

Multi-Cultural Church Planting

How can our churches reach people from multiple cultures? What does it look like to plant such a church? We will discuss core principles and appropriate training in creating a successful multi-cultural church planting strategy. In thinking this through, we need to remember that there are many cultures even within what looks like a mono-cultural context. For example, class and age group form important cultural barriers as does the total immersion of people in a secular worldview that has no room for God. Furthermore, the church could be said to constitute a particular culture or even sub-culture which those of us in the church need to understand.

Martin Robinson is Principal and Chief Executive of ForMission College. Martin was born in India of missionary parents and then brought up in Scotland where his father was a church planter. When Martin was in his early twenties he trained for the ministry, and his first church was in the inner city of Birmingham. This multi-ethnic congregation was engaged in church planting, and Martin, together with his wife, Lynda led one of the new church plants. After thirteen years in local ministry, Martin went to work for the Bible Society in the UK in a variety of roles. In that period he was the Director of Mission and Theology.

Martin has written many books on the broad theme of mission, including *Faith of the Unbeliever*, *Invading Secular Space*, *Planting Mission-Shaped Churches Today*, and *Practices for the Re-founding of God's People: The Missional Challenge of the West*. In 2002 Martin became the National Director of Together in Mission. In 2008 he became the Principal of Springdale College. These two organisations are now known as ForMission. The goal of ForMission is to prepare workers for the harvest.

- I. What do we mean by Multi-Cultural Church Planting?
 - A. From Jesus synagogue to Gentile congregation
 - B. Cross-cultural church planting
 - C. Inter-cultural church planting
 - D. Multi-cultural church planting

- II. Taking culture seriously
 - A. The work of Donald McGavran and The Bridges of God
 - B. The homogeneous unit principle (HUP)
 - C. The heterogeneous nature of multi-cultural church plants
 - D. Being clear as to why we want to plant a multi-cultural church

- III. The issue of first-generation migrant churches

- A. The four phases of migrant church development
 - 1. Survival and identity
 - 2. Serving their community
 - 3. Mission to the homeland
 - 4. Discovering their wider context
- B. Working with second and third generation potential planters
- C. The reaction of first-generation migrants to the development of multi-cultural plants
- D. Creating the right training environment

IV. Allowing the mission to shape the church

- A. The problem of beginning with a pre-formed concept of church
- B. The task of listening
- C. Seeking the People of Peace
- D. Starting small

V. Building the team

- A. Growing trust
- B. Permitting conflict
- C. Agreement around purpose, vision and values
- D. From multi-cultural to inter-cultural?

VI. Creating the culture

A. Welcome

B. Generosity

C. Table

D. Living with difference

Suggested Readings:

Donald McGavran, *The Bridges of God*, Wipf and Stock, 2005 (originally 1955).

Harvey Kwiyani, *Sent Forth: African Missionary Work in the West*, Orbis, 2014

Harvey Kwiyani, *Multicultural Kingdom: Ethnic Diversity, Mission and the Church*, SCM Press, 2020.

Hirpo Kumbi, *The Culturally Intelligent Leader: Developing Multi-ethnic Communities in a Multicultural Age*, Instant Apostle, 2018.

Martin Robinson and Alan Roxburgh, *Practices for the Re-founding of God's People: the Missional Challenge of the West*, Church Publishing, 2018