

Mission Moments – August 10, 2007  
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Following Jesus into the U.S. Mission Field  
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Becoming or Planting a Multi-cultural Church  
by E.J. Rethinasamy

This article is a follow-up to Dr. Rethinasamy's previous article, "Mono-cultural vs. Multi-cultural" in the July 13, 2007, issue of *Mission Moments*. See [www.centerforusmissions.com](http://www.centerforusmissions.com) > Newsletters.)

Most churches think of themselves as welcoming congregations, and perhaps they are. But to be welcoming, we cannot neglect the changing faces and cultures of our neighborhood. Rather, churches can create an outreach strategy to increase 'foot traffic' with the people of various communities, cultures and languages moving into their communities. Our congregation's presence is to offer the aroma and the taste of God's grace in Jesus Christ to everyone in our community.

A multi-cultural ministry involves clear visionary leadership that attunes the whole congregational life to this journey. A series of Bible studies, case studies, and/or visits with those who are already engaged in this similar ministry can help. Here are some additional suggestions.

1. Be an informed church--biblically, culturally and doctrinally.
2. Look around your neighborhood. Observe the changes. Look for common connections to begin the dialog. When visiting Silicon Valley in Northern California, I observed that many young entrepreneurs and software professionals from South Asia are migrating to the region. Many churches in this community are clueless about this change!
3. Read your church. Are you immersed with your own old problems? Or looking for a new breeze to come in, and looking to be connected to it?
4. Ask God to show you at least one new contact in the growing community.
5. Identify whether or not your church understands the need for multi-cultural flavor.
6. Create a core group within your church or partner with your sister churches in sharing this common vision.
7. Be a user-friendly church. Jesus' incarnation is a custom-made template by the will of God for humanity's freedom from bondage to sin. Undoubtedly, Jesus the Christ is user-friendly and approachable so the churches need to be too!
8. If your congregation is close to colleges and universities, look for an opportunity to create an international student ministry. For more on small group campus ministries,

check out International Student Ministry, Inc. (<http://www.isminc.org>) or Lutheran Campus Mission Association ([www.lcma.info](http://www.lcma.info)).

9. Make yourself present in the community. Be represented in street festivals, presenting the available diversity of your church.
10. If a new community of a different language group wishes to be part of your church ministry or to start a new ministry, do not create an atmosphere in which you are the givers and they are the receivers. In other words, do not create a colonial mentality in your missional approach. Rather, be partners in the Gospel. If an immigrant group wants to rent your facility, whole-heartedly work with them to make it happen. I have seen it happen that in a few years such a group becomes part of the church.
11. Don't let your cultural sensitivity detour your congregation's main objective. Keep the message of Christ on center stage. Always.
12. New immigrant communities often try to re-live their past in their new land. They just live in the community, go to work, earn money, send money to their relatives back home and do not get involved in American issues. This dysfunctional disconnection has to be bridged. Civil governments sometimes rely on churches to help make this connection, giving us an opportunity to begin our dialog.

Engaging in multi-cultural ministry IS challenging from a human perspective and with human efforts. However, it is the will of God that these newcomers' diaspora/relocation is to our place and to our neighborhood. It is God's design that the church addresses this need from the perspective of the Great Commission.

It is an illusion to think that multi-culturalism and trans-nationalism trends are only an urban phenomenon. It is actually an emerging global life style for human survival and it occurs in each of our own communities--in rural America, the Midwest, Silicon Valley, Hollywood and in the Bos-Wash region of the northeast. Human migration is everywhere. For example:

- As mentioned above, Silicon Valley has growing numbers of South Asian immigrants who work for the software giants
- Lincoln, Nebraska resettles hundreds of refugees from Liberia, Rwanda, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan and more in their towns and suburbs
- Phoenix, Arizona and its suburbs are filling in with new faces from everywhere.
- The "Little Middle East" is a synonym used by many for Dearborn, Michigan.
- A significant Laos-Hmong community lives in Minnesota's twin-cities area
- A large group of Somalian settlers are also in Minneapolis and St.Paul
- The highest concentration of ALL immigrants in every part of the world lives in Queens, New York
- There are more Jews living in New York than in Israel.
- Seasonal farm workers are constantly engaged in a modern-day underground railroad, from Mexico, Ecuador and other parts of Latin America moving upward to Midwestern farmlands and dairy industries.

- Temporary immigrant workers near U.S. borders from Southern California to Texas assist in vineyards, on produce farms and in meat processing factories.
- There are Caribbean, Cuban, Jamaican, Trinidadian, and Haitian immigrants in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana and countless day workers in numerous range orchards.
- Chinese people are found everywhere, even in the coldest spots of Alaska, serving in the food industry.
- To all of the above, add the children of this soil – the Native Americans, African-Americans, Caucasians and Eastern Europeans who contributed to the American mosaic before the present ‘Age of Migration,’ and who continue to contribute.

Simply stated, these communities are everywhere. We CANNOT ignore them.

For a taste of being a multicultural church, read the vision statement of First Baptist Church in Flushing, New York (<http://www.fbcflushing.org/docs/who.html>)

*“The vision of First Baptist Church is to be a multi-cultural, multi-lingual church that contextualizes the Word of God to the World of God. The communities that speak one hundred languages in our neighborhood are the local mission field of the church. First Baptist Church members speak more than forty languages. In the past twenty years the church has also trained more than one hundred interns who have gone on to participate in global missions.*

*Currently, the church has three hundred people who participate in the English worship service, two hundred in the Chinese worship service, and one hundred fifty in the Spanish worship service each Sunday. Although the church is made up of three congregations, it is one church, governed by one board of Deacons, one board of Trustees, and under one budget”*

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Who’s in our community? How do we know?
2. What avenues do we have into the various people groups in our community?
3. If we were adding a new staff member to our ministry, what ethnicity would best match our community?
4. Who casts vision for your ministry? Does it include reaching the community?
5. What one step can you take to help connect your church with the community?

### **Links**

Pentecost 2000

<http://www.pentecost2000.com/>

The LCMS World Mission set a goal to begin 1000 cross-cultural ministries by the 2000. To date 1011 ministries have been registered. The site includes specific details about various ethnic groups, links to many of the new ministries and suggested resources.

Mosaic

<http://www.mosaic.org>

“We are a community of followers of Jesus Christ, committed to live by faith, to be known by love, and to be a voice of hope. The name of our community comes from the diversity of our members and from the symbolism of a broken and fragmented humanity which can become a work of beauty under the artful hands of God. We welcome people from all walks of life, regardless of where they are in their spiritual journey. Come to Mosaic, and discover how all the pieces can fit together!”

Mosaic Alliance

<http://mosaicalliance.com/>

“The Mosaic Alliance is a global network committed to create the future by unleashing a culture of entrepreneurship, activism, innovation, authenticity, and creativity within the local church. The Alliance seeks to empower and equip churches and leaders to maximize the creative potential in the communities in which they serve. We partner with leaders from around the globe in effort to catalyze the movement of Jesus Christ. The Mosaic Alliance provides resources, training, and ongoing dialogue in effort to serve leaders and churches worldwide. One of our focus areas involves serving church planters, but the Alliance is not limited to church planters. Join us in creating the future together!”

Planting a Mission Across Cultures by Dr. Ken Behnken

[www.centerforusmissions.com](http://www.centerforusmissions.com) > Resources > All resources, by topic > Church Planting > Articles on church planting

A two part article by Dr. Ken Behnken, author of the kit *Planting Missions Across Cultures*.

A Guide For Planting Multicultural Churches

[www.churchplantingvillage.net](http://www.churchplantingvillage.net) and search for ‘planting multicultural churches’

A fifteen page PDF with biblical foundation for planting, recommended steps, recommended resources and a bibliography.

## **Resource**

*Planting Missions Across Cultures* by Dr. Ken Behnken

[www.centerforusmissions.com](http://www.centerforusmissions.com) > Store > Kits

This kit, written by Ken Behnken, teaches churches how to start an outreach among people in their area who come from a different culture. Originally, the kit cost \$39.99 and the accompanying PowerPoint cost \$10. Both are included in the current price of \$30.00.

## News from the Center

### 1. Church Planter Assessment Center

**All applications, references and assessment tools must be completed and submitted by September 3, 2007, for the Sept. 24-27, 2007 event in Chicago, Illinois.**

The Church Planter Assessment Center (CPAC) is a 4-day experience to help potential church planters verify if God has given them the necessary gifts and character to be a lead church planter. Endorsed and encouraged by LCMS World Mission, CPAC uses a variety of tools, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, to prayerfully evaluate candidates. CPAC is a key strategy for supporting the goal of 2000 new congregations in the USA by 2017, part of the *Ablaze!* initiative. For full information, and to register, visit [www.centerforusmissions.com](http://www.centerforusmissions.com) and click on this event in the “Currently-scheduled Seminars” listing.

### 2. New Mission Executive Training, August 21-22, 2007, St. Louis

For more information, contact the Center.

### 3. Two opportunities -- Daughter Church Planting Seminar Friday/Saturday September 14-15, 2007, Woodbury, MN OR Friday/Saturday October 5-6, Fond du Lac, WI

Church consultants tell us that the best way to reach the unchurched is by planting new churches. Congregations of all sizes will benefit from this refreshing and hope-filled seminar that approaches churches planting churches from a Biblical and practical point of view. Explore planting strategies, the advantage of planting, when to plant, the process of daughtering, mother-daughter relationships and more! Pastors, congregation leaders, mission executives and district presidents who have taken this seminar have developed a contagious spirit and become advocates for churches planting churches. For more information, and to register, visit [www.centerforusmissions.com](http://www.centerforusmissions.com) and click on the event in the “Currently-scheduled Seminars” listing on the home page.

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*Mission Moments*, a biweekly electronic newsletter from the Center for U.S. Missions, brings information and encouragement to all who desire to share the God’s great love in Jesus Christ with others. The Center for U.S. Missions provides research and training for mission work among unevangelized people in the United States. A partnership of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod World Missions, Concordia University in Irvine, California, and the North America Mission Executives of the LCMS, the Center serves all Christian denominations.

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