Culturally-Conscious

WORSHIP

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KATHY BLACK

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

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Contents

Prelude ix

Introduction: Dreams, Definitions, and Demographics 1
- Multicultural Church but Separate Worship
- Multicultural Church with Multicultural Worship
- Cross-Cultural Communication
- Definition of Terms
- Culturally-Conscious Worship
- Predictions of the Future
- Sneak Previews

1. Motivations and Models 17
- Motivations for Churches
- Motivations for Individuals
- Models of Culturally-Conscious Worship
- Models of Bilingual/Multilingual Worship
- Summary

2. Kin-dom Visions and Kinship Values 35
- Kin-dom Visions
- Kinship Values
- Summary

3. Cultural Complexities 63
- Surface Culture and Primary Culture
- Ethnic Cultural Complexities
- Denominational and Missionary Complexities
- Summary

4. Shared Stories, Shared Story 83
Worship's Story
Creating a Shared Story at Pentecost
Different Interpretations of the Story
Creating a Shared Story, a Common Memory
Biblical Images
Visual Art
Music
Eliciting the Vertical Stories
Sharing the Horizontal Stories
Summary

5. Culturally-Conscious Worship: Balancing and Blending 105
Balancing the Vertical and Horizontal
Balancing Visual Symbols
Balancing the Comfortable and the Unsettling
Balancing Precatechesis and Catechesis
Blending Older Generations and Younger Generations
Blending Options for Culturally-Conscious Worship
Living with Different Stories Simultaneously
The Next Step
Gray's Story

Appendix A: Global Resources 117

Appendix B: Hymns from around the World Found in North American Hymnals 121

Appendix C: Traditional Hymn Tunes with New Lyrics 141

Appendix D: Questionnaire 149

Prelude

The question "How does/should one design worship in a multicultural context?" was asked several years ago by students and clergy in the Los Angeles basin. I was fascinated by the question since I had asked a similar question in 1980 when I was appointed as a chaplain at Gallaudet University (a college in Washington, D.C., for students who are deaf) and associate pastor of the Washington United Methodist Church of the Deaf. This was a cross-cultural appointment for me, and I learned much about pastoring in a community whose culture and language were different from my own.

From that experience, I knew that the question "How does/should one design worship in a multicultural context?" could not be answered until we knew at least the basics of how persons of other cultures worshiped in a more homogenous context. So I set out on what I considered to be a prerequisite research project, studying the worship practices of the twenty-one different ethnic cultures within The United Methodist Church. That resulted in the book *Worship Across Cultures* (Abingdon Press, 1998).

Talking with clergy and laity of these various cultures, worshiping in their congregations, and writing that book with twenty-five coeditors was not only a deep and rewarding experience for me, it was a crucial prelude to this book on culturally-conscious worship. The rich diversity of worship practice that I experienced around the country in these congregations has led me to believe that worship in multicultural or multiethnic contexts should be conscious of the "liturgical homelands"[1] of the cultures present in the congregation.

If you are pastoring a multicultural congregation and are in need of some of the basic issues and questions to ask surrounding a Korean funeral or a Filipino wedding or a Vietnamese baptism, *Worship Across Cultures* is the resource to consult, not this text. This book is about

[1]Carol Doran and Thomas H. Troeger, *Trouble at the Table: Gathering the Tribes for Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 23.

designing worship (primarily Sunday morning worship) on a weekly basis in multicultural congregations. It deals with the cultural conflicts that arise in regard to the various expectations people bring to worship and the cultural complexities that need to be faced to develop a shared story, a common memory, a new congregational culture in the midst of such tremendous diversity.

I am grateful for a sabbatical granted me by the Claremont School of Theology, a research grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theological Education, and the students in the Multicultural Worship class who helped me hone the questions and issues this book addresses. I am most indebted to Dr. Mary Kraus for imagining the term *culturally-conscious worship* as a way of articulating what this book is about. Her marvelous hospitality also allowed me a place to write away from the daily distractions of my life in Claremont. She, along with my colleague in worship, Jack Coogan, were also helpful dialogue partners throughout the process.

Gratitude goes also to the many pastors I have talked with and the multicultural congregations I have visited for their hospitality in sharing their multicultural worship practices with me. It gave me a feel for the various models of worship that currently exist in multicultural contexts in this country. It is my hope that the models presented and the information found within will stir the imaginations of your minds and hearts to think intentionally and theologically about the design and content of worship in multicultural contexts.

Introduction: Dreams, Definitions, and Demographics

When I was beginning to write this book, I had a strange dream one night. In the dream, I was in a car driving to a lake when we passed a large field. The cars in front of me had slowed down, and some had pulled over to get a better view of what was in the field. As we approached, there in the middle of the field was the strangest creature I had ever seen. It had a body about the size of a cow, but the hair on the body was like that of a shaggy dog. The head and tail looked like a Brontosaurus dinosaur. Its neck was long and skinny and smooth and very flexible. The neck could be as short as the neck of a horse or extended as long as the neck of a giraffe. On the back part of the body were two horns that resembled the pointy nose of a rhinoceros. Clearly these horns were prickly at best and possibly dangerous, but we were not afraid of the creature. Everyone in the car kept asking, "What is it? What is it?" "I don't know," I replied, "but it sure is fascinating! Let's find out."

That's exactly the question I ask when trying to describe the creature some call "Multicultural Worship" and I have come to call (with the help of a friend)[1] "Culturally-Conscious Worship." What

[1]Many thanks to Rev. Dr. Mary Kraus for imagining this term, *Culturally-Conscious Worship,* to define what this book is about.

is it? It's a strange-looking creature, but it has familiar features. It reminds us of an ancient past but is clearly something new. Parts of it are inviting, like a big shaggy dog, but parts of it are scary, and we're not sure how close we want to get to it. It is mysterious and beyond our reach, yet exciting, calling us to further investigation. Some look at it from the safety of their cars, and others want to see it up close, to get involved with it.

But what is multicultural worship? On the one hand, it can be argued that all worship is multicultural. In a homogenous African American service, there are elements from various parts of Africa that were brought by the people who were taken as slaves to this country. These rituals and practices were merged with the white missionary teachings of their masters, along with their own liturgical creations on this soil, the spirituals.

The liturgy of a congregation that is entirely composed of European Americans is likewise multicultural in its history. We sing hymns from German composers and British composers and American composers, both black and white. Our eucharistic prayers come from Paul and the early church in the Mediterranean area, including North Africa. Other prayers come from various parts of Europe and the United States.

And yet, within any denomination, people struggle to hold on to their "traditional" worship practices as if they were stagnant entities for hundreds of years. Introducing change in a worship service is often met with, "We've never done it that way before." And yet the reality is that worship has been in flux since the beginning of our history.

Throughout history, most worship services have been "multicultural" to some degree in that they contain elements from diverse cultures, including roots in Jewish worship. Few, if any, liturgies derive their material from a single culture. However, claiming that all worship is multicultural in its very nature masks the real differences that congregations are facing today when persons of very diverse cultures worship together. The past thirty to forty years have had a major effect on the cultural makeup of many congregations in urban, suburban, and even rural areas. Many multicultural congregations are struggling today with what it means to worship in such a diverse context.

The assimilationist policies of the United States forced early immigrants from various parts of Europe to give up their native languages and cultural practices and join the "melting pot" of American culture. To a large extent, this worked because in their

physical appearance, the people looked enough alike that once they gave up their native languages (other than English), these Europeans could blend into the "look" of being American. But the early immigrants from China and Japan did not have the same choice, since their facial features did not allow them to "blend in" in the same way.

Since the 1960s and 1970s, however, many persons who belong to cultural and linguistic minority groups are trying to reclaim or maintain their ethnic histories, languages, and cultural practices. The "melting pot" image has been replaced with the "salad bowl" image, where we are all in the same bowl, but our uniqueness is clearly visible.

In addition to the movements happening within this country, there has also been a recent influx of immigrants to this country as a result of various wars and upheavals in other lands. The Korean War, the Vietnam War, the war in Cambodia, the war in Nicaragua, the upheavals in China and Cuba and Haiti are just a few. These migrations of people from all over the globe have had a major effect on our increasingly multicultural society. The more recent immigrants bring with them their belief systems, worldviews, cultural values, and ritual practices–including worship.

Many Christian immigrants seek out a congregation composed of persons from their native culture or persons who share their native language. Having worship in their native language and in the style and form that are familiar to them provides a touchstone for them in this foreign land. For many communities, this time of segregation is important for both spiritual and cultural enrichment. It is in homogenous worshiping communities that the rich language(s) of their native land is spoken, where the music is in the rhythm that beats in their bones and where the prayers that express their deepest struggles and most intense joys are offered.

In these more homogenous congregations, God is praised in Cantonese or Spanish, Korean or Fanti, Tagalog or Creole, Vietnamese or Samoan, Lao or English. Singing may be accompanied by guitars and maracas, or piano and organ, or African drums or Native American drums or Latin American drums–each with their own distinct shape and sound, but all beating the heartbeat of the world. Some sit quietly in sincere reverence while others dance for joy over what God has done in their lives.[2]

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[2]Kathy Black, *Worship Across Cultures* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998).

Those who have immigrated to this country bring their "liturgical homelands"[3] with them. They bring the sights and sounds and touches expressed in their worship traditions, the ebb and flow of celebration and meditation, the depth of their belief and their commitment to God. In times of transition and turmoil (which many immigrants experience in this country), their "liturgical homelands," a sense of cultural familiarity as well as a faith community, are crucial for planting one's feet in new soil and not only surviving but growing–supported by the community.

So while this book is about worship in multicultural congregations, I want to recognize the importance of homogenous faith communities, especially for new immigrants. For many, the survival of their language and culture in future generations is dependent on a strong ethnic congregation.

Multicultural Church but Separate Worship

One model of the multicultural church that can be found in several cities around the country is a congregation with two or more worshiping congregations organizationally structured under one multicultural church. Each subgroup worships in its native language. So a congregation may have three pastors on staff: one for the English-language ministry, one for the Korean-language ministry, and one for the Spanish-language ministry. While the administrative tasks, outreach ministry, and other programs of the church are done collectively, worship (and other activities such as religious education and fellowship times) may be conducted in their respective languages. The entire congregation comes together a few times a year for a common multicultural worship service, but for most Sundays, none of the three worship services conducted are multicultural. This model not only allows for a multicultural context, a greater pool of resources, and shared facilities, but it also honors the language preferences and unique worship styles of the various cultural communities represented in the congregation.

Multicultural Church with Multicultural Worship

Despite the number of persons who join ethnic congregations or who join multicultural congregations with various language ministries that hold separate worship services, there is still an increasing number of congregations in this country that are composed of persons of

[3]Carol Doran and Thomas H. Troeger, *Trouble at the Table: Gathering the Tribes for Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 23.

different races, ethnicities, and cultures. Many of these worship services are conducted in the English language. For many recent immigrants to this country, one of the first goals is to learn the English language. Attending an English-speaking church and developing supportive friends in the congregation who are native English speakers are steps in achieving that goal.

Other congregations are composed of persons from the Philippines or from Africa, where there are so many languages spoken among the islands (Tagalog, Ilocano, Pampango, etc.) or among the various countries and tribes of Africa that English is the language most have in common. But multicultural worship services are not limited to English-language congregations. There are multicultural worship services conducted in Spanish or conducted bilingually in a Chinese congregation in Cantonese and Putonghua (Mandarin) or conducted in French and Creole in a Haitian church.

A historic European American congregation now has a large Filipino population comprising more than a third of its membership. A large European American congregation in a city that is predominantly black has just called an African American to be their senior pastor. A congregation whose charter members were from Mexico is now composed of persons from Cuba, Argentina, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, and Ecuador. A traditional African American congregation now has members from various countries in Africa and the Caribbean.

The membership of a European American church has been rapidly declining over the last decade. A church in Los Angelas had a choice of closing or inviting another congregation to merge with them and assume primary responsibility for the facilities. They offered it to a Native American congregation, and the remaining remnant of the European American congregation joined the Native American church. A Japanese church composed of second- and third-generation Japanese conduct their services in English. Over the past few years more and more one and one half generation (moved to the United States as children and were educated here) and second-generation Koreans and Chinese have joined this church, making it a pan-Asian congregation with Japanese clergy. The combination of cultures in any given congregation is virtually endless.

Each multicultural congregation is unique in its ethnic makeup and approach to ministry and worship. Some congregations are monolingual while others are bilingual and still others are multilingual. Part (or most) of a congregation's ministry may be focused on newly arrived immigrants (documented or undocumented) while another

congregation may be multiethnic but composed of persons whose ancestors arrived on this soil several generations ago. Some multicultural churches have numerous persons within their congregations who have recently converted to Christianity and are hearing the biblical stories for the first time. Each congregation has its own challenges and its own ways of honoring and celebrating its diversity and the common Christian tie that binds them together as a faith community.

Cross-Cultural Communication

Communicating in relatively homogenous congregations can be rife with misunderstandings. This becomes even more complicated when communicating across cultures. Often idioms don't translate from one language to another ("It's raining cats and dogs" can be very confusing for those who are studying English as a second language). The same word in English can have a different meaning to a person in Australia or Britain (a "bench" to an Australian is a kitchen "counter" to an American, or the "trunk" of a car is the "boot" for a Briton). The tone of voice (e.g., an ironic tone) can totally change the meaning of a word that may not be understood by those less familiar with the nuances of that particular language. Younger generations have their own vocabulary that often doesn't communicate outside that particular cultural group ("bad" really means "good"). Each culture's value system and worldview forms the basic assumptions that lie behind every communication event, whether it is verbal or nonverbal.

Worship is clearly a communication event, and in multicultural congregations, miscommunication and associated problems can arise when communicating cross-culturally. Chapter 3 will deal with these issues in depth.

Definition of Terms

In addition to communication across cultures being an extremely complicated task, another difficulty in communication lies with a whole new set of words and phrases that have emerged in attempts to talk about multiculturalism. The whole language of multiculturalism is relatively new to the English language and its usage in the United States. If you look at a dictionary from thirty years ago, the word *multiculturalism* will not be listed. And to complicate things even further, people in the fields of anthropology, urban ministry, population growth, or genetics may use the same term to mean different things.

The definitions of terms we thought we understood, such as *race*, are now being challenged. So let me try to clarify what meanings I intend behind the language I use throughout this book.

Race: The problem with the word *race* is that some scientists believe that it is not a helpful category for classifying human beings anymore.

> The concept [of race] has little or no value for describing human biological diversity. This is because the pattern of human variation is predominantly one of within-group variation, so that it is impossible to delineate clear boundaries between groups. Biological differences between groups result from the isolation of breeding populations, but evidence indicates contact between groups since at least the Middle Pleistocene (0.6 million years ago). In the past 500 years, with the expansion of trade, colonization, etc., long-range contacts have greatly increased; gene pools are in constant flux, and the biological contrasts between populations are slight, relative to their internal variety.[4]

Basically, the variations within any one traditionally defined "race" are as great as the variations between "races." Still, if we eliminate race from our vocabulary (which is an intriguing idea), then we also eliminate *racism.* And racism is a topic in this country that still needs to be dealt with by everyone. Racism is "the belief that some races are inherently superior (physically, intellectually, or culturally) to others, and therefore have a right to dominate them."[5] Racism has contributed much pain and suffering to numerous groups of people in this country, and much more work needs to be done to overcome our racist attitudes and actions before we can eliminate it from our vocabulary.

However, I will use *race* sparingly. It is used by the United States Bureau of Census, and it is an important distinction in regard to assimilation into another culture. For example, a light-skinned Mexican woman coming to this country at age ten can master the English language and American culture and can be perceived by the dominant culture as white and therefore be treated as an equal.

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[4]David Crystal, ed., *Cambridge Encyclopedia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 885.

[5]E. D. Hirsch, Jr., Joseph F. Kett, and James Trefil, *Dictionary of Cultural Literacy,* 2d ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 338.

However, a Japanese man or an African woman who is second- or third-generation American is often born into the American culture learning English as a first language, but neither will be able to "pass" in this country because of their "racial" features.

Biracial means that a person was born to parents of different races. And the term *multiracial* can identify someone whose heritage is a combination of several races: an African American grandfather, a Native American grandmother, a German father, and a Native American/African American mother. The term can also be used to refer to a congregation whose members comprise two or more races.

Ethnicity: Ethnicity is different from race. Ethnicity refers to an "identity with or membership in a particular racial, national, or cultural group, and observance of that group's customs, beliefs, and language."[6] A church can be *monoracial* (an all-black church) but *multiethnic* if there are African American members as well as persons from the Caribbean with African ancestry or Africans from Ghana or Nigeria, Sierra Leone or Zaire. Or a congregation may be composed only of Asians, but they are multiethnic: Koreans, Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese, and so on.

Ethnocentricism: Ethnocentrism is "the belief that one's own culture is superior to all others, and is the standard by which all other cultures should be measured."[7] In many ways, ethnocentrism is as destructive as racism. The problem with ethnocentrism in this country is that many European Americans are not sufficiently aware of the value systems and intricacies of our own culture to realize we judge all others by it. Some go so far as to say that European Americans have no culture! Herein lies the difficulty. What is a culture?

Culture: Culture is "the sum attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguishes one group of people from another. Culture is transmitted through language, material objects, ritual, institutions, and art from one generation to the next."[8] The first part of this definition can refer to numerous groupings of persons. Take youth culture. I certainly don't understand half of their language. I understand the words but not the meanings behind the words. I am clueless about the material objects they insert in and under their skin, and their reasons for piercing their eyebrows, noses, belly buttons, and who knows what else. Their music and other art forms often separate them from other persons.

[6]Ibid., 417.
[7]Ibid.
[8]Ibid., 415.

Yet the last part of this definition is about passing down these "sum attitudes, customs, and beliefs" from one generation to the next. For this reason, culture is often used to refer to *ethnic* cultures. Whenever *culture* is used in this book, it will usually refer to *ethnic* cultures unless there is an adjective to clarify its usage for another group of people: Generation X culture, denominational culture, and so on.

The term *bicultural* is used to identify a person who is comfortable moving in and out of two different cultures. For example, most African Americans are bicultural. They know how to adapt their language, behavior patterns, and values from one culture to the other.

The term *multicultural* can be used to identify a person who is comfortable in more than two cultures (many Europeans can move in and out of French, Swiss, British, or German cultures). A congregation is identified as multicultural if its membership is made up of persons from two or more different cultures.

Multiculturalism: Multiculturalism is "the view that the various cultures in a society merit equal respect and scholarly interest."[9] In many ways, this is a fuzzy definition. What does "equal respect" mean? Some interpret this to mean equal treatment, equal authority, and so on. With this interpretation, *multiculturalism* and *ethnocentrism* collide. It is difficult to believe all cultures merit equal treatment and still hold on to an ethnocentric attitude that "my" culture is superior. Others will argue, however, that they can respect another culture while still holding on to the belief that their culture is superior.

Whichever end of the spectrum one leans toward, the role of cultural critique is crucial. Some people are always ready to critique another's culture but are defensive of their own. Others are always critiquing their own culture and "romanticizing" the cultures of others. In reality, however, we need to critique our own culture, and we need to provide some judgments on other cultural practices and beliefs. For example, I want to honor the communal nature of African cultures, their rich dance rituals in worship, and their music, but I do not want to affirm the cultural practice of female circumcision practiced in some countries. Likewise, there are things that I want to uphold about my own culture and things that definitely need to be critiqued and challenged.

In general society the problem is what (or whose) "higher" standard is being used to make these value judgments. In the church we think it is easier because we have a standard by which to do cultural critique–the will of God. But as we saw in the situation in South Africa

[9]Ibid., 423.

during apartheid and in this country during slavery, the "will of God" can be interpreted very differently by persons from diverse cultures.

The controversy over the definition of multiculturalism will not be resolved here; neither will the controversy over how to live in a multicultural church, let alone a multicultural society. The conversation will continue in this country for many years to come.[10] For the purposes of this book, however, multiculturalism will be used to refer to the attitude or belief that the cultures present in our society deserve attention and respect. In terms of multicultural congregations, each culture has elements that are sacred and important to the spiritual lives of the people raised in that culture. When these elements can be interpreted for others outside the culture and can be used appropriately and with integrity, the congregation should be open to having these elements shared with the entire congregation.

Assimilation: Assimilation is "the process by which a person or persons acquire the social and psychological characteristics of a group."[11] It is difficult for anyone to achieve educational, social, or career goals in this country without assimilating to some degree to what is called "the American culture" (most often defined by the European American, male powerbase and that which fosters capitalist economics).

Assimilationism, on the other hand, is "a specific ideology that sets the fundamental conditions for full economic and social citizenship in the United States." It has three main features: (1) It "requires adherence to core principles and behaviors"; (2) It "rejects racialized group consciousness"; and (3) It "repudiates cultural equity among groups."[12] Assimilationism in many ways is the opposite of multiculturalism. It views equality among cultures as a threat to harmony and peace.[13] And when you think about it, cultural equity is a logistical nightmare for government and the church. We can't negotiate differences between Republicans and Democrats or Pentecostals and Episcopalians, let alone the numerous cultural groups that make up this country. Multiculturalism is hard work. Total assimilationism is so much easier—at least for those in power.

In reality, assimilation happens on a variety of levels. All immigrant children must assimilate to the American educational system. To one degree or another, we all assimilate to the values and

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[10]For a more detailed discussion, see Avery F. Gordon and Christopher Newfield, eds., *Mapping Multiculturalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

[11]Hirsch et al., *Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, 412.

[12]Gordon and Newfield, *Mapping Multiculturalism,* 80.

[13]Ibid., 81.

practices of the Western-style medical establishment. We talk about the "Southwest" as if it had a culture all its own, and in reality it does, because most people in that region have assimilated the various ways of the Native American inhabitants as well as the Mexican American population and the European American peoples. A new "Southwest" culture has been created out of the mix. And in many multicultural churches, a "new" culture has been created out of their interaction and the living out of the gospel among the diverse members.

But what about the term *multicultural worship?*

- Does multicultural worship identify the worship of any congregation that is multicultural in its makeup?
- Or does multicultural worship identify the form and content of worship rather than the people present in the congregation?
- Can multiculturalism happen (each culture is given equal respect) in worship when the form, content, style, and tone of worship is the same as it was when the congregation was homogenous?
- Or should the service itself (at one time or another, depending on what model is being used) be representative of the various cultures present?
- Can a worship service be multicultural in an all-white congregation in Nebraska?

These questions do not have easy answers. Designing worship in a multicultural context is still a relatively new field. It is that odd creature that is both ancient and new, familiar yet strange, enticing yet possibly dangerous. The term *multicultural worship* can be confusing, depending on who is using it.

Taken in its broadest sense, multicultural worship can refer to a large spectrum of worship practice. At one end of the spectrum is worship with absolutely no changes made to accommodate the new cultures represented in the multicultural congregation. The newer members are expected to fully assimilate into the existing worship style.

At the other end of the spectrum is the type of worship that is done at World Council of Churches meetings. In these worship services, a song from South Africa is sung in Zulu, a sung response is taken from the Greek Orthodox Church, the corporate prayer of confession was written by someone in Brazil, and the scripture is read in the Tagalog language of the Philippines. While these liturgies are very multicultural, they are designed for a large group of people who come together for a short period of time, not for a continuing worshiping community.

In between these extremes are a wide variety of models that vary in the way churches incorporate the spiritualities and worship traditions of the cultures present in their congregations.

I do not need to describe or analyze the worship that happens at the end of the spectrum where the church is multicultural in its membership but the worship has not changed. It is “the way it has always been.” Because the congregation is multicultural, some would argue that their worship is multicultural as well. Because of the differences of opinion surrounding the meaning of the term *multicultural,* it is difficult to articulate the other models on this spectrum.

What I would like to address are those churches that are trying to take cultural diversity seriously in designing worship. I do not want to deny the term *multicultural worship* to any congregation that is multicultural. On the other hand, I want to distinguish between those congregations that assimilate persons of other cultures into the traditional worship of that congregation and those that intentionally design worship to be inclusive of the diversity of cultures represented in the congregation. I have chosen another phrase to describe the latter: *culturally-conscious worship.*

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

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

Number 3 in the above definition can refer to persons of any ethnicity. This is intentional, since projections for the future also suggest that class or economic status will be the determining dividing factor of the future rather than race or ethnicity.[14] The “cultural” experience of the lower classes is already something the church should be addressing. Culturally-conscious worship takes these subcultures seriously as well.

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[14] *Race in America: A Message from LA.* Video production of the Multicultural Collaborative, 1998. Distributed by Dubs Inc., 1220 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood, CA, 90038.

Culturally-Conscious Worship

This book, *Culturally-Conscious Worship,* is just one of many contributions to the dialogue of what it means to be a multicultural faith community. It is by no means a definitive statement on multiculturalism or worship or any combination of the two. It is not a recipe book for culturally-conscious worship, since each church's context (denomination, cultures represented in the congregation, pastoral leadership, lay leadership, etc.) is so very different.

Instead, this book tries to lay out some of the cultural and liturgical issues that pastors may face when designing worship in a multicultural context. Hopefully, you will gain a deeper awareness and sensitivity of the underlying factors that contribute to communication across cultures.

In worship, communication happens on a variety of levels. Sometimes what we intend to communicate and what people receive are at cross purposes because we are unaware of the cultural assumptions that form both the intent of a message and the reception of any verbal or nonverbal communication.

- Do some members of the congregation arrive twenty to thirty minutes late to church? Is this interpreted by some to be disrespectful?
- Does the Sharing of Joys and Concerns seem to go on too long? Whose cultural assumptions are deciding what is "too long"?
- Is music style a continual hot topic of controversy? Whose cultural biases determine what music is appropriate for sacred settings?
- Are the aisles congested during the Passing of the Peace or Ritual of Friendship because people refuse to stay in their pews to greet one another?
- Are you struggling with the issue of Sunday worship being worship or evangelism?
- Is there conversation about which prayers are more spiritual—corporate prayers printed in the bulletin or an extemporaneous prayer offered by someone on behalf of the congregation?
- Is there conflict over who is responsible for disciplining children?
- Are some people uncomfortable being called by their first names?
- Are some people complaining that worship is going on too long?

- Are some saying that your sermons are too short and others that they are too long?

Each of these questions and many, many more all have (often unconscious) cultural assumptions that lie behind the communication event. Some have to do with cultural differences about time (being "on time" or "wasting time"). Some have to do with cultural definitions of what a sermon is and isn't, what sacred music should sound like, or what kinds of prayers God prefers. Others have to do with issues of formality and informality and what is appropriate in a sacred setting. (These issues will be dealt with in depth in chapter 3.)

In reality, the controversies named above can be found in homogenous congregations among people of the same ethnicity but who come from different geographical regions, different denominational backgrounds, or different generations. We don't think that the cultural differences of "the South" or "the West" or denominational or generational cultures make that big a difference, but communication and liturgical expectations can be conflicts in homogenous congregations as well.

In multicultural congregations, geographical, denominational, theological, and liturgical differences, along with generational differences, are complicated by ethnic cultural differences and often linguistic differences as well. As persons from various cultures bring their own expectations about the form, content, style, and mood or "feel" of worship, negotiating these differences can be quite a challenge.

Predictions of the Future

If the projections of the United States Bureau of Census statistics for future population growth are correct, chances are multicultural congregations will increase in number over the next fifty years rather than decrease. Keeping in mind the concerns about the definition of "race" today, but recognizing that this is still how our government classifies people, let us look at the statistics.

Based on birth and death rates in the various ethnic communities, population statistics predict that by the year 2050:

- The European American (white) population will increase by 3 percent.
- The black race (of any nationality: African Americans, Nigerians, Jamaicans) will increase by 69 percent.
- American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts will increase in population by 79.5 percent.

- Asians and Pacific Islanders will increase 195 percent.
- Hispanics (of numerous nationalities) will increase in population 199 percent.[15]

I realize that for some European Americans, maybe even some African Americans, these numbers stir within them a sense of anxiety, even fear. The rhinoceros horns on the creature of my dream loom more large and threatening than its cuddly shaggy dog possibilities. European Americans will only increase their population by 3 percent. Asians and Hispanics will triple in population while the African American population will increase by just over fifty percent. While blacks outnumber Hispanics at the turn of the new millennium, by 2050 there will be 96,508,000 Hispanics and only 60,592,000 persons of African descent.[16]

But to the Christian church, these numbers should not be met with disdain or contempt or even fear and trembling, because the largest growing churches are often among these populations. Many come with a rich Christian heritage, a celebrative spirit, and a deep commitment to both God and neighbor.

The future is ripe with excitement as we share our faith journeys and ritual practices with one another. This is not to say that languages won't be stumbling blocks, or that differing theologies won't pose problems, or that a true welcome from all sides will be easy. Although we are often aware of surface differences between persons of one culture and another (the names people give their children, the food they eat, what they wear to church, the music they listen to, the way they greet one another), we are often unaware of the deeper differences that divide cultures based on worldviews and value systems.

These deeper issues can cause difficulties when communicating cross-culturally—especially in worship. There will be many challenges to face in the coming years as we all work together to overcome our various ethnocentric attitudes and behaviors. Still, we are all one in the body of Christ, and the future of the church and our society may depend on how we meet this multicultural challenge.

Sneak Previews

In the text that follows, chapter 1 examines the various motivations churches have for becoming multicultural and the motivations individuals have for joining a multicultural congregation.

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[15]United States Bureau of Census Web site (www.census.gov).
[16]Ibid.

Understanding the role worship plays or doesn't play in personal decisions to become a member of a multicultural congregation will help us in the design of culturally-conscious worship. Then various models of culturally-conscious worship will be explored.

Chapter 2 provides a theological and biblical foundation for what we do in culturally-conscious worship and the way ethnocentric and racist attitudes work against living out our faith in a multicultural world.

Chapter 3 examines a number of cultural differences that can create problems in both the design and implementation of culturally-conscious worship. Issues of time, rhythm, personal space, power sharing, formality and informality, care of children, individualism, and communal commitments, among other concerns, will all be explored.

Chapter 4 explores a theology of worship: What is worship? What is the purpose of worship in your congregation? It then analyzes the need for developing a shared story, a shared memory in multicultural congregations, and looks at ways to elicit individual stories in worship.

Chapter 5 describes some liturgical foundations for keeping balance in the design and content of worship when changes are made to be inclusive of the cultures represented in the congregation.

The intent of this book is to map out the landscape of worship in multicultural congregations, to ascertain what some of the underlying issues are, and to begin the conversation about what it means to worship in a multicultural context. What follows is an exploration of this strange but fascinating creature called *culturally-conscious worship*.

Chapter One

Motivations and Models

As we look toward designing worship in a multicultural context that is culturally conscious, it is important to ascertain why churches were motivated to become multicultural, why individuals have chosen to join a multicultural congregation, and what models currently exist for culturally-conscious worship.

Motivations for Churches

Multicultural congregations are becoming a reality in most cities and even small towns in this country. The reasons churches are multicultural are varied. Some congregations are strong, but they have a large building that is not fully utilized and welcome another congregation (e.g., a European American congregation welcomes a Korean congregation or an African American congregation welcomes a Hispanic congregation) to share their facilities. Others are smaller congregations who are struggling financially and rent space to another congregation to help pay the bills. During the year, however, the two congregations often worship together for special occasions.

There are other congregations that find themselves in a changing neighborhood. Most of the members have moved out of the immediate area. Fewer and fewer of the long-time members are willing or able to commute to church every Sunday, let alone participate in activities during the week. The leaders realize that if they don't open their doors to persons of other cultures, the church may close. Some do this reluctantly, but others see this as a wonderful opportunity for

evangelism and outreach to the surrounding community to bring people to Christ.

For many congregations, however, becoming multicultural just happened without a lot of thought or planning. One Filipino family started coming, and they invited their friends and extended family members, and after a while one fourth of the congregation was Filipino. Or in an African American congregation, an African family joined as did a family from Jamaica, and over time, several more African and Caribbean families joined the church.

In most of these congregations, the worship life of the congregation has not changed because the cultural makeup of the congregation has changed. It is assumed that the people come because they are comfortable in the worship service and receive meaning and grace from it. Since becoming multicultural was not an intentional plan by the pastor(s) or lay leaders, life went on as usual. However, when a new pastor is appointed or called to (what is now) a multicultural congregation, she or he may wonder what difference a multicultural context makes in the planning, design, content, structure, and leadership of worship.

There are a few congregations that have made intentional decisions to become multicultural because they believe God's plan is for equality of all people and that the church should lead the way in showing the world how different cultures can live, work, and worship together. They struggle with what this means for the design, content, and style of worship. They know that the presence of diverse cultures has an impact on worship, but what changes that entails is often a continuing process of discernment.[1]

Motivations for Individuals

Churches don't always have the choice of whether or not to become multicultural. When individuals decide they want to join a particular church, the church can make it very clear that they are not welcome, but few churches barricade their doors anymore with signs saying "Whites only" or "Blacks only" or "Koreans only." So it is important to understand why persons would choose to join a congregation that is predominantly of a culture other than their own or why persons choose to join a multicultural congregation. While

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[1]Charles Foster, in his book *Embracing Diversity: Leadership in Multicultural Congregations* (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1997), identifies four "catalysts" that cause congregations to become multicultural: (1) quest for survival, (2) gospel commitment, (3) hospitality, and (4) theological vision. For a more detailed account, see pp. 8–11.

the reasons are as numerous and different as the individuals involved, some common motivations can be identified.

1. ***Integration.*** The Brown versus Board of Education Supreme Court decision for forced integration happened in 1954. The civil rights movement of Martin Luther King, Jr., was in full swing by the mid-'60s. After that, there were some African Americans who wanted to claim their right to full integration in this society in restaurants, on buses, in schools, and in churches.

   At that time, integration meant assimilation. If you were welcome at all, you had to abide by the rules, style of worship, music choices, and channels of authority of the dominant culture. You could join if you didn't make any demands and acted like "us." And while there were some African Americans who chose to join all-white churches (for whatever reasons), other African Americans accused them of "running from their blackness," of betraying their community, of being an "oreo"–black on the outside but white on the inside. Whatever their internal motivations were, African Americans pioneered the integration of some European American congregations in the 1960s and 1970s.
2. ***Assimilation.*** Some immigrant groups who came to this country chose to join European American congregations where they could polish their English skills and learn the cultural norms of their new country. As newcomers to the United States, they were trying to "fit in." They basically assumed that they had no power in their new context (e.g., to ask the pastor to accommodate some of their worship needs) and made the necessary compromises and adaptations necessary for worshiping in a foreign environment. It was socially and economically helpful for them to make contacts with persons from the majority culture and to improve their English skills. Being in a Christian faith community gave them a sense of commonality and familiarity in a culture foreign to them.
3. ***Denominational Loyalty.*** While denominational loyalty is decreasing in the United States, it can still be found among persons who immigrate to this country. This is especially true of Episcopalians/Anglicans and Roman Catholics, although it is present in nonliturgical denominations as well. Jamaicans may seek out the closest Disciples of Christ church, even though it is an all-white congregation, because they were

Disciples of Christ in Jamaica. Or persons from Vietnam or Laos or Cambodia may seek out a Christian Missionary Alliance Church because that denomination had the strongest missionary influence in Southeast Asia. Persons from Ghana may seek out a United Methodist congregation because they were Methodists in Ghana.

Denominational loyalty may also be influenced by a particular "characteristic" of the denomination. In Pentecostal churches, speaking in tongues is an important characteristic. This "gift of the spirit" has the power to unite persons from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

4. ***Linguistic or Racial Bonds.*** Persons from various cultures may choose a particular congregation because of the language that is used in worship (Puerto Ricans and Guatemalans worshiping together in Spanish, or deaf persons from various cultures worshiping together in sign language).

   Or the congregation may be multicultural because of racial (though not ethnic or cultural) commonality: Africans joining an African American congregation or Navajo, Creek, and Sioux worshiping together.
5. ***Acceptance.*** For a variety of reasons, some people don't feel accepted in the churches of their own culture. This is especially true of many gay and lesbian persons, but it may also be true of persons who are divorced, persons with disabilities, ex-prisoners, and so on. For gays and lesbians, there are few churches that accept them as active participants in the life of the congregation if they are open about their sexual orientation. The churches that welcome them with open arms may be of a different culture than their own.
6. ***Making a Difference.*** Multicultural congregations are seldom without needs of one sort or another, and some persons are drawn to this type of community. They feel their presence can make a difference. They are needed in this body of Christ, and the congregation is open and welcoming of the contributions they have to offer.
7. ***Multicultural Environment.*** Many middle-aged and young adults today have been raised in multiethnic public schools and colleges; they work in multiethnic environments, exercise together in multiethnic gyms, and participate in numerous social and recreational clubs that are multiethnic in their make-up. They choose a multiethnic, multicultural environment in which to worship as well. Parents may choose to raise their

children in a multicultural spiritual environment so that their children can handle the conflicts that inevitably arise in the classroom or on the playground between persons of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

There are also persons whose core family or core being is multicultural: those in "mixed marriages," adult children born to a mixed couple, and those parents who have adopted children from other cultures. A multicultural faith community allows biracial or multiracial individuals, both spouses of a mixed marriage, or parents with adopted children to feel as if they fully belong. No one stands out as "different."

8. ***Justice Oriented.*** There are people from a wide variety of cultures who are convinced that the biblical mandate to strive for justice and peace on this earth requires people to cross boundaries, to negotiate differences, and to work toward a sense of well-being for all. They do not support the assimilation model but rather want both the richness and the challenge of sharing their faith journeys with persons whose spiritual paths are rooted in languages and soils, rituals and prayers of a different land or culture. They want to be changed by the interchange, to be reformed by new insights, to be inspired by new rhythms and songs.

   As our society becomes more multicultural, there is a sense of urgency. If we cannot learn how to be truly multicultural in the church—each shaping the other and creating a common culture from the mix—we cannot expect peace across ethnicities and justice across cultures for our society, let alone the world. Persons join congregations expecting that their presence will make a difference, that their cultural affinities will challenge some of the status quo, that their racial heritage will affect some of the power dynamics in the church, and that their "liturgical homeland" and expressions of spirituality will influence the form and content of worship.

9. ***Geographical Proximity.*** Particularly in Roman Catholic parishes, people (of whatever ethnicity) attend the parish closest to them. Others choose the closest neighborhood church (regardless of predominant ethnicity) because they don't own a car and can walk or take public transportation to the church.

This list is not exhaustive of why persons choose a multicultural congregation, but it is representative of the historical and

contemporary factors that have created multicultural faith communities today. While worship may be one's initial contact with any given congregation (although in immigrant communities it may be English as a Second Language [ESL] classes), it is not necessarily the reason why persons stay. There are numerous factors that contribute to a person's deciding to join a multicultural congregation.

Those who in the past sought integration, those in the past and present who seek assimilation into this country, those who cherish the acceptance they receive, and those who join because of linguistic or racial bonds may not care greatly whether the worship style best expresses the rhythms, prayer forms, moods, and proclamations of their "liturgical homeland." Their spiritual and social fulfillment comes in other ways, through other avenues of the church's life and ministry. And over time they often grow into this new worship style in the same way that we all have adapted to and grown into liturgical reform over the years.

Those who join because of denominational loyalty, or who want a multicultural environment, or who seek a justice community may easily adapt to whatever worship style is currently practiced at a particular church. Many persons of minority cultures are accustomed to feeling powerless to change the status quo and are accustomed to adjusting and compromising their needs and preferences to the dominant culture's preexisting patterns (in this case, worship patterns). The basic pattern of worship of the particular denomination, the multicultural environment, or a congregation's commitment to justice and peace in other aspects of its mission and ministry may be sufficient to sustain them spiritually.

However, it is also possible that persons who join for these reasons want to feel a familiar beat. They may want to receive communion in a certain posture and feel the Spirit's energy moving throughout the congregation in the way that they experienced in their own culture and faith. And just as European Americans were inspired to share the message of Christ through their cultural style of worship with people around the world (sometimes in destructive ways), persons from other cultures want to share their knowledge of Christ in their lives. They want to share their worship styles, their inspirations, their testimonies, and their rhythms with their multicultural congregations.

Models of Culturally-Conscious Worship

My goal was to identify the various processes that went into designing culturally-conscious worship. I suspected that the "end product"–the worship service itself–would be unique to each congregation and hence not transferable. There were too many factors

to take into consideration, such as the cultures present in the congregation, the pastoral and lay leadership, and the denominational background(s) of the pastor and lay members. Therefore, I was more interested in what decisions were made, how they were made, and by whom, that led to the culturally-conscious worship experience.

One assumption that proved false was that the worship life of the congregation was the important critical factor in establishing and maintaining a strong multicultural congregation, since worship is often a person's first entry into a congregation. But, as I have noted above, worship may not be the determining factor as to whether a person comes to a multicultural church, joins the church, or stays active in the church. Pastoral care, fellowship, education (religious education and ESL classes) for themselves and their children, commitment to global issues, commitment to justice issues, theology, hospitality, and commitment to a multicultural community may all be strong contributing factors to a person's decision.

Nonetheless, worship is an important weekly event in every congregation. Many come to worship who do not attend any other regular activity that the church offers. And worship has the power not only to attract people and to keep them as regular participants, but also to shape the lives of individuals as well as the faith community on their spiritual journey together. And shaping a multicultural community is not an easy task.

So, what processes go into making decisions about the final form and content of culturally-conscious worship? In many churches, these processes emerged over time and are still emerging. Initially, as persons from other cultures join a particular congregation, the worship usually stays the same. The basic assumption is that "they" (those of another culture) like what they see and experience in worship and therefore keep coming. This may be a false assumption, as I have noted above.

Over time, however, there may be sufficient numbers of the "minority"[2] culture to have not only a voice but also a vote in the decision-making processes about the daily operations of the life of the church, including its worship. Or a new pastor may be called or appointed to the church who was not a part of the congregation when it slowly became multicultural. She or he may want to take seriously the cultural makeup of the congregation and make changes in the

[2]I have struggled with the negative implications of the terms *minority* and *majority* but have found no other vocabulary to identify numerical differentials. While I realize that greater numbers usually means greater power and these terms can be laden with subordinate/dominant, inferior/superior connotations, I would like to use *minority* and *majority* to talk about population size.

form, content, or "feel" of the liturgy to be more representative of the various cultures present in the congregation. Or, for theological and justice reasons, a congregation may make intentional decisions about changing or adapting their worship in a way that is representative of the spiritualities, ritual practices, rhythms, and prayer forms found in the faith journeys of the people of various cultures in the congregation.

The process of decision making and the final design and content of the worship service varies from congregation to congregation, but there are some "models" that can be identified.

Inherited Liturgy Provides the Design. In some denominations the basis of the liturgy is predetermined by some sort of liturgical resource: Book of Common Prayer, Book of Worship, Missal, and so on. In these denominations, the form of the liturgy and often the content of many of the prayers and responses are set. The scripture texts are usually taken from a lectionary, which provides the readings for every liturgical occasion. The choice of music, the instruments used to accompany the music, the visual images present in the environment, and the pastor's sermon provide the degree to which the multicultural makeup of the church is expressed. In some churches, the various racial and cultural constituencies within the congregation seem to have little influence on these "changeable" aspects of worship. In other churches, however, these aspects of the liturgy express the rhythms and spirituality of the diverse people present.

Pastor Designs. This model can be found in a variety of settings. The pastor is basically responsible for the design and leadership of worship so she or he decides the structure, content, and style of worship. This model is often found in congregations where the worship committees are either nonexistent or function more as altar guilds (and occasionally as advisors) than as worship committees.

Historically, this model fostered total assimilation by anyone who wanted to participate in the worship life of the congregation. The pastor designed the service and everyone who came (of whatever ethnicity or culture) either accepted it (or put up with it) and stayed, or rejected it and went elsewhere. This model is used in many multicultural congregations today where the worship is not culturally conscious, but rather still looks and feels "white."

However, this model can also be found in congregations in which a sizable percentage of the membership emigrated from cultures where democracy was not part of the political or ecclesial structure. In many countries, equal representation or participation in decision making is not valued or practiced. It is difficult to get persons from these cultures to actively voice their opinions in regard to worship design and

content. They are accustomed to the pastor having autocratic power. It is expected that the pastor will make the decisions, and the congregation will obediently follow.

When the congregation gives total power to the pastor, the design of worship can range from assimilation to culturally-conscious worship. Much depends on the gifts and skills and sensitivities of the pastor. A pastor may decide that to be more inclusive of the cultures represented in the congregation, new music needs to be introduced with different rhythms as well as lyrics that convey the cultural background and spiritual expressions of the cultures represented in the congregation. The pastor solicits favorite hymns/songs from persons of different cultures in the congregation. These hymns may be totally unfamiliar to the congregation, or they may be Western hymns that were adapted by missionaries to the unique rhythms of the new Christian community.

The pastor may decide to introduce Sharing of Joys and Concerns into the liturgy or some form of Passing of the Peace so that shared bonding might happen between people of different cultures. The pastor may use corporate printed prayers one week and ask someone from the congregation to give an extemporaneous prayer the next week to balance the prayer forms that are most common in the traditions represented in the congregation.

Obviously, the people will give the pastor feedback on any changes that are made to the "way it has always been done," and the pastor will then make additional decisions about whether to continue certain practices, introduce some at a slower pace, or eliminate some of the new elements altogether. The decisions about the design, content, and "feel" of the service, however, are made almost entirely by the pastor.

While this may seem autocratic, it is a model that can work and work well in some contexts. There are some churches where the laity of the majority culture don't want to make any changes to accommodate the persons of other cultures, and there are other churches where nobody understands the issues, and the people don't see multicultural worship as an important need. There are also church members of the minority culture who experience themselves as powerless to *ask* for change, let alone *effect* any change in the content or style of worship.

By having total control over the design and content of the liturgy, the pastor can push people beyond the status quo and their comfort zones. It nudges the majority culture to compromise elements of their "liturgical homeland" and open themselves up to the rich spiritual

traditions of another. It nudges the minority culture(s) to risk sharing their music and prayers and ritual practices with a majority culture they perceive as self-sufficient, neither needing nor wanting anything from anyone.

Professional Team Designs. The professional team usually consists of the clergy, professional musicians, song leader, and persons in charge of drama, liturgical dance, or other art forms. This model can be found in many "contemporary worship" services or "seeker services." It is important to note that the professional team, often called the worship team, is not usually representative of the various cultures in the congregation. Rather, whoever plays the guitar, or drums, or saxophone, or keyboard is a member of the team regardless of ethnicity.

In some of these contexts, worship can be very "performance" oriented rather than participatory. The worship team performs the liturgy for the people. In seeker services, this may be intentional, so that those who are seeking an expression of their spirituality are not pressured into participating in something that is still uncomfortable for them.

This model, however, is also found at various ecumenical gatherings where worship usually opens or closes the meetings. It is also used in large multicultural gatherings such as the World Council of Churches liturgies. The form, content, structure, music, other art forms, and symbolic actions are designed by a team of professional liturgical "artists." These liturgical artists may or may not be representative of the cultures of the participants in the liturgy. With persons from so many cultures present at the World Council of Churches meetings, it would be almost impossible to have representatives from them all.

In these contexts, the liturgies are usually carefully planned in advance and "choreographed." The team intentionally chooses music from various cultures and denominational traditions. They often vary the instruments that will be used to accompany the hymns/songs. The visual environment, the use of symbols, the design of the altar, and the position of the seating are all taken into consideration so that a complex communication event such as worship in a global setting can be conveyed on multiple levels around a particular theme or text.

Often there is a rehearsal or at least a detailed "walkthrough" of each worship service in order to anticipate any problems with the design, possible interruptions to the flow of the service, sudden shifts

in mood or tone, offensive language (especially in interfaith services but also in ecumenical services), and so on. When any kind of symbolic action is being used, the design team must consider the logistics of getting people out of their seats and back again as well as any possible problem the symbols may create (e.g., carrying a lighted candle). Since those who create the service often recruit a representative group of people to lead the service, the rehearsal also facilitates a smooth transition from one liturgical leader to the next, from one liturgical element to the next.

These services are excellent models of culturally-conscious and ecumenical worship. The same model can be used on a smaller scale in the local church, but it requires much time and preparation. Good culturally-conscious worship may not come easily or quickly; many find this model extremely time intensive. Often it is difficult (but not impossible) to gather the kind of "liturgical artists" necessary for such an undertaking on a weekly basis. However, a pastor or congregation can begin training several laypersons, who are interested in worship design and planning, to become this worship team in the future.

Representative Committee Designs. In this model, a worship committee is intentionally chosen to be representative of the various cultures present in the congregation. This model *can* function along the lines of tokenism. One person from the minority cultures represented in the congregation is appointed to the worship committee. This lone voice seldom has the power to influence any decision. In reality, life and worship usually go on as usual.

This model, however, can be exciting and challenging when several persons from each culture represented in the congregation are members of the worship committee. By including more than one representative of a culture, the subgroup is more apt to feel equal, with a sense of power. The challenging part is negotiating the differences that will inevitably arise. Each individual, each cultural group, and the worship committee as a whole will have to decide which elements of worship are negotiable and which are not. Then compromises will need to be made on all sides.

The exciting part of this model is that the cultural representatives on the committee share information from their various cultures with the committee. The committee learns about the faith journeys of one another and the elements of worship that are most meaningful to them, such as the music and rhythms that inspire their souls, the way they pray, and the cultural symbols that have become Christian symbols. As the committee empathizes with the moods and emotions

that characterize worship at the core of the others' being, the committee can devise powerful and meaningful ways to share these with the congregation.

As various elements from the different cultures are introduced into worship, it is natural for some to be "put up with" or even opposed, but inevitably, others are adopted by the whole congregation. A song from Africa makes a deep connection with people across cultures; reading the scripture in another language (with the text also printed in English in the bulletin) allows the congregation to hear the rhythms and vocal inflections of a language that is so dear to some of its members. Everyone may learn a few songs in different languages. A prayer form used in Pakistan may be tried and appreciated as a layperson is asked to pray from their seat on behalf of the congregation. Or the Korean custom of the Tong Song Kido prayer, in which everyone prays his or her own prayer aloud simultaneously, may become accepted by the entire congregation.

Over time, what emerges is a new style of worship where various elements of different cultures are included in worship on a regular basis. In a way, a "third" culture is created that combines some of the values, ritual practices, and rhythms of the cultures represented in the congregation. Visitors may not be totally comfortable at first, but hopefully they will find some elements in the worship that speak directly to them.

Various Worship Groups Design. Another model honors the diversity present in the congregation in a different way. Rather than having one worship committee that is representative of the congregation that designs a "blended" style of worship, this model utilizes a variety of worship "groups" to design each Sunday's service.

Dumbarton United Methodist Church in the Georgetown area of Washington, D.C., is one representative of this model. They have a worship committee (called the Worship Cluster) that is composed of the pastor, the chair of the Worship Cluster, the artist-in-residence, the music director, and the person responsible for creating a visual environment in the sanctuary that reflects the various liturgical seasons. While the Worship Cluster is a coordinating body for Sunday services, it does not design the weekly worship services. Sunday services are designed by several groups of laity who each take responsibility for worship on a particular Sunday.

For Dumbarton, the process often begins with a half-day gathering or an overnight retreat (open to anyone interested) to look over the Sundays of a particular liturgical season or a particular period of time (the month of July, the six weeks of Lent, or a series on a particular text, topic, or biblical character, for example). The group discusses

the lectionary texts, issues facing the congregation, and topics of concern that might provide the foundation for worship in the coming weeks. Cultural occasions such as the Fourth of July, Mother's Day, and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, birthday, as well as congregational events such as a work team going to Nicaragua are also taken into consideration.

Those present at the retreat go through an overview of the season/period of weeks to be planned and then some sort of centering process. After that, the people present are divided up into small groups (usually two to four people each)–one for each Sunday to be planned. These smaller groups then study the four lectionary texts assigned to their Sunday, the themes of the liturgical season, and any other topic relevant to their particular day. The goal is to discover what theme or themes emerge for the group as they study the various texts and topics. The discoveries of each group are then shared with the whole group, and a general image or theme is collectively decided upon that will provide a common link through that season or time period.

Members present at this planning retreat then volunteer to work on the worship design team for a particular Sunday or series of Sundays. Each worship design team (composed of two to four people) is self-selected based on their interest in the liturgical season or the texts, or their availability for a particular day or period. These groups may or may not be racially or culturally mixed.

Each team designs the liturgy, picks the hymns and other music, and writes the Call to Worship, prayers, benedictions, litanies, and so on. Some members of the design team may write lyrics to a familiar tune for a particular service or compose a new song. The team also decides who they want to present the children's storytime and who they want to preach the sermon for their Sunday. Sometimes it is the pastor of the congregation and sometimes not! Each group puts their own interests, preferences, theologies, and personalities into the worship service(s) they design. They may ask others to join them in the designing stage, or the original team may design the liturgy and recruit others in the congregation to be liturgists or scripture readers for their particular Sunday.

The diversity that is representative of the congregation comes through on a week-by-week basis rather than by the creation of a "third" or unique style of worship that was designed for that particular group of people (as in the fourth model, Representative Committee). In this model, worship can be very different from one week to the next. A particular structure or order of worship is encouraged to maintain some continuity, and the general theme that emerged at the retreat is present, but both these elements are flexible and often

change. For example, instead of singing the entire hymn before the scripture readings, the hymn verses may be alternated with each scripture reading. Or instead of one person giving the sermon, the preacher of the day may raise the issues found in the texts but then open it up for members of the congregation to share how those texts or issues have affected their lives.

About 20 percent of the congregation has participated in these worship design teams over the years. The team draws on the gifts and graces of many laypersons. Worship is seldom dull, because it changes from week to week. It takes diversity seriously by engaging as many people as possible in the planning and implementation of worship. People "own" worship in a different sense because they have invested their time and talents in its creation.

For visitors, this model of culturally-conscious worship may be exciting or it may be confusing. Since worship is different from week to week, visitors need to come for several months before they decide whether this style of worship fulfills their spiritual needs. Many like the "surprise" that each week has to offer and look forward with anticipation to the new ways God may be revealed to them.

Dumbarton's membership is well educated in both the secular and theological worlds. In a different context, this model may pose problems for persons for whom English is a second language. They may feel uncomfortable writing liturgies in English or may feel that they don't have the training or skills necessary to be on one of the design teams. Having training sessions or mentors (persons who have served on previous design teams) to foster the participation of new members or persons who are hesitant can help to overcome some of these reservations.

A variation of this model can be found in many seminary, hospital, and nursing home chapel services. Worship may also be different from week to week depending on who is responsible for the service that week. In some seminary chapels, there may be a Korean service one week, a Unitarian service the next, and an African American service the next. In hospital and nursing home chapels, the responsibility of weekly worship often rotates among various ministers in the area. One week the Roman Catholic priest will lead the service, the Disciples of Christ minister the next, a Lutheran pastor the next. This results in a wide variety of worship orders, content, and style depending on the ethnicity, culture, and denominational affiliation of the pastor.

Homogenous Context but Culturally-Conscious Worship. This model does not fit neatly into a clearly defined preparation process. In many ways, this model can utilize all the preparation methods

listed above except for the fourth model, where a culturally diverse congregation is necessary.

This model reflects those congregations in communities that are not yet culturally diverse or where segregating into one's own cultural community for Sunday morning worship is still the norm.

Some homogenous congregations are extremely aware of the multicultural nature of our world, are committed to global issues of justice, are extremely conscious of the unequal power dynamics that exist, and want to do what they can to fight racism and ethnocentrism. In these congregations, liturgical resources from various cultures are included in worship, visual and musical arts play a prominent role in the worship setting, and concerns of various groups in this country and around the world are lifted up in prayer. Persons of other cultures are not physically present, but their spiritual presence is held up in this unique form of culturally-conscious worship.

Another example may be found in a homogenous Japanese (or some other culture) congregation. The church is homogenous because worship is conducted in their native language. But still they are very conscious of the cultural diversity around them and their own issues of ethnocentrism and racism, and they utilize a variety of resources (translated into Japanese or not) in attempts to design worship that is culturally conscious.

One danger to this is a congregation that utilizes (some would say misappropriates) liturgical resources from other cultures without any commitment to multiculturalism or to dealing with their own racism and ethnocentrism. One Latina seminary student is sometimes asked to read part of the Acts 2 text in Spanish on Pentecost Sunday. The congregation wants to have various verses read in different languages. She refuses to participate because, as a Latina, she knows that on the other fifty-one Sundays of the year she is not welcome.

Models of Bilingual/Multilingual Worship

The multicultural makeup of some congregations necessitates conducting the worship service in two or more languages. In many of these churches, there is often one dominant language. In a Chinese church, Cantonese may be the predominant language, but the services may also be interpreted into Putonghua (Mandarin). In a Filipino church, the worship may be conducted in English, but Tagalog, Ilocano, or Pampango may also be used. How translation happens in bilingual or multilingual worship services varies.

Simultaneous Translation. With simultaneous translation, the other language is often not audible to those who are not accessing the translation. An interpreter voices the translation into a microphone

for persons wearing a receiving device (usually from an FM system or an Infrared Assistive Listening System). The interpreter may be in a balcony, in another room with sound played into it, or in a corner of the sanctuary. In some congregations this simultaneous translation takes place throughout the entire worship service. In other congregations, however, it is only the sermon that is translated simultaneously.

Bilingual Translation. In churches that use bilingual translation, various elements (e.g., prayers, sermon, announcements) are given in both languages one after another. If the prayer is short and the person offering the prayer is bilingual, the person praying may speak first in one language and then in the other. When the person praying is not bilingual or not comfortable speaking one of the languages in public, a translator or interpreter will translate the prayer. For long prayers and for the sermon, the translation often takes place "concept after concept." This means that it is not phrase-by-phrase or even sentence-by-sentence translation, but rather a particular concept, the translation, and then the next "concept." These "concept" parameters are very fluid and may be one word or one emphatic phrase, but often it is a longer idea.

Sporadic Translation. There are some churches that only translate a certain element in worship. The children's sermon may be given in English when the rest of the service is conducted in a native language. Or the liturgy is in the English language, with an English bulletin that includes the call to worship, prayers, and so on, but the sermon is translated into the native tongue. The assumption is that people comprehend English when it is printed (in the bulletin, Bible, or hymnal) but prefer their native language for oral reception of the sermon.

Printed Translation. In churches that use some form of printed translation, the translation may be found in the bulletin, worship book, or hymnal. For example, in a Haitian church, there may be a Creole hymnal, a French hymnal, and an English hymnal. Or in a Ghanaian church, there may be a hymnal in Fanti and one in English. Or in some of the newer denominational hymnals, there are Spanish hymns with English translations. During the singing of hymns, individuals in the congregation sing in whatever language is most comfortable.

In a predominantly English-speaking congregation, the scripture may be read in Korean. In that situation, the English translation of the text would be printed in the bulletin or available from pew Bibles.

A large church in Los Angeles had four ministries worshiping in the building: Filipino, Korean, Hispanic, and a mixed European American/African American congregation whose services were in

English. Several times a year they would join together for a multicultural worship service. The bulletin was printed on large paper with two columns on the left side of the bulletin and two columns on the right. Each column was a different language: Tagalog, Korean, Spanish, and English. There was truly a cacophony of voices, but people could participate throughout the worship service in their native languages.

Each of these models allows persons to worship in the language that is most comfortable for them. It can be seen as a form of access and hospitality.

Learning the Language of Another. Another approach to bilingual or multilingual culturally-conscious worship pushes everyone to learn the languages of the other cultures represented in the worship service. This does not mean that everyone is going to be fluent in all the languages represented but that the members might learn certain words, phrases, or songs that are common in the life of the multicultural community.

In this model, rather than allowing persons to worship exclusively in their native language (as in the fourth model), everyone is encouraged to sing in Spanish, Zulu, Tagalog, or Navaho. Members of various cultures may teach the congregation "The Peace of God be with You" in their native languages. The congregation may learn the Lord's Prayer or the Doxology in another language. At one time, a deaf member of the Dumbarton United Methodist Church taught the congregation how to "sing" the Doxology in sign language. This model is often more appropriate for the congregations whose dominant language is English. Those who are fully bilingual (fluent in two languages) may feel comfortable in either language. But those who struggle with English as a second language usually have the full burden of worshiping in a foreign tongue. They have to be bilingual to a certain degree to survive in this country. It is important that those of us for whom English is a first (and often only) language attempt to understand what being bilingual or multilingual means and how learning another's language (even if it is minimally) can make a person feel welcomed.

Summary

Your congregation may not fit exactly into any of these models. It may be a combination of two or more of the models listed above. Or you may be totally unique in the way you design worship for a multicultural congregation. While each of these models has limitations, each can also facilitate meaningful culturally-conscious worship. I cannot stress enough that much depends on the sensitivities and

leadership of the pastor(s). Each multicultural congregation is unique. As Charles Foster suggests in *We Are the Church Together:*

> The task persons in these communities face is *not* that of becoming bilingual or multilingual or multicultural in the sense of mastering the multiple languages and cultures in currency. Rather, their task is to *appreciate* and *live in* rather than *master* or *resolve* the multiplicity of languages and cultures among them. Life in these communities calls persons toward the perception that experience can and should be interpreted and named in various ways, that truth can and should be viewed from differing angles simultaneously.[3]

One of these "viewing angles" is that of the Bible. It is important that all pastors who minister in multicultural congregations be rooted in biblical and theological visions for living out the Kingdom of God in a multicultural community. In many congregations, these biblical images and a theological language are the centerpoint around which the worship evolves. It is to that topic that I now turn.

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[3]Charles R. Foster, *We Are the Church Together: Cultural Diversity in Congregational Life* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996), 158.