

NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**MULTICULTURAL WORSHIP ARTS MINISTRY:
TRANSITIONING FROM MONOCULTURAL WORSHIP TO A MULTIETHNIC
WORSHIPING COMMUNITY**

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FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY
IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION & DISCIPLESHIP

BY
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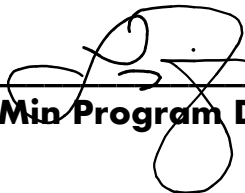
We, the undersigned, determined that this dissertation has met the academic requirements and standards of Nazarene Theological Seminary for the Doctor of Ministry program.



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ABSTRACT

Sherrie McKay

Multicultural Worship Arts Ministry:
Transitioning From Monocultural Worship
to a Multiethnic Worshiping Community

Historically, the Christian church in the United States has played a role in the segregation of worshipers based on ethnicity. This segregation has become harmful to our neighborhoods, communities, and the nation in a time where racial tensions and diverse populations are each expanding. Congregations located in increasingly diverse populations must decide if they will continue to worship in monocultural contexts or transition to becoming a multicultural church seeking to reach people of all ethnicities in their communities. Furthermore, churches who are transitioning from White majority to multiethnic congregations face unique challenges. Discussions on a variety of specific topics serve to inform leadership in this transition and how to overcome such challenges. These topics include racial reconciliation, hegemony, evangelical worship structures and practices, and ecclesial cultural intelligence. The goal is to identify and implement multicultural worship strategies which will facilitate a truer multicultural worship which is formational, welcoming, unifying, and a lived expression of the gospel message to diverse peoples in our churches and communities. Bethany Church, located in Ellicott City, Maryland is the case study for addressing the transition from White majority to multiethnic worship. Qualitative research in the form of memoir is used to capture and examine the context. The artifact is a YouTube channel titled *Memoirs of a White Woman Worship Leader*. Using elements of story in the form of memoir, each episode reveals steps in the transition from monocultural worship toward multicultural worship at Bethany Church.

GLOSSARY

Contextualization: Originally coined by Dr. Shoki Coe, “Contextualization is an intimate and complicated double wrestling of the ‘text’—the word of God—with our present ‘context’ (the *sitz im leben*).”¹ In other words, considering the life setting of the people in Christian worship.

Culture: Here, the word culture will primarily refer to the social dynamics, beliefs, history, customs, food, art, and practices of people of one or more ethnic groups.

Cultural Appropriation: This is the practice of divorcing context and story from an artform or taking credit for a cultural artform not associated with one’s ethnicity.

Cultural Intelligence: Sometimes abbreviated to CQ, it is the capability to function effectively in a variety of cultural contexts—including national, ethnic, organizational, and generational.²

Ethnodoxology: Ethnodoxology is “the interdisciplinary study of how Christians in every culture engage with God and the world through their own artistic expressions.”³

Hegemony: This is “a form of rule where the dominant group’s status is based primarily upon the consent of subordinate groups. Subordinate groups perceive the dominant group’s rule as legitimate, and acknowledge its beliefs, values, and practices as “common sense.”⁴

Majority: Majority refers to the greatest number of people from an ethnic group. I am refraining from using the word “dominant” to not imply dominance.

Monocultural: This refers to being of one ethnic group or culture.

Multicolored: Here, this refers to congregations who have regular attenders of two or more ethnicities, yet whose practices are homogenous (those of the majority culture).

Multicultural/Multiethnic: “Social scientists define successfully diverse congregations as those that have at least 20 percent of regular attenders being different racial and ethnic heritages from the dominant racial or ethnic group of the congregation.”⁵

Non-Majority: This means not being a part of the ethnic group that comprises the greatest number of people. I am not using the word “minority” or “non-dominant” to not communicate inferiority with these populations.

¹ James Krabill, et al., eds., *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2012), 29.

² David Livermore, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence: The Real Secret to Success* (New York, NY: American Management Association, 2015), 11.

³ “Ethnodoxology,” *Global Ethnodoxology Network*, accessed February 1, 2022, <https://www.worldofworship.org/what-is-ethnodoxology/>.

⁴ Korie Edwards, *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1483-1486.

⁵ Gerardo Marti, *Worship Across the Racial Divide: Religious Music and the Multicultural Congregation* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 229.

Race: I have aligned with Emmerson and Smith’s use of the word race as a social construct.

⁶Although there is only one race, the human race, the common use of the term in American society to refer to a person’s ethnicity and culture, support using the word “race” in this way.⁷

Systemic Racism: As defined by NAACP President Derrick Johnson, this refers to “systems and structures that have procedures or processes that disadvantages African Americans.”⁸

Tokenism: This is the act of selecting someone for a role based solely on their ethnicity, gender, or other identifier, unrelated to what they offer as a person, or in consideration with their knowledge, experience, or skill.

⁶ Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.

⁷ Dhati Lewis, *Advocates: The Narrow Path to Racial Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2019), Kindle Edition, Location 197.

⁸ N’dea Yancey-Brag, “What is systemic racism? Here’s what it means and how you can help dismantle it,” *USA Today*, January 29, 2021, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/06/15/systemic-racism-what-does-mean/5343549002/>.

INTRODUCTION

The people of my church are informing my understanding around culture and what it means to be a diverse, worshipping people. The cultural composition of our neighborhood and city is actively transitioning, evolving. Ellicott City, Maryland's ethnic diversity is complex, multifaceted, and on the cusp of being considered a non-majority population. This became apparent to me in 2015 with the death of Freddy Gray, after an arrest in the Sandtown neighborhood of Baltimore City. In 2015, our White majority church had African American families in the pews and on staff. Conversations that had been previously reserved for homogeneous settings were now occurring in diverse gatherings of church members.

Over time, our ethnic diversity increased; however, our church culture was primarily White. My worship planning decisions revolved more around whether we were going to sing hymn arrangements, CCM, Christian folk, traditional hymns, pop rock, or what I considered to be "gospel." I saw many skin colors and cultural dress in my congregation; however, I did not see or understand the culture of people with different skin colors or cultural dress. I didn't realize that I have an ethnicity, a culture. I did not make a connection between culture in the Scriptures and the worship culture in my church.

Through a series of events in my community and in my church, and personal experiences which I will share in greater detail in Chapter 1, coinciding with research on cultural intelligence, the multicultural church movement, racial reconciliation, and multiethnic worship practices, I began to ask questions. Is there a connection between the gospel, the Great Commission, and ethnicity and culture? How can worship aid in racial reconciliation and ethnic unity in our congregation and in our community? How do we discern our local church culture? How to we practice multicultural worship? By what measurements do we determine success in multiethnic worship?

The following is written to consider these questions and the implications of their answers in the context of Bethany Church and to address the challenges of transitioning from monocultural worship to a multiethnic worshipping community. Since the practice of telling stories is an important component of cultivating a multiethnic congregation, the qualitative research method of autobiographical and prosopography (group biography) narrative is found throughout these pages. Craig Kridel of the University of South Carolina writes in *An Introduction to Biographical Research*, an article published by The American Education Research Association, stating:

Biographical research in education may be conceived in many different ways; however, typically the topic constitutes the study of a single life, focusing primarily upon an individual who in some way is affiliated with the professional field of education, broadly conceived (Garraty, 1957; Oates, 1986). Other research methodologies are often bundled within the descriptor of biography and include life history writing, oral history, memoir, autobiography, and life narrative (Roberts, 2002; Josselson & Lieblich, 1993).⁹

Kridel concludes the article by stating:

Biography's relationship to autobiography, memoir, and narrative research in education is well developed and will continually be redefined (Denzin, 1989; Epstein, 1991; Rollyson, 2008). Yet with the emerging interest in biographical inquiry and with some growing interest in prosopography (group biography), little consensus of terminology exists; for example, it should be noted that while some qualitative researchers view the term¹⁰ auto/biography as accurate, there are dramatic differences between biography, and autobiography-much more than any slack or solidus can convey.

Amani Hmadan of the University of Western Ontario, writes the following in her article, *Autoethnography as a Genre of Qualitative Research: A Journey Inside Out*:

In this article, I argue that an autobiographical narrative approach is highly suited to educational research. I discuss how a researcher's personal narrative, or autoethnography, can act as a source of privileged knowledge. I further argue that personal experience methods can be used on a variety of topics relevant to teaching and the field of education in order to expand knowledge. Autobiographical narrative is a research genre and a

⁹ Craig Kridel, "An Introduction to Biographical Research," *American Educational Research Association*, accessed February 1, 2022, <https://www.aera.net/SIG013/Research-Connections/Introduction-to-Biographical-Research>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

methodology. It offers opportunities to highlight identity construction as it covers various aspects of the narrator's life.¹¹

These sources affirm that memoir, autobiography, prosopography, and narrative are considered under the umbrella of qualitative research methods. Therefore, autobiographical narrative will be implemented throughout both the written dissertation and the accompanying artifact.

¹¹ Amani Hamdan, "Autoethnography as a Genre of Qualitative Research: A Journey Inside Out," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 11, no. 5 (2012): 585-606, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/160940691201100505>

CHAPTER 1: THE CULTURAL COMPLEXITY OF THE BETHANY CHURCH CONTEXT

Overview

Chapter 1 discusses several local cultural factors that impact Bethany Church. First, an overview of racial history and escalation of racial tensions in the nearby city of Baltimore is presented followed by demographics by ethnicity for Howard County. These factors provide a local cultural and ethnic context in which the people of Bethany Church live. Through the form of memoir, racial tensions are exposed and new challenges for White leadership in the church emerge. Identifying cultural considerations as a result of changing local demographics and unearthing local racial tensions reveal a critical need for culturally-aware leadership and a transition away from monocultural worship practices and a pivot toward multiethnic worship practices.

Baltimore

On January 26, 2016, a White student at Mt. Hebron High School in Ellicott City, Maryland, posted a racist rant on YouTube bringing racist issues to the forefront of the community dialogue.¹² The student's racial rant disrupted the notion that Howard County is an inclusive and racially reconciled community. Ellicott City, Maryland is located in Howard County, just 10.08 miles from Baltimore City. In 2007, a community-wide initiative entitled, "Choose Civility" became the motto for Howard County. The intent of the initiative was the positioning of Howard County as a model of civility inspired by the book *Choosing Civility: The 25 Rules of Considerate Conduct* by Baltimore-based Johns Hopkins University Professor Dr. P.M. Forni. When the racist rant of the White high school student became viral, so did the undercurrents of racism in the county. Howard County residents thought they embraced

¹² Lisa Philip, "Mount Hebron students protest 'hateful' video," *The Baltimore Sun*, February 2, 2016, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/education/ph-ho-cf-video-protest-print-20160202-story.html>.

diversity; they believed they were inclusive—maybe they were, in part. However, there were also streams of racialization, and the White population was largely unaware—including me.

Churches in our area could ignore these and other racial events or they could address them head on. Bethany Church decided to address the issues. Our White youth pastor joined students in protest at Mt. Hebron High School. Although non-students were prohibited from walking onto school property to join the students in their planned protest, community members came and gathered on the corner across the street from the school. Our youth pastor stood on the corner visible to Bethany and other students. I did not go. I regret that decision. At the time, I was in a different place than I am now. At that time, I thought that protesting and speaking out made things worse. I did not oppose anyone else choosing to “march”—I just didn’t think it was helpful for me to do so.

In response to increasing racial tensions, Bethany Church held a community prayer meeting against racism. Our lead pastor began to preach on racism and encouraged members to attend the Howard County Library Redlining Exhibit, as well as Black museums and landmarks to become more familiar with racism in our area. Kip Smith, lead pastor, is a White man with Black grandchildren from Baltimore City. His White son and daughter-in-law fostered—and then adopted—three at-risk Black siblings in their preschool years. The Smith family had a heart for the marginalized and the Black community. Pastor Smith, a White male born and raised in South Carolina, now had a personal connection across ethnicities. With the addition of his beautiful Black granddaughters, he began to hear the ugly sounds of racist remarks in a personal context.

We are receiving messages about ethnicity, race, and culture throughout our lives. Our personal experiences, news events, and community structures are informing what we believe about one another. These messages impact how we relate to others in a variety of contexts,

including the church. At Bethany Church, we experience a complex set of ethnic and racial dynamics that impact our relationships with one another and the ways in which we worship. One such complexity is the racialized climate between Blacks and Whites in the Baltimore area.

Baltimore City is one of the most racially charged cities in the United States. In 2015, those racial tensions erupted into street violence, protests, burning of stores, and destruction of property as citizens of the Black community expressed their anger at the death of Freddie Gray during an arrest conducted by Baltimore City police officers. The rage was broadcast over the national airwaves, and the greater Baltimore region was forced to recognize the polarization of Whites and Blacks, rich and poor. The hopeless state of poverty, segregation, corruption, and systemic discrimination had been ongoing for generations with countless failed attempts to resolve Baltimore's problems. Freddie Gray's death became the rallying cry for Blacks in Baltimore. Within just a few miles of the city limits, it is possible to buffer oneself from the magnitude of hopelessness. As communities become Whiter and wealthier, farther from the city line, the recognition of injustice fades. Issues, sometimes unnoticed by communities outside of Baltimore, were forced to the front page in the 2015 Freddie Gray riots. People took sides. Initially, truth about what really happened was a mystery as the corruption of city officials and the police department further enraged the community. The racial divides grew greater with each day and each suspected incident of racist police brutality in the nation.

Erin Cox, reporter for *The Washington Post*, wrote a 2019 article summarizing decades of initiatives and programs, a succession of community, private sector, and government leaders and millions upon millions of dollars spent to address Baltimore's condition. The history of failure is overwhelming. The people who suffer the consequences are the Black and Brown residents of the city. One private sector business consultant brought in to work on restoring the city was

Michael Cryor. Cryor acted as “a long-term clearinghouse to channel private and public resources toward healing the city.”¹³ Cox describes the circumstances in which Cryor found himself:

Again, and again, Cryor was demoralized by the magnitude of the differences between Baltimore’s poorest neighborhoods and whiter, more affluent ones a few miles away. Life expectancies a decade shorter. One-fourth as much public, private and philanthropic investment. The cumulative effect of disadvantages in these communities was so large that a landmark 2015 Harvard study found that a black boy growing up in a poor part of Baltimore had a lower chance of climbing the economic ladder than if he was born just about anywhere else in the country.¹⁴

Cryor himself states in the interview with Cox, “I don’t think any of us fully appreciated the depth of the disparity, the generations of it.”¹⁵

These and additional factors are important to note in that they help to “take the temperature” of a congregation being stretched and challenged with race related issues. When our youth pastor resigned after 14 years of ministry at Bethany, we hired former football player and African American, Gary Freeman as the youth pastor. Gary had experience in racial reconciliation. There were more sermons on the topic of racism at Bethany Church. If the “birds had not been flushed” before, they were flushed now. Facebook became a place where the most vocal sharply expressed their opinions on matters of race. It was not as if everyone in the church was polarized. As a matter of fact, it was a vocal minority on opposing sides that was enhancing polarization. Many of the Whites did not think we had a problem. We are a very loving church. Race may have been an issue outside our walls, but it did not make it through our doors, or so we thought.

¹³ Erin Cox, “Years before Trump’s attacks, Freddie Gray’s death sparked a huge effort to heal Baltimore. It wasn’t enough,” *The Washington Post*, August 1, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-politics/freddie-grays-death-launched-an-unprecedented-effort-to-heal-baltimore-it-wasnt-enough/2019/08/01/06848f06-a7d9-11e9-86dd-d7f0e60391e9_story.html.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

It was at the end of a sermon by youth pastor Gary Freeman that led pastor Kip Smith to “call an audible” and ask for the Whites to remain silent and only listen. He asked Blacks in our congregation to share their experiences with racism. What happened next was what I would consider one of the most profound moments in the history of our church. Our African American brothers and sisters told us of marching with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and being arrested. They told us about being refused service in restaurants and rest stations. They told us about discrimination in the past and today. They told us about moments of fear and uncertainty when being bussed to schools outside of their neighborhoods. We listened to our brothers and sisters and were struck to the core. How could we know these precious friends all our lives and not know any of this? It was because we never talked about it before. This was a moment when conversations began to happen. It was a beginning, but there was and is much more work to be done.

These racial issues impacted my ability to effectively lead and plan meaningful worship for my congregation. I could not see their struggle, let alone spiritually walk with them through it in worship. I did not understand the Black worship culture. I did not know the history. At one point, my attempt to give some history to the song “Amazing Grace” by doing a quick and shallow Internet search enraged one of our African American men. Those who lead worship have a unique spiritual responsibility. We are the guardians of artforms and practices utilized for both corporate and individual communion with God. Worship pastors cue the groans that are too deep for words. Worship pastors facilitate the corporate deep crying out to deep. In the Old Testament, it was the musicians in the priestly tribe of Levi who led the people into battle.¹⁶ Today, worship leaders use the arts to help their people look to God in all circumstances. We cannot do this effectively if we do not care enough to listen to and empathize with the struggles of our people,

¹⁶ 2 Chron. 20:21.

learn and honor the ways in which they have expressed their corporate worship, and facilitate the cultural expressions of worship that are the fabric of their faith.

Therefore, the first factor in the complexity of this multicultural congregation is the presence of historic and contemporary issues around racism specifically against the Black community. Furthermore, complexity is enhanced by the presence of a White worship leader without racial awareness nor the experiences of people of color in her congregation, nor the knowledge of Black church and other cultural worship practices, songs, and forms of expression. The result is a form of hegemony where the non-majority church members are offered primarily White culture expressions of worship.

2020 U.S. Census

One Sunday afternoon during the pandemic, my young adult son and I went to our local park for an extended walk around Centennial Lake. The weather was exceptionally beautiful, and the park was full of people enjoying the day. What we came to realize as we walked the winding path was the majority of people at the park that day were celebrating a Muslim holiday, *Eid*. The month-long fast of Ramadan was ended by the first glimpses of the new moon. One of the traditions when celebrating *Eid* is to wear new clothes. We were blessed by seeing hundreds of people from various parts of the world dressed in their very best cultural clothing. The women and girls wore sequined gowns, brightly colored saris, lovely hijabs, African dresses and headdresses, and full black burkas. Many of the men wore cultural clothing and hats; however, some wore nice Western clothing. To walk around Centennial Park that day, one would think they were on the other side of the world. However, this beautiful sight was a reminder of the growing, diverse, foreign-born populations that reside in Howard County, Maryland. As I soaked

in the beautiful scene of hundreds of extraordinarily dressed Muslim families, one question persisted in my mind: Where was everyone else?

The 2020 U.S. Census results have been published. These results function, in part, like a narrative on our nation. The census shows us where we have been, where we are now, and what is projected for the future. There is a significant change in the ethnic composition of the United States, especially in the last ten years since the 2010 census. The multiracial population “was measured at 9 million people in 2010 and is now 33.8 million people in 2020, a 276% increase.”¹⁷

An article from the U.S. Department of Commerce and U.S. Census Bureau on Population Estimates and Projections states:

the population is projected to grow more from international migration than natural increase in coming decades because of population aging. As baby boomers age into older adulthood, the number of deaths is projected to rise faster than the number of births. As a result, the population will naturally grow very slowly, leaving international migration to overtake natural increase as the leading cause of population growth, even as projected levels of migration remain relatively flat.¹⁸

Since the death rate of White Americans will exceed their birthrate, non-Hispanic White population will shrink in coming decades.¹⁹ For a nation that has experienced being a White majority population since its inception, such news is considerably noteworthy.

Age is one significant factor in population changes in the U.S. Another factor is the rise in people who are Two or More Races, followed by international migration.

The population of people who are Two or More Races is projected to be the fastest growing racial or ethnic group over the next several decades, followed by Asians and

¹⁷ Nicholas Jones, Rachel Marks, Roberto Ramirez, and Merarys Ríos-Vargas, “Improved Race and Ethnicity Measures Reveal U.S. Population is Much More Multiracial,” *United States Census Bureau*, August 12, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html>.

¹⁸ Jonathan Vespa, Lauren Medina, and David M. Armstrong, “Demographic Turning Points for the United States: Population Projections for 2020 to 2060,” *United States Census Bureau*, revised February 2020, <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1144.pdf>, 2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

Hispanics. The causes of their growth are different, however. For Hispanics and people who are Two or More Races, high growth rates are largely the result of high rates of natural increase, given the relatively young age structure of these populations. For Asians, the driving force behind their growth is high net international migration.²⁰

The increase in foreign-born populations (of which Asian populations are the fastest growing) in addition to the rise of peoples of Two or More Races (projected to grow by 200% by 2060), followed by the growing Hispanic populations (which will double in the next four decades), the White population is no longer projected to make up the majority of the U.S. population by the year 2045.²¹ By 2030, “net international migration is expected to become the primary driver of population growth in the United States.”²² Being a nation of immigrants is not only historically part of our past, it is certainly our future.

In Howard County, Maryland, where Bethany Church is located, a majority-minority status was reached in 2019 increasing the likelihood that residents are already living out a multicultural reality in their everyday lives.

Howard County has a racially diverse population. According to the latest American Community Survey (2019), about 50% of Howard County residents are White, 20% African American, 19% Asian, and 7% Hispanic. The minority populations in Howard County have steadily increased over time and the county is now a “majority-minority” county for the first time with the release of this latest 2019 survey data, where the White population is less than 50% of the total. The adjacent counties of Montgomery, Prince George’s, and Baltimore City have been “majority-minority” for many years. Of all races, Howard County’s Asian population has increased the most significantly since 2010, growing by 50% over the last 9 years. During this same period, the White population in Howard County has decreased by 4%. Asian Indians make up the greatest number of Asians in Howard County, followed by Chinese, Korean, other Asians, and then Filipinos, Vietnamese, and Japanese.²³

Mt. Hebron High School, located 1.3 miles from Bethany Church, is already at a non-majority status and communicates a message of cultural intelligence to the community. The

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 7.

²² Ibid., 10.

²³ Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning, “Howard County Demographic Overview,” Accessed November 4, 2021, <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/sites/default/files/media/2020-10/Howard%20County%20Demographic%20Overview%20-%202020.pdf>.

White population of the school is at 40.4%, followed by an Asian population of 33.9%, Black/African American population of 12.5%, Hispanic/Latino population of 9/3%, American Indian/Alaskan, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Two or More Races each at 5%. The vision statement on the school's profile states: "The vision of the Mt. Hebron High School community is to embrace diversity and possess the skills, knowledge and confidence to positively influence the larger community."²⁴ It is important to note that the vision of the school is not solely related to education. The vision centers on positively influencing a diverse community. This communicates that the school leadership believe in order to be successful as a community, it is imperative for students to be culturally aware and working toward the good of the other. Likewise for the church, it is also imperative for us to be culturally aware and practicing hospitality to the other to accomplish our mission.

The second complex factor of the multiethnic nature of this congregation is that we are more than a White and Black congregation. Our multiethnic composition requires a cultural intelligence in a more global sense. This global, largely foreign-born community, requires hospitality, leadership, and diverse worship practices that our church leadership is not yet equipped to provide. I imagine that our church is like others that are located in areas where the population is increasing in diversity. One important question for the leadership is "are we ready?" Are we ready for things to change? Are we like the non-Muslim people who usually come to the park, but decided to leave because of the celebration of *Eid* and the many Muslim adherents? If we love people the way God loves people, and if we want to obey Jesus's Great Commission, then we will need to answer the question; for, never has the need to cultivate multiethnic worship experiences been more critical than it is today.

²⁴ Hebron County Public School System, "Mt. Hebron High School: Profile," Accessed September 6, 2021, https://www.hcpss.org/f/schools/profiles/prof_hs_mthebron.pdf.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Transitioning from monocultural worship practices to multiethnic worship practices requires more than one might imagine. In addition to discovering new artistic and liturgical elements to add to a service, the entire life of the church becomes integrated with becoming multiethnic. Personal worldview and cultural “come froms” are held in tension with unfamiliar perspectives, renewed leadership attention, and different cultural and spiritual practices. Chapter 2 discusses elements worthy of consideration when beginning a transition to multiethnic worship. Beginning with the importance of cultural intelligence and how it informs worship ministry, Chapter 2 examines characteristics of homogenous and multiethnic congregations. The *Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture* is used to expand on the academic discussion of culture followed by descriptions of different types of church cultures. Finally, Chapter 2 will provide a biblical and theological framework for practicing multicultural worship followed by examples of multicultural practices that are accessible to Bethany Church and other churches who find themselves at the beginning point of transitioning to expressions of multicultural worship.

Cultural Intelligence and How it Informs Worship Ministry

My young friend and fellow church member, Yetunde, is a foreign-born immigrant from Nigeria who agreed to teach me how to cook plantains. She and her husband and children live in northwest Baltimore. Yetunde says that picking the right plantains is critical to cooking them properly, so the first step of our cooking adventure was a trip to the Caribbean store in her neighborhood. The Caribbean store is an indoor market. Yetunde warned me before going in the market about the smells that would be unfamiliar and unpleasant for me. This meek and quiet

woman was starting to take the lead, which is not something she had done with me before. She offered to carry a bag that I was carrying and told me that in her country, the younger women always carry things for the older women. Doing so is a form of respect and caring for elders. I am an independent self-sufficient woman. I am not accustomed to people carrying things for me or pointing out my age. The thought crossed my mind that this is a time to let go of the Western notion of associating a “less than” mentality toward being the older woman. Yetunde’s Nigerian culture attributes wisdom, character, and respect toward older women. It required a reversal of my way of thinking to receive her words and actions as a compliment. How quickly our cultural cooking activity took me outside of familiarity and into new territory. A cultural shift was taking place and we had only just gotten out of the car.

As we walked into the Caribbean store, I quickly realized that I was in a setting where people who look like me do not often enter. I could feel everyone staring at me. Yetunde instructed me to follow her lead. We first went to the cashier to get bags for our items. While at the front, I asked permission to video tape our shopping in hopes of using the images for a project on cross-cultural cooking. The Asian owners/cashiers did not understand me when I asked for permission to photograph inside their store. Yetunde was attuned to what was transpiring. She picked up on the nonverbal reaction to my request. Yetunde then stepped forward and repeated my request and assured them that I was only using my pictures for a school project. The cashiers were feeling a level of distrust toward me yet seemed to trust Yetunde.

As we began our shopping, Yetunde took me around the store and showed me the vegetables that she cooks with and varieties of potatoes that were completely unfamiliar to me. I had no idea what many of the foods were, let alone how they would be prepared. There were so many new foods, spices, and other products that I did not recognize. Shopping at the Caribbean

store that day was both exciting and tiring. My mental processing was at a higher level than a trip to my grocery store. I couldn't take it all in, especially while feeling the eyes of shoppers and market workers on me the entire time. I was in an unfamiliar cultural context for which I had limited ability to function effectively.

“Culture” is a word we use in a variety of ways in U.S. society. In workplace environments and organizations, culture can be described as the unwritten rules, expectations, priorities, and preferences that exist whether intentionally or unintentionally within the organization. In other settings, culture may be described as an approved body of select genres (classical, for example) of art, music, or fashion. Those who are exposed to and consume certain genres may be referred to as “cultured.” Additionally, when discussing people-groups from various parts of the world, we speak of culture in terms of traditions, foods, customs, art, music, values, and practices that are common to those regions.

For purposes of this discussion, it is helpful to consider two definitions for the word “culture.” Conde-Frazier, Kang, and Parrett, in their book *A Many Colored Kingdom*, offer the following explanation of culture: “Culture can be described as an integrated system of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products (i.e., learned behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideals) shared by a group of people (i.e., a particular society or population). Culture organizes and regulates what the group thinks, feels, and does.”²⁵

Daniel Hill, in his book *White Awake*, borrows from Richard Brislin and Tomoko Yoshida, popularized coauthors of *Intercultural Communication Training: An Introduction*: “Culture consists of concepts, values, and assumptions about life that guide behavior and are widely shared by people.... [These] are transmitted generation to generation, rarely with explicit

²⁵ Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, Steve Kang, and Gary Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2004), 18.

instructions, by parents, teachers, religious figures, and other respected elders.”²⁶ These definitions help us to understand culture which is often imprinted on groups of people and discerned intuitively by those inside the group.

Communities of faith (churches) are groups of people with a particular culture. The intersection of faith and culture is important for multicultural worship leaders to see and perceive. Korie Edwards, in her book *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches*, believes “American churches are not just places where people gather to pray and learn from the Bible, they are also significant social and cultural institutions.”²⁷ As we seek to facilitate multicultural worship in the local church, we consider the many cultures represented in our congregations and communities. We also observe the overall culture of the church as a collective group.

Developing a greater understanding of culture and diversity within an organization is something David Livermore has studied and written about for some time. Livermore has been at the forefront of helping secular businesses and global organizations grow in what he refers to as “CQ,” or cultural quotient, also referred to as “cultural intelligence.” His insights have been tremendously helpful to the business world. Christian churches can likewise benefit from learning more about cultural diversity and creating awareness around culture within their congregations. Livermore defines cultural intelligence as “the capability to function effectively in a variety of cultural contexts.”²⁸ Developing the concept of cultural intelligence further, Livermore has created testing to evaluate an individual or organization’s cultural intelligence quotient, or CQ.

²⁶ Daniel Hill, *White Awake: An Honest Look at What It Means to Be White* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2017), 27.

²⁷ Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 487.

²⁸ David Livermore, *The Cultural Intelligence Difference: Master the One Skill You Can’t Do Without in Today’s Global Economy* (New York, NY: American Management Association, 2011), 16.

According to Livermore, “Everyone has a cultural intelligence quotient, and we can all improve our CQ.”²⁹ Furthermore, in the business world, cultural intelligence is critical to survival and growth. Livermore states: “Not only do individuals with high cultural intelligence survive the twists and turns of our rapidly globalizing world, they thrive in them.”³⁰ In my ministry experience, studies on cultural intelligence have been primarily directed toward international missionaries and mission efforts. In Chapter 1, we saw that the nations of the world are migrating at an accelerated rate bringing foreign-born people to our neighborhoods and churches. It is exciting to apply Livermore’s observations in the business world to the local church, projecting potential thriving multiethnic ministries. For many local churches, developing cultural intelligence may be more than an option but rather a necessity for survival. Livermore recognizes the role of cultural intelligence in faith communities as he provides: “...not only do pastoral staff need to develop CQ, church lay leaders also need to develop CQ in order to lead and minister effectively and across racial and ethnic lines.”³¹

Some ministry leaders may question how important it is for a local church to invest limited resources on developing cultural intelligence asking: “Isn’t focusing on the gospel enough?” Mark DeYmaz, in his book *Re:MIX: Transitioning Your Church to Living Color*, addresses this question and asserts the importance for churches to work towards a multicultural context as he states, “Congregations who are unwilling to re:MIX can expect a steady decline in membership and relevance over time.”³² DeYmaz goes on to suggest that a local community may be wary of homogenous churches looking upon them with “suspicion, distrust and fear,

²⁹ Ibid., 17.

³⁰ Ibid., 31.

³¹ Ibid., 26.

³² Mark DeYmaz and Bob Whitesel, *Re:Mix, Transitioning Your Church to Living Color* (Nashville, TN: NavPress, 2016), 409.

inhibiting the efficacy of ministry in these communities.”³³ Such misgivings may certainly serve as an obstacle for sharing the gospel with the community.

Practitioners of cultural intelligence argue that CI is more than awareness. Cultural intelligence also encompasses the ability to problem-solve cross-culturally. Jered Sorber, student pastor at Bridgeway Community Church and contributor to *Multicultural Ministry Handbook*, illustrates this point when sharing an experience officiating a funeral for a family comprised of first-generation and second-generation people of Nigerian descent. Sorber recalls:

The expectations of the Nigerian children contrasted with those who had lived most of their lives in the United States. I had to learn how Nigerians think about death and what a traditional funeral is supposed to be like. Then I had to negotiate between the different desires of the two sets of children. As a pastor I hope that the death of a loved one brings about reconciliation and connection within a family, but sometimes it does not! In this instance, each group learned to honor what the other needed to make the funeral meaningful for all.³⁴

Examining Homogeneous and Multiethnic Church Contexts

Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, sociologists and authors of the groundbreaking book *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, along with a plethora of books on this subject, acknowledge that homogeneous church development in the U.S. has proven to be a successful formula for growth and evangelism.³⁵ People prefer to spend their time with those who have shared experiences and are most like them. There is an ease and comfort level when gathering in groups that speak the same language, listen to the same music, worship similarly, enjoy the same foods and recreational activities and share similar upbringings and life experiences. Although people will attend school or work with those of various ethnicities, when given the choice, they tend to gather with those most like them. Emerson and

³³ Ibid., 111.

³⁴ David Anderson and Margarita Cabellon, *Multicultural Ministry Handbook: Connecting Creatively to a Diverse World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 64-65.

³⁵ Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 141.

Smith reference an interview with a woman named “Nancy,” a White Presbyterian woman, and her perception of segregated worship. Nancy is quoted in their book as stating, “Because of our cultural backgrounds,” Blacks and Whites “might not enjoy the same kinds of worship. The way we express our worship to God is different. And so if I choose to worship the way I enjoy worshipping, and my black brothers and sisters want to worship in another fashion, that should be okay.”³⁶

Emerson and Smith argue:

that in the face of social and religious pluralism, the organization of American religion powerfully drives religious groups toward internal similarity. Our argument provides theoretical insight and elaboration to the basic position communicated by Nancy at the beginning of this chapter—that to the extent that people can choose, they chose to be with people like themselves. But much more is operating than pure personal choice, and these factors lead people to internally similar congregations.³⁷

As a result of these preferences and the “much more” referenced by Emerson and Smith, multicultural churches may be less likely to thrive and grow than are homogenous churches. Bob Whitesel, Professor of Missional Leadership Wesley Seminary at Indiana Wesleyan University, in an article written for the Academy of Intercultural Research writes the following: “While worshipping in a blended format can create a degree of cross-cultural sensitivity, it may also be weaker in its outreach potential because it is less relevant to people who identify strongly with their cultural traditions.”³⁸

If Emerson and Smith’s findings are true that when given the choice, human beings prefer to gather with those who are most like them and that multicultural churches are less likely to thrive and grow, and Whitesel’s assertion that intercultural churches face unique challenges that limit their outreach potential, then we may conclude that multicultural worship is not likely

³⁶ Ibid., 135.

³⁷ Ibid., 136.

³⁸ Bob Whitesel, “Five Types of Multicultural Churches,” *Academy for Intercultural Church Research*, October 26, 2016, <https://intercultural.church/five-types-of-multicultural-churches/>.

to develop organically or naturally. Intentional diversity work in the local church informed by cultural intelligence will serve to advance efforts in multicultural worship ministry.

Reading about the need for intentional diversity work while noticing various ethnicities in my congregation—which seemed to evolve without effort—appeared to contradict some of what the experts were saying. New questions began to form in my mind. Are there factors in the lives of the non-majority worshipers in my congregation that influenced their ability to worship in a White-majority church? As part of my research, I engaged in some informal ethnography by conducting Zoom and in-person interviews with African American members of my church. Through these interviews, I gained insight into their personal histories. I discovered a correlation between personal exposure to White culture outside of the church and a change in their comfort level with worshipping in a White-majority church. All the African Americans I interviewed had been raised in exclusively Black communities and attended Black churches. Many of those interviewed attended historically Black colleges or universities. It was in the working world where they began to interact with those from the White community. Eventually, their professional employment afforded them the opportunity to purchase homes in White or blended neighborhoods. Their children attended public schools with greater diversity where they built friendships across cultural lines. It was interesting to note that integrated worship was the last step in the progression of intercultural engagement beyond the Black community.³⁹

As non-majority members of society, African Americans, along with other non-majority peoples, are experienced at adapting to the majority culture on a regular basis, as they build cross-cultural capabilities. They are continually developing cultural intelligence as they adapt to White culture and multicultural contexts. This may be a reason why multicultural churches that

³⁹ Edward and Joan Tisdale (retired African American couple from Bethany Church), in discussion with the author, March 9, 2020; Ernest and Judy Baylor (first African American members of Bethany Church), in discussion with the author, April 18, 2020.

do thrive are typically led by White pastors as non-majority people tend to be more experienced in cross-cultural contexts. In Korie Edwards's book, *The Elusive Dream*, she provides helpful statistics on the leadership of interracial churches. Edwards states: "Of interracial churches surveyed, 28% were led by a Black pastor and 68% were led by a White pastor."⁴⁰ Based on her research, Edwards argues that White members will tend to leave churches where White leadership is not present. This is not a conscious decision but rather a result of cultural factors that White people find themselves uncomfortable with over time. For example, Edwards notes that when a youth group becomes predominantly Black, White parents become concerned about the influences of youth group members of color on their child.⁴¹ Edwards also finds that white people are less accustomed to adapting to cultural dynamics while people of color are more adept and experienced at adapting culturally diverse contexts. Edwards reports from her research at Crosstown Church that: "Although whites at Crosstown were more likely to tell me that they were committed to interracial churches, African Americans were more likely to stay. They remained at the church in the face of structural change, conflict, and unmet desires."⁴² Recognizing that my non-majority brothers and sisters in Christ are likely regularly adapting their preferences and cultural worship practices to my White culture worship practices has been an anchoring moment in my growth as a multicultural worship pastor.

A challenge that White evangelical worship pastors may encounter is a lack of awareness of his/her own culture or the belief that Whites do not have a culture. Just saying the words, "White culture" may create "off" or racialized feelings. In many evangelical churches, White culture has been the majority culture; therefore, it is easy for a White worship leader to be unaware of planning and decisions impacted by that White culture. Daniel Hill is a White pastor

⁴⁰ Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 2016.

⁴¹ Ibid., 869.

⁴² Ibid., 1567.

and author who shares his journey of seeing his own culture. His book begins with an experience he once had at a wedding of a friend with Asian Indian heritage. The friend's wedding encompassed some of the traditions and practices of his Indian culture. Hill so enjoyed the experience and shared his enthusiasm with his friend stating that he wished he had a culture. His friend's response was eye-opening to Hill. His friend responded by saying, "Daniel, you may be white, but don't let that lull you into thinking you have no culture. White culture is very real. In fact, when white culture encounters other cultures, it almost always wins. So it would be a really good idea for you to learn about your culture."⁴³ I will have to admit that seeing my own culture has been one of the most challenging parts of this journey. It is easier to see something that is different. It is more challenging to see things that I am accustomed to. I asked the Lord to give me eyes to see my own cultural influences which have informed my worship planning, selection of music, and which practices I implement in our services.

What if a majority culture within a church seems to hold all the cards? This may be a form of hegemony. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines hegemony as the "social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group."⁴⁴ Edwards defines hegemony as "a form of rule where the dominant group's status is based primarily upon the consent of subordinate groups."⁴⁵ Another definition provided by Edwards states hegemony as "a form of rule where whites dominate society with the consent of racial minorities."⁴⁶ Edwards continues to expand on hegemony:

Subordinate groups perceive the dominant group's rule as legitimate and acknowledge its beliefs, values, and practices a 'common sense.' Consent can look like full endorsement of a dominant group's culture and status, or like a passive, uneasy acceptance that is the

⁴³ Hill, *White Awake*, 3.

⁴⁴ "Hegemony," *Merriam-Webster*, Accessed November 4, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hegemony>.

⁴⁵ Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 1482.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1498.

only doable means of organizing society. Either way, subordinate groups are embedded in society and perceive no other truly viable alternative.⁴⁷

Soong-Chan Rah, in his book *Many Colors, Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church*, states “When we are dealing with cross-cultural and multicultural ministry, it is important to see God at work in all cultures, not just one.”⁴⁸ Hegemony in the church would suggest that God is at work in one culture. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a proponent of integrated worship. In his book *Stride Toward Freedom*, Dr. King states:

I was convinced that worship at its best is a social experience with people of all levels of life coming together to realize their oneness and unity under God. Whenever the church, consciously or unconsciously, caters to one class it loses the spiritual force of the “whosoever will, let him come” doctrine, and is in danger of becoming little more than a social club with a thin veneer of religiosity.⁴⁹

What does hegemony, or a homogenous culture in a multicolored congregation, look like? How does hegemony, or homogenous leadership, manifest itself within a church environment? When a church is comprised of two or more ethnicities and the culture of the church reflects primarily one of those cultures, a form of hegemony may be at work. The list below is in no way a litmus test for white cultural dominance in the worship service. It also does not imply stereotypes of White worship. The list below does highlight common characteristics of predominantly White churches as mentioned in some of the research materials for this dissertation. White hegemony in a worship ministry **might** look like the following:

1. The worship band is primarily White.⁵⁰
2. The worship band primarily plays music written or recorded by White artists.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1486.

⁴⁸ Soong-Chan Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2010), 162.

⁴⁹ Martin Luther King Jr. and Clayborne Carson, *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2010), 39.

⁵⁰ Anderson and Cabellon, *Multicultural Ministry Handbook*, 92-94.

⁵¹ Ibid, 96.

3. The above music is played identically to the recording without customizing the arrangement to a cultural genre of non-majority people on the worship team or in the congregation.⁵²
4. There are no verbal “Amen” or shouts of affirmation or praise during the sermon.⁵³
5. Worship services are time oriented.⁵⁴
6. The order of worship may be strictly followed with little room for spontaneous change.
7. Decision-making leadership positions are primarily held by White persons.⁵⁵
8. Because decision making is made by all White leadership, non-majority members may receive the “leftovers” of church resources such as facility and rehearsal space, supplies, calendar dates for events/activities, and financial resources.

A form of hegemony outside of the worship ministry at Bethany Church occurred a few or more years ago when our calendar was full of ministry activities and some of the African American ladies wanted to add some events that they would lead. Their ideas included a yard sale, a paper shredding day, and a health screening day. These types of events are not common for our church. We had never hosted a paper shredding day or a health screening day. I do not believe our leadership, myself included, saw these events as important. The church already had a full calendar of activities and events that seemed more “spiritual.” At this point, a cultural and spiritual judgment was unknowingly made. The leadership did not make sufficient effort to help these ladies promote their events nor did we participate. I believe our lack of support and interest impacted the success of these activities. The White leadership granted permission for the event, but there was not enough CI or non-majority leadership support for the non-majority ladies to succeed. It did not occur to me until much later that a health care screening day would be

⁵² Ibid, 98.

⁵³ Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 1532.

⁵⁴ Josh Davis and Nikki Lerner, *Worship Together in Your Church as in Heaven* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2015), 69.

⁵⁵ Sandra Van Opstal, *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2016), 85.

meaningful to a population that was underserved. I did not see my African American friends as underserved at the time. One of the ladies organizing the events worked at the State Department and the other lady owned her own business. These ladies had the vision to see and serve those who were less fortunate in our community. I was blind to the needs in our community and assumed everyone could receive health care screenings from their personal physicians. I was wrong to make those assumptions. Diversity at the places where decisions are made, and authority is given, breaks the grip of hegemony in an organization. Diversity in leadership can expose blind spots of majority leaders and ensure that the needs of all of the people in the church and community are addressed.

Another problematic approach to dealing with culture is adopting a colorblind mindset. A colorblind mindset begins by saying that skin color has no impact on an individual or group. To be colorblind is to say that everyone is the same without any differences. The intent of this mindset is to support equality; however, the unintended result states that race, ethnicity, and culture do not matter. Although culture and identity are not the same thing, culture is a significant part of both group and individual identity.

I recall an instance in a Bethany Church pastoral staff meeting where one of the staff members spoke about being colorblind. His heart was in the right place. He wanted to express that he did not see a person of color any differently from any of his White friends or colleagues. Equality was the value and biblical principle that he was trying to earnestly express to our African American staff members. At the time, I understood his point. I was aware that the colorblind position was “wrong” according to people of color, but I did not understand why it was considered wrong. When the movie *Black Panther* came out, I gained a new understanding. I witnessed an African American staff pastor’s reaction to the movie and the reaction of his

family members. I could see how meaningful the African ancestry portrayed in the movie was to them. I witnessed the impact of this movie in which the characters were portrayed as good, heroic, powerful, beautiful, strong, ancestral, intelligent, royal, spiritual, and wealthy people. I began to understand that people of color want to celebrate these unique qualities, not sweep them under the rug so that they can be like everyone else. To hold to a colorblind mindset is to strip away pieces of identity and value. Equality: yes. Color blindness: no.

This instance with the African American staff pastor and his family helped me to see how important culture and identity are paired together. Daniel Hill, in his book *White Awake*, pairs culture and identity in a way that reflects the mingled nature of who we are and how we fit in. He describes how culture “shapes the way we interpret our experiences as well as how we evaluate the behavior of others.”⁵⁶ Furthermore, Hill applies the lenses of culture, race, ethnicity, and/or class. When looking intently at the close relationship that culture and identity play, we see personal, spiritual, theological, and social elements at work in individuals and people groups. Cultural identity, as Hill refers to it, is as personal as it is unique to the individual. There is almost a customized aspect to one’s cultural identity as each person’s experiences and influences are unique. Identity may be considered both a theological and psychological construct and both together merge as they influence spiritual formation. Cultural identity also influences one’s social choices and preferences. All these aspects heighten the importance of intentionality around culture in the context of the local church. According to Hill, if a church hopes to be relevant in the lives of people, it must consider the questions of “who am I?” and “how do I fit in?” Therefore, culture and ethnicity are important and must be seen, respected, practiced, and valued. Furthermore, we may conclude that our cultural artforms speak loudly into the lives and identities of worshipers and must be thoughtfully produced and presented. Cindy Lee, in her

⁵⁶ Hill, *White Awake*, 27.

Doctoral Dissertation for Bakke Graduate University, makes a connection between identity as an Asian North American and spiritual formation as she states:

Spiritual formation is inherently tied to identity formation. Although a large part of spiritual formation involves daily practices, the goal of these practices is ultimately to shape one's self-identity in relation to God's identity. This project further argues that the relationship between identity formation and spiritual formation is an ongoing, cyclical process. Spiritual formation in Christ shapes one's identity formation and continued identity formation should shape one's spiritual formation. Therefore, the issue of identity formation in Asian American studies is foundational for understanding spiritual formation in Asian American believers.⁵⁷

Identifiers of a Multicultural Church

Before closing out this chapter, it would be helpful to describe and define multicultural church. Social scientist and author Korie Edwards provides her criteria and particular qualities for considering a church to be multicultural. The following is a summary of her criteria:

1. Some consider a 90:10 ratio to be sufficient for categorizing a church as multicultural, however Edwards prefers an 80:20 ratio. In the 80:20 ratio the majority culture may not exceed 80% of the membership. The 20% may be a combination of various cultures other than the majority. Edwards delineates between the 20% being comprised of one ethnicity and churches where the 20% is comprised of a combination of ethnicities.⁵⁸
2. The existence of challenges related to local racial succession
3. A fluctuation of available resources
4. An organizational commitment to racial diversity

Edwards highlights a significant strength and weakening in these multicultural faith environments as she states:

Interracial churches, in particular, are places where people could voluntarily interact across racial lines to build a religious community that worships God and challenges racialized structures. Instead, they embrace their racial diversity while at the same time

⁵⁷ Cindy Lee, "Finding God in My Roots: A Multicultural Spiritual Formation for Taiwanese Americans" (DMin diss., Bakke Graduate University, 2011), 52.

⁵⁸ Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 1895.

affirming the status quo. Interracial churches are a powerful domain of consent building within the broader American social structure.⁵⁹

Joan Huyser-Honig, in her article titled *Multicultural Leadership in Worship: Sharing Power Among Cultures*, describes multicultural church through the lens of worship practices as follows: “Being a multicultural church means more than singing global songs. It means that the people who plan worship, lead worship, and make decisions come from many cultures and ethnic groups.”⁶⁰

The Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture

The Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture provides a helpful framework for discussing the cultural aspects of corporate worship. The Nairobi Statement is “from the third international consultation of the Luther World Federation’s Study Team on Worship and Culture, held in Nairobi, Kenya, in January of 1996.”⁶¹ Authors of this statement identify “four central principles of the relationship between worship and culture.”⁶² The principles state that worship is transcultural, contextual, counter-cultural, cross-cultural.

1) Worship is transcultural: “Some elements of worship are beyond culture.”⁶³

Here are some elements of worship that transcend culture, meaning that these elements are present in the worship of all Christians for all times and all cultures. The gathering of people, practice of the table, baptism, singing praise to God, and preaching which is based in holy Scripture are some of those transcultural components of worship. The Nairobi Statement

⁵⁹ Ibid., 1531.

⁶⁰ Joan Huyser-Honig, “Multicultural Leadership in Worship: Sharing Power Among Cultures,” *Calvin Institute of Christian Worship*, September 22, 2011, <https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/multicultural-leadership-in-worship-sharing-power-among-cultures/>.

⁶¹ “Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture Full Text,” *Calvin Institute of Christian Worship*, June 16, 2014, <https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/nairobi-statement-on-worship-and-culture-full-text/>.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Van Opstal, *The Next Worship*, 31.

provides: “The great narratives of Christ’s birth, death, resurrection, and sending of the Spirit, and our Baptism into him, provide the central meanings of the transcultural times of the church’s year; especially Lent/Easter/Pentecost, and, to a lesser extent Advent/Christmas/Epiphany.”⁶⁴ As believers in Jesus Christ, we are united around these central elements of worship although we may express them differently. Whether attending in person or when viewing a virtual worship service, Christians can expect a sermon, songs of praise, and prayers in that service regardless of denomination or cultural context. Identifying the transcultural aspects of worship can be of tremendous help in multicultural worship planning. These are the elements that identify and define Christian worship for all Christian worshipers for all time. Transcultural elements of worship are unifying in that they reinforce shared essentials of faith and practice.

2) Worship is contextual: “Worship reflects the culture in which it is offered.”⁶⁵

The Nairobi Statement begins this section by stating: “Jesus whom we worship was born into a specific culture of the world. In the mystery of his incarnation are the model and the mandate for the contextualization of Christian worship.”⁶⁶ From Genesis to Revelation, God’s revelation to His people is set in a specific cultural context. God chose a specific people group, the Israelites, to be His chosen people. He established spiritual practices and cultural norms that made them distinctive from other people groups and nations. Through prophets, God gave instructions on their morality by giving Moses the Ten Commandments.⁶⁷ God gave the Israelites

⁶⁴ “Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture Full Text.”

⁶⁵ Van Opstal, *The Next Worship*, 30; Sandra Van Opstal, *Mission of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 31.

⁶⁶ “Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture Full Text.”

⁶⁷ Exod. 20.

instructions on worship through the sacrificial system and the making of the Tabernacle.⁶⁸ These instructions became unique cultural practices. God's covenant relationship was symbolized through circumcision, which became a significant cultural distinction in the New Testament between believing Jews and believing Gentiles. God used spiritual practices in the context of a specific culture as a means of revelation and relationship. As we study Scripture, we read of the many ways in which God uses the context of culture for revelation. Today, we may embrace contextualization in contemporary and culturally diverse worship practices.

In the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries, Christian ethnodoxologists, linguists, sociologists, and missiologists have studied unique cultural worship contexts on a global level. Gerardo Marti, sociologist and author, describes ethnodoxology as a relatively new field of study which is developing a new understanding regarding race and worship.⁶⁹ Marti suggests that the concern of ethnodoxologists "is entirely with the study of music and worship in an explicitly Christian context."⁷⁰ The International Council of Ethnodoxologists defines the study as "a theological and anthropological study, and practical application, of how every cultural group might use its unique and diverse artistic expression appropriately to worship the God of the Bible."⁷¹ Editor James R. Krabill's *Ethnodoxology Handbook, Worship and Mission for the Global Church* is evidence of the increased work done in documentation and training of leaders for contextualized worship ministry. John D. Witvliet, director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, states that Krabill's handbook contains "the best of what we are learning from ethnomusicology, linguistics, worship studies, missiology, and the arts on the holy task of creating and nurturing a healthy diet of culturally appropriate worship for the life and mission of

⁶⁸ Exod. 25-31.

⁶⁹ Marti, *Worship Across the Racial Divide*, 14.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ International Council of Ethnodoxologists, "A Network for Culturally Appropriate Christian Worship," accessed April 24, 2021, <http://www.worldofworship.org/Ethnodoxology.php>.

the church.”⁷² The development of a field of study with focuses on contextualized Christian worship music indicates the importance of understanding the cultural aspects of the arts in worship. The wealth of tools, resources, stories, and research is evidence of the need for contextualized worship.

Contextualization is not only applicable on a global level but also on a local level within the United States. Marti acknowledges the growing interest in contextualization for the worship service in smaller localities in the U.S. as he espouses that:

expressions of worship often reflect the culture of the worshiper for worship is both a personal expression and corporate or communal one. There are thousands of ecclesiastical communities just in the United States, each with their own histories and controversies, and sociologists (along with growing numbers of church leaders) who regularly observe worship practices become highly sensitized to the contextual specificity of what happens in various localities.⁷³

3) Worship is counter-cultural: “Worship resists the idolatries of its cultural context.”⁷⁴

John 15:19 gives us clear guidance regarding the Christian’s relationship to a societal context when the Apostle tells the reader that we are “in” the world, but not “of” the world. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, provides that “Jesus Christ came to transform all people and all cultures, and calls us not to conform to the world, but to be transformed with it.”⁷⁵

Counter cultural worship challenges that which is contrary or in opposition to “the Gospel in a given culture.”⁷⁶ The Nairobi statement states that counter cultural worship pushes against systems or patterns within a culture which “idolize the self or the local group at the expense of a wider humanity.”⁷⁷

⁷² James Krabill, *Worship and Mission for the Global Church*.

⁷³ Marti, *Worship Across the Racial Divide*, 9.

⁷⁴ Van Opstal, *The Next Worship*, 31.

⁷⁵ Rom. 12:2; “Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture Full Text.”

⁷⁶ Krabill, *Worship and Mission for the Global Church*, 80.

⁷⁷ “Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture Full Text.”

In May of 2020, I was greatly disturbed and saddened by the senseless death of Ahmaud Arbery of Georgia. This 25-year-old African American man was pursued by a former police officer and his son in a pickup truck. The White men shot Arbery in the back and killed him.⁷⁸ The injustice of this act, especially poured upon an endless trail of other similar incidents in our nation, so burdened me that I made a choice to mention it in the church worship service. My words were simple. I stated that what happened was wrong. I acknowledged that White mothers like myself with young men for sons, do not have to fear for the safety of their children in the same way that our African American sisters do. I prayed for African American families. The next day, I received an email from church member stating the following: “Hi Sherrie, I just wanted to say thank you for your message yesterday. As a mother raising two black boys, it meant a lot to me and my family. With much love.” I realized it was the first email I had received from a church member related to matters of social justice. Simply stated, it is one of the most precious emails I have received. The few words I uttered publicly in the context of a worshipping community pushed against injustice that is prevalent in our culture. This is an example of how counter cultural elements of worship can function as acts of love and solidarity.

4) *Worship is cross-cultural: “Worship breaks barriers of culture through worship.”*⁷⁹

Cross-cultural worship takes place as we share our various cultural practices with one another. Cross-cultural elements of worship express hospitality to the minority cultures and expand our understanding of God’s kingdom beyond our personal context. In cross-cultural worship, majority culture members are exposed to new worship songs, unique instrumentation, a variety of musical genres not their own, as well as different languages, intercultural art, architecture, gestures, and postures. The Nairobi Statement states:

⁷⁸ Richard Fausset, “What We Know About the Shooting Death of Ahmaud Arbery,” *The New York Times*, November 4, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/ahmaud-arbery-shooting-georgia.html>.

⁷⁹ Van Opstal, *The Next Worship*, 31.

The sharing of hymns and art and other elements of worship across cultural barriers helps enrich the whole Church and strengthen the sense of the communion of the Church. This sharing can be ecumenical as well as cross-cultural, as a witness to the unity of the Church and the oneness of Baptism. Cross-cultural sharing is possible for every church but is especially needed in multicultural congregations and member churches.⁸⁰

The Worship Culture Spectrum

As the U.S. becomes increasingly diverse and racial tensions continue to manifest themselves, the church has found herself diving deeper into matters of racial reconciliation. Awareness has increased and the glamor of the homogenous mega church model has begun to fade. Currently, there is an increase in the number of churches who are striving to become multicultural. This raises questions such as: “How do we define multicultural worship?” “Who defines multicultural worship?” “How do we define and measure success in the work of multicultural worship?” I have discovered that it is difficult to label and measure the many different local cultural expressions of worship. In this next section, I will discuss worship culture types and musical styles. The three church worship culture types discussed are monocultural, multi-colored, and multicultural.

Monocultural Worship

When a church is predominately comprised of one culture group, the church is considered monocultural. One example of a monocultural church is a historically African American church. In a church such as this, there may be sparse representation of another culture or ethnicity; however, the vast majority of members, the leadership, and cultural practices are African American. Other examples of monocultural churches are language-based churches such as Korean-, Chinese-, and Spanish-speaking churches. Monocultural churches, like colors, are not bad or good. Monocultural churches possess certain pros and cons as a part of the multicultural worship spectrum. As noted earlier in this chapter, monocultural churches have been a driving

⁸⁰ “Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture Full Text.”

force in evangelism as church growth experts have discovered that people tend to gather with those most like them. Homophily is the sociological term used in what is called the homophily principle which “says that people prefer to interact regularly with others who are like them. This principle has often been used to explain why voluntary organizations, including social clubs, professional organizations, and churches, are homogeneous.”⁸¹

Additionally, monocultural churches provide social constructs and support for non-majority communities. Monocultural churches help to preserve and pass on cultural identity. Monocultural churches can also be a place for spiritual growth as members may study the Scriptures in their first language and worship with songs that are a part of spiritual traditions and history. Contextualized worship in a monocultural church reinforces the qualities, traditions, and practices of one culture.

One concern regarding the monocultural context is the tendency for the majority culture to dominate to the extent that there is no room for representation of non-majority cultures. As discussed earlier in this chapter, there is a risk of practicing a form of hegemony when worshiping in a monocultural setting. In the context of worship, cultural hegemony is a term that has been used to describe the Westernization of faith cultures around the globe for the purposes of mission work. Soong-Chan Rah discusses this dynamic in his book, *The Next Evangelism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*, when he states: “Instead of an idealized globalization, we see a cultural hegemony—the imposition of the culture of the powerful upon the powerless. Cultural hegemony is the power and ability by the West to impose its cultural views upon the rest of the world.”⁸² Rah continues:

⁸¹ Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 1450-1451.

⁸² Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 129.

questions may be raised about how the Western, white captivity of the church is transmitted to non-Western expressions of Christianity, resulting in a global Christianity that is just as captive to Western, white Christianity. In the history of world missions, one of the most significant concerns is the paternalism and cultural insensitivity that may be a part of the missionary enterprise. Because of an existing imbalance of power, the movement of the gospel message from Western culture to non-Western culture yields a system of dependence and results in a cultural hegemony.⁸³

In a monocultural context, worship styles and practices will reflect the preferences of the dominant culture. If non-majority persons or groups are present, their worship preferences are likely subordinate to the majority group. Musically, monocultural worship says: “There is one culture at this church. Sing our songs.” In this context there is a type of unity; however, there is no diversity.⁸⁴

Leadership positions in monocultural churches—such as worship leader and pastoral positions—will likely be filled by those from the majority culture. Similarly, worship team and other platform visible positions will be filled with people from the majority culture. If the person planning the worship music is White and serving in a multicultural White context, then the worship music will likely come from the Contemporary Christian Music genre (referred to as CCM). One of the sources I have gone to for years to purchase new worship music for my church is Praise Charts. Praise Charts, Song Select, and for Southern Baptists, Lifeway Worship, are primary resource sites for worship music. These are the sites that many of the White worship leaders I know go to as they seek to purchase music for their ministries. The original artist recordings on these sites and the arrangements of the songs are primarily White worship culture arrangements. Likewise, publishing companies such as Lifeway and Word Music send out their choral anthem resource kits with anthems in White Southern Gospel, traditional anthem arrangements and White CCM songs arranged for choirs. If worship planners and leaders

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Krabill, *Worship and Mission for the Global Church*, 54-55.

continue to go to these companies for our worship music needs, we will have severely limited cross-cultural resources. Nikki Lerner is an artist, worship leader, speaker, culture coach, author, and core team member of the Multicultural Worship Leaders Network. In an impromptu moment as worship leader at the 2021 Multicultural Worship Leader Network annual conference, Lerner stated that if we continue to fish from the same pond, we are going to catch the same fish. Her admonition to worship leaders was to break the monopoly that the Contemporary Christian Music industry has on the worship market.⁸⁵

Multi-Colored Worship

It is possible for hegemony to be present in monocultural churches as well as multicolored churches. A multicolored church is a church where the majority culture is no more than 80% with the remaining 20% comprised of other ethnicities or cultures. I am using the same statistic used to define a multicolored church as is used to define a multicultural church. Lerner defines a multicolored organization as having “many different colors and backgrounds, however, most people are asked to ASSIMILATE into one dominant culture or to DOWNPLAY their culture for the sake of unity, peace, and advancement.”⁸⁶ A multicolored church is a church where there may be variety in skin color, however there is not significant variety in music genres, cultural worship practices and styles, or representation.⁸⁷ A multicolored church has a homogeneous culture that all of the people accept. When asked if she sees any advantages/pros to being a multicolored congregation, Lerner responds:

⁸⁵ Nikki Lerner, “Multicultural Intensive: Making Room for Diversity” (presented at the Multicultural Worship Leaders Network, Online Workshop, April 21, 2021).

⁸⁶ Nikki Lerner, email message to author, April 25, 2021.

⁸⁷ Nikki Lerner, “Multicultural Intensive: Making Room for Diversity.”

Depends on who you are talking about. Personally, I don't see any advantage to a multicolored church for people in the non-majority. There are countless advantages for people in the majority culture including:

- Not having to change any of their systems or ways of being, but still getting the benefit of being 'around' non-majority people.
- Being able to tell people that their church is diverse and wearing it like a badge of honor without really making any sacrifice for other cultures.
- Leaders believing that they are farther along in their cross-cultural competency and having a good feeling about where they are without having to do any work to change.⁸⁸

The term "multicolored" is one that I have not seen elsewhere in my reading and, as a result, will be attributed to Nikki Lerner. In an email conducted with Lerner, I asked what characteristics she believes are present in multi-colored churches. Lerner responded with the following list:

- Monocultural leadership on elder boards, senior pastor roles, staff leadership and service expression while having a multicolored body of people.
- One dominant, daily cultural expression in all systems and decision-making opportunities.
- Multicolored communities save cultural expression for yearly events and then are done.
- Multicolored communities have no plan to diversify leadership seats.
- Multicolored communities tend to not talk about how social and cultural issues affect their church body because they don't think that it matters.⁸⁹

My only point of reference is Bethany Church. Lerner has worked with churches and organizations all over the globe on the issue of cultural intelligence. Despite the disparity in experience, I would suggest that there may be varying degrees, or to use our color metaphor, shades of being multicolored. Lerner stated that she has not seen varying degrees in her experience; however, the list provided above may not be an all-or-nothing reality. It may be that to become multicultural, awareness inspires action and action happens in steps, not all at once. I

⁸⁸ Nikki Lerner, email message to author, April 25, 2021.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

would suggest that there can be varying degrees of multicolored worship which may transition into multicultural worship. Lerner raises a pivotal point when she states that you cannot be multicultural by accident. You can become multicolored by accident; being multicultural requires intentionality.⁹⁰

Multicultural Worship

Multicultural worship is worship that includes a variety of musical genres, worship practices, and ethnic representation with a community in mind. Multicultural churches are said to be comprised of no more than 80% dominant culture members and no less than 20% minority culture(s).⁹¹ A multicultural church may be comprised of two cultures or many. A multicultural church may have a variety of ethnicities present, however, the important distinction is that a multicultural church has a variety of musical genres in the worship service, varied cultural worship expression and practices, and representation from minority cultures in various roles throughout the church. In the context of worship, a multicultural church will include a diverse worship team, diverse choir, diverse church staff, and diverse deacon or elder board participation. Worshiping people in a multicultural context will sing one another's songs, give space to both expressive and more reserved practices.

When asked "what elements tip the balance from multicolored to multicultural?" Lerner replies:

- Diverse leadership at the most senior roles.

⁹⁰ Learner, "Multicultural Intensive: Making Room for Diversity."

⁹¹ Michael Emerson, "A New Day for Multiracial Congregations," *The Future of Race* (Spring 2013), <https://reflections.yale.edu/article/future-race/new-day-multiracial-congregations>.

- Cultural expression during service gatherings, creative choices, styles of preaching and singing, and room that is made for the WAY that people worship and practice their faith.
- An embracing of people's culture not just a tolerating of others.⁹²

In multicultural worship, songs from different cultures and languages are shared in an integrated fashion meaning that everyone participates. This integrated method of song sharing is unified and expresses a blended diversity.⁹³ Also, an innovative approach to sharing songs invites the local worshiping community to create new songs together. This innovative approach facilitates unity and creative diversity.⁹⁴ Others experienced in leading multicultural worship describe this kind of collaborative music creation as a third culture.⁹⁵ Third culture music is where the collaborative process includes a blending or fusion of cultural sounds which creates a new and unique sound for that particular worshiping community.⁹⁶

As mentioned earlier, multicultural worship service may include other languages and ethnic clothing. The colors of a multicultural worship service are many and require a great deal of intentionality. Marti emphasizes the importance of integrated worship stating that it is “fundamental to the vision of a truly multiracial church.”⁹⁷

A Biblical and Theological Framework

Discovering culture in Scripture makes the text come alive in a new way. It is as if once you start seeing culture in Scripture, you find that it is everywhere. One Scripture where culture is critical to Jesus's teaching is the story of the Good Samaritan.⁹⁸ Samaritans and Jews were two people groups at odds with one another. The Jews saw Samaritans as half-breeds and a

⁹² Nikki Lerner, email message to author, April 25, 2021.

⁹³ Krabill, *Worship and Mission for the Global Church*.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Davis and Lerner, *Worship Together in Your Church as in Heaven*.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Marti, *Worship Across the Racial Divide*, 4.

⁹⁸ Luke 10:25-37.

stigmatized ethnicity. Joshua W. Jipp, in his book *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*,⁹⁹ states that the use of these two words work “to subvert and deconstruct the validity of engaging in ethnic stereotyping as a valid means of making sense of the cultural worth and value of other ethnicities.” As I apply this concept to the context of Bethany Church, which is already a very loving group of people, I could put the words “Korean music class families” and “church families” together. The people of Bethany church are happy to have “outside” Korean families participate in our music classes; however, they don’t see them as part of the church family. They do not extend hospitality toward this part of our church community. There is a subtle “us and them” mentality.

What I have come to discover is the importance of the ministry of hospitality toward those who are “the other” and how such hospitality is linked to our worship and, quite possibly, our salvation. Jipp makes this connection as he provides “hospitality to strangers is at the core of the church’s identity and mission; it is part and parcel of what we celebrate when we partake in the Eucharist; it is foundation for how members of the church relate to one another; and it provides direction for the church’s mission in and to the world.”¹⁰⁰ Jipp also suggests that hospitality to strangers was something that the early Christian writers (1 Clement, James, Matthew, and Luke-Acts) considered a necessary practice for the church and “deeply related to salvation.”¹⁰¹

Multicultural worship offers majority people groups the opportunity to practice hospitality, solidarity, and mutuality within the worship service. Sandra Van Opstal, in her book *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World*, stresses the importance of

32. ⁹⁹ Joshua Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2017),

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 7.

communicating hospitality, solidarity, and mutuality. Van Opstal provides that in the context of the worship service, intentional acts of hospitality say, “We welcome you.” Statements and efforts of solidarity communicate, “We stand with you.” Finally, attitudes of mutuality convey, “We need you.” All three are important and interwoven. Without one of these, the others seem less sincere.¹⁰² As I have reflected on these three statements, I recognize the resistance of some in the church to communicate solidarity because it can be seen as too political when standing together with those who have suffered injustice. I believe that is what I did when I declined to attend the demonstration at Mt. Hebron High School, where the racist rant of a student on social media ignited an outpouring of solidarity among students of color. In some churches, there may be resistance to hospitality because members do not know how to receive people from various lifestyles. Other churches may experience resistance to mutuality because that could lead to feelings of vulnerability.

At Bethany Church, I see solidarity being the most difficult of the three for us to implement due to the possible political overtones. There have been times when I have communicated solidarity and have been challenged in anger in the presence of others in my ministry area. There are also times when I have spoken of and prayed publicly for African American families and Asian American families, especially in times when incidents of hate and violence are exacted against these communities. I sense that my brothers and sisters of color are starving for their White brothers and sisters to come alongside them. John, the beloved disciple, writes to believers exhorting them to love one another well: “If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person.””¹⁰³ When we are silent about a brother or sister’s need for physical safety, we are

¹⁰² Van Opstal, *The Next Worship*, 74.

¹⁰³ 1 John 3:17.

closing our heart against them. Appropriately weaving in messages of solidarity are a means of loving others which also is an expression of our love for God. Just as a parent feels loved when kindness or love is given to a child, so God feels loved by us when we obey His command to love others. Multicultural churches create safe spaces for solidarity in worship.

For a theological framework for solidarity in worship, author and pastor David Anderson uses the Apostle Paul's writings on the body of Christ. As Paul exhorts believers to "have the same care for one another," Anderson believes this care is expressed with statements and actions which communicate, "I stand with you."¹⁰⁴ Anderson also encourages the reader to honor those who are lacking honor in response to this passage when Paul writes "...God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body..." Anderson elaborates on Paul's remark about division when he states: "When we don't assign greater honor to those who lack it, the door of division is thrown wide open."¹⁰⁵ Hospitality communicates a sense of welcome in a multicultural worship service and can be expressed in many ways. From the moment people drive onto the church property until they leave, hospitality can be creatively implemented in a variety of ways.

Multicultural Worship and the Scriptures

Conde-Frazier, Kang, and Parrett, in their book *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation*, offer an excellent overview of the biblical record on culture from Genesis to Revelation. Parrett and Kang author Chapter 2, titled "Lord of the Nations." There are several passages in this chapter related to culture and ethnicity that relate to our focus on worship practices and are worth mentioning. It is interesting to note in Genesis 1 and 2, Adam and Eve, who are made in the image of God, are given the task of cultivating the garden. This is

¹⁰⁴ 1 Cor. 12:25-26; David Anderson, *Gracism: The Art of Inclusion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 106.

¹⁰⁵ Anderson, *Gracism: The Art of Inclusion*, 108.

referred to by theologians as the “cultural mandate.”¹⁰⁶ The authors point out that the English word *culture* derives from the Latin *colere*.¹⁰⁷ In this passage, the Creator imparts to His image-bearing created ones a mandate to cultivate. In Genesis 1 and 2 resides identity, culture, and the ability to create shared from God to Adam and Eve. These actions tell us that God is the original Cultivator/Creator. It is part of His nature to cultivate. Humans, who bear His image, are likewise to create and cultivate. We can conclude that all people are made in the image of God; culture is a God-ordained activity of the cultivation process He has commanded. As worship leaders, we have the privilege of joining God in His work of cultivating and creating in a way that embraces culture and ethnicity. This is good.

Embracing culture includes embracing language. Two primary passages which inform our understanding of language, ethnicity, and God’s intentions are found in Genesis and Acts. First, in Genesis 11 we read the story of the Tower of Babel: “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”¹⁰⁸ As we continue to read the story, we discover God’s displeasure with the people. He intentionally confuses their understanding of one another by causing them to speak various languages. Prior to this event, Genesis 11:1 informs us that the whole earth had one language and the same words. Kang and Parrett offer an interpretation of this passage different from the traditional interpretation. They suggest that God’s displeasure was in the people’s disobedience to disperse, cultivate, and populate the earth. This is a command that had been given to previous generations. Their determination to gather in one city and make a name for themselves so that they would not disperse is the reason, Kang and

¹⁰⁶ Conde-Frazier, Kang, and Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom*, 51.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Gen. 11:4.

Parrett argue, God came to confuse their language.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, God used language as a means to order the direction of His people. This interpretation offers support from church fathers John Chrysostom and St. Jerome.¹¹⁰ Regardless of how one might interpret the passage, all can agree that language did not develop by accident but rather by God's action. Can God use language to order our direction? Can we use language in worship as a means for God to speak to us? I believe the answer is yes.

The second passage worth mentioning contains the story of Pentecost recorded in the book of Acts, chapter 2:

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.¹¹¹

The first observation is the role of the Holy Spirit who gave the believers the ability to speak in different languages. The Holy Spirit is mentioned twice in verse 4. The first mention of the Holy Spirit points to His action of filling the believers. The second mention of the Spirit in verse 4 points to His action of giving language to the believers. This was not something humans conjured up or studied. Language was a gift from God. We see the purpose in the gift as we read on to discover that in Jerusalem at this time there were devout people from every nation under heaven. Josh Davis provides: "The church was born that day in a multiethnic environment. And so it continued. The church at Jerusalem was clearly multicultural as is evidenced by the cultural conflict that they experienced in Acts 6:1-7."¹¹² Language was God's tool to spread his Spirit and the message of Jesus to every nation under heaven.

¹⁰⁹ Conde-Frazier, Kang, and Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom*, 53.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Acts 2:4-6.

¹¹² Davis and Lerner, *Worship Together in Your Church as in Heaven*, 22.

¹¹³ Ps. 86:9.

The Psalms are full of passages that reference the nations and worship. For example, “All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name.”¹¹³ In this passage the nations are gathered before God, worshiping/glorifying his name. There are many passages where we read that peoples from the nations are praising God or singing praises to God among one another.¹¹³

Two years after the birth of Christ, men from Persia followed a star to Bethlehem looking for a king who was born to the Jews.¹¹⁴ Their occupation as men of science had their eyes looking to the night sky. God used their intellectual interest in a star to invite Persian scientists, not Jewish Priests—to see His Son. Surely this reveals God’s heart for all people to know Jesus. Their gifts of worship were culturally and spiritually appropriate. This event so captivated the hearts of the Magi, that they lied to King Herod about finding the child so that the child would avoid assassination by the king. Persian Magi, led by a God who knows their interests, worshiping Jesus with precious gifts in humble surroundings communicates volumes about God’s desire for the nations to come to Him, know Him and worship Him.

I recently attended the Multicultural Worship Leader Network Annual Conference. Jaewoo Kim led the attendees in a song he had written called “We Need Each Other.” After teaching the song, Jaewoo invited us to sing in a large circle of people following by finding someone else in the room to face while singing the song. We were essentially singing the song to one another. The lyrics are as follows:

We have each other (repeat 2 times)
Christ dwells here with us
We see each other (repeat 2 times)
Christ dwells here with us
We love each other (repeat 2 times)

22. ¹¹³ For example, Ps. 45:17; 57:9; 67:3-4; 117; Davis and Lerner, *Worship Together in Your Church as in Heaven*,

¹¹⁴ Matt. 2:1-2.

Christ dwells here with us
We need each other (repeat 2 times)
Christ dwells here with us
Hallelu- Hallelujah, Hallelu- Hallelujah, Hallelu- Hallelujah Christ dwells here with
*us.*¹¹⁵

I happened to be facing a Swahili young woman that day. While singing, we were wearing masks due to local covid mandates. I was thankful for the masks because I found myself becoming very emotional singing this song. I was worshiping in community in a new way, and I began thinking about the future reality of worshiping with these people in eternity.

The Apostle John says, “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”¹¹⁶ John’s vision is both our future worship reality and our current prayer for worship on earth to be as it is in heaven.¹¹⁷ Worshiping on earth as it is in heaven—with believers from other tribes, nations, languages, and tongues—is a spiritual practice we have the opportunity to experience in our worship services each week. The next step is to consider how to plan for multicultural worship in the context of the local congregation.

Multicultural Practices

Planning multicultural practices does not come naturally for White worship pastors. In our enthusiasm for implementing various multicultural strategies, we may be at risk for missteps that not only reveal blind spots that we have but may also be insulting and hurtful to non-majority people groups that we intend to serve. Two potential pitfalls for majority culture worship ministry leaders are tokenism and cultural appropriation.

¹¹⁵ Jaewoo Kim and Grace Funderburgh, “We Need Each Other” (Clarkston, GA: Proskueno Ministries, 2019).

¹¹⁶ Rev. 7:9-10.

¹¹⁷ Matt. 6:10; Davis and Lerner, *Worship Together in Your Church as in Heaven*, 22.

Tokenism

Tokenism is a practice by majority culture leaders who in their haste to make changes, often devalue people in their organization. Tokenism happens when we select someone for a ministry role solely based on their ethnicity, gender, or other identifier unrelated to what they offer as a person, or in consideration of their knowledge, experience, or skill. Tokenism may occur when we are so focused on measuring our multicultural ministry efforts that we develop a mindset of meeting quotas rather than a mindset of including people. Davis and Lerner unpack this idea well as they stress that quotas are good for measuring product or crunching budget numbers,¹¹⁸ but they are personally damaging when used to make decisions about filling ministry roles based only on ethnicity.

A mind-set based on quotas is dangerous for those already leading or even beginning to lead in a multicultural environment. Quotas lead to scheduling a vocal team based solely on how many different races of people you have on your team and, if one is missing, looking for a replacement based on the fact that you just need “one of them,” whatever “one of them” represents. A mind-set based on quota systems does not consider that people are actually people who have something to offer. A mind-set based on quota systems prompts a leader to say such things as, “We need a White person on stage this week,” or “We need to make sure that we have a woman on the stage.” Quotas in multicultural ministry are dangerous and lead us to think of people as objects, so that we can claim that we are diverse when in fact all we have done is provide ethnic window dressing and devalued our people in the process.¹¹⁹

Distinctions between tokenism and inclusion are not always obvious and clear. There are times when we may invite a non-majority person to sing on the worship team when a more skilled majority culture person is available. It is advisable to think about all that a person has to bring to the worship experience. Our criteria for inviting people to the worship team ministry is

¹¹⁸ Davis and Lerner, *Worship Together in Your Church as in Heaven*, 40.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

not solely based on musical skill. Certainly, we would be very reluctant to ask someone who is tone deaf to sing on the worship team. However, evaluating what the team needs most to be balanced is worth consideration. Quite possibly a team already has a strong core of musicians on a given week and the open spot to be filled is for someone who brings a unique personal worship practice and presence, spiritual maturity, expressive spirit, “non-diva” servant heart, or musical texture to the team. There are many qualities to consider in addition to musical skill and ethnicity when including musicians on the worship team. It is advisable to make those selections based on more than one’s ethnicity to avoid tokenism.

Cultural Appropriation

Cultural appropriation is the practice of divorcing context and story from an artform or taking credit for a cultural artform whether intentional or unintentional.¹²⁰ The word appropriation is defined as: “the act of appropriating or taking possession of something, without permission or consent.”¹²¹ In a culture coaching session with Nikki Lerner, she shared with me an example of cultural appropriation by well-meaning representatives from a music school. In a screen shot of an advertisement for a series of lectures on spirituals and gospel music, she pointed out that each featured speaker was White. The artform of spirituals is an African American artform cultivated in the experience of slavery in America. An all-White lecture staff, without efforts to include African Americans divorces the artform from its cultural and historical context. The school of music, once realizing their error, removed the advertisement from their social media platforms and website. Cultural appropriation does not limit a White person from speaking about spirituals. Using the element of story to connect the artform with its cultural and

¹²⁰ Nikki Lerner, in a coaching session with the author, August 25, 2021.

¹²¹ “Appropriation,” *Dictionary.com*, accessed October 23, 2021, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/appropriation>.

historical roots is key to avoiding cultural appropriation. Telling stories enriches the experience for everyone while side stepping the pitfalls of tokenism and cultural appropriation.

Once majority culture leaders have an awareness of the pitfalls of tokenism and cultural appropriation, we are more prepared to enter into worship practices that include artforms and expressions from non-majority cultures. As we move forward, it is helpful to keep in mind our primary purposes in corporate worship. What is the primary goal when facilitating corporate worship? Jaewoo Kim asks: “Is our goal to facilitate worship experiences or to develop worshipping communities?”¹²² I fear that I have been guilty of thinking about worship primarily as an experience for the worshiper. Kim’s question encourages us to think of worship as something that forms us spiritually—both individually and as a community. As we consider multicultural worship, we must then take into consideration how a community of believers in Jesus is formed as a worshipping people. Those who craft these services must seek to create more than an experience. Author, speaker, and multicultural worship leader Sandra Van Opstal affirms this view as well. She states, “Worship is not merely about authentic personal expression but also communal formation. Congregational worship is critical. It is not merely about singing songs; it’s theology to music, sermon to song.”¹²³ If the worship service is communal formation, then the cultures represented in the worshipping community will impact that formation.

Tongsung Kido

Tongsung Kido is a Korean form of prayer in which those who are praying together shout out to God. This tradition is rooted in the Korean concept of Han, which is a word that references “unresolved resentment or emotional pain that is carried by a person; it is a kind of internalized grudge. Han is frustrated hope, the collapsed feeling of pain, resentful bitterness, and the

¹²² Davis and Lerner, *Worship Together in Your Church as in Heaven*, 33.

¹²³ Van Opstal, *The Next Worship*, 47.

wounded heart.”¹²⁴ Pastor Yohang Chun of Oswego First United Methodist Church, in a news article for the Upper New York Conference of the United Methodist Church, provides the meaning behind the Korean practice. Chun states: “Tongsung means, ‘cry out together loudly,’ and Kido means, ‘pray.’ So, Tongsung Kido means, ‘praying together out loud.’ This unique form of Korean prayer is an important part of prayer life among the spirit-filled prayer life of Korean Christians.”¹²⁵ Chun recognized some personal internal challenges as he was transitioning from life in Korea to life in the US. In addition to missing a steady diet of authentic Korean food, he also missed the prayer life he practiced with fellow Koreans back home. In his article, “Tongsung Kido (A Unique Korean Prayer),” Chun explains how this type of prayer is implemented within a public worship service:

Generally Tongsung Kido is performed as follows: during worship, usually at the time of special prayer request, the minister or the worship leader will call the congregation to pray in unison. The whole congregation joins together to pray aloud, individually at the same time. Sometimes, in the beginning of prayer, the congregation may shout, “Lord! Lord! Lord!” in unison, as a cooperative sign of engaging in prayer. Usually the congregation is given a specific amount of time to pray, with a common theme of petition. At the end of the time allotted, the minister’s closing prayer finishes Tongsung Kido.¹²⁶

Bethany Church is honored to welcome a Korean-speaking congregation to use the church building for worship. This congregation meets at 6 am for morning prayers. Tongsung Kido is a regular practice at these prayer meetings. I have occasionally come early in the morning to pray with my Korean-speaking brothers and sisters. Even though I do not speak the language, I have joined in congregational singing of familiar hymns and in the practice of Tongsung Kido. I have done so when personal struggles were overwhelming my heart and mind.

¹²⁴ Yohang Chun, “Tongsung Kido (A Unique Korean Prayer),” *The Upper New York Conference of the United Methodist Church*, May 10, 2017, <https://unyumc.org/news/article/tongsung-kido-a-unique-korean-prayer>.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Crying out to God with other believers helped me to recognize Han in others and a shared hope in a God who hears our cries.

African American Practices

Our cries, at times, are in groans too deep for words and at other times they are expressed in word or song. African American song traditions can be surprisingly contemplative when a deep cry of the heart is sung repeatedly with just a word or two. Barbara Holmes, in her book *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church*, states: “it is difficult to imagine how a song of two words can be a cry of anguish, balm, and celebration. In each soaring note we participate in the unutterable terrible spectrum of human striving. In this world you will have trouble but-‘oh, oh, oh, Jesus.’”¹²⁷ I have witnessed my African American brothers and sisters in Christ worship, repeating the same phrases over and over. What I have noticed is an intensity of expression the longer the song is extended. It is as if the meaning of the text sinks deeper and becomes truer with each repetition. Often, the White theologians and spiritual leaders that I know and have read emphasize the importance of songs filled with doctrine. They stress worship music as a tool for teaching theology and Christian discipleship. Hymnody has been and continues to be an excellent means for spiritual formation, however, it cannot replace contemplative singing. How soon we forget the John’s vision: “And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!’”¹²⁸ My African American friends have modeled for me and taught me how to practice contemplative singing.

¹²⁷ Barbara Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 79-81.

¹²⁸ Rev. 4:8.

I have also learned how important it is to give space to praising outwardly and expressively rather than internally for many African American worshipers. Much more could be explored about the expressive worship practices found in African American churches.

Music

Geraldo Marti gives us the perspective of the sociologist when studying the effect of music in the worship service. Marti states:

Music allows a space for people to develop their own selves in the presence of other selves. The capacity for music to create a space for self-development in congregational life is particularly evident in the experience of personal worship in a corporate setting. The aesthetic environment allows a means for understanding and demonstrating oneself through an aesthetic medium, something that is not possible for individual worshipers when they are all alone. In other words, the corporate worship experience allows the cultivation of a self that one cannot accomplish on one's own. Thus, the corporate setting of worship creates a unique and powerful setting for the cultivation of a particular type of self.¹²⁹

Simply stated, music sung in a worship service impacts our spiritual growth in a different way than when practiced alone. This would infer that multicultural worship—where cross-cultural sharing of worship songs occurs forms us as a local body of Christ—is critical to fully growing in Jesus Christ.

Story

Van Opstal also emphasizes the importance of story as a formational element in worship. She sees story as a means of introducing heritage into the worship experience. She believes heritage can be important because we see how God is working in various cultures at various times. This cross-cultural experience impacts the entire congregations. Van Opstal states: “Heritage connects us not only to musical preferences but to story: the history of our community, the roots of our cultures, the legacy that made us who we are, and how we understand God’s

¹²⁹ Marti, *Worship Across the Racial Divide*, 20.

story intersecting with ours. Remember, learning one another's God story is what will lead to solidarity in worship."¹³⁰

Art and Images

Using imagery behind worship lyric slides and projection of images throughout a worship service can serve to help non-majority worshipers to experience a sense of belonging to the congregation and may enhance the worship experience overall. Most American churches have access to media equipment. Displaying the image of a particular place in our community or surrounding neighborhood is a fairly simple task requiring only a small amount of time and intentionality. Russell Yee sees this practice as another means of contextualization.¹³¹

The artifact accompanying this dissertation provides examples of multicultural artwork installed in the sanctuary of Bethany Church and explains how the artwork is used in spiritual formation and practice.

Summary

In Chapter 2 we have given space to discussions on culture, cultural intelligence, and introduced defining attributes of a multicultural church. Additionally, a biblical and theological framework was discussed followed by examples of multicultural worship practices that are relevant in the cultural and ethnic context of Bethany Church. Understanding these aspects is essential and foundational to the transition from monocultural worship to multicultural worship.

¹³⁰ Van Opstal, *The Next Worship*, 102.

¹³¹ Russell Yee, *Worship on the Way: Exploring Asian North American Christian Experience* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2012), 2461.

CHAPTER 3: TRANSITIONING BETHANY CHURCH TO MULTICULTURAL WORSHIP

Overview

Chapter 3 offers practical solutions for transitioning to a multicultural worshipping community. It is suggested that much like the preparations taken for music mission work, Bethany Church may prepare for the cultural context of the people in her community. Practical solutions presented in this chapter begin with tools for developing cultural intelligence for the worship leader, then cultivating CI throughout the leadership and the church. Resources and suggested multicultural practices for Bethany church are then posited. Finally, a fresh perspective is presented in identifying who the people of Bethany Church are to include all outreach arms of the church.

India

In February 2015, Bethany Church took 26 people to a country closed to Christian missionaries for a mission trip. This trip was not through a mission organization but rather rooted in personal relationships with people on the ground. The two-week endeavor took us to remote parts of the country which was very much like something out of a *National Geographic* magazine. These experiences were contrasted by our team presenting a large concert event in a city. I was responsible for planning the content for the concert event. I had to figure out how to put together a meaningful concert in a country where neither I, nor most of my musicians and artists, spoke the language. Our first step was to learn about the culture and the majority religion in this country. The team of twenty-six met weekly after church on Sundays over lunch. Native born church members from India cooked authentic food for us. We ate with our hands. We listened to people who had lived in the country tell us about the culture, what we should wear or not wear. The women were instructed on appropriate interactions; and, finally, we prepared

ourselves for possible illness. Although we did not call it such, we were doing cultural intelligence work to prepare for the mission trip.

Learning about the Hindu religious practices helped me process how we would share the gospel. Joshua Kota is a member of Bethany Church who immigrated to the U.S. from India. He was one of several native-born Indian friends who helped to train our American team for the trip to India. He explained to us that in Hinduism there are numerous gods and many of those gods have a story. He mentioned that there are comic books in India for children to learn these stories. Comic book stories, as a means of teaching about Hindu gods, have been featured in the U.S. as an artform.¹³² That was my starting point. I needed to tell them God's Story. I named our production for this mission trip "God's Story." We used flags, like those you see in a marching band, dance, and props to tell the story along with music. We prepared narrations previously video recorded at home, in the local language, and projected onto a jumbo screen. We used video and huge canvases so that we could paint the story while it was unfolding on stage. We used imagery representing aspects of life in the country. We didn't know anything about ethnodoxology or contextualization. We simply decided to be laser focused on how to communicate the gospel to people who lived in a completely different cultural context and spoke different languages from our team. Approximately 10,000 people attended this concert, and about 2,000 received Jesus that night. This is remarkable considering that becoming a Christian in this country was forbidden. If our little church could do something like this on the other side of the world, imagine what God could do through us in Maryland if we were laser focused on sharing God's Story with diverse peoples in our community using multicultural practices. I now see that God used this mission trip to prepare us for cultural work that He had for us back home.

¹³² Arnie Cooper, "Hindu Gods' Avatars on the Page," *Wall Street Journal*, January 7, 2010, as printed in Goddesschess Blog, <https://goddesschess.blogspot.com/2010/01/comic-book-art-glorifies-hindu.html>.

Cultural Intelligence Solutions for the Worship Arts Ministry Leader

Studying the culture of the people in a foreign country for a mission trip is a form of developing cultural intelligence. At home, a transition from monocultural worship to multicultural worship requires cultural intelligence work. This work will require participation beyond the worship arts ministry and throughout the leadership of the church. Intentional work by leadership will be required both inside the church as an organization and outside of the church on more personal terms. In the context of multicultural worship ministry, as the worship pastor, I am responsible to develop my own CI. This work may include, but is not limited to, intentionally spending personal time with people from other cultures. For purposes of this discussion, personal time refers to gathering with one or more persons from a different culture outside of church either at one's home or other space. Personal time with others may require taking the initiative and inviting non-majority friends or church members to dinner in my home or around my table for special holidays or personal family events such as birthdays, graduations, summer barbeques, and Thanksgiving. Personal time forms relationship. Relationship is foundational for cultivating reconciliation, unity, and meaningful worship.

Cultivating CI may begin with personal relationships; however, additional work may be facilitated by engaging a culture coach. A culture coach is someone from a non-majority ethnicity who can provide opportunities to ask real questions in a safe environment. Culture coaches can be hired for one-on-one coaching or for leadership team or church staff consultation. In my situation, I engaged a culture coach for one-on-one sessions. Coaching has challenged some of my ways of thinking, helped me to set goals and provided accountability. Nikki Lerner has been my coach and has asked me probing, thought-provoking questions such as: "In the context of authenticity, who are we (Bethany Church) becoming?" "How will I be a diverse

leader?” “In what ways am I pursuing the people around me to make room for diversity?” “How do I expand my own culture?” “Who can belong in my worshiping community?” “How can I learn from others and the way that they do ministry to inform my own practices?” This second set of eyes is more than second opinion on ministry and leadership. Culture coaching offers a different perspective adding value and substance to my development. White leaders are often afraid to say the wrong thing and do not ask the questions that they hear floating around in their White-majority relationships. Culture coaching gives space for those questions and other difficult conversations without the fear of being judged.¹³³

Multicultural ministry conferences and virtual workshops are another resource for improving cultural intelligence for ministry leaders. These opportunities provide perspectives of non-majority culture people in safe and structured environments, often with facilitated and guided discussions and sharing. In the process of implementing solutions and strategies for this dissertation, I have participated in on-line virtual workshops presented by The Multicultural Worship Leaders Network.¹³⁴ I also attended the MWLN annual conference, October of 2021, in Gaithersburg, Maryland. One of the workshops I attended at the conference was structured for minority culture ministry leaders sharing their struggles in multicultural church work. My role was to listen and learn. While practicing a ministry of presence, I was entrusted with stories of diverse men and women sharing their experiences. I witnessed shared perspectives opening a door to healing and encouragement. I came away with greater insight into multicultural work and ideas for how I can help facilitate broader participation of non-majority people. I also gained a

¹³³ Nikki Lerner, “Let Me Be Your Coach,” *NikkiLerner.com*, accessed November 4, 2021, <http://www.nikkilerner.com/coaching>.

¹³⁴ “MWLN Blog,” *Multicultural Worship Leaders Network*, accessed November 4, 2021, <https://www.mwln.org/blog>.

clearer understanding of the struggles experienced by non-majority leaders in multicultural ministry work.

There were many from the Asian community in the specific discussion group I attended. Listening to North American Asians sharing their challenge with engaging the broader American culture, informed my understanding around the raising of children in the church, church participation, issues around family, honor, and generational connections. I learned that to recruit involvement from someone in the Asian American community, a personal invitation is more effective than sending out a sign-up link. I learned that it may seem presumptuous for someone from the Asian community to come forward offering to sing on the worship team or fill any role that draws attention or is in the “spotlight.” Therefore, I will need to personally contact those in this community whom I wish to include in any public role. Culturally speaking, it is my role to include their participation through a personal invitation realizing I may need to repeat this invitation more than once.

Cultivating Cultural Intelligence Throughout the Church When the Worship Pastor is Leading the Way

When a church is transitioning to multicultural worship, the weight of transitioning the church into a new multicultural experience is often placed on the shoulders of the worship leader. Becoming a multicultural church requires more than placing a diverse worship team together and singing more gospel songs. Transitioning from monocultural worship to multicultural worship at Bethany Church must be a team effort. Cultural intelligence developed in the lives of ministry leaders throughout the music ministry and the church will be necessary to prevent a drift back to multicolored worship. If diversity is the goal, all church systems need to work toward that goal. I recommend considering learning styles to facilitate the implementation of cultivating cultural intelligence among the leadership of the church and worship ministry in the following ways.

Speak It: Auditory Learning

Sermons and small group studies, such as *Multiethnic Conversations: An Eight Week Journey Toward Unity in Your Church*,¹³⁵ are excellent tools for developing cultural intelligence for auditory learners. The use of sermons and study groups also helps to expand on the spiritual reasons for developing a multicultural ministry mindset. The content of sermons and study group materials may focus on racial reconciliation and cultural elements found in Scripture. For the Christian, a biblical framework can overcome multicultural objections often fed by divisive elements in the media, politics, and in homogeneous circles. An innovative way to use sermons to communicate cultural intelligence took place at Bethany Church. A sermon series inspired by the multicultural artwork recently installed in our newly renovated sanctuary was delivered in November of 2021. This sermon series served to introduce the use of art and culture in spiritual formation and worship practice.

The artifact accompanying this dissertation is a video series which may be used to introduce discussion, facilitate leadership training, and collaboration on multicultural practices at Bethany Church. This resource provides an audio and visual story for participants to engage with. More detail on the artifact and how it may be implemented will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Another way to speak multicultural values into the church for auditory learners is to update the mission and vision statements. We are in the process of updating our mission statement so that leaders may speak our purpose into various settings in church life (meetings, services, events, small groups). I have written a vision statement and a mission statement which has been edited and approved by the lead pastor and will be submitted for approval by our Church Board. The statements are as follows.

¹³⁵ Mark DeYmaz, *Multiethnic Conversations: An Eight-Week Journey Toward Unity in Your Church* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2016).

Vision Statement

Bethany Church is a vibrant, diverse, community of faith actively seeking Jesus Christ, and sharing the love of God with our community and beyond. We are intentional about guiding people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ while actively and creatively serving others through local and international missions.

Mission Statement

We know that diversity is God's idea. We celebrate that diversity in worship, small groups and in ministry as we serve and connect with all people in the community God has placed us. Our mission is centered on Jesus Christ as we follow Him and offer Him to our community and the world.

Bethany Church Scripture Verse

“Let him who is thirsty come; let the one who desire take the water of life without price”
(Rev. 22:17, ESV).

Language and music genre are auditory forms that increase cultural intelligence, contextualization, and cultivate connection and understanding in worship. Including language speakers in the service to read Scripture or welcome worshipers in a language other than English will engage auditory learners. Even when the language spoken is not known by all who are listening, implementing other languages demonstrates a multicultural mindset.

There is much that can be said about diversifying the music we hear in the worship service. Cultural intelligence and worship practices overlap when we consider the musical sounds we hear each week, whether it be incidental music playing prior to a service or during an event, or the sounds, rhythms, and dynamic expressions in the worship service.

Diversifying recorded incidental music is an uncomplicated way to implement multicultural sounds at church. A proper license is required for recorded copyright music played

on a live stream of the service. This can easily be obtained through Christian Copyright License Inc. Diversifying genre and sound with instrumentation is recommended. Currently, Bethany Church does not have a musician who plays the sitar. Using Christian music recorded in India as incidental music, allows for the modalities and particular instrumental sounds to be featured even though we do not have musicians skilled in this genre. I prefer to alternate worship recordings from India with recordings from other cultures, such as worship recordings with Latin American sounds and Black gospel. There is room for creativity when ordering these songs. It is also interesting to observe who notices these changes. Since incidental music is in the background while other things may be happening, such as pre-service gathering or during an event, some will not notice at all. Others will notice which may initiate further conversations about multicultural worship.

Live worship music during the worship service offers additional opportunities to present diverse sounds. Identifying and playing music recorded or written by diverse artists is one method of transitioning to more genres and sounds. This may require hiring musicians who can play Latin beats or have experience in jazz improvisation or other musical skills. Bethany Church has been able to hire musicians who have these skills; however, it has required me as the worship pastor to further my own musical skills. This journey of adding new sounds and genres may require continuing education, lessons, coaching and practice time. It is so easy to stop practicing when becoming a worship leader. I have sacrificed my personal musical practice time to make space for all of the other things that need to be done. To be an effective multicultural worship leader, I need to maintain and build my musical skills through practice.

Synthesizers are wonderful instruments for adding instrumental sounds not yet represented in the music ministry. This simple solution is one that is easily overlooked. Simply

by listening to worship music from other cultures, we can identify sounds that can be accessed on a synthesizer. These culturally specific instrumental sounds may not be the foundational instrument, yet they may be subtle layers of texture forming the overall sound.

Show It: Visual Learning

For cultural intelligence and multicultural worship practices to genuinely take place in the church, we need to see diversity not only on the platform but in all areas of the church. Displaying individual pictures of those in leadership positions on the church website would serve to highlight diversity in decision-making roles throughout the organization. Individuals who serve on the following teams and committees should be visually featured: Church Staff, Finance Committee, Trustees, Deacons, and Church Board.

Images, language inclusive signage, website design, and pictures of cultural locations in the community can be used to communicate the diversity that is welcomed at Bethany Church. A structure was recently constructed on Route 40 in Ellicott City naming a section of this commercial stretch of road as “Koreatown.” Images such as this should be photographed and entered into a photo library in the Bethany Church media booth for appropriate use. Signs in the church may also be designed to include various languages. A “Welcome” and “Merry Christmas” sign designed by a professional graphic artist may be produced and installed in the front lobby at the appropriate times of the church year. Other signs may be added over time.

Videos are powerful visual communication tools that may either encourage or discourage multicultural practices. When showing videos in a class, worship service, or gathering, it is important to consider the diversity represented in the video. During the pandemic last year, I taught my preschool music class over Zoom. I was using preschool-appropriate music videos that taught different musical concepts and some that were praise songs. I was hesitant to use one

specific video because I thought it would be too “baby-like” for the kids in the class. There was one boy in my class who I was fairly certain would not like the song and would be drawn to a song that had more of a pop rock feel to it. I went ahead and used the song anyway. The song featured two Asian teenagers singing “Who Did Swallow Jonah.”¹³⁶ The boy in my class who I presumed would not like the song told me each week that this was his favorite song. This boy is also Asian, and I suspect that one reason for this “too cool for school” boy to love this nursery rhyme-styled song is because there were young people who looked like him singing the song. The power of the visual spoke volumes in this circumstance. Moving forward, I am very intentional about the images and ethnic representation in the videos I select.

Do It: Kinesthetic Learning

Planning a song-share event for musicians in the worship ministry or with any small group in the church is a useful tool to learn about the genres that are meaningful to the worshiping community at Bethany Church. A song-share event invites attendees to bring songs (secular or Christian) to the group to listen to together. Song-share events create opportunities for sharing stories, practice listening, and may serve to deepen understanding and connection.

Shin’ichi Suzuki, in his book *Nurtured by Love*, teaches that a violinist must practice a section of music many times before it is learned. The renowned violin teacher believes that the practice of the skill is exponentially greater than talent. Suzuki also applies this to knowledge as he states, “Knowledge is not skill. Knowledge plus 10,000 times is skill.”¹³⁷ The Suzuki philosophy is to practice something 10,000 times to truly learn it. So it is with multicultural

¹³⁶ Muffin Songs, “Who Did Swallow Jonah?”, *YouTube*, January 26, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvdiF9I9kW8>.

¹³⁷ Shin’ichi Suzuki, et al., *Nurtured by Love: Translated from the Original Japanese Text*, trans. Kyoko Selden with Lili Selden (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Music Publishing, 2013).

work. It must be practiced, implemented, tried, and tried again. Through repetition, practicing multicultural work becomes a way of life.

Multicultural Worship Arts Intelligence Resources and Recommended Practices

For the worship pastor, CI resources specific to the practice of a worship arts ministry are necessary. We may need to coin a new phrase such as “Cultural Worship Arts Intelligence.”

This phrase may more specifically communicate the cultural learning process required to become further informed about the Christian worship practices from various ethnic and cultural people groups. A variety of resources have helped to inform me about multicultural worship practices and are recommended for continued cultivation of multicultural worship practices. An overlooked resource in my context has been the minority culture homogenous churches. There are many of these churches locally which can provide suggestions, resources, language help, and a deeper connection to the ethnic communities around Bethany Church. Currently, I would like to implement a small amount of Korean language into the songs in my preschool music class. The local Korean church is a wonderful resource for what I have in mind. Networking with local church offers the opportunity to begin cross-cultural conversations with non-majority ministry leaders who serve in a non-majority context. I hope the fruit of this initial endeavor will lead to further conversations and cooperation in ministering to Korean families in our community.

In addition to the list of books and articles found in the bibliography, online media resources from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship,¹³⁸ The Multicultural Worship Leader,¹³⁹ and Proskuneo Ministries¹⁴⁰ have provided scholarly and practical ministry helps from diverse authors, theologians, practitioners, and artists. Another helpful media resource was recommended to me by my African American church members is *The Black Church*, a PBS

¹³⁸ <https://worship.calvin.edu>

¹³⁹ <https://multiculturalworship.org>

¹⁴⁰ <https://proskuneo.org>

special broadcast from February 2020.¹⁴¹ Several members of my church emailed or called me to ask me to watch it. I appreciated their eagerness to ask me to watch. It was important to them that I both watch and know more about the story of the Black church and the practices on which they were raised. The story of the Black church was part of their personal story. Experiencing that part of their story informs me on meaningful and formational worship practices to implement or adapt at Bethany.

Story

Story is a central element in multicultural worship. In worship, we are telling God's story and how He has intersected with our own stories. In Chapter 1, I shared about a worship service in which my African American brothers and sisters shared their stories of discrimination at the end of the service. This unplanned story telling moment was a pivotal moment in the history of our church and for me as their worship pastor. There is power in our stories. Jesus knew the power of stories and used them often to impart understanding. The practice of telling our stories should be a regular part of our time together as a diverse worshipping community. Hosting watch parties (whether in person or online) of the documentary *Black Church* or the movie, *The Hate U Give*,¹⁴² followed by opportunities to share are excellent ways to help facilitate story. Whether in the form of a testimony, as part of a featured heritage day, or as part of fellowship gatherings, providing opportunity for sharing our stories is pivotal to moving beyond a multicolored context and into a multicultural context.

Extending Community and Practices Outside of the Worship Service

¹⁴¹ "The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song," PBS, Accessed November 4, 2021, <https://www.pbs.org/show/black-church/>.

¹⁴² Tillman Jr., George, dir. *The Hate U Give*, (Los Angeles, CA: Fox 2000, 2018), stream on Amazon Prime, <https://www.amazon.com/Hate-Give-George-Tillman-Jr/dp/B07J1GNNN1>.

Many of the strategies and solutions mentioned thus far are not necessarily new or innovative, yet they are important steps for the Bethany Church transition to multicultural worship. I have come to think about multicultural worship in a new way as I have observed what God is doing in my church. I have come to see how God has enabled Bethany Church to build strong community outreach entities that have become opportunities to relate, serve, and worship cross-culturally outside of the worship service.

John Witvliet, of The Calvin Institute of Worship, in Internet video form explains three different meanings of the term “worship.” One of those meanings is based on Romans 12:1 which states the following. “I appeal to you therefore, brothers [believers],¹⁴³ by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” Witvliet argues that worship is more than what we do in a gathered church service. Worship also includes acts throughout each day that are in honor of God. If we accept this assertion, then we can conclude that multicultural worship can be practiced both inside and outside of the context of the worship service.

Who is Part of Bethany Church?

For a good portion of my ministry career, a regular topic in our staff meetings has revolved around how we can get people from our community to come onto our property. We felt like we were in a bubble, disconnected from the people we longed to serve. The White people who live in our part of the country are either secular without a religious life or Catholic. The next “tier” might include Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, and Episcopalians. We could only speculate how people might view us as Southern Baptists. Many Baptist churches were dropping their denominational names and opting for the description of “community church.” We contemplated this move for many years. We were even more out of touch with non-majority

¹⁴³ ESV note: This appeal for dedication is addressed to believers (as also in 1 Cor. 6:20; James 4:7).

people in our neighborhoods. Today, I hold in contrast those days of isolation to our most recent outreach event. In October, we hosted a Trunk-or-Treat event for the community. We estimate over 600 people came onto our property for the outdoor party. I, with my adult children, dressed in costumes (we had an “outer space” theme) decorated our cars and handed out massive amounts of candy. It was exhilarating to engage with families from such a variety of cultural backgrounds. I greeted hundreds of children and their parents. Some women and girls adorned with the Bindi marking on their foreheads, some not speaking English, some not in costume, all excited to be a part of the fun. Interestingly, this tradition of dressing in costume and collecting candy is accepted and practiced cross-culturally. Although there may be varying perspectives on Halloween activities in other communities, Trunk-or-Treat is neutral territory in our context. Trunk-or-Treat provides an opportunity for Bethany Church to serve the community by providing a safe, free, and fun activity for their families. We are meeting a need and we are building relationships. As representatives of Jesus Christ, we are able to communicate in a creative way to our neighbors that Jesus is safe, welcoming, and generous. The welcome we were able to offer, and they were able to receive, is prepared ground for the Lord. The Gospel writer Luke says the following referring to John the Baptist:

As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”¹⁴⁴

In new and innovative ways, Bethany Church has removed barriers, leveled ground, and made a way for people to come to God. The groundwork was laid long before Trunk-or-Treat. The following are examples of innovative acts of worship outside of the traditional worship hour, which have served to enable the church to expand her gospel reach and build a new kind of faith

¹⁴⁴ Luke 3:4-6.

community. This new kind of faith community is comprised of smaller, diverse communities of people who may not attend a Sunday worship service; however, these communities are thought of as part of the Bethany Church family and have access to opportunities for deeper spiritual engagement.

When engaging in conversation with people from other churches there is one question that inevitably arises: “how many people are in your church?” The reply to this question usually includes Sunday morning worship attendance and online worship service views. I am proposing that we reframe how we think about “who” is in our church and expand our thinking on worship to include practices that occur outside of worship services. This new mindset will impact our worship practices, ministry ideas, how we serve, lead, and disciple people. This is even more significant if ethnic groups seem to participate heavily in one area of the life of the church but not necessarily in Sunday morning worship services. The current mindset at Bethany Church is that the church family is comprised of those who attend Sunday worship services either in person or online, and/or attend Lifeline (Sunday School) or one of our small groups, and/or attend student group meetings and activities. There are other entities, which I am referring to as “bubbles,” which are somewhat compartmentalized and seen more as outreach arms of the church.

Bethany Music Center

Bethany Music Center (BMC) is considered one of the outreach arms of Bethany Church to the community.¹⁴⁵ BMC offers private music lessons, group classes, summer camps, audition

¹⁴⁵ <https://bethanymusiccenter.com>

coaching, and audition recording services. Private lessons and summer camps are our most popular offerings. Asian families make up the majority of students who participate in our music school. BMC is engaging community members who do not necessarily attend our Sunday worship services or Wednesday night activities. Even so, opportunities to engage in multicultural worship practices with our students through music are offered. I have not previously considered the BMC students and their families as part of our church, however, my way of thinking about them has transitioned. If I think about them as part of the church family, I engage with them on new levels. In addition to teaching them Bach and Vivaldi, I also teach them how to play and improvise from a chord chart so that they can develop skills to play with a worship band. I also, change my worship band planning so that Bach and Vivaldi can be a part of a worship experience. I can then schedule concerts where we integrate hymnody, classical, and jazz forms and worship band skills to create a fusion of sounds. Equipping students musically is BMC's spiritual act of worship. I may also be more intentional about building bridges between BMC and the church to increase welcome and participation in church services and activities.

With BMC as an example of how one of these outreach arms may be thought of as part of the church family and not as a compartmentalized, isolated entity, I can now look at the entire organization and consider how I can build bridges from each outreach arm to the core of the church. The various arms of Bethany Church can be labeled and described as follows:

Core – Bethany Church Family

A diverse group of people thought of as the church family/body of Christ at Bethany consisting of Sunday worship in-person and online participants, Lifeline participants, and student ministry participants.

Wednesday Children's Activities Arm

Primarily composed of ethnic specific groups which do not attend worship services. Includes BMC Wednesday Music Classes (majority Korean in Preschool Class; 1st – 5th grade class is diverse) and Awana (high majority Asian participants to include East Indian and Korean; non-majority ethnicities in this group are other Asian, African American, White American). Participants may attend another church or no church at all.

Learning Center Arm

Composed of diverse professional families. The majority of participants do not attend Bethany Sunday Worship. This arm includes both the Learning Center (daycare) families and Learning Center teachers.

BMC Arm

Composed primarily of Asian families who do not attend Bethany Sunday Worship. This community places a high value on education. BMC arm includes private lesson families and students as well as summer Music & Arts Camp families.

Special Events Arm

Participants of the Special Events arm of Bethany are highly diverse in ethnicity, economic status, and religious practice and affiliation. Some participants regularly attend events but not Sunday worship. These events are typically draw a large community presence with up to 1,700 in attendance per event. Special events include The Christmas Walk of Wonder, Trunk-or-Treat, Concert Ministry, Back-to-School Jam, Easter Eggstravaganza, and Breakfast with Santa.

If we were to only count the Core Bethany Church Family as those who make up Bethany Church then total number of regular participants would be around 250 with a multicultural context with White people being the majority culture followed by African American, African,

East Indian, Chinese, other Asian, and Hispanic. If we consider all those touched by one or more of those outreach arms as people who are a part of this local church, our perspective on our size increases exponentially. We may no longer operate under a small church mentality. We may be able to think more broadly about ministry and who our neighbor is and what that means for our church.

As mentioned previously, these groups have functioned largely separately of one another as if in a bubble. Multicultural worship doesn't take place inside of a bubble. Multicultural worship focuses on eliminating barriers between people, popping the bubbles decreasing or eliminating compartmentalization. Efforts in developing a multicultural worship ministry include multicultural work throughout the church as an organization including cultivating innovative worship practices both inside and outside of the Sunday morning worship services.

CHAPTER 4: ARTIFACT EXPLANATION

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMCBUoVfvhgaQgu-JiemjMNrgOBxCXMVj>

Overview

The artifact for this dissertation is a video series posted to a YouTube channel. This video series may be used to facilitate discussion in small groups or leadership training or serve as part of a sermon series on multicultural worship and posted on the church website on the “about us” page or posted on social media for viewing. My posture for this video series is that of a White-majority culture worship leader who is leading my church through a transition from monocultural worship to multicultural worship. I am presenting this material in the form of memoir as my personal journey pivoting away from monocultural worship practices and toward multiethnic and multicultural worship practices. The intent is to use the personal journey as a White worship leader in a diverse community in a manner where other White ministry leaders, both inside and outside of Bethany, may be able to relate. Relating may serve to help others process their own questions safely and visualize how a similar pivot may be possible for them. I believe that the initial pivot is one of the most important steps and possibly the most difficult to make. The memoir is both autobiographical and prosopography. I am telling the story of Bethany Church—how the people have formed my understanding of race and ethnicity while presenting ideas and strategies for multicultural worship practice.

Episode One: Telling Our Stories

In Episode One, <https://youtu.be/IIOIBBamWyk>, I tell stories of Bethany Church, our context in the Baltimore area, and my personal journey in transitioning from monocultural worship to multicultural worship. I have been intentional about using story (autobiographical and prosopography memoir) as the framework for this project. I have shared Episode One with a

select few people. I have chosen to sit with those who are watching the video so that I may discern their reactions and responses to the content. Tears were shed on more than one occasion, which informs me that the story format is making a personal connection with the viewers and that the content is proving to be meaningful.¹⁴⁶

Episode One provides a “why” for multicultural worship. The people in our church and in our community are worth our time and efforts and as the worship leader, I have been blessed in this work. Providing the “why” at the beginning of the series prepares a spiritual foundation moving forward.

Episode Two: Language Songs 101

In Episode Two, <https://youtu.be/AqVzXZB4db8>, I share our first journey toward introducing language to the worship service through song. When introducing language in song, it is appropriate to provide context and the congregational connection to the language. Doing so avoids tokenism or cultural appropriation. The steps taken to introduce the song “Breathe” with selected Telugu phrases was as follows:

1. Selecting a worship song familiar to the congregation.
2. Selecting a small phrase that could be sung in Telugu.
3. Meeting with language speakers about their connection to the song and their stories.

Suhas expressed that hearing his English-speaking church family singing in his native language was moving for him. Ranitha expressed that the song “Breathe” was meaningful to her because of the rise of COVID-19 in India. Her grandparents, who live in India, had Covid at the time and the song reminded her of her people back home. Ranitha also shared that this song reminds her that Jesus Christ is everything to us, especially, in our greatest times of need. He truly is the air that we breathe.

¹⁴⁶ Responses to Episode One by Bethany Church members is presented in Chapter 5.

4. Introducing the song to the worship team with the native speakers of the language (Suhas, Mahima, and Ranitha). This included teaching the phrase, “This is the air I breathe,” in Telugu (Neva Na Oopidi) followed by Suhas, Mahima, and Ranitha sharing about their connections to the song.
5. Finally, we introduced the Telugu phrase to the church. This was preceded by once again asking Suhas, Mahima, and Ranitha to briefly share their personal stories and connection to this song, India, and singing in Telugu. I also provided information to the congregation about the growing Indian population in Howard County and our church mission efforts in India in cooperation with Ranitha’s family both from and living in India. Bethany Church supports 50 local pastors in India and has built two church buildings.

Before closing out this episode, I share that this practice of singing phrases in Telugu has become very meaning for the majority culture worshipers. Our church is just beginning to sing in other languages. This part of our transition to multicultural worship has served as an introduction to the practice. With more than nine other languages spoken in our congregation, we have much to learn and look forward to.

Episode Three: Cross-Cultural Cooking

Episode Three, <https://youtu.be/-teUY2hBf04>, features three cross-cultural cooking experiences I engaged in with three ladies from my church. Yetunde Bolarinwa, is a Nigerian-born young mother who I have known personally since she immigrated to the U.S. I went to her home in Northwest Baltimore to cook plantains. Prior to cooking the plantains, we went to a local ethnic market to purchase the fruit. Part of Episode Seven includes my insights into Yetunde’s culture and her daily life during this experience.

The second cooking experience was in the home of an east Indian-born mother named Victoria Kota. Victoria invited me into her kitchen to cook lemon rice. Part of the experience was learning all of the beans, types of rice, and spices that she uses when cooking on a daily basis. After cooking, we went to the Asian grocery store and shopped for her pantry. Victoria also purchased groceries that I would need to cook lemon rice at home. This grocery store was large and offered many items with which I was unfamiliar. I was experiencing some cultural fatigue at the end of this day.

The third cooking experience took place in my kitchen as I invited my African American friend Judy Baylor and her husband Ernie to my home. Judy taught me how to cook collard greens. Following the stories of cooking greens and with a full pot ready to eat, we sat down at my dining room table to some fried chicken, greens, and mashed potatoes. The evening ended in a two-hour hymn-sing in the living room.

All three of these experiences demonstrate the impact of entering into the personal space/home of someone from another culture or inviting that person into your own personal space. Teresa of Avila once said, “Know that even when you are in the kitchen, our Lord moves amidst the pots and pans.”¹⁴⁷ Cross-cultural cooking offers the opportunity to see God at work in the lives of others in a completely different context deepening connections, understanding, cultural intelligence and bonds of Christian love. Once again, this practice demonstrates how we can offer our lives, the routine and daily tasks, as an offering/act of worship to God.

Episode Four: Bringing Multicultural Elements to Our Christmas Event

¹⁴⁷ “Teresa of Avila,” *Catholic Link*, accessed December 22, 2021, <https://catholic-link.org/quotes/lord-moves-amidst-pots-pans-st-teresa-avila-quote/>.

In Episode Four, <https://youtu.be/Kxn5BnxcQ2Y>, I share how this unique outreach event is more than sharing Christmas lights with the community. It is a multicultural and spiritually forming practice. The Christmas Walk of Wonder at Bethany Church is an outdoor, interactive experience featuring magnificently themed Christmas trees, each telling a part of the story of Christmas.¹⁴⁸ The idea for this unique multicultural event was born out of the COVID-19 pandemic where social distancing, masks, and mandates against large group events were the new normal. As I was striving to implement my newly learned multicultural practices for part of my artifact, I was challenged to figure out how to imagine an event which could check so many unprecedented boxes at once. Engaging the visual senses, we decorated each of seven trees to communicate the story of Christmas.

The first tree is the Mary Tree and features baby dolls of various skin tones wrapped in clothes. We know that baby Jesus was not of European decent and so we wanted to feature baby dolls with a variety of skin tones. The dolls with diverse skin tones also point to the mystery of the incarnation. Jesus, fully God, came in human form. He was fully human. The doll skin tones are a form of artistic liberty, representing this mystery of God coming as a human, like us.

A tree topper designed by local African American, Baltimore-based artist Liz Miller was commissioned and featured the Catholic tradition of the use of blue roses to symbolize the Virgin Mary. We also included doves on this tree to represent the Holy Spirit who overshadowed Mary as part of the immaculate conception. There were small donkeys on the tree reminding us of the long journey to Bethlehem Mary endured. White lights were used to symbolize her purity. Beside the tree was an A-frame sign which summarized Mary's story through the symbolic ornaments on the tree. The last sentence posed the following question: "Do you think God has a plan for our lives just like he had one for Mary?"

¹⁴⁸ <https://yourbethanyec.org/walkofwonder>

Watching the people walk the meandering path through the thousands of Christmas lights and the themed trees, a spiritual practice was taking place. Attendees would walk the path, read the signs, study the ornaments, and talk with family and friends about what they were seeing. Each tree functioned as a worship station as attendees processed the story of Jesus birth. Simultaneously, live music, Bethany music performance videos, and recorded narrations spoken in English, Yoruba, Spanish, Mandarin, and Telugu were played/performed over the outdoor sound system. Tree themes were as follows: The Mary Tree, The Bethlehem Tree, The Shepherd Tree, The Angel Tree, The Magi Tree, The Cross Tree, and The Life Tree. Including the Walk of Wonder in the video series is an effective way to communicate purpose in all aspects of the event.

Episode Five: What I Learned in India

Episode Five, <https://youtu.be/0UbjOTkBxHw>, entails what I learned in India. Through sharing about Bethany Church's preparation for and ministry in India, I was able to give real life examples of developing cultural intelligence and using contextualization in cross-cultural worship. Cultural intelligence was developed through weekly meetings after worship where native born Indians taught us about their home country and culture. Episode Five incorporates video clips from the concert in India to show the contextual use of dance, live painted artwork, video, and music to communicate the gospel message. This missional approach may also be practiced in multiethnic ministry work in our local communities.

Episode Six: Exploring Multicultural Artwork

Episode Six, <https://youtu.be/HBlORy7Zf3w>, explores multicultural artwork. Bethany Church recently renovated the sanctuary. Carpet was replaced, pews reupholstered, and a fresh coat of paint was applied. There were a few design changes in the room, and it seemed fitting to include artwork as part of the overall design. I wanted this artwork to be more than ornamentation. I wanted the artwork to be a part of our spiritual formation as a congregation. Implementing some multicultural pieces which had meaning to our people was a high priority. Three of the six pieces of artwork fulfilled our multicultural objectives.

The first piece of multicultural art was framed pieces of Kintsugi pottery. Kintsugi is a Japanese artform of taking broken pottery and mending it with a gold-plated bonding agent. The second piece of artwork is a piece that was designed with computer graphics by a professional graphic designer. The phrase “God so loved the world” was printed in English and eight other languages. Each language is represented by members of our congregation. The design also connected with the gold veining and blue and white color scheme of the Kintsugi as these pieces are displayed next to one another. The third piece of art was commissioned. Liz Miller is an African American, Baltimore-based fine artist. I have worked with Miller on a number of projects over the years including the performance artwork on the 2015 mission trip. Based on Revelation 7:9, Miller painted the great multitude which gathers from every tribe and nation.

Below each piece of artwork is a gold plate with a QR code and a message stating: “To discover the story behind each piece of art, scan this code.” The QR code directs the person to a page on the church website titled “Sanctuary Art.”¹⁴⁹ On this page, each piece of artwork is pictured accompanied by the story behind the artwork, relevant Scripture passages, and recommendations for further study, prayer, and contemplation. For those who come to the church

¹⁴⁹ <https://yourbethanyec.org/sanctuary-art>

to pray during the week, sitting by a piece and reflecting on what God has to say to us through the artwork is a formational spiritual practice.

In Episode Six, I share what some of the challenges and blessings have been in curating the art as well as reporting reactions from various people who have viewed the art. One of the most time-consuming challenges was working with language speakers and graphic designers to ensure that the text displayed properly. Even after proof reading, we discovered errors in the “God so Loved the World” piece. The error created additional costs to have the piece reprinted.

One of the blessings is to witness people as they view the artwork. Some react when they see a face that resembles an ethnicity they identify with. Some react with pleasant surprise when they see their language. I can surmise that they had not expected to see their language. It brings me joy to see their reactions and know that these efforts are making an impact. Another blessing is curating the artwork. I had to reach out for help as this is an area in which I have limited knowledge. As I was forced to engage with those I would not have otherwise met, it expanded my circle and let others in the community know what we are doing inside of our sanctuary. These efforts communicate acceptance and welcome to a diverse community.

Episode Seven: Discussing Tokenism with Nikki Lerner

Episode Seven, <https://youtu.be/TxgvudC0ei4>, shares a discussion about tokenism.

Nikki Lerner is a culture coach, speaker, author, artist, and former worship leader at Bridgeway Community Church in Columbia, Maryland. Bridgeway Community Church is pastored by David Anderson who is an author, leading voice and practitioner in the area of racial reconciliation and leading multicultural churches. Lerner worked for Anderson as a worship leader, choir director and creative arts influencer for a number of years. Her experience in multicultural worship has been a tremendous help to me in my professional development. As a

White worship leader discussing multicultural worship, it is helpful to include non-majority voices. Lerner's life experiences as an African American woman in ministry provide a much-needed perspective for this discussion. In Episode Seven, Nikki joins me in the Bethany Church sanctuary to discuss tokenism. Nikki defines tokenism and provides examples of what tokenism might look like in a local church worship ministry. This is a helpful discussion because those who are eager to dive into multicultural worship unknowingly fall into the trap of tokenism. Tokenism may occur by placing people in various roles based on their skin color or in order to meet an unwritten quota. Ideas for avoiding the practice of tokenism are discussed.

Episode Eight: Excerpts from Conversations with Nikki Lerner

Due to technical difficulties with the audio, Episode Eight did not record well. Plans have been made to edit the sections of the conversation that are difficult to hear. A reimagined presentation of parts of the conversation will be edited into a narrated episode to be published at a later date. Content from Episode Eight that could be meaningful focus on proximity and intentionality. Lerner speaks about how our proximity to those of other cultures and our intentionality to engage impact relationships and the ability to minister cross-culturally.

Episode Nine: Cultural Appropriation and Other Thoughts with Nikki Lerner

Episode Nine, <https://youtu.be/pUwPn0WBDO0>, features conversations about cultural appropriation in the context of worship arts ministry. In the beginning of this episode, I provide two situations where questions around cultural appropriation arose in my ministry. These situations were included to continue the autobiographical element of the series as well as to help viewers imagine how cultural appropriation might manifest itself in their contexts. Nikki Lerner explains what cultural appropriation is and provides both real and hypothetical examples to help viewers consider this concept. An important point from Lerner's comments is the importance of

story and context. Providing the story or context along with an artform gives honor to the ethnic heritage associated with the artform and is focused on giving credit for the artform to the proper communities. Lerner's position is that anyone can perform an artform from outside of their ethnic heritage as long as it is presented with the appropriate context and credit.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY

Overview

Chapter 5 includes an overview of the how the larger events and experiences at Bethany Church relate to points discussed in previous chapters. This overview is followed by written responses from those at Bethany Church who have viewed Episode One of the video series and have seen cultural shifts in our congregation over the years. The final thoughts are focused on what areas were not addressed in this work, what next steps might be, and transitions that are beginning to take place as a result of my studies and resultant multicultural work in the church.

Transitions are places of movement. They are shaped by the past, rooted in the now, and looking ahead toward the future. There are no simple solutions, only a calling and active posture for the work. Changing the culture of an organization requires movement in many areas. At Bethany Church, the journey from monocultural worship to multicultural worship has begun and is ongoing.

The content of this dissertation has focused on concepts and ideas pertinent to the beginning of the transition from monocultural worship. This initial pivot is a difficult one to make. The beginning of the transition includes setting a new course, reframing our thoughts on racial reconciliation and diversity, and thinking about the words we use to process these things. Cultural intelligence work may require shifts in resources such as time, money, and personnel. The initial transition is a big one. If rushed, the effort may be sabotaged. However, an informed and measured process has a greater chance of success.

The transition began for Bethany Church with honest conversations about what was happening in the community as it relates to racism. The people in the congregation put down their colorblind eyeglasses for a moment to hear the stories of African American brothers and

sisters. The people listened. As grief was shared, shame began to erode, and new bonds were formed. In that moment, White brothers and sisters discovered the hidden stories of brothers and sisters of Color. What a groundbreaking moment! Even when some put their colorblind glasses back on, it was not the same. This happened in a worship service. How important it is to realize and appreciate the impact worship practices, like testimony, can have on the life of a community of believers. How important it is to realize the impact of gathering together in worship. What happens in gathered worship has potential for great impact for the kingdom of God if we allow it.

The transition from monocultural worship at Bethany Church continued with an intentional pursuit to apply much of what is included in Chapter 2 beginning with developing cultural intelligence. Bethany Church members learned about contextualization and cultural intelligence when preparing for a mission trip to India in 2015. In my role as worship pastor, my development of cultural intelligence was propelled by our changing community demographics, higher education, engaging in multicultural worship forums such as conferences, workshops, and personal culture coaching sessions, and building cross-cultural relationships (i.e., cooking).

Further transformation occurred as the multicultural vision was shared with other leaders. Practices such as singing in other languages, updates to our website to reflect diverse leadership, multicultural artwork installations, preaching on racial reconciliation, and intentional diverse representation in more areas of the church are being implemented. This vision is gaining ground beyond my efforts. Just recently I noticed that the Scripture read before the sermon each week is now being read in English and then again in another language. Until recently, I was the only one implementing the use of language in the worship service. These practices are becoming more regular and other leaders are taking initiative to implement them.

Cultural intelligence is being applied to planning of events beyond the Worship Arts Ministry. As discussed in Chapter 3, recognizing that Bethany Church includes more people than those who attend Sunday worship is changing our efforts in ministry to a broader scope of people. The church staff is now seeing and considering the vast diversity of peoples in various “arms” of the church to include the Learning Center, Awana program, Bethany Music Center, and Music Camp/Class participants. As we apply cultural intelligence to a parent banquet, we are asking ourselves about what foods will be appropriate and what time factors should we consider. We are forming a parent planning team so that we do not assume what works for this multicultural context; rather, we are asking diverse groups of parents to inform us. This is an example of the bridge-building we hope to continue moving. This increased integration will help Bethany to reframe how they view and connect with people who participate in different areas of Bethany Church life. In the process, a new kind of church, a broader multiethnic worshiping community may form and potentially impact the broader community in Howard County.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the church staff is applying an international mission’s mindset to reaching people in our community for Jesus Christ. We recognize that throughout modern church history, evangelicals have adapted their worship practices to meet the needs of seekers in the 90’s and, more recently, to reach millennials in the 2000’s. We also recognize the practice of contextualization in foreign missions. Therefore, it is a reasonable strategy to adapt our cultural worship practices to reach our diverse community, not as a means of being politically correct, but rather in keeping with contextualization.

What the People are Thinking

I have begun to share Episode One with a cross section of people in Bethany Church. I was a bit apprehensive about sharing the video link and asking for responses. However, some of

the responses are very insightful and are informing me even further about how members of our church are processing issues around race and living as a multicultural faith community.

One member candidly writes:

Our first reaction was irritation. We live in a time where the social impetus is to make everyone equal in every way in everything. When you stated "multi-cultural", and "multi-ethnic" for a church that wants to be ALL things to ALL people, that is not going to happen. If the church truly believed that, then why was the word "Baptist" removed from the lawn signage? The rationale was that the word was "offensive" to some in the community. Why does the church not confront homosexuality? Or abortion? Because it is not safe ground. Our world is polarized beyond repair today, all along racial dictates. If you are white, you are viewed as a racist. Revisionist thought is hard at work to erase our nation's glorious history (e.g the destruction of Monument Avenue in Richmond) because of white founding Fathers. The flag of the United States is seen as THE symbol of racism. We don't have to apologize for our history, but are committed to learning from it. You need also to address the challenge of black leaders not seeking healing, but division. Your reference to Dr. King made us remember that his movement, at the time of his assassination, was in disarray, and King himself had fallen out of favor. People like Stokely Carmichael, Hewey Newton, the Black Panther Movement, and others wanted confrontation. King's methods had become too passive too "old school". The young turks wanted no part of passive resistance. They wanted confrontation, and that continues to this day. Your efforts are noble, and God-driven. We know that. WE salute your dedication to your "cause". You are a good and decent person.....that counts. This is not the "churchy" response you were seeking, but it is real.

Another member responds by stating:

One thing I loved is how you shared why this is personal to you, why it matters to you. I think that piece is really important, just like you said - our stories matter. When you were willing to be authentic, I felt I could listen to you with my guard down and really hear what you wanted to communicate rather than being caught up in my own assumptions and reactions. Thanks for your vulnerability.

I have been very humbled by the inclusion of different languages in our worship services. It is a really great reminder that my way is not the "right" way or the "best" way. It's been good to sit and listen and be a little uncomfortable, to be reminded of the privilege I carry that I don't have to be in that position often, and to remember that many others don't share my privilege. It's also just been a really genuine and moving way to feel like I am standing in solidarity with those different than me, a way to let them know that they matter and God's love covers us all.

My overall reaction was one of joy and relief that someone with influence is stepping forward to acknowledge past wrongs of the church and lead others in a new way forward. I feel excited anticipation to hear more from you and learn with you. I'm also really

looking forward to hearing more of the experiences of others different than me. Praying blessings on this project.

One member who is a parent with multicultural children through adoption writes:

My feelings on this are multi-faceted as a minority in my own family and as a member of Bethany. I, like others, feel our church is represented well here. My shock on what our brothers & sisters went through as they shared that one Sunday left quite an impact. I feel that was pivotal for understanding. How we keep that momentum is not clear to me which makes me grateful God is working through you.

Then there is the fact that as a mom of multicultural, I feel like I have failed in some big ways. Your attempts to bridge the gap remind me of that painful place in my own heart. I can't not mention my own experience. My children wanted nothing at all to do with their birth heritage growing up. I would try and they would refuse to engage in holidays, attire, meals, stores, etc. I finally stopped pushing & let them lead. But, once they were old enough to have a desire to embrace their birth culture and lead, they also no longer remembered my attempt. They felt as if I had tried to make them white and had ignored who they were. They also want to attempt to understand their culture without my input. This has left a great divide. I want to engage but I'm kept at a viewing distance only as they navigate who they are independently.

Is my issue a teen/adoption issue only? I don't know. Do other cultures want us stepping in or do they view us as a white-savior? As you said, It would take more talks, more listening to really know.

I love how God has called you. I'll pray earnestly for clarity and continued compassion. Thank you for being a bridge!

Our Senior Pastor, Kip Smith, writes:

My thoughts: I was moved

1. because I was watching our story. It blessed me because I love our people. I was blessed listening to your story and your desire to help us speak to the pain of others.
2. Because the white church leaders failed MLKs appeal for help. It was my grief.
3. Because we are a little church w a big story and I am a part of that story.

Someone who is not a member of the church but has been a part of our worship arts ministry for over a decade writes the following:

liked this: racial reconciliation - 'ppl didn't want to talk about racial reconciliation, but it needed to be talked about.'

liked this: Pivotal to have black leadership and allow some of those people to speak about race from the pulpit to understand that this is an issue that we must face as Christians.

Would have thought the black leadership inviting people to come forward to share their race stories might have been a better fit. Thankful that ppl felt comfortable coming forward.

I liked that you went on a little tangent about sharing stories and not trying to prove a point - that not all stories must be substantiated with evidence etc - debating whether discrimination and racism exist from a white standpoint.

Likening your daughters' illness which you cannot feel or relate to the difficulty with understanding racism as a white person - helps others empathize and sympathize to wrap their minds around something that they will never fully experience for themselves.

'You don't need to understand - you need to listen' - I think also we need to act and to love people through it. Furthermore, it seems the explaining that white ppl lean towards is fueled by a need to 'feel better' - I think this urge needs to be suppressed. Discomfort being felt by all is the only way we move through this pain together towards a more equitable future. No one gets to feel better when another group is being marginalized and is in pain - we all join in - get in the dirt and help - this will be uncomfortable but is what we are called to do. His Hands and Feet in the work.

I appreciate that it's an ongoing series.

Some of the phrasings are problematic. Culture is being treated as if it's a white vs others thing. Culture is something we all share - perhaps the language can be shifted to acknowledge this. Phrasing can be used to elevate other cultures while using more unifying language.

A female active in the life of the church writes:

Thank you for realizing the needs our church has and has had for a long time. I only speak for the last 13 years when I came to Bethany. I will address the worship piece first. I grew up in a very traditional white church that sang songs straight from the hymnals in the late 70's and 80's. I love the traditional hymns but had the joy of attending church for nearly 8 years which was probably 99% black. And let me tell you, I felt completely at home. Two extremely different worship styles but both glorifying our God. Maybe I am just odd in that I love all styles and actually YEARN for it. When we do gospel, we need to go all out! When we do traditional, strip it down to the beauty of the richness of the hymn and allow the words to speak. Allow people who are gifted in certain musical areas to usher people into the throne room in those moments. Why would we hold back? We need the dance team back, we need a deaf ministry.....I know....I know....I want it all. I signed a song several years back and it was one of the most meaningful acts of worship I ever did. I would be happy to help in this area.

Regarding celebrating and recognizing our unique makeup, I say you are absolutely on track that we must listen so much more. As a mom of two girls who don't identify with any particular group, that has been a challenge in itself. Seeing people who look like them in their church was crucial. Having leadership that embraces and VALUES all cultures, nationalities and women is critical. We must address all "isms" and

acknowledging the pain, struggle and needs of those who society and historically the church has not supported and actually oppressed and persecuted.

I know we do things differently at Bethany and for that I am grateful. I know we have really dropped the ball in the past and for that I am sad and disappointed, but praise God we can stand and say we were wrong and to ask our brother and sisters for forgiveness. Yes, I genuinely believe we need to ask publicly for forgiveness and be held accountable to get it right from this moment on.

An older African American member writes:

The reconciled church must become a reality if we are serious about the Great Commission. Multicultural worship is an essential ingredient.

Reflections from a professional female:

I love this! I want to watch all of the episodes now!

I have felt and seen the changes you described over the years. As members of Bethany for over 15 years, we have watched the changes as members, and as our children have become part of the music ministry, more through their eyes as participants of the ministry.

I remember some of the events you discussed in your video... and the way our church didn't hide from them. It even caused me to venture into reading books and listening to podcasts about racism. I joined my first ever book club and the topic was about racism. I was curious to learn and explore my own biases. I grew up in a VERY monoethnic area... there were no other cultures in my town, high school, etc. So being in our church and high school and neighborhood is starkly different from where we grew up... and I think it helps us with a broader worldview. I am thankful for the diversity in these communities. I am thankful for the way you are intentional about bringing in diversity to our style of worship to make others in the church feel recognized. I even became a voice at work for diversity, ethnicity and inclusion. I presented on these topics in national webinars. We started talking about the topic of racism at home, watching youtube videos that would spark conversations around the dinner table.

I guess I would want you to know that I appreciate your perspective and as I was experiencing my own exploration of culture personally, at work, at home, with my family, I am thankful our church leadership was another place that we could know was on that same journey.

Final Thoughts

While studying and researching this topic, I often felt inadequate as a White person to be writing about multicultural worship. I was reminded by my second reader, a Brazilian American,

of the Apostle Paul who was a Jew advocating for the Gentiles. Becoming an advocate will require discernment, wisdom, and commitment and is fueled by a love for God's people. The Apostle Paul was passionate about sharing the gospel with the Gentiles. His voice as a Roman Citizen and as a Jew was considered worth listening to. Some might say he was a person of power. I cringe using those words in reference to my voice; however, as a White person, I do have a voice that other White brothers and sisters might consider listening to. I have already begun to experience some of the blessings of sharing with other White people, the insights I have gained on this journey of cross-cultural ministry in the worship arts. Sometimes people ponder, sometimes there are tears, sometimes I can see lightbulbs go off, sometimes there is opposition. I believe my passion for this work has an impact on how people receive it. It is not simply an academic or professional endeavor for me. It is my way of loving the people that God loves.

There is certainly much more space for cultivating cultural intelligence and multiethnic worship practices. Areas of interest that I was not able to cover in more detail in this dissertation include African American worship practices, continued work in ethnodoxology, and Asian worship practices. Another avenue that I was not able to lean into and which is specific to my church context is the integration of Jewish practices into the worship service. The worship team at Bethany Church is blessed to have musicians who are of Jewish heritage and non-practicing in any faith. Because these musicians with Jewish heritage are White, it is easy to miss this cultural piece of our puzzle. I would like to explore how I might integrate these Jewish roots into the cultural work we are doing.

Additionally, I would like to further analyze worship, musical genre, and language preferences within Bethany Church. Kimberly Martin, in her doctoral dissertation for Liberty University titled *Contextualizing Worship and Music in a Multicultural Church: A Case Study at*

Christ Fellowship Miami, explored the following areas in assessing cultural factors in her congregation: ethnic background, heart languages, preferred language for worship, preferred music for worship, and favorite music sound.¹⁵⁰ Martin also analyzed the repertoire of worship music by identifying each song by title, genre, language, artist/rendition, and theme. Analyzing Bethany's worship music in this way would help me to get a more accurate estimation of the music culture of our church.

Finally, further development of the video series accompanying this work is one of the next steps in this transition toward multicultural worship. I intend to record more episodes which would include additional diverse voices. Some of those voices have been a part of Bethany Church's multicultural journey. Other voices will help us to move forward in our growth. The video series will be slightly adapted and used as part of a curriculum to develop CI in our church. The first step has been distributing Episode One to various leaders within the church for feedback. Some of their comments are included in the addendum. Sharing stories will be facilitated by combining the video series with Mark DeYmaz's workbook, *Multiethnic Conversations: An Eight Week Journey Toward Unity in Your Church*.

In my search for evaluating success in multicultural ministry, I have come to believe that measuring progress is more favorable than measuring success. The work of becoming multiethnic worshipping community will look different for each congregation depending on the context in which the church is located, and the history of the church. Multicultural work will move at different paces for different churches. I believe the important factor is movement. There will always be reasons to get stuck and halt movement. Deciding to find ways to press on will keep progress in motion. The Bethany Church multicultural worshipping journey began with the

¹⁵⁰ Kimberly Martin, "Contextualizing Worship and Music in a Multicultural Church: A Case Study at Christ Fellowship Miami," (Doctor of Worship Studies diss., Liberty University School of Music, 2018), 23-40.

ways God was working through people in the pews. The journey progressed with decisions by leadership to talk about racial tensions in society and in the community. Further progress was made through exploring cultural intelligence and education in multicultural ministry strategies and worship practices.

I am uncertain where this multicultural worship journey will lead me and my congregation. This is truly a pivotal moment and the beginnings of multiethnic work in a rapidly changing community. It may be a risky road with sharp, high-speed turns, and narrow passages by steep cliffs. There may be steep hills to climb or brakes to be applied when things are progressing too quickly. J. R. Tolkien said it best when he placed the following words in the mouth of Bilbo Baggins in *The Fellowship of The Rings* when he said, “It’s a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door. You step into the road, and if you don’t keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to.”¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring: Being the First Part of the Lord of the Rings* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2004, Kindle edition), 84.

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