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# Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

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LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES TO CULTURAL TRANSITION  
AT MESSAGE OF PEACE CHURCH

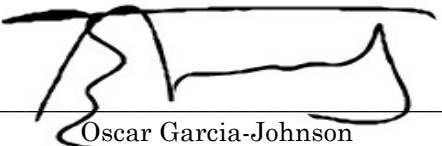
Written by

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and submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary  
upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:



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Date Received: September 20, 2013

LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES TO CULTURAL TRANSITION  
AT MESSAGE OF PEACE CHURCH

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

FERNANDO CARVALHO  
JULY 2012



## ABSTRACT

### **Leadership Strategies to Cultural Transition at Message of Peace Church**

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2012

The goal of this Ministry Focus Paper is to formulate strategies of cultural adaptation that will guide the leadership and membership of Message of Peace Church, currently a Portuguese-speaking congregation, to transition to a multiethnic church with English as its primary language of worship. Message of Peace is an ethnic church primarily of Brazilian immigrants in South San Francisco. It began ministering to the Portuguese people in San Jose, but with the decrease of Portuguese immigration and increase of the Brazilian immigration in the 1990s, the church moved north and became mostly Brazilian. With the changes to immigration laws after September 11<sup>th</sup>, and the improvement of the Brazilian economy, immigration to the US has slowed and many will return to Brazil. The ones who remain have children who are English speaking. To assure its survival and its growth the church needs to adapt to a different reality.

The study is divided in three parts. Part One describes both the local congregation and the local community surrounding Message of Peace. It also describes the needs of the new generation, made up of children of the immigrants who were born here or came very young, and were schooled in the US. This new generation will become the future of the church and its leadership. This section also describes the church's organization structure including leadership patterns.

Part Two examines the literature on cultural adaptation, makes a comparison with two multiethnic churches and provides a theology of ministry and cultural adaptation required for such a transition. The study concludes with a description of a five-year plan to transition Message of Peace and it serves as a model for other ethnic churches that may transition to a multiethnic church with English as the primary language of worship.

Content Reader: Oscar García-Johnson, PhD

Words: 157

To my wife Teresa, who always encourages me and supports me in the ministry. To my son Philipe, for his help and input in this work and to my daughter Raquel for her steadfast support in the ministry.

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## INTRODUCTION

Message of Peace is an ethnic Assemblies of God Church, composed of primarily Brazilian immigrants located in South San Francisco, California. Established in 1984, Message of Peace has gone through several transitions in terms of location and target groups during its three decades of existence. As Message of Peace enters its fourth decade, it needs to transition once more. The objective of this Ministry Focus Paper is to formulate and implement strategies of cultural adaptation that will guide the membership of Message of Peace Church, currently a predominantly Portuguese-speaking congregation, to transition to a truly multiethnic church that relies on English as its primary language of worship.

The dilemma Message of Peace faces is not unique, and is one that many ethnic churches in America must ultimately confront. The growth of immigration to the US has brought with it a proliferation of ethnic churches that can come to even encompass districts, regions and caucuses. However, as these immigrants settle down and establish families, it is inevitable that the second and third generations will adopt the English language and the prevailing culture, different than their parents as their own. The result is these new generations either leave the church of their parents, or abandon Christianity altogether as they find it difficult to locate a church that understands and reflects their reality.

For example, Korean American churches deal with what it is called the “second exodus” of the second generation who abandon their parent’s churches when they go to



college.<sup>1</sup> An article published in *Christian Century* reported that the cause for the exodus is that members of the second generation are not fluent in their parent's native tongue, that there is no effort on the part of leadership to present alternatives to this group; many of which speak with a thick accent and have little to no awareness of American idioms and American culture.<sup>2</sup>

The risk this runs is that within twenty-to-thirty years, when the original members age, pass away, or return to their country of origin, a once vibrant ethnic church is in the precarious position of dwindling to a handful of members or closing its doors altogether unless the majority ethnic group maintains their presence through immigration as in the case with many Korean and Hispanic churches. When that is not the case, those who have been successful have transitioned into English congregations; however, have failed to address the identity crisis that ensues due to a lack of cultural adaptation. This is a warning sign for Message of Peace, because as it recently completed twenty-eight years of ministry, it finds itself at this exact crossroads. The time to culturally adapt is when the church is still vibrant and resources are available to make the transition to a multiethnic congregation with a main language used in the main worship services.

Message of Peace initially began with the goal to reach the once vibrant Portuguese community in San Jose, California and it did so in its first ten years. The congregation aged and many moved away for one reason or other, but parallel, there was an increase in Brazilian immigration to the San Francisco Bay-area. Brazilians, whom

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<sup>1</sup> This term is usually used in Asian churches to refer to second-generation children leaving the church of their parents due to cultural incompatibility. American culture is not meant "anglo-saxism" but rather the prevailing diverse culture in America made up of many ethnicities and cultures.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Warner, "Korean Americans Reshape Their Churches Second Generation," *Christian Century*, November 13, 2007, 30.

also speak Portuguese, actively sought out the church and many drove over an hour to attend services in San Jose. In order to accommodate this new group, a service was created in the city of San Francisco in 1990 on Sunday evenings to provide a closer location for worship; however, this did not deter a large number of congregants to continue to attend Sunday morning services in San Jose as well. During the second decade of its existence, though based in San Jose, Message of Peace extended its ministry to San Francisco and ministered to both the now declining Portuguese community and the growing Brazilian community.

This remained true until 2001, when a second building was purchased by the ministry in South San Francisco; the main activities of the church transferred to this new location. The church added international to its name and though its membership continued to be Brazilian, devoted itself to reach out to other nationalities and language groups as well. For example, English and Spanish services were added in order to reach the adjacent communities found within the city boundaries of the church's new location. In 2005, the building suffered loss through a major fire and this forced profound changes to the church's make up. The English congregation moved south to San Mateo and became a church plant, the Spanish service became a separate congregation all-together, but the Portuguese service remained as the main service of the church, which was now located in a rented warehouse not far from the damaged building. After four years in this temporary location, the renovation of the building was completed and on the last day of 2010, the congregation returned to its own building.

As it approaches the end of its third decade, Message of Peace is transitioning once again due to another declining ethnic community. The Brazilian population in the Bay

Area is significantly decreasing due to immigration laws enacted post-9/11, alongside with a vastly improved Brazilian economy that affords its native population with better opportunities than in the United States. Brazilians are no longer immigrating to the San Francisco Bay-area—and the United States in general—in large numbers and a notable minority is returning home to Brazil, as evidenced for instance, by the decrease of membership at Brazilian churches. Therefore, the church’s transition is necessary to assure continued growth and its future survival. In addition, there is the added fact that the children of the current members of the congregation have either been born in the United States, or came at such young ages that they have spent their formative years in the United States.<sup>3</sup> These children are for the most part bilingual but operate primarily in English. Teenagers represent an influential demographic that I label the “New Generation” and need to be reached in a different way than their parents, offering a challenge, and also, an opportunity for the church’s future viability.<sup>4</sup> The New Generation is part of the focus of this project and the vehicle the church will use to transition; gradually adopting English as its primary language as a manner of unifying—and invigorating—its congregations toward a new core of church membership.

My interest in the subject is both pragmatic and didactic. As the founder and pastor of Message of Peace through its entire existence, I can see that this latest transformation

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<sup>3</sup> Glen Rogers, *Becoming a Multiethnic Church: Responding to America's Growing Ethnic Diversity* (Bedford, TX: Mission and Ministry Resources, 2007), 7. These children are commonly referred to as 1.5 generation. The term refers to children who were born in the native countries but schooled in the United States. They are labeled "1.5 generation" because they bring with them characteristics from their home country but continue their assimilation and socialization in the new country. They are often bilingual and their identity is a combination of new and old culture and tradition.

<sup>4</sup> The term New Generation will be used in this final project proposal to refer to the second and 1.5 generations of Message of Peace Church.

is needed for the survival and continued growth of the church. It is not my desire that the church ends when my ministry ends, rather I want, as perhaps one of my last contributions to this ministry, to adequately prepare it for the future. I pray it continue to be as vibrant and healthy as it has been during my tenure, continue to be multiethnic in nature, international in mind, but now unified through a new language in the diverse city of South San Francisco. This assures the church a successful and bright future as the New Generation and its new members assume leadership and take the church to a new level.

As a frequent speaker at ethnic churches in the United States and Europe, as well as a member of an Assemblies of God district that has many ethnic churches, I see that many of these churches and pastors face the same dilemmas that Message of Peace now confronts. The principles of cultural adaptation proposed in this project can help fellow ethnic pastors to naturally transition their churches into healthy ones that grow and multiply, as their circumstances change and newer generations arrive.

Part One describes the church's present situation by looking at both the local congregation and the surrounding community in South San Francisco. Special consideration is given to the challenges that members face in undertaking this transition and the difficulties involved in adapting to this proposed new reality. Also, it describes the needs of the New Generation. This generation will undoubtedly become the future of the church and its leadership. This section describes the church's organizational structure with a close look at leadership patterns.

Part Two engages the biblical and theological discussion relevant to cultural adaptation at Message of Peace and church ministry. The discussion looks at the literature on culture and diversity as well as biblical foundation to see how solutions are generally

presented when there are needs for adaptation. Particular consideration is given to the Pentecostal movement, especially the Assemblies of God, and its attempts of cultural adaptation as part of its ministry and mission. It also looks at Evergreen Baptist church in California and Congregación León de Judá in Massachusetts, where culture adaptation was implemented in order to assure the church's survival and growth.

In order to accomplish the proposed transition, specific goals are presented with the aim of becoming multicultural and using the English language. Based in prayer, the project will be presented to various leaders, a pilot project will commence, which will include the addition of a worship service, and different members of the church will be introduced to the project, beginning with the English-speaking families and their children. Gradually this English service will become the main service at Message of Peace International Church. Careful reflection will be given to training, maintaining a timeline and a proper assessment of a number of transformations the leadership and the community will undertake as well as the trial and error processes needed to fulfill this project.

PART ONE

MESSAGE OF PEACE CHURCH IN CONTEXT

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PORTUGUESE AND BRAZILIAN COMMUNITY IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

The Portuguese were the leading European explorers in the fifteenth century and through their efforts Brazil and many parts of the world were discovered, including the coast of present-day California. Although Portuguese settlements in the American colonies were initially scattered and relatively small, mostly through the arrival of Portuguese Jews during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, sustained immigration only began in the late-1800s when large numbers began to immigrate, commonly the rest working on whaling ships that departed from the Azores or Cape Verde Islands to Hawaii, California and New England. In fact, approximately 70 percent of Portuguese immigrants to the United States came from the Azores, while most of the remainder came from other Portuguese islands in the Atlantic—Madeira and the Cape Verde Islands. After an initial surge of Portuguese mainlanders to the former colony of Brazil, their immigration focus was to the United States during the mid-twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Library of Congress, “Portuguese Immigrants in the United States,” <http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/portam/chron6.html> (accessed February 28, 2011).

With new immigration legislation in 1921, the number of new arrivals drastically dropped. This lasted for a few generations but changed when in 1957 a series of natural disasters struck the Azores. The first was a volcano eruption near the island of Faial. Two Azorean Refugee Acts passed by Congress in 1958 and 1960, granted sanctuary to Azoreans in the United States. Disaster struck once again in 1960 and 1964 when earthquakes shook the island of Sao Jorge. More congressional legislation was passed to admit further Azorean refugees. From 1961-1977 about 150,000 Azoreans immigrated to the United States. In 1965, immigration quotas were dropped and a new law permitted 20,000 immigrants for each country to enter the nation.<sup>2</sup>

The main motive for immigration, at least in modern times, was purely economic as Portugal found itself as one of the poorest nations in Europe. Portuguese emigration to the United States often included whole families, rather than just men. For this reason, emigrants to the United States settled permanently, unlike other ethnic groups, who tended to be mostly men, who set out alone with the intention of returning to their home country after a few years of residence.

California and Massachusetts have consistently had the largest concentration of Portuguese. According to some estimates, from 1930-1960 there were close to 100,000 Portuguese living in California alone, and some estimates indicate a greater number in Massachusetts.<sup>3</sup> These numbers only factored in first- and second-generation Portuguese. In California, most of the Portuguese who came, worked primarily in agriculture, plying

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<sup>2</sup> Robert L. Santos, "Azorean Immigration," <http://library.csustan.edu/bsantos/immigr.html> (accessed March 10, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



their trade in the dairy industry and vegetable and fruit farming. There were large concentrations in Southern California in the cities of Artesia, Chino and San Diego. Other Portuguese communities were formed in the San Joaquin Valley in San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Kings and Tulare counties. Within the 2,000 dairy farms in San Joaquin Valley, approximately half (or at least one-third of the state's dairy farms) were owned and operated by descendants of Portuguese.<sup>4</sup>

Several of the older Portuguese-American farming communities in the San Francisco Bay-area are located south of Oakland in the neighboring towns of San Leandro, San Lorenzo and Hayward. As the Portuguese moved into this area, beginning in San Leandro in the 1850s, they entered into an agricultural landscape that had been shaped by earlier Spanish, Mexican and Anglo settlements. They first worked as contract laborers on existing farms, but as they prospered, they purchased farms of their own, concentrating on dairying and the intensive cultivation of fruits and vegetables. San Leandro was once described as a "city of orchards and gardens . . . almost as Portuguese as old Lisbon itself."<sup>5</sup>

Another bursting Portuguese community was established in the South Bay, chiefly within the cities of San Jose and Santa Clara. The area attracted many Portuguese immigrants because of its proximity to the ocean, and then, the presence of dairy farms. A small area of East San Jose that followed alongside Alum Rock Avenue became known as Little Portugal. In its heyday from the 1970s, into the late-1980s, there were many

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<sup>4</sup> Library of Congress, "Portuguese Immigrants in the United States," <http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/portam/chron6.html> (accessed March 10, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Library of Congress, "Aerial Perspective of East Side of San Francisco Bay," <http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/portam/eastside.html> (accessed March 10, 2011).

shops and restaurants that served the Portuguese community of San Jose. When immigration to the United States from the Azores Islands and Portugal diminished, many of the stores began to close their doors permanently.

Portuguese immigration to the United States came to a virtual halt due to economic improvements in Portugal when it joined the European Union in 1986.<sup>6</sup> This not only provided more opportunities back home, but also in the other EU countries. According to the 2004 report from the US Census Bureau, there were over 1.1 million people of Portuguese ancestry living in the United States, and the legacy of Portuguese immigrants was primarily felt through agriculture and local industries in the states mentioned.<sup>7</sup> In addition to their contribution to agriculture and local economies, they also introduced some of their customs and food to other Americans, especially, New England.

On the other hand, Brazilian immigration to the United States has a contrasting story. Some sources claim that the earliest immigrants from Brazil to the United States were probably twenty-three Jewish Brazilians who entered the country in 1654 when the Dutch were defeated in Brazil and Jews forced to flee from the country.<sup>8</sup> Many chose to return to Amsterdam, but a notable number decided to travel to New Amsterdam, an area today known as New York. Brazilian immigration information is not reliable since the US Immigration and Naturalization Service did not tabulate Brazilians as a separate

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<sup>6</sup> Library of Congress, "Portuguese Settlement in the United States," <http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/portam/settle.html> (accessed February 28, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Mongabay, "Number of people of Portuguese origin living in the U.S.," <http://names.mongabay.com/ancestry/Portuguese.html#DhuwlEGO73zyl0uU.99> (accessed March 8, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> My Jewish Learning, "The First New York Jews," [http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history/Modern\\_History/1700-1914/America\\_at\\_the\\_Turn\\_of\\_the\\_Century/Sephardic\\_Immigration.shtml](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history/Modern_History/1700-1914/America_at_the_Turn_of_the_Century/Sephardic_Immigration.shtml) (accessed January 6, 2012).

group entering the States until 1960. Prior to this, Brazilians were grouped within the extremely broad classification of “South Americans.” It is however known that between 1820-1960, 234,761 people of South American descent entered the United States, with peak waves of South American immigrants entering from 1841-1850 and 1911-1930. It is impossible to tell how many of these South Americans were actually from Brazil.<sup>9</sup>

Relying solely on the 1960 US Census Bureau, it reports that 27,885 people of Brazilian ancestry were living in the United States at the time. From 1960 until the mid-1980s there was a relatively steady pattern of Brazilian immigration to the United States; estimates suggest that between 1,500 and 2,300 Brazilians immigrated each year, mainly from South and South-central Brazil. The vast majorities were of European descent and came from the middle-to-upper-middle-classes of Brazilian society.<sup>10</sup>

During the mid-1980s, Brazil's economy deteriorated rapidly; in 1990, inflation reached 1,795 percent annually. Despite economic reforms, incomes continued to drop by nearly 30 percent, and many Brazilians lost faith in their government. The Brazilian government estimates that between 1986-1990, 1.4 million Brazilians left the country permanently; many of them moving to the United States, others heading for Japan and various countries in South America and Europe.<sup>11</sup> The history of Brazilian immigration to the United States thus did not begin on a significant scale until the mid-1980s. The 1990 US Census Bureau report indicates that there were about 60,000 Brazilians living and

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<sup>9</sup> Encyclopedia.com, “Brazilian Americans,” <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3405800032.html> (accessed March 17, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> The Vernon Johnson Society, “Brazilian Immigration,” <http://www.vernonjohns.org/plcooney/brimmig.html> (accessed March 17, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Encyclopedia.com, “Brazilian Americans.”

working in the United States, but Brazilians were only counted in the census if they explicitly wrote "Brazilian" in the "Other Hispanic" categorization. Brazilians are not Hispanics, so this number is a significant under-representation. Other sources suggest there were approximately 100,000 Brazilians, documented and undocumented, living in the New York-area alone.<sup>12</sup> In addition, there are sizable Brazilian communities in Boston, Washington, DC, Los Angeles, Miami and Phoenix.

With the Brazilian economy worsening, the American consulate found that many more Brazilians wanted to immigrate to the United States than quotas legally allowed. Consequently, since the mid-1980s, a significant percentage of all Brazilian immigration to the United States has been illegal. The most common way for Brazilians to illegally enter the United States is to overstay a tourist visa, fade into established Brazilian communities, and obtain low-skill, low-wage work. A riskier method of gaining entry is through the purchase of fake passports and/or green cards. A number of professional immigration services—legitimate and otherwise—operate in both the United States and Brazil to assist those wishing to come to America. Some Brazilians enter the United States on their own via the Mexican border, but this is extremely time-consuming, dangerous and expensive. Undocumented persons make up a large percentage of the Brazilian population in the United States, making census and immigration data inaccurate.

The accurate number of Brazilians in the United States varies greatly depending on the source. There was a rough estimate of 246,000 Brazilian Americans as of 2007.<sup>13</sup> Another source placed the estimate at closer to 800,000 in 2000, while still another

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> The Vernon Johnson Society, "Brazilian Immigration."

estimates that as of 2008 some 1,100,000 Brazilians live in the United States, with the largest number (300,000) residing in Florida.<sup>14</sup> It is hard to determine correct numbers, as many are undocumented and afraid to be counted in the census.

Nearly half of Brazilian Americans, documented or undocumented, live in New England. The densest populations can be found in New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts, with sizable numbers in California, Florida, Pennsylvania and Washington, DC. First-generation Brazilians tend to gravitate to areas where there is an existing community of Brazilians, especially if they speak little to no English. However, second- and third-generation Brazilian Americans are more likely to have gained financial independence and therefore may relocate to areas with fewer, or no Brazilian Americans. These particular neighborhoods do not preserve Brazilian cultural heritage in the same way a first-generation neighborhood does.

Due to the lack of precise information about Brazilian Americans, many people in America seem to have stereotyped them as an ethnic group. Media portrayals of Brazil and its citizens contribute to the erroneous belief that Brazilians are less than industrious laborers who favor a good party over a hard day's work. Movies, television and theatrical productions depict Brazilians as doing little else than dancing the *samba* (popular Brazilian dance) and participating in their world famous street parties. For instance, when Brazil won the World Cup in 1994, which was hosted by the United States, sports fans reinforced this stereotype. Contemporary depictions continue to do this, such as in the film *Rio* where Brazilian are shown as carefree and always ready for a party. Despite the

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

misconceptions these stereotypes create, Brazilian Americans maintain pride in their cultural traditions and continue to celebrate their Brazilian heritage.

The most common form of labor for male Brazilians who have recently immigrated to the United States is the restaurant business. Many other undocumented Brazilian males take jobs in construction or with small companies; others work as street vendors or as shoe shiners. The vast majority of Brazilian immigrant women, both documented and undocumented, take jobs in domestic service and in childcare, usually for private households. These are labor forces that are generally paid "under the table," avoiding possible detection or deportation from immigration authorities.

In the San Francisco Bay-area, where Message of Peace resides, most of the Brazilians originate from the state of Goias and are called "goiano." It is difficult to know precisely why they were initially attracted to the San Francisco-area, but the best possible theory is that in the 1980s there were plenty of jobs available, and as they were discovered, word spread quickly back home. Goias is a state in Midwest Brazil and the people carry a deeper interconnectivity with one another than most Brazilian states.

Due to this strong societal bond, they live in the US in a similar fashion to how they lived in Goias. Goianos eat Brazilian food, watch Brazilian TV and even claim their clothing must be imported from Brazil. They live modestly in America in order to send as much money back home to purchase property and land, keeping in line with their stated desire of returning as soon as their financial goals are achieved. Most who come are either recently married, or single young people. Once settled in the Bay-area most marry and begin families who grow up within American society, but reinforce their culture within the home. The children, what I have classified as the "New Generation" navigate

between both cultures, and is best illustrated in the fact they speak English among themselves and Portuguese with their parents. The reality is that most Brazilian immigrants find that it takes much longer to achieve their financial goals, and as time passes, their children grow and resist the original thought of moving back to Brazil, thus forcing the parents—and the entire family—to live in a sort of limbo.

Entering the new millennium, the Brazilian economy had made monumental strides forward. A new government with sound economic policies, the discovery of oil, and political stability has placed Brazil as one of the major emerging economies, alongside India, Russia and China. The result has been that there is no longer the overwhelming urge by Brazilians to immigrate to America as there once was just a decade before.

### **New Immigration Policies After 9/11**

The terrorist attacks of September 11 marked a change in all immigration policies in the United States. Although President George W. Bush had promised immigration reform as one of his top priorities when he became president in January 2001, the terrorist attack exposed major flaws in the American system. Immigration quickly became identified as a national security issue. There was no congressional support for immigration reform until 2006, when the Senate negotiated a bi-partisan comprehensive immigration reform bill that included a guest-worker program and a path to citizenship in addition to tighter border security. Despite being touted by the president, it did not pass due primarily to opposition from Republican senators.

While Congress has not passed any major new immigration laws, several changes

have now been put into place. First and foremost, all immigration services and border enforcement procedures were transferred to the newly created Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on March 1, 2003, a move that critics say results in the conflation of all immigration issues to be labeled as a security threat. For instance, the DHS has sharply increased the number of workplace raids. In addition, the Justice Department implemented the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System that requires all international students and exchange visitors to register with the federal government with their names, addresses, majors, course load, graduation date, etc., and must update that information regularly.

Most states stopped issuing driver's license to immigrants who could not prove their legal status in the country, a major blow to undocumented immigrants who rely on the driver's license as their only legal identification in the country. A new administration came into office in January 2009, with President Barack Obama also promising comprehensive immigration reform within his first two years, but it too did not happen. America post-9/11 has been split into two camps on immigration and it seems, for the time being at least, that the camp that views immigration as a threat is winning the debate. A direct consequence of these factors is many Brazilians living in the United States have begun returning home, especially those who are undocumented. The ones who find themselves with a tougher decision are those in this limbo of identity, compounded by their children who have made the United States their first home.



## The New Generation

In immigration studies, “Generation 1.5” is a term used for people living in the US whose parents originally came from a foreign country and have not learned to speak English properly. It refers to children who are able to speak English well, but communicate in the language spoken by their parents when they are at home.<sup>15</sup> Generation 1.5 are generally born in a foreign country but schooled in the US; however this classification, though not totally correct, can also refer to children born in the US to immigrants (technically second generation but also labeled by some Generation 1.5).

This generation is characterized as being “caught between two cultures,” which tends to lead to rebellion and conflict with parents over tradition. Immigrant parents often work long hours, compounding the distance between themselves and their children, who are exposed to a new culture in school and their interaction with an American social network. Those born in the United States enjoy the right of American citizenship, but for those born outside of the US, the struggle is even greater. Despite having lived most of their lives in the US and speaking fluent English, many cannot work legally, vote or drive in most states. They are also subject to arrest and deportation, just like any other undocumented immigrant.

Presently there are only a handful of Portuguese congregants that remain from the first decade of the church, and few have joined since. The membership is still largely made up of Brazilians who are active and very supportive of the church. If, and when, a comprehensive immigration reform is passed and it becomes law, it will benefit those already here; it will not increase a new wave of Brazilian immigration to the area. As

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<sup>15</sup> Rogers, *Becoming a Multiethnic Church*, 7.

Generation 1.5 grows and solidifies its affinity with American culture, the church has to redefine itself in order to accommodate this identity while concurrently reaching out to the surrounding community of South San Francisco.

### **South San Francisco: Gateway to the City of San Francisco**

The city of South San Francisco is located on the San Francisco Peninsula in the San Francisco Bay-area and is part of San Mateo County. It is just north of the San Francisco International Airport and is a gateway city to the greater metropolis of San Francisco. People unfamiliar with the local geography often mistake the city as the southern district of San Francisco, but it in fact does not share a border with the city of San Francisco. A landmark sign on the mountain side near San Bruno Mountain Park can be seen from the adjacent highway that reads: "South San Francisco the Industrial City."

The city celebrated its one-hundredth birthday in 2008; most of this period the city has been a thriving industrial city. The 1950s brought modern industrial parks east of the Highway 101-area and other airport related businesses thrived. A new era for South San Francisco began in 1976 with the founding of Genentech by venture capitalist Robert Swanson and molecular biologist Herbert Boyer. Their objective was exploring ways of using recombinant DNA technology to create breakthrough medicines. This earned South San Francisco the illustrious designation of being the "Birthplace of Biotechnology" and, consequently, it attracted other biotech and pharmaceutical businesses to the area, thus, bringing economic growth and stability to a once relatively small community for several years. South San Francisco offers its citizens a comfortable life with its fine residential areas, recreational parks, swimming pools and marina. Also more than 2,800 firms and

businesses are located here and there is an active workforce.

This historical background is crucial to Message of Peace's next steps. In the book, *Studying Congregations*, Nancy Eisland and R. Stephen Warner argue that it is important to see the congregation in context to its environment:

We need to be more specific about what it means to say a congregation exists in relation to an environment. We will speak of the environment, or that which is external to the congregation, as wide in scope, having several layers, and made up of elements that are relative visible as well as invisible . . . To speak of several layers refers to the fact that the interaction between a congregation, or any institution, and its environment occurs at different levels.<sup>16</sup>

The first layer is demography, or the characteristics of the people in the community, described in terms of numbers, age and sex distribution; ethnic and racial profile; and changes in these data over time. The demographics of the 2000 census shows how diverse South San Francisco is with large population of Hispanics, an increasing population of Asians, a declining White population and very few Blacks. Almost 40 percent of the population is foreign born. The demographic table is presented in Appendix A.

The second layer is culture, or the system of meaning, values and practices shared by members of a community. The large population of Hispanics and Asians (mostly from the Philippines) are for the most part Roman Catholics and their manner of expressing their faith and family values is part of this community. Sunday morning masses are well attended; as well as large funerals at the Catholic Church being a common sight. Whereas the surrounding areas are considered liberal, South San Francisco differs by being slightly more socially conservative and politically moderate. Another aspect of the

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<sup>16</sup> Nancy Eisland and R. Stephen Warner, "Ecology: Seeing the Congregation in Context," in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, eds. Nancy T. Ammerman, *et al* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 41-42.

culture of the city has to do with the presence of Genentech and its association with the biotech industry. According to the city website, the daytime population is 101,651 based on an employment of 39,100. The city prides itself in providing jobs and values work ethics and excellence from their industries. This can clearly be seen in the city mission statement and core values:

The City of South San Francisco's mission is to provide a safe, attractive and well-maintained City through excellent customer service and superior programs and to have a work ethic that will enhance the Community's quality of life. To that end, we will strive to nurture a partnership with the Community by recruiting a diverse and highly skilled workforce, be an active partner in quality education and attract and retain a prosperous business community, all of which will foster community pride and understanding.

**Our Core Values**

The City and Employees of South San Francisco value our role in providing service to one another and the community. As an organization we are committed to:

- Strengthening each other and the organization through dedication and teamwork
- Recognizing and Respecting diversity and encouraging opinions of the community and workforce
- Committing to Excellence and Service
- Encouraging creativity and supporting problem solving
- Accepting responsibility and accountability
- Demonstrating integrity and honesty in all aspects of service
- Promoting and maintaining open and constructive communication
- Encouraging skill development and professional growth<sup>17</sup>

The third and last layer is organization, or the system of roles and relationships that structure the interactions of people in a community. The city of South San Francisco is unique in the fact that it does not elect its mayor. The citizens elect the city council made up of five salaried members serving four-year terms. They take turns among themselves to nominate a mayor for a one-year term. The council establishes local law and policies

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<sup>17</sup> City of South San Francisco, "Mission Statement," <http://www.ssf.net/index.aspx?NID=977> (accessed February 10, 2013).

through enactment of ordinances and resolutions and determines how the city shall generate and spend funds. The council appoints a city manager that provides, in accordance with the City Council policies, overall administration and direction for the city's organization.

There are several organizations of influence in the city but the two most powerful and influential are the Historical Society and the Chamber of Commerce. The historical society has a large influence upon the council especially when it pertains to the downtown area; a significant dealing partner with Message of Peace because the church is located close to the city center and its building is considered a historical site. Moreover, the Chamber of Commerce exercises great influence in the development and the maintenance of business and industries within the area.

Eisland and Warner also suggest the construction of a "congregational time line." They say, "the goal of constructing a guideline is to understand how the congregation is situated within an inclusive conception of its history, that is, local, denominational, national and global history."<sup>18</sup> A time line of Message of Peace is provided in Appendix B.

The present membership of Message of Peace Church is a consequence of the long history of immigration of Portuguese and Brazilians to the San Francisco Bay-area, and its community makeup is due to the church acquiring a permanent building in the city of South San Francisco. How Message of Peace Church will appear in the future depends on the decisions its current leaders make in this vital period of transition, and in order for this decisions to be made, the congregation and its leaders need to understand more about the history, the make-up of the membership and the leadership structures of the church.

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<sup>18</sup> Eisland and Warner, "Ecology," 43.

## CHAPTER TWO

### MESSAGE OF PEACE INTERNATIONAL CHURCH

Message of Peace Church began as a home missions church of the Northern California and Nevada District of the Assemblies of God. The founding pastor, who was only twenty-two years old, had been married for a year, just had his first child and was still working on his bachelor's degree. It was at this point when an official of the District, knowing he was Brazilian, invited him to pastor a group of less than ten believers from Portugal, who met in a back room of an Assembly of God in Hayward, California. A year later this congregation grew to around fifty and moved to San Jose, where a larger Portuguese community resided.

A church building was purchased in 1988, and the church peaked at around 150 in attendance. In 1990, Brazilians began attending the church, many commuting an hour from San Francisco to attend. A satellite church began in San Francisco to accommodate these new members and the congregation rose to about 500 in attendance. The congregation eventually lost their place of worship and had to meet in a much smaller church building, which, with the opening of other Brazilian churches in the area, led to a drastic drop in attendance. A second church building was purchased to house this

northern congregation in 2001, in the city of South San Francisco and the head of the ministry permanently moved to this new location. In addition, the church added services in English and Spanish, amending its name to Message of Peace International Church.

The founding pastor has been the only senior pastor of the church from the beginning—a tenure of twenty-eight years. During this period, he completed bachelor's master's degrees and as he matured, the congregation matured alongside him. The longevity of his tenure provides him with credibility and affords him a certain power of influence in introducing significant changes to the congregation, such as the one being discussed. On the other hand, it also inhibits and hinders changes they do not like. R. Dwayne Conner's *Called to Stay* lists five advantages of staying at one church for a long stretch of time: knowing the people, sharing dreams, providing stability, becoming part of the community, and growing spirituality.<sup>1</sup>

These five advantages are true in the Message of Peace's senior pastorate. The senior pastor knows the people well as he has dedicated, baptized and married many of the members and their children. Additionally, he has shared the dream of establishing himself as an immigrant. Lastly, and most importantly, people have grown spiritually under his ministry, a testament being the present leader of the church. These individuals were raised under the senior pastor's ministry and have now become leaders in their own right, many of which have emulated his example in their pursuit of deeper faith, higher education and establishing themselves and their families in the United States.

Alongside these key advantages, Conner also lists five disadvantages of a long tenure. They are: becoming stagnant, burning out, declining benefits, becoming

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<sup>1</sup> R. Dwayne Conner, *Called To Stay* (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1987), 15-18.

dependent and limiting the model of ministry.<sup>2</sup> These five disadvantages are undoubtedly present in long ministry at the church; however, Message of Peace is a church that has gone through several changes due to internal and external factors (e.g. the church fire) and been forced to adapt to changing situations. These factors, and the continued academic goals on the part of the senior pastor and his extensive ministry travels, have minimized stagnation and burn out. One key issue that has affected the congregation is dependency. In an attempt to avoid further dependence and a constrained model of ministry, two full-time associate pastors were hired and the church routinely receives guest speakers. This said, it is true for Message of Peace—and perhaps for many other long-lasting ministries as well—that the advantages of long-tenured ministry outweigh its disadvantages due to primarily the ability to lead from a base of respect and credibility.

Message of Peace is an Assemblies of God church and the doctrine and liturgy are Pentecostal, although most of the members and congregants do not see themselves as members of the Assemblies of God. The Assemblies of God churches in Brazil vary significantly from the United States. For the most part, they are very legalistic and since many members are Brazilians, prefer not to be associated with the name Assemblies of God. The senior pastor was raised Southern Baptist in Brazil and in his early teens became a member of the Assemblies of God Church. He was educated in Charismatic, Pentecostal, Baptist and Non-denomination Universities and Seminaries. This background has facilitated a Pentecostal tradition with a strong emphasis on the exposition of the Word of God, a hallmark of Message of Peace and ministry.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 12-15.



For much of the first years of the church, the senior pastor and his wife comprised the leadership of the church. The senior pastor's parents and brothers joined the church and led worship, preached, taught and performed all the ministerial duties. Over the course of time, new families joined the church and the pastor's family moved on to their own ministries, creating new lay leaders. In 1990, six years after the church was founded, a cohort of a Bible School from Brazil began at the church, lasted for ten years before evolving into a local Bible Institute. Both programs have formed dozens of leaders, some having since moved back to Brazil and are now in positions of leadership in local churches, others are leaders in fellow Brazilian churches in the Bay-area and a large number serve as lay leaders and pastors at Message of Peace.

Due to the senior pastor's long tenure, the leadership structure is from top to bottom—the senior pastors exercise leadership in all areas of the church. A board of directors consisting of five members elected by the congregation for three-year terms assists the senior pastor, who chairs the board. This leadership body administers oversight of the church. There is also a pastoral staff comprised of all lay and full-time pastors. They serve as an advisory board to the senior pastor in spiritual matters.

### **The Present State of the Church**

The present structure of Message of Peace today is of a mother church with three satellite churches. The mother church in South San Francisco has two services, one in English and one in Portuguese. The three satellite churches have services in Portuguese only. The pastors of the satellite churches are lay pastors all trained at the Bible Institute of the church. The leadership structure of the mother church is of the senior pastor and

two full-time pastors, one for the Brazilian and one for the English-speaking congregation. The assistant pastor of the Brazilian congregation was trained in the church Bible Institute. The pastors form the spiritual leadership of the church and are led by the senior pastor.

The satellite churches made it easier for members of the church not to travel long distances to South San Francisco. As a Brazilian church with many programs for the family, a great worship program, charismatic leaders with a strong emphasis in preaching and teaching of the Word, the congregation always attracted Portuguese-speaking people from all over the San Francisco Bay-area (mostly Brazilians, but Portuguese and some Angolans as well). Some had to drive an hour to attend church in South San Francisco on Sunday mornings. The three satellite churches began offering services on Sunday evenings, so those who wanted to continue coming to South San Francisco could do so, and those who wanted to still be part of the church could attend closer to them on Sunday evenings and still come to South San Francisco from time-to-time. A description of each satellite church and the mother church is important to understand the present situation of the church and why the change proposed in this project is necessary.

The San Jose satellite church is the oldest and where the church started in 1984, and the building was purchased in 1988. When it began, the church was predominantly composed of Portuguese people. As a result of the decline in Portuguese immigration to the United States, the congregation aged and gave way to a Brazilian majority, who also speak Portuguese. For the most part, the Brazilians that attended drove an hour from San Francisco to attend services in San Jose. Due to this sudden surge of Brazilians, a service was created in San Francisco in 1990, on Sunday evenings; however, people continued to

attend Sunday morning services in San Jose. This remained true until 2001, when a new church building was bought in South San Francisco and the senior pastor transferred to the new location. Following that decision, the congregation in San Jose significantly declined in attendance.

Two full-time pastors followed the senior pastor and despite early success, were unable to sustain their congregations until they resigned from their posts. Today a lay pastor leads the congregation, and has been consistently maintaining the group in place and trying to reach new people. Though generated income is not sufficient to pay his salary, because the building is owned and fully paid for, there are resources at his disposal for evangelism and outreach. The building is located in a district once heavily inhabited by Portuguese immigrants, but now very few. Additionally, San Jose is one of the least concentrated locations in the Bay-area for Brazilians. A decision was made by the senior pastor and church board to sell the building and relocate to a different area, which will allow them to keep the current congregation and facilitate evangelism.

This church will ultimately face the same dilemma of the central church, which will be described later. The current plan is to use the funds created from the sale to bring the lay pastor on full-time and take a wait-and-see approach in regards to purchasing a building. This allows financial flexibility and the lay pastor to fully concentrate on expanding the congregation with greater resources. Though this is a small congregation, it has a great influence on the entire church as two-of-five board members derive from this congregation. This is primarily due to it being the oldest of the congregations.

The satellite church in San Ramon actually began in Concord, also as an alternative for people who were commuting to South San Francisco. Its original

evangelistic target was a blooming Angolan community in the area. These Angolans were often engineers and their families stationed in the US by Chevron Oil Company for up to three years. Many Angolans were reached during the first three years, but have since returned to Angola, where they continue to serve their local churches.

As a result of this temporary group, a passion and knowledge of Angola grew within the church. For example, two mission trips were conducted to Angola and a substantial portion of the mission budget is invested in supporting churches there. However, Chevron has since changed its base to Houston, and Angolans are no longer moving to the region. Due to this, the church has changed its focus to the existing Brazilian community. Fortunately, there is a blossoming group that moved from San Francisco to this area in search of less expensive housing. Services were originally on Saturday evenings and there was a strong fellowship focus that came from the pastor's nature. Since services were on Saturday evenings, many still drove to South San Francisco on Sundays, and others attended other local congregations in the area, not affiliated with Message of Peace.

The congregation did not have a strong local structure either because the church was relatively new or because the service was conducted on Saturdays. Recently there was a change in leadership, location and time of services. The congregation moved to San Ramon, a more strategic location, and now meets on Sunday evenings. A new lay pastor was placed in leadership. He and his staff work diligently to disciple the existing members and evangelize within the Brazilian community. The future and growth of the congregation depend also on the presence of the Brazilian community in the area.

The satellite church in San Rafael is located in an area with a large Brazilian community. Of the three Portuguese-speaking satellite churches, this congregation has the greatest potential for growth. It began a little over four years ago in the city of Novato and recently moved south to the city of San Rafael to strategically reach Brazilians in Marin, but also those across the San Rafael Bridge in Richmond. As stated previously, it grew out of an alternative to those making the long drive to South San Francisco. When it began, services were held on Saturday evenings and it faced the same challenges as Concord. With the move to San Rafael, the service is now held Sunday evenings, the church has taken root and is fully able to structure itself after the ministry's current vision. The current local pastor was not only discipled and trained by the senior pastor, but was converted in the church twelve years ago. This is true also for the previous local pastor who now is a full-time associate pastor in the mother church in South San Francisco.

Before describing the mother church in South San Francisco, it is important to mention an earlier attempt Message of Peace had with services in English as part of integration. When a building was purchased in November 2001, an English service started on Sunday mornings on the first Sunday of 2002. When it began, the service was made up of English-speaking Brazilians in the church, American-born spouses of Brazilians and a few English-speaking and second generation Hispanics and Filipinos. A pastor was hired to care for this congregation under the senior pastor's tutelage and he preached in the main services for the first two years.

In September 2005, the church building suffered a major fire and the church was forced to relocate to a nearby warehouse until rebuilding was complete. This move, along with lack of numerical growth, prompted the pastor of this congregation to request

permission to relocate to the San Mateo-area. The two reasons given for change were the fact that the area around the present warehouse was primarily Hispanic, and the utter dominance of the Brazilian congregation in the building impeded the progress of an English church.

The pastor developed a five-year plan to build this congregation in the San Mateo-area and pointed to the fact that it would serve as a bridge to integrate the congregations slowly in the future. The rationale was that, just as there was a transition from Portuguese to Brazilian, the church should also be prepared for an inevitable move to English, as Brazilian immigration declines and as children of current members of the Brazilian congregation increase. This English satellite would become then the main congregation of Message of Peace International Church.

The original evangelism target of this congregation was to reach second-generation immigrants, English-speaking people married to Brazilians and Hispanics, English-speaking people from different backgrounds who have traveled abroad and desire to worship in a diverse and multi-cultural environment. The target was changed to reach college-aged kids, Generation X and echo boomers, and though Message of Peace supported the church financially during the first three years, the distance and target change caused this to become a church plant and leadership felt that the denomination district could provide better oversight, and affiliation was requested with the Northern California District of the Assemblies of God, which was accepted and implemented. The attempt was not successful, but it prepared a blueprint for future transition of the church.

The mother church in South San Francisco has services in English and Portuguese but the Brazilian congregation is the main congregation. During the 1990s, when it began,

until 2000, the congregation peaked at approximately 500 people. During that decade it was not only the largest Brazilian congregation in the area (at that time there were only four, today there are over forty) but also one of the largest Assemblies of God church in the San Francisco Bay-area. In 2000, it lost its building, which was rented from a dying Assemblies of God church that merged with another church in order to survive.

The loss of the building caused the church to lose many people, as the congregation had no suitable place to accommodate its large membership. Eventually the congregation met in the basement of an African American church in San Francisco that only could house one hundred people. Multiple services were held and another Brazilian church began in San Francisco concurrently with full support of a large Brazilian church in Brazil. Many members chose to attend the new church rather than meeting in the basement. The loss of people only motivated the ones who remained to unite. They contributed and prayed more and after a year, were able to purchase a building in South San Francisco. With the church's acquisition of the building, changes were made in the vision and mission of the church to become an international church rather than an ethnic-Brazilian congregation. The congregation grew to around 300 in South San Francisco and remains the largest Brazilian church in the area and one of the largest Assemblies of God church in the San Francisco Bay-area.

On September 12, 2005, the building suffered a major fire that destroyed two-thirds of the building. Once again the congregation and leadership were tested. Not wanting to repeat the situation of 2000, the pastor and leaders quickly rented a warehouse and used all the funds available to convert it into a sanctuary with classrooms and offices to house the congregation, so people would not lose their faith in the church. The church

met three weeks in a local Baptist church while preparations were made, and less than a month after the fire, services were held in the warehouse.

The incident did not initially affect the congregation, but as time has passed, its toll has significantly worn down the congregation. It took over four years for the congregation to return to the original building. A major renovation took place and although there was plenty of insurance to cover the loss, the insurance company disputed the scope of the loss and the matter had to be settled at the cost of the church having to borrow more funds to finish the renovation; the process was laborious and arduous.

The core of the congregation is made up of families and young people. Parents of the families average around forty-five years old and the young people average twenty-five years old. The majority of the population is composed of Brazilian immigrants, with a portion being undocumented in the US. A great deal of them have come legally, or become legal since arriving in the country; nonetheless, others have overstayed their student or tourist visas, thus becoming illegal. Most of them have been in the country over five years and several as long as fifteen-to-twenty years. As a result of their extended stays, they have formed families upon arrival in the U.S. by marrying within the community, or marrying US citizens and having children who are United States citizens.

The bulk of members were non-church people prior to coming to the church and through a common need to connect with others like themselves, they found faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Since then, their children were either born here or have been raised in here. They speak English and are bicultural. The parents speak Portuguese and many who have been here longer speak English as well, but when they come to church they prefer to communicate in Portuguese. Their future in the country depends on many factors.



After the terrorist attacks of September 11, immigration laws have drastically restricted entry into the country and the process of becoming legal. In 2007, when immigration reform appeared imminent, they had much hope their status in the country would improve. When Congress did not approve the law, their hopes were dashed and they cautiously wait for the next administration to bring the issue to the fore and issue reform. Also, the US economy and American dollar has considerably weakened, while the Brazilian economy has improved. These two factors have contributed to the decrease of Brazilians immigrating to the US, both legally and illegally. Today, the exodus is more towards European countries. Moreover, these factors affect the future of those who are already in the US and need to be taken in consideration as the task force plans for the next five years.

There are very few members over the age of fifty. Most adults in this age bracket work in the service industry. Even those who are legal and have formed their own businesses remain connected to service-oriented professions, i.e., restaurants, mechanic shops, body shops, painting company, etc. The ones that do not own a business typically work as taxi drivers, limousines chauffeurs and delivery companies. Many women work as nannies and house cleaners. These individuals are dedicated as can be seen in their ability to balance 40+ hour jobs and attend church twice a week. This reveals great commitment to the vision and mission of the church since they use their professions to invite others to attend and invest through tithes and sacrificial offerings.

The worship service is contemporary with a strong teaching and Pentecostal emphasis. Much time is devoted to prayer and small groups. Additionally, though many speak or understand English, there is a slight resistance to worshipping outside of the

Portuguese language. English songs have been introduced in the worship time and as part of the vision of the senior pastor to expose the congregation to the mainstream culture. Also, English-speaking guest speakers are invited and the senior pastor occasionally preaches in English as well with interpretation available through headset translation equipment. Only 10-15 percent of attendees request the translation equipment.

The older youth, an age group that ranges from college age to late twenties is for the most part very Brazilian. Generally speaking, they were raised in Brazil and came to the US to either study or work. They have since adopted the country and have little desire to return. Most of them speak English but have a Brazilian culture. Their needs are similar to that of any young person of their age group in an American church. Attempts to have special programs for them have not been successful, as they prefer to be fully involved in the morning worship service and adult programs. Nevertheless, it is important to note that those that born in the United States or migrated at a young age have a different mentality. They usually attend college and have, or seek a specialized career.

The teens and preteens are different than the other age groups in the church. Some of them also came at a very young age, or were born in the US. Their parents speak to them in Portuguese but they typically respond in English. They express themselves in English and have adopted it as their primary language. However, though English is their language, they do not fit well in a total American culture (whether white or black), but are much like children of other ethnic groups such as Asians and Hispanics that have English as their language, but have a culture of their own which is a combination of, in this case, a Brazilian heritage and their upbringing in America. It is possible they may find it difficult to adapt to a typical American congregation and Message of Peace

presently is not properly ministering to their needs. They have small groups and activities designed for them, but they do not fit well in any of the present services of the church.

The children from infancy to elementary school age are mainly English speaking. They also speak Portuguese taught by their parents, but usually can only read and write in English. The children's ministry is strong, offering not only Bible classes suitable for their ages in English, but also children's church.

Another aspect of the present state of the church needs to be described is part of its context. For most of the existence of the church, the main service has been on Sunday evening; a custom of Brazilian society. What Sunday morning is to the American Church, Sunday evening is to the Brazilian Church (the same is true in regards to Sunday morning in the Brazilian cultures compared to the Sunday evening in the American church culture). Many Brazilian churches do not have a Sunday morning service, leaving this for family time or other activities apart from the main church service.

In 2007, when the English congregation moved out of the building to San Mateo, the senior pastor wanting to prepare the church to become more like other local churches, decided to make Sunday morning the main service of the church. The idea was presented gradually to different members of leadership; first to the pastoral staff, the church board, staff, and finally the congregation. There was some resistance, but a compromise was reached by keeping the Sunday evening service as well.

There was an intense campaign to promote the morning service and quickly the majority of the church adopted the idea and the service became the focal event of the week. Presently, nearly 100 percent of the church attends this service, which averages

300 in attendance, when members not only come, but also bring visitors. There is no longer an evening service in the main church, only in the three satellite churches.

The objective of this final project, is to formulate and implement strategies of cultural adaptation that will guide the membership of Message of Peace Church, currently a predominantly Portuguese-speaking congregation, to transition to a truly multiethnic church that relies on English as its primary language of worship. In order to implement changes that will facilitate a transition to the future of the church, a task force led by the senior pastor and comprised of all the pastors and board members was formed. This task force is responsible to identify challenges and opportunities for the transition to become a multiethnic congregation with the main services in English, as well as to determine the direction and definitions of this transition.

The task force already has assessed changes must be made to the target group, as well as the type of services conducted to not only assure the long survival of the church but, also continual numerical growth. The satellite churches have been established mainly to fill a short-term need of providing services to Portuguese-speaking communities around the Bay-area. For the reasons already described and due to their sizes, these congregations seem capable of sustaining themselves as long as there are Brazilian people to be reached. If the trend continues, and the Brazilian community decreases, these congregations will also diminish and cease to exist. The same is true for the central church is South San Francisco. As stated there is a declining Brazilian community and the church building is located in quite a diverse community, making a multiethnic church the obvious path.

In the book, *Congregation and Community*, Nancy Ammerman identifies four patterns of response to changing environmental context:

- 1) The most common response is to proceed with business as usual, a strategy that will lead to the death of the congregation
- 2) Another common response is to relocate along with church members usually to the suburbs (“White flight”).
- 3) Become a “niche” congregation, drawing commuters from a wide region
- 4) Open the doors to the newcomers in the neighborhood and take on a multiethnic identity.<sup>3</sup>

The first pattern is not an option, patterns two and three do not apply and the fourth pattern is the direction the church needs to take. Message of Peace is presently a good-sized church, with resources available to develop a plan that can be implemented to transition reaching beyond the Brazilian community and continue to strengthen for years to come as a multiethnic church. The new generation of the church, largely made up of Brazilians will serve as the basis for this transition, but the church must have greater vision to incorporate other ethnicities from the South San Francisco-area in this transition. The discussion of goals and strategies to implement change are found in Part Three.

### **Defining the Multiethnic Church**

In order to define a future target group and type of services needed to reach this group, it is important to define what a multiethnic church is in the context of the present, and the proposed future of the church, which is not an easy task. Many churches increasingly face this dilemma with the growth of minority population and the influx of new immigrants. The most common way to deal with diversity is to hold separate services for each group. This however fragments the church and it becomes an aggregate

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<sup>3</sup> Nancy Ammerman, quoted in Katherine Garces-Folley, *Crossing the Ethnic Divide: The Multiethnic Church in a Mission* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2007), 140.

of groups sharing the same space. Message of Peace has had three language groups, representing three different congregations for some time and the goal is to become one single church.

The multiethnic church has to be inclusive, yet ethnically diverse, but how a church achieves this varies. Churches, often in the attempt to achieve diversity, tend to polarize. Kathleen Garces-Folley warns against this danger when she says:

The two criticisms I heard most often are that these churches are too internally fragmented by diversity to be considered a single community, or they are too homogeneous in terms of culture to be considered ethnically diverse. Fragmentation and homogenization are the traps that churches fall into when they overstress either diversity or unity. Whatever the quality is that sets the multiethnic church apart, it must lie somewhere between these two poles.<sup>4</sup>

She presents four strategies of inclusion that churches use that can help Message of Peace determine what kind of church it wants to be. The four strategies are:

- 1) Color-blind, monocultural, multiethnic congregation – Dominant culture apparent in church structures, ethnicity ignored
- 2) Color-blind, multicultural, multiethnic congregation – Multiple cultures apparent in church structures, ethnicity ignored
- 3) Color-conscious, monocultural, multiethnic congregation - Dominant culture apparent in church structures, ethnicity is acknowledged
- 4) Color-conscious, multicultural, multiethnic congregation – Multiple cultures apparent in church structures, ethnicity is acknowledged.<sup>5</sup>

Presently, Message of Peace is a multicultural, multiethnic congregation with a predominantly acknowledged Brazilian culture. The goal of this transition is to move it to a multicultural, multiethnic congregation with English as the main language of the services, incorporating the prevailing diverse culture in America made up of many ethnicities and cultures.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 82–83.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 84.

To begin this process, the senior pastor hired staff from different ethnicities and presently, the leadership has Caucasians, Hispanics, Blacks and Brazilians. There have been more attempts to become an inclusive community, and for the time being, in preparation for this transition, four times a year (including Easter and Christmas) the Sunday morning worship serves as a ritual of inclusion, combining all the congregations of the church (English, Portuguese, Spanish and satellite churches) in a single service with English as the language of the service.

Being ethnic (ethnicity acknowledged) in a multiethnic church is no easy task. Garces-Folley, quotes Roger Greenway: “A true [multiethnic] congregation blends distinctive elements of various ethnic traditions in such a way that no single tradition predominates or suppresses others. Nor is the outcome such an ‘osterized’ mixture that nobody can tell one element from another.”<sup>6</sup> The transition and eventual multiethnic aspect will make people uncomfortable, especially those in the majority as they will be continually required to be sensitive to the experiences of those in the minority; it will certainly require a good deal of effort. There will also be cost to minority groups coming in, as they will have to cross boundaries and become part of the local body of believers.

Many would argue the cost is too great as people will be required to adapt, learn new ways and get out of their comfort zone, but as Garces-Folley points out: “What if church is not supposed to be a place of comfort? What if church is the place where you ‘get out of your comfort zone’ so you can better fulfill the Great Commission?”<sup>7</sup> Peter Wagner states, “It is a social fact, however, that some groups of people prefer the death

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<sup>6</sup> Roger Greenway, quoted in Garces-Folley, *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, 83.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

or dissolution of their group to the alternative of accepting people into their group they perceive, for whatever reasons, as being incompatible.”<sup>8</sup>

There will be many areas of discomfort. Garces-Folley says the main divine lines are communication (language), food matters and mixed marriages.<sup>9</sup> In order to minimize these three areas of discomfort, the task force agreed to stress that when it says English is the main language of worship, it is not saying it is the only language, and no other is spoken in the congregation. It is impossible to ask people not to talk in their native language, and actually the type of church Message of Peace wants to become will encourage expressions in different languages in small groups of studies, in fellowship and even in musical specials in the main service. That Message of Peace is a Pentecostal church makes it even easier as Praise and Worship time is very alive, and people are encouraged to express praises to God freely; “speaking in tongues” is part of this freedom.

Fellowship is one of the main purposes of the church and food is a catalyst for fellowship. All can appreciate different food tastes, choices and traditions and the number of food choices can only enhance appreciation as long as people are taught to respect each other. The line in the sand for many can be mixed marriages, especially for the older generation as they usually expect their children to marry within their culture. It is an area that leadership will have to be able to anticipate and as the younger generation becomes more influential this area will diminish with time.

Based on his study of Japanese Christian and Buddhist congregations in Canada, Mark Mullins predicted that immigrant churches will “de-ethnicize” over time as their

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Wagner, quoted in Garcey-Folley, *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, 140.



members lose their ethnic identity and become more assimilated to the dominant culture of the prevalent society. He believes that “immigrant churches go through stages of assimilation as they develop bilingual, bicultural ministry for the children of immigrants and a ‘de-ethnicized,’ multiethnic ministry in order to attract subsequent generations and remain solvent.”<sup>10</sup>

The decision to become multiethnic for Message of Peace is not due to a financial downturn or an arrival of a new group. It is an entirely pragmatic decision that needs to be made to assure the continual growth of the church. Many churches choose to make this decision when they are in decline. Message of Peace wants to do it while it is a healthy, growing church with financial and other resources available. Charles Foster and Theodore Brelsford conclude from their study of culturally diverse churches in Atlanta that, “The possibility of dramatic, perhaps tragic change is always within sight. Indeed, the multiethnic church is a fragile, unstable experiment continually facing new challenges, but it is also a vibrant, exciting experiment impelled forward by even the smallest signs of success.”<sup>11</sup>

The literature on multi ethnicity is vast, but it is important to relate the definitions to Message of Peace and churches in the same situation. In Part Two literature on the subject will be examined, compare it to other churches already in the process of change and see it how it applies to Message of Peace.

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<sup>10</sup> Mark Mullins, quoted in Garces-Fowlley, *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, 123.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

PART TWO  
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

## CHAPTER THREE

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The US has become more diverse in recent years, and California with a large population of Hispanics and Asians, is no exception. The US Census Bureau projects by the year 2060, there will be no clear majority population and that the country will be mostly multicultural and multiethnic.<sup>1</sup> This has a direct implication to churches, especially in areas where this is more evident. The San Francisco Bay-area is one of these places, as it is home to many different cultures and ethnicities, and Message of Peace Church is right in the heart of it. It is important to look at various works to understand what multi ethnicity is and how it relates to churches in transition like Message of Peace.

***Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation* - Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang and Gary A. Parrett**

The authors of the *Many Colored Kingdom* are part of the growing ethnic minority, either through marriage or birth. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier is Puerto Rican, married to an African-American, Steve Kang is a 1.5 generation Korean-American and Parrett is Caucasian, married to a Korean-American, has pastored several Korean-American

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<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau, "Projection of the Resident Population by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Nativity: Middle Series, 2050–2070)," <http://www.census.gov/population/projections/nation/summary/np-t5-g.txt> (accessed March 20, 2012).

churches and is currently on staff at a multiethnic church. Together their book challenges churches and individuals to face the reality of multi ethnicity, especially in the US, as they examine the implications of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) and the requirements of the Great Commandment to “love neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31).<sup>2</sup>

The experiences of evangelical churches in America are typically a reflection of society’s own struggle. Immigration in the US from its inception, up to the latter part of the twentieth century, was largely from European nations that were encouraged to assimilate into the prevailing American culture. The symbolic use of “melting pot” was commonly used to describe the process whereby immigrants are absorbed into American society. The use dates back to 1908 when Israel Zangwill’s play, *The Melting Pot*, was first presented and concerned itself with the situation of Jews in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Since most people from Europe had physical characteristics similar to the majority in America, assimilation became the norm and was accomplished usually within two or three generations and the churches, mirroring the country, were segregated more in the lines of black and white churches.

In the latter part of the twentieth century there was a shift in immigration with a rise in Asian and Latin American immigration to the US. Unlike Europeans, these immigrants looked and acted culturally different, creating a more pluralistic America. It is important to differentiate between pluralism and assimilation. Pluralism, generally speaking, affirms the existence and persistence of diversity and prescribes its preservation.

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<sup>2</sup> All Scripture quoted is from the New International Version, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>3</sup> Philip Gleason, *Speaking of Diversity: Language and Ethnicity in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 5.

Assimilation is associated with unity and the blending of different cultures into the overall national culture.<sup>4</sup>

Message of Peace Church is made up of people who may not be ready or willing to assimilate to the national culture; however, the church's leadership is precipitating a move from an ethnic to a multiethnic church due to its aging nature and increase in membership diversity. The challenge before the church is to define and outline the actions for this to take place.

Conde-Frazier, Kang and Parret argue that there must be a shared understanding, that differs from that of the melting pot notion and encourages persons belonging to cultural and linguistic groups seen as minorities to make efforts to reclaim their ethnic histories, languages and cultural practices. The substitute image is now the "salad bowl," and according to it, persons and groups exist within the same bowl yet retain their uniqueness.<sup>5</sup> The apostle Paul described something similar in 1 Corinthians 12 by utilizing the image of the human body, arguing that though every part is different in function and appearance, they all come together to form one body. The church of Jesus Christ is to be an example of that as diversity is celebrated, yet, maintaining unity by things that are common to different members of the body.

Kang, who came to the US at the age of thirteen from Korea, presents an interesting testimonial to this fact when he became a US citizen. He says:

I guess I am no longer an "alien" in this country; I am supposed to act "natural." Yet I remain an alien - with a name like S. and later Steve . . . People say I am neither a first- nor a second-generation Korean-American. I ask them, "then what

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang and Gary A. Parrett, *Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academy, 2004), 11.

am I?" They say, "You are a 1.5 generation Korean-American." I am not even given an integer (whole number) to define myself. No wonder I don't feel whole. I am caught between two cultures and languages. People sometimes ask me what kind of food we eat at home and what language I think in, Korean or English. I reply, "I don't know. Don't ask me such hard questions." I eat and think a mixture of the two; therefore, I am one confused 1.5 generation Korean-American.<sup>6</sup>

The authors take issue with those who argue that paying too much attention to ethnic diversity leads to divisiveness. One example of this argument was made by Arthur Schlesinger Jr., an advisor to President John F. Kennedy, in his book *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*. In it, Schlesinger, referring to the national slogan *E pluribus unum* ("out of many, one"), argues that ethnocentrism glorifies *pluribus* and belittles *unum*.<sup>7</sup> *Many Colored Kingdom* argues, to the contrary, that more attention should be paid to *pluribus*, otherwise the concept of *unum* will be missed, for the "unity envisioned in the national slogan implies, even requires, the reality of diversity"<sup>8</sup> and that "when genuine diversity is either ignored or disallowed, the result is uniformity, not unity."<sup>9</sup>

Each author identifies key issues emerging from their Scripture studies and teaching experiences. Conde-Frazier argues the church is to be the central socio-cultural institution for Christians to be acculturated as kingdom citizens by being serious in its Christian formation "characterized by a sense of authenticity, community, safety, and

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 15 citing Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), 17.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

hospitality.”<sup>10</sup> The Church is a community of faith that can shape its members to become true kingdom citizens by teaching them—from infants to adults—through socialization and acculturation processes. A church in transition such as Message of Peace must engage itself in this process, with children and youth serving as the formative key to such a community of faith as they are considerably more receptive to different cultures and ethnicities; by doing so an environment that focuses on the beauty God places in each culture and person is created.

Jesus, as described in Matthew 16:18, founded the Church when he said: “I will build my church,” and it was inaugurated on the Day of Pentecost as narrated in Acts 2. The church at Pentecost began as this community of faith with people from different nationalities and cultures coming together as kingdom citizens because of the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives drawing them to God through Jesus Christ. Conde-Frazier captures this when she says,

Pentecost points us toward some of our goals for becoming a multicultural community. It reveals that the church is multiethnic, multilingual, and multiracial body. It shows that diversity is enriching and enabling of Christian unity rather than threatening. The Spirit enables us to value and affirm our own culture while engaging in effective ways with another culture. Pentecost also invites us to appreciate the many ways that faith is expressed in the practices of Christians from various cultures.<sup>11</sup>

Drawing both from his experience as a Caucasian minister working in a multiethnic church and married to a person of a different culture than his own, Parrett discusses two key points in becoming a culturally-sensitive minister: ongoing growth and development. He suggests it is more important to focus on a vision of who the culturally-

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.,170.

sensitive minister can be, rather than how to teach in ways that are culturally sensitive. The minister, especially the senior pastor, serves as the linchpin in a church's transition into a multiethnic and/or multicultural body. If the minister does not support the vision completely, they will not serve as a model to their staff and members of the congregation and the church will never reach this level of cultural sensitivity. To achieve this, Parrett argues, people must examine their own culture in the same way they examine others—without judgment. This is accomplished when the minister develops and deepens relationship with people whose backgrounds are significantly different from their own.

Parrett uses two visions of Christ's incarnational ministry as a model when he draws a parallel between the John 13 passage with Jesus washing the disciples' feet and the words of Paul in Philippians 2:5–11 (see Appendix C). In Philippians, in the *kenosis* passage, Paul describes how Jesus emptied himself, became part of the culture and admonished humanity to do the same. When Jesus washed his disciples' feet he illustrated this; thus those who want to truly minister like him, must do the same. To be a minister is to serve, and in order to serve in a multiethnic environment, one must empty oneself of any presumption that their culture is better than others and must become part of the culture or cultures in which God placed them. It is only after undergoing this difficult act of selflessness that one can minister effectively.

Parrett asks and answers the question whether people should return to their own culture or stay in that new culture. He responds by saying, “Some will choose to stay put, adopting the new culture as their own and hoping that the new culture will, in turn, adopt them as its own. Others will stay even though they are fully aware that they will be as a *xenos* (stranger) in this new land. Many, perhaps most, however, will return to the places



from whence they came. But if they have truly loved, they will return as changed people.”<sup>12</sup>

***One Bread, One Body: Exploring Cultural Diversity in Worship - C. Michael Hawn***

The second work deals with worship in a culturally diverse environment. Worship is an important factor that brings people together and is one of the main activities of any church. Message of Peace, for example, places a significant value on worship and includes it as one of the five purposes outlined in its mission statement: “We exist . . . to bring people to worship God.”

Hawn says that worship together is “an incarnational matter,” meaning it is in worship that God’s presence is manifested; this can be a common denominator that brings people from different cultures together under a single purpose of praising God.<sup>13</sup> He suggests several models of worship: Culturally uniform worship, when worship is defined from a particular cultural perspective; worship through cultural assimilation, when a dominant cultural perspective assumes the common currency for all participants, regardless of experience or background; culturally open worship where the congregation displays a spirit of receptivity toward the community's cultural diversity, even though the congregation has a distinct cultural majority; and finally worship in cultural participation, when no clear majority dominates and the worship experience reflects the surrounding neighborhood as members work together in a shared Christian community.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>13</sup> C. Michael Hawn, *One Bread, One Body: Exploring Cultural Diversity in Worship* (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2003), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 6 – 8.

The first model has been practiced for centuries in traditional churches in America. The second model has been used in churches since the arrival of people from different cultures in America and churches. Most ethnic churches practice this model of worship as well. For instance, even if a non-Hispanic decides to worship in a Hispanic church, this person will be expected to worship in the same fashion that the church is used to and no accommodation will be made for that non-Hispanic person in a majority of churches.

Message of Peace Church is strong in worship and music because it is an important aspect of Brazilian culture; thus, worship is key in the church because it is a very Brazilian characteristic and important in any transition. That said, in order to become a multiethnic church, it will be necessary to move to a different model of worship, which will be discussed next.

The third model is one that most multiethnic churches have adopted. This is a more flexible model that welcomes various expressions of worship from different cultures as the congregation places an emphasis on diversity. This is true regardless if the congregation has a distinct cultural basis of worship due to its particular majority. An illustration of this might be worship led in English, but the congregation singing a mix of English, Spanish, Portuguese and other native tongues. The fact that Message of Peace is a Pentecostal church allows and encourages such openness in worship and facilitates the implementation of this model.

The fourth model is uniquely interesting and practiced in some newer churches, but one of the prevailing criticisms levied against is that it is too loose to be sustained. Hawn notes that when Jesus came to live on earth, he came to a specific place, in a specific time and to a specific convergence of cultures. “The Gospel is like a seed you

have sown it. When you sow the seed of the Gospel in a culture it will yield a plant that can be called the name of that culture.”<sup>15</sup> Bias and prejudice are natural parts of the human condition and in any cross-cultural encounter both will likely come into play. Stepping completely outside culture or origin is nearly impossible. People will always have a bias toward the cultural context that shaped them. It is only when people live beyond their culture of origin that they become self-conscious about their own bias. A healthy bias acknowledges other worldviews and presupposes other equally valid cultural ways of making meaning. Cultural bias becomes prejudice when it assumes that one’s culture is not only better than the others but it is the only one right way to view the world.

Finally, Hawn uses the metaphor of mosaic to describe the worship experience in a culturally diverse environment. Communal worship consists of thousands of tiny pieces, each with its own distinct hue and shape. When these distinct fragments come together under the hand of a creative artist, a large picture emerges. Complexity and diversity intensify this picture, especially when one sees the larger view. Such is the Church of God coming together in worship in any given place for people are all different by design, but especially in culturally diverse worship. John saw this when he describes in the book of Revelations the words of the song sung by the people who worshipped the Lamb: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev 5:9). This view does not suggest each piece has an identical role in the larger picture or reflects light in the same way. But it means each tiny fragment has an important part to play in the overall design of the mosaic.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 5.

***One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church - Manuel Ortiz***

The next work in review has much to contribute to this discussion. Ortiz is a strong proponent of the multiethnic church model (MEC). From the onset he states, “I believe that we limit the greatness of our Lord when we know God only as a local God who speaks our language and understands our conditions alone. The multiethnic church provides us with a more comprehensive understanding of the Scriptures.”<sup>16</sup> He comments on Wagner’s assumption that a multiethnic church solely exists for the purpose of evangelism and church growth based on his belief that people are better served in their own cultural and linguistic milieu. Ortiz, on the other hand argues that the multiethnic model is better and is more in line with what he understands Scripture to be articulating.

He is a staunch advocate of the MEC because “racism and bigotry are overcome in the multiethnic church.”<sup>17</sup> He quotes Paul Hiebert, a distinguished professor of Mission and Anthropology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, who writes that the MEC is a “church in which there is (1) an attitude and practice of accepting people of all ethnic, class and national origins as equal and fully participating members and ministers in the fellowship of the church; and (2) the manifestation of this attitude and practice by the involvement of people from different ethnic, social and national communities as members of the church.”<sup>18</sup>

He also believes that the MEC falls more in line with the biblical principles of ecclesiology. The Great Commission found in Matthew 28:16-20 directs Christians to

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<sup>16</sup> Manuel Ortiz, *Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 13.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

fulfill the mandate to reach all people in the immediate community. Ephesians 2-4 and Luke 4 present a church model that is primarily concerned with correcting the injustices of society and the church by intentionally working toward reconciliation. It embraces other cultures and, in most cases, is a bicultural endeavor in a community where mostly African-American live under difficult circumstances.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, Acts 2 is key for the charismatic church because, according to Ortiz, it is interpreted as saying God is bringing multitudes to the cities and is excited about sharing the Gospel through the message and signs. Culture is important, he argues, but the greatest aspect of this particular ministry is seeing how the Lord brings diversity together and allows the Holy Spirit to reconcile when they come together voluntarily to worship and serve together. Lastly, he says that Acts 11 and 13 deal with churches in transition that is concerned with church renewal and community inclusivism.<sup>20</sup>

Mark Oh, pastor of International Bible Church, an independent, evangelical church in Los Angeles composed of different ethnicities, outlined the six biblical foundations for a MEC. They are: Matt 28:19-20, preaching the Gospel to all ethnicities (*ethnos*); Gal 3:28, there is no distinction in the Body of Christ; Gal 3:39, all are Abraham's offspring; Eph 2: 14-15, 19, abolishment of ethnocentrism; Col 3: 9-11, affirming that we have a new self, a new "Christ culture," and that cultural and social distinctions are removed; and finally, 1 Jo 4:7 admonishment to love one another.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 131 – 132.

Several definitions are given for the MEC in the appendix: Roger Greenway of Calvin Seminary defines it as a church that obviously is composed of members of different ethnic background, blending distinctive elements of various ethnic traditions in a way that “no single tradition predominates or suppresses the others. Nor is the outcome such an ‘osterized’ mixture that nobody can tell one element from another.”<sup>22</sup> Hoover Wong of Fuller Seminary says a MEC “combines two distinct monocultural, monolingual groups interacting as one congregation, with an agreed, common third culture and language, e.g, Western English.”<sup>23</sup> Oh’s definition also finds language to be a common denominator. Speaking on his experience as pastor of a multiethnic church he states that many come to services and bring their uniqueness but English is used: "Unlike some of the bilingual churches which have to translate their services, one of the benefits of the multiethnic church like ours is the use of one common working language-English."<sup>24</sup> Lastly, another great definition is offered by Hiebert: A MEC is “a church in which there is (1) an attitude and practice of accepting people of all ethnic, class and national origin as equal and fully participating members and minister in the fellowship of the church.”<sup>25</sup>

Ortiz makes a distinction by contrasting the MEC with the multicongregational model (MGM). The MGM is a church that ministers separately to different ethnic groups. Usually there is more than one congregation existing side-by-side due to language, racial or ethnic reasons. The common element of MGC is the various language groups generally

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 93

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 150.

use one facility. It is common that the English-speaking church owns the building and there are little ministerial activities that overlap during the year except the occasional special event that brings the congregations together for a brief period.

In the MEC, the goal is not to have only an ethnic presence but the beauty and exciting part is having different ethnic representations coming together as one church. Ortiz admits this is not an easy task as, “It is also the most difficult in reference to embracing and maintaining people from diverse cultural background.”<sup>26</sup> Obstacles such as traditions, patterns of thinking, different aspects of culture that are approved by a particular ethnic group but may be offensive to another, and family clans are just some of what must be overcome by a healthy MEC.<sup>27</sup>

Ortiz believes leadership, continual discipleship, and training are vital for establishing and maintaining a MEC. The senior pastor plays a key part. He says, “In every case the direction for the MEC was instituted by the one who acted as the senior pastor. The pastor also solicited and engaged other pastors to join but he or she was the one who ‘sold’ the idea to the congregation and to the staff that would eventually support the development of the MEC . . . the pastor carried the full burden of this process for many years.”<sup>28</sup>

In preparing the church for multiethnic transition the pastor and leaders must be careful not to make many assumptions that the congregation is always on board with the process. The truth of the matter is that few understand what is happening, and their

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 108.

agreement and commitment is shallow initially. They will need more information and training. He concludes that training for those working in ethnically diverse communities are an essential part of the process of building a multiethnic church.<sup>29</sup>

Ortiz comments on the third international consultation of the Lutheran World Federation's Study Team on Worship and Culture held in Nairobi, Kenya in January 1996, and the statement it produced in regards to the MEC model. It offers four major perspectives about the relationship between worship and culture: worship as transcultural; worship as contextual; worship as counter-cultural; worship as cross-cultural.<sup>30</sup>

The transcultural significance of worship focuses on those qualities and theological assertions that should be present in Christian worship regardless of cultural context. The contextual aspect affirms that as Jesus was born in a specific cultural context, at a unique point in time, so does each worshipping community exist in a specific cultural setting and time. The counter-cultural states that all cultures and peoples are part of God's creation and have practices hostile to God's desires for humanity. The cross-cultural says Jesus came to be savior of all people and welcomes the treasures of earthly cultures into the City of God.

Another aspect discussed is the role music ministry plays in enabling multicultural worship, as music can serve as a pivotal catalyst bridging different ethnicities.<sup>31</sup> This is in line with what Message of Peace tried the last few years; since music is an important part

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 110 – 111.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>31</sup> However, careful implementation must be used or it can also become a divider.



of Brazilian culture and many are attracted to this type of music, the church has used it as the foundation of worship and adds other styles to complement and make it more diverse.

### ***Becoming a Multiethnic Church - Glen Rogers***

*Becoming a Multiethnic Church* was written for Anglo church leaders preparing for cross-cultural ministry. Although *Message of Peace* does not fall specifically into this category, some of the ideas and definitions presented are useful to any church embarking in, or functioning within a multiethnic setting. Rogers provides a working definition of the different types of immigrants and their children: G-1 are immigrants who come to the US as adults and usually do not assimilate or even learn the language. G-1.5 are the generation of immigrants who were teenagers when they arrived in America and often do not get very far in the assimilation process.

He believes people who have grown up in another culture never can completely learn and assimilate into American culture. They may learn the language and many behaviors of American culture but “they will never learn to think like an American.” He argues they will always be “ethnically and culturally how they were when they arrived in America.”<sup>32</sup> *Message of Peace* and many ethnic churches are composed mainly of G-1.0 and G-1.5 immigrants, and for this reason assimilation is difficult. On the other hand, children of G-1 and G-1.5 immigrants assimilate to American culture, while still holding on to some of the culture and even language of their parents.<sup>33</sup> Some G-2s and G-3s are fully assimilated into mainstream culture and interact with Anglos, others feel

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<sup>32</sup> Glen Rogers, *Becoming a Multiethnic Church: Responding to America's Growing Ethnic Diversity* (Bedford, TX: Mission and Ministry Resources, 2007), 7-8.

<sup>33</sup> Rogers uses the terms G-1, G-2, etc., for generations 1.0, 2.0, etc.

comfortable in a multicultural and multiethnic church with English as the main language, what is being proposed at Message of Peace. Rogers believes that a church in transition needs to focus on the spiritual and local needs of G-2 and G-3 generations by providing activities aimed at them, for they will be the focus of such transition.

At Message of Peace, the 2.0-generation is called “the new generation.” The church has focused on their spiritual and social needs as it began this transition. The first important step was hiring a 3.0-generation minister who could minister to them more adequately. This was done after an unsuccessful attempt to use a 1.5-generation minister due to a notable difficulty relating to them. Hiring a 3.0-generation minister provided an outlet for the new generation to communicate fully in English, despite mild resistance from parents in the beginning. This freed the new generation to express themselves fully as they did not have the pressure of trying to “translate” what they feel into a language or method that is their parents and not their own. It also freed them from having to navigate in church between two languages with very different methods of expression.

Rogers believes many Anglo churches have difficulty moving into a multicultural setting because of ethnocentrism, the bias that one’s culture is superior to other cultures:

Being a multiethnic church requires that we understand something of the cultural need of ethnically-other people. It means understanding their emotional, social, and spiritual needs. It means analyzing cherished assumptions regarding church forms (the way we do things), and it means understanding how to make the Gospel and Christianity appropriate and relevant to people who are not just like us.<sup>34</sup>

To be able to do that, one must overcome ethnocentric assumptions that people from different ethnicities think, feel, and act like Anglos and want to be like them. This

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 9.

assumption is also carried into many Anglo churches, assuming their worship assembly will be a meaningful, satisfying worship experience for people of different ethnicities. Some even go further believing that to all that is needed to overcome the language barrier is translate the service into another language (e.g., Spanish, Portuguese, etc.) and they will understand and everything will be fine. Rogers argues it takes much more than that. He believes the key is learning and understanding the different worldviews of cultures.

He writes, the “Worldview is the sum of total of our assumptions about what is really real, about how the world works, our place in the world, and our relationship to all other people and things.”<sup>35</sup> One’s worldview is acquired during enculturation, as one grows up and learns one’s primary culture. Since worldview impacts how people think and act, if church leaders want to reach out to other ethnicities, it is essential to identify the underlying and unconscious assumptions of people about reality, the community, and the needs of the people in it.<sup>36</sup>

By far the minister, especially the lead minister, at the onset is the most important. “Positive dynamic change does not occur without positive dynamic leadership.”<sup>37</sup> The leader must be able to envision a multiethnic community of faith and communicate this vision clearly to the people. They also must tell the story of Jesus in a way, and provide an atmosphere for worship and community, that is culturally sensitive, appropriate, and relevant to people of different ethnicities as well as one’s own. In some cases, Rogers believes that one of the most crucial considerations in effective ministry with ethnically-

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 104.

other people is finding an appropriately-educated minister who is of the same ethnic group the church wishes to evangelize.

Rogers concludes by providing different models for becoming a multiethnic church. The integrational model assimilates other ethnic groups into the Anglo worship context. The multi-congregational mode allows different ethnic groups with different linguistic and social cultural needs to worship in separate assemblies according to their needs and preferences, but enjoy a holistic body perspective, functioning as a unified whole (together-separate-together). And finally the multiethnic church model, which has already been considered in this chapter.

This literature review helps clarify what a multiethnic church looks like and some of the major challenges a church faces to transition to a church like that. It also helps to make it clear to the members and leaders of Message of Peace that a move from a monocultural (Brazilian)/multiethnic to a multicultural/multiethnic with English as the common language is not only a good but necessary move for the church.

In such a multi-faceted approach to change, it is important to not only examine theory, but also see how other congregations have faced these same challenges. Chapter 4 compares and contrasts two congregations that have already gone through such a transition.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### COMPARARISON MODELS: KEN FONG AND ROBERTO MIRANDA

Ken Fong is pastor of Evergreen Baptist Church in Los Angeles. Roberto Miranda is pastor of Congregación León de Juda in Boston. They both have led churches that became successful models of multiethnic and multicultural. Their experiences are now examined to extract lessons that can be used in Message of Peace's transition.

#### **Evergreen Baptist Church**

In *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, Garces-Foley uses Evergreen Baptist church as an example of a multiethnic church in transition. This chapter relies heavily on her book, in an attempt to compare the experiences of Evergreen with the transition Message of Peace Church is going through.

Evergreen Baptist Church was founded in 1925 as a mission church for Japanese immigrants. In the mid-1930s, a part-time English ministry was added to reach the growing second generation within its community, but the congregation was forced to close its doors during World War II due to the US's enactment of internment camps. After the war, returning members rebuilt the church base with a predominantly English-speaking membership. It eventually grew into a mixed Japanese/Chinese church in the

1980s, peaking to over a thousand members. In 1997, Evergreen split in two, and the Evergreen Los Angeles branch took on the identity of a multi-Asian/multiethnic community. Since then its Asian American membership has shifted from 98 percent to 75 percent of its total, and has expanded to include people of seventeen distinct Asian and Pacific Rim ethnicities. By 2001, 25 percent of Evergreen's members identified themselves as Black, Latino, White, and multi-racial. Ken Fong has been senior pastor since 1997, and led Evergreen through a successful transformation from an Asian American church to a "remarkable montages of cultures, classes and circumstances," as stated in the church vision statement.<sup>1</sup>

Many ethnic churches in the US have gone or will go through similar changes as Evergreen. Message of Peace started as an outreach to the Portuguese community in the San Jose-area. The community has aged and shifted to the Brazilian community and is gradually becoming multicultural and multiethnic in hope of maintaining and expanding its ministry. Ethnic churches who refuse to go through this change ultimately die as a result of gradual decrease in membership that leads to closing its doors. McManus, pastor of *Mosaic*, a multiethnic church in Southern California states, "Once survival has become our supreme goal, we have lost our way", and if I may add, "and we will die."<sup>2</sup>

Evergreen's logo is a telling sign of the church's transformation: a single leaf not attached to any tree, and falling to the ground. The vein of the leaf is in the shape of a cross, and the stem touches down on a pool of water, sending ripples outward. The image stems from a passage at the end of the New Testament that describes how Christians are

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<sup>1</sup> Garces-Folley, *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, 19.

<sup>2</sup> Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing: 2012), 23.

sent out to bring healing to all: "And the leaves of the tree will be for the healing of the nations" (Rev 22:2). Just as the leaf in the church logo sends ripple along the water, Fong hopes Evergreen will have an impact far beyond the church walls.

The transition of Evergreen Baptist Church was slow. The church was small in size, serving a particular population, Japanese-speaking immigrants. It was not until after World War II, with its need to rebuild that it began as a predominantly English-speaking, Japanese-American membership. After a period of postwar vitality the church fell into decline, and by the late-1970s Evergreen, with only eighty-five members, was barely surviving. The church, originally called *Boyle Heights Baptist Church*, changed its name after the war to Nisei Baptist Church of Los Angeles, and in 1949, once more to Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles. In the early-1950s, Japanese-speaking members formed a separate congregation across the street, allowing Evergreen to devote itself entirely to an English-speaking ministry.

The future of the church changed dramatically when the church appointed a third-generation Japanese American, Cory Ishida, as pastor. Ishida attracted many new members, including Chinese Americans. Fong, a third-generation Chinese American, was called to be an assistant pastor in 1981, to further the transition from a Japanese-American church to a pan-Asian church. The Boyle Heights-area of East Los Angeles became increasingly Latino and members of Evergreen moving east to the San Gabriel Valley, in 1982 the church decided to relocate to the Valley in the city of Rosemead with the objective of reaching a growing Asian-American population there. The church boomed, with a weekly attendance of 1200.

Through the charismatic leadership of Ishida and Fong, Evergreen became a successful pan-Asian church, though in practice it was largely attracting those of Chinese and Japanese ancestry. These two groups have been in the United States the longest and thus are the most Americanized of the Asian Americans. Over the course of its history, a handful of non-Asians have become members of Evergreen, primarily through intermarriage.

The transition of the church is closely associated with the transition Fong was personally experiencing. He was trained in seminary in the homogeneous unit principle of church growth; one that was developed by Donald McGavran during his time as director of the School of World Missions at Fuller Seminary in 1936. He taught those preparing for missions that forming homogeneous congregations was the most effective method of evangelization, because crossing cultural barriers is too great an obstacle for potential converts. Most ethnic churches, and Message of Peace is no exception, began with this principle in mind.

In the 1970s, one of McGavran's students, Peter Wagner, applied the same principle to church life in the US in the wake of the civil rights movement and the increasing numbers of immigrants from Latin America, Asia and Africa. Rather than support the integration of churches, Wagner provided a justification for maintaining ethnic separation under the assumption that people preferred to be with their own kind and thus a homogeneous church will grow faster.

Fong studied under Wagner and wrote his Doctor of Ministry dissertation on the application of the homogeneous unit principle to a new target population he called American-born Asians or Americanized Asian Americans. In his dissertation he



described this “unreached people group” as third-generations immigrants who are highly assimilated in American society while still maintaining a strong ethnic identity as Asian Americans. Americanized Asian Americans had not completely assimilated into mainstream white culture; consequently they are not comfortable in either immigrant churches or in so-called “American” churches dominated by White Americans. He believed that Americanized Asian Americans have enough in common to be considered a homogeneous unit. Judson Press published his dissertation in 1988, under the title of *Pursuing the Pearl: A Comprehensive Resource for Multi-Asian Ministry*.

In 1990, Fong was asked to join the national board of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, to be the main speaker at the annual Urbana conference for 20,000 college students from the US and abroad. He says that it was at Urbana, in the face of the global picture of God’s heart and God’s purpose that his transformation began. Learning about racial reconciliation through InterVarsity and experiencing it firsthand at Urbana made Fong feel tremendously guilty about writing off 99 percent of the world. Prior to this, he believed that the homogeneous unit principle was the best way to spread the Gospel; however, having experienced the tremendous diversity at Urbana, he wanted to be a part of a church that included all kinds of people.

His praxis and theology were also affected by changes in his own family. His wife is Japanese American, they adopted a Chinese American in 1999, and his brother adopted an African American child. Garces-Folley says when she first met Ken, “He described watching his Chinese daughter and African American nephew learn to use chopsticks in

their adjoining high chairs.”<sup>3</sup> The Fong family also includes Korean, Guamanian, Filipino and European heritages.

At the same time, Fong began to ascribe the vision of a postmodern church as a counter-cultural, outward-looking church that is doing “redemptive” things like serving the poor and breaking down the ethnic barriers, as opposed to an inward-focused church that is culturally comfortable. Leadership is the key for any change in ministry or church. Fong’s transformation is the main reason for Evergreen’s transformation. The same is true for every other ethnic church. If the senior pastor experiences a transformation by directly involving themselves with other realities than their own, either through studies or by being exposed to different church models, the church will no doubt be impacted as well. McManus notes, “Genuine leaders personify the values and visions of the people they lead. They do not simply espouse the vision of movement; they embody it.”<sup>4</sup> This was true for Evergreen and this is true for Message of Peace.

In 1996, Ishida made the decision to split Evergreen into two congregations, forming Evergreen San Gabriel Valley and Evergreen Los Angeles. The split (or "the hive" as the church members call it) was a defining moment in the life of the church. Members now delineate the churches in terms of its pre-hive and post-hive periods, but with any split, there are lasting ramifications that are seen as good and bad. The most positive perspective is that the church was so large and flourishing that the time was right to divide and plant another church. In Fong’s version, the church was in a period of

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<sup>3</sup> Garces-Folley, *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, 22.

<sup>4</sup> McManus, *An Unstoppable Force*, 134.

dissatisfaction, losing members and in need of a new reality.<sup>5</sup> Some members believed that the church's ethnic focus lay behind the split, but the hive actually occurred before Fong made public his desire to create a multiethnic church. When he looked back on the hive in 2004, he told Garces-Folley that the crux of the split was incongruence between the vision and approach of the lead pastor and himself. With the hive, each pastor was able to focus on his particular vision for Evergreen.

Members had a short time to decide whom to follow. Both were well liked, and this was a difficult decision for many members. They shared the Rosemead building for almost a year, meeting at different times. When the legal separation was complete, Ishida led his congregation to a rented space east of Rosemead and continued to focus on English-speaking Asian Americans, while Fong stayed at the Rosemead site to pursue his vision of a postmodern, multiethnic church.

Garces-Folley quotes a sermon preached on November 10, 2002 at Evergreen Baptist Church explaining their logo. His words clarify his vision for Evergreen:

[The logo] comes from Revelation 22. At the end of it, it says we will be the leaves that God uses for the healing of the nations. We aren't Christians just to kind of have our own sins forgiven and not to go to hell. We are Christians for God to be able to use extend the boundaries of his Kingdom . . . The tree is the cross of Jesus and those leaves are everyone of us in different shapes, colors and sizes, experience, diversity, variety, all brought together for healing.<sup>6</sup>

The vision statement after the hive stated that "Evergreen will become a multi-Asian/multi-ethnic, multi-socioeconomic, multigenerational congregation."<sup>7</sup> It was later

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<sup>5</sup> Ken Fong coauthored a book called *Pursuing the Pearl: A Comprehensive Resource for Multi-Asian Ministry*. In it he gives other reasons for "the hive."

<sup>6</sup> Garces-Folley, *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, 24.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

changed due to complaints by church members that it was too lengthy. So in 2000, a second vision statement centered on the biblical principle of *sedaqah*, the Hebrew word for righteousness: “Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles will demonstrate the passion Jesus had for reconciled relationship through our building 'Sedaqah Communities' - remarkable montage of cultures, classes, purposes in the world.”<sup>8</sup>

The congregation intentionally and publicly addresses diversity issues through theological reflection in sermons, the church newsletter, church website, and programs and discussion groups, but the most effective way is through the pulpit on Sunday morning. There has been a range of response to the new vision, from passionate acceptance to lukewarm tolerance to mild resistance. Fong used the diversity of the area, his postmodern mentality, Scripture, as well as, a growing body of literature, for evidence that reconciliation is God's intention for humanity.

Like Message of Peace, adaptation is an integral characteristic of Evergreen’s history. Today the church is still in transition and adapting to the new vision laid out by Fong. The church and leadership is still predominantly Asian American, but they are making a conscious effort to become more multiethnic. Time will tell if it will continue working, but if it is up to Fong, it has to work. The only thing that could undermine the effort of the church in this trajectory is a dramatic change of leadership, but to prevent that from happening, Fong and his leadership mentor new leaders to carry on the vision. Evergreen Baptist Church is by most definitions a multiethnic church and it will continue to be for many years to come.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 26.

### ***Congregación León de Judá***

*León de Judá* presents a different church model, not only in terms of geography (Evergreen and Message of Peace are located in California and *León de Judá* is in Massachusetts) but also in terms of the principle ethnic group. Roberto Miranda wrote about this church in *En La Tierra de los Peregrinos: La Iglesia Evangelica y Su Llamado Redentor (In the Land of the Pilgrims: The Evangelical Church and her Redeeming Calling)*. Written originally in Spanish, Miranda's statements have been translated into English since many principles from his book are used.

*Léon de Judá* (Lion of Judah) church was founded in Boston in 1982. A few years after its founding it inherited a church building built in 1879, in the city of Cambridge, from a dying Anglo congregation. The previous congregation had once been a vibrant Evangelical church, and like many other churches in the area, membership decreased drastically in the 1960s and after many attempts to grow, had to give the church building and parsonage to another denomination, which in turn provided this new Hispanic congregation an important resource. Miranda states that this is common in the New England-area, as more ethnic congregations are taking over building that once housed strong Anglo congregations. He points out that many of these dying congregations are liberal in their theology and he feels that it is due to this fact that they began to die out.<sup>9</sup>

This may or may not be the case as in other areas, but there are a notable amount of once vibrant churches dwindling in numbers due to a change in population and not a result of incongruent theological views. Message of Peace meets today in a historic

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<sup>9</sup> Roberto S. Miranda, *En La Tierra de los Peregrinos: La Iglesia Evangelica y Su Llamado Redentor* (Rio Pedras, PR: Publicaciones Palavra Y más, 2009), 92.

building in South San Francisco that was once the home of a Methodist church. When the building was purchased, the Methodist church's parting with the landmark building was because it joined with another Methodist church in hopes of bolstering its church base.

The building donated to *Léon de Judá* is located in a middle-class area and close to major education centers of the United States: Harvard University, Boston University, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Miranda did his doctoral studies at Harvard and says while there, he never thought he would pastor an evangelical church so close to this institution. During the years the church met at the Cambridge building, it went through a transformation and spiritual renewal both in practice and in doctrine. As with Evergreen, the process commenced with the pastor and spread to the congregation as the church moved from a traditional denominational church to a charismatic congregation. The name of the church was *Iglesia Bautista Central* (Central Baptist Church). The church grew in number and enthusiasm and, as Miranda ascribes, was the result of them being more "free in the Spirit."<sup>10</sup>

At the peak of its growth, Miranda had a dream in which the Lord told him they needed to abandon the comfortable setting they were in and move to the needy and urban area of Boston, where they would be better positioned to serve the Hispanic communities. In his dream he saw a lion standing over the darkness of the city of Boston as the Lord assured him he would be in control of the church and the move. As he woke up he felt the Lord telling him the lion he saw was none other than the Lion of the Tribe of Judah

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 98.

described in Revelations 5:5.<sup>11</sup> They looked for a building for many months and finally found a suitable one in a then rundown area of the city with a high crime rate. They felt that was the place the Lord was leading them. On the third visit to the building they noticed that on an entrance there was a carving on the wall of a roaring lion, this was the last confirmation they needed and when they moved to the building, the church changed its name to *Congregación León de Judá* (Lion of Judah Congregation).

It took them many months to convert the building into not only a place of worship but also the headquarters of their ministry. Miranda points out that the years of spiritual renewal in Cambridge prepared them for the move. The congregation moved into the building in late-1997. The church grew in number and in influence, becoming the largest Hispanic congregation in Boston. The neighborhood dramatically changed from rundown to a very affluent downtown area. Injection by the city to renovate the neighborhood and build new freeways afforded *León* a strategic advantage in ministry. The congregation is presently made up of people from thirty different nations and recognized nationwide as a ministry reaching beyond needs of the Hispanic population, but the whole community.

The transformation of *León de Judá* is closely related to two important factors: The personal transformation of the senior pastor, which is paramount to any church transformation, and their move from Cambridge to Boston with the purchase of the new building. These two factors are also present at the transition of Message of Peace, as written above the transformation of the senior pastor and the move from San Jose to San Francisco along with its acquisition of a new building in South San Francisco. The move was more than a geographical move but divinely-directed, though the congregation and

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 99.

leaders had not understood it at the time. With each change Message of Peace experienced came a renewed focus and amplified purpose, culminating in a multiethnic approach to reach diverse communities in the surrounding areas. Miranda interprets this purpose for the Latin Church, writing, “*Su intencion es que nuestra comunidad Latina sirva como una levadura de vida y sanidad espiritual para esta nación.*”<sup>12</sup>

Miranda draws an interesting parallel between the pilgrims who colonized New England and the Hispanics of the present. *En la tierra de los Peregrinos (In the Land of the Pilgrims)*, the title of this book, speaks of what Miranda calls “the prophetic presence of the Hispanics” in a nation that originally was founded by men and women full of faith four centuries ago. These spiritual adventurers left their security and comfort in England to find a land where they could serve and worship God according to their consciences. Now centuries later, their spiritual descendants came from far away countries to open new spiritual wells that had since closed in their nation.<sup>13</sup> The theme of the book is that God has called Hispanic people to play a spiritual role to renew this nation.

As the first pilgrims from England, many of the Hispanic pilgrims arrive with much fervor and with a Christian faith forged by the many revivals that have taken place in their countries of origin in Latin America in the first half of the twentieth-century. Many come as undocumented immigrants from the different countries of Latin America. According to Miranda, there are around 12 million undocumented immigrants in the US,

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<sup>12</sup> This quotation and all others following it are direct translations provided to aid the reader: “His intention is that our Latin community serve as a carrier of life and spiritual vitality for this nation.” Ibid., 13.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 17.



81 percent are from Latin America. Half of them come legally and then overstay their visa. The other half come illegally mainly through the border with Mexico.<sup>14</sup>

The moral values of the Hispanic community; its profound spirituality and instinctual fear of God; its traditional conception of the family and sexuality; its respect for ecclesiastic and governmental authority; the powerful and biblical faith of evangelicals and charismatic Catholics are in Miranda's view the reason they can be compared to the Pilgrims. He writes:

*Por éstas, y por muchas otras razones, sospecho que estos humildes creyentes de Santo Domingo, Chile y El Salvador, algunos iletrados y culturalmente sencillos, podrían conversar mucho más cómodamente con sus antepasados espirituales puritanos que los actuales descendientes raciales de estos . . . resulta profundamente irónico pensar que muchos de estos llamados 'immigrantes ilegales' que trabajan 'clandestinamente y 'sin papeles' en los restaurants y fábricas de Boston, Lawrence y Newton, están en mucha más profunda afinidad con la dinámica y valores espirituales que dieron nacimiento a la nación Americana que los descendientes meramente raciales de los primeros aventureros puritanos.*<sup>15</sup>

Hispanics are the largest minority in the US presently numbering 45.5 million. According to the census, between 2005-2006, one in two persons born in the US is of Hispanic descent. By 2050, the Hispanic population will reach 102.5 million people.<sup>16</sup> The most affluent Hispanic group is the Cuban community. Their average income is higher than Anglos and other Hispanics, 39 percent of them have a college degree compared to 30

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>15</sup> "For these and for many other reasons, I suspect that these humble believers in Santo Domingo, Chile and El Salvador, some illiterate and culturally simple, could talk much more comfortably with their spiritual ancestors Puritans than the current racial descendants of them ... [it] is deeply ironic to think that many of these so called 'illegal immigrants' working 'illegally' and 'without [immigration] papers' in restaurants and factories in Boston, Lawrence and Newton, are in much deeper affinity with the dynamics and spiritual values that gave birth to the American nation than the merely racial descendents of the first Puritans adventurers." Ibid., 39.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 45.

percent of the Anglo population. Though they only make up 4 percent of the Hispanics in the US and less than 1 percent of the general population, their political, cultural, and economic influence is extraordinary.<sup>17</sup>

Miranda discusses the sensitive topic of immigration. He states that Hispanics are here to stay, to prosper and to bless.<sup>18</sup> Quoting the May 1, 2008, headline of *Wall Street Journal*, which says, “The growth of the Hispanic population in the United States are due to birth not to immigration” he states that even if the borders were to close, the Hispanic population would still grow. He traces the illegal immigration problem to the Mexican-American war of 1846-1848, to what he labels, “*Uno de los capítulos más injustos y vergonzosos de toda la historia norteamericana,*”<sup>19</sup> when through, what he calls, “*Una política internacional corrupta y una intervención military totalmente injustificada, animada por un apetito voraz de terra ajena,*”<sup>20</sup> the US took from Mexico 40 percent of its territory, approximately 1.2 million square miles. He believes it is God’s justice coming back to the US by bringing Hispanics back to the land that once belonged to them and that it is better for the United States to legalize the “illegal aliens” than to pay compensation for the land, he believes was taken from them.

Drawing motivation from the pilgrims, Miranda believes they also illegally occupied the land when they arrived, for it belonged to the different tribes of Native

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 50–51.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>19</sup> “One of the most unjust and shameful chapter of all American history.” Ibid., 144.

<sup>20</sup> “A corrupted international policy, totally unjust military intervention and an uncontrollable appetite for foreign land.” Ibid.

Americans. To him, the controversy of undocumented immigration is not new when we take in consideration the historical origins of the nation.

According to Miranda, New England embodies a spiritual Puritan past that shifted into a humanistic and anti-Christian society that forgot the biblical principles it was built upon. Similar to the second and third generation Puritans, Hispanic youth are also becoming disoriented, assuming promiscuity and ignorance, incapable of achieving educational and professional progress. Their only hope is a renewed Church, conscious of her calling. Miranda writes:

*Estamos claros en que nuestro llamado primordial no es meramente educar a la juventud, o ayudar adultos a aprender inglés, o facilitar la integración del inmigrante en Estados Unidos, aunque los programas sociales de nuestra iglesia proveen todos estos servicios. Entendemos que, ante todo, somos llamados a manifestar el amor de Cristo por medio de estos esfuerzos, y a proveer medios prácticos para que la gente entre en contacto con los principios y valores del Evangelio.*<sup>21</sup>

It is absolutely important that the Church in this society finds a way to expand its conception of ministry to include not only salvation of souls, but a concern for other spiritual and eternal matters, meeting the material needs of the community, and leading transformation in all aspects of human life, whether an Anglo, ethnic or multiethnic church. However, due to the makeup of many communities, a multiethnic church may be in a better position to do that.

Miranda believes the Hispanic church has a redemptive call to bring back Christian values to America. He also believes the call of redemption is for the whole

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<sup>21</sup> “We are clear that our primary calling is not merely to educate the youth, or to help adults learn English, or facilitate the integration of immigrants in the U.S., although the social programs of our church provide all these services. We understand that first of all, we are called to manifest the love of Christ through these efforts, and provide practical means for people to be in contact with the principles and values of the Gospel.” Ibid., 129.

person and the Church must not only meet the spiritual needs of the community but their social needs as well. He feels they cannot be separated one from the other, a lesson the Church could learn from the New England Puritans. He makes a parallel of Homer's *Odyssey* story of the Sirens to point out the Church is in danger of being taken by the world if not careful and truly salt of the earth and light of the world. *León de Judá* and all truly Christian churches are called to reach the world but not to become like the world.

He concludes by arguing the intention of God is that the Church serves as life-carriers and transforming spiritual agents in the middle of society. This calling will not happen without effort but requires a strong stand from the Church and its leadership as Hispanics are called not only to survive in this country but also be a blessing, to play an active role in the spiritual evolution of the country. He believes Hispanics are God's messengers to bring this country back to its Judeo-Christian roots and that: "La inmigración documentada e indocumentada de los pueblos del sur a países del norte, como Estados Unidos, es un regalo espiritual indeseado pero urgentemente necesario, una rara muestra de la disciplina y misericordia de Dios para esta nación."<sup>22</sup>

Both Evergreen and *León de Judá* offer insights to the transition being proposed at Message of Peace Church and other churches like it. Evergreen began as an ethnic church and after many years transitioned to become a multiethnic church with a vision to make a difference in the community adjacent to it. The change was not only pragmatic as the church was losing members but also due to the transformation in the leader as Fong "became" multiethnic in thinking and practice. *León de Judá* also was changed due in

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<sup>22</sup> "Undocumented and documented immigration from the people of the south to the people of the north, like the United States, is a undesired but urgently necessary spiritual gift, a rare sample of the discipline and mercy of God to this nation." Ibid., 173.

part to the transformation of its leader and his vision and understanding of the role of the immigrant church in the United States.

The church and leadership at Message of Peace are also in the middle of a transformation that will place the church in a trajectory to become a multiethnic church in a diverse setting. This change is needed not only because the trends in immigration changed in the Portuguese and Brazilian communities but also because the pastor, as both Fong and Miranda, see the church as an instrument of transformation to the community in which God has placed the church. The members of Message of Peace as immigrants came looking to better themselves economically, but God had a bigger plan in mind for them, to become missionaries in a post-modern and post-Christian society to help evangelize the nation and bring it back to God. This is God once again sending his people into the entire world to preach the Gospel and establish his kingdom as he did in Scripture, as it will be discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THEOLOGY OF CULTURAL ADAPTATION

Scripture offers different examples of cultural adaptation, both in the Old and New Testament. The people of Judah were immigrants in Babylon similar to the situation of many people in the United States. Though their immigration was the result of a different set of circumstances, the adaptation process is similar between both groups. In Jeremiah, there is a letter sent by the ancient prophet to the people who had immigrated to Babylon. In this letter there are important steps for immigrants to learn from in order to adapt to their new environment and culture:

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper” (29:4–7).

The people who were sent into exile to Babylon felt that they were not going to stay long in Babylon due to popular belief around false prophecies that stated their exile would be brief and their return to Judah imminent; leading many to refuse to adapt to their new environments. Many Brazilians who immigrated to the United States, the main

ethnic group of Message of Peace, differ from other emigrant communities in that they see their stay as temporary. A resounding majority came to the US for economic reasons, with the perspective that their stays are investments for a long-term future in their native land; thus, they resist adaptation.

Reality presents an entirely different scenario for these emigrants. One of the primary factors in transitioning their short-term stay into a long-term residency is US-born or US-raised children. These children refuse to return to Brazil, which to them is a foreign country. Those that have returned have regretted their decision due to the culture shock that destabilized their family—forcing many to realize that this is their new home. The letter of Jeremiah can serve as a model for the families of the church and offer them important insights in cultural adaptation.

The first lesson is they are to take root in the new country: build houses, settle down, work, live off their earnings, have their children marry, and grow their families. At Message of Peace Church, leadership has not only modeled these principles, but taught members to buy property here—not in Brazil—so their families can benefit from stability. Even if they return one day after their children are grown and out of the house, these decisions are practical investments they can use for the family's well-being.

The second lesson is to seek the peace and the prosperity of the new country. This is done at Message of Peace by encouraging the members who can vote to exercise this civil right, to learn the language in order to communicate with those outside their home and their own children, learn and assimilate aspects of the culture while not giving up their unique culture and contribute to the country by paying their taxes, even those who are undocumented. It is known that the Jews heeded the admonitions of Jeremiah and as a

result became influential in Babylon, seen in the biblical accounts of Daniel and Esther. It is the vision of those involved in the transition of Message of Peace and churches alike that the same will also be true.

Another example of culture adaptation can be derived from the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul states his goal was to win as many as possible for the Kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> The goal of any church should not be to maintain the *status quo* but to grow by sharing the Gospel with as many as possible. By remaining ethnic, a church can only reach out to those in its ethnicity and language. If this ethnicity is a growing community, one can decide that the homogeneous principle is the best way to grow that church and effectively minister in that community. This is not the case of Message of Peace and the Brazilian churches in the United States. Across the country, the Brazilian community is diminishing and the number of Brazilian evangelical churches is numerous. Instead of competing for new members, Brazilian churches like Message of Peace ought to adhere to the principles of cultural adaptation offered by the apostle Paul:

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings (1 Corinthians 9:19–23).

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<sup>1</sup> The biblical passages used in this chapter are given from the perspective of how Message of Peace sees and personifies them and are not meant to be imposed on Christianity at large; therefore no scholarly discussion is provided on these passages. The interpretation given corresponds to the theology of culture adaptation of Message of Peace and perhaps similar ethnic churches.



The San Francisco Bay-area is home of over 7 million people.<sup>2</sup> There is no way of knowing how many Brazilians live in the area, some reports approximate 15,000, but this figure is dropping for reasons outlined in the previous chapters.<sup>3</sup> It then becomes paramount for a church such as Message of Peace to target the 7 million that reside in the Bay Area, especially those that resonate with the calling of the church. To do so the church must transition and learn to “become all thing to all people so by all possible means . . . save some.” William Barclay writes, “We can never attain to any kind of evangelism or friendship without speaking the same language and thinking the same thoughts as the other man.”<sup>4</sup> This is cultural adaptation in the best possible way. Ethnic churches need to understand that God’s purpose for them is greater than to just reach their own people. The Great Commission clearly instructs them to go into the entire world and part of the world is in the area where the church is. Paul’s admonition is the Church learns the language and cultures around to effectively tell them about the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ in a way they will understand.

The example of Jesus is to be followed by his disciples. The incarnation is a primary example of culture adaptation. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). Jesus did not only dwell among humanity but became like one of them. When the Samaritan Woman in John 4 met Jesus, she recognized him as a Jewish

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<sup>2</sup> Bay area Census, “San Francisco Bay Area,” <http://census.abag.ca.gov/bayarea.htm> (accessed August, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Soul Brazil, “Brazilians in the USA,” [http://www.soulbrasil.com/index.php?page=br-usa/17.php&lang=en&ms\\_lang=en](http://www.soulbrasil.com/index.php?page=br-usa/17.php&lang=en&ms_lang=en) (accessed August 1, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series: the Letters to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 84.

man, because he must have not only have looked like one but also acted like one. He assimilated the culture in order to minister to that culture.

The Pentecost narrative is another beautiful example of culture adaptation and the importance of language. One of the greatest statements is found in Acts 2:11b, “We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues.” The Holy Spirit came over the first disciples and empowered them to be witnesses of Jesus Christ and as a sign of that power; he gave them the ability to speak in languages they had never learned in order to communicate clearly the message of the Gospel. Language is a powerful tool to empathize with people. A multiethnic church can opt to become multilingual and be able to reach different cultures; however, this Ministry Focus Paper argues this is not the most effective way. It is far more efficient to unify with one language, decided upon by the majority. At Message of Peace English is the chosen language, and allows for expressions of worship in native languages as well; providing discipleship and evangelism in small groups in multiple languages, while making English the main language spoken in worship services.

Message of Peace is a Pentecostal church and as such has a long tradition of interacting with different cultures and unifying them through the Pentecostal message and language. Most Pentecostal churches trace their origin to the Azusa Street Revival at the beginning of the twentieth century, led by William Seymour, an African American preacher. It is reported that during that revival, “African Americans, Hispanics, Caucasians, and others prayed and sang together, creating a dimension of equality that allowed men, women and children to have fellowship collectively and participate in the

worship led by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>5</sup> This is how the movement began. Unfortunately, shortly after, there were divisions due to difference in doctrine, and also racial prejudice.

This phenomenon did not happen the same way overseas where the Pentecostal movement, especially the Assemblies of God denomination spread and grew rapidly, becoming the largest evangelical denomination in the world. In Brazil the walls of racial separation were broken and the church was able to reach different culture groups such as Japanese, Germans, Italians, Lebanese and others, unified in the Pentecostal message and the Portuguese language, and the Pentecostal churches grew immensely.

McGee writes, “History of Pentecostalism cannot be properly understood apart from its missionary vision.”<sup>6</sup> Early Pentecostals believed in the imminent coming of Jesus and the power to witness included a supernatural ability to speak in new languages, which would enable them to share the Gospel with people of different nationalities quickly. Their hermeneutics were probably not correct, but both beliefs took them to different cultures and peoples and required them to adapt to the people they were trying to reach. This is the legacy they left for Pentecostals doing ministry today.

Ethnic churches like Message of Peace and their leaders must amplify their vision and mission to include their entire community, not just their particular ethnic group. This can only be done if Christians understand the mission as a whole. The discussion that follows is a reflection of the ministry and mission of the Church as a whole and the role of the ministry leader of the local church. It concludes with an application of ministry in multiethnic churches like Message of Peace.

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<sup>5</sup> Gary. B. McGee, *People of the Spirit: The Assemblies of God* (Springfield, IL: Gospel Publishing House, 2004), 61.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

## Theological Reflection of Church Ministry

These words Jesus spoke to Peter are the basis for the Church: “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:18-19). Bill Hybels writes, “The local church is the hope for the world,”<sup>7</sup> and, “The Church has an utterly unique mission to fulfill on planet Earth, and the future of our society depends, largely, on whether or not church leaders understand that mission and mobilize their congregation accordingly.”<sup>8</sup> Jesus established the Church and gave his followers authority, represented by the giving of the keys to Peter, but in order to be what Jesus intended when he built it, leaders must understand its mission in its entirety, teach its members about it and encourage them to fulfill it.

The mission of the Church is clearly defined in the 1 Peter 2:9-10, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” This passage presents a two-fold purpose. One, the Church is a community of believers called by God to worship and grow in Him; two, the Church is to declare to the world the Good News that mercy is available to everyone in the same manner that it has been shown to the followers of Christ.

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<sup>7</sup> Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 12.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

The community aspect of the church is what Bonhoeffer calls “Christian brotherhood,” and he says that it is “not an ideal, but a divine reality . . . [it] is a spiritual and not a psychic reality.”<sup>9</sup> The Bible uses many word pictures to describe this important aspect of the mission of the Church. The Church is described as a family, a body, a building, a sheepfold, etc. These metaphors suggest the interdependence of members of the church and headship of Jesus who is the Lord, Shepherd, Head and Cornerstone.

It is not ideal because it is made up of flawed individuals, sinners saved by grace. It is made up, as Kurt Fredrickson writes, “Ordinary people with issues and less than pure motives who come together as a local congregation. That is messy!”<sup>10</sup> God brings people together so they can be shaped by and learn from each other, by doing so, the revelation of the Lord of the Church is manifested to everyone in it, as Bonhoeffer eloquently writes, “The prisoner, the sick person, the Christian in exile sees in the companionship of a fellow Christian a physical sign of the gracious presence of the triune God . . . who is present in the body.”<sup>11</sup>

It is a divine and spiritual reality because in this community God is worshiped. The wonder of it all is that God has perfect worship from the angels, but he seeks for imperfect worshipers to worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is in this community of believers that spiritual disciplines are exercised to bring people closer to God and one another. Nouwen suggests three important disciplines: Contemplative prayer, confession and forgiveness, and theological reflection. He says that contemplative prayer “is the

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<sup>9</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (San Francisco: Harper Publishers, 1954), 26.

<sup>10</sup> Kurt Fredrickson, “Confessions of a Suburban Church Pastor,” <http://churchthenandnow.com/2012/05/04/confessions-of-a-suburban-church-pastor/> (accessed March 6, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 20.

discipline of dwelling in the presence of the One who keeps asking us, ‘Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?’,” that “Confession and forgiveness are the concrete forms in which we sinful people love one another,” and that “Theological reflection is reflecting on the painful and joyful realities of every day with the mind of Jesus and thereby raising human consciousness to the knowledge of God’s gentle guidance.”<sup>12</sup> These disciplines are difficult, but part of the process of being the Church, of being made more like Jesus, and it is a lifelong process.

The second aspect of the mission of the Church is clearly defined in the Great Commission: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). Prior to Jesus commanding his disciples to go, he modeled to them fulfilling his own mission. He said that he came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10) and that he was sent to restore the broken relationship between man and God. After his death and resurrection, he instituted the Church as an agent of reconciliation to the world through the proclamation of what He did in behalf of the world. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17-20: “God reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

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<sup>12</sup> Henry J.M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000), 28, 46, 68.

Ray Anderson writes, “The church is the result of this mission to the world. But, at the same time, the church is the agent of this mission as it proclaims and expounds this ‘gospel’ and penetrates into the world in partnership with God’s mission to the world. The church, as the ‘missionary people of God’, connects gospel to mission and mission to gospel.”<sup>13</sup> Leaders and members of the Church may even clearly understand the mission, but the problem is how to implement it in the context they live in. They are not only living in a postmodern era, but in a post-Christendom era. Cities are more and more diverse and people from different cultures are coming into the Church. While this is a great opportunity for multiethnic churches, it begs the question how churches are going to fulfill their mission to the world.

Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch suggest the only way this mission will be done is if the Church becomes incarnational in its ecclesiology, messianic in its spirituality and apostolic in its mode of leadership. After examining the ministry of Jesus as the basis for theological implication they say that being incarnational is to “become a genuine part of a people group without damaging the innate cultural framework that provide the people group with a sense of meaning and history,” it is to “identify with them in all ways possible without compromising the truth of the gospel itself, it is real and abiding incarnational presence among a group of people”, it is “a sending impulse rather than an extractational one,” and lastly it is a way for people “to experience Jesus on the inside of

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<sup>13</sup> Ray Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Know Press, 1997), 158.

their culture . . . and their lives because of our embodying the gospel in an incarnationally appropriate way.”<sup>14</sup>

They further suggest that the Church must adopt a spirituality that is seen in the daily lives of people in everything they do that will welcome and “integrate pleasure, passion, and instinctive drives into the faith.”<sup>15</sup> They argue that instead of dividing the sacred from the profane the Church should live its spirituality where people are in their everyday life. Last they present what they call the paradigm for an apostolic leadership based in the words of Paul in Ephesians 4. They say that this is a new kind of leadership that involves every member of the local church that unleashes again the apostolic, prophetic and evangelistic ministry to the Church, while keeping the pastoral and teaching ministries as well, but not on a group of people but in all the Church.

These authors succinctly summarized problems and provided solutions they feel the Church must undertake to fulfill its mission. Their propositions are simplistic and theoretically sound, but fail to point out the Church must also operate in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Their major argument for proposing a missional church in a post-Christendom era is a return to the values and strategies of the church in a pre-Christendom era. In Acts, the Church Jesus said he would establish upon his declaration to Peter could not begin its mission until it received the promise of the Holy Spirit. That promise included power to be witnesses everywhere they went, and the assurance of signs and wonders to confirm the word preached. As the Church received and exercised power as the disciples went into the world, they were able to fulfill the Great Commission. One

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<sup>14</sup> Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 17, 19, 40.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.



can become incarnational, but if they do not have the power of the Spirit they will not make any difference in the world and though the intention may be good, it may not be successful. The Church needs a greater partnership with the Holy Spirit. It has many programs and strategies but in many ways it has quenched the power of the Holy Spirit.

As suggested by Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro in *Culture Shift*, the Church needs transformation from the inside out. They discuss a unique culture of each local church, but the proposition is much broader. The Church, and specifically the leaders must be willing to look at themselves and see that the mission has not changed but two key elements have. First, the world around them is vastly different, and second, the Church has also changed. The world today—including the Church—has become surer of itself. Humanity has relied more and more on its own strengths, its studies, techniques to explain the unexplainable; thus, forgoing faith in sake of reason. A direct consequence has been a quenching of the Holy Spirit's power and guidance upon lives. The end result has been a church with knowledge, but little to no power.

In spite of the world's re-calibration, the basic needs of human beings remain the same and the solution with it. They are all found in the message of the Gospel. So as the Church prioritizes the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit, whether it be incarnational or attractional in its ecclesiology, messianic or dualistic in its spirituality, apostolic or hierarchical in its leadership, it will accomplish its mission. These variations will depend on the culture of the leader, the culture where the church is located, and the traditions they hold. But the essence is to be the same, which is the power that the Church receives as the Holy Spirit comes over believers and they become witnesses in their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the world.

Message of Peace embraces a theology of the church in a Pentecostal fashion and therefore sees the need for its ministry leaders to be full of the Holy Spirit, willing to be guided by Him, instructed by Him, in partnership with Him. In order for that to happen they must be baptized in the power of the Holy Spirit. Regardless of one's Christian tradition, those who believe in the words of Scripture realize there is an experience taught in the Bible, labeled in the New Testament as Baptism or the Infilling of the Holy Spirit. While some believe it is an experience apart from salvation and others the same or something that has to do with their calling, the Bible is clear that followers of Jesus must be willing to ask and receive this precious gift that is available to everyone who asks for it. Second, they must depend in the power of the Holy Spirit for guidance and empowerment to fulfill the mission of the Church. The book of Acts is clear that only when the disciples did that, were they able to carry out their mission, and though they did not have the knowledge and technology available today, in a few years they accomplished their task.

Anderson argues the church must make spiritual empowerment a mission strategy. He writes, "Pentecost has more to do with empowerment through the Spirit than being filled with the Spirit," and shows that the New Testament views the relation to the Spirit to be empowering.<sup>16</sup> If believers are filled with power and if they allow the presence of the Holy Spirit to guide and enable them as early Christians did, they are in a blessed position of having greater access to knowledge and technology. What the Church of today is desperately missing is the power that early Christians possessed. The power to

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<sup>16</sup> Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry*, 114.

assume God's mission, endure adversity, and transform the human heart and the human structure based on the resurrecting energy of the Trinity.

Nouwen points out that ministry leaders must be able to let go of the temptations to be relevant, spectacular and powerful.<sup>17</sup> This takes much more than a decision of the mind but the development of spiritual disciplines as contemplative prayer, confession and forgiveness, and also much theological reflection. He says that a ministry leader must be faced with their naked self and be willing to ask the question, "did becoming older bring me closer to Jesus?"<sup>18</sup> One needs to wrestle with his statement that the "Christian leader of the future is called to be completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self."<sup>19</sup>

Ministry leaders are entrusted with many responsibilities. God made them ambassadors and are given the privilege to take the treasure of his Gospel to the world and to take care of his church. But, as Paul reminded leaders, they are human vessels, shaped both by God and by experiences to become what God wants them to be. As Reggie McNeal writes, "Heart shaping involves both the divine and human activity. God does not unilaterally mold and sculpt passive human beings who exercise no role in scripting their life development."<sup>20</sup> Christians are shaped, as McNeal suggests, by their culture, their calling, their community, the conflicts they face and the results and experiences of the daily choices they make.

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<sup>17</sup> Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, 16

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>20</sup> Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass: 2000), xi-xii

Though culture is a powerful shaping agent, as it “creates the backdrop for all the rest of the story lines,”<sup>21</sup> what sustains leaders in ministry is to know that they have been called by God to be a ministerial leader in his church. As with many leaders, innumerable times the desire is to quit and do something simpler, but because of their divine calling, they are to use Paul’s words as their own, “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me” (2 Co. 9:16b-17). The calling is more than what leaders do but what they become for Christ. Ministry leaders must be careful not just to do the right things, but also live the right life and forget that they cannot be apostles if they do not first become disciples. As Nouwen admonishes when he says,

It is not enough for the priests and ministers of the future to be moral people, well trained, eager to help their fellow humans, and able to respond creatively to the burning issues of their time. All of that is very valuable and important, but it is not the heart of Christian leadership. The central question is, Are the leaders of the future truly men and women of God, people with ardent desire to dwell in God’s presence, to listen to God’s voice, to look at God’s beauty, to touch God’s incarnate Word, and to taste fully God’s infinite goodness?”<sup>22</sup>

God also shapes his disciples through community. Leaders have spent much of their time and effort studying in order to teach principles to their people. They understand that as ministry leaders God called them to bring their community of believers to a new level of Christian maturity. They see themselves as a resource to the people, but forget that community is just as much of a blessing to them as they are to their people. Suddenly they are faced with powerful statements as, “Leadership, for a large part means to be led,” and, “Ministers and priests are also called to be full members of their communities, are

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., xii.

<sup>22</sup> Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, 30.

accountable to them and need their affection and support, and are called to minister with their whole being, including, their wounded selves”<sup>23</sup> Such statements force ministry leaders to realize they must reevaluate their concepts and values in light of the legacy Jesus, his disciples and many great church leaders throughout history left for them.

Julie Gorman once said that as we mature and grow older, we view a different part of the face of God.<sup>24</sup> This process of maturity is part of God’s training and self-revelation. Gorman encouraged students to write and share with their peers a spiritual autobiography. As they did, they came to realize that God was active at all times and He still is shaping his children and making them more like him. A ministry leader is called to allow him to mature him and to know him more, as Paul writes, “That I may know Him” (Philippians 3:10a).

The church and in particular ministry leaders are called to be people of prayer. Although leaders may know the proper place of theology in ministry, Nouwen reminds, “The original meaning of the word ‘theology’ was union with God in prayer.”<sup>25</sup> No matter what leaders do, if they do not understand this principle they will fail as ministry leaders. Prayer has been the key to unleash the power and direction of God in the lives of Christian leaders throughout Bible times and church history. No one was able to accomplish his or her missions without communion with God in prayer. Jesus no doubt modeled this principle and ministry leaders must not only live it but model for those they

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 50, 57.

<sup>24</sup> Julie Gorman, lecture in *Adult Formation and Discipleship* (Menlo Park, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary), 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 30.

lead as well, as Nouwen wrote, “A Christian leader is called to help people to hear that voice and so be comforted and consoled.”<sup>26</sup>

Ministry leaders are called to do theological thinking in a way that is relevant to the people God has called them to minister. Peter wrote, “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). This is the responsibility of the ministry leader. To do so, they must learn to do it in a way that will enable them to minister to people God has called them to and not only use theology as a basis for learning. Anderson proposes, “Theology must be as contextual as it is metaphysical, and it must be as visual as it is cerebral. Another way of putting it is to say that theological reflection must be done in the context of the Spirit’s ministry in the world. Theological reflection must also be a ‘way of seeing’ as well as a way of thinking.”<sup>27</sup>

They must be able to be people of the Word. They are to look at the biblical text and faithfully read and interpret it. They have been trained to look at the biblical text and know what it was saying when it was written. However, it must be done with an eye in the present for the practical application of the truths of the Bible, is much more important than mere knowledge. As Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson write, “Theology directs us to the narrative that weaves its way through the pages of the Bible . . . [it] also directs us to

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 68-69.

<sup>27</sup> Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry*, 118.

the so-called didactic, or instructive, parts of the Scripture. Theology explores the material with an eye toward Christian living in the present.”<sup>28</sup>

Theology must be done with culture in mind, the culture that shaped the leader and the culture that God called to minister in. McNeal wrote about culture as a shaping factor but also to know where one stands is “to understand and connect with the culture that God has placed in one’s ministry post.”<sup>29</sup> To know the culture is more than being able to understand the culture, but to be able to take biblical truths to the culture in order to answer the questions they are asking in a way they can understand.

Anderson sheds light on this concept when he writes about the *praxis* of the Spirit as liberation for ministry. He says that *praxis* is “action, taking into account the *telos*, or goal and purpose, of the act. In Biblical theology, it is not the *telos* of a historical or human process that constitutes the goal of praxis, but the *eschaton*, or final revelation of God in history through the coming of Christ.”<sup>30</sup> He used the episode of Peter’s vision and his ministry in the house of Cornelius to show that there was a paradigm shift in Peter’s theology through his understanding of the context and the visual perspective of the experience God gave him. That liberated him to minister to the gentiles and to bring the Gospel to a different culture against his prior better judgment. He also writes that the *praxis* of the Spirit is based on an earlier account or mention in Scripture for the basis of this approach to the application of biblical truths. Anderson concludes, “As nearly as I can see, for every case in which eschatological preference was exercised by the Spirit in

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<sup>28</sup> Stanly J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Who Needs Theology?* (Downer Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 94.

<sup>29</sup> McNeal, *A Work of Heart*, 78.

<sup>30</sup> Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry*, 117.

the New Testament church, there was a biblical antecedent for what appeared to be revolutionary and new.”<sup>31</sup> This safeguards the minister to not justify everything that claims to be done in the name of the Spirit.

This concept frees leaders to minister to the needs of the culture. The Church and the leaders face in this culture issues such as divorce and remarriage, homosexuality, adultery, pain, suffering and diversity. Ministry leaders must look at these issues from a theological point of view. They are to understand what Scripture has to say about these issues, they are to look at their church tradition to help them respond but also look at the *praxis* of the Spirit, his actions today in order to apply biblical truths to these situations.

This theological reflection of the mission of the Church and the role of the ministry leader is important for every church and every leader and it certainly applies for leaders of churches in transition like Message of Peace. Scripture clearly establishes antecedents for cultural adaptation and, using Anderson’s term, “the *praxis* of ministry,” at least at Message of Peace and churches alike, points toward a multiethnic ministry. The opportunities for growth and ministry are tremendous and the alternative is to limit the growth and to cease to exist in the not too distant future. Message of Peace and her leaders understand this and already began the process of transition, as it will be next discussed in Part Three.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 124.



PART THREE  
MINISTRY STRATEGY

## CHAPTER SIX

### AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY: GOALS AND PLANS FOR ADAPTIVE CHANGE

John Maxwell writes, “There is nothing more difficult to undertake, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success than introducing change.”<sup>1</sup> Peter Drucker states, “Change is not a threat. It’s an opportunity.”<sup>2</sup> Leith Anderson writes, “Every system needs a renewal . . . those that are sick need to be healed, those that are healthy will stay that way only through ongoing renewal,” and “Renewing organizations accept the inevitability of change.”<sup>3</sup>

Adaptive work is never easy; it mandates new habits and a new outlook into the way things are done. Message of Peace Church has been doing the same thing for many years and, for the most part, has been successful. Heifetz writes that, “Adaptive work is required when our deeply held beliefs are challenged, when the values that made us successful become less relevant, and when legitimate yet competing perspectives

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<sup>1</sup> John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leader Within You* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993), 53.

<sup>2</sup> Peter F. Drucker, *Managing the Nonprofit Organization: Principles and Practices* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Leith Anderson, *Dying for Change* (Bloomington, IL: Bethany House, 1998), 122, 136.

emerge.”<sup>4</sup> Message of Peace leaders must plan for the future of their congregation and usher in a process to implement this adaptive change. As stated earlier, in order to implement these changes a task force, chaired by the senior pastor, was formed.<sup>5</sup>

The first responsibility of this task force was to clearly define the church position in regards to the illegal status of some of its members. A Christian church is required to live by the principles of Scripture. While the church does not encourage anyone to break the law, leadership knows that people in the congregation are doing just that remaining in the US as undocumented immigrants. Many members overstayed their visa or entered the country illegally, and until immigration reform is enacted, which members hope and pray it will, leadership faces a difficult ethical and moral dilemma. On the other hand, it is practically impossible for many to go back to Brazil due to various factors outlined in previous chapters, none greater than their children having been born or adopted into the US as their mother country. This is a challenge that must be understood and confronted.

For instance, there is the story of Marcos, a present member of the church. Marcos came to the US as a young man to study and look for a better future.<sup>6</sup> A son of German immigrants to Brazil it was his family heritage to try new things in a new country, so he came. He lived on the east coast for years working in a restaurant but because of his entrepreneurial spirit was quickly promoted to general manager. He married a Brazilian woman and after their marriage opened their first restaurant. They

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<sup>4</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz and Donald L. Laurie, “The Work of Leadership,” *Harvard Business Review* (January – February 1997), 124.

<sup>5</sup> The members of the task force are the church board and the pastoral staff of the church. The senior pastor chairs it.

<sup>6</sup> Pseudonym.

were young and became addicted to drugs and alcohol, which led them to lose their business. They eventually jumped from Hawaii to South Florida, where they found God, had their first child and drastically changed their life. Shortly thereafter they opened their second restaurant. After a couple of years this business also failed and they moved to San Francisco, living next to a building that Message of Peace used temporarily in 2000. They joined Message of Peace during its time there. Marcos and his family lived in a one-bedroom apartment with his family and because he was unemployed, he volunteered much of his time to cleaning the church and serving in any way he could. During this period, the senior pastor had an opportunity to get to know and pastor Marcos in finding God's purpose for him.

Today, Marcos and his wife have three children, all born in America. They have lived here for twenty consecutive years. They own two prosperous restaurants in the San Francisco Bay-area with revenues well over three million dollars. They pay their taxes, employ many members of the church and are very involved in church activities. Their eldest is now a teenager and a leader within the New Generation. Though she speaks Portuguese very well, she cannot read or write in Portuguese. They struggle with their illegality and it is a constant prayer request. Marcos and his wife could sell their business and live very well in Brazil, but their children would experience significant culture shock. Moreover, they too have made the United States their home and believe unwaveringly that it is God's will for them to remain here.

After reading Anderson's *The Soul of Ministry*, the senior pastor shared with the task force Anderson's arguments on "the *praxis* of the Spirit as liberation for ministry." Anderson's central argument is that theology in ministry should be grounded in the action

of the Holy Spirit (the *praxis*) in the present century and situation, taking into account the goal and purpose of the act, as earlier described. Anderson argues that the eschatological preference of the Holy Spirit can be implemented without causing disorder and confusion in the Church in order to minister in special situations as long as biblical precedent is found in Scripture.

There were instances in Scripture when the law of the land was not followed for a greater cause, as for example when Rahab hid the spies, and when she was asked about it, she lied in order to save them. Her attitude is even praised by the writer of Hebrews (“by faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient” 11:31). The task force is required to further study the situation in light of Scripture and the present need in order to minister effectively to the needs of many of the members of this church in an ethical, moral and scriptural way.

The second ongoing responsibility of the task force is to assess the adaptive changes that must be made in the church in order to assure its survival and continual numerical growth. Heifetz and Laurie in their article “The Work of Leadership” propose some principles for leading adaptive work and—since what Message of Peace is planning to do is adaptive change—their principles are used as an outline for what is proposed.

The first principle suggested is a phrase they coined of “get[ting] on the balcony.” That is when the leader becomes reflective and able to assess the situation at hand. Max DePree writes, “The first responsibility of the leader is to define reality.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, the responsibility of assessing the situation of adaptive work falls on the leader’s shoulders. The leader will not be able to do that if he or she cannot reflect on the situation by

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<sup>7</sup> Max DePree, *Leadership is an Art* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1989), 11.

looking from the outside-in. Message of Peace's senior pastor has been undergoing this for the last few years by taking a range of diverse classes in the Doctor of Ministry program that provide varying approaches, attending seminars on change and leadership, by interviewing pastors who have gone through similar changes, and most importantly by reflecting on the stories of young people who have been part of the silent exodus at Message of Peace.

Take for example the story of Mary.<sup>8</sup> Mary came to the San Jose church when it began in the late-1980s. She came to church with her mother and two sisters. She came from a broken home where the father (a non-Christian) mistreated them and divorced her mother. The church served as a refuge, but quickly became more of a family. She was around nine when she came to church and though very young, she captured the attention of everyone because of her voice and charisma. She was fluent in both Portuguese and English, but by the time she was a teenager, found it much easier to express herself in English. Message of Peace did not address the English-language need within its walls and Mary decided it was best for her to attend an all-American church. At this new church, she continued to struggle, as her needs were not fully met because of her hybrid identity. She got involved with the wrong crowd, spent a short time in prison, got involved with drugs and stopped attending church altogether for many years. It is only recently that she was pulled back into church, now a mother of two and in a struggling marriage of her own with many emotional scars. She says she is back home and is concerned for the future of her children as she raises them at Message of Peace. Stories like hers are used to define the reality of the church if a transition does not take place.

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<sup>8</sup> Pseudonym.

The second step suggested by Heifetz and Laurie is to identify challenges. The church is healthy and vibrant, but its future is unclear. Despite the dramatic reduction of Brazilian immigration, there are many children, teens and youth (the New Generation) in the church. They are the future of the congregation, but only if it can transition to meet their needs. One of the primary obstacles the church faces is resistance of the present congregation. At the first mention of an English service, one member protested: “We have paid for the building and all the bills all these years. The people who you are trying to reach never gave a dollar to purchase and maintain our building.” When the English service began in 2001, the congregation never supported the service and when that congregation left for San Mateo many members were relieved to have the building all for themselves. In truth, only parents of the New Generation back the effort because they want something done for their children, as long as this something does not hinder their present church experience.

Another challenge is that in order to reach this New Generation present leadership needs to learn how this culture thinks. The senior pastor must be part of the process of change and lead the congregation in this transition. In order to do so, he needs to learn new ways of ministering to a younger generation raised in the US with needs that differ from their parents; this is a steep learning curve.

Heifetz and Laurie write the next step is to regulate distress, which is an attempt to strike a delicate balance between having people feel the need to change and having them feel overwhelmed by change. Also, the need of having a holding environment, a psychological space that is both supportive and nudges them forward. This is currently being done as the pastor meets regularly with the parents of the New Generation and

shares with them stories like Mary's and shows them that the whole church needs to be concerned for the spiritual lives of this new generation. At the same time, leadership must assure the congregation that the work in the Portuguese language will not be neglected; on the contrary it will continue to grow and be vibrant. The church currently is going through a spiritual renewal and being used to show the congregation it is important to continue to be a healthy body, and part of this renewal is a need to evangelize people outside of the Brazilian community, to others who share similar back stories in San Francisco. The spiritual renewal is a catalyst for mass evangelism that will prepare the hearts of people to accept changes.

The next step by Heifetz and Laurie is pacing. As stated, Message of Peace has been in existence for twenty-eight years under leadership of the same pastor, reaching primarily the Brazilian community. The leadership has made steps to change its focus to reach other ethnicities and to provide a bridge to the future by adding services in Spanish, adding "international to its name," planting an English-speaking church in San Mateo, hiring a non-Brazilian couple as youth leaders and starting a new English service. Progress has been slow, but steady and implementation of this plan takes time. The task force however is committed to lead the church into a plan that permits its survival and growth. The implementation process will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

Return to the renovated building provided the task force a great opportunity to introduce changes that would help the congregation adapt to this transition. One of these changes was a new English service. At the time, the Portuguese service was held on Sunday mornings. The congregation met at 10 am for breakfast, which served as a time of fellowship, and the service began at 10:30. There was a youth service in English in the



evening and this youth service would ultimately be changed to Wednesday evenings per request of the new youth pastors.

This English service would not be a youth service though its target would continue to be steered towards younger people and would begin at 9 am, ending at 10:30, and would have a brief transition period where both congregations could mingle during breakfast, or brunch. The task force relied on the steps provided by Charles Arn *How to Start a New Service*, to implement the change and strongly believed this service would be vital to the transition. Since this was and is a vital initial component to the church transition, what follows is the rationale used to implement, the chapter headings of Arn's book were used as an outline for the plan, which began roughly two years ago.

Arn begins with the question, "Why start a new service?" As stated, there is an age group of the church not being reached in other services provided by the church. This determination was made after discussing with their leaders, interviewing a sample of this group and observing their response as they attended services. This service provided an opportunity for the church to reach their friends and other potential individuals. When they were asked the major reason they did not invite their friends to come to church, the overwhelming consensus was basically that their friends spoke English and that they would like songs that would be more suitable to them.

Another reason to start this service was providing a bridge for the future of the church. The task force believed and still does that the present situation in the country and community gives the church approximately ten years of existence and that to assure its survival and continued growth, the church has to change the main spoken language in the principle services to English. This service provides a tool for this transition to take place.

Initially, it would reach pre-teens, teens, young people, and English-speaking members.

Arn discusses next the role the senior pastor is to play. Message of Peace's lead pastor has tenure of twenty-eight years and is respected by members and leadership. He writes, "The pastor's role is critical in successfully adding a new service," that he must have a conviction that this is God's will, be willing to count the cost, and able to be fully involved in the implementation and continuity of this service.<sup>9</sup> In this particular case it was not only a different language, but the ability to speak to an entirely different culture as this age group has a unique blend of different cultures, aside from the fact that he is fifty years of age.

Maxwell says, "Everything rises and falls on leadership," thus his role as leader of this church is key in this transition, as he leads the church through adaptive change.<sup>10</sup> DePree writes, "Leaders are accountable for the continuous renewal of the organization," and the pastor needs to keep pointing out to the church the needs of renewal of strategy to assure its future survival.<sup>11</sup> The challenge he faces is to develop first in himself and then in those around him (e.g. his staff, associate pastors, etc.) different styles of leadership in order to achieve a better success in the changes proposed. Daniel Goleman in the article "Leadership That Gets Results" writes about different leadership styles, one of them is the authoritative, which is certainly the senior pastor's style, can be good in the beginning of the change as a new vision needs to be in place and clear direction is a must. But Goleman adds, "Leaders with the best results do not rely on only one leadership style;

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Arn, *How to Start a New Service* (Grand Rapids, MI: Barker Books, 1997), 41.

<sup>10</sup> Maxwell, *Developing the Leaders Within You*, ii.

<sup>11</sup> DePree, *Leadership Jazz*, 31.

they use most of them in a given week—seamlessly and in different measure—depending on the . . . situation.”<sup>12</sup> Thus he needs to incorporate a more democratic and coaching style. This will not come easy, and discipline will be required on his part. Not only will he need to incorporate these styles, he has to develop them within the staff and board.

The current pastoral staff of Message of Peace is made up of the senior pastor, two full-time associate pastors, and three lay pastors—who are leaders of the satellite churches. The challenge is leading these pastors to embrace the same challenging changes the senior pastor is undergoing. Wilfred Drath and Charles Palus write, “Leadership is happening when an individual called a leader acts in some way to change the behavior or attitudes of others called followers.”<sup>13</sup> One of the senior pastor’s greatest hurdles will be to influence change in these pastors since they are the ones, besides him, who have most influence in the congregation.

Richard Chait, in *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards*, discusses different types of boards and two of them are specifically relevant for Message of Peace since they describe the model of board the church presently has and the one it aims to have. Using Chait’s terminology, the board of the church is a Type I board operating completely in a fiduciary mode. This means board members have served for many years and easily win re-election. Message of Peace’s board members consist of a second generation Portuguese from the San Jose satellite church, three Brazilian members from the South San Francisco congregation and an American married to a Brazilian who

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<sup>12</sup> Daniel Goleman, “Leadership That Gets Results,” *Harvard Business Review* 2:2 (March-April 2000): 79–80.

<sup>13</sup> Wilfred Drath and Charles Palus, *Making Common Sense: Leadership as Meaning-making in Community of Practice* (Greenboro, SC: Center for Creating Leadership, 2001), 1.

attends in South San Francisco but frequently visits the satellite churches. Because of the senior pastor's style of leadership and his tenure, the primary function of the board is oversight, especially over finances of the church and ensuring the pastor and staff are acting in a trustworthy and effective manner. However as Chait points out, "Type I governance is essential, but the Type I board is problematic."<sup>14</sup>

After taking a class and reading Chait's book, the senior pastor introduced the board to different types of boards and explained the difference in responsibilities. He told them it is his desire to move the board to Type III governance, which is the generative mode. This type of organization requires the board to think creatively about the future as they face an ambiguous situation, their future is also uncertain but this is what they need to accomplish the adaptive changes required for the congregation. In this mode the board joins the senior pastor in managing meaning within the church. It is imperative every board member be involved in making sense of the current situation, because as Chait writes, "It is meaning that enables understanding and action in ambiguous situations."<sup>15</sup>

In order to achieve that, it is not only necessary to move the board to a different type of governance but the church as a whole needs to move to a different frame of leadership and operation. Lee Bolman and Terrance Deal propose four different frames: structural, human resources, political and symbolic frame. Much of the work from the senior pastor is done from a symbolic frame of reference: his main job is to find meaning and legitimacy for the theological truths he teaches the congregation from the pulpit. Everything else he does is also categorized as structural frame, such as formal roles,

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<sup>14</sup> Richard P. Chait, *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2005), 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

policies and hierarchies.

Bolman and Deal suggest, “Reframing requires the ability to think about situations in more than one way,” and the senior pastor is convinced the type of adaptive changes the church faces requires them to operate more from the symbolic and human resources frames.<sup>16</sup> The symbolic frame, because the whole church must find meaning and legitimacy for proposed changes. The human resource frame, because they need to adapt the church to new people they want to reach and this requires new relationships to be built not only between leaders and members, but, between the “old” and “new” membership. Leaders have to devote much of their efforts to learn a new culture, oversee the implementation of these changes, beginning with the addition of the English service, and educate the congregation about this plan. All of this while knowing, as Arn suggests, “It will take approximately two years for a new service to become established and normal part of [the] church’s ministry,” this has been true as will be discussed.<sup>17</sup>

The next step Arn suggests is getting the church in sync with leadership’s aims and supportive of the vision. The strategy being used by the task force is to communicate the need through different levels of leadership and people of influence within the church. The first step for Message of Peace was holding a meeting with leaders of this age group, outlining the group’s needs. Leaders pledged their full support to this plan. A second meeting took place with current church staff, including worship leaders, music director, musicians and other staff personnel. Again, needs and objectives were clearly conveyed along with a plan to overcome challenges. This group was supportive of the plan, but had

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<sup>16</sup> Lee G. Bolman and Terrance E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership* (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 6.

<sup>17</sup> Arn, *How to Start a New Service*, 58.

concerns as to how the plan would be implemented, and some of the points discussed here were shared with them.

A third meeting took place with parents of the New Generation. The senior pastor divided the presentation into three points: The challenge of this age group, the challenge of the parents and the challenge of the church. The complex world these children live in and their challenges to adapt to a new culture were explained to parents, while keeping aspects of the culture of their parents and how they usually end up with a culture that is totally different than their parents. It was also presented the difficulty the parents share in “learning” the culture of their children and the perils of only trying to assume their household has one culture - theirs. Lastly, it was explained how the church and leadership have been trying to minister to spiritual needs, and the need to make changes in order not to lose them, but take active steps to minister to this age group so they will play a major role in the church now and in the future. Parents were fully supportive of the idea, the implementation and continuity of this plan. Further meetings took place with the teens and youth who are the chief targets of this service, with parents and staff. The final step was a presentation to the entire congregation who received it well, mainly because of the senior pastor’s assurance there would be no change in the Portuguese service; on the contrary, the pastor would continue to find ways to always improve it.

Next, Arn says it is important to determine what kind of service it will be. He asks two questions: “What kinds of service do you want and what kind of service do they want?” The task force studied these questions by doing the following: first, they had to determine that the initial target group would be multicultural, Christian youth and young adults (18-35). The pace of the service was to move quicker with variety and spontaneity.

The music would be contemporary to their age (Christian Rock and spontaneous Worship) and a new band and worship team was formed to lead worship. Also, they determined the service would last an hour.

Second, the task force found the need to conduct adequate research on this target audience. They did so by taking the following steps: the pastors began reading books and magazine articles that helped them educate themselves on things, such as the type of music they listen to and their culture in general. A survey was conducted in meetings with the task force in order to listen to perceived needs. Finally, contacts were made with two different churches in the area that went through similar changes, to learn from their experiences. These churches are from different cultures and denominational backgrounds (because of the unique situation of the church, no other Brazilian congregation or Assembly of God church in the area was found similar to Message of Peace). One is a United Pentecostal Church with all their services in Spanish, and today, though they still have Spanish services, their main service is in English, and is now multicultural with a strong Hispanic majority. The second is a Chinese Baptist Church that started having services only in Cantonese (the original members were from Hong Kong) and today their main services are in English as they are also multicultural with a strong Chinese majority.

Arn writes it is important to determine when and where to meet. After looking at different possibilities, the task force concluded the best time was to meet on Sunday at 9 am using the main sanctuary. This would cause very little interruption and change to the Brazilian congregation, while also allowing an opportunity for both congregations to meet and integrate during breakfast (after one service and prior to another).

The next step was to design the service. Arn writes it is important to understand the whole service as the message the church is trying to convey. He says, “The goal of your new service is to communicate, practical, applicable spiritual truths so participants incorporate these insights into their lives.”<sup>18</sup> The task force determined this would be the most difficult and most challenging aspect of the plan, since this would not only determine the kind of service they would have, but would also promote life-changing ideas to the congregants.

They began with the recruitment and development of a worship planning team. This team was made up of the lay worship leader, who was a student at a local Bible College, the church worship leader, music director, band leader, audio-visual engineer and drama coordinator. The task of this team was to identify service themes, prevalent attitudes among the target group and convey it through music, drama and multimedia. This team presented a proposal to be used in the service, which was adopted by the task force. The senior pastor wanted the same five purposes established for Message of Peace be the purposes that guided this new service.<sup>19</sup> The challenge was how each purpose would be communicated in the service. This was done through a constant reminder of the mission statement, which is accomplished by having it displayed in different areas of the church and also in every opening slide of the presentation used on the large screens. Also, a series of messages would be preached on each of the five purposes of the church every year, especially the first three years.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>19</sup> Message of Peace Purpose Statement is: We are a community of believers who exist To Share the Good News of Christ, To Bring People to Worship God, To Grow According to His Word, To Have Fellowship With One Another, and To Serve Others.



The final step Arn discusses is getting people to come. The task force determined this service would commence as soon as the church moved back to the new building and the worship team and the leadership were ready. The early estimates were around sixty people in attendance, which included the New Generation, their parents and some English-speaking members. The first year is devoted to implementing the service, the second and third years there would be a strong emphasis to have people commit to this service as their main service as well as to invite their friends and family. After three years they would advertise in the community through direct mail, telephone and newspaper ads.

Stephen Machia writes, “The key to effective worship is the healthiest setting is engaging people’s hearts, minds, souls, and strength. To be engaged in worship involves varying style and forms.”<sup>20</sup> The implementation of this service required the church to conduct the service differently than how they conducted the Brazilian congregation in order to engage the people who would be attending - there had to be a difference present. Presently, the church is in the middle of its third year and a discussion on the evaluation of the implementation of the service will be discussed in the next chapter.

The next step Heifetz and Laurie suggest is giving the work back to the people as the leader constantly constructs situations where the people themselves have to devise strategies for adapting. The church assessed the parents of the New Generation are the key link since they are the first ones to benefit as the church assures future ministry for their children, therefore they are the first ones to carry the burden of the responsibility for

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<sup>20</sup> Stephen A. Machia, *Becoming a Healthy Church: Ten Trait of a Vital Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 44.

adapting. A process began by including a select group of parents in preparation of the service and also for the ongoing youth ministry with the newly hired youth pastors.

A story to illustrate this is that of Roberta and her family.<sup>21</sup> They have been members of the church for approximately ten years. She and her husband have two daughters who are involved in the church. When they first came to the church, their daughters were twelve and five years old, had recently immigrated from Brazil and felt at home at Message of Peace. As the daughters immersed themselves in school they adopted the English language and American culture. Though Roberta's husband has not kept up with learning English (more than likely due to his work schedule and responsibilities), Roberta joined her daughters in making this nation her home by learning English. When the youth pastors were hired, she was asked to assist them in communicating with other parents and helping them get situated in the new ministry. As she began this process, she saw the need of the ministry to the new generation and realized the need for this transition, and often contributes ideas. Parents such as Roberta play a key role, and are slowly involving themselves more.

Message of Peace has recently begun an evangelistic thrust to the Brazilian community as part of the fulfillment of the first purpose, which is to share the Good News of Christ. Two mothers of church teens recently requested to the senior pastor for materials in English and ideas for the new service. They said, "We believe in a great growth in the Brazilian congregation but now we see that the English service will be the most important and long lasting as our children will be able to bring their non-Brazilian friends to church and we will be able to evangelize beyond the Brazilian community."

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<sup>21</sup> Pseudonym.

The last principle for adaptive change by Heifetz and Laurie is to protect voices of leadership from below. They write, “Giving a voice to all people is the foundation of an organization that is willing to experiment and learn.”<sup>22</sup> In the present church culture, decisions are made from top-to-bottom, this is not an easy part of adaptive change. The senior pastor has to relinquish some of his authority and delegate to others in leadership. Previous experiences within the church saw too many ideas surface that led to disarray, but these are steps that must be taken in order for a successful transition. A key insight by Heifetz that has influenced the senior pastor has been: “The voices from below are usually not as articulate a one would wish . . . but buried inside a poorly packaged interjection may lie an important intuition that needs to be teased out and considered. To toss it out for its bad timing, lack of clarity, or seeming unreasonableness is to lose potentially valuable information and discourage a potential leader in the organization.”<sup>23</sup>

Starting a new service is just one of many things needed to transition Message of Peace from an ethnic church to a multiethnic, English-speaking congregation, though no doubt is one of the most important initial steps. Other proposals for change in the next five years include a revision of the mission statement. This mission statement was revised and implemented only seven years ago by the senior pastor and leadership. However the changes already described require a revision in order to make it operational and in line with the present reality and future direction of the church. Drucker writes, “The mission is forever and may be divinely ordained; the goals are temporary.”<sup>24</sup> It is possible that as

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<sup>22</sup> Heifetz and Laurie, “The Work of Leadership,” 129.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 129 – 130.

<sup>24</sup> Drucker, *Managing the Nonprofit Organization*, 5.

their goals change, their mission will change to reflect these new goals. They must wait for this new service to be in full operation before revising the mission statement. Along with the revision of the mission statement, a proposal to change or revise the name of the church may be considered as part of the revision. They must be open to all options while holding firm on their core beliefs of the church and the ministry. In preparation for the possibility of these changes, Message of Peace leadership already began to ask questions to raise awareness of the direction they need to take. Using Scott Cormode's table from, *Leading with Cultural Resources*, Message of Peace is trying to define itself in the present to change for the future.<sup>25</sup>

The first question has to do with what holds Message of Peace's community together. First and foremost, Message of Peace is an evangelical church. Second, it is Pentecostal and presently it is a Brazilian congregation, that despite growing and thriving, sees the need to transition to assure continual growth and future survival.

The second question is Message of Peace's ideology, the ideas that guide the group's actions and the present mission statement that clearly guides the church in five areas: evangelism, worship, discipleship, fellowship and service. Next are the norms of Message of Peace and the church's core values. The church stresses family values and personal integrity and its core values are faithfulness, excellence and spirituality as a group (family or church body) and individuals.

The general goals of Message of Peace are clearly stated in their statement of purpose, which gives them direction for ministry. Nevertheless as they lead this church through adaptive change, the goals become more specific. Not only do they want to share

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<sup>25</sup> Scott Cormode, *Making Spiritual Sense* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 70.

the Good News of Christ, but also they want to share it beyond the Brazilian community, reaching different ethnicities that have English as their common language. They want to help this people worship God and need to understand that though worship is their goal, the way they achieve it will be different than what they have right now because people will be different. The same is true for the discipleship aspect of their purpose statement and the next two purposes—fellowship and service, will be key to the growth and integration of the different congregations and people.

Cormode writes about narrative and symbol, to find a unifying theme or story that holds all together. Message of Peace is presently an ethnic congregation and as changes take place it will probably become multiethnic. Apart from an act of God, the church will not attract the typical Anglo family rather it will be a place with an international flavor. First, second and third generation immigrants will make up the membership along with people who have traveled to or are in contact with the countries represented in the membership. Thus the church is and will continue be an extended family to those who come, but are now the Family of God. That is an important unique aspect of the church. Other unifying themes are their beliefs and values. They are evangelical and Pentecostal, and in order to be one of them, one has to have a conversion experience with God, be baptized and willing to seek an experience with the Holy Spirit. They value faithfulness, excellence and a life of devotion to God.

Another more immediate proposal was hiring a full-time associate pastor for the Brazilian congregation and elevating the role of the new youth pastor to associate/youth pastor for the English congregation. Each associate helps the senior pastor with pastoral duties of the respective congregations, leaving him to focus his efforts on teaching and

preaching, as well as leading the church through adaptive changes. Besides these two staff members, the staff currently consists of a full-time music minister to the Brazilian congregation, a part-time music minister to the English congregation, a part-time administrator, and volunteers that run the audio-visual department, play in the band, and so forth. Most of these volunteers receive a small compensation for their work.

The task force also proposes the sale of the building in San Jose and transfer of that satellite church to a rented space. With the sale of the building, resources should be used for different staffs needing to accomplish these changes. It also proposes to double the contribution to pastors of the satellite churches, as finances become available, allowing them more time to pastor these churches as they understand this is a vital time to do outreach in these areas before the Brazilian community drastically decreases.

Lastly, the task force proposes that four-to-five years into the transition, efforts should be made to sell the building and relocate to a new building, which is to be built or purchased in an area that will be more suitable to the direction the church is going with ample land and parking. A study needs to be conducted to determine where to build or to relocate to and that when this should be undertaken.

Ammerman writes, “No congregation that adapted did so without conflict and no church without conflict adapted.”<sup>26</sup> The adaptive changes required for Message of Peace will cause conflict and to a certain degree some pain and discomfort, but as a surgeon becomes better with every surgery, changes will make them a better church and act as an inspiration for many ethnic churches that need the same transition to a multiethnic church.

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<sup>26</sup> Nancy Tatom Ammerman, “Skills and Competencies for Managing External and Internal Environment” (paper presented to the National Seminar on Religious Leadership, Yale University, January 22, 1979).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS AND EVALUATION

This chapter discusses the implementation and evaluation undertaking cultural adaptation at Message of Peace. This is part of a transition to a multiethnic church, as proposed in the previous chapter.

In Collins' *Good to Great*, the author writes of what he calls "The Stockdale Paradox," this is when the leadership of an organization on one hand accepts the facts of their reality and on the other hand, maintains an unwavering faith to move forward in spite of the facts.<sup>1</sup> The name refers to Admiral Jim Stockdale, a high-ranking United States officer, who was a prisoner of war at the height of the Vietnam War. Collins interviewed Stockdale years later and in their conversation discovered this paradox. When asked whether he thought he would not get out, Stockdale told Collins: "I never lost faith in the end of the story,' he said. 'I never doubted not only that I would not get out, but also that I would prevail in the end and turn the experience into the defining event of my life.'"<sup>2</sup> Later when Stockdale was asked who did not make it out, his answer

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<sup>1</sup> Collins, *Good to Great*, 83.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

was “the optimists,” which intrigued Collins in light of the earlier statement. Stockdale paused and told Collins: “This is a very important lesson. You must not confuse faith that you will prevail in the end—which you can never afford to lose—with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever that might be.”<sup>3</sup> The implementation of the transition of Message of Peace Church from an ethnic to a multiethnic congregation requires exactly that.

The task force began by looking at the church’s position in regards to the illegal status of some of its members. Before the last election that reelected President Obama, there was little-to-no public support for immigration reform in this country due chiefly to the high rate of unemployment and a stuttering economy. However, the last election showed the power of the Hispanic vote and both parties now agree that there must be an immigration reform in order to address the security of the border and the fate of over eleven million undocumented people living in the US. There has been a rekindling of hope for immigrants due to the resurfacing of congressional bills to assist those raised from an early age in the American school system (Dream Act), by the president’s latest executive decision to not deport these individuals and the immigration reform proposals currently being debated both in the Senate and in the House. Though the passage of the Dream Act and immigration reform are not yet a reality, these are certainly steps towards an optimistic future for the new generation of Message of Peace. New generation parents remain steadfast in their hope and do everything they can to be rooted in the country for the sake of their children and be good citizens of their community. The congregation is committed to be united in prayer and encourage those who can vote to keep pressure on

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



their representatives to pass an immigration reform.

The second responsibility of the task force was to define and implement strategies of cultural adaptation that will guide the leaders and members of Message of Peace to the transition. The strategies would be made up of three steps: helping them realize the fact that the Brazilian community is decreasing; educating them on the multicultural/multiethnic principles outlined in this paper; and finally developing a plan and a time line for the transition. The plan would also consist of three components: the start of a new service; the hiring of a diverse staff; and a gradual inclusion of the other ethnic congregations in this service, which will emerge as a new multiethnic congregation at Message of Peace and hopefully will become the primary congregation in the future. During this time, every effort will be made not to weaken the Brazilian congregation as it is the church's long-time backbone—they must be folded into the long-term goal of the church. The time line would be of about five years.

The first half of the first year would be devoted to preparation in prayer. Leaders took seriously the words of Jesus when he said, "Apart from me you can do nothing," (Jo 15:5) and began seeking God for wisdom and favor. This was done with much success as Message of Peace already has a strong focus in prayer, having daily prayer in the morning at the church and a prayer meeting one evening. The senior pastor led the task force to pray daily for the transition, the congregation was constantly reminded of the need for change and encouraged to pray for God's guidance.

In the first year, the project would be introduced to different levels of leadership and finally to the congregation. The vision for the transition, which included the first two steps of the strategy, began with the senior pastor, who shared constantly with the board

and staff who make up the task force. In the beginning there was resistance from some staff and board members. The senior pastor relied on five principles from William Ury's book *Getting Past No*; they are: "don't react, go to the balcony (see the situation objectively); don't argue, step to the other side (try to see the situation from their perspective); don't reject, reframe; don't push, build them a golden bridge; and don't escalate: use power to educate."<sup>4</sup> These principles guided the task force to be in harmony to implement this project. It also prepared them to face the same resistance from the congregation. The plan was then presented to parents of the New Generation who readily embraced it; there was no resistance from this group, though not all of them saw it as something for them, just for their children.

It was important to assess the success of this phase before introducing the plan to the congregation. This was done through a one-to-one interview of the senior pastor and key leaders to make sure the strategy and the plan were understood and supported and once they were, the plan was presented to the congregation in three different meetings. In the first meeting, the senior pastor educated the congregation on the two facts presented throughout this paper: the decrease of the Brazilian community and the needs of the New Generation. In the second meeting, stories of people like Marcos, Mary and Roberta were shared to put a human face to the problem at hand. Next, there was the announcement of the start of the new service, the goal for the future, and the assurance there would not be any weakening of the Brazilian congregation. The education of the church on the advantages of the multicultural/multi-ethnic church with a unifying language would be

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<sup>4</sup> William Ury, *Getting Past No: Negotiating in Difficult Situations* (New York: Bantam Dell, 1991).

done through the teaching and preaching from the pulpit, which the senior pastor did with fervor.

Just before the new service started, the board authorized the senior pastor to bring on one of the lay pastors from a satellite church to be full-time staff and devote his time toward the Brazilian congregation, as well as hiring a full-time native, English-speaking youth/associate pastor to concentrate on the multiethnic congregation. It was decided any new staff would have to be English-speaking and represent the vision of church diversity. A part-time music director was hired to form a worship team for the new service before they began. The new director did not want to use any members of the worship team from the Brazilian congregation in order to differentiate completely from the other services and avoid a translated form of worship from Portuguese-to-English. The music minister assembled a team outside of Message of Peace and brought them to the church's ministry, with approval of the board. Due to the congregation being new and music being a key attraction, the board agreed to give each musician a nominal monthly offering as gratitude for their service.

The second year began when the congregation moved back to the building after being away over four years due to the fire. The building was totally renovated and with much enthusiasm the congregation moved back. The first Sunday began with the new English service followed by the Portuguese service, with a breakfast offered between the two. The new service began following the structure outlined in the previous chapter. It was agreed that no advertisement would be done in the second year, not even invitation for friends to come, rather all efforts were to structure the worship service, the children and youth ministry—to get the house running efficiently before actively calling the

community. With the help of volunteers, mainly made of leadership and parents of the New Generation the year ended with a structure in place for these ministries and about sixty people in attendance, mainly from the New Generation and their parents.

Message of Peace is currently in the third year of this five-year implementation. This year the focus is identifying those who committed to this service, developing lay leadership, educating that this is more than a service but a new congregation, inviting friends to come and gradually introducing the Brazilian congregation to this service by having four joint services in English throughout the year. Many parents of the New Generation have made this their main service together with their children and though advertisement has not yet been done, some friends and family began attending and have committed to the new congregation.

As of now, a lay leadership is being formed and the senior pastor, who preaches in both services, is leading the new congregation in spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible reading, small group participation and stewardship. There have been three combined services, the final day of the Mission's Conference, Easter Sunday and a recent celebration service. There was practically 100 percent participation and little-to-no resistance. There is one more service scheduled before the end of the year for the Christmas special.

The first three years have been challenging. It has been like starting a new church all over again. Like with any church plant, it is a process that takes time and effort on the part of all involved. The greatest challenge is to clearly define the target group. The vision is to be multicultural and multiethnic but ability to clearly communicate this vision is not an easy task. People tend to go back to the ethnic church concept and vision needs

to be repeated until all understand. The senior pastor has preached in the first two years, and will continue to preach in the next three years, two monthly series on the theology of cultural adaptation for the church as a means to constantly remind the congregation of the transition goal. The series of messages are also preached in the Portuguese service. Most have been supportive of the structure of the transition in place but some long standing member of the Brazilian congregation support it as long as the church continues to have a quality service and ministry to the present Brazilian community.

The three steps of the strategy have been accomplished: the Brazilian congregation is very aware that the community of Brazilians in the area of the church is slowly decreasing and that change is necessary; the senior pastor, using his pulpit influence has been able to educate both the new as well as the old congregation of the principles outlined in this paper and they are slowly becoming part of the church philosophy of ministry; and the plan is in place for the transition. Out of the three components of the plan, two have been successfully implemented: There is an established new service and the staff today is much more diverse than three years ago. The one area that is more difficult in the inclusion of the other ethnic congregation in this service. The way the leadership is addressing this issue is by doing it gradually and by coming to the realization that though the goal is that the new multicultural/multiethnic congregation will emerge from this service, and that it will be the main service of the church in the future, there will always be a need to have separate ministries and perhaps even services in other languages in different times.

Now, the work that has begun must move into the next phase. In the fourth year, advertisements will begin through direct mail and media outlets and there will be six joint

services. It is the senior pastor's hope that this service will be Message of Peace's main service by the end of the fifth year with a strong multiethnic congregation with English as the main language at its core. During these five years, constant leadership development is being would have been offered to staff and leaders who are raised in the church. This is mainly done by training and education by the senior pastor in the weekly staff meetings and monthly leadership meeting of the principles discussed in this paper. Field trips are scheduled for leadership to churches that went through similar transition and literature of cultural adaptation is also provided.

Another important decision that has been successfully implemented is the replacement of all signs and placards to English. When a sign needs to be posted in Portuguese for the Brazilian congregation, it is only posted during their service and taken down immediately. Even the opening slide of the weekly PowerPoint presentation with the Church Mission Statement and the date is done in English for both services.

The implementation is assessed in weekly staff meetings and monthly leadership meeting with questions from the senior pastor to get feedback from leaders (assessment sample questions are presented in Appendix D). The assessment is based in how the leaders and congregations are assimilating the three steps of the strategy. Leadership makes direct observation of interaction during the combined services and response cards are given to all participating in these services (see sample in Appendix D). These two methods offer valuable information for leaders to assess the process of implementation. The transition has begun and Message of Peace in on its way to becoming a multiethnic church with English as its primary language of worship.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Message of Peace is not the first church I have pastored, but it is the one where I have spent the most time in ministry. I was twenty-two years old when I started this church and have led it faithfully for twenty-nine years. The church has gone through several transformations during my years in charge, but nothing as radical as what I am proposing through this paper. My objective is to formulate and implement strategies of cultural adaptation that will guide Message of Peace church's leaders and members from a predominantly Portuguese-speaking congregation to a truly multiethnic church that relies on English as its primary language of worship. I have outlined my basis for doing so, which is both for practical and didactical reasons.

The practical motive has to do with the drastically declining Portuguese-speaking community in the Bay Area. Portuguese immigrants were the original members of the church and over time, this morphed into a Brazilian-base with some influx of Angolans. The first group decreased due to an aging community and economic improvement in Europe with the addition of Portugal to the European Union. The latter decreased due to a strict alteration and enforcement of immigration laws after 9/11 coupled with a Brazilian economy in its ascendancy. Message of Peace, like many other ethnic churches, is a church of the present and not the future, i.e., it is strong and healthy now, but as the membership ages or moves away it will eventually weaken and decline. The changes proposed are necessary to assure not only the survival, but also the growth of the church.

Another practical reason is my desire to leave a lasting legacy after I no longer lead this church. I have been extremely blessed all these years to minister to a vibrant and

healthy, Christian body of believers. During my tenure, I have led many people to personal faith in Jesus Christ and had the responsibility to mentor leaders who now lead Message of Peace as well as other ministries in America and abroad. While Message of Peace is not a large church, it has endured a longevity that I attribute to sound theology, leadership and devoted members. It certainly can sustain itself for much longer and grow beyond what I led during my pastoral stay. However, I am concerned for its future as my window as senior pastor nears its end and in this paper I accessed that the future lies with its children and teenagers whom are quickly becoming adults. I do not want Message of Peace to be a church only for their parents, but also for them and as they marry, for their spouses, children and friends. It is my prayer that Message of Peace be an integral part of the South San Francisco-area, ministering to the needs of this very diverse community.

In order for this to be accomplished it is necessary for us to learn and apply the strategies of cultural adaptation outlined in this paper that will change the way we have done ministry all these years. Our core beliefs will not change, neither will our ministry philosophy, but our focus and strategies must. Church members, beginning with leadership, have to understand the calling of God is larger than the initial purpose. Before, we were called to reach a small segment of the population around us. Today, this segment becomes much bigger and includes many ethnicities instead of only one. In spite of differences, there is much in common to draw them together to worship under one ministry.

They, their parents or even grandparents came to the US as immigrants. Though they may have somewhat assimilated to American culture, they also kept part of their own culture and, as they look for a community of believers, they find a multiethnic



church that respects their differences but is united by the English language and their love for God. Others may join this group who are neither themselves immigrants nor their children; through marriage, travels or other means, feel attracted to such an environment.

We have learned and understood in theory these strategies and now, as we implement them, we are learning in practice, so in fact we are both learning and implementing the principles and strategies at the same time. We have found that the three steps of the strategies are working well for us but that we must be careful not to destroy the present structure. Many churches have moved too fast in transitioning and removed what it took many years to build—and what was uniquely important about their ministry. Leadership needs to patiently understand and address the resistance the original members have. One way to do it is to move slowly. The proposed project takes at least five years to put into place and the full transition may take even longer, depending on many circumstances. During this time, it is necessary to constantly educate leadership and members of the church of the need for this transition. In order to move to a multiethnic church, we cannot simply replicate the prevailing ethnic ministry by changing the main language; we must learn what it takes to implement this transition by being familiar with the literature in cultural adaptation and speaking with those who have undergone similar experiences.

Another important aspect is not to diminish the efforts of the present ministry. Resistance will be minimized when the present ethnic congregation feels that every effort is made to maintain and grow the present ministry. This is a must for ethical and practical reasons. It would not be right to just abandon a ministry to pursue another. Also, the fact is the new ministry needs the current one for spiritual and financial support. At Message

of Peace, ministry to the Brazilian community both in and out of the church has not diminished a bit, on the contrary it has increased while the transition is taking place at the same time. The Brazilian congregation is actually growing and new ministries and outreaches have begun to strengthen and grow this church.

The challenges the church faces are not small. Some aspects are beyond our control such as immigration reform and the economy. Immigration reform impacts this church because when it is enacted, will allow members to be rooted in the country and provide a more stable life for the present members who, together with their children—the New Generation, are initial members of this new church. It also secures the borders preventing others to come illegally. The economy is always a factor in any church, and more so in a church in transition. People live where they can get jobs and immigrants have few other reasons to be in a place besides this one. Thus it is important that the economy of the area the church is in to continue to blossom as well as the economy in Brazil, which determines if people will continue to come or go back.

There are other factors within control of the leadership if we are careful and wise. An important one is to clearly understand what a true multiethnic church is and how to become one. This is the major challenge Message of Peace and similar churches face in transition. I met recently with a prominent member of *Evergreen Baptist Church* and asked him how a multiethnic church functions. I was told that though every effort is being made to become one, it is still a predominantly Asian congregation having services in English. There is a lesson here. Even as we move to a multicultural body, there is a backbone that is still unique. At *Evergreen*, it is the Japanese and Chinese bodies that

foster an Asian interest. We can never be a fully global church<sup>1</sup>, but we can cater to a larger demographic that shares affinity to similar attributes, maybe Message of Peace is that for Americanized Latins (south and central America specifically), but also some European and African groups that share romance language expressions or an emotional expression of worship.

Another very important factor is the role of the senior pastor in this transition. If for any unforeseeable reason I am not able to lead the church in this trajectory, I fear the church will continue to focus solely on the Brazilian community and lose its efficacy and relevancy over time. This paper is an attempt to have a plan in place for others to follow, not only at Message of Peace but also at other similar ethnic churches that want similar transition. It is an effort to inspire other ethnic churches to want such a transition. Their circumstances may be different but the core principles outlined in this work are the same and this paper will serve as a blueprint for change, if this is what is desired.

Thus far the results have been positive at Message of Peace. The new service, in its third year, is taking shape and growth is coming. It is not a Brazilian service translated into English but a unique service with its own set of distinctions. With the exception of the senior pastor, leadership is different than of the Brazilian church and diverse. The worship style has distanced itself from Portuguese-speaking worship groups and embodies the type of church we want to become. Membership is made up of the New Generation and their parents, but also slowly being complemented by people from other

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<sup>1</sup> My content reader and mentor, Dr. Oscar Garcia-Johnson made an important comment here that I agree: “To believe that as a church you must embrace every single culture, ethnicity, race, and language to be fully global is simply unrealistic... You can be global in respect to the articulation of the mission of God, the openness to other cultures, the adaptability of ministry, and the understanding of your local and global context.”

ethnicities. Already Anglos, Hispanics, African Americans and eight different nations are attending. Every effort is being made to avoid being “Brazilian” and though we have a long ways to go, we have also made great improvement in this area.

Only time will tell if this will be successful, but I am confident it will and not only at Message of Peace but also at any church that wants to seriously transition. With God’s help and a strong leadership it can be happen.

## APPENDIX A

### CITY OF SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO DEMOGRAPHICS<sup>1</sup>

City Area	9.63 square miles
Population	60,552
Businesses	4,091
Residential Units	20,661
Total Budgeted Positions	526.71
Property Tax Rate (range)	1.000 – 1.0325
(amount is divided among various local agencies)	
Operating Budget	\$71,000, 098
CIP Budget	\$21,100,491
Assessed Valuation	\$7,076,926,034
Total Est. General Fund Revenue	\$48,323,900
Total Est. General Fund Expenditures	\$48,627,170

#### Ethnicity Breakout

#### RACE

White	26,671	44.0%
Black or African American	1,707	2.8%
American Indian and Alaska Native	362	0.6%
Asian	17,510	28.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	944	1.6%
Some other race	9,091	15.0%
Two or more races	4,267	7.0%

#### HISPANIC OR LATINO ANY RACE

Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	19,282	31.8%
Not Hispanic or Latino	41,270	68.2%
White	18,487	30.5%
Black or African American	1,621	2.7%
American Indian and Alaska Native	197	0.3%
Asian	17,312	28.6%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	896	1.5%
Some other race	264	0.4%
Two or more races	2,493	4.1%

#### SEX

Male	30,009	49.6%
Female	30,543	50.4%

#### AGE

Under 5 years	3,914	6.5%
5 to 17 years	10,752	17.8%
18 to 64 years	38,254	63.2%
65 years and over	7,632	12.6%
Median age	35.7	X

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<sup>1</sup> “South San Francisco - Official Website - Demographics”, n.d., <http://www.ci.ssf.ca.us/index.aspx?nid=145>.

**HOUSEHOLDS**

Total households	19,677	100.0%
Family households	14,650	74.5%
Families with children under 18	6,935	35.2%
Average household size	3.05	X
Average family size	3.51	X

**HOUSING OCCUPANCY**

Total housing units	20,138	100.0%
Occupied housing units	19,677	97.7%
Owner-occupied housing units	12,303	62.5%
Renter-occupied housing units	7,374	37.5%
Vacant housing units	461	2.3%
1 unit, detached housing	11,829	58.7%
Median value owner occupied unit (dollars)	352,900	X
Median gross rent (dollars)	1,057	X

**INCOME AND POVERTY IN 1999**

Median household income (dollars)	61,764	X
Median family income (dollars)	66,598	X
Per capita income (dollars)	23,562	X
Individuals in poverty	3,151	5.2%

**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

Population 25 and over	40,422	100.0%
High school graduate	9,703	24.0%
Bachelor's degree	7,816	19.3%
Graduate or professional degree	2,375	5.9%

**COMMUTING TO WORK**

Mean travel time to work (minutes)	26.7	X
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**LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION**

Employed civilian population 16 years and over	29,796	100.0%
Management, professional and related	8,973	30.1%
Service	4,321	14.5%
Sales and office	9,546	32.0%
Farming, fishing & forestry	121	0.4%
Construction, extraction, and maintenance	2,879	9.7%
Production, transportation, and material moving	3,956	13.3%

**CLASS OF WORKER**

Self-employed workers	1,639	5.5%
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## APPENDIX B

### TIME LINE FOR MESSAGE OF PEACE CHURCH - 1984 - 2010

Location	1984	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
Church	Church begins in San Jose	Church begins in San Francisco	Attendance peaks at 500 in SF	Church loses building in SF and purchase building in 2001	Major fire in the building	Return to renovated building
Congregation	Portuguese	Brazilians and Portuguese	Mainly Brazilians	First attempt of international church.	Set back on international attempts.	International attempt again.
Community		Silicon Valley Industries	Dot-com Bubble	Brazilians and English-speaking members from different nationalities.	Brazilians.	Brazilians. English-speaking members for different nationalities.
Nation	Bush 41 Years	First Gulf War & Internet	Clinton Years. Economic Prosperity	Dot-com failure.	Biotech industry booms	Silicon Valley and biotech flourish.
World (Portugal & Brazil)	Beginning of collapse of Soviet Union and end of cold war. Portugal joins EU in 1986. Brazil economy deteriorate rapidly.	Mass Brazilian immigration to the US. New economic and political powers.			Beginning of Real Estate Crisis.	Slow Economic Recovery.

## APPENDIX C

### Parret's Two Visions of Christ's Incarnational Ministry

#### *John 13: 3 – 17*

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God

so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him...

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am.

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

#### *Philippians 2: 5 – 11*

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing,

taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus



## APPENDIX D

### Assessment sample questions used in Staff and Leadership Meeting

The three steps of the strategy of transition at Message of Peace are: realize the fact that the Brazilian community is decreasing; educating on the multicultural/multiethnic principles; and plan and a time line for the transition. The plan consists of three components: the new service; the diverse staff; and a gradual inclusion of the other ethnic congregations in this service. Some of the questions used in weekly and monthly meetings are:

- 1) What current events confirm the decrease of the Brazilian community?
- 2) How many new visitors are we having in the services that are new arrivals in the community?
- 3) Are new members in the Brazilian congregation new converts or transferred from other Brazilian congregations?
- 4) During the monthly series of cultural adaptation:
  - a. How well did the senior pastor convey his message on the subject?
  - b. What were the action points of the message? Example of action points would be inviting someone from a different ethnic background over for dinner, eating at different ethnic restaurants in the community, sitting by someone different than you during the service, learning words in a different language, inviting someone from different ethnicity to the service, etc.
  - c. How could the points be made more clearly?
- 5) How is the 9:30 am service (the new service) different from the 11:00 am service (Brazilian service)?
- 6) What are some of the areas that should be the same in both services?
- 7) Are the people who adopted the new service as their main service being ministered in that service? Do they grasp the vision for transition?
- 8) What are some of the resistances we are facing from the members of the church and how can we address them?
- 9) Are the new people coming to the new service returning and making it their church? If not, why not?

APPENDIX E

Sample of the Connection Card Used in the Combined Service

**Front of the Card**

*MESSAGE of PEACE is a community of believers that exists to share the good news of Christ, to bring people to worship God, to grow according to God's word, to fellowship with one another, and to serve others.*

Name: Mr./Mrs./Miss. \_\_\_\_\_

Please print clearly

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Street/Apt #: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Best Contact Phone: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Mark One:

\_\_\_\_\_ 1<sup>st</sup> Time Guest \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> Time Guest \_\_\_\_\_ Regular Attender \_\_\_\_\_ Member

Age Group: \_\_\_\_\_ 9 – 12 \_\_\_\_\_ 13 – 19 \_\_\_\_\_ 20 – 29 \_\_\_\_\_ 30 – 39 \_\_\_\_\_ 40+

How did you about, or who brought you to Message of Peace Church?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Back of the Card**

**MY NEXT STEP TODAY IS:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Please pray that for my relationship with God

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to invite Jesus to come into my heart

\_\_\_\_\_ I want more information on:

\_\_\_\_\_ Baptimal \_\_\_\_\_ Small Group \_\_\_\_\_ Church Membership

Message of Peace is a multicultural/multiethnic church:

Was that clear in your experience in worshiping with us today? \_\_\_\_\_

If this was clear to you, how was this experience for you? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Question? Comments? Prayer Requests?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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