrism and racism, both, properly seen, forms of idolatry – lifting ourselves or our ethnic group above the true God.

From the early Genesis record we see a second and balancing theological principle emerge: ***the diversification of peoples is good***. The whole creation witnesses to the fact that God enjoys diversity, and different ethnic groups are but one expression of this divine joy. He is the *God of Variety*. Significantly, in the biblical record both God's creational diversity and post-flood dispersion of peoples are viewed as "good" not evil. God's purpose is that a plurality of peoples would populate the planet. He never intended people to be monochrome and uniform, either as individuals or groups. The human race is one, yet many –which demonstrates that *God loves both unity and diversity*. Modern-day ethnic peoples have all sprung from the three sons of Noah, divinely dispersed for His purposes after the flood. Thus, human differences, languages—even ethnic peoples—are not to be viewed as the result of man's sin or God's judgment. Ethnic identity is rooted in God's creative design and part of His original purpose. None of the various ethnic groups and "races" of mankind are products of the mark of Cain, or the curse of Ham, or the dispersion of Babel. This truth that ethnic groups are God's idea is also confirmed in the New Testament (again Acts 17:26 is a key text: "*he made every nation [ethos]*").⁸

A third principle is first revealed in the OT record: *the destiny of “nations” is in God’s sovereign control*. Peoples and kingdoms rise and fall under His providence. He is the *God of History*. Deuteronomy 32:8 clearly states the “when the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples.” The living God not only made every “nation” from one man, and made each unique and different, but He also “determined the times set for them, and the exact places where they should live” (Acts 17:26; cf. also Deut. 2:9-12, 19-23;). That is, both the histories and locations of the ethnic nations are in the hand of God (see also Is. 40:15ff). Two conclusions can be drawn from this principle. First, it is clear that, in the long view, no people are a permanent entity. The ethnic “nations” begin, grow, flourish, decline and die like humans. Thus to idolatrously absolutize one’s own nation or group (as is often done in nationalism gone awry) is foolhardy. Second, God has sovereign moral purposes in dealing with nations/peoples. For example, repentance can save a nation from God’s impending judgment (Jer. 18:7-10; Jonah 3), and one nation can be used of God to punish another for its sin. This is why God permitted Israel to destroy the Canaanites (see Deut. 9:4,5) and later allowed the Assyrians and Babylonians to drive out the Israelites as punishment for their sin. Yet His use of a nation to fulfill His purposes does not mean their moral superiority.

A fourth theological principle is seen first in Genesis and then progressively revealed in other Old Testament texts: *God’s purpose is to bless all the nations redemptively*. As the *God of Redemption* He intends to bring the peoples the gift of His salvation. From the very beginning this salvific plan of God had the central figure of the “Seed” who was to come in the person of the Man of Promise (Gen. 3:15; 9:27; 12:1, etc.). To Abraham, the man of faith, God unveiled a global plan to reach all ethnicities: “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:3). Through this one man who left his people, all peoples on earth were to be blessed with the gift of the Messiah. This is also clearly seen in the Psalms and in Isaiah. The Old Testament reveals a merciful and compassionate God who is on mission to the nations. This God-on-mission, therefore, has chosen and commissioned two Servants to take His message of salvation to earth’s ethnic peoples: His servant Israel and His servant Messiah (Is. 42-54). *Israel’s vocation*, her role in the divine purpose, was to represent and mediate His mercy and grace to the peoples.

As the recipient of divine blessings, the nation was to exalt God in its life and worship, attracting individuals from among the nations, inviting and incorporating them into the covenant family. *Messiah's role* was to be Yahweh's Sent-one, the Suffering Servant, offering his life as a sacrifice for the peoples, satisfying the plan of the Father (Is. 53; Ps. 22). This hope of salvation is summed up in the prophets as the "desired [One] of all nations" (Haggai 2:7).

Finally, the OT first reveals that ***God's passionate desire and purpose is to be worshipped and glorified by all people groups***. Above all else, He is the *God of Glory*. The Old Testament is filled with optimistic and hopeful expectations that Jehovah God will one day be worshipped by people from all the nations of the world. Significantly, this hope is repeatedly expressed in ethnic people group terminology (families, tribes, nations, peoples). This long-anticipated and certain hope of the nations is expressed in several ways in the Old Testament. There are outright *promises* that the nations will one-day worship the true God,⁹ confident *prayers* that God would be praised and honored among the nations,¹⁰ and even striking *exhortations* to the people of God to declare His glory among the nations.¹¹ This Old Testament expectation is premised on the reality that God is forever passionate for his own glory. Over and over God reveals that He is zealous to maintain his name and fame among the nations; His glory He will not give to another (Is. 48:9-11). The Old Testament makes clear that God's ultimate goal is to uphold and display the glory of His name to all peoples. He created all peoples for His glory (Is. 43:6-7). He called Israel and did numerous acts of power through her for His glory.¹² In fact, God's plan is to *fill* the earth with the *knowledge of his glory* (Hab. 2:14). Thus, even without the fuller and completed revelation of the New Testament, we can boldly assert that God has always been on mission to bring glory to Himself. *The Lord Himself is the missionary* who ultimately gathers and rescues, not simply the dispersed of Israel, but also people from all nations, *so that they may see his glory*.

The Four Gospels

Against this Old Testament backdrop of God's purpose and plan for the ethnic peoples, the Gospel writers present the Promised Messiah as the One passionate about fulfilling His Father's mission.

The four Gospels clearly display the message and ministry of Christ as inclusive of all ethnic “nations.” This is seen first in the birth narratives. Both Luke and Matthew’s accounts of Christ’s humble birth foreshadow and allude to the inclusion of Gentiles (*ethnos* = “peoples”) in God’s salvation story.¹³ The Gospel writers also seem to highlight that Jesus had roots and was raised in “Galilee of the Gentiles” (Matt 4:15-16 cf. Isa. 9:1). Jesus prepared for His public ministry by calling a “congregation” of disciples that was a radically inclusive fellowship. He is seen as intentionally broadening His social circle (“table fellowship”) to include sinners, tax collectors, outcasts and other untouchables, people often excluded by the Jewish religious authorities of His day. Furthermore, the Gospels record numerous occasions when Jesus stepped outside His own ethnic group and ministered to Gentile peoples and in Gentile regions. In all this He was modeling what He intended for His future Church to be.

What was implicit in the Gospel accounts becomes explicit when our Lord publicly declares the purpose and passion of His ministry. Standing in the temple area where He dramatically confronts the moneychangers, He asks, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer *for all the nations*’?” Significantly this account is recorded by all the Gospel writers, but only Mark includes the last four words of the Isaiah quotation (Mark 11:18; cf. Isa. 56:7). Clearly, Jesus understood this “to be the culmination of three years of preaching, healing, and ministering...” (DeYoung et al. 2003, 20). Brian Blount summarizes the significance of this statement when he writes: “In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is a preacher of multicultural worship. He envisioned a future that was radically different from the one espoused by the temple leadership” (Blount 2001, 16).

At the end of the Gospels we observe again the intentional universality of Jesus’ message and ministry. At His death both Jews and Gentiles embrace Him. After His resurrections, He leaves His disciples with His final marching orders. At least two of the Great Commission accounts explicitly describe Christ’s global mission to include all peoples. Luke (24:47) records Jesus’ final words: “repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in [my] name to all nations [ethnic peoples].” Matthew’s account (28:19) says Christ commissioned His followers to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations [*pante ta ethne*].” Acts (1:8) clarifies that His missional strategy incorporated a “both/and”

process—witnessing in both Jerusalem/Judea/Samaria and the ends of the earth. Significantly, Jesus told His followers not to neglect their Samaria: those who are geographically near but culturally far.

Looking at the total Gospel record, DeYoung and his co-writers state it well:

The earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth began and ended with a worldview and mission that was inclusive. We suggest that the bookends of Jesus' life story display the message of the Gospels and provide a framework of inclusion for the congregations that were receiving and reading these first-century documents (Ibid.14).

Acts Through Revelation

A fair reading of the rest of the New Testament indicates that Christianity's first congregations were multicultural bodies ministering in multiethnic urban settings. When Luke's historical account of the early church's growth found in Acts is carefully compared with the epistles, we see how Christ's disciples sought to embrace His inclusive vision. Clearly the first congregations that emerged under their leadership were diverse and inclusive. There were crossing cultural boundaries from *day one*. This is evident with the birth of the Jerusalem "mother" church. On the Day of Pentecost Jews from the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe, in Jerusalem for the feast, heard the Good News in the local dialect of their country of origin (Acts 2:5-11). Under the powerful preaching of the Spirit-emboldened Galilean disciples, over 3000 multicultural, multilingual Jews were saved and gathered into the church community. From the moment of its inception the Church sought to be a house of prayer for all nations! Significantly, the Jerusalem congregation bridged a divide normally found in first-century Judaism—culture and language-specific synagogues (Sonne, 1962, 478-79).

There seems to be some evidence that the early congregations which emerged in Palestine during the latter part of the first century exhibited the same cultural diversity of the Jerusalem congregation, incorporating into their assemblies Hellenist Jews, Samaritan converts and other Gentile responders (Brown 1979, 37, 39, 55). This growth of the early church into other Palestinian centers was no doubt sparked by the non-discriminatory outreach of pioneering early church leaders: Philip, one of the seven Greek-speaking leaders, and Peter, one of the original twelve apostles. Philip left Jerusalem and witnessed

to the Ethiopian finance minister (Acts 8:26-40), thus enabling the Gospel to enter Nubia, considered by many of that day to be “the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8) because it was outside the boundaries of the Roman Empire. The Apostle Peter, after some prodding from the Lord regarding his initial racist separation, left Jerusalem and preached to the household of Cornelius, a Roman centurion in Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast (10:1-48). Philip the layman had earlier gone into despised Samaria and preached (Acts 8:5-25). Given the animosity between Jews and Samaritans at the time this was an amazing development, but certainly consistent with the modeling ministry of Christ (cf. John 4). These incidents in the life of the early believers are no doubt incorporated into the Acts record by Luke to dramatize and symbolize the future of the church. Since Jesus ministered to both Jews and Gentiles in this same Palestinian region during His days on earth, the early believers were simply following His lead.

According to Acts, the first congregation of Jesus’ followers that intentionally enfolded both Jews and Gentiles, was at Antioch of Syria. Founded by Greek-speaking Jewish Christians who left Jerusalem during the persecution that arose after Stephen’s martyrdom in the mid-thirties, this culturally diverse body was evidently composed of Jews, Greeks, Africans, Cypriots, and other Syrians (Acts 11:19-26; cf. 13:1). Ethnic strife, violence, fear and hatred were common in this city of half a million, the third largest city in the Roman Empire. Yet the Antioch church lived out an inclusive table fellowship that emulated the ministry and vision of Jesus. This was modeled and encouraged by a diverse leadership team composed of: Paul and Barnabas, both Jews raised outside of Palestine who were immersed in Greek culture and bilingual; Manean, related to Herod Antipas, and thus probably a hated Roman; Lucius, who had come from Cyrene in North Africa; and Simeon, called Niger (“the black”), probably a dark-skinned African. Because this kind of social solidarity and racial reconciliation was so radical in that day and in that city, the locals began to call them “Christians” or Christ followers (11:26). The normal classifications and categories did not fit!

That the Lord of Harvest used this Antioch model to spread the Gospel and expand the Christian church during the first century is evident. Mentored and sent forth by the Antioch leadership team, the Apostle Paul and his co-workers founded numerous other congregations, each started in a fashion similar

to the strategy used in Antioch—and first given by Jesus.¹⁴ The result—many of these missionary planted churches of the New Testament era were multicultural. There is internal scriptural evidence of their multiethnic character. Scan the names of folk mentioned by Paul in the last chapter of his letter to Rome. Here we find a mix of Greek, Roman (Latin), and Jewish names (Rom. 16:3-16). Consider the historical record of the planting of the church at Philippi—we find a Jewish proselyte business woman, a Roman centurion, and a Greek slave girl (Acts 16:14-40). Remember the cities where the first missionary teams traveled with the Gospel—places like Corinth, Ephesus, Laodicea which often lay at the junctions of the Roman trade and shipping routes. As a result there was much ethnic interaction in these marketplace communities. In these cosmopolitan crossroads between the eastern and western portions of the Mediterranean world, the apostolic teams established thriving congregations which undoubtedly reflected the ethnic diversity and confronted the religious pluralism of these urban communities.

A look at one city church validates our premise. Ephesus, for example, was an important city in Western Asia with nearly a quarter of a million residents. Paul spent three years there establishing a strong congregation, one which Luke clearly states is multicultural. The author of Acts writes, “all of the residents of Asia, *both Jews and Greeks*, heard the word of the Lord” (19:10; see also 19:17 and 20:21). Witherington writes, “It is here in Ephesus that [Paul] has the longest stable period of ministry without trial or expulsion, here that he most fully carries out his commission to be a witness to all persons, both Jew and Gentile” (1998, footnote 389, 454). Unlike some modern-day church planters who specifically target one ethnic group, Paul’s goal was evidently to ensure that the churches planted and nurtured under his care would both *begin* and *remain* multicultural. Biblical scholar Wayne Meeks affirms, “By the time the extant letters were written, the established pattern was instead to found in every city associations of believers in Christ, drawn from gentiles and Jews alike” (1983, 168).

Adjusting to this fresh perspective of culturally diverse communities of faith, and thus maintain authentic unity, was no easy task in the early church. Differences brought challenges, conflict, and even tension. The New Testament confirms that the first-century churches often struggled to preserve unity in diversity. The Apostle Paul is compelled to often remind them that in Christ there was no Jew or Gentile

(Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:11-26; Col. 3:11 cf. I Cor. 12:13; Rom. 10:12).¹⁵ The New Testament faithfully records at least three occasions where early church leaders struggled to preserve the unity found in culturally heterogeneous congregations. In Acts 6:1-6 we see the Jerusalem congregation on the verge of an ethnic conflict. A crisis emerged over the neglect of Greek-speaking immigrant widows in the daily food distribution. The church leadership wisely addressed the issue promptly and prayerfully selected seven new leaders (6:3, 5); significantly all had Greek names. The goal was evidently to avoid favoritism and prevent an ethnically divided body.

From Galatians 2:11-14 we gather that a serious crisis also arose in Antioch when the apostle Peter visited the young congregation. Under pressure from visiting Judaizers from Jerusalem, Peter backed down from his earlier practice of open table fellowship where Jews and Gentiles ate together. This prompted “even Barnabas” and other Jewish Christians to follow his example. The Jerusalem group was convinced Gentiles must first become Jews culturally and religiously (be circumcised, etc.) before they could embrace the Christian faith and enjoy full communion. Sensing the seriousness of this threat, Paul confronted Peter publicly on his ill-advised behavior, telling him his action compromised “the truth of the Gospel” (2:14). Paul saw it as hypocritical and heretical. He chose *not* to take what seemed the pragmatic course of action, that of founding a separate and exclusively Gentile church. “He believed that it was not enough to maintain a spiritual unity in the universal church. Unity needed to be seen and experienced in the local congregation as well” (DeYoung, 35).

The early church’s third attempt to preserve the unity of the church in the midst of ethnic diversity and cultural conflict was the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-31). With representatives from both the Antioch and Jerusalem congregations, this leadership summit met to settle once for all the vital doctrinal issue of whether Gentiles should be required to cross an ethnic barrier and become culturally Jewish in order to be saved. After a lengthy and lively debate, the apostles and elders forever affirmed that salvation is totally by grace through faith in Christ alone. They defied efforts by the Judaizers to impose legalism and ritualism as necessary prerequisites to salvation. Significantly both Barnabas and Peter, now convinced of their previous error, supported Paul in his defense of the purity of the gospel.

Table fellowship and social interaction was restored. Believers were warned against syncretism but allowed to be themselves and to worship God in their own way. This wise decision at the Jerusalem Council ultimately preserved the unity of the churches and empowered Paul and others to forge ahead in their ministry of reconciliation. The result was that multicultural churches continued to be established.

The New Testament closes with John the Apostle's beautiful description of the redeemed in heaven gathered together to worship the Lamb for all eternity. Because of Christ's finished cross work and the Church's Great Commission obedience, there is a great multitude of glorified saints from every tribe, language, people group, and nation (Rev. 5:8-12; 7:9). This teaches us that when Christ returns, the ethnic element of our identity will evidently not be eradicated. God's great goal in history to be worshipped by every people group will at last realized.

In Revelation 21 this scene of multiethnic unity is again picked up so that believers of all ages might be convinced that God's never-ending purpose for ethnic peoples will ultimately prevail. We are told that the kings of all "the peoples" come into the New Jerusalem bringing their "nations' glory and honor" to lay at King Jesus' feet (21:24-26). In other words, the unique giftedness and goodness of each culture will be there at the end of time and will last forever. There is a recognition and celebration of the differences of a plurality of different peoples and cultures—yet a oneness in their coming together to be in the presence of the one Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. In the eternal city, there will be no more divisions, barriers, or exclusions because of race or politics. God's overarching missiological goal will be realized: to uphold and display His glory among all the world's ethnic peoples in order that each people can fully enjoy Him forever (Piper, 1993).

Looking at the totality of biblical revelation, we conclude that the multicultural church not only prepares us for a picture of eternity but allows this divine objective to be fulfilled in some measure this side of eternity. Multiethnic congregations become an example of what can be done on earth now and a foretaste of what will be in heaven.¹⁶ In this age God is already drawing people of every ethnicity to worship Him for all eternity. And if this is what King Jesus is doing in our time, then this is what we need to be doing!

Theological Help for Multicultural Churches

Theologically, Charles Van Engen has sought to demonstrate that God's great mission through the ages has always been to seek balanced *complementarity between universality and particularity*. (2004) These twin truths, properly understood and applied to our ecclesiology, will help us avoid both cultural blindness or cultural imposition. He rightly cautions: "Too strong an emphasis on universality will drive us toward uniformity and blind us to cultural distinctives. Too strong an emphasis on particularity will push us toward either exclusivist homogeneity or fragmented ethnocentrism, and create serious questions about our oneness in Jesus Christ." (Ibid., 4) Thus, in today's multiethnic North American context we urgently need multiethnic churches where cultural and ethnic differences are affirmed, appreciated and celebrated. Yet we also need to understand and teach that ethnicity (particularity) as such can never be the basis of unity for these congregations. Our congregational unity is based on our common life in Christ and related to the *universality* of the Gospel for all peoples. "Thus universality must complement rather than eclipse the marvelous richness of ethnic diversity which can be fostered in multiethnic congregations" (Ibid., 36-37).

Proposed NYC Multiethnic Ministry and Setting

Description of Project Jerusalem

This writer directs a seminary-based church planting ministry which has as its mission statement: "Networking with churches to prepare passionate leaders to plant dynamic churches for global outreach impact." Project Jerusalem is an innovative training strategy of Baptist Bible Seminary located in Northeast Pennsylvania. Project Jerusalem seeks to partner with independent Baptist and other evangelical churches and agencies to intentionally launch healthy churches in need urban, ethnic and rural communities of the Nation's Northeast. Partnering together allows us to provide each seminary church planter (and his team) with appropriate assessment, training, mentoring, deployment, and support giving each ministry student opportunity to succeed in planting a dynamic church. A balance of both formal

(classroom) and practical (on-site) training is provided with a final internship required for those in the church planting track of the seminary's masters of divinity degree program.

So far [2005] this seminary-based training and outreach ministry has launched five new congregations in the nearby towns of Scranton, Kutztown, Forest City, Carbondale and Mt. Pocono, Pennsylvania. [As of 2008 two more churches were launched, a second in Scranton and another in Marshalls Creek, PA]. One [four by 2008] of these churches has "graduated" to self-support and several more are scheduled to become financially self-sufficient in the next year. Currently, I am coaching eighteen seminarians on four church planting teams and am a part-time instructor at the seminary. Our strategy includes working with sponsor parenting churches which undergird each plant with prayer, financial support and occasional seed families. We also utilize a team approach to church planting, bringing men (and often their wives) together with complementary spiritual giftedness and ministry backgrounds.

As BBS Director of Church Planting, one of my goals has been to prepare and enable seminary planting teams to enter New York City in order to establish, over time, several multiethnic congregations. This has been a passion God has given me even before I moved from the Midwest six and a half years ago. It excites me that our campus is but two and a half to three hours drive from the "Big Apple," depending on which of the five boroughs one is visiting.

To attempt to have a ministry of impact in "the City" will be a giant step of faith and require much careful planning. Currently our most distant church planting project is an hour and a half from Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania where the seminary is located. We know the challenges will be many but are convinced that New York City is America's largest mission field. It would also be a tremendous training ground for seminarians considering urban and ethnic ministry. Some of our men are in fact preparing for international missions in an overseas setting but often lack cross-cultural ministry experience. We feel it is essential for these men to delay embarking upon a church planting career in another language and culture overseas until after they have proven that they can successfully do cross-

cultural ministry in English in their own homeland. New York City seems to provide an ideal setting for men to develop cross-cultural skills and interethnic sensitivities.

The Challenge of New York City

Because of its size, influence and diversity, New York is a complex city in which to plant churches. Because of its constant change and flux, New York is difficult to assess. It is a place where many churches have failed in the past. High costs and crime discourage many people and Christian families from living there long term.¹⁷ New York City often beats down the church and Christians considering ministry there through sheer intimidation.

First, its *size* is awe-inspiring. New York City is the largest city in the US with a metro-population of 21.75 million people—larger than 42 states and a larger population than many entire countries. The city itself is home to 8,104,079 people (2004). It is also one of the most visited cities in the country, receiving 39.4 million visitors a year. No wonder they call this city the BIG Apple!¹⁸ New York City will be the only US city remaining on the list of the world's ten largest cities well into the 21st century. No other US city has a population density of more than 13,000 people per square mile in its inner city.¹⁹

Second, its *influence* is tremendous. It competes with Los Angeles as media capital, with Paris as cultural capital, with Tokyo as financial capital and with Washington, D.C. as power capital. No other city excels in all these areas together. This is why it has been called the “Capital of the World.” In a 1999 Public Broadcasting System documentary, NYC was described as the most influential city in the history of the world. With the headquarters of the United Nations situated in Manhattan, it is a political center for world leaders. Because of the stock exchange and major banking and financial institutions that are headquartered there, the city is perhaps the most influential financial center in the world. It is a media and communications center, with nearly every major news agency having a headquarters or major anchor positioned in the city. It is a fashion center. New York is an entertainment center boasting of Broadway, the Metropolitan Opera, and a place where movies and television shows are produced in abundance. It is

an education center with almost a million college and university students in the large metro area attending elite schools like Columbia, New York University and Julliard.

Finally, New York's *diversity* is dizzying. New York stands atop the world in its ethnic variety.²⁰ Almost every language of the world is spoken there and new immigrants are moving in every day. Of the City's 8 million residents, 35.9 percent were born outside the United States, according to the 2000 US Census.²¹ More than 150 languages are spoken on city streets—138 in Queens alone, making it the most diverse neighborhood in our nation. It is being predicted that over the next 20 years at least half of New York residents will be foreign-born recently arrived immigrants. Actually, New York City should be seen as an interlocking network of international centers. In its boundaries are a Dominican city of 500,000; a Haitian city of 200,000; a Jamaican city of 400,000; a Columbian city of 200,000; two Chinatowns of over 400,000; a Puerto Rico city of 1.4 million; a Jewish city of 1.9 million; and centers of 100,000 Koreans, 80,000 Greeks, 30,000 Russians, 100,000 Hindus (Asian Indians), 150,000 Arabs and Middle Easterners—just to name a few! (U.S. Census and Foner 1987)²² Altogether, “people of color” in the city number over 4.8 million, about 60 percent of the population.²³ New York City is a “gateway” city for immigrants to our nation; recent data show strong flows now come from Asia and Latin America. This diversity that has been the city's strength for generations is predicted to continue to feed NYC's urban renewal as immigrants bring drive, talent and ambition to our shores.²⁴

Religious Composition of New York City

Because of all this ethnic diversity, New York may be the most religiously diverse city in the nation. It is certainly the least Protestant big city in the country. Religiously, surveys and polls indicate 49 percent of all New Yorkers are Catholic. Most people think of New York as a Jewish city, which it is—the most Jewish of a large city in America. But often forgotten is how Catholic it is. The city has lots of Italians and Irish, as well as Puerto Ricans. Many of the new immigrants—Haitians and Dominicans, etc—are basically Catholic. Unlike Protestants, who divided into many denominations, the Catholic Church is a cohesive force with lots of influence in the city.²⁵ Of its 8 million people, just one to one

and a half million NYC residents identify themselves as Protestant (Keller and Thompson 2002, 54). But a mid-80's survey of New Yorkers found that no more than 500,000 people (roughly 7% of the city) were actually Protestant church goers (*New York Daily News*, April 1986). New York also has large numbers of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Baha'i, Sikhs, Jains, and other religionists.

While populated by considerable concentrations of Roman Catholics, Jews, Muslims and others, New York City has seen a recent surge in the number of evangelical Christians. To most New Yorkers in the past, the presence of conservative white Protestantism was just a distant “threatening rumor,” with local evangelical religion virtually absent from public perception (Neuhaus 1989, 50). Over the last 20 years that has changed. According to a recent (2003-2004) church census conducted by Columbia University for the Christian Cultural Center, there are now 7,100 evangelical, charismatic, and Pentecostal *churches* in New York City (Carnes 2004, 35).²⁶ A separate study, done by Vivian Klaff, a professor of sociology at the University of Delaware, estimated there were about one million evangelicals, Pentecostal or charismatic Christians in the city, the vast majority of them from historically African-American denominations (Luo 2005, 2).²⁷

In the 1960-1970's, the white native-born evangelical churches in New York were shrinking. Like most long-established organizations, these congregations were not innovative. They were on the defensive and blind to the potential of urban and ethnic ministry. Most of the evangelical growth occurring today is from new immigrants—Hispanics, Asians and Africans in particular. According to Tony Carnes, co-director of the Research Institute for New Americans, this resurgence of evangelical leaders, churches and schools in NYC is bringing a quiet revolution in city neighborhoods and is even beginning to be felt at city hall (Ibid 33-37). Evangelical church leaders are boldly seeking to transform the city's culture and morals “through compassionate service, principles, politics, and multicultural arts.”²⁸

Understanding Multicultural Churches

Before we identify some of the challenges we will face in New York City and discuss our strategy recommendations, we must first settle on a working definition of a multicultural church and make some helpful distinctions. We need to clarify what kind of church we aim to establish.

I would propose that a *multicultural church* be viewed as a biblical community of believers: (1) which intentionally recruits, recognizes, and embraces 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.²⁹ My proposed definition is purposely broad to include both multilingual and English only churches as well as congregations with multiple services or a single blended worship service. It should be noted 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 many, 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).³⁰ Relying on recent sociological studies, the research team for the Multiracial Congregations Project 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 also assume their understanding.

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 and the core of our strategy proposal for New York City.

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) fully integrated multiracial churches (DeYoung, 164-5).³¹ 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 *fully 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).³² As we shall see, this foundational premise will have tremendous implications to how we design ministry strategy.

It is this author’s contention that the cultural character of churches in interethnic urban communities should normally follow the interactive pattern of community peoples outside the church. In other words, new churches will “grow best when they heterogeneously match their community with many various homogenous [small] groups within the church” (Arn, 2-3).³³ This means that if several homogeneous ethnic 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 groups, 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. Ethnically diverse churches are best for mixed urban communities

which are intentionally and comfortably diverse and where groups are mutually respectful or supportive.³⁴

Ultimately, what I am proposing is a *contextualized* approach to the planting of multiethnic churches.

This is very similar to the “congruence” approach advocated by David Britt in his insightful chapter entitled, “From Homogeneity to Congruence.” The concept of “congruity” seeks to compare and match the make-up and the nature of the congregation with the make-up and nature of the context.³⁵ Britt writes:

Congruence is similar to homogeneity in that congruence also assumes that most of us are attracted to others who share like values. Congruence differs, however, from homogeneity in that it refers not only to characteristics of the congregation, but to a relationship between the congregation and the community context. My adoption of the term stems from my understanding of social theory, especially that of (Peter) Berger ...

Where the cultural symbols of a congregation are congruent with those of a local community, the gospel will receive an easier hearing. Church-community congruence forms the backdrop for church growth or decline

The church-community congruence model argues...that conservative congregations grow best when they articulate the values already present in their cultural contexts. These values may be different from the values assumed dominant in the national culture, but they are community values in a local sense (1997, 144-147)

Thus if the community is multiethnic the emerging church should reflect this reality.

What kind of urban people are attracted to intentionally multicultural churches? In the past homogeneous churches have been seen as the 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. In an increasingly multicultural and urban society at least four types of people do not fit into traditional homogenous churches: interracial couples and families; ethnic people who prefer speaking English; urbanites who “appreciate living, working and ministering in the midst of ethnic diversity” and Generation-Xers who often despise racial separatism (NAMB 1996, 6-7). Finally, interethnic multicultural churches are particularly attractive to those within each ethnic group with low ethnic consciousness.³⁶ 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. The Rice University-based Congregational Study discovered

that congregants in mixed churches typically were those who already socialized with people of different backgrounds at work, school or in recreational activities. Research team leader Michael Emerson states, “By becoming part of the [racially mixed] church, their social networks became even more diverse and extensive” (cited in Dart 2002).

Identifying Challenges Facing Our Planting Project

In order to develop multi-ethnic churches in New York City, Project Jerusalem will need to face a number of significant challenges. The challenges can be divided into two major categories: 1) challenges related to church ministry in New York City and 2) challenges related more specifically to multicultural church planting.

Challenges Facing New York City Church Planters

Urban areas provide unique challenges for those seeking to plant new churches. Cities—those large, socially complex concentrations of people living in close proximity—offer innumerable opportunities for evangelism and church planting. With these opportunities, however, also come challenges. It is vital that our church planting teams be aware of these urban realities which will affect ministry. In this section I will identify specific challenges related to New York City church planters.

Perhaps the greatest challenge is for *constant cultural learning*. It is common for missionaries entering a new culture to accept the reality and necessity of learning the language, customs, and lifestyles of the people with whom they expect to live. Due to the fact that New York City is in North America and the major language is English, church planters sometimes fail to realize the importance of putting on the “missionary hat” and learning new ways of thinking, acting, and relating. This can be a significant mistake. Church planters entering NYC from other parts of North America inevitably bring their own cultural maps: ideas of how to dress, what to eat, how and who should raise their children, how to worship properly, and many other things. No matter how hard they try, they cannot “go native” in NYC. And though they cannot fully erase their childhood culture, they are influenced by the new culture they

enter—the culture of NYC. Paul Hiebert (1994, 147-158) describes the “bicultural bridge” as the quality of interpersonal relationships between human beings—in this case between church planting missionaries and the city residents they serve. New Yorkers who interact with church planters becomes a part of the bi-culture, adding their own ideas about family values, child-rearing, worship preferences, etc. To relate to one another productively, the planter and New Yorkers must create new patterns of working, playing, and worshipping—a new culture, or bi-culture.

Thus, the first months of the church planter’s life in the city must be spent in learning the ways of those he seeks to serve and in developing a bicultural community. He must seek to answer a broad range of questions from personal habits to ministry values, such as:

- Do I need a new wardrobe? What type of clothes should I wear?
- What type of apartment should I live in?
- Where should the children go to school?
- What values should the new church demonstrate?
- What should be its philosophy of ministry?

This process of learning culture and the incarnation that results is called “identification,” in cross-cultural lingo. This process does not deny who we are originally. It is a bi-cultural state where we choose to become one with the people we serve. Effective church planters must not skip this vital process or attempt to downgrade it. For those who invest the time, learning the local culture will be rewarding and will reap benefits for the future church planting project. This process is not so much one of minority people engagement but urban-culture engagement.

A second New York City challenge will be the *high financial cost of ministry* in the city. Based on our understanding of Christ’s incarnation (his “dwelling among us,” John 1:14), Project Jerusalem normally asks its lead church planters to eventually live in their ministry target area. Living in New York is very expensive. For example, a small (800 square feet) two-bedroom apartment in Manhattan rents for more than \$3,000 a month. Purchasing facilities for worship is unthinkable; renting adequate places for worship (schools, churches, synagogues, theaters, community centers, etc) is always challenging and costly. Therefore a church planter and his family may need upwards of \$100,000 to \$250,000 a year for

living and ministry expenses! Churches and individuals helping Project Jerusalem to plant churches in the city will need to understand and accept these budgetary challenges. Our church planting teams will need to develop a well-prepared church planting proposal to give to potential supporters. This document will need to include an executive summary of the vision, a brief demographic profile of the target area, a biographical sketch of the church planter (and possibly some of his launch team partners), and a proposed budget. Donors are more likely to respond to a compelling vision of a multiethnic ministry that meets the needs of people versus a bland financial presentation.

Our teams will also be challenged by *shortage of suitable worship venues* in the city. In other areas of our country church planters commonly envision a start-up congregation of 75 to 100 people meeting in a rented facility with ample room for growth. My conversations with pastors and planters in NYC leads me to believe that finding a comparable meeting place in New York City available at the right hour on Sundays will be a difficult task. Our planting teams may need to modify their original goals, expectations and projections because of venue limitations. Flexibility and creativity on the part of our teams will be required in order to enhance a poorly designed meeting place. For example, renting a theater on Sunday morning may be feasible but also tricky, in that a dark and windowless site will require additional lighting. Skillful use of a large screen, however, could result in a well-lit space.

A related challenge will be locating potential meeting sites that are *accessible* to the ethnic peoples and neighborhoods being targeted. Can the ministry focus groups identify with the site and feel comfortable attending services in the neighborhood? Class and ethnic rivalries may hinder some from wanting to walk into a proposed neighborhood to attend services. Those social dynamics will need to be understood (through on-the-street conversations with residents) by Project Jerusalem teams as sites are selected. Because most NYC residents travel by public transportation—or walk—it also is essential that any meeting facility selected be accessible to a nearby subway or train.

New York's *constantly changing social climate* and neighborhoods will also certainly challenge our seminary planting teams. New York City is the only northern industrial city with a sustained net population gain in the last one hundred years. As we have seen this is primarily the result of attracting

new immigrants. While the population grows, the city also experiences a large turnover in population which creates change in the social and demographic makeup. Tony Carnes, a sociologist professor at Columbia University, indicates that migration is a catastrophe for newcomers to the city. It disrupts marriages, children and families. Newcomers either accept new customs and habits or reject, synthesize, fall apart or go another path. During the first two years as they seek in some measure to be assimilated into American society, immigrants are open to the gospel. This fact needs to be understood by our planting teams as they develop evangelistic strategies. Carnes points out that newcomers also struggle with income and education: 35 percent have incomes below \$22,000; 52 percent are ages 18 to 34 but only 17 percent have college degrees. Many (46%) are single and 33 percent are single mothers. Surprisingly, 39 percent attend religious services regularly (cited in Thompson 2005).

In light of those social realities, our planting teams will need to develop great sensitivity to the ethnic groupings in targeted communities as well as their social networks. Because new NYC immigrants are 30 percent Caribbean, 26 percent Asian, 27 percent Hispanic (most from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic) and 5 percent African (Ibid.), church planters would be particularly wise to become a student of these major ethnic groups. Communities in the city, as noted above, are a patchwork quilt of neighborhoods representing a large mix of people from various nations. My conversations with NYC church leaders and residents have revealed a strange fact—though full identities are often unknown, there is a great deal of intimacy among strangers. However, immigrant peoples relate differently depending on their education, occupation, income (or lack thereof) and language preference.³⁷ Therefore, to be effective in designing the model of church which will reach these constantly changing communities, church planters need to do extensive demographic and ethnographic studies. Assumptions cannot be made too quickly until people profiles of particular neighborhoods are completed.

Project Jerusalem teams entering New York City will need to deal with a *logistical* challenge. The fact that the Big Apple is two and a half to three hours drive from our campus will provide us with a huge hurdle for getting our itinerant teams into the city on weekends. It will be imperative that at least our team leader be completed or nearing completion of his seminary studies in order to move his family into

the city. Once there, he may be able to help lodge other seminarians who only come down for a few days a week. Non-resident seminarians may also need to be housed in the homes of members of sponsor churches. Some of the team may need to sleep in church facilities of sponsors. The final cost of team transportation, meals, and lodging will need to be counted.

A final challenge to be faced in New York City is the reality of *spiritual and worldview warfare*. Major city-centers are known for not only diversity of ethnicities but also diversities of worldviews. Tim Keller, who has successfully planted a growing church, Redeemer Presbyterian, in Manhattan, contends that city-center culture is a “salad bowl” with two dominant ingredients—modern and postmodern worldviews—interacting and blending in different ways. From his experience and research, he describes the following characteristics of “global city-center culture,” as found in New York:

- The city center is a *culture of expertise* ...
[people who live in NYC are often “highly skilled and highly educated”]
- City-center people are *living in their career* ...
[whereas, most suburban/ non-urban people work in order to come home and have a life].
- City-center people are very *sexually active* and believe ... sexuality is completely private ...
- City-center people have *consumer identities* ...
[rather than identities which spring out of one’s community –i.e. family and society].
- City-center people are *very rootless*—geographically, socially, historically ...
- City-center people are *pragmatic* rather rational or linear in their thinking ...
- City-center people are *ironic and suspicious of authority and institutions*, especially religious ones ...
- City-center culture is *very multiethnic and international* ...
- City-center people are *deeply concerned for justice and the poor* (Keller 2005).

Each of these culture characteristics has ministry implications which we cannot develop here.³⁸ Suffice it to say that this major-city secularist worldview must be understood and addressed. Effective NYC church planters will need to work hard at contextualizing the gospel message so traditional, modern, and post-moderns “get it” and are challenged. The job of the urban missionary evangelist is to “enter sympathetically into the worldview story of that culture yet challenge and retell the culture’s story so they see their story will only have a happy ending through Jesus” (Ibid.). Because of the clash of competing worldviews, church planters will need to acknowledge the reality and dynamics of spiritual warfare. Hence, any strategy for impacting the city’s culture must begin and end with intercessory prayer. Though

this broad major-city worldview may be somewhat modified by each of the city's ethnic groups (depending on their own initial culture and religion), it will still be recognizable throughout the city and among its long-time residents.

Challenges Related to Multicultural Church Planting

In addition to these five general challenges which all Christian ministries face in a large metro like New York, there are specific concerns which those starting intentionally multiethnic churches must wrestle with. At this point in our planning, I am able to identify eight challenges Project Jerusalem teams must face.

First, there is the challenge of *forming a diverse launch team*. Most everyone I have interviewed strongly recommends that the best way to start up an ethnically diverse ministry is to begin modeling interethnic harmony at the leadership level from the earliest stages of the new work. This sends a loud message to the target communities that this emerging congregation will “practice what it preaches” and is serious about racial reconciliation in Christ. Without launch team diversity, onlookers will be unimpressed; the new church may appear to have but “token integration,” with minority members expected to attend functions but not to share in the decision-making. Ideally, the mix of the launch team should reflect the diversity of the target community, with at least one leader representing each major ethnic group residing in the community. Diversity in both pastoral and lay leadership is key to assuring respect for each culture's needs, concerns, and perspectives.³⁹ Since Baptist Bible Seminary currently has a small number of “minority” students, and not all of them are inclined to be church planters—especially in New York City!—we may need to recruit some potential launch team partners from outside the seminary or Northeast Pennsylvania.

Another crucial challenge will be *selecting the best launch approach* for start-up of these multiethnic churches. Broadly speaking, there are at least two launch strategy options we could utilize: pioneering and/or hiving off.⁴⁰ The launch strategy of “pioneering” would involve starting “from scratch,” with no core group in place. The seminary church planter would need to be a highly motivated self-

initiator who was convinced of God's call to start a church in a given community or people group. The planter and his team would need to do most of the initial evangelism and core group networking themselves. Starting with the launch strategy of "hiving off" would involve recruiting a partnering or "mother" church which could give seed families and workers. The core group for the new church would then already have some seasoned members. The hive-off group could also come from the pooling of local cell-groups started earlier by the seminary team or from more distant families willing to relocate or move into the targeted communities. Of these two major launch options, the second would be preferable. Ideally, the core group being hived off to assist would be an ethnically diverse group of lay leaders familiar with the culture(s) of the target communities. The challenge for Project Jerusalem is to pray for God's wisdom to identify potential "hive-off" groups and/or NYC sponsor churches. Rather than rushing into the city with our preconceived ministry ideas and strategy, it would be far better to first meet with potential core group members. Ideally some would be living in the target neighborhood and reflect the ethnic diversity there. The goal: to determine together the needs of the community and how to best meet them. Praying together for indicators of God's leading would be vital.

A third challenge would be *determining the best church design model*. Church planters are often impressed by what they have seen other planters do in a new situation. They may conclude that simply duplicating someone else's model would suffice. The problem is many models effective in other contexts may not be workable in the Big Apple, at least without major modifications. The rush to borrow methodologies and neglect the learning stage may result in tragic contextual misjudgments. This writer has identified and described at least four multicultural church planting models being utilized fruitfully in large urban settings which seem to hold promise in New York City. In the *multicongregational model* a planting team seeks to start and organize a number of language and/or ethnic congregations that would all share one facility; there are multiple worship services, each designed to meet the needs of a particular cultural group. In the *multi-language satellite model* there is one church in many locations scattered around the city; satellite congregations are typically focused upon serving one neighborhood ethnic group, but all gather together occasionally to celebrate their oneness in Christ. In the *cell-celebration model* the

urban planting team intentionally launches numerous house groups (“cells”) whose members also attend a weekly or biweekly celebration worship service either at a central campus or rented hall; the focus of church life is fixed on the weekly lay-lead cell meetings. In the “*multiethnic church model*”, the planting team seeks to blend many different cultures and ethnic peoples into one dynamic worship service utilizing one language, usually English. Of the four, this latter model would normally be the most challenging to implement. Each of these four models has its own strengths and weaknesses; each would be appropriate in different contexts.⁴¹ To select and develop the most appropriate model, the church planter should move to the target area as soon as possible, do a walking tour of the area, begin networking in the community, ascertain information in the context of relationships, and then summarize and analyze the data which provides implications for the right type of model.

Seeking to apply Niebuhr’s “Christ Transforming the City” model and the theology behind it, the Redeemer Church Planting Center has developed models for three urban (multiethnic) contexts (Keller and Thompson 2002, 53):

- *The Urban Regional Crossroads Church*: which best serves urban professionals with its stress upon the arts and expository preaching;
- *The Community (Parish) Based Church*: which best serves poorer neighborhoods by helping its residents address the felt and foundational needs;
- *The Multicultural Church*: which best serves the immigrants working classes and broader ethnic “grassroots” of the city through its emphasis on racial reconciliation, prayer, and non-liturgical, more open worship.

Church planting teams need to also study these and other church design models to determine which might be best for their community context. Of these three, the latter model would produce the most multiethnic fellowship because it is contextualized for a mix of both poor and working classes—not only in worship but in communication and leadership styles.

A fourth challenge for multicultural church planters in New York City would be *identifying receptive mixed neighborhoods*. Where in metro NYC will we start the work? A number of social

dynamics might determine if an area is a potential site for intensive evangelism and a specific church planting model. Four are key: the actual location of a people group, their neighborhood patterns (crime, housing, transportation, schools, etc.), neighborhood stability (growth trends), and work (employment) patterns. At the bare minimum, church planters should study the demographics and psychographics of several potential areas, then they must accurately interpret the data.

A recent *New York Times* article highlighted the Ditmas Park neighborhood in Brooklyn as a classic example of a new phenomena emerging in the City—what city demographics are calling a “melting pot neighborhood” because no one ethnic or racial group is dominant, and many are represented. Ditmas Park is representative of the new face of New York City because the neighborhood’s population of 8,243 “is not cut up into distinct ethnic swatches like Williamsburg in Brooklyn—where Hasidim [Jews], Italians, Poles, Latinos, and white bohemians live in distinct pockets—but is significantly intermingled” (Berger 2005, 33). The ethnic mix in this emerging neighborhood is not merely cosmetic, it is “thorough and strong.” According to the *Times* writer, cross-cultural friendships are quite common and now almost second-nature. (Berger 2005, 33) Ditmas Park would seem to be exactly the kind of neighborhood in which a multicultural church would thrive.

The good news for multicultural church planters is that the outlook for such “polyglot and polychrome” neighborhoods in New York is very good. Recent analysis by the Department of City Planning, studying 2000 census and updates data, indicates there are 220 “melting-pot” census tracts among the city’s 2,217. In 1970 there were only 70 such areas!⁴² The ranks are growing as a result of immigration and “the apparent comfort level long-rooted New Yorkers feel in cosmopolitan milieus” (Ibid.). These 220 neighborhoods would be an excellent starting point for our seminary teams as they further research in which mixed neighborhoods to work. For our purposes we will particularly need to take a close look at mixed neighborhoods in Queens, Brooklyn, Bronx and Staten Island. While Manhattan is getting more affluent and even “whiter” (more Anglo and more professional), these boroughs continue to become more multiethnic.

This leads us to a related challenge planting teams will face: locating mixed *neighborhoods in need of new churches*. Proper research bathed in prayer will be needed to identify the best locations for new multicultural churches. Research is an ongoing discipline which God can use to direct planting teams. It is not inconsistent with dependence on God but complementary to it. Since most of our entering seminary teams will be largely unfamiliar with New York City culture and ethnic peoples, it will be essential that they adopt a learner's and servant's attitude. From my initial investigation, I have identified a number of existing evangelical ministries which may be able to help us locate metro areas of spiritual need which lack sufficient gospel witness and have few if any biblical churches. One urban resource will certainly be Tim Keller and the Redeemer Presbyterian Church which has started from scratch in 1989. Redeemer has now grown to 4,200 in attendance on Sundays, meeting in three locations, and is one of Manhattan's most vital congregations. In 2001, Redeemer started a church-planting center that has helped more than 100 new churches get started in the New York metro area and elsewhere. We will need to tap into their collective wisdom and research data. A second resource for locating where existing evangelical churches are—and where they are yet needed—would be the two evangelical colleges which have been set up in the city in recent years: King's College (which meets on the 15th floor of the Empire State Building and is a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ) and Nyack College. Carnes reports that there are also 100 Bible institutes in the city, probably the most well-known being New York School of the Bible, founded in 1971 by Dr. Stephen Olford and operated by Calvary Baptist Church in Manhattan. A final source for Project Jerusalem to consult with in order to determine spiritually needy mixed neighborhoods would be Tony Carnes, an evangelical professor of sociology at Columbia University, co-director of the Research Institute for New America, and key leader behind the recent citywide church census conducted by the university. The Southern Baptists have an aggressive church planting strategy⁴³ for New York City and will no doubt have done much demographic and ecclesiastical evaluating. Other men and ministries with which we will need to network and contact for research data and encouragement will be mentioned later under our strategy plan.

The ongoing challenge for our planting teams will be to do solid research of potential communities, not relying upon guesswork, holy hunches, or second-hand information. Manuel Ortiz and Harvie Conn, professors of urban ministry at Westminster Theological Seminary, recommend the homework of biblical study, leadership training, social science research, reflection, prayer, and finally, wise evaluation (2001, 255-310). On the other hand, Henry Blackaby reminds us that we must keep asking God to show where He is already at work, rather than overly rely upon human logic to decide where the most promisingly productive places might be (cited in NAMB 1999, 10). The seemingly opposite counsel from Ortiz and Blackaby are actually two sides of the same coin—preparation and dependency. Both are essential for locating needy planting sites.

Once a suitable multicultural community is selected, and the planting team begins preparing for a public launch of worship services, a huge challenge will be *designing of a culturally attractive worship service*. To be evangelistically effective and to deeply impact their communities, racially mixed churches will need to intentionally design multicultural worship and music. Little research has been done on this in North American settings,⁴⁴ and most church leaders involved in multiethnic worshipping churches are still in a learning stage. This writer would propose that multicultural worship is *blended* worship which incorporates and brings together all kinds of people in meaningful worship of the true God. Furthermore, 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 North American society (Redman 2002, 106-107). Multicultural worship assumes that one size does *not* fit all, regardless of ethnicity. Minorities’ worship styles—not just mere token expressions thereof—must be integrated fully into the worship of the dominant group. This may mean singing in different languages on occasions.

Researchers of emerging multiethnic churches point out that those that are growing share a common characteristic: all strongly emphasize public worship as a priority and primary ministry of the church. In other words, worship is central not peripheral. “Worship creates community and outreach, not the other way around” (Ibid., 111-113). Culturally relevant musical and artistic worship is a powerful

evangelistic tool; as unbelievers see believers responding to God in joyful worship they are attracted to Him.

Yet designing *culturally sensitive* worship is no easy task. This writer has elsewhere sought to describe the complex interplay of deeply ingrained ethnic cultural factors that affect how we worship (Davis 2004, 120-123) and then overviewed the worship perspectives and practices of African Americans, Hispanics, and Caribbean peoples, three prominent groups found in New York City (Ibid., 121-130). Based on my initial research and the experience of Living Hope Baptist Church, an eighteen month old multicultural church which Project Jerusalem launched in the Poconos (primarily among former New York City residents who had relocated to Pennsylvania), I would propose that the worship style of a multiethnic church ministering primarily to the above three groups would be characterized by ten essential qualities:

- *Holistic*: it should involve the whole person—mind, emotions, and body
- *Participatory*: it should draw in the entire congregation with moderate amounts of verbal and nonverbal interaction encouraged
- *Expressive*: there should be freedom for people to spontaneously and enthusiastically express themselves
- *Celebratory*: the worship mood should be less reflective and more joyous
- *Relationship-Oriented*: sufficient time should be given for greeting one another, sharing concerns/needs, praying for others and hearing personal testimonies
- *Musically Passionate and Varied*: A variety of musical styles⁴⁵ and formats should be utilized with songs sung lustily and loudly.
- *Rhythmic Instrumentation*: percussion, electronic keyboard, electric guitars, drums, tambourines, piano, trumpets and maracas, etc.

- *Informal Structure*: rather than formal and liturgical in format. Such 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.⁴⁶

This proposed worship format is but suggestive of diligent work that will need to be done by each launch team working in different multiethnic contexts.

A final and constant challenge for multicultural ministry teams is the difficulty of *developing ethnic leadership* in a high-turnover urban context. Church planters in large metros like New York face the added challenge of working in a highly fluid environment. The transient nature of New York makes it difficult for a congregation to build deep roots. The rapid turnover and high attrition rate of city dwellers particularly poses a problem to planters seeking to develop committed leaders in young congregations. Many ethnic, new believers will be tempted by the consumerism and materialism of American society: working long hours to support their families (or relatives back in their homeland) may not give converts much time to be discipled. Those who do show the most promise for congregational leadership could easily assume too many responsibilities in the new church and soon burn out.

The key to church growth in an ethnic or multiethnic church will be the developing of community-based ethnic leaders. If we can recruit and train strong ethnic leaders who at least understand the basics of the Christian faith, we have gained an entrance into that culture. Identifying and working with a “man of peace” (Luke 10: 3-10; Matt. 10:11ff.) in that community—a person of influence who is respected in the community and is receptive to our message—may often be the key to penetrating a people group and winning a larger hearing.⁴⁷ Once led to faith in Christ, that emerging church leader must be trusted and treated as an equal in decision-making. He must be given key roles and responsibilities in the young church to develop his gifts. He must be trained through ministry while discipling his heart. To develop and train key leaders, it will be important for the seminary launch teams to quickly involve community people in the ministry. Here are four ways they can do so: 1) *take risks*—when something needs to be done, give it to somebody new instead of relying on teammates; 2) *learn to recruit*—start compiling a list of ministry tasks, and ask community people to serve; find those who want to go deeper;

3) *establish apprenticeships*: constantly instill in followers the concept of every leader having an apprentice; and 4) *develop a leadership training plan* for the long term; an evening Bible institute may be needed to train lay leaders. The forming of leaders is not only essential to see sustained church growth but also to insure church multiplication. There is a clear correlation between the number of new churches and the number of trained leaders.

A Recommended Strategy for NYC Multicultural Church Planting

Once we understand some of the above major challenges to be faced in New York City, we are ready to begin designing an entry strategy and ministry plan for our Project Jerusalem teams. A strategy for our church planting projects guides the overall efforts to establish the foundation as well as to initiate the early beginnings of each new congregation. Therefore, it is wise to reflect carefully on the expected results of our early actions before initiating any new multicultural congregations. A well prepared strategy plan for potential partners, core leadership team, and interested persons will also help communicate the degree of commitment, efforts, and resources needed. This proposed strategy will only be suggestive of what we believe it will take to successfully establish multicultural, biblical churches in the metro area. At this juncture we envision a strategy with eight foundational components.

Building Partnerships

Our first strategy component calls for *building partnerships* with other established evangelical city churches and ministries. It will be essential that we see the value of networking with others⁴⁸ who have been in New York long before us. I have already written of the benefit of gleaning from the wisdom and experience of Redeemer Presbyterian Church Planting Center and local universities, both secular and Christian, for gathering urban/ethnic demographics and information on the location of existing evangelical churches. Keller and Thompson (2002, 54) point out the difficulty of doing sustained ministry in Manhattan without lots of connections and lots of ‘street wise’ experience. To overcome this obstacle we will need to network with and seek counsel from key people inside the city.

From my interviews, reading, and study of current evangelical church life in NYC, I have already begun to list pastors, churches, and parachurch ministries with whom we may be able to partner—either for seeking counsel or for potential sponsorship of our planting projects. I will only mention a few of the more prominent and street-smart ministries which may be helpful. A.R. Bernard is the Panama-born pastor of the 21,000-member Christian Cultural Center in Brooklyn (which recently commissioned the citywide church census) and was chair of the June 2005 Billy Graham Crusade. He has a big vision to transform the culture of the city. Pastor Jim Cymbala leads the Brooklyn Tabernacle (Four Square), home of the renowned Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, and has been friendly to evangelical ministries starting up. Joseph Mattera, pastor of Brooklyn’s Resurrection Church, is founder of the City Covenant Coalition, a profamily advocacy and networking organization with 500 associated churches. Pastor David Epstien leads the 1,000 member Calvary Baptist Church in Manhattan, which has many internationals participating in the ministry and hosts a solid Bible institute. Puerto Rican Rubén Díaz Sr. is a Pentecostal Bronx pastor of Seward Avenue Church of God (Cleveland) and also an influential state senator. His church runs service ministry caring for 5,000 elderly citizens. New Life Fellowship is the Salvation Army’s newest NYC church and is an 800-member Spanish-speaking body. Two Asian American ministries may be able to share insights about reaching Asians: the all-immigrant New York Presbyterian Korean Church with 6,000 members and the Overseas Chinese Mission, a mega church with a nine-story high church structure (Carnes 33-36).⁴⁹

Intentional Prayer

A second crucial component in our overall entry and ministry strategy must be a *commitment to intentional prayer*. Church planting must be viewed as spiritual warfare, where our teams are beach storming parties on mission to knock out enemy strongholds in order to establish new communities of faith. Ultimately, only God can plant and build His church (Matt. 16:18). He does so through retaking territory by breaking down barriers and strongholds. Prayer is our resource for the bringing down of these barriers and strongholds. We have already seen that New York City, with its secularist “global city-center

culture,” is a place where modern and postmodern worldviews clash. In addition, we must recognize that cities are often held captive by spiritual forces of evil which largely control not only individual perceptions but also institutional patterns (Eph 6:10-12). These invisible powers war against Christ and His kingdom. They must be engaged and disarmed with spiritual armaments, chiefly prayer. In our efforts to preach and model racial reconciliation in Christ, our teams will no doubt be confronting both racism and ethnocentrism. As McNeil and Richardson have shown, a ministry of social impact and heart transformation will require that we engage the personal, social, and spiritual dimensions of racism and racialization (2004, 109-132). Only then can authentic multiethnic congregations be established in the city. Thus, prayer must be fundamental not supplemental in our work. Prayer is not just preparation for the battle, it is the battle!

Our Project Jerusalem strategy of prayer for NYC planting should include the following vital elements:

- Insisting that each planting leader and his team enlist on *intercessory prayer team* with which they regularly communicate.
- Utilizing *prayer walking* in the communities we are targeting.
- Ensuring that our planters have a consistent personal prayer life.
- Reminding our teams to *teach* their converts and disciples the priority of prayer.
- Expecting teams to develop multicultural churches committed to individual and *corporate prayer*.
- Showing our teams how to set up *pastoral prayer teams* which regularly uphold the congregational elders.
- Asking the church plants to pray regularly for the harvest, more harvesters, and for further church multiplication.

Micro Church Models

A third component in our city multicultural planting strategy is *utilization of “micro” church models*.⁵⁰ Three micro church approaches seem appropriate for New York City: the house church, the cell church, and the satellite church. Each of these three church design models has the primary advantage of not being dependent on a large building to grow a new church. As noted above, one of the greatest barriers in NYC is the lack of available and affordable properties for churches to use for public worship. Micro churches are people-centered not building-centered, allowing a young congregation to focus on developing closer, more intimate personal relationships and a friendly family atmosphere in a smaller setting. They also have the advantage of being comparatively inexpensive to start and maintain, as opposed to more traditional program-oriented churches. Research shows micro-churches are particularly attractive to Generation X and post moderns; young professionals who want to be in a small community of faith and are disillusioned with mega churches will also come.⁵¹ Micro churches seem to be ideal for NYC because they seek to assure continued growth through multiplication by avoiding the limitations imposed by ever-expanding facilities.

The **house church** is an intentionally small congregation of approximately ten to thirty believers which meet at least once a week in a private home. It is normally focused upon serving a specific neighborhood. Each house church would be independent and autonomous, functioning as a complete church in itself and seeking to fulfill all the basic purposes of a biblical church. House churches have the potential of thriving in an urban setting like NYC because they are normally viewed as culturally-fitting (“indigenous”), being locally lay-led and deeply rooted in the local community. They allow for creativity, encourage friendship evangelism, and facilitate leadership development. In a city setting, people can readily use public transportation or even walk to the neighbor’s house.

The **cell church** model also has the potential of thriving in multiethnic New York City. Like the former model, members meet weekly in homes (or storefronts) for prayer, pastoral care, discipling, and outreach. But unlike the house church approach, members of related cells come together several times a month for a large celebration worship service, normally at a rented hall, city auditorium, or near

university. Each cell normally has five to fifteen people, is designed to be a discipling community networking with others, and is expected to reproduce. Cell-celebration churches, as they are sometimes called, differ from traditional churches with small groups in that the very life of the church is in the home cells, not in a building. The church is understood to be a dynamic, organic, spiritual being that can only be lived out in the lives of believers in community.⁵² The beauty of this unique “two-winged” church model for multicultural church planting is that the individual cells can be designed for particular ethnic, language, or generational groups. Then, the unity of the body of Christ can be expressed as all the cells meet together for multicultural worship.⁵³ The fact that many of the largest churches in the world are cell-celebration congregations in large urban multiethnic settings⁵⁴, demonstrates that this micro approach may be fruitful in New York as well.

Another “micro” church approach for strategy consideration in NYC is the multi-language *satellite model*. Here our planting teams would seek to launch numerous satellite sub-congregations throughout a targeted NYC borough in various ethnic or multiethnic neighborhoods. Each satellite would normally offer a worship service in a different language, if need be, and focus on an unreached ethnic group. Each satellite would eventually have its own ethnic pastor and local leadership. Community based worship services could be held in apartments, leased small community halls, storefronts, or in homes. This one-church-in-many-locations model differs from the above two in that the satellites may be larger and would only gather for combined worship once or twice a year. For these special celebrative gatherings, a larger city hall or auditorium would need to be rented in order to accommodate everyone. Thus, no large church structure would be needed on a permanent basis. This multi-site model allows a growing congregation to better adapt to the shapes and cultures of the city, reaching more and more unreached ethnic peoples. Though all the ethnic pastors are seen as co-pastors of one large church, there is a decentralized structure which can hopefully liberate the church for rapid growth as it meets the needs of specific people groups. The language churches would be attractive particularly to first generation immigrants to NYC.⁵⁵

Through experimentation, further research, and prayerful reflection, Project Jerusalem church planting teams will need to determine which of these three church design models will be best for their community and ethnic group context. Other workable models may become evident once we enter the city.

Van Engen gives helpful criteria for the final evaluation and selection of the best ecclesiological model:

These and other “models” should not be evaluated only on the basis of whether they grow numerically, nor only on whether they “work” in terms of reducing cultural conflict and preserving the cohesion of groups. They should not even be evaluated on whether they are well-received by the people or groups in a particular context. I believe the primary criterion on which models should be evaluated is the extent to which they are able to preserve a contextually-appropriate balance between the UNIVERSALITY and the PARTICULARITY of the Church. We should seek to avoid neither cultural blindness nor cultural imposition (2004, 36).

This is good advice based upon a solid theological principle, discussed earlier.

Word and Deed Ministries

A fourth strategy component for our proposed multicultural planting efforts in NYC is the *balancing of word and deed*. In order for our proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus to have any legitimacy in a city where there is much cynicism and skepticism, it must be accompanied by lives that practice the truth. Skepticism about Christianity is often skepticism about the actions of the church. Thus, our church planting teams will need to insure that new churches have holistic ministries which are seeking to reach their communities with good news *and* good works. Evangelism will need to be balanced with social service ministries. Since immigrant people groups arriving in NYC commonly struggle with cultural adjustments, learning English, finding jobs and affordable housing, compassion ministries will be wonderful ways to share God’s unconditional love with newcomers. Ron Sider describes four types of social action ministries which urban churches can prayerfully consider and embrace:

- *Relief* would involve directly supplying food, clothing, or housing to those in urgent need. This is parallel to *giving a hungry person a fish*.
- *Individual Development* would include transformational ministries that empower a person to improve his/her status physically, emotionally, intellectually, or relationally. This is parallel to *teaching a person to fish!*

- *Community Development* focuses on renewing the building blocks for a healthy community by addressing housing, jobs, health care, or educational issues. This approach is parallel to *giving the person fishing equipment!*
- *Structural Change* works to transform unfair political, economic, environmental or cultural institutions or systems. It is the equivalent of helping everybody get *fair access to the fishpond* (2002, 170-171).

Each church plant will need to decide which of these approaches they can focus on, contingent upon the resources, gifts, and manpower God has given them. Obviously a thorough demographic and ethnographic study of the ministry focus area and its peoples will need to be done in order to understand the perceived (real) needs of the community and how to best address them. With limited financial resources our church plants will probably need to initially focus on the first two approaches, but as their ministry grows they may be better positioned to move toward the latter two.

To make holistic ministry a vital and effective component in our ethnic/urban strategy we will need to train our launch teams to carefully think of ways to design deed ministries so that they truly serve people *and* fit the community culture. How will we show the community we love them even if they don't believe? What are the specific felt needs of the *individuals* and specific ethnic *groups* within the target community? What are the physical and emotional needs of the elderly, families, teens, singles, men, women, and children? What are the social, economic or educational needs of the same? What are the flaws and difficulties with the *systems* of the community? The answers to these key questions will vary greatly depending on the neighborhood. The key is to find ways to stand with the broader community to face the effects of our fallen condition and be, as a church, a sign of the kingdom of God. We must find ways to bring emotional, social, and spiritual healing in a way that the world can *see*. And then linking the community service in such a way that it weaves verbal witness and Christian community together with the service provided. In other words, we must not simply create social programs but also link outreach service ministry with small group fellowship, with public worship and verbal expressions of the gospel.

Most urban people will desire to place a new church somewhere on an ideological spectrum from “liberal/left wing” to “conservative/right wing.” It is crucial that our teams use the gospel in the life of the new churches so as to defy such stereotypes and to thus become impossible to categorize. Watching unbelievers must see that the biblical gospel brings both powerful individual transformation and deep social changes. It defies the values of the world—power, status, recognition, and wealth. It changes our attitudes toward the poor, toward our own status, wealth and careers. It gives us a concern for justice for the oppressed and disadvantaged. Together, these two “sides” of the gospel’s influence create a unique kind of church—one that is counter-intuitive and holistic. Truly gospel-centered churches should have a social justice emphasis and effectiveness that greatly exceeds liberal churches (often messageless) in the city; yet they should also have an evangelistic fervor that greatly exceeds the ordinary fundamentalist (often legalistic) churches.

There are many examples of church-based transformational ministries which can pave the way for profound social change—“one by one from the inside out.” Churches may decide to focus on helping individuals with deep-seated behavioral problems like drug addictions, long-term welfare dependency, or generational domestic abuse. Or, they may choose to assist those who have been systematically demeaned—such as some minorities, high school drop-outs, those with poor self-image or negative on-the-street survivor lifestyles. Churches can also make a difference by providing GED classes, teen mentoring, family counseling, financial seminars, job training, and health education. “Compassion” ministries, which feed needy people while teaching them that they do not live by bread alone, can also have an impact in the city—provided this is done unconditionally. It must not be seen as a bribe or just as a means to an end, as a utilitarian evangelistic tool.

Intentional Heterogeneity

Related to this concern for holistic ministries is our fifth strategy component proposal: *a commitment to intentional heterogeneity* at all levels of the new churches. This commitment must be clearly described in each church plant’s philosophy of ministry, core value statements, mission vision,

goals, objectives, and long-term strategic plan. Ideally, these should have all been developed by a diverse leadership team. Authentic integration of cultures will be possible only through emphasis on the common identity all members (believers) have in Christ. Therefore, the biblical theme of racial reconciliation needs to be often heard and taught. Project Jerusalem's multicultural church planting efforts in New York City need to regularly emphasize that the authentic (biblical) gospel always calls sinners to be reconciled both with an offended and holy God and with others. City people need to see that reconciliation is the *heart* of the message and work of Jesus.

It is not uncommon for a church to mistakenly consider itself multicultural because a few internationals or people of color attend services. Manuel Ortiz, after studying multiethnic bodies across North America reminds us that a church must be committed to meet both qualitative and quantitative measures to qualify as multicultural. In terms of *quantitative* measure, a church should have a significant percentage of its membership composed of various ethnic groups (1996, 88-89). A church with two races or cultures—such as black and white—would be simply that, biracial or bicultural, and would not by definition be considered multicultural. Ortiz cites the International Bible Church in Los Angeles as a good example of one that meets the quantitative standard; IBC is composed of “Anglos, American Indians, Asian Indians, Blacks, Chinese, Guatemalans, Filipinos, Koreans, Mexicans, Salvadorians, Russians, Taiwanese, Thais, and Ukrainians” (Ibid, 91).⁵⁶ Certainly authentic multicultural churches need not all have this level of diversity (some urban settings will not have but three or four predominate groups), but the commitment to be as diverse as possible needs to be evident. The *qualitative* measure of a multicultural church includes the equal distribution of majority and minority leadership throughout the church and the ethnic diversity of its music programs, its teaching styles, and its application of Scripture.

The operative word in this strategy component is *intentional* diversity. Multicultural churches do not just spring up because we open our doors in a mixed neighborhood. They will not automatically happen because a church practices an open door policy and seeks to sincerely welcome ethnic guests. Multicultural churches are the result of intentional efforts on the part of the church leaders and members to create and then maintain an truly integrated congregation. For example, if a new church does not put

forth a concerted effort to help first-generation immigrants, then those immigrants are very unlikely to show up for worship. Sociologist George Yancey, one of the researchers in the landmark Lilly Endowment study of multiracial churches across America, has shown that intentionality is true to all such congregations that are growing. He contends that this is so because of the subtle yet strong influences of living in a racialized society where its easier to just follow the “American” way and remain with our own group (2003, 108-117). Yancey states, “A colorblind philosophy that discounts the importance of race in our society does not generally lead to successful multiracial churches” (Ibid., 117). Raleigh Washington and Glen Kehrein, co-pastors of the racially mixed Rock of Salvation Church in Chicago, also argue, in an earlier work, that racial reconciliation will not occur unless Christians are willing to go out of their way to pursue relationships with people of other races (1993, 127).

In a new church context, this means that our Project Jerusalem teams must be modeling from the start a commitment to becoming multiracial. They need to be preparing their people for this pursuit through biblical exposition, through planned messages which show that racism is sin and reconciliation at all levels is God’s eternal purpose. Our team leaders will need to often cast the vision for why multicultural churches are so vital in our society today and convince people from the Scriptures that this is a natural consequence of the gospel of grace! People will need to be challenged that this means sacrificing their own desires and putting the preferences and needs of others first (c.f. Phil. 2:1-11). For genuine unity in diversity to be maintained—so that our emerging churches are attractive and “amazing” to a watching community—there will need to be this combination of sacrifice and accommodation. Believers, recent and long time, will need to be taught that the great sign of biblical unity is not a merely a heterogeneous gathering—it’s a body of Christians where traditions, languages, preferences, and customs are allowed to flourish.

Evangelistic Networking

A sixth essential component of our multicultural church planting strategy is *evangelistic networking*. We have already spoken of our focus on word and deed ministries, of launching new

churches which are seeking to identify with the hurting people of society and be involved in various community services and forms of social action. But if “social concern” is stressed to the virtual exclusion of other biblical purposes, a church can easily become more concerned with improving society—or even reconciling the races—than about evangelism.⁵⁷ To launch biblically balanced churches in NYC our teams will need to be committed to outreach. But what type of evangelism will be needed to win ethnic city people? We are proposing that the best approach is evangelistic networking⁵⁸, a term we use to mean a *whole philosophy of ministry based on friendship evangelism*. From our conversation with urban church leaders and from personal observation/experience in cities, it is our assumption⁵⁹ that the more traditional evangelism programs (“cold contact”, mass, and visitation evangelism, etc.⁶⁰) do not seem to bear fruit. Why? Most programs rely on the reception of the gospel from a stranger. Either the crusade evangelist, or the trained “visitor,” or some other stranger must give the gospel to the non-believer. As our modern society becomes more privatized, as neighborhoods disappear and people “cocoon,” the likelihood that people will listen to a stranger diminishes. Therefore, we are recommending that in our church plants the ministry and outreach of *the entire church* be based on a philosophy of networking.

Implementing this approach must begin with our launch teams creating a “corporate culture” for evangelistic networking. This means seeking to give every facet of the church’s ministry an “outward” face, making virtually every church activity a friendship evangelism event. Tim Keller, founding pastor of the evangelistically effective and multiethnic Redeemer Presbyterian in Manhattan contends, “A networking church is developed *primarily* through cultivating a mindset, a collective attitude, and only *secondarily* through setting up programs” (2002, 114, emphasis his). Keller shares three principles for making networking effective:

1. The key to networking: a partnership between newer/grape-vined believers and mature believers... [This solves the problem of new believers having all the connections and credibility with non-believers but not knowing how to articulate the gospel—mature believers, the church’s worship/preaching can help.]
2. The critical event in networking: the internal ‘self-talk’ that turns ‘comers’ into ‘bringers’... [The Christian becomes convinced that bringing a non-Christian friend to the Sunday service will help his own witnessing—his/her friend will hear the gospel explained in a non-threatening and understandable way, and will want to come back to hear more!]

3. There must be an atmosphere of *expectation* that every member will always have 2-4 people in the incubator, a force-field in which people are being prayed for, given literature, brought to church or other events. [This assumes the planter is committed to preach dynamic evangelistic expository messages addressing the needs/questions of *both* Christians *and* non-Christians each Sunday.] (Ibid., 114-115)

For church members to catch the excitement of bringing unsaved guests to church events, services, and small groups there must be: modeling by the launch team leaders; regular and focused intercessory prayer for the lost; the provision of evangelistic “tools” to God’s people (handout evangelistic pamphlets, books, tapes which answer questions, etc.); a constant variety of visitor-seeking events (Friend Sunday, special concerts, singles picnics, a hot topic seminar on sex, money, work, etc); and a commitment to constantly evaluate all programs to see if they are challenging *both* believers and unbelievers.

Networking evangelism recognizes that there are four kinds of web networks: familial, geographical (neighborhood), vocational (career/school associates) and relational (friends not necessarily in the other networks). Because in urban areas the latter two are more important, effective NYC outreach needs to focus on planning events oriented to drawing in job co-workers and the extended family circle of church members. For example, workday breakfast and lunch events in business districts would probably be more effective than an evening small group that is neighborhood based. Keller points out that outreach minded networking churches will need to “discern, create and keep track of ‘pathways’ for the non-churched [to come] into the congregation” (Ibid., 117). He mentions six types of pathways Redeemer has found effective: business-network events;⁶¹ worship services;⁶² cell groups;⁶³ felt need ministries;⁶⁴ large group special events;⁶⁵ and alliances with other evangelistic ministries⁶⁶ (Ibid., 117-118).

All of these networking pathways assume that urban seekers will normally need to come to faith in Christ in stages. They have “process personalities” and require time to think it over and get their questions answered; they will seldom come if they are pushed or pressured. Research shows that the more varied ways a person hears the gospel, and the more often a person hears it before making a commitment, the better the comprehension and the less likelihood of “reversion” to the world. In order for this networking philosophy to have impact in our church planting projects, it will be imperative that our teams

understand these principles, develop skills in networking follow-up, and are able to train NYC converts and emerging church leaders in this strategy.

Some modifications of this basic outreach strategy will need to be made to contextualize it for various ethnic peoples. Our strategy for evangelism will be deficient if the dynamics of cultural integration and receptivity are not also factored in. Enoch Wan, chair of the intercultural studies division at Western Seminary, has proposed a very helpful “Cultural Integration/Variation and Readiness Scale” (see Appendix 1) which helps us evangelize North American people-groups within the context of their own cultures. Though the “host culture” of Canadian and American Anglophone Caucasians is in reality a mixture of many cultures—such as British, Scottish, Irish, European, etc—it is distinctive and works to assimilate newcomers. Both the non-English speaking, overseas-born-ethnic (OBE) and the local-born ethnic (LBE) will be gradually integrated into this “host culture.” There are many factors, Wan reminds us, which contribute to the rate and extent of the cultural integration of ethnic North Americans—things like “English language skills, level of education, type of occupation, residential pattern, place of birth, duration of stay, etc” (2004, 5). Professor Wan points out that there are two major dimensions in the process of cultural integration: *objective predisposition* (the degree of resemblance of an OBE/LBE’s own culture to the host culture) and the *subjective preference* (the OBE/LBE’s personal choice in terms of motivation, emotion, and volition towards cultural integration). His figure chart shows how the degree of cultural integration (or variation) of various Canadian ethnic groups relates to a group’s personal readiness (or resistance) to receive the Christian Gospel. Wan concludes, “If an OBE/LBE’s cultural background is more integrated with or similar to the ‘host culture,’ then generally there is more opportunity for him or her to hear the gospel and more flexibility for that person to enjoy the freedom of accepting Christ.” (Ibid., 5-6) So, for example, OBE Filipino Catholics will tend to be more open to the gospel than an OBE Vietnamese atheist (who has more cultural and religious barriers to overcome).

Wan’s cultural integration/variation scale should be a useful conceptual tool for our planting teams to develop and fine-tune evangelism and discipleship strategies to reach different ethnic peoples in NYC. He agrees with this writer’s assessment (and that of Tim Keller) that the normal means of pre-

evangelism and evangelism used by Anglo North American Christians are “inadequate and inefficient in reaching new immigrants who are functionally illiterate in English, relatively untouched by the mass media, and socially isolated from the Anglophone Caucasian Christians social network (typically of middle-class, professional, suburban dwellers)” (Ibid., 2). The typical means of impersonal-informational evangelism will not touch, for example, most first generation immigrants who are largely unassimilated into mainstream culture. Wan concludes, “Thus, pre-evangelism is best done *through personal contacts and private interaction*, which better demonstrates the virtue of a Christ-like character than extensive reliance on mass media” (Ibid., emphasis mine). His recommendation seems to harmonize well with our previously explained concept of networking evangelism.⁶⁷

Community Small Groups

Community small groups are the seventh component of our proposed urban/ethnic strategy. This need to be the backbone of newly planted multicultural churches in the Big Apple—a network of small groups (or “cells”) and ministry teams in which face-to-face friendships and caring develops. These home groups will be essential for connecting people to Christ and to the young churches God is raising up. Community groups (not “Bible studies”) should be the front-line of discipleship, fellowship, pastoral care, and leadership development in the new churches. They are the place where lonely and distressed urbanites can plug into intimate relationships and find authentic community. Thus, all groups must be constantly challenged to be outreach-oriented and visitor-friendly. They should be seeking to apply the gospel and biblical truth to both unchurched seekers and Christians through worship, interactive Bible study, sharing, prayer, and mission outreach.⁶⁸ Thus, each group would be expected to regularly do community service projects in its neighborhood, and at least once or twice a year to plan an outreach event such as a block party, picnic, barbeque, or dessert. As noted above, the cell group should be seen as one “pathway” into the church. Actually, this can work in two directions: a) the seeker is invited to the group and then comes to worship, or b) the seeker comes to church and is invited quickly into a small group.

What would be the distinctives of these community based small groups? They would be nurturing Christian communities led by skilled and supported leaders. Group leaders ought to be recruited, interviewed, trained (through orientation seminars, turbo-groups, apprenticeships, monthly leadership meetings, etc.), and accountable to a coordinator. Groups should meet at least twice a month for the whole year (with time off for Christmas and summer breaks?). They would gather in private homes scattered around the city on various nights and mornings to provide lots of options for people. They should be open by invitation, not by advertisement primarily. Each should be committed to multiply new leaders and new groups. Groups would generally grow to no more than twelve participants and then expected to hive off several members, and the trained apprentice would start another group! If at the larger celebration worship level the young congregation is very diverse and multicultural, some groups might be permitted to be more homogeneous and ethnic-specific (or language-specific). Other small groups would seek to intentionally blend races.⁶⁹ The objective is to give unchurched and non-believing seekers choices so that they can fit in where they feel comfortable. Once people come to faith in Christ and are growing, they should be encouraged to join a more integrated group.

There are many practical benefits of this kind of community small group for urban churches. They require no money for space. A large church building is unnecessary. They relate people together who may be uprooted and far from family (common among urban ethnic immigrants). Small groups help a congregation become more heterogeneous in a heterogeneous large city by providing multiple options of relational associations, depending on people's interests and backgrounds. The church's growth is not limited by the size of its building or lack of a building. Community groups enable a young church to enlarge its evangelistic touch all over the city. And finally, they make it possible for newly planted churches to operate with few pastoral staff in a big city where staff support is expensive.

Culturally Sensitive Worship

A final component for our multicultural church starting strategy is *dynamic culturally sensitive worship*. Each church plant will have its own mix of ethnic peoples and so will need to arrive at its own

contextualized worship style. I would, however, like to propose *five* key elements that will need to be part of authentic worship services if they are to be attractive to unchurched ethnics, evangelistically compelling, and yet biblically balanced. First, there will need to be use of the *heart language* of the groups represented in the service and in the surrounding community. Assuming that English will be the common language in most of our multicultural churches, we here refer to use of the vernacular so that hearers can understand the message and relate to the entire service, not just mentally but also connect with them at a deeper level. This “heart language” will differ in each culture and yet there will be some similarities with groups such as Hispanics, African-Americans and Caribbeans. Hispanic culture, for example, is very family-oriented. Thus a non-Hispanic church planter could relate by sharing about his background, his family, and his children in his messages. “Heart” is also communicated in the language itself and so occasional use of terms in the language of the audience may help to communicate respect for the hearer’s culture. If ethnic youth are present, referring appropriately to popular hip-hop artists, for example, can indicate the worship leader or preacher is at least trying to understand their world. Above all, our teams must take great pains to explain biblical concepts and terminology in ways that are readily understandable to those with little or no Christian or theological backgrounds.

Secondly, our teams should aim for *culturally “blended” music*. In order to connect with the various ethnic groups represented in the worship service, it is vital they incorporate a variety of musical styles and sounds: black gospel, Anglo hymns, Spanish caritas, upbeat urban contemporary praise, and even songs in other languages on occasion. Because one size does not fit all in multicultural worship, no one style should dominate. Pastor Mark DeYmaz of Mosaic Church in Little Rock, where 21 nationalities worship together, states, “If the worship style is the same from week to week, it will appeal only to certain segments of the population, which puts up an unintended barrier.” He likens multicultural worship to a family dinner where the kids may not like what’s served one night but will the next. So, they endure it for the sake of unity (Kennedy 2005, 43). And so, while non-Hispanics may not care for Latino music at first, over time they may. Even if they don’t, it helps break down racial barriers. Blended music and worship keeps everyone together and seeks to build unity where culture divides. 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!

Our teams should also aim for *Christ-centered, practical exposition*. For the preaching in our multicultural churches to really “connect” with urban and ethnic peoples it must be culturally-sensitive. Contemporary culture has little patience for long strings of logic and for abstract thinking in general. It prefers the visual, the narrative, and the intuitive over the propositional and the rational. While biblical preachers must never dump absolute truth, to relate will to ethnics, they must also learn to be good storytellers. Ethnics like many others in our society, will respond to narrative preaching. Stories about life, family, and struggles almost always relate will between cultures. The proclamation of God’s Word should touch everyday concerns of the audience, be enthusiastic (if not passionate with some cultures, as with blacks and Hispanics), true-to-the-Scriptures, and full of down-to-earth practical illustrations and applications. To be truly Christ-centered, every attempt should be made to place the biblical text being used within the whole story line of the Bible—the “meta-narrative.” In other words, every text must be asked, “What does this tell us about the salvation we have in Christ?” in order to be understood. The Christ-centric preaching approach views the whole Bible as essentially one big story with a central plot: God restores the world lost in Eden by intervening in history to call out and form a new humanity. This intervention climaxes in Jesus Christ. Our teams must learn how to preach in this way—so that *all* preaching becomes narrative preaching and yet is still careful and close biblical exposition of texts.

Fourth, worship services should be *artistically excellent*. While worship styles may differ, the art and music must be excellent. The quality of speaking, music, and program must be kept high in order to be more inclusive to outsiders and guests. Use of technology, for example, to project the words of songs on the screen, may enable newcomers to learn new songs—or even allow us to teach a Spanish song one Sunday.

Finally, every worship service should *address both Christians and non-Christians*. Tim Keller has done extensive study on the ways to address unchurched post moderns and urbanites in both one-on-one and worship contexts (2002). He believes the best context is a mix of believers and unbelievers

together. In a mixed group, when the preacher speaks somewhat more to non-Christians, the Christians present learn how to relate and share the faith. On the other hand, when the preacher speaks more to Christians, the non-Christians present come to see how Christianity “works”. Many deeply secular post-moderns and urban ethnics tend to decide on the faith on more pragmatic grounds; they do not examine the claims of Christ in a detached intellectual way. Also, they are more likely to make their commitment to Christ through a long process of mini-decisions. They will want to try Christianity on, see how it “fits” their problems and how it fleshes out in real life. Thus multicultural urban services must be designed to speak to *both* groups. Our teams must always expect non-believers to be present and then speak to their concerns—and those of the wider community. If they speak as if their whole neighborhood is present, eventually more and more of the neighborhood will find their way in or be invited by regular attendees! Keller has shown that authentic and dynamic worship has a powerful evangelistic impact and draws unchurched people in—if the service is carefully designed to be visitor and seeker friendly.

These five elements—use of heart language, culturally blended music, Christ-centered culturally-relevant exposition, artistic excellence, and design for both Christians and non-Christians—will insure that our multicultural plants, whatever their “style,” really “connect” with and attract urban ethnics. To implement this kind of *contextualized worship* our seminarian teams will need to: 1) recruit and train multiethnic worship teams from the community, 2) use a variety of local musicians and indigenous instruments, 3) constantly study the varied cultures and musical styles of their communities, 4) study and utilize the dominant cultural theme(s) of various ethnic groups,⁷⁰ and 5) encourage ethnic believers to write and sing their own worship songs.

In multicultural congregations, for deep unity to be experienced in the midst of great diversity, it will be essential that our teams work together with community ethnics to foster a common worship memory, a “shared story.” Researcher Kathy Black comments on the value of the “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 (2000, 90).

To facilitate the emergence of this “third” culture, leaders of multicultural churches must discover ways to take the various individual stories shared by all and build a new common story. This is what happened at Pentecost and can happen today, with God’s enabling and wisdom.

Conclusion

This eight-point strategy for seminary church planting teams to enter New York and successfully launch dynamic multicultural churches is certainly not exhaustive. It is only preliminary and will need to be modified as we learn more through on-the-street ministry. Much work yet needs to be done to research, recruit, network and prepare for Project Jerusalem to begin work in the Big Apple.

In actuality, no one strategy will be adequate for New York City. It will take pluralistic church planting strategy to reach a highly pluralistic multiethnic city. To reach all the many groups—and every subculture within each ethnic group—will take a multifaceted strategy plan. Ken Fong, senior pastor of Evergreen Baptist Church in Los Angeles, widely regarded as a leading authority on Asian American ministry, feels that it will take different kinds of churches to reach the four ethnic sub-groups found in every North American people group (see Appendix 2). Building on the previous work of C. Peter Wagner and Daniel Sanchez,⁷¹ he proposes that “*nuclear ethnics*” would need a language church and “*fellow traveler ethnics*” would require a bilingual or multilingual church to best reach them. “*Marginal ethnics*” would be most effectively won and discipled by a multicultural church and “*alienated ethnics*” by predominately white congregations (1999, 9-10). This model will be helpful to church planting teams because it properly recognizes different levels of assimilation and ethnic identity *within every ethnic group*.⁷² I have previously referred to Enoch Wan’s proposal. He also give strategy planners a very helpful church planting scale, based on his earlier “Cultural Integration/Variation and Readiness Scale.” His premise is that church planters (or the founding ethnic members) should have the “option of forming a church that is not necessarily homogeneous or heterogeneous but somewhere on the continuum between

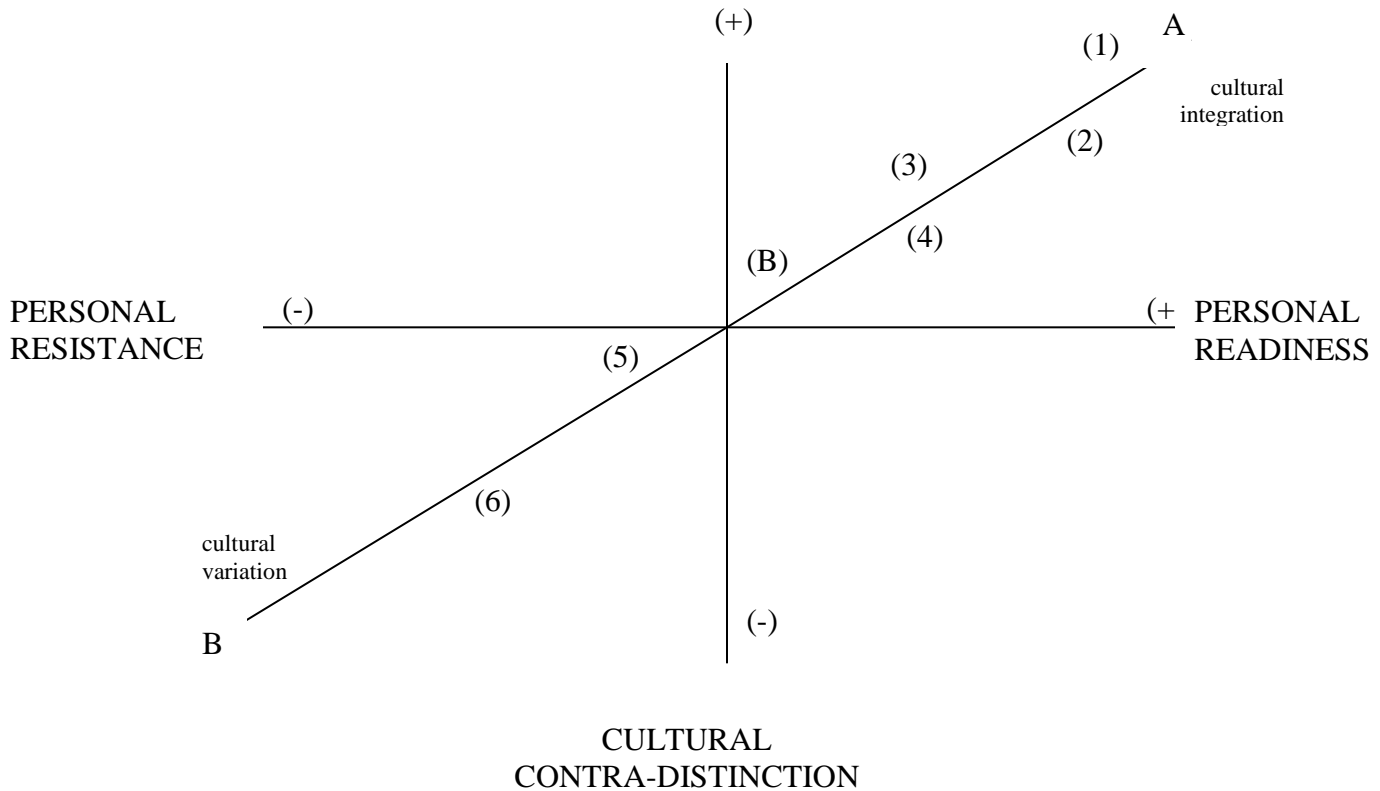
the two” (2004, 7). His scale gives planters at least six options (see Appendix 3). In a pluralistic and multicultural urban setting like New York City, the proposals of both Fong and Wan should be very helpful.

In conclusion, those who are committed to evangelism and the Great Commission in North America must take into consideration the multi-ethnic, multicultural trend of our population. The best way to reach and disciple urban ethnics is through church planting. Multicultural church plants hold great promise for this century. The establishing of multiethnic congregations will require a lot of mutual respect, careful coordination, and Christian love to ensure the future health and wellbeing of such heterogeneous churches. But the task is not an impossible dream. Christ, our Commander-in-Chief, has promised the power of the Holy Spirit, not only for our witnessing and the discipling of our Jerusalem—or just the far corners of the earth—but also in our “Judea and Samaria.”

APPENDIX 1

CULTURAL INTEGRATION/VARIATION & READINESS SCALE

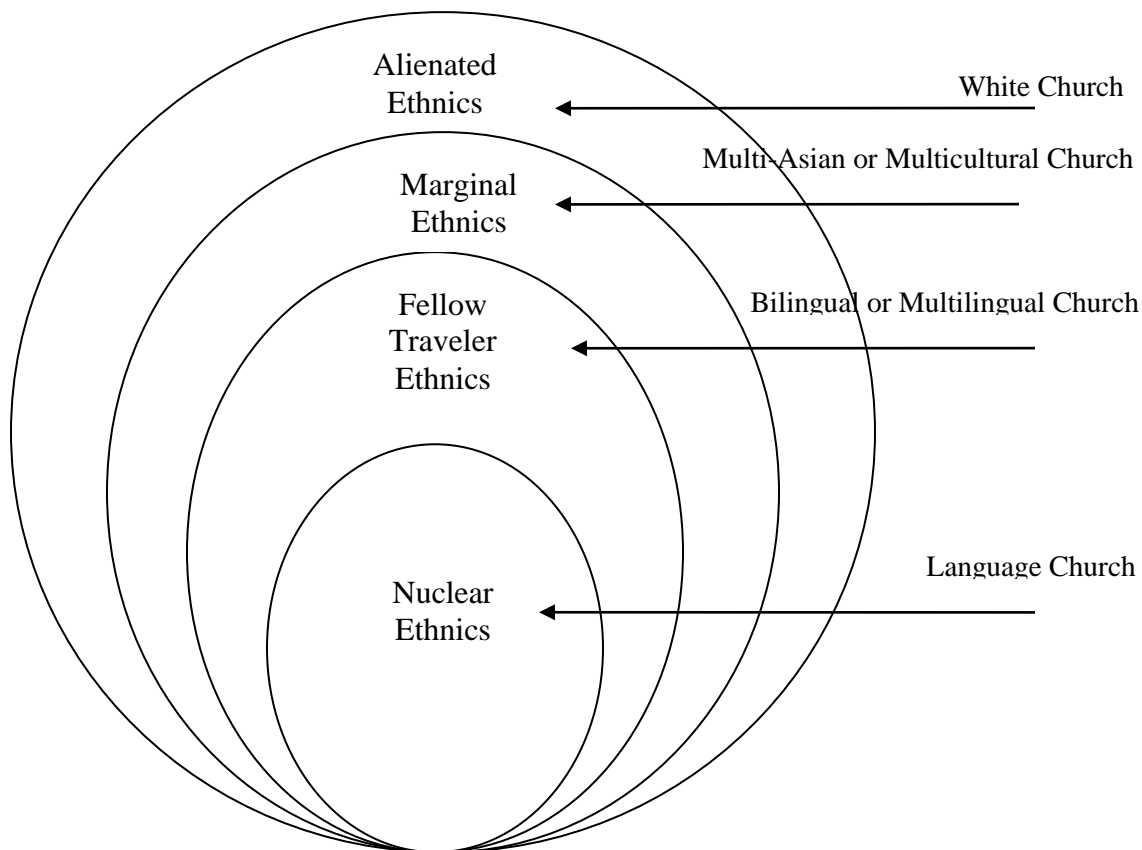
CULTURAL RESEMBLANCE
(objective predisposition)



1. OBE Canadian from the Philippines
 2. OBE Canadian from Pakistan
 3. LBE Canadian of East Indian parents
 4. OBE Canadian from India
 5. LBE Canadian Vietnamese (Buddhist from the countryside)
 6. OBE Canadian Vietnamese (Atheist from Bangkok)
- (B) Point of “acculturation”

Source: Enoch Wan, “Ethnic Receptivity and Intercultural Ministries,” a paper published in *Global Missiology*, October 2004, download: www.globalmissiology.net

APPENDIX 2
Assimilation Guide to Church Planting
(Modified from C. Peter Wagner)



Four Types of Ethnic Identity in an Open Society:

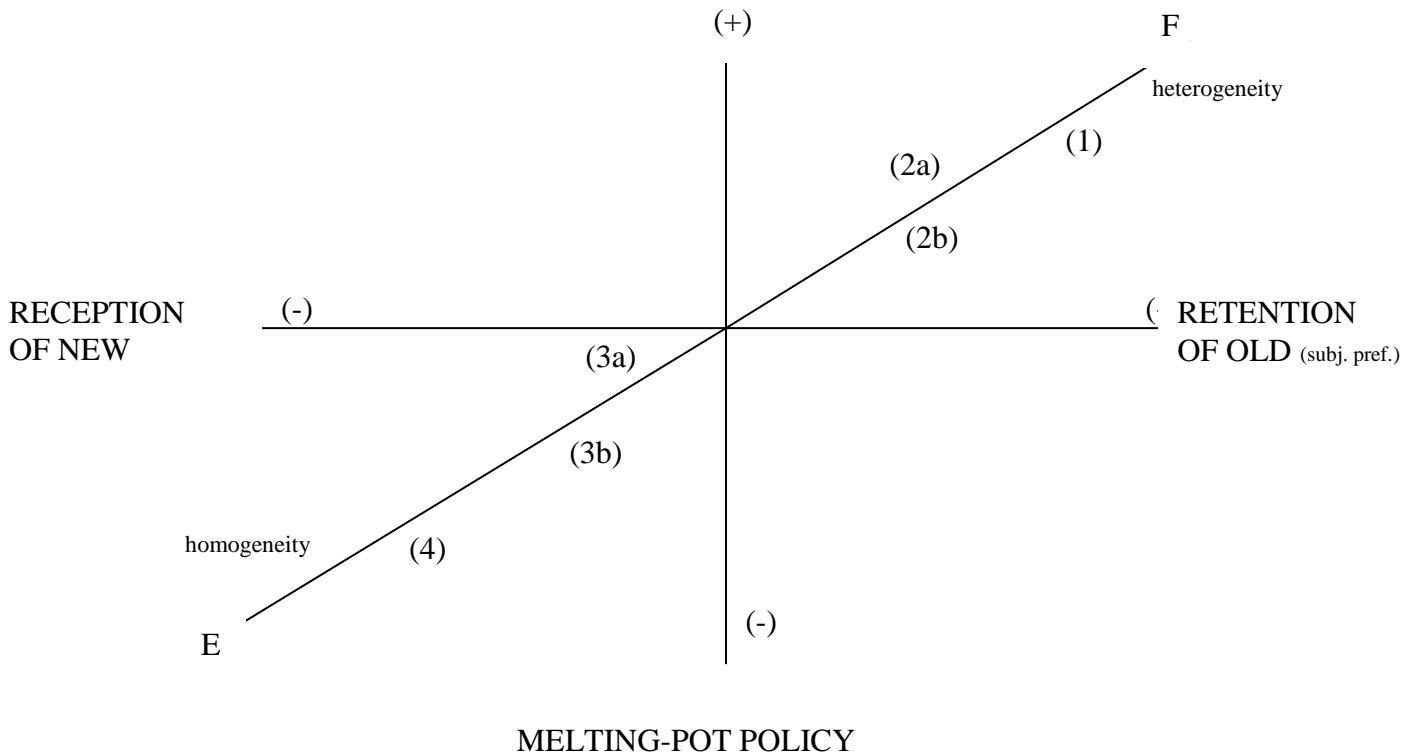
1. **Nuclear Ethnicity:** strongly identify with and are controlled by their ethnic traditions. Often live in isolated setting from mainstream of American life.
2. **Fellow Traveler Ethnicity:** mildly identify with their language-culture group yet are bi-cultural and capable of living in two worlds simultaneously.
3. **Marginal Ethnicity:** identify with their group only when convenient or beneficial. Knowledge of language/culture is limited; may work and socialize with Anglos.
4. **Alienated Ethnicity:** reject their ethnic values/heritage and adopt another.

Adapted from: Ken Uyenda Fong, *Pursuing the Pearl*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1999, p.10.

APPENDIX 3

THE CONGREGATION TYPE AND CHURCH PLANTER'S OPTION SCALE

MULTICULTURALISM IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY
(objective provision)



1. heterogeneous & multi-congregation church
- 2a. multilingual & multicultural church
- 2b. bilingual & bicultural church
- 3a. monolingual & monocultural church, ethnic but open (OBE + LBE + etc.)
- 3b. monolingual & bicultural church, ethnic but conservative (OBE dominant)
4. monolingual & heterogeneous church (only OBE or LBE)

Source: Enoch Wan, "Ethnic Receptivity and Intercultural Ministries," a paper published in *Global Missiology*, October 2004, download: www.globalmissiology.net

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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 These researchers define a "mixed" congregation as one in which no one racial group is 80% or more of the congregation. Actually Emerson's team calculated that overall just 7.5% of America's 300,000 *religious* congregations are racially mixed. But the percentage for *Christian* bodies drops to 5.5%. Overall, the study found 7% of Protestant congregations nationally are "mixed." Integrated Protestant churches tend to be those that are theologically conservative and nondenominational. Surprisingly, among mainline denominational churches, only 2 to 3% are mixed on average. Furthermore these researchers calculate that half of America's 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).

⁵ 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."

⁶ 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). Emerson, DeYoung et al. give 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).

⁷ 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 more 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, funded by Lilly Endowment, studying both multiracial and uniracial congregations. The "Congregational Project," based at Rice University, is believed to be the first large study focusing on racial and ethnic diversity within Christian houses

of worship. The project began with a telephone survey of 2,500 Americans about their congregations. Nearly 500 of these churches, selected at random, were sent mail surveys. Researchers then visited 30 churches in four metro areas – Houston, Los Angeles and unnamed cities in the Midwest and Northeast. Of these visited the team concluded only 18 of these were truly “multiracial.”

⁸ Scripture suggests at least two reasons why God desires ethnic diversity. First, no one ethnic group could ever adequately express the glory of Almighty God. God is infinite, and in order to mirror his infinity, all kinds of cultures and peoples are needed. Each is capable of illuminating one or more of the attributes of God. None can express all that God wants to be in the world. God is seen and understood better through a multiplicity of cultures than He could be through a monoethnic humanity. The beauty of a diamond consists in the number of facets it has. The greater number of facets, the greater the glory of the individual diamond. Likewise ethnic diversity is meant to express the full glory of God in different ways. Second, belonging to an ethnic group is for people’s well being. Authentic living is only found in corporate connectedness. God believes in the value of groups—family, clan, tribe, and ethnic peoples. The need to belong to a group is deeply ingrained in our human nature as created by God. The Old Testament shows that God values cultural/ethnic heritage and identity because they bring us a sense of belonging and security in a sin-cursed, fragmented world. The meaning and purpose of human life is best worked out in the relational context of collectivities.

⁹ See Ps. 2:8; 45:17; 47:9; 86:9; 102:15,22; Is. 49:6; 51:5; 52:10; 52:15; 55:5; 56:7; 60:3; 66:18-19, etc.

¹⁰ See Ps. 67:1-5; 72:11, 17, etc.

¹¹ See Ps. 9:11; 96:3; 105:1; Is. 12:4, etc.

¹² Ex. 14:4; Ps. 106:7-8; Jer. 13:11; Ezek. 20:14; 36:22-23,32; I Sam. 12:20-22; II Sam. 7:23; I King 19:34.

¹³ Matthew narrates the story of rich magi from Asia who come to Bethlehem to pay respects to the infant Jesus and offer Him gifts; this gospel writer also tells of Jesus’ family traveling by night to Egypt in Africa to secure the safety of their son from the murderous threats of Herod. Luke is careful to record that Jesus’ birth was at the time of Caesar Augustus sitting on the Roman throne; he also notes the prayer of Simeon in Jerusalem who foretells that this baby will be a “light for revelation to the Gentiles *and* for the glory of Your people Israel (Lk. 2:30-32). All of these incidents were recorded to position the birth of Jesus in the context of the broader Gentile world and to help readers see that even at Christ’s birth He had an outsider status and attracted the attention of those who felt excluded by the Jews.

¹⁴ Paul’s teams of itinerant evangelists normally preached first in the synagogues and reached some Jews (Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8, etc) and then reached out to other “God-fearers” and Gentiles attached to the synagogue.

¹⁵ Paul does not teach that being in Christ obliterates our ethnicity, nationality, or sexuality. In these passages he is teaching that while our racial, national, social and sexual distinctions remain, they no longer divide us. They are transcended in the unity of the family of God.

¹⁶ If the church is to be a visible representation of the power of God and of heaven, and if all the saints will one day be together proclaiming the one reason they are together, namely Christ’s salvation (see Rev. 7:9-12), then it stands to reason reconciliation would be most visibly demonstrated through various cultures and people worshipping together here on earth. The church functions best in community and not some separate-but-equal mentality that brings us together only on special occasions.

¹⁷ Garrison Keillor jokes, “Another thing I like about New York is that people don’t watch as much television here...in New York TV is tame compared to what you just find on the street” (Keillor 1991).

¹⁸ For those looking for entertainment, NYC is home to 26 Broadway and 125 off-Broadway theaters. The city boasts the largest department store, Macy’s, which covers 2.1 million square feet of space and stocks 500,000

different items! Other impressive firsts: our first president, George Washington, was inaugurated in NYC. Also Babe Ruth hit the first homerun in Yankee Stadium in the first game ever played there. For those who love useless facts, there are 6,274.6 miles of streets in NYC, 578 miles of waterfront, and the statute of Liberty's finger is eight feet long! No matter what you're looking for, you can find it in the city that never sleeps!

¹⁹ Manhattan actually has 60,000 residents for each of its 24 square miles. On weekdays the number of people in Manhattan triples with commuters.

²⁰ Los Angeles has more people born abroad – 40.9% compared with 35.9% for New York – but most are from Mexico. A handful of world cities rival New York in its proportion of the foreign born. – Toronto is 49.4%; Sidney, 33.4%; London, 27.4% – but the ethnic stew is not as varied as in NYC.

²¹ These 2.88 million foreign-born New Yorkers exceed the city's entire population in 1890. NYC never has had more. Since 2000, 104,000 new foreigners have arrived each year.

²² NYC is the second largest city in the world for Puerto Ricans, Haitians, Dominicans and Jews! It is the third largest city for Greeks and the world's fourth largest city for Italians.

²³ The broad ethnic numbers include about 2.3 million Blacks, 2.5 million Hispanics, .8 million Asians, and 41,000 American Indians (2000 Census). The Hispanic population is 27% of the city's population with two groups making up over half of the Spanish speaking segment: 38% are Puerto Rican and 27% are Dominican.

²⁴ Fueled by the tide of Asian and Latin American immigration, NYC saw a population turnaround in the 1990's—the largest and most dramatic of any U.S. city according to 2000 Census figures. A fiscal crisis and high crime rate led a population decline in the 1970's. But NYC is now the nation's biggest comeback city. And the growth of the 1990's was almost entirely non-white.

²⁵ The archbishop of Manhattan gets plenty of press and is major political player. Unlike the Protestant denominations, the Catholic church is a hierarchal organization with a large resource base. It administers many social service programs under contract with the city. Catholic Charities is a major force in the delivery of social services to the poor. The Church is a major source of funds for community-based housing, such as the Nehemiah Project in East New York and the South Bronx.

²⁶ Precisely tabulating how many evangelical Christians there are in the city is a difficult task. Tony Carnes, who led the 2003 study, and his staff, went throughout the city, visiting churches and dropping off surveys in five languages, asking about their theological beliefs and attendance.

²⁷ According to Luo, Klaff analyzed data from a 2000 study conducted by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies. Since her study focused on church goers to conservative Protestant denominational churches, it does not tell us how many are born again believers or how many actually believe evangelical doctrines as individuals.

²⁸ Carnes calls the growing impact of these new Christians “glorious urbanism,” contrasting it with two other kinds of urbanism competing for pre-eminence in New York: “secular modernism” and “magical urbanism” (voodoo and Eastern religions) (2004, 35). There is much optimism in the air among city evangelicals. Finally, the city hierarchy has noticed: the evangelical church is reputed to now be the fastest growing institution in New York City. Despite these gains, the prevailing culture of the city is still unsure of what to make of this emerging giant. According to a recent *New York Times* article, evangelical Christians can, in fact, still be treated with contempt and at other times with curiosity (Luo 2005).

²⁹ 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).

³⁰ Very helpful is Dr. Peart's "reconciliation continuum," consisting of five types of churches or models (pp. 129-142.)

³¹ I have slightly modified one of the terms which DeYoung and his co-authors propose; in this paper I'll describe the third model as "fully integrated" rather than just "integrated" as in *United By Faith*. This is to better distinguish this model from what I'm calling a "mere integration" approach as described in the paragraph above. *United* gives a very helpful chart comparing these three models (see p. 165).

³² 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.

³³ With Dr. Win Arn, I stand in opposition to the "homogeneous unit principle" (HUP) as popularly understood and sometimes practiced. Unfortunately discussions of this controversial church growth concept often generate more heat than light. Though the HUP has been carelessly equated by some to racism, that is a stereotype, not derived from a careful reading of Donald McGavran (see *Understanding Church Growth*, 1980). McGavran never meant for the HUP to be prescriptive but descriptive of cultural realities. In this ongoing debate the author would take a somewhat mediating position: the heterogeneous church is a scriptural concept toward which all of us must strive; likewise the homogenous church can be a scriptural and effective way of beginning and moving a people group toward the scriptural ideal. Thus the often-heard statements that the homogenous church is not scriptural or that the heterogeneous church cannot be successful (growing) are both untrue. There is increasing evidence that multicultural churches that match their community mix are growing today in many American cities. See, for example, the story of Culmore United Methodist Church in Falls Church, VA as told by the church's pastor, Stephen A. Rhodes in *Where the Nations Meet: The Church in a Multicultural World*.

³⁴ For these distinctions I am indebted to Dr. William Smallman, "The Homogenous Unit Principle," unpublished class notes, n.d., 1-3. Smallman reminds us that Donald McGavran, founder of the Church Growth Movement, referred to non-Christian groups which distrust one another, are not normally friends, and do not inter-dine or intermarry, as "unassimilated contiguous homogenous units." Interethnic churches may not be best for these groups.

³⁵ Britt's conclusions are based upon a careful study done in 1985 of 70 churches in Jefferson County, Kentucky. Britt feels the data in the study support the concept of "congruence" as being a much more dependable predictor of numerical growth than the concept of "homogeneity." He suggests we substitute a linear, stacked-up analysis of the multiple institutional and contextual factors affecting church growth with the concept of "congruity."

³⁶ Tetsunao Yamamori defines ethnic consciousness as "the intensity of awareness of one's distinct people-hood 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 also 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!

³⁷ For example, Hispanics and Asians possess the commonality of entering into a white world. Yet their individual social standing will make them comfortable in some groupings and uncomfortable in others.

³⁸ For Keller's recommendations, see his excellent article "Ministry in the New Global Culture of Major City-Centers." It is also available in Redeemer's fall 2005 e-newsletter, *The Movement*.

³⁹ For more on the urgency and mechanics of recruiting a racially diverse leadership group, see Yancey 2003, 85-97. Yancey points out that this is a big issue for African Americans in particular, does not mean changing our theology or hiring unqualified individuals, and should never be seen just as simply a call for quotas.

⁴⁰ Multicultural churches can be started through a variety of church planting strategies. Robert Logan and Steven Ogne in *The Church Planter's Toolkit* (1991, 4-3), list nine possible start-up options, all doable in NYC: pioneering, branching, colonizing, seeding, adopting, partnering, revitalizing, transplanting, and catalyzing.

⁴¹ For review of the strengths and weaknesses of these four church design models, see the author's complete article, "Multicultural Church Planting Models" in *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* (Spring 2005, 114-127). The article also gives numerous examples of urban churches using each of these four models.

⁴² Neighborhoods like Elmhurst, Jackson Heights, and Flushing in Queens

⁴³ They have recently planted three successful "post-modern" congregations [The Journey, Mosaic, and 411]

⁴⁴ 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.

⁴⁵ E.g., black gospel, traditional Negro spirituals, West Indian calypso, Spanish coritos, Anglo hymns, contemporary Christian praise, and simple easy-to-learn English choruses.

⁴⁶ 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."

⁴⁷ Biblical examples of the men or person of peace principle are: Cornelius (Acts 10), Lydia and the Philippian jailer

⁴⁸ For a better understanding of the value of networking for urban church ministry, see Ray Bakke (1987, 179-187).

⁴⁹ Other churches and ministries which may need to be contacted about possible partnership or networking assistance are: Church of Grace (largely Fujianese, 800 members, with five spin-offs); Christ the Rock (East New York, largely Nigerian immigrants); The New Grace Center (East NY in Brooklyn, sponsor of a large school); First Christian Missionary Alliance; Chinese Christian Herald Crusade; and the three recently planted Southern Baptist "postmodern" congregations: The Journey (Pastor Nelson Searcy), Mosaic, and 411.

⁵⁰ Micro churches are new churches designed to stay small and intimate. Also called "organic churches" these churches are growing in popularity. See the article "Make Way for the Micro church!"

⁵¹ But these also appeal to working class and urban poor peoples who may see established churches as stuffy and cold.

⁵² Carl George sees the cell-celebration church as a new paradigm which he calls the "meta church" (to be distinguished from the "mega church") because it calls for such radical change in the thinking of both pastor and people (1991, 50-81). The original and still primary advocate of this non-traditional model is Ralph W. Neighbor, Jr. (*Where Do We Go From Here? A Guidebook for the Cell Group Church*. Houston, TX: Touch Outreach Ministries, 1990.) For practical instructions on how to start a cell church see Logan and Buller's *Cell Church Planter's Guide* (2001).

⁵³ Conn and Ortiz comment, “In the small [cell] group one finds a stronger measure of accountability, greater flexibility and a deeper rooting in the local community and culture that is missing from the regional focus of the mega church” (2001, 247). Thus, if the local context is multicultural the cell groups should reflect this.

⁵⁴ For a good descriptive overview of “The Ten Largest Cell Churches in the World” see the article by the same name in *Cell Group Journal*, Houston, TX: Winter 2001, 26-30. Comiskey’s article cited above (FN#19) lists other growing U.S. cell churches. For the story of the New Hope Community Church in Portland, Oregon see Dale E. Galloway, *20/20 Vision: How to Create a Successful Church with Lay Pastors and Cell Groups* (Portland, OR: Scott Pub. Co., 1990). A list of U.S. cell churches by state can also be accessed at www.touchusa.org.

⁵⁵ A good example of this model is New Life Community Church in Chicago which has six satellite congregations with services in both English and Spanish. This exciting 1700-member multiethnic church has more than 95 home groups meeting throughout the city and suburbs. The pastors and leaders of all the satellites are part of a unified New Life staff and meet weekly for prayer and planning. All the congregations meet together several times a year at a civic auditorium for a grand celebration called “Taste of New Life.” This multisite body has a big vision to reach one percent of Chicago (Jobe 1999, 203-214; Pocock and Henriquez, 2002).

⁵⁶ IBC is led by a Korean American Pastor Mark Oh

⁵⁷ Balance is needed. When a socially concerned church has no theological depth or evangelistic outreach, etc, it becomes “liberal.” When the evangelistic church has no theological depth or social concern, it becomes “fundamentalist” (=legalist).

⁵⁸ “Networking was originally a modern marketplace jargon word which refers to deliberate relationship building to meet business goals.

⁵⁹ This author is aware of no research which proves this.

⁶⁰ Examples of these three types of traditional evangelism: “cold contact”(street evangelism, tract distribution, cold calling, etc.); mass evangelism (crusades, radio/TV broadcasting); visitation evangelism (Evangelism Explosion).

⁶¹ E.g. a breakfast or noon time luncheon where Christian men sponsor/invite a non-Christian friend to hear a quest speaker give a gospel message or testimony.

⁶² Where there are question and answer forums, Christian basics classes, visitor desserts, etc.

⁶³ Weekly seeker-oriented small group meetings to which believers invite their friends or Sunday quests are encouraged to attend.

⁶⁴ E.g., divorce recovery workshops/groups, job search seminars, ministry to people with AIDS, various support groups, counseling ministry, singles recreational events, etc.

⁶⁵ E.g., Christmas concert, comedy night, hot topic seminar, pastor’s gabfests, etc.

⁶⁶ E.g., para-church outreaches to international students, collegians, etc.

⁶⁷ Easterners, for example, are highly relational people who can better understand terms of personal “reconciliation” as opposed to forsenic ideas such as “justification.” Professor Wan’s paper also gives insights into how to deal with those immersed in the “shame culture” of the East (e.g. Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese) as opposed to western “quilt culture.” He points out that Orientals, for example, will be more willing to accept Christ as the “Blame-bearer” or “mediator-reconciliator.” Wan also explains how to share the meaning of grace and stay away from “cheap grace” when witnessing to Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims.

⁶⁸ Ideally these five functions should be balanced elements in well designed and led small groups.

⁶⁹ Mixed small groups which meet monthly are the strategy of Mosaic Church in Little Rock, Arkansas which has 400 attending weekly and 21 nationalities represented. Pastor Mark DeYmaz believes that singing, studying, and fellowshiping together in small groups in the best method for ethnic people to become better acquainted and to build unity in Christ. (Kennedy 2005, 42-43).

⁷⁰ 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

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.

⁷¹ See David R. Sanchez's 1979 dissertation and work for the SBC.

⁷² On page 37 and 38 of Fong's book, he also discusses another "Assimilation and Ethnic Identity Model" which recognizes four types of Asian Americans. Each type is represented by a corresponding cell in his chart. Fong acknowledges that this four-celled scale is based on the work of sociologists Harry Kitano and Roger Daniels in *Asian-Americans: Emerging Minorities* (1988).