

Mono-cultural vs. Multi-cultural Church by E.J. Rethinasamy

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The churches being planted today come in a variety of languages, shapes and sizes. Numerous church planting models address the complex needs of people groups and cultural anthropology.

Church planting is directly impacted by global migration and globalization. Our lives are globally connected. We cannot circumvent it. We have to embrace and live it.

Global migration and globalization are inseparable. The reality of globalization has been dissected into various local forms – “glocalization” – defined by Wikipedia as *“the creation or distribution of products or services intended for a global or transregional market, but customized to suit local laws or culture.”*

Like never before, the confessional church is challenged to be in mission at the crossroads of people migration, globalization and glocalization. This necessitates strategies to reach out in integrating an international/trans-national/multi-cultural church in a local context.

The United States is the forerunner of unity in diversity, where people of all colors, ages and races come together to work and to share life, space and time. This is a ‘last hour’ call for all churches to additionally engage in multi-cultural and mosaic church models. Why the church is still intentionally segregated at 11 am on Sundays by color, language and economic status?

What does it mean to be a multi-cultural church?

In a multi-cultural church, diversity is neither an option nor a trend but a reflection of the increasing reality of our society. Particularly in the context of the American mosaic, churches are called to understand multiculturalism while planting, organizing, and administering a church.

In a multi-cultural church, people of all colors, languages, races and economic status transcend their differences and intentionally stand together, experiencing God’s reconciliation, an amazing race under the cross of Christ’s amazing grace!

When the New Testament church was born on Pentecost (Acts 2), it was obviously multi-cultural/mosaic in character. Undoubtedly, multi-cultural/mosaic reflects the Image of God (Imago Dei)!

For practicing mission planters, it is essential to use every opportunity in and around us to create or serve in a multi-cultural, trans-national, intergenerational context; in other words, networking various homogenous groups, inter-related for a Kingdom cause, shapes up a heterogeneous church. What does your/our church look like?

I like to quote from Brenda Salter McNeil, an acclaimed scholar in racial reconciliation. “Cultural isolation is no longer viable for Christians who want to serve a society where soon no ethnic group will be a majority . . . What we most need to do is what the expectant mother asks her husband to do at a crucial moment: Wake up. It’s time” (from “Behold, the Global Church” *Christianity Today* November 2006 at http://www.christianvisionproject.com/2006/11/behold_the_global_church_1.html)

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