

# Pentecost People

**Helping churches to embrace the different cultures within them,  
to learn hospitality in a new way  
and to experience multicultural worship and prayer**

*Notes for Small Group Leaders*

# Pentecost People

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# Pentecost People

## an Introduction to the Series of Four Studies

At the **core** of each of these four Bible Studies is a passage from the **New Testament** and a short **video** lasting about 5 minutes.

Each study is designed to help you **think** about what it is like for strangers, especially people from a different language or cultural background, to visit your church for the first time; the idea being to **challenge ourselves**, so that we can become even more hospitable, and get better at making people really feel that they belong in our local worshipping communities.

Each week we will also **pray** for one of the four churches that were filmed in order to make these videos, and there follows a short summary describing each church, so that you can picture them clearly in your minds as you pray.

### **Here are a few things to keep in mind throughout the four study sessions:**

- try to create a relaxed atmosphere. These studies do not need one person to be 'the teacher'; the idea is to discover things together, and some of the quieter people might need encouragement so that they do not feel left out. Someone needs to become familiar with the material before the session begins, but their task is to help everyone else make it happen;
- there is never any need to hurry. It will not really matter if you do not complete everything that is suggested, especially if you discover something really important that impacts your own church along the way. You might even head off on an un-planned conversation that is especially relevant to the future of your church; go for it, no one is checking what you do! Make sure everyone who wants to contribute has time to speak, and leave spaces just for thinking, as well as speaking;
- for each study, someone will need to make sure you have all the right materials available for the session. There is a PowerPoint to lead you through each study, and a written text that can be downloaded from the website. The video will be available on a separate file that you can easily play through your computer onto the screen, or through a television monitor. All the details explaining how to do these things are on the website. The aim has been to make it as simple as possible
- when you are asked to talk together as part of a session, you will have to decide for yourselves whether you want the whole group to talk as one group, or whether you want to break into smaller units, perhaps half a dozen in each. It will rather depend on how big the whole group is on each occasion, and what you are used to in your local community;
- it is really important to remember that not everyone in your group will have the same background knowledge of information and understanding, so make sure you do not use unnecessarily technical words that will leave some people out, especially those for whom English is a second language. It only takes a moment to check whether anything needs a little more explanation.

Hopefully, you will have a very enjoyable and productive time together.

## BIBLE STUDY ONE:

# Hospitable Church

### Introduction

This study explores what the New Testament says about **hospitality** and **belonging**, and what it means to be **a genuinely welcoming church**

### 1 What makes worship hospitable?

**Watch** the video: *Hospitable Church* - <https://youtu.be/U0f-Djz1KrQ>

**List** some of the keywords you have heard in the video that sum up what hospitality is all about, trying to remember some of the people who said them

**List** words that describe the expressions on the faces of people who looked as if they really felt they belonged

### 2 What does it take to belong to a community?

Read aloud the story of the encounter between **Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10:1-33**, listening for the ways that real gospel hospitality pushes so far beyond the boundaries of a merely polite 'Hello'.

It is hard for us, all these years after the event, to grasp just how difficult it was for someone like Peter to admit that 'Gentiles' - today we would sum them up as 'foreigners' – should have a place along with his own people as 'God's chosen'. Have a conversation about some of the tensions and conflicts you see in today's world that could benefit from a strong dose of Peter's vision.

### 3 Why is it that people find themselves abandoned on the edge?

Are there any folk in your group who can recall their own stories that illustrate some of these following common experiences in our church communities?

*some people expressing negative attitudes towards strangers and outsiders;*

*under-valued people being made to feel much more important;*

*people giving the impression that they are more important than others.*

**Don't rush** - take time to talk each issue through;

**Don't forget** - keep making connections back to Peter and Cornelius.

## 4 So what about us?

This is where something new and important might begin to happen for your local church and community

**Name** - all the things you have discovered that you would like to see taken further in your church (**be specific and try to say how each challenge might be taken further and who will follow this up**)

## 5 Time to pray

Today we will pray for Cemetery Road Baptist Church, Sheffield – one of the churches you saw in the video.

**Read aloud** – this 'Brief Description' of life at Cemetery Road and then spend some time in prayer together.

### ***Cemetery Road Baptist Church, Sheffield***

is located on the edge of a major City Centre and, today, it regularly welcomes people from about two dozen different nationalities, the largest number being from Jamaica, Congo and Iran. Since a major 'stock-take' during a ministerial interregnum, many new initiatives have begun to take shape: greater diversity in leadership, ongoing and demanding work with refugees and asylum seekers, the provision of language classes in an effort to help break down barriers, and a strong focus on sharing food as a focus for fellowship.

(For more information about Cemetery Road Baptist Church, please see the separate 'Case Study')

## CASE STUDY 1

# Cemetery Road Baptist Church, Sheffield

### Introduction

We are on a journey to be a healthy city serving, multi-ethnic church, to truly be a house of prayer for all nations. About two dozen nationalities are represented, with large numbers especially from Jamaica, Congo and Iran. We have been exploring, in study groups and away days, the importance of cross-cultural engagement and competence, empowering diversity in leadership, and a common identity in Christ. There are tensions, particularly over ethical cultural understandings, but we seek to be intentional in accommodating a love for all people.

### History

Just on the edge of Sheffield City centre, for many years Cemetery Road Baptist Church (CRB) was the premier Baptist congregation in the area, planting most other Baptists churches locally. It had a largely gathered congregation. Since early in the last century CRB has had Jamaican links and, post-war, saw the growth of the West Indies Fellowship, in the main from Jamaica. The warm welcome given to immigrants was in stark contrast to the experience of other churches. Subsequently there have been small pockets of members from other nations and backgrounds attending. Ten years ago, the church was invited to host Baptist refugees from the Karen community in Burma; they now have their own church (although a strong link remains). The church has always celebrated its multi-racial identity. We have a good proportion of mixed-race marriages.

### Change

During a period of ministerial interregnum, the church conducted a SWOT analysis which enthused many and has led to an increase in size and task. There are many outcomes still to follow up, but as the building and congregation is renewed, so the missional purpose has been strengthened. A Congolese prayer meeting started that has grown into a fellowship of good size, including many refugees from Burundi. Just following that, we began to receive people from Iran who were, in the main, asylum seekers. That fellowship now includes many from other middle eastern nations. Universally, people have felt welcomed and encouraged by the church. The church now has increasingly more people involved within walking distance, although some do travel from a distance of 30 miles to attend. As a church, we have been looking at what it really means to be a healthy multi-ethnic congregation, and not only be a place of welcome, but a place where those joining can find significant purpose. The journey is not easy - there are occasional tensions and prejudices that surface. We are working at bringing people into membership and leadership from the fringe so as to represent more fully our racial diversity, and provide a broader perspective on being Baptist.



### **Leadership Team**

The Lead Minister is a stereotypical white British male, but has tried to widen the experience of leadership for the congregation by, within the past two years, having a woman minister in training, a Ghanaian minister in training, a Farsi project worker, and an increased diversity at the front in the services. The diaconate has for many years included those from Jamaica or children of Jamaicans, and that too is widening. Challenges of broadening the leadership demographic emerge, but there is a keenness for that to happen. Deacons' away days and breakfasts are important to explore issues of being a multi-ethnic church.

### **Worshipping together**

The style of Sunday worship is recognisably British Baptist. The children are included in the first half before going to classes. Farsi speakers will attend their *Alpha* course at this point too. We have elements of worship from other cultures, but for multi-ethnic church to work, there is a need to be fairly mono-cultural in our worship. We are conscious of tokenism, but occasional music and material from the world church is appreciated, especially our Congolese choir. The Congolese and Farsi speakers have a separate time in the week for worship and teaching - although many will struggle through an English spoken service happily. Up to two dozen different languages are spoken within the church, so interpreting cannot easily be personalised. We have a large number of baptisms now, and interpreters are used for that, and testimonies.

### **Church meetings**

Church meetings rarely reflect the make-up of the church. Language accessibility is an issue. Power dynamics are most at play in this forum. We have tried to do things a bit differently, such as meeting over Sunday lunch, but it has not really worked so far. The meeting is conscious of its responsibility to represent a diverse church in decisions that are reached. More members are being added from other cultures, as people want to be included more into the life of the church.

## Children and Youth

The Junior Church is quite diverse and welcoming and good work happens. However, because of the geographical spread of the congregation, mid-week activity is difficult. We are in the process of looking for a pastor to work with young people and families, who can encourage integration. The fifth Sunday of a month is an all-age service. Projects and holiday activities, such as *The Quilt of many colours*, seek to enhance an appreciation of diversity and connectedness.

## Outreach

The church serves the local community and God, by caring for the least, by having a coffee morning in the flats opposite, a Luncheon Club, Soup Run, supporting Street Pastors, and other such activities. We are aware of issues of justice, highlighted through hosting the Sam Sharpe lecture, and an event to mark the Gutumba massacre of many Congolese refugees in Burundi in 2004. That event directly impacted many of our members, and war crimes justice is being sought. Many of our asylum seekers and refugees (we have had about 200 in the last couple of years), have trauma and evidence of torture, which add to the pastoral workload. The lead minister finds himself attending asylum hearings on average once every three weeks. The increase in asylum seekers has challenged the church, but also blessed. Over 100 baptisms have taken place in the last 18 months. Most weeks we will have converts - especially former Muslims drawn by the love of Christ and his church. This has normalised baptism, so many longstanding church attendees are now enquiring about baptism. Recently, four of us travelled to Poland to baptise a couple of Polish converts who had returned and are involved in a Baptist church back home.

## Language

Basic level English classes are offered at different levels, a couple of times a week. These do enable bridges to be built and relationships to form. Recently a training day was offered on Sign Language for the Deaf.

## Food

Good fellowship centres around food. At gatherings, a bring and share culture is encouraged and appreciated by most. We have various groups and organisations using the main kitchen in the week, and issues do arise at times. We had a Jamaican evening recently, and a Congolese one is next - to share food and stories.

## Highlights

This year's Church Weekend away highlighted the positive intention to celebrate multi-ethnic church. It is certainly not an easy option, but we have theological concerns with the homogenous unit principle that has dominated church growth studies in recent times. We seek to serve God and do church better by looking to bless the city, bring the least to Christ, and encourage and fulfil the Great Commission.

[www.crbchurch.org.uk](http://www.crbchurch.org.uk)

## BIBLE STUDY TWO:

# Hearing Every Voice

### Introduction

*This study explores what a difference it can make when **everyone's voice is really heard**, bringing together insights that otherwise would be totally missed*

### 1 Genuine listening and hearing

**Watch** the video: *Hearing Every Voice* - <https://youtu.be/t6yfRu-ODAk>

**Try to remember (and list)** some of the things you heard people say in the video that meant they really felt they were being listened to and heard in their local church

**List** some of the things that you think had changed for the better in these churches as a result of these voices being taken on board

### 2 What does it mean to listen to a stranger?

Read aloud today's passage from the New Testament, which will be familiar ground for many, the **Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37**. Try to hear it today as if you had never heard it before, listening for the respect that Jesus clearly had for people easily written off by his own community. It was really quite brave to tell a positive story about dodgy folk like Samaritans!

### 3 The things that others can teach us!

**Take stock (make another list)** of things you think Jesus thought his own community could learn, about themselves and about others, if only they would pay attention to someone like this Samaritan, noting carefully what the Samaritan said and did that became important in the story

### 4 Why do we not listen more willingly and more often?

**Have a conversation** – about why you think it is that people get so nervous about people who are different from themselves. Why do we jump to the conclusion that 'we' know best, and 'they' have so little to teach us? Ask yourselves where you think we first learned to think like this.

## 5 So what about us?

**Name** – any ideas that come to you about how we might sharpen up our own listening skills, and how we might let some of the ‘quieter, different, often hard to understand’ voices be heard and influence the future of your church – ***be as specific as you can, ending up with a clear idea of how you will make this happen***

## 6 Time to pray

Today we will pray for Anderson Baptist Church, Reading – one of the churches you saw in the video.

**Read aloud** – this ‘Brief Description’ of life at Anderson and then spend some time in prayer together.

### ***Anderson Baptist Church, Reading***

brings together people from several different nations – half are Nepali speakers and half are English speakers. The arrival of an experienced Nepali Pastor in 2006 was very important, and has enabled many new ways for the congregation to work creatively with the diversity they embrace. There are events together (using both languages), and also occasions when it is right for people to work in different language groups. The emphasis is on building a single united community. Language classes, shared meals, and a growing collection of bi-lingual worship songs have all been important for the ongoing journey.

(For more information about Anderson Baptist Church, please see the separate ‘Case Study’)

## CASE STUDY 2

# Anderson Baptist Church, Reading

### Introduction

We are a church of about 90 members including those from Nepal, UK, France, Ghana, Barbados and Albania. Half of our congregation are Nepali speakers and half are English speakers. We are learning what it means to be God's family grappling with being multi-cultural and bi-lingual. We have a great sense of being called to be a church that offers welcome to all who come and to work wholeheartedly at being inclusive across age, ability and culture. Our vision is to keep on walking, talking and journeying together as we share the good news of the Kingdom of God.

### History

In 2006 our Baptist cluster hosted a visiting team of Nepali Christians who were attending the Baptist Conference in Birmingham. Pastor Tula and Chandra Rai were part of the visiting team. Pastor Tula believed God was calling him to come and work amongst the Nepali people settling in the UK, and in 2007 he approached the congregation at Anderson to receive him and his family as he responded to the call and travelled to the UK to work with INF (International Nepal Fellowship).

### Change

For many years Anderson has had a heart for Nepal through the work of BMS, sabbatical visits, and other friends. The decision of the church to welcome Pastor Tula and his family has led us to an amazing and unique ministry. God has used the openness at Anderson to transform us as a community. Pastor Tula's ministry amongst the Nepali people settling in and around Reading has led to a strong Nepali group forming around him. From the outset we decided that we wanted to be a church where everyone was seen as an equal, and that it was important that our worship and our life reflected who we are - rather than sticking to familiar, traditional and comfortable ways of being church. We preached Gal 3:28 *'There is no Jew, no Greek, no English, no Nepali, ...'* frequently as we tackled the importance of all being of equal importance to God, and of all having a part to play. This has impacted our leadership, our worship, songs, prayers, seating arrangements, church meeting, finances, social gatherings and outreach activities.

### Leadership Team

As the demographic of the church has changed we have worked at making sure that all voices are heard in church life. On the deaconate we have worked to have Nepali representation beginning with Pastor Tula, John Gurung and Alina Rai. We have actively encouraged Nepali leaders, and this has led to Pastor Tula being recognised as a Sessional Minister for the Nepali Congregation and Alina Rai beginning her Ministerial training amongst us. We place high priority on establishing prayerful and friendly relationships amongst the leadership team. We have faced many challenges and difficulties on the way, but we believe it is the strong loving relational ethos, learning to listen well and our commitment to prayer that has kept us travelling together.

## **Worshipping Together**

Like every church we work hard to worship together. Our model is to be like a family who does what they can together and then to bless each other to do the other things apart. Our default pattern for a Sunday service is all-age, both languages in the first half, and then we divide into children, youth, Nepali speakers and English speakers in the second half, all returning for refreshments at the end of the service. One Sunday a month we keep both language groups together for the whole service, which always includes our Communion. Alongside the regular Sunday morning service we offer a variety of worship services conducted in one language and aimed at a particular group; for example: Saturday Nepali Service in Nepali, Sunday Afternoon Tea Service in English, Messy Church with a family focus, 'Our Place' with a focus on people with additional needs, and trips to Soul Survivor Church with the youth. As we have developed our pattern for worshipping together we have recognised the need to include Nepali language into our services to be inclusive. This started with the Lord's Prayer, and a few songs that were easy for us all to learn. The challenge of different scripts, different musical styles, non-readers in the congregation, different cultural approaches to planning a service and leadership capacity has made this slow progress. Praying together has also challenged us and we have experimented with different approaches. At the present time we use open prayer in both languages, silence, written prayers and translators to keep us praying together.

## **Church Meetings**

Central to the running of our church we were faced with the challenge of including everyone in the decision making process. This was a matter of making our meetings accessible in both languages, offering discussion topics that could be taken away and returned to before making a decision and helping everyone understand the importance of offering their own thinking as we discerned God's direction together. This highlighted the very different approaches to leadership and understanding within Nepali Baptist and English Baptist culture.

## **Children and Youth**

Our vision to work at multi-cultural church was driven by Pastor Tula's desire that the children and youth should grow up within the church community together, English and Nepali. This remains our goal but we struggle to make it a reality. Within the Sunday children's work this has been easier to manage with the children of different ethnic backgrounds mixing well and growing together in faith. However, our youth group has no Nepali members, as there currently are no Nepali families with teenagers connected to our congregation. This may point to a particular challenge of crossing cultures for the teenagers. We are pioneering a new group working with the young adults (20-40's) who are mostly Nepali but seeking to make it open to all. This is in its early stages.

## **Outreach**

Anderson has a long history of youth work and has maintained this through the Scouting groups: Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, and also through the Toddlers group. Whilst the groups continue to thrive it is noticeable that we do not have any Nepali members in the groups and very few others from ethnic groups, despite living in an area of many ethnicities. This brings into question how we should proceed in the future and what the best way to reach out to our local community is, given that we have limited resources. The Nepali community have led us to reaching out through some community events and meals. We have been encouraged to be part of East Reading Festival using Nepali song and dance as a way to connect with others and to join in special outreach programmes at Christmas and New Year, which have been led by Pastor Tula and Alina.



### Language

There have been English language and discussion classes offered to help with English which has helped in various ways, breaking down barriers and offering simple language skills to those who attend. There continues to be a Nepali language class where some of the Nepali women meet to help teach Judith, our minister, focusing on language use in the services and studying the Bible passage of the week.

### Food

The meals have been a great way for everyone to get involved. We have lovely feasts and times of fellowship over the different food we all bring. But there are problems and it is not always straightforward to sort them out. However, through listening, discussion, prayer, mistakes, reflection and wise leadership we have sought to move on.

### Highlights

Last year we took part in a weekend on song writing within a multi-cultural church. It was both challenging and brilliant as we composed our own Anderson bi-lingual worship songs to use. On the weekend we were given seven reasons to celebrate multi-cultural church: God is glorified, we value other people, it challenges cultural pride, it enlarges on vision, we learn more about God, it impacts the world, and it is a foretaste of eternity. This has been a great encouragement to us to continue our journey together. It is God who leads, God who sustains and God who walks beside us.

[www.andersonbaptistchurch.org.uk](http://www.andersonbaptistchurch.org.uk)

## BIBLE STUDY THREE:

# The Global Church

### Introduction

*This study explores what it means to take seriously God's vision for the church, a truly global community – Jesus' vision of community, the kind for which he laid down his life*

### 1 Global thinking

**Watch** the video: *The Global Church* - <https://youtu.be/GQQfMOXdreA>

Watching the video, it really does look like a **win-win** outcome for everyone involved. The existing community finds itself revived by the input from new companions. New arrivals are inspired and nourished by the welcome they receive, and the opportunity to serve God in their new-found home.

Thinking back over this film:

**List** some of the ways in which you saw a local church community being transformed by those it dared to embrace in their the vision. Be specific – give examples of things that were changed

**List** some of the ways that newly-arrived 'outsiders' gave testimony to the benefits of belonging to a genuinely mixed community. Again, be specific – what tangible differences did it make?

### 2 If it is good enough for heaven...

Read aloud part of the **great vision of God's heaven in Revelation 5:1-14**.

Put the words '**you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation**' (Revelation 5:9) on the screen so that everyone can see them. This is a time to imitate that scene in heaven where everything just falls quiet and everyone is caught up in the silence (Revelation 8:1). Try and keep **silence** together for about **5 minutes**, after which, quietly and treating each other gently, share any insights you have gained in the silence

### 3 Making it happen here

What do you think are some of the things (attitudes and actions) that get in the way of letting your own church become more like the ones you have see in these videos? **Make a list**.

And now for the big one! **What practical steps do you think you could take to make progress from where you are starting today?**

## 4 Time to pray

Today we will pray for Erdington Six Ways Baptist Church, Birmingham – one of the churches you saw in the video.

**Read aloud** – this 'Brief Description' of life at Six Ways and then spend some time in prayer together.

### ***Erdington Six Ways Baptist Church, Birmingham***

situated on the High Street, Erdington, a place that has been changing rapidly over the last ten years. In recent time, the membership has grown, the age profile has lowered, and the cultural diversity has widened. Leadership now represents the diversity quite well, and there is a strong emphasis on racial justice. Worship involves people from different backgrounds, and from time to time there are prayers and readings in languages other than English. Shared lunches are known as 'Around the World in Eighty Dishes'. People say they like being a multicultural church, and things are still very much on the move.

(For more information about Erdington Six Ways Baptist Church, please see the separate 'Case Study')

## CASE STUDY 3

# Erdington Six Ways Baptist Church, Birmingham

### Introduction and History

For most of the 20th century we were a church for 'well-to-do' white people. Erdington has changed and we have too. We are situated on the High Street in North Birmingham. Our city began as a village and became the mighty industrial place it is because of migration, from across Britain and from across the world. Erdington reflects this and our church, rooted in this community, has always followed on. In the past ten years our membership has grown, our age demographic has lowered and our cultural diversity has widened.

### Change

For many years Six Ways has been an outward-looking and open-edged church. There has been and continues to be prejudice, and the power dynamics still need to change. But we have made headway and, having had seasons when things need to be shaken up, we are now in a time when we are church together in a natural way - but still needing to be intentional about what we do. It is nice to be multicultural at a certain level: sharing food, learning about each other, singing different songs, being pleased to be worshipping and fellowshiping together. It is a more challenging thing completely to move to a level that is both higher and deeper, where the decision-making and direction of the church is concerned, where those who are ultimately in charge truly reflect the diverse group who are the Body of Christ. The change is good and the change is continual. Sometimes it can be exhausting but it is also beautiful!

### Leadership Team

I am a white British male, but in Baptist understanding we are a Black-led church insofar as our membership is predominantly 'non-white'. Our diaconate reflects this and has done for many years now. The majority of the members are not blind to the importance of diversity being reflected in those appointed to serve and to lead. Over the past two years we have also had a black British woman as Associate Minister. An important aspect of leadership has also been about modelling a way of being that is inclusive, and welcoming and that celebrates diversity. These values and the importance of challenging racial (and other) injustice run through all areas of church life and we have tried to give them prominence in all areas.

### Worshipping Together

In our services we seek on every occasion to involve different people from different cultural, racial and generational backgrounds. As far as possible we look to achieve a mix of styles reflecting different backgrounds. There is still much much more that we can do, but we have at least achieved a point where the people of the church buy into the idea that we are all one, but different - where there are no favourites and no outsiders. Occasionally we have services and/or parts of services led by a group from a particular culture. Seeing previously oppressed and overlooked people leading, even just a prayer or in song, can be such a transformative moment! Each of these moments is playing a part in shifting the balance of power within our church. We have for many years now celebrated Black History Month, and this has helped us learn together and live side by side with better understanding. It has also played its part in changing some power dynamics.



### **Church Meetings**

We try to make our church meetings as accessible as possible. We have few people where not speaking/understanding English is a barrier, but there are differing experiences and expectations of how meetings should be conducted. Therefore, we seek to combine formal and informal and create spaces within meetings where people can contribute in different ways. Also, we have found that many of our members who are most recently arrived in the UK and who are able to work are more likely to have to work long and sometimes inconvenient hours; therefore, in order to involve such people we have every other meeting on a Sunday after the service.

### **Children, Youth and Outreach**

We do not have specific multi-cultural outreach but try to make sure that all that we do is open and accessible and remind people involved in activities and throughout the church to be culturally sensitive and thoroughly welcoming. We do, however, offer free ESOL lessons on Monday mornings, and these are accessed by a wide range of people from our community and there has been some crossover with our core church.

### **Language**

Whilst our services are lead in English, from time to time we have readings and prayers in different languages from within our church community. A popular activity is to have a roving-mike opportunity for people to share a relevant phrase: for example, welcome/thank you Jesus.

### **Food**

Over the past five years or so we have got in the habit of having bring and share lunches called 'Around the World in Eighty Dishes'. We have, on average, four per year. Individuals are encouraged to bring a favourite dish reflecting their culture. These occasions have been barrier-busters encouraging insights into others' cuisine and wider culture, recognition of previously under-valued individuals and cultures and simply meaning that we eat together over food!

### **Highlights**

It is a matter of great joy for people in our church that we like being a multi-cultural church. We see that as being who we are. This in itself seems very important as we move forward together.

## BIBLE STUDY FOUR:

# Dreaming the Dream

### Introduction

*This study takes us back to where it all began, the Day of Pentecost and the birthing of a Pentecost People – the great dream of one people from every tribe and nation, filling the earth with the glory of God ‘... as the waters cover the sea’*

### 1 Being global in the local church

**Watch** the video: *Dreaming the dream* - <https://youtu.be/0m0HIsuiG0g>

In the light of all you have seen and considered over these four studies, and in the spirit of this final video, name your dreams.

**Make a wish-list** of everything you can think of that would make a local church more like a *Pentecost People*.

### 2 When the day of Pentecost had come...

**Read aloud** the passage that set all our talk about Pentecost on the move, *Acts 2:1-13*.

On the Day of Pentecost, Luke tells us how God set the agenda for the new community we call God's church. We can continue to work at a similar goal in very practical ways...

**Talk together** – about practical ways you could make your worship more friendly for people who do not have English as their first language – and other people, for that matter, who struggle with some of the more difficult language that often gets used in church. Don't forget those who struggle with seeing and hearing everything that is going on around them.

### 3 Keeping everyone on board

Being realistic, there are always people who find any changes difficult, and there will certainly be those who struggle and resist if worship begins to have more variety.

**List** – things you remember from the videos that might help people feel positive about change in the local worshipping community.

**Remember** – some of the positive things people said, admitting that they had actually surprised themselves

#### 4 One more stock-take

You now need some kind of list of all the things you would like to see happen in *your* local church as a result of acting on this series of studies.

*Write them down and see if they can become the basis for further discussion in future Church Meetings.*

#### 5 Time to pray

Today we will pray for Greenford Baptist Church, West London – one of the churches you saw in the video.

*Read aloud* – this 'Brief Description' of life at Greenford and then spend some time in prayer together.

##### ***Greenford Baptist Church, West London***

located in the suburban Borough of Ealing, the neighbourhood is vastly diverse, with people from South Asia, Eastern Europe, East and West Africa and the Caribbean. The leadership team has increasingly become truly representative of the church family. There is an emphasis on racial justice, and music from around the world has become a regular part of worship. Care is taken to communicate to visitors that the church is inclusive, many nations, and welcoming. International events focus on food, entertainment, art and music, and to provide opportunities for people to wear national dress.

(For more information about Greenford Baptist Church, please see the separate 'Case Study')

**Thank you for taking part in these four studies.**

**Let us pray that they will enable us all to become even more effective as 'Pentecost People'.**



**'Trinity - after Rublev' by Meg Wroe  
([www.megwroe.com](http://www.megwroe.com))**

## CASE STUDY 4

# Greenford Baptist Church, London

### Introduction

Greenford is in the West London Borough of Ealing. Greenford Baptist (GBC) is situated in a suburban area to the west of the borough. Ealing is a vastly ethnically diverse borough. In 2011, 49% gave their ethnicity as white, 30% as Asian, 15% as Black and 4.5% as of mixed or multiple ethnicity. The community in Greenford is made up mainly of White British, South Asian, Eastern European, East and West African and Caribbean people. We have a membership of around 200, and a Sunday morning attendance of 130-140. Our regular church family represents around 35 nationalities.

### History

The church was founded in 1935 by Welsh church planters. By 1985, GBC was a white majority church in a community that was growing in its ethnic diversity – many Caribbean and South Asians were resident in the area. (Southall, home to one of the biggest Asian communities in the UK is less than 3 miles away.) In 1987, Pastor David Wise arrived at Greenford, and began a work based on a vision to see Greenford become racially and ethnically representative of the community it served.

### Change

Pastor David had a heart for racial justice, and spent much time studying and visiting other expressions of church in order to grow his understanding of how scripture is viewed and interpreted by other cultures. He visited Soweto, Brazil, Italy and Albania to broaden his understanding. During this time we began to introduce songs into our worship that came from ethnicities other than white western. We were provided with a number of songs from West Africa which soon became part of our regular canon. The staff and leadership team were taken to a number of mono-cultural churches in order to expose us to the style and ethos in practice in different cultures, and I spent time at some of the Black mega-churches in London, which gave me an incredible insight into the feeling of being a minority culture in a church. I went on training courses at All Nations College, learning about World Worship, Ethno-musicology and Ethno-doxology. We are now in a place where we are using songs from West Africa, Central Africa, Brazil, India, China, Pakistan and even a Native American chant! We have flags displayed in our building that represent the make-up of our church family, and artwork that reflects our diversity. We are on the road, but we acknowledge we still have a way to go.

### Leadership Team

Our team has intentionally transformed over the years. We have a team that is truly representative of our church family. The team includes white English men, a Nigerian man, a Jamaican woman, a Trinidadian woman and a 20 year old Nigerian woman. It is a robust team, based on good friendships, a deep respect for cultural and theological differences, and an incredible level of trust.



### **Worshipping Together**

What does a typical worship time look like? I don't think there is one. Our meetings are led by a diverse array of people, we do use a wide canon of songs, we also are exploring art and movement, there is freedom for people to dance or not, there is opportunity to pray in first languages, and we are constantly offering new experiences as we worship together. We look at the room layout, posture and space to respond. Freedom in worship leads to freedom in service, so it is important that we continue to develop worship spaces that allow people the freedom to be who they are in God. One of our biggest and constant challenges is providing space and opportunity for children and young people to engage in our worship times. We hand the whole meeting over to both of these groups on occasions, and we are treated to worship presentations through their eyes, skills and cultural references. Collecting the offering to a backdrop of dub-step is always exciting! We are also intentional in encouraging young people to join our worship team - we have three under the age of 16 in our singing team, and have had a number of musicians in the past.

### **Outreach**

In all of our outward communication we are careful to communicate that we are inclusive, many nations, and welcoming. Our strategy going forward is to ensure that all of our outreach work is tailored to the vast differences in ethnicity – on one side of the road near our building the majority of residents are white, on the other, 70% are of South Asian background. We have provided courses such as 'Jesus through Asian Eyes' that provide education into the way the Gospel is viewed from particular cultural viewpoints. We hold an international evening every year that provides food, entertainment and an opportunity to wear national dress, and our major events at Christmas and Easter always draw on art and music that reflects our diverse approach.

### **Food**

Regular church lunches always provide an array of culinary delights from around the world – from goat curry to swordfish. It's a brilliant way to eat, mix and meet each other!

### **Highlights**

Being a part of a church family worshipping in a variety of languages and cultures: hearing and watching prayer in first languages; seeing people 'come alive' as worship is conducted in their first language; hosting events that explore and provide opportunities for all to learn and engage with worship from outside of their own experiences; being on this journey is exciting, challenging and a highlight of our church life.

<http://greenfordbaptist.london>

## APPENDIX ONE:

# Theological Background

### Pentecost People: Becoming Locally Global

It is not the only motif that shapes the narrative of Luke-Acts, but it is certainly a very significant one. This two-volume gospel narrative is designed to clarify the global significance of the gospel story. This motif begins in the first volume with 'infancy narratives' - stories in which women (not typically on the receiving end of affirmation) immediately appear as the principal players in events that surround the birth of Jesus (Luke 1-2), and it is still fully alive at the end of the second volume, many many chapters later, where Paul's final appeal to his hearers in Rome (Acts 28:28) finishes with the reminder '... this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen' (Acts 28). It is a narrative that makes it clear why in the new-born churches there can no longer be any conceivable justification for ethnic or cultural exclusivity in authentic Christian communities, those that are serious as followers of Jesus. Many marginal groups, each familiar to first century hearers, are brought into focus in a sustained and growing litany of striking remembrances. Women, children, people with disabilities, pagans and



Gentiles - one by one they enter the narrative as recipients of grace, each drawn into the great saving initiative of God in Jesus. A manifesto for the new movement is rehearsed in Luke 4, re-cycling for a new generation the prophetic insights from Isaiah of the Exile, and compelling evidence that this manifesto is finally having its day in the ministry of Jesus is spelled out in a succession of striking encounters, sayings and miracles.

Uniquely important in the sequence, however, is the stories that frame the opening of The Acts, now well-placed to make connections back to the Gospel and to demonstrate that everything that had been learned from the life of Jesus is now resurrected and fulfilled in a new community, empowered by what the Fourth Gospel will one day call 'another' comforter, making Jesus present, as it were, a second time over. Historically the dominant exegetical emphasis has fallen on the account in Acts 2, recalling the events at the first Day of Pentecost celebration following the dying, rising and appearing of Jesus, and this emphasis is not insignificant for our own globalising theme. At its core is an initiative of God that makes it possible for everyone to hear the good news of Jesus such that '... each one heard them speaking in the native language' (Acts 2:6). This is a major event in the narrative of salvation, marking the inauguration of a time when language will no longer be tolerated as a barrier to access



into God's favour. It is, as commentators and theologians have often noted, a definitive reversal of the curse of Babel, the story which for generations had articulated a reason for the inevitable conflict between people from different language groups. It should have been enough, you might think, for Peter to preach in the universal Greek language of the Mediterranean market-place - surely, the majority would have understood the message; but no, nothing less than 'their own native

language' was good enough for God's coming kingdom. If we now attempt to contextualise this insight in the churches of later centuries, we might well find ourselves putting it like this: ***no regular participant or occasional visitor to any genuinely Christian act of worship should ever feel themselves to be an outsider, experience exclusion, that is, on basis of language or culture.*** This presents a continuing challenge as we tell the salvation story in our own day.



There is a good case, however, for the suggestion that our prioritised focus on the Day of Pentecost, has missed a significant point - that the Lukan narrative is still unfolding, and that there is much more 'pentecostal' energy as yet untapped. We could argue, as some have, that the real hinge of the Luke-Acts narrative is the visit of Peter to the House of Cornelius at Joppa in Acts 10. Within the terms of the narrative's own structure, we learn that the miracle at Pentecost was not enough

to convince Peter that God's saving work, symbolised by an exuberant vitality of the Holy Spirit, was accessible to all people, regardless of language or ethnicity - available to Jews and Gentiles (all the others) alike. It would take another divine initiative, originating in Peter's blasphemous dream-life and Cornelius's accessible spirit, to tip the balance. When it comes, however, the new insight is blatantly clear, the saving work of God's Holy Spirit is equally available to everyone, regardless of ethnic or cultural origin. When we now contextualise this across the centuries we might want to say something like this about our approach to what we do in our Christian worship: ***in shaping Christian acts of worship, not only will every effort always be made to prevent language becoming a barrier to inclusion but, more than that, wide-ranging cultural differences will normatively be affirmed with enthusiasm and respect.*** We will make such a commitment, because this is how we credibly re-enact the initiative that God took, first in Jesus, and then in the young church - and this is why disciples are called, to embody the 'alternative' comforter.

Once the story of Joppa is done and dusted, the Lukan trajectory is all down- hill towards Rome. Now the gospel has been free to become global, transcending every potential barrier of language or culture. Acts 11 onwards makes a gripping read, and some of the memories of those heady days are so intense that they are fraught with the dangers of misunderstanding. Who gets the Spirit, then, and when and why?





Who does God use most strategically in the story: the missionary (usually Paul, sometimes another) or the recipients (a Macedonian, a gaoler, a local magician). But however difficult it might be to interpret the detail, the trajectory is beyond doubt. What began in Jerusalem (or Bethlehem) is not complete until it reaches Rome, the centre of the Gentile world. Before we know what has hit us, we find ourselves confronted with the prophetic challenge, that amongst the most

important distinctives of authentic post-pentecostal worship has to be its multicultural inspiration and accessibility. If this is so, then we have stumbled on an emphasis that is hugely needed in today's worshipping communities if we are to redress a wide-spread misunderstanding that God is content with what we have come to think of as normal, mono-cultural, linguistically exclusive acts of public worship.

One of the recurrent tensions in Acts, one that has sometimes caused Baptists some serious heart-searching is the tension that arises between the church local (of which there are many in Acts and with which we easily identify) and churches-together (or the Church, as it often gets called in later history). A Baptist distinctive has included variations on the claim that the local, whilst not necessarily independent of its need for others and the blessings of inter-dependence that accompany



it, has nonetheless all the ecclesial potential of the global. Every church is able, under the grace of God, to be Church, that Church is not another something that happens only when many churches are networked, but is simply church on another scale, more like the outer envelope in a stack of Russian dolls than a new kind of doll that lords it over the smaller ones. If this is the case, and there is a good argument that the Luke-Acts narrative affirms us in thinking this way, then there is now no justification for any church to aspire to anything less than the vision of becoming a full 'Pentecost people'. We are under gospel orders to enact this pentecostal vision in every aspect of our community life, and most certainly in our public acts of worship; to do less is to miss the vision of kingdom as it can be traced from the narratives that begin with the birth of Jesus. Our calling is, with God, to be locally global.

## APPENDIX TWO:

# Worshipping as World Christians

Music is a mysterious phenomenon unique to humanity within creation. (Other parts of creation may appear 'musical' but only to human observers.) Music exists in all cultures. It works deeply within the human spirit. Most people find it precious and essential, although they don't think about it much. Others presume it to be an optional extra. A very few aren't able to connect with music at all.

Ethnomusicology, the study of the meaning and function of music in culture, developed formally as a discipline in the twentieth century. It arose partly through Christian mission work where outsiders were investing long years and great efforts into learning other languages and cultures in order to communicate the gospel more contextually. It developed into an academic discipline through fieldwork and analysis to theorising and testing. It records the diversity and development of music in culture and in some cases within cultures which are 'dying out' or changing radically. By now ethnomusicology has been able to show that music plays a fundamental role in reinforcing social stability and coherence by expressing and cementing human beliefs, social values and relationships through its structures.

Musical analysis can show that relationship patterns and power structures appear within the actual notes and rhythms of the music of particular groups and cultures. For insiders these don't generally need to be spelt out, but they can be identified and analysed by those with the tools to do so. At first sight, music may seem to be at the vanguard of social change but in fact musical structures generally operate to reinforce cultural norms and work to keep them static. It is more likely to be associated aspects of music such as voice tone, song words, new instruments and playing styles, even clothing and movements which push at social boundaries. For example rock and roll first appeared requiring barely more than three basic chords to play, yet everything about it screamed that significant social change was in the air. Music has to be changed intentionally and rather quickly for it to be able to promote social or political change in itself. Music then can function either to obscure or reveal, to allow or to bar, to bring freedom and release or to manipulate, depending on social context and influence.

Music inhabits our feelings and has intrinsic power to create, change, heighten or develop emotional moods. It can therefore be used intentionally to manipulate or work up individual or even communal responses. Consider how music effects the emotions when a national anthem is played at a sports event, or in a political meeting, or in religious worship. It can work through association. We've all experienced how suddenly hearing a piece of music can transport us intensely to a former time, place or situation in the instant.

It is however, despite the Romantic poets' views, emphatically not a 'language.' There is no guarantee that what a composer intends to communicate through music will reach another, even from the same culture, in any specific way. It is not always possible to predict the outcome of music's power. Far from being a language, music is a non-specific and crucially a non-verbal form of communication. It works deeply in a manner beyond words.



God is portrayed in scripture not only as receiving musical worship gladly when it is heartfelt, hating it when it expresses hypocritical praise, but as singing himself with joy and delight over his beloved people. God has intentionally placed the capacity to make and experience music uniquely within humanity to help us flourish as individuals and in groups. Words can do many things, but God knows that at times only something beyond words will do.



Music therefore forms an important part of Christian expression around the world. Fortunately Christianity has retained enough cultural diversity so far for Christian music to be very diverse too, in some cases reflecting the cultures where it has taken root, in others the cultures of the gospel bearers. Singing together rather than speaking is especially appropriate for corporate worship. It allows even a large crowd to express themselves all at once as loudly as they like producing, ideally, something greater than the sum of its parts rather than the cacophony and chaos caused by everyone speaking at once. Through song, music can combine unity of meaning with a huge diversity of range, pitch, harmony and tones of voice. It can include all and any kind of musical instrument, just as in Psalm 150 where the three technical categories of musical instrument to be found in any culture; strings, wind and percussion, are all validated for worshipping God. However in worship music, music and musical instruments serve the words rather than the other way round.

The Pentecost communication miracle, which began the restoration of cultural divisions echoing down history since Babel, required those declaring the gospel to speak new languages. The insider must change for the benefit of the outsider. Christianity owns one Lord, faith, baptism and so on but is not a cultural movement based on one language or way of doing things. At its best it foreshadows the worship in heaven where, as John's vision in Revelation 7 reveals, distinction of language and therefore culture are apparently preserved.

What might this mean for musical worship here and now? What approach would be most welcoming and inclusive in an increasingly multi-cultural Britain? What best reflects and draws on the gifts of everyone who is already in the congregation? What would express a longing for those not yet part of it to feel at home? What demonstrates that we are part of a community spanning all cultures and histories? What prefigures the multi-cultural worship of heaven most authentically, and even suggests we are looking forward to getting there?

Some UK churches now have very diverse congregations, although rarely as diverse as their local communities. Despite this, experience shows that diversity in congregational makeup doesn't automatically result in diversity of practice. Frequently groups are multi-ethnic without necessarily being multi-cultural at all. The latter refers more to how things are done not who is in the room. Choices of music won't come to reflect the variety of people within a congregation automatically. There has to be intention. More importantly our assumptions about how things should be done won't change without a lot of listening, learning, purposeful encouragement, giving permission, and trying out new ways. This is especially true when it comes to the dynamics of leadership. Who decides about and leads what is done? Who has permission to be involved? What breadth of material is accepted and allowed? These are key areas to work on in bringing about more diverse and inclusive worship.

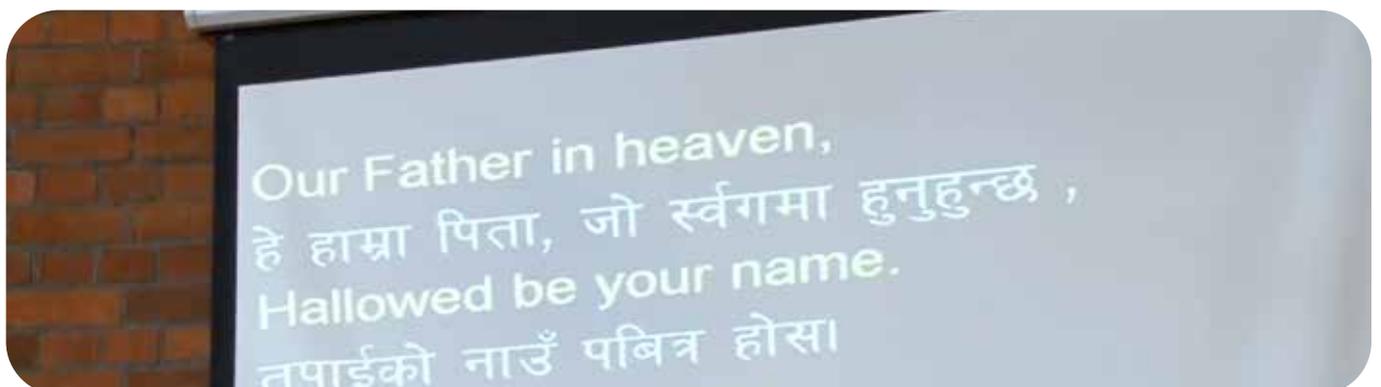
Whether we are aware of it or not, the music we use in church operates like glue, week in week out reinforcing our beliefs, values and relationship dynamics. It can be reactionary or prophetic, prolonging a limiting set of cultural parameters, or embodying the inclusion, mutuality and diversity of fellowship with God and each other initiated at Pentecost and finally to be realised in the worship of heaven.

## APPENDIX THREE:

# Advice to Worship Leaders

### Looking at Your Church Worship Culture

- Be aware that churches are not automatically acting 'multi-culturally' just because congregations are ethnically diverse. Culture is much more about the way things are done, rather than who is present. Many UK churches now have quite diverse congregations but despite this, haven't really changed the style or content of their worship.
- To develop truly multi-cultural worship, special attention must be given to questions of leadership. Who makes decisions and how are these decisions made? Audit your leadership makeup and also the worship in your church using the questions: who, how, when, what and why? Spend time finding out how worship is planned and led in other cultures, not just what songs etc are used. This process will help to avoid the tokenism of believing that including an occasional song from another culture is enough.
- Examine your surrounding community. Are cultures represented there which aren't present in church? When people come into church for the first time they pick up quite quickly if it is 'for them' or not. Consider including material from these groups, so that worship can inform mission and vice versa.
- Find out how use of time in worship is viewed in different cultures. Make no assumptions! Is there any notion of 'start time', 'end time', 'on time', 'free time', 'limited time' etc? Similarly look into different cultural ways of planning and preparing versus spontaneity in leading worship.
- Prepare for and acknowledge feelings of discomfort and difficulty along the way. Challenges are to be expected if we are undergoing a deep process. Multi-cultural worship will require sacrifices in order to learn and grow together.
- Set short, mid and long term goals for your journey into multi-cultural worship and revisit them regularly. Developing multi-cultural worship is a process which will take time, perseverance and patience.
- Be prepared to adapt and improvise! Feel free to substitute your version of what is done or used in other cultures according to the resources you have available.
- This advice and approach don't just apply to worship and music but to all areas of church life. Try to include it in your overall strategy and monitor your progress from time to time to make sure it hasn't slipped off the agenda.



## Practical tips to enrich your worship

- Consider varying practical aspects of worship such as room layout, appropriateness and style of clothing, interaction of gender and age, body language, instruments and clapping, symbolism, greetings, artwork, illustrations, food and hospitality etc, from different cultural points of view.
- Include a variety of languages, spoken, sung and written, whenever possible, remembering that English may be useful as a lingua franca but carries hidden messages of culture and power for many.
- Use and get to know different cultural styles of prayer as well as different languages.
- Vary use of songs, music, instruments and dance. Try to get songs led and taught by people from other cultures to enable them to be played in the appropriate cultural style as well as language. Some well-known worship songs exist in a variety of languages and translations as well as English, so all can sing at once or alternate verses. Encourage people to try singing occasionally in other languages as well as in their own. Try to learn some songs from places in the world where the gospel is being preached widely, where the church is growing fast, or facing persecution. Try to establish a culture of voice-led and congregational worship rather than too many solos or performance style worship within your multi-cultural worship, so people are not just listening to but trying each other's styles.
- Read scripture in a variety of languages and in inclusive English, and show texts on the screen when possible. Include a variety of cultural preaching styles such as question and answer, interactive, narrative etc, and make sure verbal and visual illustrations reflect the diversity of the world.
- Include testimonies from people with different backgrounds including what it was like first coming into your church as a visitor.
- Encourage your congregation to create their own songs, music and all kinds of worship which will reflect your unique makeup and circumstances.
- Be aware of the hidden gap of experience and expectation in general and in worship between first generation people arriving into the UK and the second and third generations who have different inherited cultures but who have grown up within a UK worldview.
- Consider featuring worship from cultures represented in your congregation, and from countries where you have mission links.
- Explore how Christian festivals or communion are celebrated in different cultures.
- Explore justice issues locally and world-wide through your multi-cultural and inclusive worship.



## APPENDIX FOUR:

# Many ways of Praying

Here are a few ideas that could help your church community think more about ways in which to increase variety and cultural diversity in its worship.

### Encourage prayer in first languages

There is nothing more liberating than someone being free to pray in their first language – this brings a release of passion and connection that, even though others may not understand the words, certainly fires the Spirit.



### Posture

When we laugh, when we cry, when we relax, when we show respect, when we listen, when we watch sport, we change our posture. When we pray, posture and physicality should feature. Posture in prayer is hugely important in many cultural contexts, and so it is important we allow space for this. Kneeling, standing, bowing, sitting, laying – all have significance as we pray, and are featured regularly in scripture.

### Praying together out loud

This is an incredibly powerful way for a community of believers to pray, and yet for some it is a real challenge. It's a very natural way to pray for many, yet for others, especially white British like myself, it's an alien concept. Worth persevering with – God's people crying out together in anger, desperation, passion, is inspiring and faith-building.

### Creative arts

For some, spoken words are not an easy way to express, so making space for creativity and expression in prayer using art, craft, written word, and music in prayer is very important, and often opens up a whole new world of prayer for many.

### Visual meditation

There is a wealth of Christian art that helps us to focus on God and informs our praying. Meditation on a piece of art, guided by thoughts and questions allows a different level of thought and prayer. Using art drawn from a variety of cultures also allows us to develop an understanding of how scripture is interpreted in other cultural settings.

### Youth and children

As we know, children pray in ways that are free from over analysis, cynicism and embarrassment. We should allow our children opportunities to teach us how to pray, how to be honest in our prayers. Our young people will often bring musical/artistic styles in prayer and worship that are culturally important to them, and although validating these in our community gatherings can be challenging to some, it is very important if we want to engage and be inclusive across cultures.

Being aware of the diversity of approaches to prayer within our communities, and then allowing time and space to utilise and play with these forms, will enrich us, challenge us and bless us as we look to pray and worship in power and unity.

## APPENDIX FIVE:

# Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture<sup>1</sup>

### Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities

This statement is from the third international consultation of the Lutheran World Federation's Study Team on Worship and Culture, held in Nairobi, Kenya, in January 1996. The members of the Study Team represent five continents of the world and have worked together with enthusiasm for three years thus far. The initial consultation, in October 1993 in Cartigny, Switzerland, focused on the biblical and historical foundations of the relationship between Christian worship and culture, and resulted in the 'Cartigny Statement on Worship and Culture: Biblical and Historical Foundations.' (This Nairobi Statement builds upon the Cartigny Statement; in no sense does it replace it.) The second consultation, in March 1994 in Hong Kong, explored contemporary issues and questions of the relationships between the world's cultures and Christian liturgy, church music, and church architecture and art. The papers of the first two consultations were published as *Worship and Culture in Dialogue*<sup>2</sup>. The papers and statement from the Nairobi consultation were published as *Christian Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity*<sup>3</sup>. In 1994-1995, the Study Team conducted regional research, and prepared reports on that research. Phase IV of the Study commenced in Nairobi and will continue with seminars and other means to implement the learnings of the study, as LWF member churches decide is helpful. The Study Team considers this project to be essential to the renewal and mission of the Church around the world.

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Worship is the heart and pulse of the Christian Church. In worship we celebrate together God's gracious gifts of creation and salvation, and are strengthened to live in response to God's grace. Worship always involves actions, not merely words. To consider worship is to consider music, art, and architecture, as well as liturgy and preaching.
- 1.2 The reality that Christian worship is always celebrated in a given local cultural setting draws our attention to the dynamics between worship and the world's many local cultures.
- 1.3 Christian worship relates dynamically to culture in at least four ways. First, it is transcultural, the same substance for everyone everywhere, beyond culture. Second, it is contextual, varying according to the local situation (both nature and culture). Third, it is counter-cultural, challenging what is contrary to the Gospel in a given culture. Fourth, it is cross-cultural, making possible sharing between different local cultures. In all four dynamics, there are helpful principles which can be identified.

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1 This document was prepared by the Department for Theology and Studies of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in 1996 as part of the Statements on Worship and Culture series, and may be downloaded for personal use and study.

2 Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1994. Also published in French, German, and Spanish.

3 Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1996. Also published in German.

## 2 Worship as Transcultural

- 2.1 The resurrected Christ whom we worship, and through whom by the power of the Holy Spirit we know the grace of the Triune God, transcends and indeed is beyond all cultures. In the mystery of his resurrection is the source of the transcultural nature of Christian worship. Baptism and Eucharist, the sacraments of Christ's death and resurrection, were given by God for all the world. There is one Bible, translated into many tongues, and biblical preaching of Christ's death and resurrection has been sent into all the world. The fundamental shape of the principal Sunday act of Christian worship, the Eucharist or Holy Communion, is shared across cultures: the people gather, the Word of God is proclaimed, the people intercede for the needs of the Church and the world, the eucharistic meal is shared, and the people are sent out into the world for mission. The great narratives of Christ's birth, death, resurrection, and sending of the Spirit, and our Baptism into him, provide the central meanings of the transcultural times of the church's year: especially Lent/Easter/Pentecost, and, to a lesser extent, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany. The ways in which the shapes of the Sunday Eucharist and the church year are expressed vary by culture, but their meanings and fundamental structure are shared around the globe. There is one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one Eucharist.
- 2.2 Several specific elements of Christian liturgy are also transcultural, eg, readings from the Bible (although of course the translations vary), the ecumenical creeds and the Our Father, and Baptism in water in the Triune Name.
- 2.3 The use of this shared core liturgical structure and these shared liturgical elements in local congregational worship -- as well as the shared act of people assembling together, and the shared provision of diverse leadership in that assembly (although the space for the assembly and the manner of the leadership vary) -- are expressions of Christian unity across time, space, culture, and confession. The recovery in each congregation of the clear centrality of these transcultural and ecumenical elements renews the sense of this Christian unity and gives all churches a solid basis for authentic contextualization.

## 3 Worship as Contextual

- 3.1 Jesus whom we worship was born into a specific culture of the world. In the mystery of his incarnation are the model and the mandate for the contextualization of Christian worship. God can be and is encountered in the local cultures of our world. A given culture's values and patterns, insofar as they are consonant with the values of the Gospel, can be used to express the meaning and purpose of Christian worship. Contextualization is a necessary task for the Church's mission in the world, so that the Gospel can be ever more deeply rooted in diverse local cultures.
- 3.2 Among the various methods of contextualization, that of dynamic equivalence is particularly useful. It involves re-expressing components of Christian worship with something from a local culture that has an equal meaning, value, and function. Dynamic equivalence goes far beyond mere translation; it involves understanding the fundamental meanings both of elements of worship and of the local culture, and enabling the meanings and actions of worship to be 'encoded' and re-expressed in the language of local culture.
- 3.3 In applying the method of dynamic equivalence, the following procedure may be followed. First, the liturgical ordo (basic shape) should be examined with regard to its theology, history, basic elements, and cultural backgrounds. Second, those elements of the ordo that can be subjected to dynamic equivalence without prejudice to their meaning should be determined. Third, those components of culture that are able to re-express the Gospel and the liturgical ordo in an adequate manner should be studied. Fourth, the spiritual and pastoral benefits our people will derive from the changes should be considered.

- 3.4 Local churches might also consider the method of creative assimilation. This consists of adding pertinent components of local culture to the liturgical ordo in order to enrich its original core. The baptismal ordo of 'washing with water and the Word', for example, was gradually elaborated by the assimilation of such cultural practices as the giving of white vestments and lighted candles to the neophytes of ancient mystery religions. Unlike dynamic equivalence, creative assimilation enriches the liturgical ordo -- not by culturally re-expressing its elements, but by adding to it new elements from local culture.
- 3.5 In contextualization the fundamental values and meanings of both Christianity and of local cultures must be respected.
- 3.6 An important criterion for dynamic equivalence and creative assimilation is that sound or accepted liturgical traditions are preserved in order to keep unity with the universal Church's tradition of worship, while progress inspired by pastoral needs is encouraged. On the side of culture, it is understood that not everything can be integrated with Christian worship, but only those elements that are connatural to (that is, of the same nature as) the liturgical ordo. Elements borrowed from local culture should always undergo critique and purification, which can be achieved through the use of biblical typology.

#### **4 Worship as Counter-cultural**

- 4.1 Jesus Christ came to transform all people and all cultures, and calls us not to conform to the world, but to be transformed with it (Romans 12:2). In the mystery of his passage from death to eternal life is the model for transformation, and thus for the counter-cultural nature of Christian worship. Some components of every culture in the world are sinful, dehumanizing, and contradictory to the values of the Gospel. From the perspective of the Gospel, they need critique and transformation. Contextualization of Christian faith and worship necessarily involves challenging of all types of oppression and social injustice wherever they exist in earthly cultures.
- 4.2 It also involves the transformation of cultural patterns which idolize the self or the local group at the expense of a wider humanity, or which give central place to the acquisition of wealth at the expense of the care of the earth and its poor. The tools of the counter-cultural in Christian worship may also include the deliberate maintenance or recovery of patterns of action which differ intentionally from prevailing cultural models. These patterns may arise from a recovered sense of Christian history, or from the wisdom of other cultures.

#### **5 Worship as Cross-cultural**

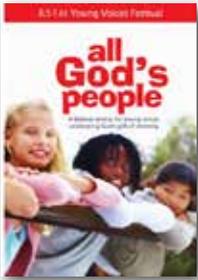
- 5.1 Jesus came to be the Savior of all people. He welcomes the treasures of earthly cultures into the city of God. By virtue of Baptism, there is one Church; and one means of living in faithful response to Baptism is to manifest ever more deeply the unity of the Church. The sharing of hymns and art and other elements of worship across cultural barriers helps enrich the whole Church and strengthen the sense of the *communio* of the Church. This sharing can be ecumenical as well as cross-cultural, as a witness to the unity of the Church and the oneness of Baptism. Cross-cultural sharing is possible for every church, but is especially needed in multicultural congregations and member churches.
- 5.2 Care should be taken that the music, art, architecture, gestures and postures, and other elements of different cultures are understood and respected when they are used by churches elsewhere in the world. The criteria for contextualization (above, sections 3.5 and 3.6) should be observed.

## 6 Challenge to the Churches

- 6.1 We call on all member churches of the Lutheran World Federation to undertake more efforts related to the transcultural, contextual, counter-cultural, and cross-cultural nature of Christian worship. We call on all member churches to recover the centrality of Baptism, Scripture with preaching, and the every-Sunday celebration of the Lord's Supper -- the principal transcultural elements of Christian worship and the signs of Christian unity -- as the strong center of all congregational life and mission, and as the authentic basis for contextualization. We call on all churches to give serious attention to exploring the local or contextual elements of liturgy, language, posture and gesture, hymnody and other music and musical instruments, and art and architecture for Christian worship -- so that their worship may be more truly rooted in the local culture. We call those churches now carrying out missionary efforts to encourage such contextual awareness among themselves and also among the partners and recipients of their ministries. We call on all member churches to give serious attention to the transcultural nature of worship and the possibilities for cross-cultural sharing. And we call on all churches to consider the training and ordination of ministers of Word and Sacrament, because each local community has the right to receive weekly the means of grace.
- 6.2 We call on the Lutheran World Federation to make an intentional and substantial effort to provide scholarships for persons from the developing world to study worship, church music, and church architecture, toward the eventual goal that enhanced theological training in their churches can be led by local teachers.
- 6.3 Further, we call on the Lutheran World Federation to continue its efforts related to worship and culture into the next millennium. The tasks are not quickly accomplished; the work calls for ongoing depth-level research and pastoral encouragement. The Worship and Culture Study, begun in 1992 and continuing in and past the 1997 LWF Assembly, is a significant and important beginning, but the task calls for unending efforts. Giving priority to this task is essential for evangelization of the world.

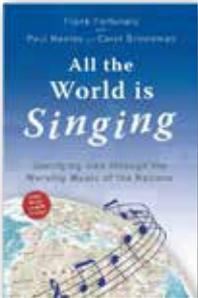
## APPENDIX SIX:

# Further Reading



### *All God's People*

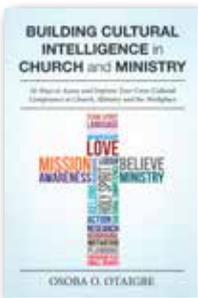
Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) Young Voices Festival, 2010  
A festival service for young voices celebrating God's gift of diversity.



### *All the World is Singing:*

#### *The Transforming Power of Worship Music in the Mother Tongue*

Eds Fortunato, Neely and Brinneman - Authentic, 2006  
This first collection of stories of its kind documents the power of music within the global Body of Christ. Agencies and churches around the world show how music has made as much impact in reaching the unreached as other methods of evangelism.



### *Building Cultural Intelligence in Church and Ministry*

Osoba O Otaigbe - Author House UK, 2016

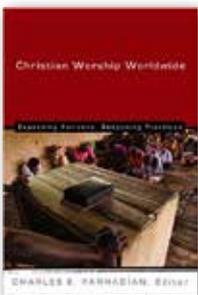
Ten ways to assess and improve your cross-cultural competence in church, ministry and the workplace.



### *Cantate: A Book of Short Chants, Hymns, Responses and Litanies*

Ed Stephen Dean - Decani Music, 2005

Easy to learn and teach pieces for all kinds of worship needs from many cultures.

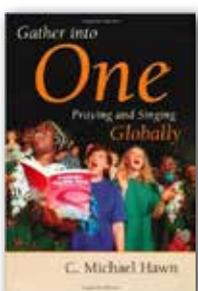


### *Christian Worship Worldwide*

Charles E Fahrhadian - Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Liturgical Studies, 2007

A kaleidoscope of Christian worship through time and cultures.

A very mission-centred approach to multi-cultural worship.



### *Gather into One: Praying and Singing Globally*

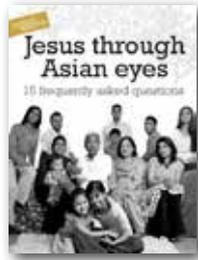
C Michael Hawn - Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Liturgical Studies, 2003

Hawn explores the work of five significant global church musicians found in North American worship: Pablo Sosa (Argentina), I-to Loh (Taiwan), David Dargie (South Africa), Patrick Matsikenyiri (Zimbabwe), and John Bell (Scotland). Hawn gives biographical background for each of these composers and the meaning of their music within their respective cultures.



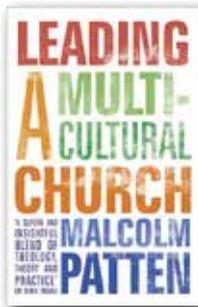
### ***God, Music and Us***

Church Training Initiative: Resource pack 4 - Spurgeon's College, 2015  
An online study module exploring the hidden messages of music and the implications for worship music in your church.  
See [www.spurgeons.ac.uk/church-training-initiative](http://www.spurgeons.ac.uk/church-training-initiative)



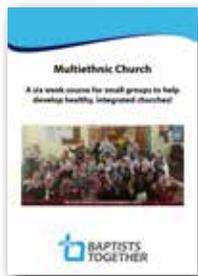
### ***Jesus Through Asian Eyes: 15 Frequently asked questions***

South Asian Forum, 2012  
*Jesus Through Asian Eyes* gives practical explanations of how Jesus can be seen, explained and understood especially from a South Asian perspective. It explains cultural terms and makes connections for better understanding and insight. It shows that the message of Jesus is appropriate to all cultures.



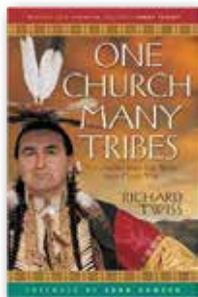
### ***Leading a Multi-cultural Church***

Malcolm Patten - SPCK, 2016  
'There is no greater joy or greater challenge in ministry than leading a multicultural church...  
Malcolm Patten offers well researched wisdom and insightful reflection from his own experience on this challenge, which create signposts that can only enhance our leadership, whatever the diverse context.' - The Rt Revd Peter Hill, Bishop of Barking



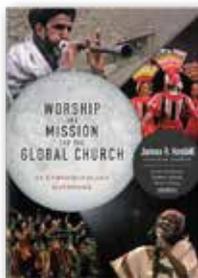
### ***Multi-Ethnic Church***

BUGB Racial Justice Group, 2015  
A 6 week course for small groups to help develop healthy, integrated churches - download from:  
[www.baptist.org.uk/multiethnicchurch](http://www.baptist.org.uk/multiethnicchurch)



### ***One Church, Many Tribes***

Richard Twiss - Chosen Books, 2000  
In this account from a Native American context, Richard Twiss of the Rosebud Lakota/Sioux discerns God's strategy for a nation's host people within their culture.



### ***Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook***

Eds Krabill and Fortunato - William Carey Library, 2013  
*Worship and Mission for the Global Church* offers theological reflection, case studies, practical tools, and audio-visual resources to help the global church appreciate and generate culturally appropriate arts in worship and witness.

There are many more items on multi-cultural worship to be found by searching the internet, reflecting the current interest in world Christianity and worship.

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