



Greater Sydney SDA Conference



Ethnic Blends

Mixing Diversity into Your Local Church.

Mark Deymaz and Harry Li
Zondervan, 2010.

- If the kingdom of heaven is not segregated, why on earth is the church?

Ethnic Blend = The intentional mixing of diversity into the local church.
Promoting the development of the multi-ethnic churches.

- Passion must not be driven so much by the pursuit of racial reconciliation as by the need for men and women to be reconciled to God.
- In USA – 92.5% of churches are mono-racial.

The Biblical Mandate of the Multi-Ethnic Church:

- Envisioned by Christ (John 17:20-23)
- Described by Luke (Acts 11:19-26; 13:1)
- Prescribed by Paul (Ephesians)

Seven Core Commitments of a Multi-Ethnic Church:

1. Embrace Dependence
 - Such a church can only be established when we commit ourselves to prayer, patience and persistence.
2. Take Intentional Steps – established not by assimilation but rather by accommodation
 - We must no longer allow the homogenous unit principle to inform our understanding of success.
3. Empower Diverse Leaders
4. Develop Cross-cultural Relationships

5. Pursue Cross-cultural Competence – proficiency in addressing another's culture or customs, their needs and expectations.
6. Promote a Spirit of Inclusion
 - Pay attention to those little things that add up to create the look and feel of the whole.
7. Mobilize for Impact

Section on Personal Challenges and Emotional Obstacles

Theological Obstacles:

Consideration without compromise

“Social justice is not so much a programme to pursue; rather it is who we are. Not so much focused on becoming missional; rather we are the mission. We are not so much focused on building bridges to the community; we are the community.”

Models of Engagement:

1. Intended Exclusion: Us and Them – Starting an ethnic 'service'
2. Unintended Exclusion: Them in Us – Translation but still dominated by one culture.
3. Graduated Inclusion: We Are One – Language specific small groups – discipleship beginning in language groups – integrating into service and multi-ethnic small groups.
 - Includes Multi-Ethnic Governance.
 - Merging Churches – smaller ethnic churches merge with larger churches who are starting new campuses and create multi-ethnic communities.

Music & Worship

- Blended sets – eclectic worship
- Beyond the music – integrate various worship expressions and experiences.
- Empower diverse leaders
- Promote inclusive thinking at every opportunity.

An Everlasting Aroma

- Paint the pictures of what a church community looks like when it shows the world how the 'new biblical community' works.

God's house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations, and together with all the saints, we will enjoy with our Father the everlasting aroma of ethnic blends.

Another review brought to you by engagingchurchblog.com.

Ethnic Blends is a book which encourages local churches to aim for multi-ethnic (self consciously not multi-cultural, as the authors explain) and makes a beginning of explaining how to do this. The first chapter outlines the biblical reasons that we ought to be doing this as well as the seven core commitments of a multi-ethnic church. Chapter one, as well as the introduction, also give the reader the understanding that this task will be difficult. From there, Deymaz and Li spend seven chapters explaining how to overcome various obstacles; personal, theological, philosophical, practical, cross-cultural, relational, and spiritual. Each chapter is a mix of stories, advice, warnings, and encouragement. They end with discussion and reflection questions.

I completely agree with Deymaz and Li in terms of the purpose of this book. They put the question very well: "If the kingdom of heaven is not segregated, why on earth is the church?" I believe there is something very important about the church not just being in all nations around the world but composed, as much as possible, on the level of individual churches, by people from 'all nations.' Of course, if there are no people from a particular place in our community, we don't go out of our way to bring them. What this means, and what the authors of this book are promoting, is that our churches congregations represent our communities.

Having said that, I was disappointed with this book. They started out well, with some biblical depth and good points. However, each of their chapters on overcoming obstacles was too shallow. For example, in the chapter on philosophical obstacles, they outline three different models, but do not give much detail on how to transition between them. Another example was their discussion of being missional. They tell us that being missional isn't something they 'do' but it is a part of 'who they are.' But something like that doesn't happen by accident; are they implying that by being multi-ethnic a church will, automatically, be missional? I don't think so, given comments elsewhere... but even that lack of clarity is part of my disappointment.

Still, this book is a start, and a good one. Deymaz and Li place themselves in the pioneering stage of this movement, so we should expect to find things still vague in some ways. Too many stories for my taste, but not poorly written, and an important subject matter.