

Preface

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As Christ's followers we celebrate the **new** birth and sing a **new** song as part of a **new** Kingdom! We need not fear the **new!**

- Our Lord gave us “a **new** command . . . Love one another” (John 13:34).
- Jesus instituted the “**new** covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20).
- The resurrected Lord commanded, “Go . . . and tell the people the full message of this **new** life” (Acts 5:20).
- The apostle Paul reiterated: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a **new** creation; the old has gone, the **new** has come” (2 Cor 5:17)!
- The **new** can be uncomfortable, like a **new** pair of shoes.
- The **new** can be wonderful, like a **new** baby.
- The **new** can be dangerous, like strange **new** doctrines.
- The **new** can be invigorating, like a **new** insight from God's word.

The truth is we live in a **new** world, particularly in the **new** USA/Canada demographic reality. Who moved our Church and who changed our community?

Oliver Phillips offers us an encouraging vista of **new** potential for Kingdom advance in this **new**

mission field. We are invited to launch culturally sensitive bold **new** missional ventures to transform our world!

It matters not who moved the Church. We just know that our creative God will not allow the Church to become an irrelevant extinct dinosaur! Led by the Holy Spirit, we will courageously enter this **new** promise land of missional opportunity with **new** effectiveness and fruitfulness!

Introduction



In *Who Moved My Cheese?*, Spencer Johnson used a simple parable to demonstrate the various ways in which human beings can react to sudden and unexpected change. The theme of this 96-page book is that people see change either as a curse or a blessing.

The book is about four characters who live in a maze. Sniff and Scurry are nonanalytical and nonjudgmental mice who simply want cheese and are willing to do whatever it takes to get it. They don't spend a lot of time questioning where the cheese went when it runs out or moves; they just sniff and scurry about finding new cheese. Hem and Haw, on the other hand, agonize over what might have happened to the cheese and where it might have gone and rationalize why it should still be there, not somewhere else. The point of the story is that we must be attentive to changes in the cheese (or whatever it is we want), and be prepared to run in search of new sources of cheese when the cheese we have runs out or moves. The author affirms that change occurs *whether we like it or not*, and that it is our reaction to change that determines whether we have a future that is rife with new possibilities or one that is defined by the absence of something.

In the life of congregations, the cheese has moved, and one wonders whether we should exist without cheese, search for new cheese, create our own cheese or—perhaps most frightening—

change our diet and find substitutes for the cheese. This last option involves changing our demographics because congregations that once ministered to a particular group because of historical and family allegiances now discover that the surrounding community is no longer what it used to be. The cheese—the people it must serve—has moved. The Church, if it is to remain the same in meaningful ways, must change in finding new cheese and addressing new demographic curves!

The environment around the physical edifices where we “do church” is changing before our very eyes, and it has created a combustible mixture of uncertainty about the future of some congregations. Communities that were once homogenous have witnessed an influx of new immigrants searching for the American dream of a better life. We are surely in the throes of something new, something strange, and something amazingly filled with possibilities for evangelism and revival in congregations.

Truth be told, there is much good news that emerges from our changing demographic landscape: The dramatic changes have made it possible to liberate God and the Church from any dominant cultural bondage. Congregations can now engage in multicultural worship in a manner that we may never have imagined. However, the challenges of cultural pluralism are real. Even so, they must not be sacrificed on the altars of comfort and ease in Zion.

Any congregation that yearns to be on the cutting edge of evangelism will seriously consider the challenges posed by changing neighborhoods. The inclination toward encouraging homogeneity in our congregations or toward the preservation of cultural comfort zones may very well be an indictment against what we claim to be. H. Kortright Davis, professor of theology at Howard

University School of Divinity, wrote, “In our increasingly pluralistic society, it is incumbent on the people of God to check and recheck all their prejudices at the doors of their churches, so that the strange census of the first Pentecost experience . . . does not become for our modern-day Christianity a source of social contradiction, rather than a bastion of religious conviction.”¹

I am writing this booklet as a reminder of the changes that are taking place and as a guide to help congregations to become energized to respond to the changes in ways that will bring about a testimony of Kingdom witness.

The Opportunity for Mission

The Lost Boys of Sudan were a group of thousands of child refugees from Christian Southern Sudan who walked hundreds of miles through a war zone to find safety at the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. They spent their childhoods there, staying for more than ten years until they were resettled overseas or returned to their homes. In 2001, about 3,800 Lost Boys arrived in the United States, where they were scattered to 38 cities, averaging about 100 per city. The compassionate act of the citizens of the United States in taking the boys into their homes was hailed as unprecedented in our history.

However, with the 9/11 attack on these shores, the mood about immigrants changed. Rage and recrimination overwhelmed American citizens as never in the history of the nation had such a violent act been perpetrated on American soil. The lingering result of 9/11 has been the ratcheting up of a sullen suspicion of the burgeoning immigrant population. Almost overnight, the prevailing sentiment about the presence of immigrant changed. Lost in this rage were not only our humanitarian tendencies but the more practical fact that “our country’s large immigrant population

brings many positives. Immigrants keep our workforce numbers up, which means economic growth and more payroll tax contributions to Social Security and Medicare. Immigration assures the United States a young, productive labor force."²

Similarly, congregations of the faithful fast became aware that their communities were being transformed demographically by the emerging newcomers, a veritable mission field, maybe people from the very lands to which they had sent missionaries. The paradox here is that missions had come to us.

Unfortunately, America has failed to come to grips with the stark reality of this increased immigration. Forrest Gump was right: "Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you're going to get." More to the point, the American church has not come to grips with what opportunities and challenges are presented by this giant shift in cultural demographics, guided wittingly by God's hands. The wrapping comes off the box of chocolates and surprises abound.

Feelings vary about this new phenomenon. What most Americans are not willing to admit or understand is that immigration is the key not only to current economic growth but also to future growth because the children of immigrants today are the labor force and the consumers of tomorrow.³ Immigration might also be the key to sustained membership growth in U.S. congregations. Research has shown that in my denomination, the Church of the Nazarene, from 1993 to 2003, 820 new churches were started. Of that number, 429 (52.3%) were begun primarily by ethnic groups, mainly immigrants, and 218 (50.8%) of those ethnic-specific congregations were Hispanic. Any growth is an encouraging sign, but it should be accepted with an appreciation for the new windows of evangelistic

opportunity provided by the coming of immigrants to these shores.

The advent of this surge of evangelistic prospects has touched states that were previously immune to such explosions of immigrants. According to a New York Times reporter, in 2006, Indiana saw a 34% increase in the number of immigrants, South Dakota saw a 44% rise, Delaware 32%, Missouri 31%, Colorado 28%, and New Hampshire 26%. Overall, immigrants now make up 12.4% of the nation's population, up from 11.2% in 2000. That amounts to an estimated 4.9 million additional immigrants from 2000 to 2006, for a total of 35.7 million immigrants, a contingent larger than the population of California.⁴

No other topic will consume the minds of sociologists and anthropologists in the 21st century more than the implications of increased immigration. At the time of this writing, Congress is embroiled in rancorous debate about the manner in which this country should solve the problem of undocumented immigrants. At the same time, we struggle to understand those immigrants who have made America home through legal channels and processes. Millions have earned permanent residency and have become naturalized citizens in this land of hope and opportunity, and America is faced with the demanding task of defining the assimilation matrix that has emerged as a result.

This scenario suggests that we revisit the American image provided by English playwright Israel Zangwill in his signature work, *The Melting Pot*. The play, written at the beginning of the 20th century and endorsed by many Americans, presented a Utopian vision of America as a crucible that blended all peoples into a new nation, interethnic and interracial, who would build "the Republic of Man" and "the Kingdom of God." For decades thereafter, this play was the social

mantra for an America faced with a rapidly increasing immigrant population. In 1908, when the play opened in Washington, the United States was in the middle of absorbing the largest influx of immigrants in its history—Irish and Germans, followed by Italians and East Europeans, Catholics and Jews—some 18 million new citizens between 1890 and 1920.

It was not until 1963, when Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan published the volume *Beyond the Melting Pot* challenging the assumption that there ever was a melting pot, that America dared review this vision of an ethnic Utopia. The publication raised the ire of some who idealized the melting pot metaphor as a godly goal to be aggressively sought. Many felt betrayed by the potential loss of this iconic image of America.

Then, in 1972, Michael Novak published *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics*. In a review of the book, Bayard Rustin, a prominent African-American scholar, claimed that “there never was a melting pot; there is not now a melting pot; there never will be a melting pot; and if there ever was it would be such a tasteless soup that we would have to go back and start all over again.”

As if to add fuel to fire, in the height of the Civil Rights movement, Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded America that 11:00 on Sunday morning was the most segregated hour in America. This poignant observation mobilized some Evangelicals to join a crusade to reverse this reality by advocating for a heterogeneous worship experience that would blend cultural groups together.

Today, the church community must again grapple with the question of what is the proper expression of a multicultural society. “Multiculturalism,” some say, has become the new civil religion of the United States, yet it is unclear what is meant by “multiculturalism.” Welcomed enthusi-

astically by some, deplored by others, and maligned by many as an overused and tired buzz word, multiculturalism and the issues that surround it continue to pose a significant challenge to American society in general and to evangelicals specifically.

Before one attempts to offer relevant ideas, however, the gravity of the immigration crisis, which reaches into every corner of society, must be acknowledged. Consider for a moment these facts:

- Asian-American students comprise one-sixth of the student body at Yale, one-fifth of that at Harvard, and one-fifth of all students enrolled in medical schools in the United States.
- By 2050 the Hispanic population will double to 24% of the US population, while the majority of non-Hispanic whites will drop to 52%.
- In New York, Koreans own 70% of the independent groceries, 80% of the nail salons, and 60% of the dry cleaners.
- According to the US Census Bureau, between 2005 and 2010, the white population will grow by only 3.2%, while the Hispanic population will grow at a rate of 14.4%, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders at 15.4%, and African-Americans at 6.3%. The growth rate for the overall population during that time-frame will be 4.2%.
- According to the 2000 Census, there were over 30 million immigrants in the U.S., representing 11% of the total population.⁵
- One in five children in the U.S. is the native-born or foreign-born child of an immigrant.
- Eighty-five percent of immigrant families with children are mixed-status families (families in which at least one parent is a non-US citizen and one child is a U.S. citizen).
- Between 1970 and 2000, the naturalized citizen population increased by 71%.⁶

Taken together, these factors reflect a dramatically

changing society that demands a new way of thinking, as well as an innovative way of doing evangelism. The tasks of understanding the multi-cultural mosaic and designing the approach that the community of faith must take to it are fraught with difficulties caused by outmoded suppositions.

Three premises that have found prominence in discussions of evangelism and church growth could potentially undermine an effective ecclesiology. The first assumption is that immigrants come to these shores *tabula rasa*, with a cultural “blank slate,” eager to absorb and acquire our culture as their own. Many ignore the deep cultural roots that are imbedded in the worldview of immigrants. One is naïve to attempt to assimilate new arrivals into the cycle of mainstream American church life and expect them to shed all past allegiances.

The second assumption is that the attitudinal portal into which immigrants come to America has been unchanged over the past century. This has resulted in misguided notions of assimilation, which, unfortunately, have become the foundational impetus for church-planting strategies. The America to which immigrants have come in the early years of the 21st century differs greatly from early 20th-century America.

Third, because of these first two assumptions, evangelism has taken on a sort of “one size fits all” approach. Granted, the claims of the Gospel are universal in their core ingredients; However, effective evangelism takes place only when thoughtful consideration is given to cultural particularity. The Donald McGavran (eminent founder of the Church growth movement) adage that people like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers—although it may be a pragmatic sociological observation—may be a deficient prescription for evangelism.

The cheese has moved. If one believes that God is still in control, it is safe to assume that it is this God who has shifted the locus of mission in the midst of changing communities. The solution to the challenge might very well be found in new curves to address these demographic changes.

The Urgency and Timing for Change—the Sigmoid Curve

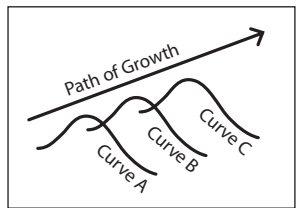
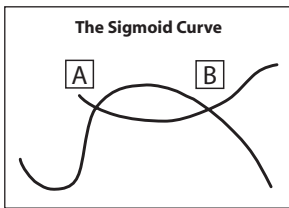
In preparation for a canceled Pastors' Conference I came across some of the thinking of Charles Handy wherein he uses the idea that life cycles (for businesses and for individuals) follow an S-shaped curve—a sigmoid curve, which looks like an S turned on its side—where there is an initial dip followed by growth and, finally, decline. This life cycle has a base building/introduction phase, followed by a growth phase, then a flat comfort phase, and, finally, a declining phase. According to Handy's viewpoint, all organizations, persons, relationships, living organisms, and congregations experience such phases. The curve represents the ways in which you got to where you are and illustrates that those are seldom the things that keep you there. It implies the inevitability of change and the necessity for changing when things are good, not when they start to go bad. It is the story of the life cycle of most congregations amidst communities.

Handy asserts that the organizations that survive are those that understand the necessity for creating new curves. The organism must experiment with new ways and new ideas, and not all of them will work, but it must always be experimenting with new curves if it is to survive. The challenge of the second curve is to find a way to start that curve while still building upon the success, learning and maturity gained from the first curve.

A cursory look at the diagrams below will reveal

some significant guidelines. When standing at Point A, one is presented with two confusing and opposing vistas. The view looking back along the sigmoid curve shows success, growth and satisfaction, but a look in the other direction and over the horizon of the curve shows the fall towards Point B. The opportunity is to openly look at what Point B tells you—to see the trends that can lead from A to B—but then to use this information to design a pathway from the current Point A to the Point A on the next sigmoid curve, a pathway of uninterrupted success.

As a philosopher and organizational change specialist, Handy proposes that the second sigmoid curve be started before the first curve has reached its peak, when growth is still occurring, in order to minimize the impact of the eventual decline. But he also affirms that it is human nature to start the second curve on the declining part of the curve, when failure is imminent, not the rising part of the curve, where uninterrupted success might be achieved.



Successful churches are those that constantly seek ways to reinvent themselves, even when things are going well. The only path that any organization can chart for ongoing success is constant reinvention. The sigmoid, or S-shaped, curve charts the trajectory of every successful human system. There is always a first period of experimentation and learning, which is followed by a time of growth and development. Ultimately, however, every curve turns downward. The only thing that varies is the length and duration of each part of the curve. This concept relates di-

rectly to the case for a congregation's need to adjust to a changing community.

Corporate America seems to have learned the importance of this paradigm in dealing with the constantly changing marketplace. While the speed of the curve may vary from one organization to the other, to keep pace, the successful industry, organization, and individual, must develop a second curve out of the first. The new curve, however, must start before the first one peaks, at Point A, when all the evidence says that there is no need for change because, after all, everything is going so well. But the secret of constant growth is to start a new curve before the first one peters out. The right place to start is at point A—when things are going well, when there is time, as well as the resources and the energy, to get the new curve through its initial explorations and floundering before the first curve begins to dip downwards. But at point A, all the signals suggest that everything is going fine, that it would be folly to change when things are going so well. Often change only comes at point B, when it may be too late. It is often easier to move on from disasters than from successes.

The discipline of the second curve keeps one skeptical, curious and inventive—the best route to discovery of effective future practices. Second-curve thinking suggests that past practice is not necessarily the best guide to future practice in the face of changing circumstances. There are no perfect answers in a changing world. We must be forever searching.

A 2004 documentary directed and produced by Morgan Spurlock, *Super-Size Me*, almost brought McDonald's to an abrupt stop. Spurlock explored the fast food industry's corporate influence, including how it encourages poor nutrition for its own profit. McDonald's survived this event by discontinuing the Super Mac and by introducing

sweeping new curves such as Apple Dippers, Fruit 'n Yogurt Parfait, and Fruit & Walnut Salad. McDonald's ability to continue is based on its commitment to initiating new market curves. Churches in changing neighbors can learn much from such business practices.

The challenge for most congregations is starting new curves at the appropriate time. Most congregations arrive at a decision to address the need for a new curve when it is really too late; by then, the leaders have lost credibility, resources are depleted and the energy for creative thinking is low.

The message of the Sigmoid Curve is that we need the foresight to start making changes even when it is not yet obvious that change is necessary, and the courage to switch from one curve to the next when the time is right.⁷

Power to start new curves

The challenge for congregations will be to harness its energies to initiate new curves with alacrity and timing. The one ingredient that is inherent in every congregation—though it often lies dormant—is its power to start a new curve. When communities change, if congregations don't recognize this power, they are helpless. What is power? According to Bob Linthicum, a highly recognized urbanologist, "Change cannot occur in any city, neighborhood, family, church, tribe or nation unless the people and their institutions have developed their capacity, ability and willingness to act."⁸ So *power is the **capacity, ability and willingness to act!***

Every word in this definition is important. *Power is the capacity to act.* *Capacity* means the resources the congregation has at its disposal in order to exercise power. Search out persons in the community and in the congregation who understand the dynamics of cultural and community

exegesis and make them part of your capacity. *Power is the ability to act.* That is, the congregation should have the ability—the skill and competence—to grapple with the complexities that accompany the attempt at a new curve. Essential to this task is a small group of members who can spearhead change. *Power is the willingness to act.* The congregation must be willing to risk failure by doing whatever is necessary to effect change.

Starting new curves means a radical departure from the past. Ministry becomes uncertain and unpredictable and offers no security or familiarity. Ministry of this sort is analogous to the parable of the sower and his seeds: We move forward with reckless abandon, knowing quite well that the terrain might not be as friendly ahead as it has been behind. However, we proceed and invest with the assurance that, as we risk failure, we also are planting seeds of hope for a transformed community, one in which the yardstick with which we measure success might be drastically different.

The Options for New Curves to Address Demographic Changes

Nazarene Multicultural Ministries is committed to helping our denomination become a racially just, culturally diverse, spiritually vibrant and growing church in the US and Canada, a church that gives expression to the richness of its faith, heritage and experiences. It is a ministry that embraces the challenge of including all Nazarenes as partners in ministry at all levels of its corporate structure. It is our prayer that changes may be seen as an opportunity to become the church that God intended.

Who Moved My Church? is more than a booklet. It is a ministry opportunity. It is more than an academic exercise in missional church-growth semantics. It is a ministry opportunity in the midst of a God-ordained demographic kaleidoscope.

Changes



The population of the Western world is the only major segment of the world's population in which Christianity is not growing,⁹ yet we often continue to "do church" as usual. Of the 300 million people in the US today, only 40% of the adults say they went to church in the past week. According to researcher George Barna, the number of unchurched adults is increasing. One in three U.S. adults is unchurched, which translates to 90 to 100 million people. George Hunter, a leading authority on the Church's impact and effectiveness, says the situation is far worse: "In America, there are 120 to 140 million functionally secular people, many of whom are nominal members of our churches."¹⁰

While we lament those facts, it takes the combined efforts of 85 Christians working over an entire year to produce one convert in America today.¹¹ The church-to-population ratio has decreased in the last one hundred years from 27 churches for every 10,000 people in the US in 1900 to 12 churches per 10,000 people in 1990.¹²

Much more startling than those statistics, however, are the changes brought about by the rapid increase of immigrants to the U.S. Ethnic groups like African-Americans and Native Americans, coupled with immigrants, present the Church with a burgeoning mission field that is unprecedented by any other period in U.S. history.

The Changing Face of the US

Today, America stands on the brink of a cultural and ethnic revolution. No longer is it the land where differences in race and culture can be ignored or even de-accentuated. Every village, community, school, town, institution, and place of employment brings one face-to-face with the reality that America has become a tossed salad of ethnic groups, languages, and cultures. Some reports indicate that two-thirds of the world's immigrants are finding a new home in America. God has brought the world's mission field to the United States.

One of the Church's greatest opportunities in the new millennium lies in its ability to harness the assets of our cultural and racial diversity. For the Church of the Nazarene to remain true to the Great Commission, it must reach out to the nation's historic minorities and to the millions of immigrants who have made America their home.

The changing face of America in the 21st century has resulted in its being composed of significantly different factors than it was in the period 1860-1930, which brought the highest rate of increase in church membership in American history. These were the years of rapid population and economic growth, of territorial expansion that provided opportunities for the recruitment of members and of the development of stable communities that facilitated church-building.¹³ When the Hart-Cellar Immigration Act of 1965, which resulted in major changes in immigration patterns to the US, fostered a flow of immigrants that was much more ethnically diverse and less European than the immigrant population had been. Whereas three-quarters of the immigrants between 1900 and 1968 (when the reforms of 1965 took effect) were from Europe, almost two-thirds of those arriving since that date have been drawn from Latin America or Asia. As this new wave of immigrants gathered strength, it was inevitable that Nazarenes

were among them, for Nazarenes were well represented among the population of many Latin American and Asian countries.

The most conservative predictors estimate that, by the year 2050, the English-speaking white majority will be only one of a sizable number of minority groups that will collectively constitute the population of the United States. As a denomination, the Church of the Nazarene needs an intentional strategy designed to ensure our ability to capitalize on the opportunities God is providing. To do less would be poor stewardship.

Consider the following statistics that seem to support these observations:

- More Jews live in America than in Israel.
- More people of African descent live in America than in any other country except Nigeria.
- More Samoans live in America than in Samoa.
- More Hispanics live in America than in any other country except Mexico or Spain.
- More Hispanics live in America than the total population of Canada.
- More Cubans live in Miami than in any other city except for Havana.
- More Armenians live in Los Angeles than any other city.
- In the 1990s in the US, the Asian population grew by 107%, Hispanics by 53%, and Native Americans by 38%, while the general population grew by 6%.

These amazing demographics should awaken us to the challenge of becoming the New Testament church in this new century. Bill Sullivan, former director of USA/Canada Mission-Evangelism, succinctly warns, "The Church of the Nazarene will rise to the challenge, or it will falter, flounder, fail, and fade."

How has immigration affected us and the way we

do ministry? It has brought astounding heterogeneity. The 1990 census showed seven Asian nationalities and ten Hispanic nationalities with populations over twenty thousand in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. In the New York City metropolitan area, there were five Asian nationalities and eleven Hispanic nationalities with populations over twenty thousand. The Hispanic and Asian populations grew in New York City, even though the overall population declined.¹⁴

Though it may surprise us, the challenge of multiculturalism is nothing new to the Church of the 21st century. Cheryl Sanders, professor of church ethics at Howard University School of Divinity and pastor of the historic Third Street Church of God in Washington, DC., stated at the Multicultural Ministries Conference held at Bethany, Oklahoma, in 1998, "So how is it that the Church is just now becoming multicultural, if the Bible says it was born multicultural? Because of Pentecost, we should divest ourselves of the idea that an inclusive, multicultural Church is something new, or something we should pride ourselves for thinking up at the close of the twentieth century."¹⁵

The Present Opportunity and Obligation

It is possible that the Church of the 21st century will closely resemble the Pentecostal crowd of Acts 2, where worshippers came from the present-day countries of Iran, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Cyprus, Malta, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Greece, Albania, Italy and parts of Asia. The present immigration phenomenon is rapidly moving the United States from merely a repository for European offshoots to a multicultural world nation with cultural ties to virtually every race and region in the world. By divine providence, the stage has been set for a 21st-century church-growth revival. The cheese has

moved, and the question becomes, “How do we practice church midst this new ecclesiastical climate?” Immigrants have rezoned the Church’s neighborhood. How can the Church respond effectively?

To be a truly missional church means to be in touch with the need to reach out to the new neighbors who merge into our communities. How? By starting new curves. The Great Commission remains the rallying cry for the Church, but the practice of ministry does not take place in a vacuum. The relevant question for the Church today is how to implement effective evangelism in the midst of this flourishing pluralism in society and community. How does a predominantly white denomination become missionally evangelistic within a multicultural nation?

It was with forceful perception that Tom Nees, former director of USA/Canada Mission Evangelism Department for the Church of the Nazarene, observed the church’s dilemma: “I fear that if we continue to do nothing different than we are doing, in the near future, when and where there is no majority group, this denomination will be marginalized as a predominantly English-speaking white fellowship in a sea of diversity.”¹⁶ Nees’ warning precludes the objective of simply starting more culturally specific churches. Embracing the demographic changes and their accompanying opportunities for evangelism should be part of a more comprehensive strategy to ensure that all churches display the welcome mat for all people.

That challenge creates a dilemma for both the predominant white church as well as culturally specific churches. While we need to start culturally specific churches that cater to the needs of people who find themselves comfortable in a particular cultural setting, a basic sociological principle proffers that people prefer to be with

people like themselves. According to the 1998 National Congregations Study, about 90% of American congregations are 90% people of the same race.¹⁷ However, we need be careful not to attribute this congregational homogeneity to prejudice alone. If groups maintain their strength by providing meaning and belonging, the particularizing force of similarity must be acknowledged.

God works in the language and culture of those to whom salvation is offered; it is not necessary to surrender one's cultural identity in order to be a Christian. God uses ancestral identities as legitimate gifts, as well as a means of revealing love, peace and justice to the world. Churches that reflect culturally distinct ministries are being used by God to reach unchurched people. These churches must never exclude people of other cultures, but because of their context and/or their calling, they are oriented to a particular cultural, language or geographical settings. As our surroundings become increasingly multi-cultural, especially in the urban neighborhoods, it is right that the people of those neighborhoods be given the opportunity of affiliating with a congregation that reflects their cultural heritage and meets their particular needs. Still, it is within the context of religious groups that a healthy social fabric is most naturally nourished, thereby establishing social solidarity—churches exist to provide meaning, belonging, and security—so it is here that multiculturalism must be most encouraged, most welcomed, most nurtured.

The Significance of Ethnic Consciousness

Many well meaning evangelicals struggle with the seeming prominence given to ethnicity and cultural consciousness. This is, of course, understandable: for persons who have not been exposed to the complexities and historical en-

trenchment of culture, an appreciation of various cultures becomes a rather difficult task.

Let's take a moment to break this down into bite-sized portions. It is only natural that new immigrants choose to be with those who tell the same types of stories in the same language, who eat the same foods and celebrate the same festivals, and who may be helpful in the search for a job. To do otherwise would be unusual. However, the future for these immigrants could go in one of two directions.

Assimilation: The children and grandchildren—the second and third generations—will have an easy time letting go of some of their ethnic identities because they have been schooled in their new home. They are not like their parents; they have advanced educationally and economically and have mixed with the majority to the point that there are very few visible differences between the immigrant and the majority. This is evident in some of the congregations in the Metro New York district, where Afro-Caribbeans have migrated in significant numbers and have found a home in Nazarene congregations.

Pluralism: Many groups have great difficulty assimilating a new culture and cling to their ethnicity, which provides a safe haven as repositories of history and culture. It is unfortunate that government and big businesses have united to develop an economically stratified society along ethnic lines, which can easily lead to discrimination and marginalization. These groups should have equal access to and opportunities in employment, education, and overall economic well-being.xviii

Congregational Response to Change



In 1992, the Congregations in Changing Communities Project, a research effort funded by the Lilly Endowment and based at Emory University, researched the manner in which congregations responded to the changes that were taking place in their neighborhoods¹⁹ and found several patterns:

- Many congregations simply attempt to hold their own, doing what they have always done, with a slowly dwindling membership. Some of these eventually close their doors or merge with other congregations.
- Some congregations move; after looking at the possibilities for ministry in their current location, they opt for friendlier territory. They assess the needs of their neighborhood and what they have to offer and conclude that their gifts can be best used elsewhere.
- A few congregations determine they will not go under. They experience resurrection, often under the leadership of a transformational pastor who helps them start all over again by developing new ministries and new styles of worship.
- A few farsighted and courageous congregations undertake the hard work of re-rooting themselves, planning for new ministries and integrating newcomers into their midst even before the situation becomes critical.

- Some congregations seek their new identities in a set of ministries less tied to a particular place and more tied to the gifts, connections, and passions of its members. They find a niche within the large array of congregations and ministries available in a metropolitan region.
- More common than any other response to change is the founding of new congregations. The survey discovered that 21% of the congregations in the neighborhoods studied in the early 90s had been founded since 1980. A large survey five years later that covered five representative large urban regions, found that 14% of the congregations had been founded since 1985.
- Some congregations merge. By choosing to join forces with another existing congregation, these churches experience changes that span all the other alternatives. As with businesses, there are elements of both birth and death in merging, and some mergers are successful while others fail. Congregations that do it successfully have to create a new congregational culture in ways that are not unlike the tasks facing congregations that re-root or create a new niche for themselves. Many merged congregations also move. While merging is a distinct pattern of change, its many variations create challenges characteristic of nearly all the other patterns, combined and compounded.

Look Before Crossing the Street!

Misunderstanding often comes when we fail to analyze carefully enough the ramifications inherent in seizing new opportunities. Countless initiatives, though well intended, fall on the ash heap because the time was not taken to assess with precision the challenges that they would present. Our parents' admonition still holds true: "Look both ways before you cross the street" . . . or be crushed by oncoming vehicles on their

path to legitimate destinations. It is vital to prepare a congregation for the changes that will occur when a church transitions from monocultural to multicultural.

As examples of the importance of looking before leaping, here are some noteworthy observations about immigrant groups:

- Today, people tend to have longer-lasting ties to their homeland. Ease of travel and internet communication allows immigrants to maintain contact with their homelands—unless, of course, they are political refugees. Whereas earlier immigrant groups usually said goodbye to their countries of origin forever when they came to the United States, that is frequently no longer the case. As a result, immigrants may be less likely to assimilate as quickly into the dominant culture in the United States.
- More than twenty countries are represented among Spanish-speaking immigrants; although they all speak more or less the same language, the cultural differences are often considerable.
- The nature of new immigrant groups in the multicultural mix is of a somewhat different character than was the case in earlier waves of immigration. It is not uncommon for Mexican immigrants, for example, to send their children back to Mexico during summer vacation in order to get to know their relatives and the customs of that country and keep up their language skills. There is always some level of assimilation, especially beginning with the second generation, but the decidedly slower pace of assimilation, or even outright resistance to assimilation, is bolstered by the fact that access to the country of origin is maintained, at least through the first generation.
- While there may be a distinguishable “Little Saigon” in Orange County or a “Little Havana” in Miami, immigrant populations tend to be more mobile than in the past. They can

move frequently and quickly as they follow economic opportunities, or they may be constantly moving to better housing as their financial resources improve, which makes ministry to a group more difficult if the people—and sometimes even the culture—change rapidly.

Four Possible Curves to Respond to New Demographics

If we are to seize this moment, we must not be relegated to a “one size fits all” recipe but be open to a variety of approaches. I recommend that we choose among four curves that could help the church reinvent itself.

1. Start churches that are neighborhood-oriented.

Congregations should reflect the makeup of the neighborhood. The sociological DNA of any group of gathered Christians will determine the structures and boundaries of their existence and their *raison d'être*. The geographical parameters of a local congregation, although becoming less of a factor than other indicators, are still the single most important ingredient in the structures of socialization.

In medieval Europe and in the early history of American religion, individuals were driven to a particular denomination or congregation by ascription, a blind allegiance to the faith of their parents. Today, people select among options to satisfy their personal preferences in search of meaning and belonging. It is a basic sociological principle that the human drives for meaning and belonging are realized through interaction with others, and the community of faith remains the dominant force for neighborhood gatherings.

High levels of solidarity are usually found in neighborhood churches, so churches that reflect the neighborhood should be started. People like to be with people like themselves and prefer to

belong to an organization that provides the resultant stable relationships. Although this reality may create entities that are homogeneous in nature, to the extent that they are a reflection of the socio-demographic characteristics of the neighborhood, they should be allowed to be a viable currency of ecclesiastical engagement. These churches, reflecting the makeup of the neighborhood, make a unique contribution to the social space of the neighborhood.

However, neighborhoods that have a growing concentration of African-Americans create different challenges than neighborhoods that are experiencing an increasing influx of other immigrants. African-Americans are more difficult to attract to the dominant-culture congregations because they tend to be more residentially segregated than other groups, are less likely to marry people of other races, and have had a more difficult time gaining acceptance in the majority society.²⁰ Research in a Lilly study suggests that if African-Americans are to be attracted to predominantly white congregations, those congregations must concentrate on two areas: finding African-American clergy or lay leadership and encouraging discussions on racial issues.

It is unlikely that a church in an African-American neighborhood would succeed with no African-American leadership. In the Lilly data, the highest percentage of African-Americans that attended a church with no African-American clergy was 33 percent, while the highest percentage of whites and Hispanics who were willing to attend churches without members of their own group in leadership was 50 percent. The Lilly study also revealed that churches that spend time discussing racial concerns attract more African-Americans than do other churches. Since alienation between African-Americans and the rest of society is greater than that usually felt by other ethnic groups, discussions of racial issues may be

necessary for African-Americans to vent some of the frustration they experience²¹ and to feel that their concerns are respected. We cannot continue to hide racial issues behind the guise of “colorblindness.”

2. Start churches that are immigrant-specific.

Since 1994, Nazarenes have started 820 new congregations. Of that number, the congregations of 422 (52 percent) are other than English-speaking whites; 218 of these have been Hispanic, 48 Haitian, 36 African-American, and 30 Korean. The future of ethnic-specific churches is deeply embedded in NewStart initiatives.

It was once assumed that groups of immigrants coming to America formed the proverbial “melting pot,” where everyone blended together into one homogenous whole. However, what we actually have is more of a “tossed salad” where we are all in the same bowl making up a single dish, but we are not blended and our uniqueness and integrity remains. Today’s immigrants bring with them their belief systems, worldviews, cultural values, and ritual practices—including worship. They bring their “liturgical homelands”—sights, sounds, smells and depth of belief. In the turmoil of coming to a new land, it may be that cultural and faith familiarity is crucial for survival and growth.

God works within the language and culture of those to whom salvation is offered. God uses one’s tribal, cultural, racial, or ancestral identity as legitimate gifts. It is not necessary to surrender one’s cultural identity in order to be a Christian. All Christians, regardless of color, class, size, or gender are chosen people. They are saved, transformed into communities of praise, and sent forth to share the good news of God’s love with people of all nations.

As revealed in the Book of Acts (2:5-8), God uses

ethnic churches with culturally distinct ministries to help reach unchurched people. Today, this same kind of multicultural environment is evident in many neighborhoods that exhibit the same kind of multiracial identity as the churches portrayed in Acts. The churches of these neighborhoods are not closed to other cultures but, because of their context and/or their calling, they are oriented to particular cultural settings.

The nation is becoming increasingly multicultural, especially in its urban neighborhoods. Therefore, it is only right that the people of those neighborhoods be given the opportunity, if they wish to take it, to affiliate with a congregation that presents the gospel within their cultural heritage, assuming that approach meets their particular needs. We can neither ignore nor avoid responding to this growing national diversity. The challenge to all Christians is to learn how to share the gospel in an increasingly diverse culture, a culture that features a rich variety of languages, music, styles, and modes of worship, ministries, and witness.

The Case for Ethnic-Specific Churches

- *Pragmatic reasons*—If people want to worship with others who share their ethnic culture and background, then ethnic-specific churches provide the pragmatic solution. Donald McGavran has maintained that most people do not want to cross the lines of race or culture to go to church and that ethnic-specific churches are the most successful approach for the development of growing vibrant churches. Many members of first-generation immigrant congregations are converts and would never have been evangelized without such places of fellowship. These new converts were attracted to the church primarily because of the ethnic character of the congregation.
- *Theological reasons*—The history of racial alienation and supremacy contributed to the

formation of separate churches based on race and ethnicity. However, despite the apparent intentions of those who advocated for separation, ethnic groups found dignity and self-affirmation in these congregations. A person's culture and faith interpretation should be upheld and enhanced in the faith community, and this element is not easily duplicated in a multicultural experience.

- *Activist reasons*—It is important that, in faith communities of color, there be opportunities to express the struggle against injustice and inequality. Particularly in the African-American church, social and political leaders have emerged to champion civil and human rights.
- *Cultural reasons*—Unless multicultural and dominant-culture churches learn how to affirm and acknowledge other cultures, the unique ways that ethnic groups understand and worship God can be lost.
- *Sociological reasons*—The ethnic church serves as a place of refuge and community development. They “are places where people are embraced for who they are, valued for their cultural particularities, free to communicate through shared experiences, and not pressured to change their ethnic ways so as to gain acceptance. These congregations celebrate, safeguard, and pass on to the next generation cultural practices and traditions.”²²

3. Start multicultural churches.

A multicultural church, in the true sense of the term, is a church designed to serve the needs of various ethnicities, cultures, ages, genders, etc. However, for the purposes of this booklet, we'll limit the discussion to ethnicity.

A purposeful and intentional decision must be made to start churches that are multicultural, that is, churches that are composed of various ethnic groups and with the styles of worship geared to a

multi-faceted inclusiveness. Because of human resistance to change, it is much easier for congregations started in this manner to continue to be multicultural in their life cycle than it is for mono-cultural churches to change, but that does not mean such change is impossible. In fact, one could make a strong argument for the necessity of undertaking change in order to remain vibrant and relevant.

In his booklet “A Guide for Starting Multicultural Churches,” Russell Begaye states:

In most ministry settings, any available, faithful, and teachable believer can be used greatly of God. In a multicultural church, the challenge level increases, especially for the lead pastor. Therefore, the following background and qualities are valuable for anyone in a leadership role in any church, but especially for the lead pastor of a multicultural church. One well suited for multicultural church leadership has:

- A commitment to the authority of Scripture, especially principles of reconciliation and unity.
- A commitment to missions.
- A commitment to include people of all ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- A commitment to prayer.
- A servant’s heart.
- A sense of humor.
- An ability to enjoy and compromise with different cultural preferences.
- An ability to handle criticism and rejection.
- Strong leadership and pastoral gifts.
- A strong training in theology and in the social sciences.²³

Multicultural congregations require time, energy, and focus that could be used elsewhere. But neither the ease nor difficulty of the task nor its simplicity or complexity are the issues

on which to focus. We are called as Christians to live, work, serve, and be together, forging community that can occur only with God's help.²⁴

Designing a multicultural church is the result of hard work by the leaders and laity. Even in the few instances in which this pluralism is the result of neighborhood dynamics, it takes a concerted effort to maintain this unique approach.

4. Help mono-cultural churches become multi-cultural.

A recent report by the Congregation Project of the Lily Endowment discovered that:

- A multiracial congregation is defined as one in which no one racial group is 80 percent or more of the congregation.
- Only about 7 percent of all American congregations are multiracial.
- Only about 15 percent of Catholic churches are multiracial.
- Only about 5 percent of Protestant churches are multiracial.
- Non-Christian congregations are more likely to be racially mixed than are Christian congregations.
- The most common type of racially mixed congregation is comprised of Anglos and Hispanics or Asians.

Motivations for Churches to Become Culturally Conscious

- Full utilization of a large facility—The congregation is strong but it has a large building and welcomes another congregation to share.
- Financial struggles—Smaller congregations that are struggling financially rent space to another congregation to pay the bills.
- Changing neighborhood—A church in a changing neighborhood is losing members and

realizes that, if they don't open their doors to persons of other cultures, the church may close.

- No motivation/Serendipitous—Sometimes cultural consciousness is a part of the natural evolution of a church as when, for example, a Filipino attends, likes what he hears and feels, and brings others from his ethnic community.

Motivations for Individuals to Attend a Culturally Conscious Church

- Integration—African-Americans join a European-American church specifically to integrate it.
- Assimilation—Immigrants join European-American congregations so they can polish their English skills and learn the cultural norms of their new country.
- Denominational loyalty—Immigrants join denominations they attended in their home country.
- Linguistic or racial bonds—Persons who speak the same language group but are from different cultures choose to worship together, or persons from the same culture but who speak different languages (e.g., Native Americans) choose to worship together.
- Acceptance—People seek a church that will accept them and make them feel comfortable (e.g., divorced persons, persons with disabilities, homosexuals, ex-prisoners).
- Making a difference—People who choose a congregation because they can fill a need through that church.
- Multicultural background—People who have grown up in multiethnic schools, work in multiethnic environments, exercise in multiethnic gyms, etc., or people from a biracial family choose a particular church that reflects their experiences.
- Justice oriented—People join a multicultural

church because they appreciate and benefit from the richness of diversity and believe that striving for justice and peace on earth requires people to cross boundaries, to negotiate differences, and to work for a sense of well being for all.

- Geographical proximity—Some people choose a church only because of its physical proximity and, if it happens to be multicultural, so be it.

Multi-congregational Opportunities



There is an increasing number of buildings with dwindling memberships that can be the catalysts for district initiatives and church sponsorships. With gradual shifts in urban populations, movements of people, and exploding immigrant groups, there is often a new opportunity to use existing buildings to house culture-specific congregations.

Rev. Ian Fitzpatrick has been involved in multi-congregational initiatives for a considerable length of time, with great success. As pastor of the Emmanuel Church of the Nazarene in Toronto, Canada, he has developed a missional model for using the church building for the nurturing of ethnic congregations. His observations about the checks and balances that should be put in place offer valuable insights for those planning multicultural congregations:

As the pastor, you have a unique opportunity to expand the ministry field of your local church. As with any ministry opportunity, you will probably be the one to “make it fly” or “see it die”. If you are thinking of pursuing a multi-congregational ministry, there are a few things I would suggest.

DO have a personal passion for it to happen.
DON'T surrender your conviction to a committee just yet.

DO pray and ask God to confirm that this is indeed a conviction and not just another fad.
DON'T move any further in the process until this is confirmed.

DO formulate a vision in your mind consistent with the community in which you minister.
DON'T try to duplicate what someone else has done in another part of the country.

DO shape and construct your vision into a plan that can be understood by your hearers.
DON'T be vague or uncertain about your plan.

DO make a Biblical, reasonable and visionary presentation of your plan to the church board.
DON'T ignore objections or concerns that members of your board might have.

DO pursue a positive response to the plan and involve key leaders in the implementation of it.
DON'T go it alone.

DO look for key lay people who can be instrumental in carving out a non-English speaking ministry group.
DON'T try to lead a non-English speaking group if your only language is English.

DO provide as much as you can to the group so that they can concentrate on "ministry" (free space, use of equipment, etc.).
DON'T inhibit the success of their reason to exist (to seek the lost) by imposing secondary rules and regulations that would seriously impede their efforts. (There will come a time when shared costs are appropriate but not yet.)

DO publicly promote the ministry of the new "congregation" in a very natural way; this is what the Kingdom is all about.

DON'T make excuses for why we had to go in this direction; this is our calling!

DO your very best to promote a climate of equality from the very beginning.

DON'T try to establish equality when you are already way down the road; this will be interpreted as “tokenism”.

(For pastors and boards who already have more than one congregation meeting in a shared space facility).

DO make it a priority to eliminate a landlord-tenant arrangement.

DON'T maintain or try to establish an “authority” congregation.

DO meet with *all* pastors regularly.

DON'T assume that all is well simply because you haven't heard otherwise. You can only be in tune with what is happening if you are in regular consultation with your “peers”.

DO create an atmosphere of equality, not only among the congregations but also among the pastors.

DON'T abuse the privilege of your position as a catalyst.

DO establish a contractual, working agreement.

DON'T assume that everyone involved will simply understand the system.

DO meet and pray with the entire pastoral/leadership team on a regular basis.

DON'T allow issues to go unresolved.²⁵

Addendum A



LEADERSHIP AND THE URBAN CHURCH

Much has been written about church leadership in general, but very little about context-appropriate training for urban ministry. The danger we face is that we assume that, since scriptural principles are universal, they fit anywhere without the need for contextualization. Most evangelical denominations have their congregational epicenter in the non-urban areas and are not really prepared for leadership in urban areas. We need a redirection.

Conn and Ortiz distinguish three kinds of leaders: relocated leaders, indigenous leaders and multiethnic leaders. *Relocated leaders* are selected from outside the community, usually from a rural or suburban setting. These individuals are from a totally different homogeneous environment, respond to a call from the Lord, and are aware of urgently spiritual needs within the community. Because it represents a different socio-economic culture, they often view the urban mix as awkward and oppressive. *Indigenous leaders* have grown up in the city and belong to a particular culture, so they are the greatest asset to any denomination. They are the contextualizers in the community and are filled with the Spirit of

God. There are reasons why indigenous leaders are a natural fit for starting urban churches.

- They see the city as their home.
- Their commitment to the city is long-term.
- They embody an urban lifestyle and know the boundaries for survival.
- They know the hardships of the city and have learned to live with them.
- They understand the temporality of property and possessions.
- They find high density or living in close proximity comfortable.²⁶

Multiethnic leaders are often found among congregations with a multicultural mix and in areas close to the center of our cities. We are witnessing an increasing number of individuals who want to plant a church among diverse groups in the community and embrace the racial struggle that this kind of pluralism presents in the city. These leaders are interested in showing that God is interested in reconciliation and harmony among God's people.²⁷

If we can harness the energies of these three groups, the difference could be a harvest of souls through a variety of loving approaches to the city.

Addendum B



Focus Areas, Goals, and Objectives for Transition to a Multicultural Church

Accountability and Responsibility

Goal 1: Pastors and staff will be held accountable for creating an environment that fosters diversity and the acceptance of all cultural, racial, and ethnic groups.

Goal 2: All members will be responsible for understanding and promoting diversity.

Education and Training

Goal 3: Everyone in the church will be provided appropriate training in diversity.

Goal 4: Church members will participate in community outreach programs to reach and prepare the culturally diverse for church membership.

Path of Christian Ministry

Goal 5: The pastor will ensure that every church member, regardless of ethnicity, has access to training and mentoring for Christian ministry in a multicultural environment.

Leadership Policy

Goal 6: The church will review and update church policies to ensure that a culture of diversity is practiced in every aspect of church life.

Goal 7: The issues of diversity will be reviewed

when planning and conducting conferences and other special meetings within the church.

Community

Goal 8: Enhanced community relations and media advertising will be used to increase positive perception of the church's commitment to diversity.

Goal 9: Church members will actively participate in local events, youth activities, youth mentoring, and other outreach programs among all ethnic groups in the community to establish and enhance community relationships and partnerships.

Outreach and Discipleship

Goal 10: The church will establish a five-year marketing and communication plan that addresses the church's openness to racially, culturally, and ethnically diverse people.

Goal 11: The church members involved in outreach and discipleship programs will reflect the diversity of the minority and ethnic groups in the community.

Goal 12: The church will establish a highly visible outreach and service presence in minority and ethnic communities.

Measurement

Goal 13: The church will develop, deploy, and periodically review an effective system to measure and communicate progress on the goals of diversity.

Funding

Goal 14: The church will provide funding in support of the programs and efforts of diversity throughout the church.²⁸

Epilogue



This booklet encourages two efforts at the same time. On the one hand, it embraces the initiatives to start change curves that cater to the cultural needs of a particular people. On the other hand, there is the encouragement to start multicultural change curves. These are not antithetical promotions, but are meant to complement each other. The choice should never be either/or, but both/and.

The apostle Paul, when faced with similar challenges, never promoted a theology of oneness that encouraged the loss of one's own culture of origin or the assimilation into another group's culture. Jewish Christians were not asked to become Gentiles, nor were Gentile Christians asked to become Jews. The theologian William Campbell writes that Paul did not "discourage Jewish Christians from following a Jewish lifestyle after they had become Christians. . . . The two positions, i.e., Jewish Christians continuing to follow a Jewish pattern of life, and Gentile Christians continuing to follow a Gentile pattern of life, are not mutually exclusive."²⁹

The Church has moved, and what is unimportant is who is responsible for moving it and how it can maintain a status quo. What is important is the active and positive to change in order to move from peak to peak in successive curves of improvement. This booklet is intended to address some options for renewing our commitment to be a Kingdom-builder for God.

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