

GUIDE

Building a Multi-Ethnic Church Guide

A practical guide for predominantly white or monoethnic churches pursuing genuine racial diversity -- theological foundations, honest assessment, practical steps, and the hard long-term work

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Equipping pastors and leaders to serve with excellence, integrity, and lasting Kingdom impact.

Why This Is Theologically Necessary

The New Testament vision of the church -- "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne" (Revelation 7:9) -- is not merely an eschatological promise. It is a present calling. The congregation that intentionally pursues racial and cultural diversity is not accommodating a social trend; it is bearing witness to the Kingdom of God in one of the most compelling ways available to the contemporary church. This guide provides the theological foundation, honest assessment framework, and practical pathway for the hard, slow, beautiful work of building a genuinely multi-ethnic congregation.

Why This Is Theologically Necessary

The argument for multi-ethnic church is not primarily sociological or even missiological -- though it has implications for both. It is theological. The church is the body of Christ, and Christ has torn down "the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14) between Jew and Gentile, creating "one new humanity" (Ephesians 2:15). This new humanity, which spans every ethnic and cultural boundary, is the primary evidence offered in Ephesians for the "manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10). When the church reflects only one culture, one ethnicity, one economic stratum, it is not merely failing to be diverse -- it is failing to display the wisdom of God in the specific way that the church uniquely can. The multi-ethnic congregation is not a specialty congregation for people who value diversity. It is the normative shape of the church, and the monoethnic congregation is the deviation.

Honest Assessment: Where Are You Starting From?

The work of multi-ethnic church development begins with honest assessment of the current congregation's actual composition and culture. Not aspiration -- actual reality. What is the current racial composition of the congregation? Of the leadership? Of the staff? Of the platform? What percentage of the congregation's giving comes from members of minority racial groups? What is the current preaching content's engagement with the experiences and perspectives of people of color? What do Black, Asian, Latino, and Indigenous members of your congregation say about their actual experience of belonging in the community? Are they genuinely integrated into leadership, or are they present but marginalized? This assessment will produce discomfort. That is not a sign that the process is going wrong. It is a sign that it has begun.

The practical pathway to multi-ethnic congregation involves both cultural and structural changes. Cultural changes: leadership that reflects the diversity being pursued; music and liturgy that draws from multiple cultural traditions; preaching that regularly engages the biblical texts from diverse interpretive perspectives; explicit acknowledgment of racial history and its ongoing impact. Structural changes: intentional recruitment of staff and lay leaders from underrepresented groups; specific outreach into ethnic communities in the congregation's geography; financial investment in the neighborhoods and organizations that serve people of color. This work is not a program -- it is a generational commitment.

Reflection and Discussion Questions

1. What is the most personally significant insight from this resource for your specific ministry context right now?
2. Where is the greatest gap between the principles here and your current practice? What is one specific step to begin closing that gap?

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3. Who in your leadership community needs to engage with this material? How will you bring them into the conversation?
4. What accountability structure will you put in place to ensure the commitments you are making here are actually kept?

The work described in this resource is not the extraordinary work of exceptionally gifted ministers. It is the ordinary, daily, faithful work of people who have decided to take their calling seriously -- to prepare, to pray, to show up, and to trust God with what only he can do. Do the ordinary things with extraordinary faithfulness. That is the whole of it.

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