

Becoming an Intercultural congregation

What Can Church Communities Do?

It will take faith, trust, and openness to become more intercultural. Here are some things you can do.

Worship

Regularly let different cultural groups influence your style of worship. Many cultures do not respond to a general invitation. They would value if they are personally invited.

It's not enough to do this once a year on a special occasion. Make this part of the DNA of your worship.

Here are some suggestions

- Learn a song from another language
- Learn symbolic gestures from the cultures in your congregation
- Display cultural symbols in the worship space
- Have the Bible read in a cultural language
- Do whatever is possible to ensure everyone has a chance to use their own language.
- Try to express yourself in plain English, not academic English.
- Consider providing simultaneous interpretation and written translations.
- Invite people to pray in their own language—God does not require English!
- Preach about anti-racism
- Talk about our call to be an intercultural church
- Use diverse imagery to describe God. In the Bible, God is described as being like
 - o an eagle
 - o a loving father
 - o a protective mother hen
 - o a rock
 - o a roaring lion
 - o a potter
 - o a judge
 - o a jealous husband
 - o a woman giving birth
 - o a good shepherd
 - o a persistent widow
 - o and many more

Leadership

Share leadership among racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. But be careful: Don't assume any one person speaks for their whole group.

In meetings and decision-making, ask: Who is present? Who speaks? Does everyone feel included?

- Make sure leaders learn how to work with different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups:
 - o Provide opportunities for meaningful encounters with other cultural communities.
 - o Ask leaders to attend workshops to increase their understanding of other cultures.
 - o Hire a consultant to teach cross-cultural communication.
 - o Organize exposure trips to other countries.
 - o Provide leaders with anti-racism training.

- Create opportunities for different cultural groups to mix as equals. Don't let any one culture dominate. Everyone contribute and everyone's cultural traditions are celebrated.
- Look at the ways the community interacts. Whose voices are heard? Whose voices are not? Keep working at it.
- Learn what languages people are most comfortable with. Can everyone understand what is being said? Is everyone able to contribute?

In intercultural interaction no one is left unchanged. All of us by examining our own cultures, biases, and prejudices begin to change to create a new community.

Becoming Intercultural congregation is not about survival. It is the nature of a Christlike community.

It is a journey and a process. We will not arrive but it is important to start the journey

For all white congregation or pre dominantly Anglo congregations.

The questions that is asked is why should we worry about becoming an intercultural congregation? We are all white. We do not need to think about being intercultural.

The question that needs to be asked is: Why is the congregation all white?

Saying we are all white is not an excuse to not begin the journey