MULTI-CULTURAL MINISTRY

Level 2 (Diploma, 2nd year BA): 20 Credits

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for Council for World Mission

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This course module is aimed primarily at theological education and training settings but is flexible enough to be adapted to any situation. An important focus of this course is contextual exposure and experience. It is a practical module that can be used at ordination training or post ordination training. The expected outcome of the module is that students will be equipped with understanding and key competencies for ministry and mission in a multicultural context.

Aims of the Module:

- To provide a broad overview of Multicultural Ministry, including its background and terminology
- To introduce the participant to models of multicultural church and patterns of leadership
- To engender an informed understanding of and empathy with minority ethnic communities resident in Western Europe
- To develop skills in worship, Bible Study and leadership in multicultural contexts

Learning Outcomes (Knowledge & Understanding, Evaluation, Skills)

At the end of this course students demonstrate:

**Knowledge and Understanding**

- Knowledge and awareness of the broad context of multicultural ministry
- Knowledge of different models of multicultural church (e.g. mono-ethnic, mono-cultural, multi-ethnic, multicultural)
- Familiarity with language and terminology and sensitivity to usage
- Awareness of a range of biblical interpretations and methods of interpretation
- Awareness of a range of worship material and style, and sensitivity to its use

**Subject specific skills**

- Leadership, individually and as participant in or leader of a team
- Developing models of multicultural church
- Raising awareness and sensitivity in multi-ethnic and multicultural church situations
- Teaching and leading Bible Study from a range of perspectives
- Leading and developing multicultural worship

How it works:

This is a four unit module, including module notes and resources for private study. It may be taught through a series of face to face workshops/teaching sessions or as a distance learning module. Guidance is given in the notes for both these approaches. In either case, contextual learning through exposure visits and reflection is a requirement.

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Assessment
In 2005, 2006 and 2008, expert meetings on multicultural ministry were conducted in Utrecht (Netherlands), Derby (U.K.) and Basel (Switzerland). The participants, recruited from a wide range of ‘old’ and ‘new’ (migrant) churches, discussed the qualities needed for authentic multicultural mission and ministry. In defining the situation they mentioned a number of issues in relation to knowledge, attitudes and skills. It is remarkable that the participants hardly stressed the importance of knowledge other than that ministers should know about the history of migrations, the impact of migrations on daily lives of people (such as being ‘undocumented’, having no health insurance) and that they should have knowledge about the ‘many faces’ of church and Christian faith.

They gave much more attention, however, to required attitudes and skills and to the way people can be prepared to minister in a multicultural context. They specifically referred to the importance of the following attitudes: being inclusive, having a passion for justice, having a propensity for the prophetic, having sensitivity towards people with other opinions and/or backgrounds and being ‘community minded’. They gave a lot of attention to the issue of justice: authentic multicultural ministry cannot ignore the issues of discrimination, distribution of wealth, power and access to education and jobs. Any ministry that ignores these issues – for whatever reason – runs the immediate risk of making itself irrelevant in the eyes of the people concerned. Authentic ministry should keep Matthew 28 and Luke 4 in creative tension, sharing the good news in word and deed, preaching grace and doing justice.¹

In their opinion the most vital skills for multicultural ministry are: networking, team-working, community building, having the ability to evaluate one’s own performance and being able to fruitfully interact between one’s own cultural and theological set of values and the values of the other.

The pastor should learn, they said furthermore, that he/she is not the private chaplain to the congregation, but that he/she should engage in issues of the community and that he/she is part of a team. The pastor should be the pastor of the community, or neighbourhood, rather than the pastor of the congregation. As the community often has many minority ethnic communities attention should be given to the composition of the church leadership. The congregation will only become attractive to inhabitants of the neighbourhood when and if the leadership also reflects the ethnicities present. This will

also ensure that issues of the community will find their way to the church leadership easier. The participants in the expert meeting wondered why pastors have so little training in community development. Some pointed out that the pastor should learn to be a stranger in the community and that in modern society the ministry by definition is cross-cultural. The mission statement should result from the experience of being a stranger: others should mention the issues at stake. The pastor should relate these to the message of the gospel.

A task group of the abovementioned expert meeting observed some issues in relation to the issue of mission and ministry that are noteworthy. Some of these have already been mentioned, but below the issues are listed:

1. First of all the task group took note of the fact that many congregations who are or who would like to be involved in multicultural ministries lack a clear vision and mission statement (or policy). Sometimes it appears that congregations ‘exist’ simply because they ‘exist’. They are there as a provision for the (declining) membership. Others state that their congregations exists in order to preach Christ. Yet very often this statement is not ‘filled’ with content: what then does it mean to preach Christ in the midst of a particular multicultural context? The question how the preaching of the gospel is to (be) related to the neighbourhood has to be addressed. And how is the content of a missions programme (or ministry) shaped?

2. The task group observed that the content of the ministry is often shaped by the professionals in the church. The question needs to be addressed how the issues at stake can be found in a ‘bottom-up’ process. In finding ways to shape the mission ‘bottom-up’ the congregation, in stead of the pastor, will ‘own’ the mission.

3. The task group expressed their concern that a multicultural policy and ministry should include people at all levels of the congregation and community. Taking into account the great number of talents and gifts that people bring with them will again help to prevent that mission is the hobby of the professional, the pastor.

4. The pastor should be a team player, a networker. Individualists or solo-players are not qualified for ministry in a multicultural setting.

5. The group observed the importance of language as part of our identity. Pastors and other professionals in the church need to understand how important language is in worship and prayer. Congregations that are involved in multicultural ministry have to address this issue and should not easily settle for the use of one language only in worship. The minister should also develop language skills in order to be an effective communicator.

6. It is important to understand that migrants are going through a process of transformation. Language is only one of the transitions involved. Maintaining the mother tongue as primary language is only an option for the first generation, and possibly the second. This has important consequences in relation to ethnic and group identity. For ‘whites’ it is important to understand that they also are in a continual process of transformation. Western societies are clearly searching for identity, especially after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center (9/11).

7. Pastors need to learn that ‘doing theology’ also involves dealing with issues of power: they have to learn how ‘power’ and racial issues effect and sometimes hinder a fruitful multicultural ministry. Pastors need to develop the skill to learn experientially.

The draft text of the module was sent to two readers: Rev Dr Susan Durber, Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge, UK, and Rev Dr Jione Havea, Lecturer in the Hebrew Bible at United Theological College, Uniting Church in Australia.
The Europe of the 21st century is characteristically diverse and multicultural. It is quite normal these days to arrive at any European city and see people of different skin colours, speaking different languages, wearing various traditional clothing, enjoying a huge variety of international foods, and going about their daily business.

Multiculturalism is not a new phenomenon in Europe. But prior to World War II, the presence in Europe of people of racial-ethnic backgrounds other than European white ethnic groups was not so obvious. Today, European societies are multicultural microcosms where many of the world’s peoples, languages, and cultures meet. The presence in Europe of these diverse racial-ethnic others in their multitude, has forced Europe and European settler societies (i.e. the West), to consider more seriously what it means to be multicultural.

A serious consideration of multiculturalism in this context must take account of Europe’s history of conquest, colonialism, and enslavement, which has destroyed whole nations and cultures, displaced and dispossessed countless peoples, arrested the socio-economic progress of ancient civilizations, and created political upheaval and unrest. The consequences of this grim history, along with modern technology, globalization, and the free market system, have been the uprooting of millions of peoples, leading to massive global migration of people seeking more stable economic means for survival. It is interesting to note that even the more rigidly mono-cultural nations in some parts of Asia are becoming multicultural due to the influx of migrant workers.

The changes in European societies also impact the churches within those societies. Christian churches throughout Europe have become very diverse and multicultural. In Britain, for example, a Tearfund survey of church attendance reported in April 2007 that the face of British Christianity today is multicultural. Such
changes will continue throughout Europe well into the future. European churches, therefore, urgently need to consider how to deal with these changes in the light of God’s mission and purposes. As the wider society comes to terms with multiculturalism, so must the churches respond prayerfully and proactively to their responsibilities of hospitality and justice in this emerging ministry with peoples of diverse racial-ethnic backgrounds.

Life with people of many different cultures in one community or church is now increasingly known as multicultural ministry. Various terms have been used to name this ministry, including cross-cultural ministry, minority ethnic ministry, and migrant ethnic ministry. Terminology is often problematic and is even more so in this area. The term ‘ethnic’ is often rejected because it implies second class, abnormal, substandard. ‘Migrant ethnic’ is used to refer to newly arrived migrants, but in many places this label excludes native and indigenous peoples. The usefulness of multiculturalism as a concept continues to be a subject of debate. Nevertheless, the presence and interaction of people of diverse cultural backgrounds in the same church or community is rapidly increasing, changing relationships, deepening cross-cultural understandings, and transforming the face of Western and European Christianity from monochrome to multicultural. Multicultural Ministry, therefore, seems to be the most appropriate way to express and name this ministry with all people across the boundaries of various cultures.

Multicultural Ministry began to gain wider recognition at the World Council of Churches (WCC) 1996 Mission Conference in Salvador Bahia, Brazil. The theme of that Conference was ‘Called to One Hope – the Gospel in Diverse Cultures’. At that conference many highlighted the urgent need for the World Church and its ecumenical instruments to recognise that life with people of diverse cultures is no longer a theoretical and academic exercise but a reality and urged that this be reflected in churches’ mission priorities and ministry planning.

There is a concern that this ministry can be sidelined as one of special interest and only relevant for immigrants. While it is true that multicultural ministry is a mission area that is growing and expanding due to the increasing presence of peoples from diverse racial-ethnic backgrounds, it is still an integral part of the life and witness of the whole church, and touching the life of every member. Against a background of ageing and declining membership, this is an area in the life of European churches that is growing and vibrant. It is for Christ’s sake and for the future of European Christianity that European churches must urgently equip themselves to respond faithfully to God’s call to welcome and hospitality in 21st century multicultural Europe.

2. ‘Settler Societies’ here refer to countries colonised by British and other European powers and are now settled predominantly by white people.
3. Re: www.tearfund.org/newsurvey
Exposure/Experience

The module notes should be read alongside a cultural exposure programme, which should inform and interact with the material in the notes. Guidance is given throughout the module. The exposure should be organized by the module tutor in consultation with the student, and should involve a link with a church of a different ethnic background from that of the student’s own, either a migrant church or a church with a multicultural congregation and leadership.

The following checklist should be used to guide general reflections on the exposure.

Checklist

If there are fewer than 10 ‘yes’ to the questions, that church needs more work in growing as a multicultural church. More than 8 ‘yes’ that church is doing OK; more than 12 ‘yes’ that church is truly becoming a multicultural church and should be congratulated.

a) Welcome & Hospitality

- Do you have an orientation program for new members to know the church and the other members better?
- Do you have social events where members share their cultures and food with each other?
- Do you intentionally foster an atmosphere of welcome in and around your church, using diverse visual images and clear information that communicate warmth and openness to all people?

b) Worship & Liturgy

- Does your worship life reflect the languages and cultures of your congregation and the surrounding community?
- Do you encourage your worship leaders to and multicultural worship resources?
- Do you provide your young people with opportunities to participate, create and experience different worship styles?

c) Overcoming Barriers

- Do you pray regularly asking the Holy Spirit to open the hearts of each member to love and respect all people as unique gifts from God?
- Do you explore, biblically and theologically, God’s call for inclusiveness in church and community?
- Do you provide opportunities for members to encounter and make friends with people of different cultures and ethnicity?

d) Mission

- Do you seek to discern the mission to which God is calling you and formulate a mission statement relevant in a multicultural society? Do you ensure that any minority ethnic voices are heard in this process?
- Do you consider seriously the gifts and needs of all members as you prioritise and resource your mission tasks?

e) Leadership

- Do you consider the gifts and skills of the diverse members of the church in electing leaders, planning mission, and developing church programmes?
- Do you require your leadership to be committed to the vision of the multicultural church and to develop links between the church and the diverse communities in the area?

f) Inter-generational issues

- Do you have a multicultural youth programme?
- Do you provide opportunities for older and younger generations in the church, especially if there is minority ethnic presence, to develop better understanding of each other?
Multicultural Ministry – Biblical Perspectives
Multicultural Ministry – Biblical Perspectives

This unit should include some element of face to face teaching, for example, a session or sessions based on the following:

**A CLASS EXERCISE** (90 minutes including time for e.g. prayer, explanations, debriefing)

This should be done as multicultural as possible. If the class is culturally poor (e.g. mono-cultural), the exercise should include people from other cultures. The exercise should draw on the experience from the exposure programme.

Read **one** of the following passages.


1. Each individual read the passage alone, prayerfully, allowing the story to interact with her/his story. (5 minutes)

2. Discuss the story in pairs or threes. These should be similar in background if possible – in age, gender, ethnicity and any other relevant ways. They should draw out elements of their own cultural experience which interact with the story. (10 minutes)

3. Feedback – each pair demonstrating how the story appears from the standpoint of their culture. Relevant points should be put up on flip chart or equivalent. (20 minutes – or less, depending on number of people in group)

4. One person should have read the chapter in Voices from the Margin which reflects on the passage, and should now feed in that perspective.* (10 minutes)

5. Plenary discussion on the variety of interpretations. What challenges arise from the variety of readings? Is it possible for them to ‘sit at table’ together? (30 minutes)

There may need to be a ‘debriefing’ at the end, either in plenary or privately, if some participants have been hurt or challenged by the variety of interpretations.


It is important to recognise the Bible as a rich resource for multicultural ministry, and a tool for understanding some of its complexities. Given that the Bible collects thoughts and accounts from a long stretch of history (from the ancient Patriarchal to the Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Babylonian, Greek and Roman eras) and their various cultures and values, it is important to recognise that the Bible itself is multicultural. In other words, when we bring multicultural perspectives to the Bible, we pay homage to its multicultural nature. 4

It is impossible to read the Bible without a cultural perspective. This was not recognised for many years, and Eurocentric readers in particular have long assumed that theirs is the normative interpretation, and that part of converting the world was to teach it to read the Bible from a post-enlightenment, European or North American point of view.

However, people from this set of cultures are perhaps least capable of reading the Bible in any direct way. They are removed from the cultures of the Bible by distances of lifestyle, self-identity understanding of the way the world works. They have much to learn from other cultures about the narrative and poetic nature of the Bible, about the ways of life described and the world views which undergird them.

All readers are subjective, and our subjectivities are complex. For instance: a white single-mother from the north of England will have different worldviews from a black widow from the Caribbean in London, or a Sri Lankan mother in exile from her homeland and family. Two simple observations need to be made here: the Bible is multicultural, and readers too are multicultural.

The crucial questions here are three: Can any reading, then, have universal applicability? What gives some readers the confidence to claim that their culturally conditioned readings are normative? What tames people from outside of dominant cultures so that they do not question readings that claim universality and normativity?

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Recognising the normative as cultural

Read: The Bible and the Third World pp. 61-71

After almost 200 years of efforts by national and international Bible societies, the Bible has been partially or fully translated into a great many existing languages. These translations represent interpretations which are the result of processes of understanding taking place within specific socio-linguistic contexts.  

Dora Mbuwayesango describes the culturally charged issue of translating the biblical God into the Shona language. Early missionaries used descriptive words, words for ‘master’, for example, or heavenly beings. The normative translation, however, was, ‘Mwari’, the supreme being, which united the peoples of pre-colonial Zimbabwe, understood to be a genderless spirit. The intention of the translators was to make the biblical accounts accessible in terms that would be familiar to the Shona people, but also to Christianize the native deity. Mbuwayesango writes, ‘To take over the name Mwari is to rob the Shona of their traditions and to colonize Mwari’. She argues for a retranslation of the Bible in which, ‘the Hebrew names of God would be maintained in order to maintain the differences between Mwari and Yhwh Elohim’.  

Biblical translation was part of the great missionary drive of the eighteenth-nineteenth century, driven by the two-fold imperative of European colonialism and the divine commission in Matthew 28:19-20. This was an extremely complex movement. Motives were mixed, and the work was often carried out with what seems to us to be a fatal mixture of naivety and ignorance, compounded with a supreme confidence in European interpretations of the gospel as normative and right.  

The Bible tells the story of a People called and chosen by God, who were given a Promised Land, by means of a series of victories in which God drove out its former inhabitants. When the People of God were obedient, they prospered, and their enemies were destroyed. When they were disobedient, specifically when they turned to other gods, they suffered decline and defeat. Their God was the supreme, indeed, the only God, and their ultimate purpose was to carry His light into the rest of the world, whose inhabitants would either convert in humiliating ways (Is 60:5-6, Zech 14:16-19) or be destroyed.  

This God was incarnate in Jesus, who lived a life of service, ending in a death which is the only redemption for the whole human race. This was emphasised in the Great Commission, in which the risen Jesus commanded his disciples to go to all peoples everywhere, and make more disciples.  

John Hull traces the way in which Britain, at least, began to interpret its own place in the world in terms of the chosen people of God. In this reading of the Biblical story into British expansionism, non-Western peoples, cultures and religions are inevitably cast as ‘other races, without the law’, ripe for, and in need of, conversion to Christianity, which, in this context, means British Protestant civilisation.  

Sugirtharajah describes some of the marks of colonial hermeneutics:  

1. *Inculcation* of European customs and manners, and the denigration of indigenous customs as uncivilised. Sugirtharajah quotes from Robert Moffat:  

The same Gospel which had taught them that they were spiritually miserable, blind and naked, discovered to them also that they needed reform externally, and thus prepared their minds to adopt those modes of comfort, cleanliness, and convenience which they had been accustomed to view only as the peculiarities of a strange people. Thus, by the slow but certain progress of Gospel principles, whole families became clothed and in their right mind.  

2. *Encroachment* of alien values into indigenous cultures: the example is given of the Panare of Central America, who did not have concepts such as sin, guilt, punishment or redemption: ‘The translators decided that the best way to go about it was to re-edit and rewrite the scriptures in such a way that the Panare were implicated in Christ’s death’.

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Displacement of local values: in Papua, missionaries confronted an egalitarian, non-authoritarian life-style. Again, Sugirtharajah quotes from a contemporary source:

Compulsion has come into the lives of the Papuans by the introduction of English law and justice. It is becoming easier to explain the New Testament by means of reference to the British Government. To-day . . . there are magistrates and judges and policemen, and prisons . . . A fresh world is being opened up to the Papuans, and a new life with a new sense of responsibility. They are being constrained into practical recognition of that Categorical Imperative which the New Testament translates in terms of love.

Analogies and Implication of juxtaposing biblical and secular history – see the above example from the article on Isaac Watts by John Hull.

Textualization which values text over oral tradition, and the biblical text over other sacred texts. This has many implications: ‘One consequence is that biblical interpretation has now become a private, solitary activity. In India, hermeneutics used to be a public activity undertaken by professional story-tellers and singers.’

Historicization of faith as opposed to what was regarded as the mythical nature of other traditions and writings: ‘the replacement of the narrativel approach, which is widespread in Africa, Asia and Latin America, with the historical-critical mode of interpretation,’

Thus a tradition of biblical theology, which arose from European Enlightenment thinking, was imposed on cultures to which that thinking was entirely alien.

This last is perhaps the most insidious of all, since it imposes a way of interpreting the Bible, and therefore a way of living and presenting the gospel, from one very narrow perspective, that of the classically or scientifically educated white western male. Consequently, its hermeneutic is overwhelmingly patriarchal.

It is impossible to overstate the completeness and the impact of this casting of the races within the sacred text. Renita Weems notes that the Bible needs to be recognised as, ‘a politically drenched text invested in ordering relations between people, legitimizing some view points and delegitimizing others’. The context of the reader is similarly politicized: ‘Meaning takes place in the charged encounter between socially and politically conditioned text and socially and politically conditioned reader.’

The political context includes multiple marginalization through lack of access to resources, race, caste, gender, and a whole host of other factors. But further, it is infiltrated into people’s very identity. Our view of ourselves in relation to others is moulded by this history of interpretation and presentation of what is regarded as a Sacred Text. It is extremely difficult to overcome or undo the damage. ‘The enterprise is really much more difficult than the optimistic efforts of the mid-late twentieth century recognised. The context in which we read the Bible is one which has been carved out, for longer than we can properly imagine, by the text we are trying to read. It is extremely hard to escape the context.’


Sugirtharajah, The Bible and the Third World, p. 71.


Wisdom has laid her table

The most recent edition of R. S. Sugiratharajah’s seminal work, Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World (2006) contains a festival of articles from North and South America, Africa, the Caribbean, the Middle East and East and South Asia. They are grouped under a variety of ‘readings’: postcolonial, intertextual, popular, and so on. So, the feast has a number of ‘courses’ in which a huge variety of fare is brought to the table.

Sugiratharajah’s introduction recognises a number of changes in the first years of the twenty-first century, which have a profound effect on the ways in which we read the Bible. Two are specifically important to this module.

The first is the rise of fundamentalisms. He sees this as the transformation of the ‘margin’ from ‘a thriving foundry where many counter-stories were minted’ to ‘a mean and menacing shelter for censorship, the single story and the unambiguous message’. This is reflected in a change in the status of the Bible: ‘Now the Bible has become a lethal weapon in the hands of extreme fundamentalists who project a God who unleashes retaliation.’

The second is the emergence of diasporic hermeneutics, which is actually the location for this module’s subject. Multicultural Ministry in Europe is a matter of European cultures (which have themselves been diasporic at times in their history) working with consciously diasporic communities bearing a wide variety of cultures. This raises two kinds of question: the relationship between diaspora and regional hermeneutics; and the relationship between diasporic communities and the cultures among which they settle (which, of course, include other diasporic communities).

Sugiratharajah concentrates on the former question: ‘Will Indians, Koreans, Africans, or Cubans who are physically resident in their respective homelands continue to mediate a true and authentic theology, or will it become the preserve of the domiciled diasporan intellectuals?’

We need, of course, to deal with the second question too, and it is one which Sugiratharajah touches on, when he writes, ‘The practice of treating American and European interpretation as the interpretation and labelling the enterprise of others “Asian”, “African”, and so on, or of using gender or ethnic terms persists. Those who work on the margins are unable to shake off the exotic tag attached to them’.

The purpose of this section is to see whether, in a European setting, we can sit down at the feast with others around the table, without trying to control the menu or play the host.

The analogy with eating is not only symbolic. The way in which white Europeans enjoy the rich diversity of food which has become available recently, is symptomatic of many cultural attitudes. We enjoy ‘authentic’ meals from a whole range of ethnic backgrounds. It is a sign of our sophistication to seek out exotic ethnic identities, as witness the plethora of eating places that spring up and decline in areas like Islington (North London).

But, until recently, cross-cultural eating was seen as a white European activity. White Europeans wanted the cultures themselves to remain self-contained. It is almost a colonial experience, without having to travel.

In the same way, we have maintained a sophisticated white European scholarship, enjoying the diversity of ethnic readings of the Bible, but failing to see our own reading as equally culturally biased, as one set of dishes at the feast alongside others.

‘The presence of diaspora communities from Asia and Africa in Europe offers the opportunity for us to set out together, as a local ecumenical community of readers, to open up for one another the meanings of the Bible’.

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15 Sugiratharajah, Voices from the Margin, p. 3.
16 Sugiratharajah, Voices from the Margin, p. 6.
17 Sugiratharajah, Voices from the Margin, p. 1.
Reading Ruth

Non-Western, non-patriarchal ways of reading the Bible are challenging and enriching. The story of the genocide meted out by God on the indigenous peoples of pre-Israelite Canaan appears differently when seen from the point of view of indigenous peoples displaced by European colonialisation. The gradual suppression of local deities and their worship, by the jealous male God Yhwh can be read from the perspective of those whose local, genderless or multiple expressions of the divine have been swept away by patriarchal Christianity. The life of Jesus finds a truer context when the story is told away from the urban, technological setting which is so alien to it.

These examples could be multiplied throughout the Bible. But one story which is being told and retold at present in a multi-cultural setting is that of Ruth. There follows a list of ten studies on Ruth from different contexts, with a short description of each.

Interwoven with the studies are images from the story of Ruth from different perspectives.

For further reflection or group discussion

Read the descriptions of the articles and reflect on pictures of Ruth. Do they change or challenge the way you have read Ruth? If you were leading a Bible Study on Ruth, do you think you would do it differently, having read and reflected on what is shown here?

1. How has your perspective been enriched by taking into account views by readers from other cultures and other parts of the world?
2. How would you nurture your multicultural perspectives?
3. How would you enable your multicultural perspectives to influence the way you “do church” in your local congregation?
4. How would you respond to persons who claim to have the normative readings of biblical texts?


This book comes from the influential and prolific Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, which endeavours to promote biblical and cultural hermeneutics by and among African women. The Circle’s publications are drawn from research by African women individually or collaboratively, in areas defined and selected by women.

It begins from the centrality of stories and story telling in African societies. This essentially oral methodology is fluid – the same story may be told in different ways to meet different needs. There exists a wide culture of story telling in Africa, which Musa Dube sees as supplemented rather than supplanted by the biblical stories.

Later sections deal with Patriarchal and Colonizing translations, the contribution of non-academic readers, womanist interpretations and divination. The articles below come from the latter two sections, and from the last chapters of ‘Response’.

Sarojini Nadar, ‘A South African Indian Womanist Reading of the Character of Ruth’, Other Ways of Reading pp. 159-175

This article reads Ruth from the perspective of a fourth generation South African Indian Christian woman, with a commitment to the women of her community, who use the Bible collectively. The tragic fate of Hindu women, while culturally changed by the South African context, still affects Indian women. Nadar speaks of single women who are impoverished by their situation and oppressed because of their ethnicity. She sees Ruth as a survivor, and an example that can counter the mindset of sati.

Musa W. Dube, ‘Divining Ruth for International Relations’, Other Ways of Reading pp. 179-198

Musa Dube sets Ruth in the context of Batswana and other southern African Independent Churches’ use of the Bible in connection with a divining set for healing and restoration. She describes this form of using the Bible, and goes on to read Ruth as a divination of international relations. Behind the relationship between Ruth and Naomi lies the relationship between Judah and Moab, which forms a background of subordination and domination, which brings suffering on both nations.


This response by an African male theologian recognises the freshness and prophetic nature of contemporary African women’s writing, characteristics which he senses have been lost in the bewilderment of a post-colonial, post-apartheid, post-modern world. He comments, ‘It is a cruel piece of irony that the fountain of creativity – African women’s theology – is the place into which tired and frivolous African male theology will not look’ (238). He relates the suffering of women in his own family to the experience and context of the articles in the book.
The category of non-Western theology which is most familiar and most acceptable to culturally aware Western readers is liberation theology. Sugirtharajah argues that this tends to overshadow another category, which he calls, ‘vernacular hermeneutics’, which, ‘privileges indigenous culture as an authentic site for doing theology, and which focuses on native characteristic and ideas’. (page 12) He goes on, ‘Despite the stranglehold of Western interpretation, and its claim to universality, vernacular hermeneutics is postmodern in its eagerness to celebrate the local, and postcolonial in its ability to disturb and dislodge the reigning imported theories.’


Dalila Nayap-Pot is an indigenous woman from Belize, living and working in Costa Rica, and writing from the perspective of women living on an indigenous reservation, who have been exiled and excluded from their own lands. She recognises the context of warfare, famine and migration of refugees as a contemporary context: ‘The exodus of masses of people completes the destruction of families that warfare and disaster have set in motion.’ (page 52) She also sees Ruth as a survivor, who challenges us to join in the creation and recreation of humanity.

Laura E. Donaldson, ‘The Sign of Orpah: Reading Ruth through Native Eyes’ Vernacular Hermeneutics 20-36, Ruth and Esther 130-144

Donaldson, a Cherokee woman, borrows the term, ‘contact zone’ from Mary Louise Pratt to describe the space of colonial encounters, across which peoples on both sides are changed. The rereading of Ruth takes into account both Anglo-European genocide and Native ‘survivance’ (borrowed from the Chippewa Gerald Vizenor to describe the complexity of Native survival). To Cherokee women it is Orpah, not Ruth, who gives the positive example, in choosing ‘the house of her clan and spiritual mother over the desire for another culture’. (page 34)

This article also appears in Athalya Brenner, Ruth and Esther a Feminist Companion to the Bible, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

Ruth and Esther is in the Second Series of A Feminist Companion to the Bible edited by Athalya Brenner. Brenner notes in her introduction that the field of feminist biblical interpretation has moved on since the publication of a commentary on Ruth in the first Series in 1993. In particular, the essays ‘express concern for peoples marginalized in/by various social levels and realities’. (page 14)

Bonnie Honig, ‘Ruth, the Model Emigrée: Mourning and the Symbolic Politics of Immigration’, Ruth and Esther 50-74

Bonnie Honig looks at two other interpretations of the story of Ruth, by Cynthia Ozick and Julia Kristeva. She challenges normative interpretations which see Ruth as ‘right’ and Orpah as ‘wrong’ in their choices, and Ruth’s choice as a choice for assimilation. Instead, she sees the story as a ‘potential source of new ethical and political inspiration’, highly relevant to readers who have to ‘deal responsibly with the politics of migration’. (page 51) She explores the relationship between Ruth’s foreignness and the monarchic, nationalistic state of Israel. She also explores the potential in the continuing but broken sorority between Ruth and Orpah.


This article begins with the return of a young Botswanan woman anthropologist to her home, sickened by the portrayal of her people in her academic studies. Her Grandmother reminds her of the stories of her people, ethical and wise, before the Europeans came. Extraordinarily, the author discovered an unpublished article of her own among the young woman’s papers. These are the ‘unpublished letters of Orpah to Ruth’. In the letters, she retells the history of the Moabite people, and the story of Naomi and Elimelech. It is the familiar story, told not with hostility to Ruth’s decision, but as a reminder of her heritage.

Judith McKinlay, ‘A Son is born to Naomi: A Harvest for Israel, Ruth and Esther 151-158

Here is a voice from a part of the globe that is not well-represented in these writings: from the Pacific. McKinlay is a woman from the dominant culture, attempting to read against her own cultural position, and ‘look for telltale signs of an ideology of domination’ (page 154). She concentrates on the fact that the child of Ruth and Boaz is described in the story as a son born to Naomi. From a Maori point of view, this can be read as the acceptance or assimilation of Ruth. Or, more sinisterly, it can be read in the light of Hagar, as the outsider bearing a child for the dominant culture.
Athalya Brenner, ‘Ruth as a Foreign Worker and the Politics of Exogamy’, Ruth and Esther 158-163

Brenner reads Ruth from the perspective of foreign workers in modern Israel, a society which she describes as, ‘by and large, snobbish and insular, suspicious of strangers and xenophobic’ (page 159). The only time integration occurs is when cross-cultural marriages take place. Read against the background of the real choices, or lack of choice, of foreign women workers, the story of Ruth loses some of its romantic gloss. In particular, the disappearance of Ruth at the point at which her son is named hints at the foreigner becoming invisible, absorbed rather than integrated into the host community.


Kirk-Duggan reads the stories of Ruth and Esther intertextually with the mother-daughter stories of Mary Helen Washington’s Memory of Kin: Stories about Family by Black Writers, in a womanist interpretation of the two biblical stories. In the background of both biblical and modern stories lie the two elements of famine and feast, and the movements between them, both in literal and in symbolic terms. The outcome is that ‘healthy relationships require mutuality, reciprocity and accountability’ (210), especially against the background of famine and feast.
Multicultural mission and ministry
Multicultural mission and ministry

This unit should include some element of face to face teaching, for example, a session or sessions based on the following:

**Two workshops on multicultural ministries**

1. ‘Being church in a multicultural society’

In this pattern of teaching, exposure is built in to the programme.

Requirements:

Readings on faith (religion) in post-modern Western society (appr. 50-75 pp.). The selected readings intend to direct the attention of the student to the role of religion in Western modern society and the break with the ‘classic’ notion of secularization as the death of religion. Special attention should be given to the emerging migrant churches and their role in the integration of migrants into Western society. Seminarians are requested to write a two page report on their readings and to formulate their questions and remarks. This paper is to be sent in two weeks prior to the start of the module.

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**Day 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>16.30 h</td>
<td>Arrival</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.00 h</td>
<td>Devotions</td>
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| 17.15 h| **Session 1: introducing the theme ‘church in society’**  
  - Focus on the reflection of the fundamental missiological issue of the relationship between God – church – society.  
  - Summarizing highlights of the readings on the role of religion in modern Western society.  
  - Seminarians are requested to (personally) make a drawing which expresses his/her ideas about the relationship God – world – church – pastor (30 minutes, drawing paper handed out) |
| 19.30 h| **Session 2a: presenting the drawings**  
  - Each participant explains his/her drawing and in doing so refers to the following questions:  
  - Which theological concepts / ideas are visible in the drawing?  
  - What does the drawing say about the relation God – world - church? |
| 20.30 h| **Session 2b: ‘Faith in civil society’ – a lecture by a sociologist with specialization in religion in Western society.** |
| 21.45 h| Devotions                                     |
Day 2

08.45 h Devotions
09.15 h Bible study on relation believer - world
10.30 h **Session 3a: discussing the prepared papers in small groups**
  - Share your observations/observations
  - Identify key issues/questions for further discussion
  - reports from the small groups
  - questions on group reports
  - discussion
11.45 h **Session 3b: preparations for the exposure visit (visit to a missionary project in a multicultural neighbourhood)**
  - Observing in relation to the group discussions
  - Questions to the host
  - How does this model challenge your theological thinking and existence?
1300 -17.00 h **Exposure programme**
19.30 h **Session 4a: evaluating the exposure visit**
  - What insights have you gained?
  - What questions were answered or raised?
  - Which elements of the observed model would challenge you to reformulate your ideas about church in context?
20.45 h **Session 4b: preparing session 5:** lecture by a missiologist (with expertise on church in a Western multicultural context) and discussion: seminarians evaluate the process till this moment and formulate their questions.
21.45 h Devotions

Day 3

08.45 h Devotions
09.15 h **Bible study on John 4: intercultural perspectives in reading the Bible**
10.30 h **Session 5: lecture on being a church in a multicultural context. Discussion**
13.30 h **Session 6: ‘looking back, looking ahead’**
  - Looking at the drawings of day 1: new drawing needed?
  - Looking ahead: Which skills do I need to develop? How can I gain more understanding?
  - Optional readings
15.30 h Devotions
16.00 h Departure
UNIT 2: MISSION AND MINISTRY

2. ‘Mission in a multicultural context’

The aim of the workshop is to encourage pastors to rethink and reformulate their mission in the light of their ministry. The focus is on the relation between the congregation, the church (denomination) and the world. A visit to a missionary programme in a multicultural setting should be part of the programme.

The participants are requested beforehand to send in a ‘case’ which exemplifies a key missionary issue in the life of the local congregation they are ministering to and to present this case for group discussion. They are requested to provide, in brief, written information concerning the context of the congregation, describe the actual missionary issue and formulate related theological questions. This paper has to be sent in two weeks before the start of the workshop.

Required reading:
Stuart Murray, Church after Christendom, Sparkford, 2004, pp. 135-164.

Session 1
- Introduction to the theme of the module and its aim.
- The participants are requested to formulate in brief their ideas about ‘God’s mission’, ‘mission of the church’, ‘mission of the congregation’ and ‘mission of the pastor’.
- Exchange of views and identifying key (theological) issues.
- Discussion on views concerning the relation of God – world – church - minister.
- Discussion in small groups (max. 3 people) about the prepared cases, with the specific request to relate the cases to the theological discussions in session 1 and to identify key questions for plenary discussion.

Session 2
- Reports on the group discussions and identifying key issues for further discussion
- Discussion and focussing on ‘learning questions’, such as:
  ‘What do I need to know more about...?’
  ‘What exactly am I confused about?’
- Preparation for exposure programme: content, questions for observation and discussion.

Exposure visit
- Visit to a missionary programme/project in a multicultural context.

Session 3
- Reports on the exposure: observations, questions, doubts, position of the pastor on the missionary model they were exposed to.

Session 4
- Models for church in mission (lecture on the paradigms of David Bosch).
- Relating the models to one’s own position
- Personal reflection on insights gained and on the following question:
  ‘What do I need (both as a pastor and a theologian)
  a) to deepen my understanding of the missionary nature of the church, in the context of multicultural society and
  b) to develop my skills?’ (insights to be written in a personal log)
- Brief exchange of reflections and ideas
Evaluation

These two workshops are intended to make the student aware of his/her own theological position and to help rethink this in the light of the exposure in a multicultural context. But in matters of fact the existing plurality compels us to ask theological and practical questions throughout. This doesn’t go without saying. We have to develop a new attentive attitude: we actually need to learn to pause in order to read the multicultural context (as it is often unknown to us), to discuss its meaning together (as we understand less than we may assume) and consequently to rethink our theological position (as our theology was developed in a largely monocultural context).

Reading the context is a process of discovery, in many aspects similar to crosscultural experiences of missionaries (and others) who crossed geographical, social and linguistic borders. Analysing the context starts with asking questions: what is actually happening in this neighbourhood, what is at stake? Who is in control and who does not have access to decision making? Who suffers, who is marginalized, who benefits? ‘Contextual reflection therefore pays attention to the details of the people and communities, lives and struggles, which furnish the everyday challenges and opportunities for Christian ministry and mission.’

Immersion in the context is vital. An exposure programme cannot be more than a starting point. But those who develop the new attitude and listen attentively and reflect critically will find that creative reformulation of our theology may and, very often, will be part of this process.

Jane Leach developed a model that is very helpful in becoming reflective practitioners in multicultural ministries. Her ‘practical theology of attention’, developed as a pastoral resource, is easily applicable for those who reflect on multicultural ministry and who try to discover what is at stake in a specific context.

She has identified a number of steps that can be taken prayerfully and that may help to discover what God is saying in a specific situation.

Step 1: Attention to the ‘voices’
- Whose voices are part of the conversation?
- What are they saying?
- What feelings are being expressed?
- Whose voices are absent or being silenced?
- Whose voices are being mediated by someone else – how does that nuance them?

Step 2: Attention to the wider issues
- What trends in culture are exemplified here?
- What kinds of human behaviour are exhibited here?
- How has the past shaped the present?
- What academic disciplines (sociology, psychology, history) or witnesses from the context (doctors, local politicians, children) might help us understand them better?

Step 3: Attention to my own ‘voice’
- What is my role?
- How do I feel?
- Where do I locate myself in relation to the issues emerging?
- What are my instincts about the ‘real’ issues here – where do these instincts come from? (my personal experience; Scripture; what I’ve been taught...or read)

Step 4: Attention to the theological tradition
- What ethic(s) are being practised in this situation – what is their implicit theology/ideology?
- What biblical texts resonate or set up a challenge in this encounter/situation?
- (Why these texts and not others?)
- What has my church tradition said about the issues identified?
- (How helpful/realistic is the stance taken for dealing with this situation?)
- What other theological resources can I bring to bear (theologians; liturgies; hymns; practices of the church)

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Step 5: Attention to the mission of the Church

- What is the calling of the church in (every and) this situation?
- What is/was my role in this situation?
- What do I want to govern my response in the future?

Multicultural ministry may be understood as a ‘theater for evangelism’. Isaiah 66: 18 provides an eschatological perspective: ‘I ... am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory’. Christian mission and ministry is a multicultural undertaking as it takes place between Pentecost – among all peoples and with people from multiple ethnic background (Acts 2) – and the perspective of the gathering of the nations in the new Jerusalem. Mission was multicultural from the very inception to its very end. Many tongues are part of it. With it come many cultural and theological perspectives.

1. Mission in a changing context

Theological libraries are filled with monographs on the transmission of the Christian faith in past and present. In order to enable the student of missions to get a grasp on the vast amount of data missiologists have produced encyclopaedic works on mission. David Bosch (1929-1992), author of Transforming mission, provides us with a widely used overview on models (paradigms) in mission. Although already dated in some respects, he does not only provide a useful framework but also challenges the reader to reflect upon the contemporary crisis in mission. He observes a widespread shift from confidence in the past to malaise nowadays: ‘a terrible failure of nerve of the missionary enterprise’. Bosch invites the reader to consider the ‘wider’ crisis: an ongoing progress of secularization and dechristianization in the West, feelings of guilt and shame as a result of Western complicity in the exploitation and subjugation of ‘peoples of color’, the great divide between rich and poor and (Western) uncertainty about the aim and nature of mission. He realizes at the same time that some apparently continue to do ‘business as usual’.

When speaking about the observed crisis in mission Bosch refers to the Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama, who stated that mission and crisis ‘belong’: it is normal that Christians and churches are in a state of crisis and are confronted with both danger and opportunity. Bosch urges Christians in the West to deal with the crisis, without ‘clinging to yesterday’s images’ of mission. He opts for a ‘pluriverse’ of missiology, meaning that he wants to chart both the classic and the emerging missionary paradigms. Not in an effort to reconcile all models, but to look at approaches and developments and to gain new understanding of what mission is about.

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23 Due to the year of publication Bosch doesn’t discuss recent emerging paradigms such as ‘mission as healing’ (in response to the AIDS pandemic and ethnic conflicts in the Great Lake District and Indonesia), ‘mission as marketing’ (the use of marketing tools for analysis of the context and designing missionary programmes) and ‘multicultural mission’. In his book Bosch unfortunately doesn’t give much thought to mission as intercultural and inter-church learning, a model that was already in existence in the eighties.

24 Bosch, Transforming mission, pp. 1-11.

What Bosch does not address in his encyclopaedic work is the issue of demographic changes due to migrations from the South to the North and South – South. He therefore fails to discuss the resulting shifts in traditional Christianity in the West: no longer are Christians and churches in Western countries ‘white’ only, but a substantial percentage of Christians in Northwestern Europe originates from the South. In the Netherlands 7.2 million people – 45% of the population – are church members. It is estimated that of this figure some 800,000 people are Christian migrants who have come to the Netherlands since the fifties. The picture in the U.K. is quite different: about 72%, some 41 million people, is a member of a Christian church. According to the Directory of Black Majority Churches the number of migrant Christian belonging to black majority churches is in the range of 500,000 people. The reliability of these figures may be debatable, but the mere fact that hundreds of thousands of migrant Christians have settled in this part of the world implies that the shape of Christianity has changed dramatically. The changes greatly impact – and increasingly do so – the shape of the missionary programmes run by the churches. Next to the ‘traditional’ white churches many ‘black majority churches’ have come into existence with a distinct emphasis on mission.

In spite of this the Indian theologian Wesley Ariarajah recently spoke of a ‘missionary paralysis’. He observes a ‘pluriverse of missiology’ and voices his concern that the missionary debate is running around in circles and does not address actual problems. He starts from the assumption that it is important:

not to become captive, in our discussions on mission today, to the criticism, though justified and necessary, of the insensitivities and excesses of much of the missionary activities that were associated with colonial expansion, either of Constantine or of the 18th or 19th century colonization of the world by European powers. We should go a little further and ask: ‘What are some of the problems in the understanding and practice of mission that we face today in the context of religions and cultures?’

He then continues to identify the problems in mission as he sees it: little fruits, mission that threatens and mission that breaks up community. Relevant and contextual mission should address these issues: mission should bear good fruits, it should not pose a threat and it should strengthen community. It is in this way that also the Indian theologian Andreas D’Souza speaks about the mission of the church: as a theology of relation that relates people to one another and that reconciles. To Ariarajah it does not need to be explained or defended that Christians engage in mission: as one of the missionary religions Christianity has a message to the community at large. The issue is not that being a missionary religion doesn’t fit with modern times and pluralistic society. The issue is that the shape of mission may not be relevant in today’s world as it doesn’t address the real issues.

2. Mission as colonial mission

People associating on the word ‘mission’, both Christians and others, often refer to the interrelatedness of the heyday of colonialism and the protestant missionary endeavor in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. Indeed this is and was a tricky issue. The spread of (Western) Christianity can not be isolated from the effort of Western governments to gain influence in other parts of the world and to exploit people and natural resources for Western interests. During the World Missions Conference in Salvador de Bahia (Brasil) in 1996 the participants went to the harbour of this coastal city and heard stories of how the slaves from Africa, upon arrival, were instantly baptized. The rational for doing this was to expand the Kingdom and just to make sure no heathen would enter Christian homes.

In the late nineteenth century churches and colonial governments increasingly recognized that they had a moral obligation towards the inhabitants of the colonies: the indigenous peoples had to be uplifted and civilized. The process of Christianization was one of the means to achieve that. For a long time key words in the process of Christianization were ‘conversion’ and ‘civilization’: the conversion of the heart was to be prepared through civilizing the heathen. Banishing ‘heathen’ customs, introducing Western standards for sanitation, requiring school attendance helped to weaken the defences of heathenism. When ‘civilization’, often identified with

the biblical ‘yeast’ which had to influence the dough of society, reached a certain level and (rational and logical) understanding had grown, people would be able to gain some understanding of Christian faith. Christianization, including baptism was often regarded as only a first step towards true conversion of the heart. The change of the heart was often considered as a second step, that was only reached by the pious and sincere Christians.

The change of the heart was seen by many, especially by missionaries who were influenced by the German ‘Mission as Volkschristianisierung’, as a prerequisite for change in society: church discipline, like the Old Testament law, could regulate moral life of the congregation, but only the change of the heart, through the power of the spiritual gospel, could result in the real change of society.

The optimism of the first World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (1910) was brutally scattered as armies met on the battlefields and hundreds of thousands never returned home and as the atrocities of the concentration camps became manifest. Between the two great wars remnants of cultural optimism remained visible. In 1924 the German missiologist Julius Richter, respected chairman of the influential Brandenburger Mission Conferences still spoke of the superior Christian Western culture that was brought to the primitive and cultureless people. It was the early thirties when Karl Barth and Karl Hartenstein (director of the Basel Mission) started questioning the interrelatedness of christianization and civilization. They realized that the First World War was not just a political disaster, but that it also signified the failure of Western culture and that the missionary effort of the church could no longer be defined in relation to the moral and superior force of Western Christian culture. Barth and Hartenstein defined mission not as the effort of Western churches and organizations, or the undertaking of Christians as such, but as the work of the transcendent God who revealed Himself in Christ.

Christ was preached in Africa as the answer to questions asked by whites, as the solution to problems observed by whites, as saviour of the world as seen by Europeans, as object of adoration and prayer within historical Christianity. But if Christ would reveal himself as an answer to questions posed by Africans, what would then be the message?

The Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako reacts to Taylor’s remarks, saying that the negative side of colonial missions should not be exaggerated. To show his point he reflects on a number of issues, such as the vitality of Christian churches in Africa. This vitality to him is proof that the message of the gospel touched the hearts of Africans, in spite of all (just) criticism concerning the method and the content of communication. There should be trust that the Spirit moved, not just missionaries.
3. Mission in six continents

Due to the missionary effort in the past many new communities of Christians came into existence. Some statistics about Christianity in the former Netherlands-Indies (Indonesia) may serve as a good example. Between the year 1800 and 1900 the number of non-European Christians in the Indonesian archipelago rose from a mere 51,000 to 311,000. The steady focus on the christianization of adherents of primal religions, the increasing number of missionaries and the rapid spread of Christian schools can be mentioned as contributing factors to the tremendous rise in Christians between 1900 and 1940: from 311,000 to 2,200,000 people. In this period the number of protestants increased sixfold: from 285,000 in the year 1900 to 1,665,771 in 1940.

In the nineteenth three centuries a number of Christian communities on the ‘mission fields’ gained formal independence. Others became independent in the fifties. The World Missions Conference in Tamaram (1939) strongly advocated the necessity of instituting churches. This process however took a long time, as sending mission agencies or sending churches had to come to terms with the rise of nationalism in many colonial territories. The shift was not easily made and not seldom formal education and training of professionals in the church was neglected with the excuse that the new Christian communities were not yet ‘ripe’ for independence and that the level of indigenous spiritual life was below (Western-christian) standard.

The end of colonial rule however inevitably lead to the instituting and independence of indigenous churches. From mission field to daughter church became the adage. The influx of Western personnel and money however fostered ongoing paternalism. True partnership of ‘old’ and ‘new’ churches became the (hoped for) standard after the World Mission Conference in Mexico City (1963), which stressed that mission was no longer – and had never been! – one way traffic from the West to non-Christian countries, but that every country in the world, including the so-called Christian West, was a mission field itself. Keywords became ‘partnership in obedience’, ‘mission in unity’, ‘reciprocity’ and ‘ecumenical sharing of resources’. All of these keywords direct our attention to the search for equal and just relations between churches: churches are in partnership, are sent into the world and are to unite in the missionary effort.

One new challenge came to the fore: reciprocity was increasingly understood as ecumenical exchange of personnel, vision and theology. It was sometimes forgotten that creating a reciprocal network and sharing the ecumenical resources was not meant as a conversion to one another, as an intercultural ‘learning experience’ or as mutual strengthening of our spirituality and experiencing the joy of ‘fellowshipping’, but that reciprocity was foremost focussed on the mission of the church in the world. Reciprocity in ecumenical relations had a reason outside itself. It’s focus was mission in unity: encouraging Christians, churches and Christian organizations to do mission(s) together, to stimulate the development of locally relevant programmes and to enable new ways of doing mission in a changed society.

4. Mission in Europe

In the nineteenth century societies for ‘home missions’, such as the London City Mission, were established in many countries of North West Europe. Right after the Second World War some evangelistic organizations from the U.S. started missionary work in devastated Europe. Is was not till the nineteen seventies though that ‘mission in Europe’ became a real issue for the churches. Of course, churches had already for a long time been involved in evangelistic and diaconal activities, but it took a long time for churches in the West to fully understand the implications of the motto ‘mission in six continents’: Western countries were no longer to be considered as the Christian ‘sending’ countries, but were just as much a ‘receiving’ country.

As a result of this new pattern of thinking in 1977 Dutch churches invited a delegation, consisting of Christians from the South, to observe and to evaluate churches in the Netherlands, their life and their activities, and to report their findings. The findings of this delegation were discussed in many local congregations and lead to a conference on ‘mission in the Netherlands’. In a written reaction to the observations of the delegation a church leader said that ‘in meeting with the delegation we see ourselves as Peter, being placed under the control of the gospel by Paul, as we are concerned that our mission in the Netherlands has degenerated into a copy that is copied over and over again’. 34 The visit of this delegation marked the beginning of the programme ‘Missionary Presence and Assistance’, in which professionals from overseas partner churches were invited to work in the Netherlands and to assist Dutch churches, especially in relation to ministering in a secular context.

For churches in Northwestern Europe doing mission in the context of secularization was the issue in the nineteen seventies. Some opted for being present in society and showing solidarity with those in need, sometimes leading to a position over against traditional churches.35 Prophetic justice became a key phrase. Others were in favor of witnessing and revitalizing the...
missionary nature of the church by internal and external evangelization.\textsuperscript{36}

In the struggle to come to terms with being a (declining) church in secular society churches almost failed to recognize that the context was changing rapidly: religion did not die in Western secularized societies, as predicted by many sociologists, but it made a remarkable comeback. The instituted Christian religion declined, but private religiosity of the Self emerged. Newly arrived migrants brought their religions with them. Christian migrants planted many new churches and congregations, although in the beginning hardly noticed by the white churches. Muslim migrants established their communities in every Western country. Ever since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, the London Underground and trains in Madrid this presence of Islam in Western society is widely and hotly debated. Governments have discovered the relevance of religion: religion may be a catalyst in conflicts and may create grave tension in society, but it can contribute to cohesion and integration as well. Recent reports point to the fact that religion and religious communities help migrants to integrate into Western society.

Slowly recognition is growing that Christian migrants constitute a sizeable percentage of Western Christianity. Furthermore, these new churches do not only give a lot of attention to preaching, but they also voice their concerns about economic, social and ethical issues.

**6. Nature of multicultural mission**

Acknowledging that the membership of churches in Western Europe is changing and is becoming multiethnic implies that many cultural backgrounds will influence – or should influence – the missionary ministry of the church, as visible in preaching, teaching and healing. Multiculturality within the Western Christian communities will inevitably impact discussions on liturgy (worship), ecclesiology (community, ordination, leadership) and mission. ‘White’ Christians often have the impression that ‘black’ Christians hold outdated theological views and that they promote ‘old time religion’. ‘Black’ Christians often seem to have the impression that ‘white’ Christians are not faithful to the Word any more and have become liberal, both theologically and ethically.

While some of this may be true it does not represent the whole picture. Reality is much more complex: it is true that migrant Christians do often hold traditional views of the Christian faith, but in opposition to what is expected these theologically conservative viewpoints are often combined with strong views on issues of justice. And it should be kept in mind that a sizeable number of ‘white’ Christians is theologically conservative as well. ‘Pride and prejudice’ plays an unfortunate role in relations between the Christian communities. Pride about the rich Western theological heritage over against ‘naïve’ faith, pride about ‘having faith’ over against Christians ‘having doubts’, prejudice in relation to the presupposed one-sided ‘vertical’ faith of some and ‘horizontalism’ on the part of others. Multicultural mission begins with listening and acceptance. What applies to dealing with plurality of opinions in the mainline churches applies to multicultural ministry as well. The big difference with plurality in mainline churches is that ‘whites’ and ‘blacks’ are largely members of different communities and that it is very easy to ‘live and let live’. Tolerating the other community should not be confused with true acceptance and partnership, as the first often borders on neglect and withdrawal in one’s own community.

Theologically, the discussion on multicultural mission is related to the unam sanctam, the belief that all Christians belong to the one, holy and catholic church. The Apostolic Creed reminds us that Church and churches are related, are one in the end. The history of the ecumenical movement may point to the undeniable fact of divisions within the worldwide Christian community or help us rejoice in our rich diversity, but with Paul we have to start from the oneness of the body of Christ, of whom we are all members: ‘For we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks. slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink’ (1 Cor. 12: 13). Rejection of the other member is not an option: ‘The eye can not say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you’ (1 Cor. 12: 21). Neither is it possible to withdraw oneself and live in splendid isolation: ‘... you are the body of Christ and each one of you is part of it’ (1 Cor. 12: 27).

Following the argument of Paul we observe that while he begins with the community of Christians as the body of Christ, he doesn’t use this metaphor as an end in itself. It is not the congregation as such that he refers to in the end, but pointing to the oneness of the body of Christ is the first step leading to the gifts that are bestowed on the Christians. And that in turn leads to the mission and ministry of the Christian community. People are different, have varying gifts (1 Cor. 12: 27-31), but all these gifts and talents should lead to the ‘most excellent way’, which is the way of love (1 Cor. 13: 1), the essence of Christian mission and ministry: ‘By this shall all people know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another’ (John 13:35).

Accepting that all are part of the same body will lead to distinctive traits of the ministry. Any offence to the oneness of the body is in the end a sin against the head of the body, which is Christ. Acts 6:1-7 makes this very

\textsuperscript{36} See Bosch’ discussion on ‘mission as evangelism’, Transforming Mission, pp. 409-419.
clear to us: the tension between the Grecian Jews and the Aramaic-speaking community was not accepted by the apostles as ‘a fact of life’. The injustice of marginality and unequal distribution of bread for the needy members of the Christian community immediately became an issue that was responded to: seven people were chosen to deal with issues such as these. The neglect may not have been intentional, but it was not accepted as a ‘fact of life’. Discrimination, intentional or not, is damaging to the one body of Christ.

The people chose the leaders themselves and they were, remarkably enough, not appointed by the apostles. The people who were affected by the unequal distribution were involved in solving the problem. The chosen leaders had to be full of the Spirit and of wisdom, but it is not without meaning that the names of the seven reflect different ethnic origin: the names of the chosen men are Greek, indicating that they most likely were not from an Palestinian – Aramaic-speaking – background, but that they belonged to the ethnic community that was sinned against. Again it is not without meaning that the last verse of this pericope, verse 7, states that the word of God spread and that the number of believers increased rapidly. Living as the one body of Christ – accepting one another and listening to issues that are raised and responding as members of that same body, bears fruit. Living as the one body of Christ in itself already constitutes the mission and ministry of the congregation. The life of the faithful congregation is missionary in nature. Responding to the issues of living together – with all its challenges relating to acceptance, listening and justice – is the prerequisite for effective ministry and mission.

In any missionary work, and the more so in multicultural mission, the mandate of Matthew 28: 18-20 and Luke 4: 18-19 should be seen as complementary. Making disciples and baptizing can’t be separated from the ‘year of Jubilee’, the freedom for prisoners, sight for the blind and release for the oppressed. These two passages can be put in creative tension, safeguarding the ‘down-to-earth’ character of the missionary message and guaranteeing on the other hand that in the Christian ministry the call to convert and be baptized will retain its proper place.
Models of Multicultural Church
This unit should include some element of face to face teaching, for example, a session or sessions drawing out the students’ existing awareness of models of multicultural church, from their general experience, and from their exposure/experience in relation to this module. The exercise should chart existing experience before embarking on the notes and case studies for this unit, and return to the reflection after going through the notes and case studies.

Introduction

Multicultural Ministry not only offers strategies for developing culturally diverse churches, it is also a strategy for church growth. The potential for churches to become more visibly diverse and vibrant cannot be ignored. If diminishing membership in European churches is to be reversed, then surely this is a means to live. European churches need to be encouraged to be open and willing to embrace the vision of multicultural ministry. It is important that churches are enabled to become multiculturally literate. The multicultural church model is an ideal to aspire to because to be a truly multicultural church is to be an authentic expression of Christ’s community for the 21st century. But to get there, every church/group needs to understand what being a multicultural church means, and be proactive in growing as multicultural communities of Christ. Ministerial students, therefore, urgently need to be equipped well to minister to, and meet the needs of, the multicultural communities they serve. This unit is aimed to help students training for ministry to:

- Raise their awareness about the vision of the multicultural church as a core characteristic of the community of Christ;
- Experience diversity as source of spiritual and social growth;
- Become enthusiastic and confident about growing and developing multicultural churches;
- Become better equipped to minister to all ages in multicultural churches.

Multicultural Congregation/Church

A multicultural church/congregation primarily means a congregation that is not only multi-ethnic in its membership but is also intentionally multicultural in its whole life. It is a church where the leadership encourages participation of all its members, enabling people of different ethnic backgrounds to contribute their own cultural gifts to the life of that multi-ethnic church. In short, it is a church that is not only ethnically diverse but is also intentional in ensuring that it reflects its multi-ethnicity in all that it does. However, a more homogeneous church can be multicultural when it is living and witnessing consciously and intentionally in a multicultural way, always seeking to reflect God’s diverse gifts in everything that it does.

Models of Multicultural Church I

The Multicultural Church welcomes all people and embraces diverse models of being church locally. Currently within the European Churches these or similar models of multicultural church exist:

1. Mono-cultural Churches
   a) All White Congregations
   b) Single Ethnic/Language Congregations (e.g. Urdu Speaking Pakistani) which could be:
      I. A congregation of a mainline Church worshipping in own language or English or the language of its European host
      II. An independent group meeting in a mainline Church building
      III. A fellowship in process of becoming a congregation of the mainline Church
      IV. An independent group that regularly worships in their mother tongue, consisting of people who already have membership in the mainline Church and others who see this group as their main and only church

2. Multi-cultural Churches
   a) Multi-ethnic Congregations
      Membership is ethnically diverse and worships together as one congregation using either the majority ethnic group’s language or English or the language of its European host. The majority ethnic group is dominant though the church is seen as having a multicultural flavour.
   b) Multicultural Congregations
      The church membership may be ethnically diverse or not, but it is living and witnessing consciously and intentionally in a multicultural way. It expresses unity in diversity in the church’s whole life, always seeking to be multicultural in everything that it does. It uses the diverse gifts and talents of all its members. Above all it empowers and nurtures leadership among all its members especially those in the minority. This is a

37 URC 2005 Assembly Book of Reports, Appendix 3, p.110.
true multicultural church, not only in its membership but also in its living experience. This model is the multicultural church ideal.

c) Black Majority Congregations

Here 75 - 100% of members are black from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The language of the European host is often the language used.

Models of Multicultural Church II

1) The Interim church/congregation

The minority ethnic members prefer to be part of the host church though they welcome the opportunity of a service in their mother tongue at least once a month so they can have fellowship among themselves.

2) Component church

Separate churches co-exist holding separate services in their own mother tongues, but with one Council of Elders representative of each church. Joint activities are held either occasionally or regularly to maintain links between the churches.

3) Multi-ethnic church

The membership is ethnically diverse and worships together in one church using the majority culture’s language. The majority culture is dominant, though the church is seen as having a multicultural flavour.

4) Mono-ethnic church

The church composition here is predominantly from one ethnic group. Most mainline churches are in this category. Some minority ethnic churches in this model are set up by migrants who seek the security of a church of their own culture and traditions and worship regularly in their own mother tongue. They are committed to actively participating and making their contribution to the life of the host church. It is not necessarily monocultural, e.g. an Urdu speaking congregation could include Indians, Pakistani, and Afghans etc.

5) Bi-cultural churches

Two major language groups exist in this model. They get along very well, and organise themselves as one church, though they still prefer two separate services conducted in the two languages. Combined services have simultaneous translations.

Building the Multicultural Church

A. 10 Steps to Creating a Multicultural Church

1. Start by evaluating and understanding what the church already has.
2. Develop new cultural approaches and cognitive activities that train people to be more open minded and accepting of others different from them.
3. Identify potential elements of a multicultural church in the area.
4. Develop models for relating to a diverse population:
   - Meeting the people
   - Greeting the people
   - Inviting the people to share the multicultural vision
5. In partnership with the people develop activities incorporating their values and preferences.
6. Begin to develop spiritual, social and educational systems that respect and serve the whole group.
7. Develop smaller specific interest/thematic components for ongoing events.
8. At the outset create a value of strong active participation on the part of each member as a desired Christian witness.
9. Equip members on how to find meaning for themselves in the experiences.
10. Emphasise inner transformation as essential to Christian witness and discipleship. Accepting others’ values and behaviour is important as long as such values are acceptable to God and conforms to Christ’s teaching.

B. 10 Points for Growing Multicultural Churches

A growing prophetic and multicultural church is one where:

1. Worship is vital, alive, challenging and involves everyone.
2. Pastoral care is about making real the love of Christ especially to new members and those on the fringe, and involves knowledge by leaders of the rites of passage practices important to different groups in the church.

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39 Adapted from materials of Presbyterian Church, USA (PCUSA).
40 Adapted from High Cross United Reformed Church, Tottenham, North London, 2005.
3. Christian education for different age groups, bible study, house groups and constant prayer life are normative.

4. There’s real compassion and engagement with local community, meeting the needs of the suffering and victims of injustices with empathy.

5. Effective communication and publicity are important.

6. Hospitality, spirit of generosity, willingness to help and serve, fellowship and food sharing are encouraged.

7. All ages are welcome and nurtured especially children, young people and the elderly.

8. There is desire to be a healing community bringing Christ’s healing to all, with prayer and action in atmosphere of acceptance and tolerance.

9. There is active and ongoing empowerment of members, diverse gifts are utilised, and members are trained for different kinds of leadership.

10. There is vision and enthusiasm rooted in the Holy Spirit, joy and celebration of faith, with daily praise and thanksgiving to God.

C. Ideas for Building an Inclusive Church

A Multicultural Church...

- Affirms and lives out its faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ
- Appreciates the interconnectedness of people of all cultures and ethnicity
- Embodies and rejoices in cultural diversity as gifts to humanity
- Welcomes all into the community of faith without discrimination
- Values and utilises the diverse gifts in the Christian family
- Stands in solidarity with those committed to inclusion
- Affirms multicultural inclusiveness as key organising force for the church
- Works for justice and peace in the world

Pray for the multicultural vision to become a reality in your church

Examine your own feelings and attitudes about other cultures

Learn about other cultures and make friends with their people

Learn another language or teach English as a second language

Join advocacy for the rights of minority ethnic groups

Join or build a group to meet socio-economic needs of new migrants.

Support church youth programs on cross-cultural awareness

A Multicultural Congregation can...

- Form cell groups to biblically explore God’s call to inclusiveness
- Form partnerships with churches of other cultures locally and abroad and organise church exchanges and visits
- Identify socio-economic needs of groups within the church and in the area and set up network/ecumenical partnerships to work with local/central government agencies to meet those needs (e.g. housing, bank loans, health and business education etc...)
- Develop multicultural youth programs and youth cross-cultural experiences
- Welcome minority ethnic groups who need a space for worship
- Run anti-racism awareness seminars and observe special days/occasions (e.g. Martin Luther King Day, Racial Justice Sunday etc...)

A Multicultural Church Member can...

- Pray for the multicultural vision to become a reality in your church
- Examine your own feelings and attitudes about other cultures
- Learn about other cultures and make friends with their people
- Learn another language or teach English as a second language
- Join advocacy for the rights of minority ethnic groups
- Join or build a group to meet socio-economic needs of new migrants.
- Support church youth programs on cross-cultural awareness

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Also adapted from PCUSA materials.
D. Multicultural United Reformed Churches: A Case Study

1. Introduction

1.1 As well as the emergence and growth of minority single-ethnic congregations in the UK, some of which have relationships with the United Reformed Church locally; multicultural congregations are growing and form a significant presence within the United Reformed Church. Ministry, mission and resources in relation to these churches need to be taken seriously by the denomination.

2. History

2.1 Multicultural congregations have been a feature of the United Reformed Church since its beginning in 1972, and the number of such congregations has grown steadily since then. The most significant minority ethnic group in the early days was from different Caribbean backgrounds (e.g. Jamaica, Guyana, St Kitts, Barbados, Trinidad etc). There were in fact a few Caribbean members in Congregational churches pre 1950. Many people who came from the Caribbean in the Windrush tried to settle in churches and went through many painful experiences. People naturally looked for churches of the same or similar traditions to join, but were met with a cold reception, ignored, or told that they would surely be happier down the road where there was a black church (usually a Pentecostal one). West Africans trying to worship in churches of Presbyterian tradition in the 1960s, 70s and 80s also faced the same reception.

2.2 However, there were a few Congregational and Presbyterian churches around the UK that did warmly welcomed people from the Caribbean and other places. A steady increase in the number of people from Caribbean and West African roots joining United Reformed Churches has continued since, the majority of West Africans being from Ghana. Some churches also had members of Asian and European backgrounds.

3. The Current Situation

3.1 At present in the United Reformed Church we have churches that include a small number of minority ethnic members, others where 50% of the members are of minority ethnic origin, and some that are predominantly or even totally minority ethnic in composition. Such churches are often referred to as a Black Majority United Reformed Churches. London has the largest percentage of minority ethnic people in the UK (approximately 60% of the minority ethnic population in the UK) so it is not surprising that the majority of URC congregations with significant numbers of minority ethnic membership are found in London. For example, approximately 47% of the United Reformed Churches in Thames North Synod are multicultural to a lesser or greater extent. The following is a very approximate estimate of the minority ethnic membership in that synod:

- 24% of churches have only a few black and minority ethnic (BME) members
- 12% of churches have fifty percent BME members
- 11% of churches are predominantly BME

3.2 A similar pattern but to a lesser extent can be found in the London Churches of the Southern Synod. United Reformed Church multicultural congregations can also be found in several other synods, particularly in the West Midlands (e.g. Birmingham and Wolverhampton) and East Midlands to name a few.

3.3 Many of the churches described here are maintaining their level of membership and some are growing steadily in membership. They are not declining churches. There are many good examples within these churches of community outreach and community work within the church building. The way these multicultural congregations function vary, and it could be said to be in a continuum. At one end, some still have a white core group of members holding all the power and responsibility and where minority ethnic members are on the fringes of the church. At the other end are churches that have undergone a transformation in leadership, where minority ethnic members have been invited and enabled to lead and reshape the church. In these churches also, minority ethnic members are in positions of responsibility as elders, in children and youth work, and in finance and management. They are also offering their gifts and talents in worship and some are serving in the wider church at district, synod and national levels. These churches have been enriched and changed through the mutual growing together of all the different ethnic groups within their membership.

Lessons to be learnt

- Ensure that minority ethnic members of the church speak for themselves
- Identify and deal with any racist behaviour in the congregation. If left unattended, such behaviour can create a real block, which will prevent the church becoming truly multicultural
- Avoid paternalistic approaches towards minority ethnic members
- Stress the importance of the different cultural groups and members recognising and valuing each other

Multicultural churches must not complacent with the
composition of their congregations, and be attentive to the changes in the community around and ensure they reach out to others who may need support and to be included. The composition in communities can shift and change over a period of time, so churches must be ready to respond to such changes.

5. Principles to work at and continue to work towards:

- Building confidence amongst people who have been let down and kept down by churches in the past, so that people’s gifts, talents, and skills can be used, shared, and developed.

- Real sharing between different cultures within a church does not only imply eating and drinking together, but it also means sharing power and responsibility. It means being around the decision making table as well as the food table.

- Spiritual nurture of minority ethnic members, as for all members, needs to be carefully considered. Particularly in multicultural churches, there can be different kinds of spiritual needs, requiring a variety of responses.

- Education and training is important to ensure that minority ethnic members are equipped and have access to information and resources in relation to various ministries of the church, e.g. eldership, youth and children’s work, and ordained ministry. They should be actively encouraged to inquire about these opportunities and be able to access them.

- Participation for minority ethnic members may begin by ensuring that they are members as opposed to worshippers, and if it the latter, then they need to be invited to consider church membership. Also within some cultures the practice of volunteering comes after a personal invitation to get involved in an aspect of church life or to take responsibility within the church.

- Empowerment of minority ethnic member to participate, be involved, and to take up leadership is crucial, so that the whole church can benefit from people’s gifts and skills and be truly enriched.

6. Gains and benefits

6.1 The gains and benefits of being a URC multicultural congregation include:

- The variety of worship experiences (that can be drawn on) that are not only reflecting worship in the world church but also ecumenical.

- Rites of Passage practices and experiences relating mainly to birth, marriage, and death, and also particular kinds of services relating to the offering, gift days, and fund raising all provide good opportunities for theological reflection and pastoral care.

- Great opportunities for youth and children’s ministry. Many multicultural churches have sizeable numbers of children and young people. Such local churches are enriched by their presence and can make great contributions to the youth work in the wider church. Minority ethnic young people could become a sizable and significant presence in the wider United Reformed Church.

- Minority ethnic members provide natural links with partner churches abroad. Opportunities for forming links and twinnings between United Reformed Church congregations and churches in their countries of origin are many (e.g. with Churches in Ghana and also with the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands).

7. Conclusion

- It is important that the United Reformed Church recognises and affirms the existence of its multicultural congregations and take seriously their great potential to bring growth and vibrancy to the life of the whole church now and into the future.

- Other levels of the denomination’s structure must reflect this multicultural diversity and utilise the gifts that are there for the sake of the whole church. To that end, the Assembly Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry brought a resolution to the Assembly in 2007 designed to increase the involvement and participation of black and minority ethnic people in the decision making processes and governance of the denomination. That resolution was withdrawn because the Assembly leadership felt the Church was not yet ready for it in the light of the heated debate that followed. In 2008 the resolution was brought back to the Assembly where it got overwhelming support and was passed. Some have suggested that withdrawing the resolution the first time round was more to do with procedural issues and the lack of strong and informed leadership during the debate itself than a reflection of people’s prejudices. The point is that such intentional measures are sometimes necessary for needed changes to take place.

- URC multicultural congregations should be invited to write and tell their stories so that the denomination can hear first hand the diversity of life that exists within its membership and the potential for growth and development.
E. The Korean Emmanuel Church in Stockholm: A Case Study

A Church Celebrating Unity in Diversity: The Case of Immanuel Church in Stockholm

By Cho, Choongil

1. Immanuel Church towards a multi-cultural church

Churches belonging to SMF (Svenska Missionsförbundet, now called Svenska Missionskyrkan) in Stockholm experienced a decrease in number of members as families moved to suburbs in the beginning of 1960. As a result, each church was not equipped with the manpower and facilities to handle the challenges of ministry in a new situation. Therefore, few of them joined together to form one church. At that time, there were 6 member churches of SMF in the center of Stockholm. Four among them formed one united church in June 12, 1971 under the name of Immanuel Church. At this time Immanuel Church was a homogeneous Christian Community with only Swedish speaking church members.

Immanuel Church was however transformed to a heterogeneous Christian Community in 1973 when International Fellowship, an English speaking group, was formed. A pastor from U.S.A. was invited by Immanuel Church to care for the International Fellowship. Five years later in 1978, a Korean Fellowship, a Korean speaking group, was also formed. Since then, Immanuel Church has been a multi-cultural church, having Sunday services in different languages at different places under the same roof at the same time. Members of Immanuel Church do not hold a membership in one fellowship, but in the Church itself. The members differ from one another in language, ethnicity, culture and Christian background and it is in this diversity in which Immanuel Church aims to seek unity.

Immanuel Church has steadily grown since the unification of the four SMF member churches in 1971 and is continuing to do so. At present, Immanuel Church has 2,000 members. Each week during Sunday services, 250-300 members of the International Fellowship, 150 members of the Korean Fellowship, and 300-400 members of the Swedish Fellowship gather for worship in their own languages. Immanuel Church is truly a multi-cultural church.

2. Towards Overcoming Diversity

There are conflicts between the different groups in Immanuel Church due to multi-cultural diversity. When the Western and the Eastern worlds meet, invisible conflicts due to differences in history, culture and values are experienced. It is not easy to overcome these invisible differences between the Europeans who grew up with the Christian culture in the background and non-western people who have been kept on a distance from the Christian culture. Despite the cultural and historical differences, it is the task of Immanuel church to unify its members and fellowships not only on a structural level but also in the mentalities of the members. Therefore, integration is the point of focus in the works of Immanuel Church.

The truth is, Immanuel Church has experienced difficulties since the change from a homogeneous to a heterogeneous church. For example, the International and the Korean Fellowships often raised the problem of identity by questioning “Who are we in Immanuel Church?”. Each time, the Church tried to find a way to overcome the differences. A group called Group 21 was organized to deal with the questions and difficulties due to the cultural diversity. It was also given the authority to re-new the organization of the Church. At last, the bill for organization of the Church presented by Group 21 was passed by the General Assembly of Immanuel Church in 1997. The organization of the Church was made up of two large groups; the decision-making body of the church, and the operational. Even though the organization of the Church was changed, complete unity could not be found in Immanuel Church. It was only a step towards an improved integration.

Immanuel Church had a structure which dealt with integration of the Church even before Group 21 was organized. That structure is still standing. For instance, the Church emphasizes integration by having a common administration, finance department and a common board (Församlingsråd). In order to be equally involved in the administration, there are many committees in the Church. A common board decides and plans important directional events of the whole Church. This committee is formed by 14 members: two members from the International Fellowship, one from the Korean Fellowship, and twelve from the Swedish Fellowship. These members are chosen by the General Assembly of Immanuel Church.

The Church has tried to find a way to solve problems regarding the cultural differences. One of the tools was the joint services. Several times a year, Immanuel Church has joint services with all of its members. In same place; all members of Immanuel Church sing, pray, and listen to the sermon in three different languages. Now and then, the church members share the Holy Communion together to celebrate unity in Christ.

Immanuel Church has worked to accomplish unity in diversity for more than 28 years. Nevertheless, the integrational procedure is still a topic on the agenda.

42 Cho Choongil presented this case study during the consultation on multicultural ministries in Utrecht (2005).
and there are more conflicts rather than unity among the different groups today. Of course structural integration is needed to equip a certain framework which is necessary for democratic decision making.

Structural integration is, however, not sufficient in resolving psychological, cultural and spiritual dimensions of the problems. So, Immanuel Church has tried a theological approach. For instance, all pastors working in Immanuel Church gathered in one place after the summer and had semi-theological forum with the theme Diversity and Plurality to share opinions about the future of Immanuel Church. For this forum, Prof. Runar Eldebo was invited.

Immanuel Church exists as a co-habitation but it is yet to become in actuality one family of the household of God. That is why the Church must not only think conceptually of their members as ‘one family’ but needs to give real expression to the consciousness that everyone is ‘one’ in the household of God, regardless of different cultural backgrounds.

3. For better integration

The theological basis of strategy for integration in Immanuel Church to overcome cultural and ethnical diversity is the theology of the household of God. The Church start from theological basis that the Church is the household of God for the people of God as the One Body of Christ. With the help of Paul’s mission, Israelites and Gentiles together believed in Jesus Christ. Although they had the same faith in Jesus, they could not forget their previous statuses. Thus, there must have existed invisible barriers between them, and they could not give themselves up to be a family of God. At that time, Paul gave a concept of a family in Christ to the church in Ephesus: “in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.” (Eph. 2:13) It means that there is only one God and this God is God of all (Eph 4:6). Also this God of all is “One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Eph 4:6) Paul continuously emphasized God of all.

One of the major cultural differences between the West and the East is the We-Culture and I-Culture. While the Europeans have an I-culture, the Koreans have a We-culture. When a European married couple refers to each other, they use the words my wife and my husband but Koreans say our wife and our husband. Although Immanuel Church consists of members with varying backgrounds, all members are Christians in the family of Jesus Christ. There are no Korean Christians, Asian Christians, American Christians, African Christians, European Christians, and Swedish Christians in Immanuel Church. Therefore, the most important task of Immanuel Church is to form Christian solidarity and to confess that we all are one family in Christ.

Immanuel Church is aware of the problems and its factors and has a clear idea of which direction it should work towards. One of the obstacles facing the Church is the fact that the members of the Church do not have a common understanding of the Church’s identity that we are one in Jesus Christ on the level of theology. If the members are not informed and educated about this theology, Immanuel Church will only reach unity on the surface, not the unity God is looking for.

Finally, I believe that the most important thing Immanuel Church must think of when working for a better integration is what a blessing it is for Immanuel Church and all its members to be one family in Jesus Christ, and how the Church can celebrate such a blessing.
MULTI-CULTURAL MINISTRY

Transforming the Church for the New Millennium

Plan for Transformation

- Embrace potential for becoming diverse and inclusive
- Adapt worship and music to include the local culture
- Extend outreach by advertising and promotion in the mass media
- Be active in the neighbourhood through co-operative mission outreach and community development
- Offer holistic seven-day-a-week programming
- Offer a community of caring and sharing, solace and healing, of values and visions for purposeful life

Community Outreach

- Partner with a church of different ethnicity from yours and share joint mission projects, social events, special worship services, etc...
- Invite preachers, speakers, and pulpit exchanges from diverse ethnic groups
- Welcome guest singers, choirs, choir exchanges and willingly use local music
- Observe special days that are significant to another group, e.g. Black History Month, and run seminars on history/traditions/heroes of that group
- Support the causes of another ethnic group
- Seek out minority ethnic candidates for church staff openings
- Plan and promote special events that interest diverse groups in the area

Principles of Multicultural Evangelism

- Multicultural evangelism involves all parts of the church sharing the Gospel of God’s love and salvation in Christ to all people.
- It involves making friends with people, sensitively learning about them, caring for them, and entering into dialogue with them. There must be sincere intentions to welcome people into a circle of life-long friends, sharing hospitality, common needs and activities, and joys and sorrows. There is mutual appreciation and respect.
- It requires a collaborative approach working in close co-operation with the whole church thereby faithfully and responsibly witnessing to our unity in Christ as well as model a more effective witness to those we are in mission with.
- Learning the language of the people in the community is a wonderful way to make friends and to share in dialogue with them.
- Prayer is essential to multicultural evangelism, seeking the mind of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we minister to those around us.
- Christians are called to special sensitivity in witnessing to their Christian faith in a multicultural setting. There must be careful attempts to understand and respect other people’s religion, culture and faith journeys. Beyond that, Christians are called to ‘give account for the hope that is in you’ (1Peter 3:15) as they share the gospel with others. Some suggestions:
  i. After listening to a person’s story, identify points of similar experience and share one’s own faith journey and how the Grace of God in Jesus has been active in one’s own life. Do this in the attitude of ‘one beggar telling another where to find bread’.
  ii. Invite people to participate in Bible study around various subjects or issues - from the context of their respective lives.

43 Adapted from Transforming the Mainline Church by Dr Robert Chestnut, PCUSA.
44 Adapted from Revd Raafat Girgis’ paper of same title, PCUSA.
Worship in Multicultural Ministry
MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY

Worship in Multicultural Ministry

This unit should include some element of face to face teaching, for example, a session or sessions based on the following:

Rites of Passage

Exploring and understanding Rites of Passage experiences and knowledge belonging to a diverse membership from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds is important to the life of the church and community. Such experiences are often the focus of great sensitivity and vulnerability in people’s lives. Therefore, it is important that ministers, elders, leaders and members of churches are aware of the important practices of different rites of passage and their implications for pastoral care, theology, mission, and ministry.

It is important that the church leadership understands the different cultures that are part of its membership and surroundings and is actively engaged with them and find opportunities to gain experience and good practice on multicultural approaches to rites of passage.

Group Interaction

- Sharing Stories and Experiences
  i. Invite participants to share key happenings in their lives that have marked special occasions. What meaning did these special occasions have for them and their families? What were significant about these events?
  ii. Consider some key elements about different rites of passages (e.g. birthday, wedding, and funeral) that a minister should know in relation to the different cultures in his/her church. Why is it important to know these things?

What are the pastoral implications of knowing/not knowing?

UNIT 4: MULTICULTURAL WORSHIP

1. WORSHIP AND CULTURE

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, the committee compiling the new Methodist and Ecumenical Hymnbook which came to be called, Hymns and Psalms met in a variety of locations. I represented the Congregational Federation, as a young minister, straight out of college, and then in the early years of my first pastorate. Oh how I wanted to be accepted as a fully participant part of that committee! I had grown up on hymn-sing, and loved the richness of the texts and the experience of singing in congregation. At the close of one of the first meetings, the person leading worship announced a hymn which I knew and loved (I don’t remember which one!). I looked forward to singing with the group, demonstrating my rightness in being there. The singing was unaccompanied, and I started off loudly – but it was the wrong tune. Miserably, I struggled to join in, trying to pick up the tune as we went, feeling acutely and demonstrating my alieness in the group, and my ignorance of this particular culture.

And that was as a Congregationalist among Methodists! Later discussions addressed other ‘cultural’ issues, such as gender-inclusive language, modernising thees and thous, and the inclusion of what came to be known as worship songs alongside hymns.

On the other hand, I have sung ‘What a friend we have in Jesus’ with great gusto in Korea, China, Burma, India, Kenya, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, Jamaica and Guyana, often the only one singing in English, but with a hugely joyful sense of being at home, while a critical voice in my mind questioned the ascendancy of rather mediocre 19th century English hymns over indigenous forms of worship. What right had I to feel at home here?

The changes in global and European landscapes of faith explored in this module have perhaps their greatest impact on the lives of ordinary Christians when they encounter them in the worshipping life of the local congregation. This unit explores the challenges arising from multicultural worship in that and other contexts.

Culture, inculturation and secularism

Mats Rydinger has studied and analysed the worship of two congregations, a native American congregation in the USA, and an urban congregation in Stockholm, in a missionary context. He sees worship as the vulnerable centre of the church in mission. Worship relates to mission in three ways: as the ideological home base for mission (from which the congregation goes out to face the world); as a symbol of a celebrating community (designed to draw people in); as an emerging mission field in itself. The last he describes as follows: ‘From having been a service mainly focused on people who already profess and are expected to grow into the faith, the worship services have developed in to a meeting place where people who are alien to the church and its traditions gather and are supposed to be addressed.’

Thus issues of inculturation arise not only in the context of minority ethnic communities, but, in post-modern Western Europe, in approaching a local community which is deeply alienated from its Christian roots.

Rydinger speaks of inculturation or contextualisation in two basic aspects: transcultural and cultural/counter cultural.

Transcultural elements are major structures which have persisted throughout Christian history. Following Saliers, he names four: Christian initiation, Eucharistic liturgy, daily prayer offices, and seasonal celebrations. To these he adds rites of passage, in which he includes marriage, burial and ordination.

None of these is unproblematic. Ecumenical discussions in Britain and globally have failed to find common ground in any of the four major structures. Salvation Army, Pentecostal, or Friends’ worship may give rise to completely different sets of structures, for example, praise, healing, music, shared reflection. But the argument is that structures such as these form a transcultural set of forms by which we can recognise worship in different contexts: ‘As theologians use the Scripture to look for local equivalents in a culture, the liturgical scholar uses criteria of identity – not as a kind of edition typical, but rather as a kind of shared pattern that doesn’t necessarily follow a consecutive order.’

For worship to be both cultural and countercultural recognises that there is a constant dialogue within and with cultural context. On one hand, ‘A process of contextualization that takes a vulnerable center seriously should be open to a method whereby the gospel is allowed to be challenged. This doesn’t mean the gospel must be weak or dim, but that the context must be allowed to keep its integrity and remain strong.’ Contextualisation is not so much ‘content to be translated’ but ‘a process to be achieved’. On the other hand, all culture is human and, as such, has both positive and negative elements. Worship is properly counter-cultural when it challenges and subverts cultures of injustice and unrighteousness.

For example, the regular use of the Magnificat in worship over the last 1500 years has astounding failed to operate counter-culturally as the Churches which promoted it have also controlled great wealth, and promoted injustices such as slavery and dictatorship; or when worshippers have gone out from church to exploit their workers or take part in oppressive regimes.

On the other hand, Michael McNally tells the story of a revival of hymn-singing among the Ojibwe native Americans, which also revived cultural identity and informed a successful campaign for land rights. The hymns, which, ironically, had been introduced by missionaries to eradicate ‘Indianness’ in a process of christianisation, were translated into the Ojibwe language and music style. McNally describes the singing at the wake of an elderly man who had been kicked to death by youths: ‘Although after some difficulty I could make out the tunes of familiar Anglo-Protestant hymnody, the songs were transformed into highly expressive laments that bore little apparent relation to the English hymns from which they were ostensibly derived.’

The cultural meaning of hymn singing gave rise to tensions, which McNally describes: ‘When one Ojibwe man heard hymns at a ceremony honouring a new drum . . . he whispered his opinion that such “Christian” music was disrespectful to the drum’. On the other hand, the Church in the area (St Columba’s) approved the singing of Ojibwe hymns at wakes, but ruled out other practices such as sage incense, pipe ceremonies and drumming.

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48 Rydinger, The Vulnerable Power of Worship, p. 70.
49 Rydinger, The Vulnerable Power of Worship, p. 73.
51 McNally, Ojibwe Singers, p. 191.
The process is vulnerable. It is impossible to draw a defining line between worship and secular culture, since all our worship springs from the culture in which it is set. At one time, the pipe organ was seen in Britain as a rather flamboyant European invention, a useless noise box, when all God wanted to hear was the unaided human voice. Now, some churches are locked in a very narrow musical culture, in which music isn’t worship unless it is accompanied by a pipe organ. How did that happen?

We cannot speak without using language, which is cultural; we cannot sing or make music without using musical styles and instruments; the shape of our worship spaces is based on long traditions of public life. And yet, the arguments that arise over what is acceptable in worship are capable of splitting churches and causing wars! To non-church cultures, our nitpicking concern about who can lead, and what kind of music is OK seem completely barmy!

And yet, every worshipping community would draw the line somewhere. Worship has to be marked out, signified in some way; and some things are unacceptable in any public activity. The problem is that it is almost impossible for Christians to agree on where the lines are to be drawn.

The following examples may help to clarify the issue. How would you respond to:

a) exorcisms
b) blessing of same sex unions
c) preaching by women
d) veneration of ancestors
e) use of drums

These are all complex. I have been involved in rescuing a family from grossly intrusive and violent exorcism of one of the children, who was considered to be demon possessed. She and the family were deeply traumatised. On the other hand, I have been asked to exorcise houses and raise curses. There seemed on those occasions no reason why I should not call on the name of Jesus to bring blessing.

The last example is not confined to drumming as part of ethnic tradition. It arose recently at the church in which I worship, which has a strong tradition of hymn singing, accompanied by an organ and led by a choir. Any suggestion of introducing a style of music which included other instruments, especially drums, is greeted with horror, and the sense that it would not be proper worship, but a concession to secular culture.

Philip Jenkins describes the process in churches of the Northern and Southern hemispheres in the chapter, ‘Coming to Terms’ in his book, The Next Christendom. The worship he describes in Latin American, Korean and African settings is so different from what is regarded as mainstream in Western Europe or America, that critics regard it as syncretistic or pagan. However, as he points out, ‘The Church made large compromises with pre-Christian practices to accomplish its goals [in Central America], but no more than it had done in northern Europe a millennium before.’

He describes the adaptation of language to local customs and the natural world in Africa and Aotearoa New Zealand; the use of local food in the Eucharist or the introduction of local symbols in worship; drumming and dancing as part of worship.

But he goes on to explore the relationship between cultural practices in worship and core beliefs. He quotes a Catholic archbishop as saying that inculturation, ‘must be carried deeper than just music, drums and clapping of hands’ and goes on to say that, ‘In recent years, we can trace the emergence of innovative Southern theologies by implication, arising from and in interaction with worship.

For example, the notion of God as the Ancestor of ancestors resonates in African and East Asian worship and theology; Jesus as the Great Physician forms a bond between independent churches and the Mediterranean Christianity of the earliest churches. Native American Christians recognise spiritual aspects of nature in the Great Spirit or Holy Spirit. Incidentally, I can remember the unease with which English worshippers encountered this in a Women’s World Day of Prayer service prepared by native American women.
Perhaps the greatest gulf between European/American and other cultures lies in the attitude to spiritual powers. Enlightenment thinking has largely banished supernatural forces from the world view of Western Europeans and Americans, though, interestingly, post-modern and New Age spirituality demonstrate a hunger for and readiness to engage with spirituality and spiritual elements beyond the individual’s inner world.

Many Southern worldviews already include a range of spiritual powers, both good and evil. This is evidenced in worship in the centrality of exorcism, healing and spiritual warfare. Many new independent churches are founded by prophets who claim specific inspiration and knowledge. Jenkins notes that healing both enables Christianity to compete and sets it in a context with non-Christian traditional practices: ‘with traditional religion in Africa, with various animist and spiritist movements of African origin in Brazil, with shamanism in Korea.’

This, in turn, raises criticisms that the churches are merely importing pagan traditional practices.

MULTI-CULTURAL CONTEXTS

All the issues that have been raised in terms of Southern Churches operating in their countries of origin also arise in connection with the various diasporic communities in (in our case) Europe.

South-North mission is not now simply a new way of seeing partnership in the old European missionary movements. It is a genuine missionary dynamic to bring the culture, worship patterns and beliefs from Southern independent and mainstream Churches into a global context; to interpret the Great Commission from a Southern perspective. And, of course, European Christianity is operating in a context which includes many migrant churches, new indigenous churches and varieties of diversity within congregations.

The same question must be asked as in other discussions of multicultural ministry: how far is it possible to be truly multi-cultural? Can we really sit down together at the great feast?

There are (arguably) three contexts within which multicultural worship takes place:

a) in inter-church contexts (ecumenical events, conferences)

Per Harling describes the development of multicultural worship through the World Council of Churches Conferences and Mission Conferences in the twentieth century. He notes that, at the first mission conference in Edinburgh in 1910, nearly all delegates were white, male, middle aged Protestants from the USA and Europe. In 1989, in San Antonio, 70% of delegates came from Third World countries, 43% were women, and 15% young people. He goes on to comment: ‘The experience of faith is now rooted in non-Western cultural, political and social soil; and people in the North and West are increasingly becoming receivers of these experiences of newly formulated theology in art, music and liturgy.’

He identifies some features of ecumenical worship that help to increase cultural diversity and participation.

1. The Worship Order, which includes symbolic actions, short sung responses or acclamations, and the Lord’s Prayer spoken each in his or her own language;

2. Symbols (including traditional symbols such as candles and water, and innovative symbols such as fruit, chains, or stones) and symbolic actions (such as shaking hands or dancing);

3. Music

   i. in a multi-cultural and multi-lingual way: Harling comments, ‘only during the last three decades has indigenous music become widely accepted, replacing the exclusive use of European hymns with the words translated into local languages.’
   
   ii. liturgical acclamations: a gift of the Orthodox tradition and from world sources;
   
   iii. use of different instruments, and increased use of unaccompanied singing
   
   iv. the role of animators – in teaching, leading and inspiring singing.

b) in multi-cultural local congregations (including where buildings are shared)

If a congregation includes people from different cultures, its worship should reflect and draw on those resources. John Wilkinson begins his book Church in Black and White with a telling story about a white vicar’s awakening to the failure of his church to include the Caribbean tradition of long-standing members in its worship.

56 Jenkins The next Christendom, p. 126.
White leaders of ethnically diverse congregations need training and help to recognise and develop the leadership of the whole body of Christ where they are. Non-white church members may well be under-represented on the church’s boards and committees. Their voices, languages or cultures may be unheard or rarely heard in the worshipping life of their church. And, like the vicar in Wilkinson’s story (who later turns out to have been himself), white leaders may be totally unconscious of their exclusivity.

White majority churches may also be unfamiliar with, or nervous of worship material or worship styles that flow from the varied cultures within their congregations. Wilkinson describes a beautiful rendition of a Sankey song by two women from the Caribbean Island of Nevis, singing unaccompanied and in harmony. But black singing is itself in danger of becoming a stereotype, which reinforces white prejudices without challenging them.

It is necessary, but not easy, for the majority congregation to move from enjoying cultural elements as ‘performance’, to worshipping with their minority cultures. After all, we have a long tradition of treating children’s worship in exactly that way, with Sunday School Anniversary services which are more like concerts than shared worship experiences, and do nothing to help the adult majority to share the outlook of their children.

Worship is not an isolated element of Christian life. It flows from the experience of the worshipping community, and forms the theology and attitudes of that community. Worshipping with a diversity of cultures is an empty experience if it does not challenge and change the worshippers, creating a new community, which is richer, and a more complete expression of God’s purposes.

Much of this is reflected in the material from Janet Morley and Maggie Hamilton in the next section. But in the context of the multi-cultural congregation, the development of multi-cultural worship needs to happen alongside empowering diverse leadership, and development of a diverse theology, through, for example, study of the Bible from a variety of standpoints.

Participation in worship needs to extend beyond singing or symbolic action, to preaching, prayer and presentation of scripture by members of different communities within the church, so that there is an opportunity to influence the theology and outlook of the whole congregation. In some cases, this may extend beyond regular corporate worship to healing services, or home blessings. A white majority congregation, or a white church leader may be challenged by requests for exorcisms. In each case, the discussion will be healthier in a church in which the several cultures are already engaged in shared worship, leadership and learning.

Where congregations share buildings, they may normally worship separately, but may also gain great encouragement and strength by worshipping together from time to time. With emerging churches or fresh expressions of church, a number of different ‘congregations’ may share premises, or meet in the same locality. They may be culturally quite specific: young city dwellers; skate-boarders; parents with young children; night-clubbers; – as well as sharers of an ethnic identity. Being open to one another’s culture and sharing worship, as well as allowing culturally distinct space, is a challenge facing churches today.

The dvd, Expressions\(^\text{59}\) showcases a number of new Christian communities. Many of them have arisen in relation to inherited or traditional churches, and may enrich the lives of those churches too. These are interesting and exciting times for Christian witness in Western Europe.

c) as a resource for every act of worship

In any local congregation, worship may be greatly enriched by drawing on the rich and varied resources of multi-cultural worship. This could include any of the categories mentioned in Harling’s introduction to Worshipping Ecumenically. Indeed, he goes on to describe how the experience of multi-cultural worship in a global setting may be transferred to local ecumenical services. His advice includes consideration of the rationale for worship, ways of using music, the worship space, effective leadership, and the use of symbols and symbolic actions.\(^\text{60}\)

In a local congregation, his warnings about the appropriate introduction of multi-cultural elements ring even more true. New songs should be well led and taught. The congregation may need to get used to the idea of learning and rehearsing new music as part of worship. The use of symbols and symbolic actions might need to be introduced with care and with sensitivity to the culture of the congregation itself.

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60 Harling, Worshipping Ecumenically, pp. 16-25.
The other sensitivity in using worship material and styles from a variety of cultures is the requirement to honour the original context from which the material comes. In a post-modern sophisticated context, there is a temptation to see the world’s cultural resources as a kind of toy shop, whose contents are there purely for enjoyment and fun, and can be picked up and discarded without adult consequences.

Janet Morley edited a book of global prayers called, *Bread of Tomorrow: Praying with the World’s Poor* while she was Adult Education Adviser for Christian Aid. In the preface, she emphasises the seriousness of using global worship resources, many of which have arisen through Christian responses to poverty, oppression and struggle. She says that the purpose of the book is ‘to explore whether we can join the poor in their prayers’. This is by no means certain, nor is it unproblematic. Prayers (and this is true for other worship resources) written by poor people differ from prayers written by rich people about poor people. The former ‘often ring with hope, assurance, and confidence in the power of God’. However, we who are rich do not have the right to that triumphalism and, indeed, we often feel uncomfortable with it. Therefore Morley advises against rushing into singing the songs of the oppressed, but suggests a longer, more difficult process of seeking solidarity and connection through worship.

The Compilers of World Praise, which arose from the Baptist World Alliance Worship Commission, are less cautious about the use of music (in this instance) from other parts of the world. The preface by David Peacock and Geoff Weaver argues that, ‘In prayer, we can often react intellectually to news of suffering abroad. However, when we sing the songs of Christians in other parts of the world, we are able to enter more fully into their joys and pains.’

Both Janet Morley and the World Praise compilers recognise that worship ‘forms’ the worshipper – that Christians are continuously formed through their worshipping lives, and that using material from other cultures might change the way we see the world. Morley therefore calls for an encounter with the prayers of the oppressed that will lead us to a place of metanoia, and a passionate desire to change the structures of oppression. She ends the preface with a warning:

However moving, beautiful or trenchant are the words offered here, if they are prayed only as an alternative to doing anything concrete about poverty, or as a distraction from such action, or so as to veil how our churches actually stand in solidarity with those who benefit from the continuing poverty of many, then they are misused, and will become a danger to the health of our souls.)

Maggie Hamilton did a workshop on Intercultural Learning in Liturgy and Worship at the Mission and Liturgy Workshop, Earthing Liturgy in Life, held at the Ökumenische Werkstatt in Wuppertal 31st March – 3rd April 2003. Participants were invited to sing songs such as ‘No nosso altar (On our altar)’ from Brazil, which Maggie recognised as culturally relatively unchallenging, and ‘uKwayimane (Crosspatch)’ about ‘my father’s black cow’, which raised other issues. Issues raised in discussion included:

- Why do we sing?
- How can we be honest and authentic in our liturgies and music?
- What is ‘political’?
- What has this to do with us? (e.g. ‘Yo te nombro, libertad (I cry out for liberty)’ from Chile?)
- How do we pray with others?
- What do we mean by ‘community’, ‘church’, ‘being one body’?
- Can we live with the questions?

63 Morley, *Bread of Tomorrow*, p. 3.
In his written input to the workshop, Dietrich Werner made the following points and raised the following questions: 67

1. Intercultural learning in worship and music is not an arbitrary or optional task but integral to worship as it is about understanding and communicating the euangeliion or Good News, which is rooted in Jewish and Hellenistic culture, to people today. Even singing the Kyrie eleison is an act of intercultural understanding. As any Christian act of worship remains rooted in the language and culture of the Jewish-Hellenistic tradition, any congregation needs to make continuous and deliberate attempts to educate and excite people about the otherness of Christian language and to enable them to relate it to our language of today.

What efforts do we make to provide courses on intercultural liturgical literacy today?

2. Intercultural learning does not only take place where people in one congregation relate to partners abroad or invite migrants with a different language. Wherever the cultural framework of understanding is different, between social groups, between generations, between men and women, between people who are healthy and those who suffer illness, between those familiar with the Christian tradition and those who are not, there is a need for mutual intercultural learning and understanding. Otherwise we presuppose that a language and/or musical style, which is appropriate for and communicable to one social group (e.g. the elderly) is appropriate for and communicable to another (e.g. the young). The lack of diversity in cultural expressions excludes people from participating in worship engaging all their sense.

How do we allow for intercultural learning between social and age groups within our congregations?

3. Intercultural learning in worship and music means that we become increasingly able to understand liturgical and musical expressions which do not belong to the tradition the majority of the congregation is used to. It also entails making space for different cultural forms or musical traditions within the accustomed liturgical pattern, even to the extent that it is transformed. Intercultural learning and exchange therefore is not about folkloristic decoration but about the power and right to participate authentically for those groups and traditions, which were passed over or out of sight before.

What examples do we know of conflictual or transformative forms of intercultural learning in worship and music in our church settings?

4. There are ways of respectfully integrating and responsibly using liturgical or musical sources from a different culture or tradition. This responsible use and integration of other cultural elements is marked by a clear acknowledgement of sources and authors, by an invitation to representatives of those different cultures (if around) to bring in these different liturgical or musical elements themselves (rather than by someone else or their behalf!) and by honest listening and openness to the otherness of its message, content and style, rather than superficial absorption and instrumentalisation for purposes that go against their original meaning.

What examples can we share of the responsible use of elements from other traditions and cultures in our worship life?

5. There are also ways of improperly, irresponsibly and arbitrarily using and appropriating liturgical and musical sources of other origins within a given liturgical framework. This destroys their spiritual and cultural authenticity. Disrespect for the original words and meaning of a hymn and arbitrary use of a different melody demonstrates a lack of cultural sensitivity and a sense of disowning others. The misplaced appropriation of the sources of a different tradition or culture can hurt others and violates the sense of the unity of the church in full diversity. The market forces of globalisation, which also affect worship and which tend to absorb everything in their hunger for entertainment and emotional excitement, need to be observed and analysed critically.
What examples can we give of improper use of other cultural traditions and elements in our worship life?

6. The exchange of new liturgical and musical material between churches of different contexts and cultural settings is on the one hand an integral part of ecumenical sharing with one another. It is an essential element of the catholicity of the church. Like the blood circulates in the body, so the elements of liturgical life (prayers, hymns, symbolic gestures) can circulate within the worldwide ecclesial body. Thus it can invoke a deeper understanding of the spirituality of different parts of the worldwide church and deepen one’s own spirituality. On the other hand integrating elements from other cultures and churches in one’s own liturgical framework is by no means a substitute for liturgical and spiritual creativity and productivity in one’s own cultural context. In certain settings there might be the danger that the process of absorbing elements from other cultures becomes more important than creating new liturgical and musical material within one’s own setting (i.e. liturgical inculturation in one’s own place).

How are liturgical and musical creativity and productivity encouraged, learned and enabled in our own church context?

7. Translating hymns and liturgical texts from one language to another always demands high poetic, cultural and linguistic sensitivity. Unfortunately, efforts like this usually only take place occasionally and at an individual level, not as a continuous and organised endeavour between the churches in Europe and their partners. We might consider whether the creation of a European Ecumenical Network of Worship Renewal (EENWR) could facilitate a more organised and long-term programme of learning about and producing worship and music material from different churches.

How are our churches investing in programmes for intercultural learning and exchange in worship and church music?

8. What is strongly lacking in the training of church musicians and of pastors is an openness for and experience in equipping local congregations in intercultural learning in worship and music. Training programmes so far tend to be one-sided and focused on the past of the church. They are not very much concerned with the church’s ecumenical horizon and its extension into all cultures and continents today. Training musical and liturgical animators for local congregations, who can facilitate properly the enrichment and joy that comes from sharing in other worship traditions and cultures, is a key imperative for the period ahead.
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**Terminology**

Recognising that terminology and language are always risky in this area, it is good practice to strive as far as possible to use language that is clear and inoffensive. Some of the terms used in this course are still debated in public and academic discourse. It is therefore important to strive to be clear as far as possible about why certain terms are used.

There are ongoing debates surrounding the term multiculturalism in the media, academia, and in the political arena. Some racial justice advocates would argue that multiculturalism has been used to avoid addressing racism. Others point out that true multiculturalism can only be a reality if there is racial justice so the two must go together. The fact is, there are different understandings of the term. It can be used as a demographic description of a population, as a strategy for inclusiveness, as an instrument for social justice, in reference to social structures and institutions, and to describe a political response to the needs of minority ethnic groups.

It is important to understand that multiculturalism is relevant to the whole population, not just for people from minority ethnic background. It is about caring for the life and wellbeing of a whole community or church, where members accept and respect their differing histories and origins. Further, it is not a cheap and diluted version of racial justice. Multiculturalism is not an easy option and does not avoid the difficult questions. Rather, it requires careful attention be paid to the often concealed power play that can distort and damage relationships across cultural boundaries. It demands that true acceptance of one another is not just an academic exercise but is to be reflected in our actions and practices.

There is a distinction between multicultural and cross-cultural approaches to growing the multicultural. Multicultural encourages engagement, interaction, fellowship and celebration to enrich the life of the whole church. Cross-cultural is the deliberate crossing into another culture to learn and participate so as to appreciate what that culture is experiencing. It is important for ministerial students and ministers to be provided with opportunities to experience and learn to practice both approaches.

The term race is also debated. The underlying assumption here is that the notion of race does not exist. The classification of different groups in terms of race is meaningless because biologically we are all one human race. However, popular discourse continues to use the term race to denote ethnicity or nationality. A hyphenated form (i.e. racial-ethnic) may be used to more clearly convey what is meant.

Following is a list of terms and definitions to assist students in their efforts to deepen understanding and enable better communication with people from diverse backgrounds. Understanding such terms will also help in coping with the changing and evolving language/terminology in communities and society.

**Glossary & Definitions**

**In relation to work on Racism and Racial Justice within the British and Irish Context**

**Black**
A term of political unity, based on experiences of discrimination among people whose skin colour is not white. The term is used mainly by and for people of African, Asian and African-Caribbean origin/descent.

**White/whiteness**
The notion of being “white” is alien to most white people. “Whiteness” is associated with ‘supremacy’ and unearned privileges, but it is difficult for white people to see this since ‘whiteness’ or ‘white cultural norms’ or ‘standards of whiteness’ determine what is normal. White cultural dominance determines the norm in all aspects of life today, globally and locally, and so white people are often blind to how those norms are biased and systematically benefit them at the expense of those who are outside that norm. Focussing on individual violent acts of racism can mask a system of power that privileges white people. Such privileges include for example, the assurance that white people will appear in history as leaders and heroes, and the freedom to drive any luxury vehicle and not be stopped by the police because of skin colour.

**Race**
A dictionary definition is: ‘the descendants of a common ancestor, especially those who inherit a common set of characteristics...’ However scientists have proven that the differences between racial groupings are superficial and thus the term ‘race’ is in fact meaningless. There is actually only one race, the Human Race.

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68 Sophia Ng in Growing Multicultural Churches, Uniting Church in Australia, 2003.
69 Adapted from materials the authors produced for the Churches Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ) in Britain.
**Culture**

This term refers to attitudes, values and ways of life (including religion, customs, and food) belonging to a particular group of people. There are subcultures within culture so people can inhabit a multitude of cultures simultaneously, for e.g. black middle class suburban able-bodied non-churched married woman. In addition, some cultures change during life, for e.g. we stop being young, and may marry, divorce and so on.

**Prejudice**

This is expressed in acquired beliefs and opinions that lead an individual or group to be biased for or against members of a particular group. In practice ‘prejudice’ means pre judging others and is normally used in negative ways. Prejudiced opinions are not based on actual knowledge but on hearsay and assumptions that generate hostile views.

**Stereotyping**

This refers to an image or opinion about a particular group, which is then used to characterise or label the group itself as well as all its members too readily and simplistically. Such images/opinions are often based on myths and hearsay (stereotyping also operates in relation to sexuality, gender, disability and nationality or regions).

**Ethnic**

Derived from the Greek word ‘ethnikos’ and refers to a people or a nation. An ethnic group is a self-conscious collection of people, united or closely related by shared experience and distinct identity (e.g. language or culture). The terms ‘ethnic minority’ or ‘minority ethnic’ refer to such a group of people who are numerically a minority within a majority dominant group in a society. Minority ethnic is the preferred term as it recognizes both the minority status of the group in the society as a whole, and the ethnic origin of the majority culture.

**Ethnocentrism**

Refers to the belief in the superiority of one’s own cultural group or society and the corresponding dislike and disrespect of other such groups.

**Xenophobia**

‘A fear of strangers.’ Many white Europeans are happier with this word rather than racism. The implication here is that we all fear strangers thus avoiding the more fundamental demands of racism.

**Racism**

(Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report by Sir William Macpherson)

‘Racism in general terms consists of conduct, words or practices which advantage or disadvantage people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. In its more subtle form it is as damaging as its overt form.’

**Institutional Racism**

Institutional Racism consists of ‘the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in the institution’s culture, practices, and processes. Individual members of the institution can racially discriminate without being racially prejudiced personally (e.g. unwittingly through uncritical acceptance of company policies, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping) thereby disadvantaging minority ethnic people.’

**Racist Incident**

A racist incident is any incident, which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.

**Racial Discrimination**

This is when someone is treated badly or as inferior because of racial or ethnic origin. This is a way of acting/behaving that affects people’s lives and life chances. For example, minority ethnic groups often get second rate treatment in regards to access to services like education, employment, housing and health. Such treatment can also be experienced in the church.

**Institutionalised /Systematic Racism**

This occurs when racism is built into laws and/or expresses itself through administrative and structural processes, procedures and practices.

**Racial Harassment and Violence**

This refers to abuse, harassment or violence experienced and suffered by individuals or groups because of their ethnic or national origins. It could be physical, verbal or emotional and can include attacks on property and land as well as people.

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71 McPherson, The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report, clause 6.34.
**Multicultural Congregation/Church**

A multicultural church/congregation primarily means a church/congregation that is not only multi-ethnic in its membership but is also intentionally multicultural in its whole life. It is a church where the leadership encourages participation of all its members, enabling people of different ethnic backgrounds to contribute their own cultural gifts to the life of that multi-ethnic church. In short, it is a church that is not only ethnically diverse but is also intentional in ensuring that it reflects its multi-ethnicity in all that it does. However, a more homogeneous church can be multicultural when it is living and witnessing consciously and intentionally in a multicultural way, always seeking to reflect God’s diverse gifts in everything that it does.

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72 URC 2005 Assembly Book of Reports, Appendix 3, p.110.
Requirements will differ for different course styles and providers. The following are examples of assignments that could be set.

**Exposure/Experience**
Assessment could be in the form of a written report based on the checklist, critically evaluating the church in which the experience took place. This could be supported by evidence in the form of interviews, orders of service, recordings, publicity material, etc.

Alternatively, assessment could take the form of a presentation in a class context.

This should be an essential element in the assessment. One or more of the following assignments based on the units should form a reflective written assessment in addition.

**Unit 1: Biblical Perspectives**
Focusing on one of the Bible passages set for the group exercise, or on the book of Ruth:

1. Read commentaries or reflections from at least three cultural perspectives
2. Describe the three perspectives
3. Analyse and discuss the relationship of each perspective with the biblical story. How do they interpret the story? What new insights does each perspective bring? Are there contradictions between them (e.g. as there are in seeing Ruth as a victim, a powerful woman, a traitor to her heritage or the ideal of assimilation)?

**Unit 2: Mission and Ministry**
Mission in a changing world

3. Write a two-page paper on your theological views on mission(s) with regards to its aim and content. In doing so reflect briefly on a Bible passage that in your opinion summarizes the essence of mission. Do you share the observation that Christian mission is ‘in crisis’?

**Mission as colonialism**
2. Write a one page reflection paper on in reaction to Taylor’s statement and Bediako’s response. How has your knowledge of colonial mission impacted your own understanding of contemporary mission?

**Mission on 6 continents**

**Unit 3: Models of Multicultural Church**
Choose one of the case studies in this unit. Use it to write a similar analysis of the church in which the exposure/experience is taking place.

**Unit 4: Multicultural Worship**
Find out how a particular rite of passage is carried out in the church in which the exposure/experience is taking place. If possible, attend at least one instance of the rite of passage.

Recall a biblical story that includes this rite of passage and identify key issues highlighted in the story.

Compare the biblical account with the way the same rite of passage is carried out in your host church.

Produce a general guideline or strategy for learning about different rites of passage rituals. What questions would need to be asked? How would the person who needs to learn go about finding the information they need? What pastoral and theological issues should they be aware of?
Rev. Dr. Gerrit Noort, lecturer in missiology and multicultural ministries at the Hendrik Kraemer Institute of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (Utrecht). (contact details in leaflet)

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