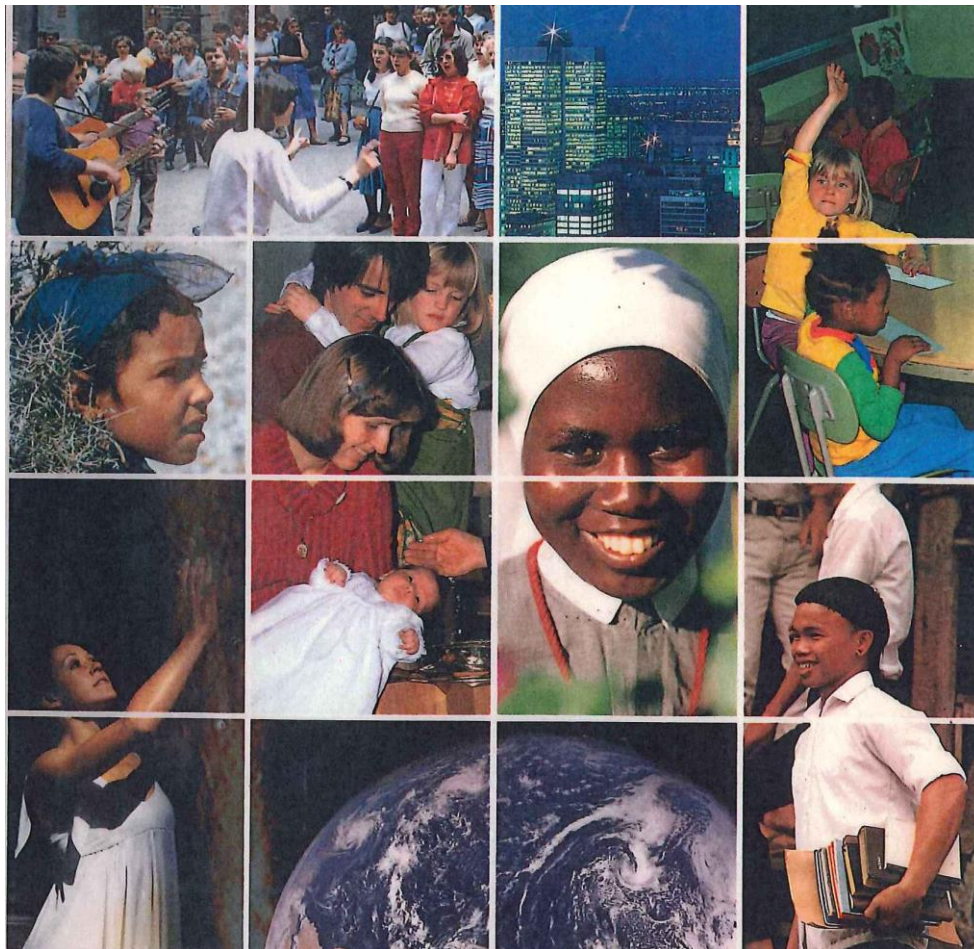


Cultural diversity and unity in Christ: the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand in a land of many cultures



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A nation of immigrants

Human habitation of New Zealand has always been by migrants who for a variety of reasons have made the decision to travel significant distances across oceans to settle here, until recently in quite hazardous conditions. The first to arrive were people from Pacific Islands to the north in the 14th century, who became the indigenous Maori population of the country. Europeans discovered the islands in the mid 17th century. In the later 18th century the great English explorer James Cook visited three times and mapped the coast lines of the islands with remarkable accuracy. A few settlers from Europe began to arrive later that century, but increasing numbers from the early 19th century on, particularly with planned settlement after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi between the British Crown and Maori chiefs in 1840.

For the following 130 years the vast majority of settlers were European, indeed more precisely than that from Britain. There were a few Chinese settlers from the 19th century, who came for the gold rush and chose to remain, and some from Pacific Island countries after World War II, allowed in because of New Zealand's relationship with some of those countries following World War I. Samoa has just last year celebrated 50 years since being granted Independence from New Zealand. Although there was no official 'white' immigration policy, as in Australia, the policy made it difficult for non Europeans to gain entry, and particularly favoured those from Britain. In the later 1960s and 1970s significant numbers began immigrating from the Pacific Islands, welcomed because they were willing to do the manual jobs kiwis did not want, but not wanted and sometimes sent home when unemployment levels began to increase. This was part of a pattern of migration that began all around the globe in the 1960s, sometimes facilitated by changes in immigration laws, that has seen these people being called "the new immigrants".

The changing face of New Zealand demographics

In 1987 a major change in immigration policy was made and New Zealand began to diversify its source of countries and an increasing number of migrants came to New Zealand from Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, India and later the People's Republic of China, as well as continuing numbers from Pacific countries. There were also significant numbers of white immigrants from South Africa and Zimbabwe with the changing political situation there. In looking at these trends it is important to remember that the highest number of immigrants continues to come from the United Kingdom, and many also immigrate from our closest neighbour Australia, but nevertheless these changes have led to significant changes in the ethnic makeup of New Zealand's population, and will lead to even bigger changes in the future. Figures from the United Nations show that currently NZ has the highest percentage of its population made up of people who are immigrants of any country in the world, with 24% (Australian 23% and Canada 22% follow closely)¹.

New Zealand is no longer a country mainly populated by European New Zealanders (or 'pakeha' the Maori term) with a significant percentage of Maori, and one or two pockets of other ethnicities.

- In 1961 NZ was 92% European and 7% Maori with Asia and Pacifica minorities sharing the remaining 1%.
- In the 2006 census² those who identified as European made up 68%. By 2026 it is estimated they will be 62% and in all probability below 50% by 2050.
- Maori were the next largest group, 14%. By 2026 they will be 15%
- Asians grew the fastest between 2001 and 2006, making up 9%. By 2026 they will be 15%.

¹ <http://esa.un.org/MigFlows/MigrationFlows.aspx>

² There is a New Zealand census every 5 years. However because it is operated out of Christchurch the impact of the February 2011 earthquake meant it was postponed, and has not yet been done.

- Pacifica people made up 7% of the population. By 2026 they will be 9%.
 - In addition there were small numbers of Middle Eastern, Latin American and African peoples.
- As well as immigration another significant factor fuelling the changes is the aging profile of the European population and the much younger age profile and higher birth rates of other ethnicities. In 2006 92% of the population over 65 were European while 55% of babies born were of Maori, Pacifica or Asian descent.

In Auckland, by far NZ's largest city, 40% of inhabitants were born overseas, only 56% of the population is European (likely to be down to 50% by 2016) and over half of children enrolled in primary schools are non European. Similar patterns of demographic change are found in all western societies, which were previously dominated by those of European descent. Writing about the situation in the US Charles van Engen writes.

We are all being radically impacted by the largest redistribution of people the globe has ever seen. And the multiculturalness of our new reality is so staggering that we are reeling between rising new protectionist racism, rampant individualization and balkanization, and a radical postmodern embrace of cultural relativism that calls into question many of our most cherished values. In this new reality, all of us are being called on to find ways to affirm cultural relativity: tolerance, understanding, justice, equality, and coexistence within the new multiculturalism. The cities of our world are being especially impacted, and the church in the city knows very little, and seems to care even less, about how to present the gospel in this new reality.³

Commenting on this increasing ethnic diversity in NZ and the failure of some established churches to connect in areas with a high concentration of ethnic minorities, Peter Lineham claims that "any religion that did not engage wider than the rich white middle-class will certainly not be growing in a city with Auckland's demographics today".⁴

For reflection/discussion

(1) *How has the ethnic makeup of your community changed?*

(2) *The NZ Herald in 2012 ran a series on the growing ethnic diversity of Auckland and noted that 70% of people indicated they comfortable with this new ethnic diversity. Is that the way you feel?*

Immigrant churches

The first significant arrival of Christianity in NZ was missionary, with Samuel Marsden beginning mission activity in 1814 under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society. Wesleyan and Roman Catholic mission shortly followed. After a very slow beginning there was a significant embracing of Christianity, at least in some way or other, by Maori people and estimates are that by the mid 1840s perhaps 70% had done so.

From the beginning of formal settlement following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi granting sovereignty to the British Crown by the chiefs (greatly abetted by the missionaries who had high standing among a number of them), immigrants arrived in significant numbers bringing their churches with them. So New Zealand had English Anglicans and Methodists, Scottish Presbyterians and Irish Catholics. For the first 100 years of its 'European' history these four dominated the ecclesial landscape with about 90% of the population identifying with one of them, even if only about 25% turned up at church on any given Sunday. This pattern of Christianity among NZs European immigrant settlers continued with only minor variations through until the mid 1960s. Other expressions of church life (sects as they were commonly known) were very minor players.

The other significant event to occur in these early years was the sudden collapse of Maori Christianity as a consequence of the land wars in the 1850s and 60s. When the Maori saw the church siding with

³ Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996) 179.

⁴ "Christian faith losing out to other religions", *The New Zealand Herald*, October 2, 2012.

the British forces who were seizing their lands, and many of the ministers and missionaries acting as chaplains, they deserted the faith in droves (“You taught us to turn our eyes to heaven to pray and while we looking up you took the land from under our feet”). A religious consequence was the springing up of many new forms of faith, what would now be called New Religious Movements, combining Christian, or more especially Old Testament, beliefs with traditional Maori beliefs and culture. The most significant of these in the 19th century was Ringatu, founded by the charismatic warrior chief Te Kooti, while in the 20th century a very significant movement was the Ratana Church, founded by the Maori prophet and faith healer Ratana, the ‘mangai’ or mouthpiece of God. Unfortunately, like all the earlier expressions, this was regarded by the European churches as being outside the fold of true Christianity instead of embraced as a local contextual adaptation.

The church landscape began to change significantly from the late 1960s, firstly with the decline of the mainline churches and growth of more independent evangelical, charismatic and Pentecostal churches, particularly the latter. The second major factor bringing about change was the arrival of considerable numbers of Christians from non European countries, who also brought with them their own versions of church from their homelands.

The first wave of these, as indicated above, came from the Pacific Islands and, with their churches having been established by Anglican, Presbyterian, Congregational, Methodist and Roman Catholic Churches, in one sense, they brought churches that already existed. However the culture, beliefs and practices, as well as the language, they brought was significantly different. The role that religion and religious communities play in the settlement experience of migrants is well covered in the literature. Helen Ebaugh comparing early patterns of immigrant religion with that of the ‘new immigrants’ found: “Then as now, ethnic places of worship served the dual purpose of reproducing the groups cultural and religious heritage while assisting immigrants in the process of adapting to the new society... Religion appears to be persistent in its centrality in the lives of immigrants, as a means to cope with the challenges of relocation, a way to reproduce and pass on culture, a focus for ethnic community and a way to provide formal and, especially, informal assistance in the settlement process.”⁵

- Religious institutions provide social and physical space and social networks that help the immigrants reproduce and maintain their values, traditions, and customs in the midst of an often alienating and strange society. Religion is inextricably interwoven with cultural values and practices so that it becomes a way of reproducing many aspects of immigrants’ native cultures for themselves and their children. Collective memory, symbolic rituals and native language are major strategies for maintaining and passing on cultural values, norms and practices and it is within ethnic congregations that symbolic representations are often most evident. Often immigrants find they have a lower social status than they had in their homeland and so religious institutions are a place where they are able to retain their status. Reflecting on immigrants who came to the US in earlier waves William Herberg argues that immigrants were expected to give up virtually everything they brought with them except their religion. In fact religious identity often replaced ethnic identity and became more important to them in their new country than in the homeland. The church becomes “a place to feel at home” as the title of one book on African immigrant churches puts it⁶.
- Immigrant congregations also help their adaptation to NZ society by providing much of the information and services required in the course of settlement in a new country. While an array of formal social services is provided the use of informal networks among congregational members is far more common. Religious institutions provide places where immigrants can meet one another, discuss their needs, and share information about resources that are available in the community.

So these new immigrants formed their own ethnic specific churches in the new country, keeping the practices and language of their homeland, rather than becoming members of existing churches of the

⁵ Helen Ebaugh “Religion and the New Immigrants,” in M. Dillon ed. *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2003) 228.

⁶ F. B. Welbourn and B. A. Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966)

same denomination. Over time they did become part of the national bodies of those denominations but the local churches remained distinct. One shift in this identity to note is that many Pacific Islanders were in the Congregational Church, a result of London Missionary Society activity. The Congregational Church was always very small in NZ, and even weaker after the post 1960s decline, and in 1969 most of their churches joined the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, bringing many Pacific Island churches into the denomination. This historical factor helped contribute to some of the issues that have emerged over the ensuing years. The next significant wave came from Asian countries, and in church terms particularly strongly represented among these were Filipino Catholics and Korean Presbyterians. Other more recent immigrants from Africa, Latin American, Eastern Europe and the Middle East have brought an increasingly wide array of expressions of church life.

In NZ weekly church attendance has halved over the past 50 years, from about 20% in 1960 to about 10% currently, with the most rapid decline in the 1970s and 1980s, and tending to plateau in the last decade.⁷ Most of this decline has been in the mainline denominations previously identified, while evangelical, charismatic and, especially, Pentecostal churches have seen considerable growth. Again, while research data is hard to find, partly because ethnic churches or ethnic members of mixed churches rarely fill in survey forms, it is very clear that much of the recent growth of these growing churches has come from immigrants and if we took immigrant/ethnic figures out of mainline data the decline would be even more catastrophic. Certainly a considerably higher proportion of Pacifica, Koreans, Filipinos and South Africans go to church than do European NZers. Particular churches have benefitted from different ethnic immigrants: Roman Catholics from Filipinos and Koreans; Presbyterians from Pacifica and Koreans; Baptists from Chinese and South Africans; Pentecostals from Pacifica especially, but also Asians; Methodists from Pacifica. With immigration from Asia and the Middle East there has also been a very rapid increase in those who identify as Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim, although the actual numbers are still very small: only 4% in the latest census, compared with 54% Christian (the other largest group by far is no religion 32%). UN figures show that 49% of immigrants globally identified themselves as Christians. The impact of this immigration into NZ from what might be regarded as at least part of the “new Christian heartlands” are similar to those identified by Jehu Hanciles for the US. They are changing the face of NZ Christianity by de-Europeanising it. Immigrant congregations are the fastest growing segment across all traditions and represent forms and expressions of faith that may seem as foreign to ‘pakeha/palagi’ Christians as other religions and this immigration of non-Western Christians represents a new missionary encounter with NZ society.⁸

While South Africans have blended fairly easily into European congregations, most of the other groups have preferred their own congregations, and significant numbers of churches have targeted specific new congregations for them. It is estimated that 45% of the 1100 churches in Auckland may be ethnic communities.

For reflection/discussion

(1) What ethnic specific churches or congregations are you aware of in your community? How do you feel about having them there? Do you have any relationship with them?

(2) What ethnic minority groups are represented in your church?

Ethnicity and multiculturalism

At this point it is necessary to clarify some terms, in particular those around ethnicity and multiculturalism. Recent social science scholarship has stressed the ways in which ethnicity, and other concepts such as race and nation, are essentially “social constructions, the product of specific historical and geographic forces, rather than biologically given ideas whose meaning is dictated by

⁷ Church attendance figures are notoriously difficult to attain in NZ with no regular consistent polling done and difficulty in accessing denominational figures, if in fact they are kept.

⁸ Jehu Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008) 379.

nature”.⁹ Most see the whole concept of race as a recent modern assumption, based on a debatable concept of ‘biological essentialism’, often developed in order to exert social controls over certain groups, and therefore better to be discarded. However most feel it is better to continue to use the language while recognising that it refers to one facet of identity that is constructed rather than given. It is certainly not a static category which predetermines how people assigned or taking that identity will think and act. Rather it is a fluid and dynamic concept and individuals negotiate racial and ethnic attributions amidst a variety of social constraints. As people of a particular ethnic group move from one place to another, obviously they face a new set of social constraints, and negotiate over time how that identity is lived out for them in their new context. It is “self perceived and people can belong to more than one ethnic group”¹⁰, as the NZ Census now allows.

Modern definitions of an ethnic group include the following elements:¹¹

1. A common *proper name*, to identify and express the ‘essence’ of the community.
2. A myth of *common ancestry*, which includes the idea of a common origin in time and place.
3. Shared *historical memories*, including heroes and events.
4. One of more *elements of a common culture*, which normally include language, religion and customs.
5. A *link with a homeland* to which there is a symbolic attachment.
6. A *sense of solidarity* on the part of the population.

For reflection/discussion

How do you respond to the definitions put forward here? To what extent do you think ethnicity is a given and to what extent socially developed?

This definition raises the question of the relationship between ethnicity and culture. Having a common culture is part of what forms an ethnic group, and so within a single race of people there may be several ethnic groups. This can be seen today in many of the major racial groups, Asian, African and European beings examples. For much of recent history most countries have been populated predominantly by people of the same ethnicity. However the recent global migration has meant that for many countries, as we have seen with the NZ figures, the population has become increasingly made up of several different ethnicities. Because of the strong relationship between ethnicity and culture these societies have come to be termed multicultural (rather than multiethnic) and in countries such as Australia and Canada this is an official policy. In NZ the situation is a bit more complex because we are officially a bicultural country, with Maori as the Tangata Whenua, but are having to come to terms with the fact that we are also multicultural, and in particular Asian-Pacific. Just how those two concepts sit together is in a situation of at times uneasy flux.

For reflection/discussion

Is there a conflict between biculturalism and multiculturalism? How do you imagine them fitting together in NZ?

For most of NZs post-European history the pattern of relationship between different ethnic groups, as in all countries where European settlers become the dominant population, assumed assimilation of other groups to European culture, including Maori. At times punitive measures were enacted to bring this about, such as prohibiting the speaking of Maori language in schools. In the 1960s and, particularly, the 1970s that pattern began to be challenged and most countries embraced some kind of model of cultural pluralism, or multiculturalism as it came to be called. This assumed that each group maintains many of its distinctives while still identifying with a common society and accepting some common norms. It is important to distinguish between the term multicultural and multiculturalism. To

⁹ John Stone, *Race and Ethnicity: Comparative and Theoretical Approaches* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) 33.

¹⁰ Edwin Pio, *Longing & Belonging: Asians, Middle Eastern, Latin American and African Peoples in New Zealand* (Wellington: Dunmore, 2010) 49.

¹¹ David G. Horrell, “Race, Nation, People: Ethnic Identity-Construction in 1 Peter 2.9”, *New Test. Stud.* 58, 2011, 123-143.

describe a country as multicultural is simply a term to define a reality that we now live in community that is made up of a multiplicity of cultural or ethnic groups. Multiculturalism on the other hand is a value or a policy which regards all cultures as being of equal value and that no one cultural group should be seen as being normative. A number of people are now critical of that policy, and some regard it having failed, the increasing tension and conflict between different ethnic groups in many countries being given as evidence.

It could be argued that part of the reason for this conflict is that in general the different ethnic groups have tended to live as separate communities, much like the ethnic churches we identified earlier. Even when forced to inhabit the same space, such as in education and work, they tend to mix and form subgroups with their own kind. Some call this existing in 'polite silos'. Of course this means that groups never come to understand each other, which happens by spending time with each other and learning from and about each other, which leads to misunderstanding which at times spills over into conflict. As a consequence some would argue we need to be working for intercultural or cross cultural communities, where there is genuine interaction and learning from each other. The fundamental argument I want to make in this study is that this is the kind of communities our churches should be endeavouring to become, and in so doing provide leadership for the wider society. I want to argue strongly this is not just a good idea, but is in fact a gospel imperative. Using either the term cross cultural or intercultural, rather than multicultural, may help to reinforce this

Ethnicity and the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand

The PCANZ was for most its early history made up of people who were European, and its culture predominantly Scots. This helped shaped much of its own particular culture, which was somewhat different from that of the other major churches, Anglicans and Methodists who were English, and Roman Catholics who were Irish. It was well into the 20th century before Maori in any significant way became a part of the church, significantly through the work of John Laughton in coming to an agreement with the Prophet Rua Kenana of the Tuhoe tribe, who took up the mantle of Te Kooti and the Ringatu movement. Eventually a separate Maori Synod was formed in 1954 recognising this bicultural dimension, Te Aka Puaho. By and large though it could be said that the two groups have inhabited largely separate worlds and there has not been a significant amount of shared involvement. In other words it is questionable to what extent we have become a bicultural church, beyond the changing of our name to the Presbyterian Church of *Aotearoa* New Zealand.

The other major groups that have become part of our world are the Pacifica and Asian communities, as indicated. Pacifica people have the highest rates of Christian identity in NZ at 76%¹², compared with 54% for the population overall and 28% for Asians. Of these the largest group belong to the Presbyterian Church and there are also significant numbers of Methodists and Roman Catholics, as well as a growing number of Pentecostals among the younger generations raised in NZ. As noted above it is understandable that new immigrants form and are attracted to churches of their own kind. It provides a world of the familiar in a strange land, a "cultural island and sociological haven"¹³ in a precarious new world. It is important to note that the islands from which these immigrants come had generally been completely christianized in the 19th century and had in effect become little expressions of Christendom. The church was very much at the centre of village life. In leaving their islands in many ways the church operated as the village community for so much of life and culture for these immigrants in a strange new land, providing much more than just religious services. This has been recognised by government and social agencies in NZ. Structurally within the PCANZ when the Congregational Church joined a Pacific Island Council was set up to work with their particular concerns within the church as a whole, eventually becoming a Synod though with more limited powers than Te Aka Puaho. Tensions developed over time, within both the local congregations and the Synod itself, between the older immigrant leaders and younger 1.5 and now second generation. The latter have wanted to retain the forms, practices and languages they brought with them, while the

¹² Figures are taken from Census NZ, which has always asked religion questions.

¹³ Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009) 178.

former have increasingly wanted to adjust to wider NZ cultural ways of doing things, but also become increasingly involved in multicultural or multiethnic settings. In light of this it is interesting to note that Leuatea Sio, a significant leader in the Pacific Island churches, stated that “God had brought Pacific Island members to the Presbyterian family in order for us to learn new ways of being a church in our new home”, a laudable vision that has at times been difficult for some to flesh out.

At a national level some of the more established leaders, dissatisfied with what they see as a lack of recognition of Pacific Island cultural concerns and practices by the wider church, and seeing increasing integration as being simply assimilation into a ‘palagi’ (the Samoan word for Europeans) church in which they have little power and fear losing their identity, all concerns which have considerable validity, have at times wanted to set a separate Pacific Island structure. In 1992 there was a move to restructure the church into three equal partnerships, Maori, Pakeha and Pacific (with the possibility of a fourth being added, Asian). This was modelled on the structure which the Anglican Church in NZ with a Tikanga Pakeha, Tikanga Maori and Tikanga Pasefika, each having the power of veto making cooperation and unity very difficult¹⁴. Observing from outside of that church, and with the benefit of hindsight, it seems providential that this step was not followed. For the PCANZ this issue has also been fuelled by historic roots of the Pacific Churches in the Congregational rather than Presbyterian Church, with its somewhat more diffuse polity as well some sense of still being newcomers rather than part of the establishment.¹⁵ In 1997 a Pacific Island Synod was set up, but with limited powers.

It is necessary to add at this point that this concern for retaining a distinct ethno/cultural identity by separate groups is not just a Pacific Island distinct from European issue, although it is that. It is also an issue of Samoan distinct from Niuean from Tongan from Cook Island from Tokelauan. Many of the Pacific Island churches are for a single island group and some current doctoral research being done on this issue within the PCANZ indicates that 83% of churches are ethnically homogenous, defining ethnicity in the Pacific context as being a separate ethnicity for each group. Other Pacific churches have several distinct worshipping congregations for each group. Endeavours to merge these have often met resistance, and at the heart of this has been the language issue.

Asians have the lowest rate of Christian identity of any of the major groups in NZ, at 28%. Significant numbers identify with one of the other three major world religions, Hindu, Buddhism or Islam. Within this broad group in 2006 73% of Koreans identified as Christian, a considerably higher rate than in Korea. Of these 30% are Presbyterian and 22% Catholic. The other group with a high level of Christian identity are Filipinos, with 93%, and of these 74% are Catholic. Of Chinese 28% identified as Christian with the highest number being in Pentecostal, charismatic or Baptist churches. Estimates are that about 80% of these Asians attend an ethnic church, and again as with Pacific peoples most of these are of the same ethnicity rather than being ‘pan-Asian’¹⁶. Within the PCANZ the significantly largest group are Korean, but there are also Taiwanese, Cantonese-Chinese, Mandarin-Chinese, Indonesian, Filipino and Indian congregations. Asians have been in NZ for less time than Pacific people, but already they are finding difficulty holding the 1.5 generation, a trend that has been well identified in the US where they have been present for a longer time.¹⁷ However it is to be noted that the Asian leadership is showing a greater degree of awareness of the challenge this generational change provides, and a greater willingness to adapt seek to integrate.

¹⁴ ‘Tikanga’ is a Maori word that translates as “correct procedure, custom, habit”. The Anglican Theological Institution at St John’s in Auckland has separate Colleges, one for each Tikanga, and has been rent by painful divisions since the model was adopted. The new Dean of the Tikanga Pakeha College, coming from overseas, notes that what she sees is noticeably absent is ‘any language of the body of Christ’.

¹⁵ Over the last decade or so there have also been ‘new’ Congregational Churches established, still run from Samoa or the Cook Islands, complicating the relationship further.

¹⁶ Pan Asian is a term which is used to cover all the various people groups of Asia together, emphasising that despite the tendency of westerners to describe people as Asian there is in fact no ‘Asian’ ethnic group.

¹⁷ See eg. Ho-Young Kwon, Kuang Chung Kim, R. Stephen Warner, *Korean Americans and Their Religions* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

There has also been some degree of tension and dissatisfaction with how the Asian churches fit into the wider denominational structure of the church. The Asian congregations have had an Asian Council, and as with the Pacific Islanders feel that they have little power and their concerns and particular issues do not get adequate attention. Occasionally some have likewise made noises about withdrawing and forming their own denomination, particularly from some of the Korean churches. The welcome of nine churches from the Presbyterian Church of Korea into the PCANZ, along with recognition of their ministers, has helped to further the process in a positive direction, but quite how they fit as a group of churches and also find a place to stand is still an ongoing journey. A reality to take note of at this stage also is that the three largest churches in the PCANZ are all Korean churches. From the other side it needs also to be acknowledged that some European church members and leaders are rather uneasy about the numbers of Korean churches and ministers coming in with what is perceived as a conservative theological stance and views on some social issues such as women in leadership. However a significant part of being intercultural is about journeying with each other, learning from each other and both being open to being changed rather than expecting one group to change to meet the others framework before coming together.

For reflection/discussion

How do you think we as the PCANZ have fared so far in working with the different ethnic groups that are not part of us?

Homogenous churches and mission

In the wider church scene many churches, particularly in the evangelical-charismatic-Pentecostal sector with their concern for growth, have identified a market in this and have begun planting ethnic specific churches, and so the much discredited “homogenous unit principle” articulated by Donald McGavran has re-emerged. McGavran stated that “people like to become Christian without crossing racial/linguistic/class/cultural barriers. In other words they prefer to remain who they are culturally while changing to become Christian. Culturally they remain the same and tend to gather with others from the same culture who share their faith.”¹⁸ Theologically it could be argued that he was simply articulating in principle the practice of the apostle Paul articulated in 1 Corinthians 9 of becoming “all things to all people... that I might by any means save some”. This led Peter Wagner to declare that “He was the first century champion of the homogenous unit principle”.¹⁹ The idea was widely criticised, and tended to disappear from discourse, although in practice nothing much changed. As well as being in effect accepted in this rush to plant new ethnic churches it also is found uncritically embraced in some of the fresh expressions and emerging church forms and rhetoric as well, and I have written elsewhere critiquing this²⁰. As an example of this recently the Filipino group in a Presbyterian Church in Auckland which had become highly multiethnic decided they wanted to leave and begin their own worship service so they could attract more Filipinos.

Of course missiologically McGavran was right. Certainly almost every missionary knows this, and often a church never begins to really develop until mission is taken on by members of the local community. An example of this would be the rapid growth of Christianity among Maori in NZ in the early European settlement period, where most of the far reaching mission was carried out by Maori ‘evangelists’, and often the European missionaries reached new tribes to discover the gospel already present. This is also another illustration of the fact Hanciles reminds us of that “the spread of Christianity in the non-Western world has largely been the work of non-Western agency”, with the work of the missionary being “more catalytic than comprehensive”.²¹ Another example in NZ, long before McGavran was even born, can be found in the work of the pioneer Presbyterian missionary to Chinese gold miners in central Otago, Alexander Don. He wrote in 1884, “Surely it is not expected that the Chinese shall be evangelised by Europeans... [as] one of themselves has put it, ‘If China is to

¹⁸ Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) 198.

¹⁹ Peter Wagner, *Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979) 136.

²⁰ Kevin Ward. “It might be emerging but is it church?” *Stimulus*, Vol 17, No 4, Nov 2009, pp. 2-13.

²¹ Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 2008, 368-9.

be Christianised it must be by the Chinese’.”²² McGavran developed this insight on the mission field in India, but it was picked up by the church growth movement in the US and applied to church life there. Church growth theory was based on the social reality that people find it easier to go to church with people just like themselves and this became built into all the church marketing ideas. So most “successful” churches became based on some version of the homogeneity principle. The pragmatism of our culture then assumed that if it works in bringing people into church it must be good. Questions were not often asked as to whether it was consistent with the gospel or not, a question we will soon pick up.

However even pragmatically in the kind of increasingly multicultural or multiethnic societies we live in it becomes questionable whether it holds perhaps the same valency, particularly once an immigrant group moves beyond the first generation. When I was visiting the UK in 2000 Peter Brierley, who heads up Christian Research there, told me in an interview with him that he could describe where the church was growing in one word; “black”. He said as you traced changes in the level of church attendance in those counties where it increased it was where the percentage of inhabitants came increasingly from black immigrant communities. However whereas in the 1970s and 80s it was with those from the Carribean, in the 1990s and into the 21st century, as those communities moved into the second generation, it was with the new immigrants from Africa. Now over 50% of church attenders in London are of either Carribean or African ethnicity. The point he was making, though, is that well identified in sociological studies that as the community moves through the generations in the new land so people become more like the host community, especially the young people, and in the UK, as in NZ, regular church involvement is not one of their characteristics. This shows up in statistics on church involvement among young Pacifica people raised in NZ (the 1.5 generation) and increasingly those born in NZ. This was discovered in a study of these among Pacific Islanders by Jemaima Tiatia²³ and a further study of Cook Island churches²⁴ found a significant proportion had left those churches for similar reasons as were identified in research of European church leavers’ in NZ by Alan Jamieson²⁵. Cluny MacPherson in studying Samoan adolescents and young adults found they became increasingly impatient with “the adherence to traditional forms and styles of worship and a gerontocratic principle of leadership that denied them a voice in the church’s decision making process.”²⁶ This ties in with Ebaugh’s findings of the major problems second generation members confront in the their parent’s churches in the US:

- (a) many feel estranged by the ethnic ambience of the immigrant congregation, including heavy use of old-country language
- (b) often the young adopt [western]ised attire and demeanour that the older generation defines as improper and often comment on negatively
- (c) sometimes religious services are defined by youth as too rigid and old fashioned
- (d) in some religious institutions adult second generation members are denied meaningful participation in congregational affairs and access to authority roles to which they feel entitled.²⁷

As well as those who left church altogether, what is also evident is that many others who have left the Pacific Island ethnic churches have moved to multiethnic churches, particularly Pentecostal and charismatic churches. Yannick Fer, a French sociologist, has carried out considerable research on religious change among young Pacifica people, and found that in NZ many had moved to Pentecostal churches which provided a way for them to remain within their traditional faith (Christianity) and yet

²² Alexander Don, “Our Chinese Mission,” *The NZ Presbyterian*, October 1, 1884, 64.

²³ Jemaima Tiatia, *Caught Between Cultures: A New Zealand Born Pacific Islands Perspective* (Auckland: Christian Research Association, 1998).

²⁴ Tokerau Joseph, *Cracked Coconuts: An exploration of why young Cook Islanders are leaving Cook Island congregations of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand*, MTh thesis, University of Otago, 2005.

²⁵ Alan Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith* (Wellington: Philip Garside Publishing, 2000).

²⁶ Cluny Macpherson and La’avasa Macpherson, “Evangelical Religion Among Pacific Island Migrants: New Faiths or Brief Diversions”, *Journal of Ritual Studies* 15 (2), 2001, 31.

²⁷ Ebaugh, “Religion and New Immigrants”, 235.

express that in cultural forms appropriate to their belonging within a contemporary western society.²⁸ MacPherson identifies also that the disenchantment of Samoan youth was particularly prevalent among those who came into contact with non-Samoan youth who belonged to Pentecostal and evangelical churches.

With the Asian community in NZ we are only just beginning to enter this phase now, however the experience of these communities in the US would indicate similar experiences. Stephen Warner writes that “Korean American youth seemed to be positive about God, religion and their ethnic heritage, but negative about the church. My conjecture is that behind this pattern is the cultural strangeness to acculturated youth of the institutional church, and alienation indexed by the language problem but not confined to it”.²⁹ In light of this it is interesting to find that Soong Chan Rah notes that among Asian Americans “in recent years there has been an increase in the number of multiethnic churches planted by second generation immigrants.”³⁰

For reflection/discussion

Can you think of stories of people who are part of either the 1.5 or second generation in immigrant communities for whom these factors seem to have been true?

So it remains then a dubious question as to whether pursuing ethnic specific churches long term is the most effective missional strategy for the church, once immigrant communities move beyond the first generation, while acknowledging that they play a critical role in the adjustment to a new world for first generation immigrants. Adding further to this question is interesting research in the UK that churches with an ethnic mix were more likely to grow than those of one ethnicity, and that the richer the ethnic mix the more likely they are to grow.³¹ This finding is supported by a study in York which found that “church growth has in significant measure been correlated with ethnic diversity’ and that “the new churches embrace pluralism with vigour”.³² A report in the US claims that one of the major characteristics of the fastest growing churches there is that they are multiracial,³³ a finding consistent with George Yancey’s research showing that ethnically diverse congregations were more likely to have experienced growth.³⁴ Research among Baptist Churches in NZ, which over recent years have begun to decline, found that the most rapid rate of decline was among ethnic specific (meaning in this instance non pakeha ethnicity) and the least decline among multicultural churches³⁵. So to argue for maintaining ethnically homogenous churches as a critical mission strategy in societies which are becoming increasingly multiethnic, such as NZ, seems to in the light recent research a policy which is increasingly difficult to support on empirical grounds. It is interesting that McGavran, who many would argue was misconstrued to some extent when applied to western societies, recognised as far back as 1970 that in diverse urban settings the church must be strategic in promoting multiethnic ministries: “In such cities, some supratribal churches are growing rapidly. Here the unifying brotherhood should be stressed, breaking with the old homogenous unit should be a prerequisite for baptism.”³⁶

²⁸ An unpublished paper presented at the International Society for the Sociology of Religion in Leipzig, July 2007. It should be noted that often they drift out after some years, many leaving organised Christianity completely and some others returning to Pacific Island churches with their children.

²⁹ Stephen Warner, “The Korean Immigrant Church as Case and Model”, in Kwang Chun g Kim, *Korean Americans*, 36.

³⁰ Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism*, 181. Song-Chan Rah immigrated to the US from Korea when he was 6.

³¹ Bob Jackson, *Hope for the Church: Contemporary Strategies for Church Growth* (London: Church Publishing House, 2002) 86-93.

³² David Goodhew (ed), *Church Growth in Britain, 1980 to the Present* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012) 179, 191.

³³ Jeffrey MacDonald, “From US Churches That Are Growing, a Sound of Drums”, *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 2007, 1-10.

³⁴ George Yancey, *One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003) 27.

³⁵ An unpublished report from Lynne Taylor, statistician for the Baptist Union of NZ, 2010.

³⁶ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 179.

What kind of church: ethnic diversity and ecclesiology.

However the main issue I believe we need to focus on in considering this question is that, even if ethnic or culturally specific churches could be argued for on those grounds, it is difficult to defend them ecclesiologically, when the nature of the church is examined from a biblical or theological perspective. There is no question that the “new immigration” is changing the demographic makeup of western societies such as NZ. While migration has always been a fact of history, the unprecedented numbers of recent decades, and its spread to be from almost everywhere to anywhere, has significant implications for the nature of religion in those societies. For much of history the religion one belonged to was determined by the geography of where one lived. One was born into faith and religion formed the “sacred canopy” helping to bind societies together, which is why ‘heretics’ were generally dealt with so harshly; they were a threat to the social order. So religious communities were generally ethnically homogenous and religions only clashed when one ‘region’ moved into another, and was eventually settled when one side won against the other and became the ruling power. As secularisation happened in societies this ended and it led to pluralisation of religion in those societies, as Peter Berger noted in the *Heretical Imperative*. Still in western societies this was mainly pluralisation of Christianity, and European denominational forms at that. All that has changed in the last few decades with the arrival of, not only significant numbers from non Christian religions but also, greater numbers of Christians from non European ethnicities bringing their own ethnic forms of Christianity and church with them. So we now have pluralistic or multicultural societies in which people of a wider variety of ethnicities, religious identities and cultural practices are living alongside each other, particularly in large cities.

The New Testament

Many scholars have pointed out the parallels between this reality and the world in which Christianity spread in the first few centuries. “The region around the Mediterranean Sea was multilingual, multiracial and multiethnic, with many different religions and philosophies. The Jewish groups and Gentile nations comprised the multiplicity of cultures that Christianity sought to address and to embrace. In this multicultural arena, the diversity of early Christianity took shape.”³⁷

While it is true that Jesus came as God’s Messiah for the people of Israel, and kept his mission primarily to them, nevertheless he challenged the Jewish purity codes of his day which kept those of other ethnicities as outsiders (as well as many Israelites as well). In the Gospel of Mark, for example, Jesus has table fellowship with the impure and invites them to follow him (2.13-17). He breaks Sabbath rules (2.23-28). He includes Gentiles as he engages with a demoniac in the unclean territory of the Gerasenes (5.1-20). He eats with the Syro-Phoenician woman (7.24-30). The climax comes as Jesus cleanses the supposedly ‘clean’ temple (15.15-19). He says, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?’ But you have made it a den of robbers” (11.17). The temple was the centre of monoculturalism, dedicated to excluding Gentiles and the impure. Jesus said it had to be destroyed (13.2) before it could become what it was meant to be, the house of prayer for all nations, gathered from all corners of the earth (13.27). As Brian Blount puts it, “In Mark’s revelation of the future in the midst of the present, then, kingdom worship is multicultural worship.”³⁸

If those who followed Jesus did not immediately grasp this the way the Spirit worked in Acts continually reminded them of it. From the day of Pentecost the early church was multicultural, made up of those from many nations and miraculously speaking in many languages (Acts 2.5,6, 9-11). We then see this being enacted with the gospel being extended to Samaritans, (8.5), an Ethiopian Eunuch (8.27) and finally Gentiles (10.28). Peter’s declaration, against all his preconceptions which took some dramatic work by God to change, that people of all nations and cultures are acceptable before God and that Jesus is Lord of all (Acts 10.34–36) was to be decisive in opening the door for

³⁷ David Rhoads, *The Challenge of Diversity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996) 2.

³⁸ Brian K Blount, ‘The apocalypse of worship: A house of prayer for ALL the nations’, in *Making room at the table: An invitation to multicultural worship*, eds. Brian K Blount and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 25.

Christianity to become a worldwide movement. It began the tradition, evident ever since, of translating the message into the vernacular,³⁹ exemplified by the way Paul preached in Athens using Greek and pagan beliefs to communicate the sovereignty of God (Acts 17.16–34).

When we come to the letters of the New Testament, particularly in Paul, a significant theme was that the unity that people from all of these different ethnicities and cultures had in Christ was primary and their ethnic or cultural identity was secondary. There has been much debate over the centuries about what was central to Paul's theology, and for those of us in the Reformed tradition, ever since Luther, we have been sure it is justification. However over recent decades that has been increasingly challenged. N.T. Wright now argues it is "the unity of the church", the "united family" of God. "When we read Paul on his own terms, we find that for him the one, single community is absolutely central. The community of Christ in Christ, by the Spirit, is at the very heart of it all."⁴⁰

Personally I think Wright is right, and it is a theme which runs all through Paul's writing. We have only space to deal briefly with a small number of texts. The letter to the Ephesians is generally regarded as being where Paul's ecclesiology is most fully developed. Markus Barth sees Eph 2.11-22 as "the key and high point of the whole Epistle"⁴¹ (Barth, 1974: 275) and Klyne Snodgrass as "perhaps the most significant ecclesiological text in the New Testament".⁴² What Paul is saying here is that in Christ the identity marker of circumcision and all the other aspects of keeping the law that made the Jewish people ethnically and culturally distinct no longer act as the marker for the people of God. The "dividing wall" that kept them "aliens" has been "broken down". There is a new identity marker, Jesus Christ. Being in Christ marks you out as belonging to "the household of God", the new humanity. Those old identity markers may be appropriate to indicate your human identity as Jew or Gentile, but they are no longer of any relevance in identifying those who are God's people and who have access to God. Only one thing counts. That is Christ. Through his death he has made it possible for all people, whatever their cultural or ethnic identity, to become part of the "one new humanity" who are reconciled to God. Thus Christ is "our peace", peace not only in our relationship with God but also peace with all of those who are in Christ, whatever our previous relationship with them might have been. This now is our primary identity and all other identities are secondary. As James Earl Massey puts it: "The fence that once stood between them is now down. Because believers are reconciled to God, they are also related to one another. A new set of criteria applies now for human relations in the Church. In church life social distance must no longer be the order, and a sense of oneness and equality must prevail when previously-honored differences seek to intrude themselves."⁴³ Paul goes on to develop this concept of unity in next few chapters, particularly chapter 4, demonstrating as Andrew Walls writes that "each of the culture-specific segments is necessary to the body but incomplete in itself.... None of us can reach Christ's completeness on our own. We need each other's vision to correct, enlarge, and focus our own; only together are we complete in Christ."⁴⁴

Paul develops this theme in other places also, such as Romans 10.12, 1 Corinthians 12.13, Colossians 3.11 and most famously in Galatians 3.28, where he broadens it to include the cultural and social divisions that demarcated slave and free, male and female. Scholars suggest that this text was part of a baptismal formula used for welcoming new members into the church. Richard Longenecker states, "Early Christians saw it as particularly appropriate to give praise in their baptismal confession that through Christ the old racial schisms and cultural divisions had been healed."⁴⁵ The early church struggled to keep this unity in Christ in the midst of its diversity, and much of Paul's writing is

³⁹ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the message: The missionary impact on culture*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2009). It is important to note for us that this vernacular principle is at the very heart of the Reformation movement.

⁴⁰ N.T. Wright, "Whence and Whither Pauline Principles in the Life of the Church?" in N. Perrin and R.B. Hays, ed. *Jesus Paul and the People of God* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity, 2011) 266.

⁴¹ Marcus Barth, *Ephesians 1-3: The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1974) 275.

⁴² Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians: NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 123.

⁴³ James Earl Massey, "Reconciliation: Two Biblical Studies" in T. George and R. Smith Jr. ed. *A Mighty Long Journey: Reflections on Racial Reconciliation* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000) 208.

⁴⁴ Andrew Walls, *The Cross-cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002) 79.

⁴⁵ Richard Longenecker, *Galatians: Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 41* (Dallas: Word, 1990) 157

dealing with such episodes. A very significant occasion is the setting in Galatia, which leads into 3.28. Peter has been persuaded not to share in table fellowship with the Gentiles in the church (2.11-14) after some of hardliners from Jerusalem arrived, and this led to other Jewish Christians following suit. Paul's saw this as not just a social affront to the Gentiles but a betrayal of the gospel and so his response was swift and strong. He "never wavered in his conviction that God was making a new creation by drawing into one church both Jews and Gentiles."⁴⁶ He believed it was not enough just to maintain a spiritual unity in the universal church, it needed to be seen and experienced in the local congregation as well. The break in sharing meals together would end "the social unity of the church."⁴⁷ Such practices were once markers that kept Jews and Gentiles separated and now in Christ such markers are annulled and they are constituted together as one new people of God. John Zizioulas develops this further by saying "the Christians themselves soon came to believe that they constituted a third race, but this was only to show that in fact it was a 'non-racial race', a people who, while claiming to be the true Israel, declared at the same time they did not care about the difference between a Greek and a Jew once these were members of the Christian Church."⁴⁸ From this line of reasoning, the church as a "new creation" in Christ (6.15; also 2 Cor. 5.17) can incorporate a diversity of ethnicities.

This unity of all in Christ, across whatever ethnic, cultural or social divisions is a central theme running through Paul's longest letters, those to the churches in Rome and Corinth. There is now widespread agreement that the Roman church was not a single entity. Paul does not address "the church" but "all in Rome who are loved by God, called to be saints." Probably the Christians in Rome were too numerous to meet in a single house, so functioned as several almost autonomous 'house churches' (congregations) with no central structure. The individuals Paul addresses in chapter 16 may have been leaders of these various congregations and their names certainly give us glimpse of those he asks to participate in his missionary endeavour: there are a number of significant women; there are couples like Prisca and Aquilla, Jews who were banished from Rome and lived in Corinth and Ephesus (Acts 18.2-3, 26). There are Greek and Latin names, many names associated with slaves and freed-slaves and a few that may indicate a person with the standing of a patrician. Roman Christians would have heard the particular classes, statuses and ethnicities of the names, slave, Jew, freed, Roman, rich, Hellenic and so on. The Christians in Rome appear to be an ethnic mix of the empire and, whilst we must be wary of according to him 21st century perspectives, Paul indicates an awareness of ethnic differences. He not only emphasises his usual theological message that Christ came for Gentiles as well as Jews but he also includes the terms "Greeks and barbarians" (Rom.1.14).

Romans provides no blue-print for ecclesiastical structures. We cannot be sure how the house churches related to one another, whether they met separately or came together on certain occasions – such as the reading of Paul's letter. Perhaps they flourished in different ethnic quarters of the city. Perhaps there was a slave church in the Emperor's households whose ability to meet with others was curtailed. However, Paul is critical of those who had a divisive or sectarian spirit, particularly apparent in the reluctance to maintain fellowship between the Gentile majority in Rome and the Jewish believers who continued to follow their traditions. Paul insists on a distinct identity for Christians and a commonality among them. In Paul's passionate theological exposition of the parity of Jews and Greeks when believing in the Gospel or faced with God's judgement (1.16–4:25) and his ethical exhortation to "welcome those who are weak in faith" (14.1) and to respect the food customs of others we see a concern that his readers understand that the love of Christ transcends cultural differences. This message has, of course, been preached with the assumption that one culture is normative and that way of being a Christian will be easily adopted by others: the greatest pitfall for Christian unity is that it becomes the coercion of the majority over the minority. Rather Paul "presupposed variety and diversity among Christians", he expected ethnic distinctions to continue but

⁴⁶ J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1997) 236.

⁴⁷ Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (Yale; Yale University Press, 1986) 161.

⁴⁸ John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 151.

“denies them ultimate significance”.⁴⁹ This is not an abandonment of ethnic or cultural identity, there is an acknowledgement that humans belong to particular times, spaces and group relationships which form particular cultures, but some form of transformation of it because identity is ultimately found in Christ. John Barclay claims that Paul does not necessarily abolish particularism but instead of ethnic (or we might add any other) particularism privileges “an ecclesial particularism defined by faith in Christ”. Barclay reads Paul as “the fashioner of multiethnic and multicultural communities, which function not to erase but to moderate between differing cultural specificities”.⁵⁰

Paul pleads for warm acceptance of one another, respecting those who eat differently or observe as special another day (14.1-6) and calls on them to “live in harmony with one another... so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (15.8-9). True fellowship is required, for which reconciliation and unity and, before them, welcome and understanding, are vital. These important themes are firmly attached to Paul’s understanding of what it means to be ‘in Christ’ and of his practical missionary plans to “evangelise” further. It is “precisely in the reconciliation of different peoples (made possible by the reconciliation with God through Christ) that the grace of God is made visible”.⁵¹

It is not only a central theme of Paul’s ecclesiology, but also has profound expression in Peter. In 1 Peter 2.9-10 the church (most probably in Rome) is described as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people... Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s own people”. David Horrell⁵² points out that this is the only text where three central words for ethnic identity in 1st century Greek, *genos*, *ethnos* and *laos*, are all applied to the Church. *Genos* was used to denote groups of people who share a common identification. *Ethnos*, like *genos*, had a wide range of meanings but had a focus on the notion of shared descent. *Laos* always seemed to refer to groups of people, sometimes with the specific sense of ‘common’ people as distinct from leaders. What is immediately worth noting is that these ethnic-identity terms are linked with central Jewish identifications: chosen or elect, holy and God’s own people. So combining these two factors seems to suggest that Peter is consciously using ethnic identity terms along with those used to define the people of God to suggest the church is a new “ethnic form of identity” that draws into it all other identities. He then goes on to show that all of the six elements used in recent scholarship (see p.5) to define an ethnic group can be found in 1 Peter. Moving beyond the NT itself into early Christian literature we find writers such as Clement and Tertullian using language of race or ethnicity to describe the Christians as a “third race” alongside Jews and Greeks, the “one race of the saved” brought together from those two groups. Returning to 1 Peter it is interesting to note that the reason this new people has been formed in Christ is to “proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you”, a theme we will return to.

For reflection/discussion

How important for us today do you think the argument that was being made by the NT writers is? Do you think it has been lost sight of in many parts of the church? How much should it shape the way we are the church now?

Theology

So an ecclesiology that takes seriously the parameters and implications of the New Testament compels us to work for multiethnic rather than homogenous churches in our current ethnically and culturally diverse contexts. No wonder as the early church developed its theology it came to understand that for the church it means that it is “one, holy, catholic and apostolic”, what have become known as the ‘marks’ of the church. They provide an interesting lens through which to examine many of our contemporary forms and practices. Developing Paul’s theme of our identity in Christ, Thomas Torrance notes on these marks that “they do not denote independent qualities inhering

⁴⁹ William Campbell, *Paul’s Gospel in an Intercultural Context* (Frankfurt; Peter Lang, 1991) 100.

⁵⁰ John Barclay, “Neither Jew nor Greek’: Multiculturalism and the New Perspective on Paul”, in *Ethnicity and the Bible* ed. Mark Brett (Leiden: Brill, 1996) 211.

⁵¹ Campbell, *Paul’s Gospel in an Intercultural Context*, 116.

⁵² David Horrell, “Race’, ‘Nation’, ‘People’: Ethnic Identity-Construction in 1 Peter 2.9” *New Testament Studies*, 58, 2011, 123-143.

in the church, but are affirmations of the nature of the church as it participates in Jesus Christ.... They are first of all attributes of Christ himself, but attributes in which the church shares through its union and communion with him. Therefore in the unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the church it is the image and face of Christ himself that comes to view.”⁵³

Within the scope of this resource the critical marks for us to consider are its oneness and its catholicity. While almost everyone affirms the unity or the oneness of the church, since the Schism of 1054 that oneness has been somewhat difficult to locate, and since the splintering of the Reformation even more so. Daniel Migliore helpfully defines it as “a distinctive unity rooted in communion with God through Christ in the Spirit. The unity of the church is a fragmentary and provisional participation in the costly love of the triune God.”⁵⁴ Recent trinitarian theology with its focus on a plurality within an essential oneness is helpful for us in understanding how the Christian gospel embraces both diversity and unity, and some of the best recent ecclesiology begins from this basis. So Jurgen Moltmann argues that this kind of community creates “unity in diversity, while at the same time differentiating and making diversity possible... we call this the Trinitarian fellowship of the Spirit”.⁵⁵ However ever since the Reformers placed the focus on seeing the unity of the church in the invisible church rather than the visible church, that understanding has been used as a way of enabling churches and their leaders to do little about working to see unity as a visible mark of the church in its present reality. We are happy to affirm we believe in it provided we don’t really have to act as if we belong. But Jesus left behind a visible community not an invisible concept. A community he called to be one and prayed that they might be one and so come to see who God is and what God is doing in Christ (John 17), and so it is incumbent on we who are the church in our increasingly diverse ethnic and culture locations to continually work hard to find ways to express that this oneness is a reality, not merely a mystical spiritual entity we believe in.

The affirmation of the catholicity of the church refers to its universality and inclusivity. It is the church that has existed everywhere, always, and for all. It guards the church against parochialism, sectarianism, racism, and chronological conceit. However as with oneness we need to guard against it being understood merely as an abstract kind of universalism hovering over the particularities of culture and history. Avery Dulles claims that catholicity “is not the accomplished fact of having many members or a wide geographical distribution, but rather the dynamic catholicity of a love reaching out to all and excluding no one.”⁵⁶ and so being “inclusive of all kind of people” Returning again to a trinitarian understanding which sees the church as the overflow of the love of the triune God, Miroslav Volf writes: “We who have been embraced by the outstretched arms of the crucified God open our arms even for the enemies – to make space in ourselves for them and invite them in – so that together we may rejoice in the eternal embrace of the triune God.”⁵⁷ While people of different ethnicities used to be over there, and so it was not so much an issue of everyday life and faith, today they are over here and so again it is a mark that needs to be demonstrated in the life of the visible church, in local congregations and denominational structures, as well as I would add in its ecumenical arrangements. Tyron Inbody goes so far as to assert that “any church, including a local congregation, which does not intend to be catholic in the sense that it invites all manner of people... is not the church.”⁵⁸

⁵³ Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement; The Person and Work of Christ* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2009) 381.

⁵⁴ Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 201.

⁵⁵ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) 220.

⁵⁶ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1974) 122.

⁵⁷ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996) 131.

⁵⁸ Tyron Inbody, *The Faith of the Christian Church: An Introduction to Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 261.

For reflection/discussion

How important are these marks of 'unity' and 'catholicity' today? Would someone observing our churches today see them as being practised?

The challenge and the possibility

This is not to imagine that this is at all easy, or might I say natural, for many of us deeply enculturated in our own various ways and so often feeling uncomfortable and out of our depth with those who do not operate within those cultural norms. Moltmann comments on the tendency for churches made up of our kinds of people: “‘Birds of a feather stick together.’ But why? People who are like us, who think the same thoughts, who have the same things, and who want the same things confirm us. However, people who are different from us, that is, people whose thoughts feelings and desires are different from ours make us feel insecure.”⁵⁹ So even after becoming Christian we still tend to operate largely within the cultural and ethnic worlds we were born into. The doctoral research noted early on PCANZ churches found that this ethnic homogeneity was reflected in the friendship of members inside as well as outside of the congregation. For others raised within a particular cultural and ethnic form of Christianity we simply, like the frog in the kettle, live that way without thinking that there might be some cultural ways of being that are not necessarily in step with being Christian and may need to be transformed, or indeed discarded, if we were to move toward a more faithful living out of our new primary identity in Christ. Eric Law writes: “One of the major barriers to building a multicultural community is our ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is the assumption that the worldview of one’s own culture is central to all reality. In our ethnocentrism, we perceive and evaluate persons, things and events according to our values, beliefs and assumptions, often not knowing or accepting other worldviews as valid or important.”⁶⁰ This is particularly prevalent among Europeans who have lived in a society fundamentally shaped by European culture and involved in churches whose beliefs, and practices were formed during centuries of European Christendom. Many of us have tended to see these things as being normal and only other peoples as having cultures.

For reflection/discussion

We all like to feel comfortable. Often we understand the gospel as being about making us feel good. We are most comfortable with people like us. How much should the gospel challenge us to move out of comfort zones to engage and be with those who are different?

The relationship of gospel and culture has of course become a very significant, and often hotly debated, question since Christianity began to grow rapidly in the new indigenous expressions and forms that emerged in postcolonial non western societies. In considering the relationship of the two, Andrew Walls reminds us there are two important principles. On the one hand there is the “indigenising” principle, which affirms that the gospel is at home in every culture and every culture is at home with the gospel. But then there is the “pilgrim” principle, which warns us that the gospel is never fully at home in any culture and will put us out of step with every culture.⁶¹ Max Stackhouse defines these two critical dimensions as the “textuality” of the church – its faithfulness to the gospel – and its “contextuality” – its faithfulness to the world in which it finds itself.⁶² There is often a tension between these two, a tension which runs through the pages of the New Testament. What the writers of these seem to insist is that whenever our cultural practice is clearly in conflict with the essence of the gospel then it must be what the gospel calls us to that has priority in our cultural habitus.

So considering the issue of single-ethnic or multi-ethnic churches, where our natural tendencies have pulled us to be in churches of our kind of people, we need to work to challenge that both within ourselves and others. This is not to pretend this is not a difficult calling, but as David Bosch expresses

⁵⁹ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1978) 30.

⁶⁰ Eric Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1993) 42.

⁶¹ Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996) 7-9.

⁶² Max Stackhouse, “Contextualization and Contextuality” in R.O. Costas, ed. *One Faith, Many Cultures: Inculturation, Indigenization and Contextualization* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988) 6.

it: “The new fellowship transcends every limit imposed by family, class or culture. We are not winning people like ourselves to ourselves but sharing the good news that in Christ God has shattered the barriers that divide the human race and has created a new community. The new people of God has no analogy; it is a ‘sociological impossibility’ that has become possible.”⁶³

As this happens, though, the new community being formed in Christ becomes as Lesslie Newbigin called it a “sign, foretaste and instrument” of the reign of God.⁶⁴ As local congregations live out a way of life that is in contrast with the wider communities in which they are located so they become, to use another phrase of Newbigin, the “hermeneutic of the gospel”⁶⁵, interpreting to the world what God is on about, or as we noted 1 Peter put it “proclaiming the mighty acts of him who called you”. There is a growing realisation among NT scholars that rather than the Roman Empire simply being the political and cultural locale in which the early Christians lived and had little to do with how they shaped their ideas and actions, an essential key to understanding the NT is to see the Christian movement as a self conscious alternative to the empire, that often tyrannized them. So if we see Ephesians in this light, picking up from where Paul finished in chapter 2 with a multiethnic, multicultural, multi-tongued family of God, it this new community which in chapter 3 declares to Caesar that he doesn’t run things any more, because in fact Jesus Christ is Lord and that in him he is gathering all things together (1.10). Reflecting on the implications of this N.T. Wright comments; “As long as we continue to collude with things that no Paulinist should ever collude with – fragmentation, petty squabbles, divisions over this or that small point of doctrine – the powers can fold their arms and watch us having our little fun while they really run the show. But when there actually is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Eph 4) then the powers are called to account and they will know it. Something new has happened.”⁶⁶ For Paul then the church is that social and political dimension of God’s reign that bears witness to Christ’s liberation of the cosmos from the powers, which reorders humanity in such a way as to surmount ethnic and class differences.

For reflection/discussion

How relevant do you think this argument is for us in NZ today?

A new vision

Forming communities like this in the kind of society we have in NZ, as well as elsewhere, divided into a vast array of fragments on all kinds of grounds - ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, generations, lifestyle, gender – so that there are in fact very few comprehensive communities that embrace all kinds of people, may indeed be the most profound witness to the gospel we can give and is indeed a foretaste of what will be when God does in fact reign. As Bosch puts it “The church can only be missionary if its being-in-the-world is, at the same time, a being-different-from-the-world.”⁶⁷ In similar vein John Howard Yoder writes: “The political novelty that God brings into the world is a community of those... whose fellowship crosses lines instead of reinforcing them. This new Christian community in which the walls are broken down... by the work of Christ is not only a vehicle of the gospel or only a fruit of the gospel; it is the good news. It is not merely the agent of mission or the constituency of a mission agency. This is the mission.”⁶⁸

The book of Revelation images in that time that those who are gathered together before the Lamb are made up of a multitude of peoples “that no one could count from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” (Rev 7.9). The seer here seems to be using all of the terms at his disposal to emphasise that all human diversity is present, still apparently distinguishable by their ethnicity, culture and language but nevertheless united together in worship. Now of course that is an eschatological picture of what things will be like when all things are perfected in Christ, but living in

⁶³ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Maryknoll, 1991) 389.

⁶⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, *A Word in Season* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996, 60-63).

⁶⁵ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) 223-233.

⁶⁶ Wright, “Whence and Whither”, 267.

⁶⁷ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 387.

⁶⁸ John Howard Yoder, *Essays Ecumenical and Ecclesiological* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1998) 91.

the eschatological tension of the ‘now and the not yet’ we must not be content with arrangements simply the way they are in our sin marred and alienated existence, but rather working in the power of the eschatological Spirit toward what they will one day be. As ‘Kupu Whakapono’ calls us to confess, “We belong to this triune God, women and men, young and old, from many nations, in Christ *he iwi kotahi tatou* [we are one people].

For reflection/discussion

How does this vision affect your understanding of what our church should look like?

The gospel does not call us to leave our ethnicity and our cultures. Paul makes it clear that Jews can still remain Jews and follow many of their cultural practices, provided they didn’t try and impose them on others. Likewise he tells different groups of Gentiles they can still practice many of their differing cultural practices (see Romans, Corinthians, Colossians). Clearly there is still a need for us to associate at times with those of our group, to work out what it means to be Christian as Samoans or Koreans or Filipinos in a strange land and support each other. The authors of *United by Faith*, despite its strong call for multiethnic churches, accept that these “provide ways to meet the particular needs of these groups, while integrating immigrants in a multiracial community” and also to overcome the language difficulties for new immigrants.⁶⁹ Also for Maori, in a land now dominated by those of European culture, there are particular issues and cultural practices that meeting separately at times will facilitate, and it may be that other minority ethnic groups may need to do this on occasions also. In this the Maori understanding of *turangawaewae*, ‘a place to stand’, is helpful as we can only engage fully with others when we have a strong sense of who we are. At times some of these occasions may be helpful in introducing others from those ethnic groups to Christian community, following the core of McGavran’s missional discovery.

However, at the same time the gospel clearly calls us into a new community in which those ethnic and cultural identities are not primary. Our fundamental identity is in Christ and in Christ we are baptised into a new people, a new nation, and new *ethnos* or race. If this is what we are baptised into in our initiating sacrament then it is critical that we express that reality in our other sacrament when we share in bread and wine together. It is now commonly accepted by scholars that as well as the Jewish Passover meal the shape and motif for the Lord’s Supper came from Jesus’ practice of table fellowship, which was so central in his ministry. Sharing a meal in first century Palestine indicated the acceptance of those around the table. Jesus constantly included in fellowship around a meal those who were considered outsiders and sinners. “In societies where there are barriers between classes, races or other status groups, the separation is maintained by means of a taboo on social mixing... The scandal Jesus caused in that society by social mixing with sinners can hardly be imagined by most people today.”⁷⁰ Jesus intentionally shattered the boundaries instituted by established religion and society and modelled a new understanding of community rooted in the radical grace of God. The table of God’s community was open to everyone. It was Paul who fully grasped the implications of this, which is why he was so distressed and reacted so strongly against the practice of the church in Corinth. Gordon Fee notes that it was “sociologically natural for the host to invite those of his/her own class to eat in the dining room while others ate in the courtyard” but for Paul that cultural custom was “a destruction of the meaning of the Supper itself because it destroyed the very unity which that meal proclaimed.” He goes on to say “No ‘church’ can long endure as the people of God for the new age in which the old distinctions between bond and free, Jew or Greek or male and female are allowed to persist. Especially so at the Table, where Christ, who has made us one, has ordered that we should visibly proclaim that unity.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ Curtiss Paul De Young, *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) 132.

⁷⁰ Albert Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976) 37.

⁷¹ Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 532-4, 544. See also the excellent discussion of Paul’s vision for the church in Corinthians and its implications for homogenous groups in Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) 239.

As we have seen the church is to be a sign of God's mission of reconciling all humanity to Godself and to one another in Christ and table fellowship is the outward and visible expression of that, a foretaste of the eschatological banquet of the people of God. "Because the fellowship of the table unites believers with the triune God through Christ, it also causes [persons] to unite with one another in messianic fellowship. The common bread and the common cup point to the oneness of the people who partake in the one Christ, and in him with participants at all times and in all places... The open invitation of the crucified one to his supper is what fundamentally overcomes all tendencies toward alienation, separation and segregation. For through giving himself up to death for the fellowship of [people] with God and with one another, the godless and inhuman divisions and enmities between races, nations, civilization and classes are overcome. Churches which permit these deadly divisions in themselves are making the cross of Christ a mockery."⁷² Unfortunately many of the churches which have separate ethnic congregations within them have been unable to even agree to work together so they can worship as one on the occasions they celebrate communion.

It is clear that it is critical for the future of Christianity in societies like NZ, as immigration trends move us toward becoming an increasingly multicultural society, that we in the church are committed to forming churches that are intercultural or cross cultural communities, and in that way may be a sign to an increasingly fragmented world of what God in Christ is able to do. This is not to argue that every church in every place should be cross cultural in this way, as some churches are still located in contexts which are largely homogenous. However this is increasingly less the case, even in many of our rural communities. At the same time we also need to remember that we move into this from our commitment to being bicultural. In light of this some affirmations at the past two General Assemblies have been encouraging, and some of the moments at the 2012 GA significant. In seeking to work toward a structure that best enabled the Pacific Island community to find a *turangawaewae* within it, the 2010 Assembly affirmed "its commitment to the embodiment of the bicultural and multicultural church" and in 2012 the Pacific Island Synod was granted Presbytery status. The 2012 Assembly also affirmed a motion from the Asian Council that it work toward becoming a "cross cultural church within the context of a bicultural church" as it sought to move to finding its own place to stand. Commenting on this, Stuart Vogel, a member of the Asian Council, said that "the Presbyterian Church has decided to begin the process of becoming an active, vibrant cross-cultural church."

Moving forward

In trying to find some definition of a multicultural church, most researchers set a figure of no more than 80% of a church's population being made up of anyone ethnic group. Even allowing for this fairly generous limit remarkably few churches qualify. However a truly cross cultural church is more than just having different ethnic groups inhabiting the same space. One helpful definition I have found is this: "A multicultural congregation is one that is made up of a variety of cultures and ethnic groups, which actively contributes to the leadership, direction, worship, style and ethos of the church, and share its power, finances and resources."⁷³

For reflection/discussion

Think about your church in the light of this definition. To what extent does its makeup reflect the makeup of your community? Think about the leadership of the church. What ethnic groups who are part of the church are missing from it? In terms of worship, how much do the variety of cultural groups contribute to what happens?

In a helpful book on culturally diverse congregations, Charles Foster outlines four different practices that churches have taken in negotiating the dynamics of relationship between groups as racial and cultural diversity develops in their context.

- *Sponsoring congregations.* It is relatively easy today to find churches that provide a space for at least one other congregation or ministry for a group different from their own. When churches do

⁷² Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1977) 257-8.

⁷³ Ross Langmead, "Why Multicultural Congregations?", an unpublished paper presented at the Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools Conference, Brisbane, Australia, July 2012.

this though the groups tend to live alongside each other rather than to interact on a regular basis with each other. The sponsoring congregation usually holds on to as much power as possible over the future of the relationship. They are multicultural in as much as recognise the demographic presence of different cultures and honour the integrity of their cultural differences, but they do not generally question their own cultural dominance in relationships..

- *Transitional Congregations.* These are congregations located in areas where the ethnic makeup of the community changes significantly. When a church follows this pattern the existing members seek to maintain the institutional viability of their congregation as its cultural perspectives and practices shift from one ethnic group to another. This approach assumes that congregations reflect their cultural context and that people prefer homogenous communities of faith. The existing members make enough accommodation to assure the newcomers they are welcome without sharing much power with them until the point when something signals the church is now associated with the new group. They are multicultural only in the sense that for a time people from different cultural heritages coexist while they negotiate the transfer of power and church from one group to another.
- *Assimilating congregations.* These nearly always move so-called minority groups or marginalised peoples into a dominant-culture congregation. These welcome people without regard to ethnicity, but that does not mean they embrace the gifts of ethnic and cultural heritages of the newcomers. Rather their imagination is dominated by the assimilationist process which they shared with the wider culture a generation ago and assume that those who are new and different will shed that which does not fit their new cultural situation to become a member of this particular community.
- *Multicultural Congregations.* These congregations focus on the interaction of the people from diverse cultural groups, so to increasing numbers the terms cross cultural or intercultural is preferred to multicultural where they might exist as alongside each other with little interaction. Differences are engaged and often embraced as resources for the creation of a new kind of community. There is a change from the saying often heard in assimilation congregations that underneath everything “all people are really the same” to a “mosaic of God’s creation” or a “rainbow coalition.” It emphasises the interdependence of cultures in the life and work of the church rather than the dominance of one culture over the others.⁷⁴

The path to becoming genuinely cross cultural is challenging and will not happen without intentionality and planning. It needs to be intentional, as the default position is for people (Christians included) to feel most comfortable with ‘people like us’, that is in a monocultural context. The most common paths are through sharing food, stories, celebration, practical solidarity and community. They assist us in gradually moving from our comfort zone into a learning zone and then an expanded comfort zone. When coupled with an open, porous and hospitable faith community, these practices are also deeply missional, because people from the wider community find them welcoming and relatively unthreatening.

It involves a great deal of learning. Cross cultural churches invest time in learning about other customs, worldviews, languages, practices, celebrations, expectations and social roles. Gatherings specifically to learn about these things are necessary, but they are also rich and enjoyable. It also requires a commitment to active inclusion and deliberate hospitality (from all sides). Those from groups other than the dominant culture nearly always need to be invited repeatedly before they will feel at home in a group. Hospitality is a rich Christian tradition in which the guest often becomes the host, reflecting the divine mystery in which, when we welcome Christ, Christ welcomes us home.

⁷⁴ Charles Foster, *Leadership in Multicultural Congregations: Embracing Diversity* (New York: Alban, 1997) 39-47. Another helpful analysis of different types of multicultural churches can be found in Manuel Ortiz, *One New People; Models for Developing Multiethnic Churches* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996). A basic distinction he makes is between ‘multicongregational churches’, where various ethnic congregations retain separate body life but work together and celebrate their common identity in Christ through worship and ministry, and ‘multiethnic churches’ in which those different ethnic groups work together to form one congregation.

Charles Foster writes: “The practice of embracing others is not easy – especially given the human proclivity to exclude, dominate, differentiate and oppress people who are considered to be other and to privilege and give preference to ourselves. It begins with discerning difference as a possibility – a gift – rather than a problem. It continues with the recognition that our lives and our cultures are inextricably intertwined and interdependent – even though when examined discreetly they often seem to be studies in contrast. It requires the affirmation of cultural ‘others’ on their own terms, and at the same time, an affirmation of our own cultural embeddedness as a primary resource to the depths of our own identities. This requires that members of each racial and cultural group grant the others ‘sufficient respect’ to listen and trust enough to challenge and critique. This cannot happen without sharing power, creating a collaborative engagement on the issues that matters most in the common life of the congregation”⁷⁵

For reflection/discussion

(1) *What experiences have you had where you have entered into the world of another cultural or ethnic groups in ways that you have learned from and been enriched by them? Have any of these changed you?*

(2) *What are some of the steps you think your church could take toward becoming more cross cultural in the way envisioned here?*

Some of the most helpful work theologically and socially about this whole area of living with difference and embracing diversity has been done by Miroslav Volf, coming out of his experience of ethnic religious conflict in Bosnia. Volf observes that the act of embracing involves two movements on the part of two people or groups. A movement to create “space in myself for the other” and an enclosing movement to communicate that I do not want to be without the other in her or his otherness. To embrace others suggests that we cannot “live authentically without welcoming others – the other gender, other person, other cultures – into the very structure of our being.”⁷⁶

Commenting on Romans 15.7 “welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you” Volf argues that the metaphor of embrace brings together three important and interrelated themes:

- the mutuality of the self giving love in the trinity (the doctrine of God)
- the outstretched arms of Christ on the cross for the world (the doctrine of Christ)
- the open arms of the “father” receiving the prodigal (the doctrine of salvation).

So he says practices of embrace refer to the movement of different peoples in community that seek to be close to others without losing the integrity of their own identities.⁷⁷

This image brings us to some of earlier ecclesiological reflection, particularly of the church in the image of the trinity, indeed further as “a fragmentary and provisional participation in the costly love of the triune God”. Rublov’s icon of the three persons of the trinity, Father, Son and Spirit as hosts at the table welcoming the viewer to join them has been used as a powerful image for the kind of overflowing love of our trinitarian God for others. The welcoming communion of the Trinity and its connection with the kindness to strangers, important in many cultures, develops a comprehension of loving, hospitality that Jesus develops in his call to invite to table those who are not part of our own social circle and who cannot repay the invitation (Lk 14.12-14).

Hospitality is a familiar word, one that is used in many contexts. Its meaning must be radicalised if it is able to carry the freight of the kind of response required as people of different cultures interact with one another. It models a radical hospitality as God’s welcome in which the difference of others is valued and cherished in willingness to talk with, eat with and share with the other, of cheek-by-jowl hospitality which invites the other into our lives and expects movement and change, rather than smooth corporate hospitality which provides service at arms length but does not disturb us.

⁷⁵ Foster, *Leadership in Multicultural Congregations*, 47.

⁷⁶ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 140-147.

⁷⁷ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 29.

So this provides an image not just of the church in its everyday life, both when scattered and gathered, but also for what we are doing when we share communion together which should symbolise who we are as God's new people. Graham Redding provided a healthy reminder for us of this in an essay he called "Whose Hospitality?" published in a recent *Candour*. "An integral part of hospitality is about making the stranger feel welcome, making space for those who are not like us... The Apostle Paul made this a recurring theme in his correspondence It's not just that Jews and Gentiles, men and women, slave and free, all have their place – a form of peaceful coexistence as it were – but rather, the very things that divide them allowing one ethnic group or class of people to dominate another, dissolve, and in their absence a new reconciled and reconciling humanity has been born. It is this radical, transformative dimension of God's hospitality on display very time Christians gather around the Lord's Table, which sets the church apart from every other organisation."⁷⁸

It is when this dynamic of life is displayed in our life together, flowing from our worshipping life outwards, that we will indeed be a sign, a foretaste and a instrument of what God is doing "in reconciling the world to himself in Christ".

Helpful resources for developing a multicultural church

Branson, Mark Lau & Martinez, Juan *Churches, Cultures & Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2011)

Butcher, Andrew and Wieland, George "Go From Your Country: missiological reflections from Asian Christians in New Zealand", *Stimulus* (Vol 18, no. 1, Feb. 2010, pp. 2-8)

De Young, Curtiss Paul, *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Law, Eric, *The Bush was Burning but Not Consumed* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1996)

Law, Eric, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1993).

Foster, Charles, *Leadership in Multicultural Congregations: Embracing Diversity* (New York: Alban, 1997).

Metzger, Paul, *Consuming Jesus: Beyond Race and Class Divisions in the Consumer Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007)

Ortiz, Manuel, *One New People: Models for Developing Multiethnic Churches* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996).

Plueddemann, James, *Leading Across Cultures: Effective Ministry and Mission in the Global Church* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009).

Rah, Soong-Chan, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2010).

Rah, Soong-Chan, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009).

Volf, Miroslav, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996).

Yancey, George *One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003).

There is also three helpful discussion papers by Stuart Vogel on the PCANZ website.

<http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/about-us/general-assembly/general-assembly-2012/papers-for-ga12>

⁷⁸ Graham Redding, "Whose Hospitality?" *Candour* (Issue 3 / July 2012) 14.