

Planting Missions Across Cultures
Part 2 of 2: The Daughter Ministry
by Ken Behnken

This article first appeared in the March 10, 2006, Mission Moments newsletter from the Center for U.S. Missions. Permission is given to copy this article for distribution within your own congregation. Please credit the author and the Center for U.S. Missions in Irvine, California, www.centerforusmissions.org. For more information, contact the Center at 949-854-8002 x1780.

You are a new mission planter called to serve a culture-specific group. Your host/ mother congregation has prayed for God to lead them to serve this group in their community. More than likely, they are sharing their facilities with you for your ministry. This now is a place where two different cultures will meet. No doubt there will be concerns about cultural differences. Questions will be raised by both groups: “Why don’t they do it our way?” or “Why don’t they understand?” The same questions were asked at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15.

What a blessing it would be if we could solve problems caused by cultural differences the same way they did at this council, as recorded in Acts 15: 9-11. “And God, who knows the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”

In another article, we looked at principles to guide the mother or host congregation. Here are principles to guide the pastor and people in the mission or daughter church plant.

1. Acknowledge that this is the Lord’s ministry. Never think it is your ministry or that you are in charge. God has called you to serve His people in this ethnic community. Let all of your decisions, pastor and people, begin with prayer. When difficulties arise, let your first move be to your knees, to look up for the Lord’s guidance in prayer.

2. Know the people you are called to serve. All Anglos are not alike, and neither are all Hispanics, Chinese, or African Immigrants. Within any cultural group, there are differences in language, culture, class, needs, and assimilation into the host culture. Before you begin outreach, form focus groups, walk the community and talk with the shop owners and the people in the coffee shops. Listen, listen, and listen. Then ask the Lord to give you a vision and a strategy for best serving this community.

3. Build relationships with your host congregation. Before outreach to the community starts, it is of utmost importance that the mission pastor and his core group get to know the host congregation. The pastors of both groups should spend time together in discussion and prayer. The pastor and some people from his core group should attend several worship services at the host congregation. If the mission pastor has a good command of the English language, he can offer to preach or speak at a worship service, sharing the mission’s plans. Congregational potlucks where both the host and the mission

bring food to share are good ice breakers. Make sure people from both groups mix at the tables so that they can build new relationships. Take time to share some things about the specific culture you will be serving. Allow time for discussion.

4. Respect diversity: People from other cultures are not going to be the same. It is just as important for the mission congregation to realize this as for the Host congregation. Remember, you are the guest in this facility. Understand the host's expectations for cleanliness and care of the facility. Be sensitive to their needs, just as you expect them to be sensitive to your needs. When a husband and wife are totally concerned about meeting the other's needs, they are less concerned about their own needs. So also with two culture groups. If each group works to meet the other's needs, there will be less conflict.

5. Develop a core group and a ministry team. The **core group** will be your first members. They need to organize and learn how to witness to their neighbors. They can be small group leaders who will open their homes to Bible study groups. These people are living billboards for your ministry. The **Ministry Team**, on the other hand, are those you gather to be in ministry with you. These volunteers are committed to the vision and to service as ministry leaders for children's ministry, music ministry, youth ministry, outreach ministry, care ministry, etc. The pastor leads this team.

6. Develop a Ministry Plan: The core group and ministry team need to determine the values, mission, vision, goals and strategies for ministry. If you don't have tools to develop a ministry plan, attend Basic Mission Planters Training or contact the Center for U.S. Missions for resources to help you with this process.

7. Plan joint worship services with the host congregation. Join worship works best on special occasions such as Thanksgiving, Easter, anniversaries. Make these services bi-lingual, with lessons read in both languages and hymns that can be sung in both languages.

8. Be patient but persistent. Since most growth in a culture specific congregation comes by conversion, growth is often slower than that of an English language mission. Remember there is much rejoicing in heaven over one soul won for Christ.

9. Work with the second generation. A great weakness of culture-specific congregations is not reaching out to the second generation. To do this, the mission congregation must become bi-lingual or work with the English language/host congregation to incorporate your second generation youth into their youth and young adult programs. What a great way to work together.

What a joy when host/mother congregation and mission/daughter congregations see themselves as one ministry working in two languages and cultures to accomplish the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ. Their one goal is to reach into their community and, with the gifts God has given them, bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to "all nations." We need only to move aside and let the Holy Spirit work through us.

Ken Behnken, retired Director of the Center for U.S. Missions, now assists the Pacific Southwest District with cross-cultural ministries.