

CHARACTERISTICS  
OF EMERGING  
HEALTHY MULTICULTURAL CHURCHES

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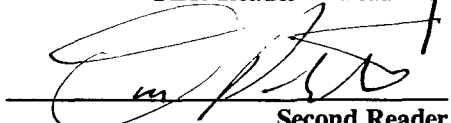
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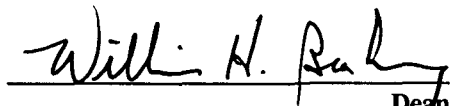
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with a new generation of churches in Canada trying to respond to the significant changes being felt in communities across the country as a result of the federal government policies over the last 30 years dealing with immigration, refugees and multiculturalism.

There is a growing awareness that churches will need to become more intentionally multicultural to accommodate the emerging generation. Many pastors are not equipped to minister cross-culturally and churches are often unwillingly to change to adjust to the changing communities in which they are located.

A number of sociological and theological influences will be reviewed to determine their impact on Canadian churches. There will be a response to the issues raised by those who advocate an emerging postmodern worldview in search of genuine community. Theological observations on the possibilities of the diversity of a heterogeneous multicultural church model being a valid response to the pluralism of contemporary Canadian life will be developed.

The research presented will be dealing with three emerging multicultural Canadian churches. These three churches are located in either Vancouver or Toronto and are representative of many other churches in Canada today. There will be a discussion

on the current ministries and plans of these three churches and some common characteristics identified. An integration of the models presented, and the research observations will lead to a proposal for moving towards becoming a more intentional healthy multicultural church to meet the needs of the next generation.

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## CHAPTER 1

### **Background to the problem**

The 1996 census reported that 36% of the Greater Vancouver Regional District's and 41% of Metropolitan Toronto's population was born outside of Canada and has immigrated to live in Canada permanently. Most of the major Canadian cities range between 20% and the 41% for Toronto for this newly arrived immigrant population. Canadian bureau chief for *TIME* magazine Andrew Purvis reported in a May 1999 issue that by 2005, according to Statistics Canada, the proportion of "visible minorities" will rise to 16% of the national population from 12% in 1996. By 2016 the number will rise to 20%. In Toronto, foreign-born residents are on the verge of outnumbering the native born. He also reported that "visible minorities", moreover are already in the majority, and will reach 54% of the Toronto population by next year.<sup>1</sup>

Many Canadian pastors and church leaders have not been prepared to minister cross-culturally and the churches they serve are often unwilling to make the necessary changes to accommodate the increasing diversity of their communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Purvis, "The Changing Tapestry," *TIME*, May 31 1999, 33.

This diversity is resulting from the recent waves of immigrants who are often arriving from countries where they have had some orientation to Christianity. Whether dealing with the early stages of resettlement in a new country or the later cultural disorientation for their children, many of these immigrants could be embraced by the Canadian church.

Since the 1970's Canadian churches and leaders have been increasingly influenced by the principles and methodologies of the Church Growth Movement (CGM). The development of the CGM has been significant for this generation of North American Christianity. The CGM emerged in the early 1960s influenced by the observations and convictions of Donald McGavran and C. Peter Wagner. The establishment of a Graduate School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1965 also contributed to the movement which is committed to growing churches through discovering and promoting effective evangelism and mission strategies.

The CGM has provided a theological rationale known as the homogeneous unit principle (HUP) which reinforces a model for the local church that assumes ethnic homogeneity as the preferred and most effective model for church growth and ministry. The acceptance of these teachings and models from the CGM by many Canadian church pastors and leaders has hindered a theologizing

that is particularly concerned with the multicultural Canadian context. In the past 10-15 years there has also begun to emerge a growing number of pastors and church leaders who are beginning to network and sponsor conferences as they attempt to define a theology of mission that will:

- i) address and work out a response to the racism present in the churches
- ii) lead from an experience of toleration to integration for many immigrants currently attending the churches
- iii) release control of congregational heritage and resources to a new generation of people
- iv) develop church models dissimilar from the past while maintaining unity with diversity and multiplicity
- v) provide a uniquely Christian response to the need for a genuine model of a community that is inclusive of the diversity found across Canada.

#### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to identify some theological and pastoral characteristics that are necessary for Canadian churches to become more representative of the communities they serve. The project involves three churches described as "emerging

healthy multicultural churches". The three words "emerging", "healthy" and "multicultural" need some brief clarification.

The term "emerging" is used to describe the transitional status of each of these congregations. They all are changing as communities of faith because the new people who are arriving are from differing cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The result is that these churches are becoming much more multicultural, with a variety of cultural groups, where no one group is dominant in numbers and influence. The three churches are at different stages of becoming more multicultural, but they all realize that this is the future direction they must continue to move towards. They all realize that they are emerging and becoming something that is not clearly defined, but have certain beliefs and values at their cores as communities of biblical faith.

The term "healthy" is used to describe the life and vitality found within these three congregations. There is an intentionality to deal with the changing communities around their locations, there is an openness to welcome the newcomers from other cultural backgrounds, there is a commitment to the biblical understanding of life and mission and there is a genuine attempt to understand and experience Christian community. There is an awareness of the awkwardness, tensions and difficulties of bringing the necessary changes for growth to continue. However,

there is a desire to grow and remain healthy as churches committed to Christ and his purposes.

The term "multicultural" is used to describe a society or community in which people of varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds are attempting to live together in unity, while affirming diversity and respect for the differences of each cultural group.

### **Context of the study**

There is a growing momentum among church leaders to develop a theology of mission particular to the Canadian multicultural context, to dialogue about theological rationales and congregational models and to discern the processes needed for facilitating change. In 1996 the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec established a new commission within its governance structure to deal particularly with multiculturalism and the churches. In June of 1999 a national conference was held in Vancouver hosting 200 church and mission agency leaders to discuss the issues around mission in multicultural Canada today and make plans for the future. A similar conference was held in Toronto with over 300 in attendance in February of 2000. A number of Theological Colleges and Seminaries are developing courses dealing with the dynamics of multicultural ministries and models of multicultural churches.

As one of the more secular and developed multicultural states in the world, Canada at this time provides an excellent context for designing and developing models of the church which can be liberated from the encumbrances of state and cultural expectations and represent a more biblically faithful expression of Christianity. Many current scholars and authors who are trying to develop a worldview that will make sense for today and the future propose the notion that there needs to be a community-based understanding of the truth, if we are going to have any hope for living together in community. Stanley J. Grenz of Carey Theological College clarifies the understanding of "truth" for those holding this notion described as a postmodern worldview:

The postmodern worldview operates with a community-based understanding of truth. It affirms that whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth are dependent on the community in which we participate. Further, and far more radically, the postmodern worldview affirms that this relativity extends beyond our perceptions of truth to its essence: there is no absolute truth; rather, truth is relative to the community in which we participate.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 8.

The dilemma for those pursuing this notion of community based truth in today's pluralistic environment is that they have trouble reaching agreement on a methodology for building a community where truth can be discerned.

Local churches still have a real possibility of providing a model of a community where truth can be discerned while at the same time being representative of the cultural diversity present in today's society. To become a church for the future and accommodate the changes resulting from the increasing influence of the current pluralism, there will need to be more intentionality in demonstrating the possibility for community within a multicultural context. The present generation of youth and children will either find ways to build unity or they will follow the patterns of history by privatizing into fragmentary cultural ghettos. The church is one of the social institutions still present in every region across the country that has an opportunity to be a model of real community of reconciliation in a time of fragmentation and alienation.

The Canadian church has been slow in accommodating the emerging cultural diversity of the last 25 years. It has become increasingly sidelined as an irrelevant and outdated institution for contemporary life. In responding, many Canadian church leaders have adopted and developed models of church community and

life influenced by the CGM, which has relied heavily on American business models of pragmatism and efficiency. The CGM is an example of an American based movement that has had significant influence on a number of Canadian churches and denominations. For the most part these churches have justified staying in homogeneous groupings so that evangelism would be more effective.

Many of the churches that are growing as homogeneous entities are failing to address the underlying problems faced in Canada due to the multicultural experiment the nation began in the 1970's. The failure to address the realities of racism, nationality identity and core values upon which meaningful community can be built and experienced leads to the churches, in the long term, contributing to the fragmentation being experienced by many.

### **Methodology**

The case study method of research<sup>3</sup> will be used to learn from three emerging multicultural churches which are at different levels of development, have different locations

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<sup>3</sup> An excellent one volume presentation of research methodology is *Research Decisions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives* by Ted Palys in which he describes the case study method . He says that instead of beginning with theory and assuming that there's one theory that will eventually account for everything, the qualitative approach typically involves beginning with individual case studies in context, trying to understand each situation on its own terms, and leaving open, for the moment, the question of whether generalizable theoretical concepts can ever eventually be drawn together in anything resembling a grand theory. (pp.19-20).



(two in Vancouver, one in Toronto) and have different socio-economic characteristics. The data will be primarily of a qualitative nature gathered through surveys and interviews of pastors, key leaders and others who are involved in these churches. For each church the survey data will be summarized and a series of questions will be developed to be used in focus group sessions with those who participated in the surveys. These focus group sessions will help clarify and expand the data found in the surveys.

#### **Limitations of the Study**

The survey will have to be limited to a small sample (12 - 15 per church) of representative leaders and congregants. The awareness of barriers to establishing a multicultural church and the identification of healthy characteristics of their local church by the respondents will be qualitative and subjective in nature. There will need to be an element of interpretation of the results that may be biased by the assumptions of the researcher. The office held by the researcher as an Area Minister may bias respondents to be uncritically positive about their church. The researcher is committed to a moderate evangelical Christian position and acknowledges that he will bring this bias to the presentation of the material presented throughout the thesis.

## **Importance of the Study**

This topic is one of growing interest to church leaders as they implement ministry to their communities. The attitudes and anxieties present in many Canadian churches concerning the changes needed to minister in the emerging multicultural communities around them must be addressed, if the church hopes to be effective and relevant for the next generation. Every community eventually will be impacted by the significant changes that are taking place due to the large numbers of new immigrants and the federal government's policy from the 1970's on multiculturalism. The church does have a significant opportunity to demonstrate a biblical model of community to a confused pluralistic age where there is a cynicism that rejects the notion of a metanarrative (big picture) text and/or a mythology that provides cultural identity and history. Stanley J. Grenz provides a helpful understanding of the term metanarrative text in his discussion on postmodernism:

As the twentieth century unfolded, anthropologists became increasingly aware of the foundational importance of myths in human society. Some scholars argued that myths are more than just stories that primitive cultures tell; in fact, they embody the central core of a culture's values and beliefs and are in that sense fundamentally religious.

Their research led them to the conclusion that each society is bound together by a system of myths, that these myths sustain social relations within the society and form the basis of its claim to legitimacy.

Postmodern thinkers speak of these legitimizing myths as "narratives" (or "metanarratives"). They contend that a narrative exercises a force apart from argumentation and proof and, in fact, that it provides the principal means by which every community legitimates itself.<sup>4</sup>

The church does have a metanarrative text, which was established and has been preserved within community through the centuries. The Bible is a text, foundational for defining essential beliefs and values, which have been discovered and transmitted through time cross-culturally to define the parameters of "a community" that can be a model for all other communities. Although there will always be a variety of models used to demonstrate Christian community within differing cultural contexts, there are some commonly recognized beliefs influencing these models as the biblical vision of a multicultural society given in Rev. 21:22-27 is pursued.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 44.

These core beliefs and values which have been informed by scripture, tradition and experience through the centuries in many diverse cultural contexts need to be contextualized into today's multicultural, pluralistic world through creative and innovative models of Christian community.

There has emerged in the last two decades a notion of a "postmodern" age in which the assumptions and institutions of the modern period are becoming less significant. David Lyon of Queen's University provides a way of understanding the terms "modern" and "modernity" when he says:

Modernity is all about the massive changes that took place at many levels from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, changes signaled by the shifts that uprooted agricultural workers and transformed them into mobile industrial urbanites. Modernity questions all conventional ways of doing things, substituting authorities of its own, based in science, economic growth, democracy or law. And it unsettles the self; if identity is given in traditional society, in modernity it is constructed.<sup>5</sup>

Lyon suggests elsewhere that there is hope for this age if the New Testament Pentecost episode begins to become the paradigm

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<sup>5</sup> David Lyon, *Postmodernity* ( Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994 ), 21.

replacing the Old Testament Babel episode of the biblical material.

The Babel episode, however is only one point in the narrative. Contradicting many postmoderns, who foresee only chaos and disorientation as a permanent condition apocalypse forever - the story of Pentecost heralds a reversal of Babel- not, **nota bene**, the reintroduction of one tongue - a kind of charismatic esperanto - but the capacity to recognize and respect the difference within the wider framework. As one of the church Fathers put "...what had been torn apart by strife is joined together by charity" (Blocher 1984, 211). Jew and Greek, slave and free, woman and man now find a new sociality in "harmonious difference" (Milbank 1990, 5). The social and ethical implications of Pentecost have yet to be elaborated for postmodern times, but the anti-Babel denies permanence to Babel and offers profound perspective, a signpost in the mist, that reorients those who mistook Babel for the terminus. Babel is already relativised but not yet reversed, fully.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> David Lyon, "Jesus In Disneyland: The Church Meets The Postmodern Challenge," *ARC* 23 (1995) : 32 .

The most effective way to demonstrate the new paradigm of Pentecost is through the local expression of the church. The consequences of Babel will continue as long as the church fails to deal with the calling of being a multicultural community. Linguistic and cultural differences will be reinforced. Many of our contemporaries are not going to be permanently drawn to Christ through bigger and more efficient churches that are driven by the values of our culture. Instead, the experience manifested and postulated in the New Testament needs to be recovered and modeled afresh for today and into the new millennium.

This study presents the ministry stories and characteristics of three very different churches located in Toronto and Vancouver. The research provides some characteristics and patterns from these Canadian churches attempting to meet the challenges of the changing communities around them. The shared experiences, struggles and successes of churches like these three are beneficial to the broader church in facilitating the changes needed to remain effective for the future.

### **Literature Review**

There was a range of literature reviewed during the preparation and implementation of this research project. There were several courses where helpful resource materials were used

and have been integrated into the writing, which will follow in this thesis. The books and articles reviewed dealt with the gospel and culture, postmodernity, contemporary theology and biblical studies, missiology, Christian social reform, sociology, ecclesiology, census and other statistical data, research methodology, and the multicultural church. This brief review will present only those authors and books which were of the greatest influence for the development of the material in this thesis, but were not quoted or reviewed in the process of writing it. They will be categorized under the following headings:

**(1) Classic Studies in Gospel, Culture and Worldview**

Other reference books include H. Richard Niehbuhr's *Christ and Culture*, Charles Kraft's *Christianity and Culture*, Brian Walsh and Richard Middleton's *The Transforming Vision. Shaping A Christian Worldview*, Lesslie Newbigin's *Foolishness to the Greeks: the Gospel and Western Culture* and Richard Mouw's *Consulting the Faithful: What Christian Intellectuals Can Learn from Popular Culture* and Richard Tarnas' *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View*.

**(2) Gospel and Culture in Missiological Foundations**

Other reference books include Paul Hiebert's *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, Lesslie Newbigin's *The*

*Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology*, Gerald Arbuckle's *Earthing The Gospel: An introductory handbook for the pastoral worker*, George Hunter's *How To Reach Secular People*, Michael Green's *Evangelism Through the Local Church*, Loren Mead's *The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the congregation for a new mission frontier* and *Transforming Congregations for the Future*, Lyle Schaller's *21 Bridges to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Future of Pastoral Ministry and Innovations in Ministry; Models for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* .

### **(3) Christian Perspectives on Postmodern Culture**

Other titles include Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon's *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*, Charles Kraft's *Christianity With Power: Your worldview and your experience of the supernatural*, Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh's *Truth is Stranger Than It Used To Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age*, Thomas Oden's *After Modernity...What? Agenda for Theology*, David Wells' *God in the Wasteland: The reality of truth in a world of faded dreams* and *No Place for Truth: whatever happened to evangelical theology?*, John Wimber's *Power Evangelism* and *Power Healing*, a collection of essays (edited by Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden) titled *Faith and Modernity*, Alister McGrath's *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism*.



#### **(4) Communicating the Gospel within a Canadian Context**

Other books used as reference include Reginald Bibby's *Fragmented Gods: The poverty and potential of religion in Canada* and *There's Got to be More! Connecting Churches and Canadians* and Don Posterski's *True to You: Living our Faith in our multi-faithed world*.

#### **Overview of the Project**

Chapters 2 and 4 will be given to a full presentation and discussion of the research methodology followed and the information gathered. The survey designed and used and a summary of the focus groups will be part of this discussion. The three churches that were selected to research (Immanuel Baptist Church in Toronto, Trinity Baptist Church and Grandview Calvary Baptist Church in Vancouver) are very different in histories, stages of development as multicultural churches, socio-economic and ethnic demographics and congregational sizes. The 15 individuals surveyed were selected by a pastor and a key elected leader. Those selected to be surveyed are leaders in the church. They are a mix of formal elected leaders and others who may not hold an elected position, but are providing leadership within the ministries of the church. The researcher was the only one handling the surveys and conducting the focus groups. The surveys were sent in advance of the meetings of the focus groups and the

focus groups were designed to expand and clarify the information gathered through the surveys.

Chapters 3,5 and 6 will present a more comprehensive discussion of the problems faced in developing a multicultural church, the sociological and theological factors around this topic, the literature that was consulted and the implications of the study for future usage and research.

## CHAPTER 2

### **The Profiles of Three Canadian Multicultural Congregations**

#### Introduction

The churches chosen for this research project are representative of many other small to medium sized churches confronted with significant changes in their immediate communities due to the accumulated impact of immigration over the last 25 -30 years. All three congregations have been ministering for 85 years or more. They are congregations in transition and are at different stages of becoming more representative of their multicultural communities. Although the sample is small, it comes from those who are most involved with the ministries of these churches currently. In some cases, those responding have been involved with their church over many years. The material for these profiles was gathered through reading written histories of the churches, interviewing some of those who are involved with the churches and from denominational records.

#### Immanuel Baptist Church, Toronto, Ontario

Immanuel was established in 1866 by the Bond Street Baptist Church and is the second oldest Baptist church in the Toronto area. The church served in a number of locations in the downtown Toronto core until 1966 when it moved to the growing suburbs of

North York, where it is located today. The church did not divide over the theological debates of 1927 as did many other Baptist churches and was able to preserve strength and integrity of purpose for the future. The commencement of the church declared a standard for doctrinal understanding by adopting The Articles of Faith in the "Baptist Manual" (The New Hampshire Confession of Faith)<sup>7</sup> and throughout the years there has been a core theology that has defined and informed the ministries of the church. Within a Baptist heritage Immanuel would be classified as a moderate conservative evangelical church. Through the years the church's programming has kept it well networked to the communities where it has been located. The church has been able to maintain a coalition of members from a number of denominational backgrounds by focussing on local and global mission activities. Facing the prospect of a bleak future in a deteriorating inner-city setting, the church moved from the downtown location. The active resident membership at the time of the move was 127 and over the last two decades has ranged between 225 - 250.

Immanuel today is a regional multicultural church. While the other churches in the North York area have remained largely

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<sup>7</sup> A.C. Simmonds, *Diary of a Century* ( Oshawa: The Alger Press, 1966 ), 1.

homogeneous (i.e. Chinese, Anglo/European, black), Immanuel has been becoming increasingly multicultural and is much more heterogeneous in character today than when it moved in 1966. Sunday morning congregations average between 250 -275 and are approximately 1/3 black, 1/3 white and 1/3 brown. Those attending represent at least 30 different countries of origin. The church's profile is mainly middle-class with some post-secondary school education and is representative of all age groups. The growing edge of the congregation is made up of ethnically mixed marriage families, second generation ethnic Canadians who no longer feel comfortable in the ethnic churches of their parents and Anglos who support a multicultural model of church life. The current congregational profile indicates that 40% of the congregation is between the ages of 25 - 44 and 25% between 45 - 64. So, there is a good prospect for the development of future leadership and ministry. The church has developed a strategy and model attempting to enfold new ethnic groups into the congregation. Culturally distinct fellowships are designed to meet the immediate needs of the newly arrived first generation immigrant by providing leadership and services in the language of origin. When it comes time for the individual to become a member of the fellowship, they are in fact becoming a member of Immanuel. As the immigrant families or individuals become more

enculturated into the Canadian context they will gradually become more comfortable in the larger multicultural congregation while being able to preserve some security and identity with their culture of origin.

Grandview Calvary Baptist Church, Vancouver, British Columbia

Grandview Calvary was established in 1908 as a response to the growth of Vancouver and the development of a new suburban area East of downtown. The church has always been outreach-oriented and has continuously developed a number of ministries within the community for children and seniors. Up until the late 1950's the church grew as many other suburban Canadian churches did during the first half of the century. The Sunday morning worship attendance peaked at about 175. During the 60',70's and 80's the church went through a continuous decline due to families moving further away to newer suburban developments, attrition of longstanding members who were not being replaced and immigration of new ethnic groups. The East Vancouver area also went through a decline in socio-economic status and became a part of the city experiencing the urban decay common to other large metropolitan areas. In the late 1980's the church, in cooperation with the Baptist Union of Western Canada, began to rebuild the ministry by intentionally working towards a model that would accommodate the multicultural reality of the community. At that time there was a

remnant group left within the church with about 50 in attendance at Sunday worship. This remnant group came from a number of ethnic backgrounds and was desperate enough to allow the changes needed to move in a new direction. In the fifth year of development the church went through a significant visioning process which defined their future as intentionally multicultural using an integrative model rather than developing separate ethnic congregations. Today there are about 125-150 in attendance who clearly are representative of the diversity of the community. The church over the last few years has re-established a presence and connection within the community through a wide range of ministries that are offered by the church or through other agencies in cooperation with the church. There is a healthy expectation about the future as the church works through the awkward and at times confusing process of forming a new model and identity that will be relevant for the future. Grandview Calvary struggles to find the financial or people resources that are necessary to rebuild a dying church. This has led to a number of strategic partnerships being established with other Christian and community agencies, which is a factor in the church's understanding of identity and ministry.

Trinity Baptist Church, Vancouver, British Columbia

Trinity Baptist is an 85 year old congregation located in one of the most expensive communities in Canada. It was born, like Grandview Calvary, in East Vancouver as a mission work in the newly developing South Vancouver in 1914. Throughout the years Trinity has been a church that has been able to attract middle to upper income families through good programming and preaching. The church has gone through several cycles of growth and retrenchment, but has always been able to maintain a core of capable lay leaders and stay financially viable. The current active membership is around 240 with about 400 regularly attending the Sunday worship services.

Over the last 15 years the immediate communities around the church have changed with significant numbers of new immigrants from China and South Asia arriving and becoming residents. Up until this recent wave of immigration, Trinity was a typical Canadian theologically conservative Baptist church ministering to primarily those from an Anglo-European background. The church has a prime location, good plant and a solid core of longtime members. However, Trinity has over the last 15-20 years been struggling to redefine the identity and mission of the church. The theological, ministry/worship style controversies along with the changing community demographics have been unsettling. The



church has seen a higher than normal turnover of staff and this has also left people uncertain about the future.

One of the current pastors is Chinese-Canadian and he has been highly effective in helping the church to reach out to the new immigrants through "English As A Second Language" programs. These programs have brought a whole new group of people from China and the Philippines into the church. The church has welcomed these new people, but has not yet had enough time to integrate them fully into the ongoing ministries of the church. This pastor has recently resigned to pursue a new ministry as a senior pastor in another part of the Vancouver district. Once again, the church is in a time of significant evaluation and uncertainty concerning the future.

### **The Survey and Focus Groups**

#### The Participants

The 15 participants from each church for the research project were selected by one of the pastors and the chair of the board or moderator of the church. The researcher met in advance with the pastor and the key leader to review the survey with them so that they were aware of its contents. They were asked to gain permission from the church board or council for the project to proceed. The participants were to be representative of the congregation's ethnic, economic and educational profile.

The participants were asked in advance for permission to be contacted by the researcher. They were mailed a participant's letter (appendix 1), a survey (appendix II) and a stamped, pre-addressed envelope. They were given three weeks to return the survey. They were invited to participate fully in the survey and focus groups and were given the opportunity to remove themselves from the research project at any time.

### The Survey

The survey (appendix II) is designed to investigate a number of questions. The four sections provide a profile of the participants and their understanding of their church. The survey is seeking to gain an understanding of the church from the participant's knowledge and experience. Thus, it is based on qualitative responses to statements that do not assume a right or wrong answer. It is made clear to the participant that they are being asked to answer from their own observations and experience and not in consultation with others.

The first section MY CHURCH AND THE COMMUNITY WHERE IT IS LOCATED is designed to determine the participant's knowledge and perceptions of their church and immediate community. How many people come to church? Where do they come from? What is their country of origin? Are those involved with the church representative of the immediate community? The participants'

responses can then be compared with current census data, observations by the researcher made through attending the services of the church and the discussion of the focus groups (see chapter 4 for the discussion of the comparisons made). The terms used in this section of the survey to describe ethnic backgrounds are the same as those used for the 1996 Canadian census.

The second section THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MY CHURCH is built around a number of agree/disagree statements, which are descriptive of a church's identity and mission. Is my church's ministry being effective? Do people feel welcome and can they find a place to belong? Is denominational affiliation important? How open is the church to change? Does the church represent the diversity of the immediate community? Who controls the church? The concern of this section is to determine if there are some common perceptions of the participants about their church and its ministry. Is the participant's experience one of inclusion and community with a group of others in common mission or one of superficial attachment? This section was helpful in forming a number of questions for the focus groups where the participants could develop their observations more fully.

The third section THE VISION OF MY CHURCH focuses more on the motivational and directional issues facing churches. Where

are we going? How do we make our church more effective in the community? What role does theology and beliefs have in our planning? Do we have the resources? To stay committed to the ministries of a church, people need to feel that there is a future and that their efforts are leading somewhere. This section is seeking to measure the corporate climate around vision clarity and implementation.

The fourth section BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT MYSELF deals specifically with the individual participant's profile. This section helps to evaluate whether the participants are truly representative of the congregation. Is the diversity of the congregation represented in the participants? How attached and committed are they to the work and future of the church?

The final section OTHER COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS is an invitation to the participant to raise other insights, evaluate the survey or raise questions for further development in the focus groups. This section was not widely used, but the comments given were helpful.

#### The Focus Groups

The focus groups were explained in the participant's letter (appendix 1). They were designed to enhance the information gathering process and to provide a place where a face to face dialogue would help the researcher evaluate the integrity

of the survey responses. The participants were invited to attend one of two opportunities for a ninety minute focus group session. The researcher prepared a set of questions, which were used for each of the focus groups. The questions were designed to guide the dialogue in the focus groups so that the participants could have a fair opportunity to both enhance the survey findings and also raise any new concerns or observations.

### Focus Group Questions

The questions were primarily concerned with sections I, II and III of the survey.

#### **MY CHURCH AND THE COMMUNITY WHERE IT IS LOCATED**

1. Tell me why you come to this church?
2. Tell me about the ministries of this church?
3. How is your church involvement helping your relationship with Christ?
4. Do you think people who come to your church would go to others in the church in a time of personal crisis?
5. Is there any difference in your relationships with people at your church and people outside the church you know through work or community involvement? Are you treated any differently?
6. Does your church have any ministry impact in the immediate neighborhood? Are you a drive-to church or a neighborhood

church?

7. How important is music, the arts and worship for your church?
8. What holds your church together?

#### **THE VISION OF MY CHURCH**

1. How would you describe your church to someone who doesn't go to church?
2. What do you tell non-Christians when they ask you why you bother going to church?
3. What do you think are the priority needs of the church's immediate neighborhood today where your church could help?
4. What changes does your church need to make to be connected, relevant and effective for people who don't go to church?
5. How important is it to be a Baptist church? Is the name a help or hindrance to those outside the church?
6. Are people in your church interested in ministries beyond the immediate neighborhood and region (i.e. overseas/relief and development)? How do they show that interest?

#### **Reflections on the Survey and Focus Groups**

The survey responses will be discussed in detail in chapter 4. The survey appears to have been clear enough in communicating with the participant as there was very little feedback, either written or spoken, when addressed in the focus groups. There are some minor changes to the survey, which would

improve it. (eg. inclusion of a self-employed category in section V). The survey data does provide some helpful insights into the church and were especially helpful in listening more intentionally in the focus groups.

It was observed after the research had been done that it would have been helpful in the survey to explore the importance of the pastoral leadership and ministry style for the development of a multicultural church. What characteristics are necessary for being the pastor of this kind of congregation? Do pastors need specialized education to be effective in serving a multicultural congregation?

The position of the researcher as an Area Minister, who is the denominational liaison and consultant for the pastors and churches, does not appear to have affected the responses as many of the participants had very little awareness of, or involvement with the denomination. For many who have recently arrived into these churches, they were not informed on the role of the Area Minister and did not feel awkward reflecting on their ministries. Although the researcher was a former pastor of Immanuel Baptist until four years ago, several of the participants had arrived at the church since then and the others appear to be responding from their most recent experiences.

The focus groups were essential to the research process for enhancing and clarifying information. The numbers responding were substantial enough to accomplish this part of the project. Immanuel Baptist had the smallest number come to the focus group sessions. This probably was a result of the timing of the groups. However, the researcher had already gained a good understanding of this church due to his former involvement as a pastor. The focus group participants were representative of the congregations and were very interested in the topic and research. At several points in the dialogue they demonstrated ways of operating with significant diversity while holding a respect for each other due to their common vision for the church.



## CHAPTER 3

### **Sociological and Cultural Observations**

Canada is currently in the midst of a major identity crisis. The crisis has always been a part of our national psyche because of the attempt to accommodate the cultural differences of the two original founding peoples who immigrated from England and France. However, this crisis has taken on a new urgency for resolution as a result of the federal government's policies dealing with immigration and multiculturalism. Canadian author and journalist Richard Gwynn observes that:

The walls being built between Canadians by all the "identity" groups as they claim their separate entitlements to dictate the terms of their Canadian citizenship are entirely new.

The specific policies involved are those of multiculturalism and employment equity. Each is intended to make Canadian society more inclusive. Each institutionalizes new forms of exclusiveness.<sup>8</sup>

The mass movement of people and easy access to others through communication technologies has created a time when

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Gwynn, *Nationalism Without Walls* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1996), 273.

ideas, values, symbols and cultural expressions are intersecting in a way never experienced before in human history. John Friesen of the University of Calgary provides an insightful summary of the problems facing Canadians when he states that:

As multicultural efforts in Canada continue there is a growing awareness that knowledge about diversity is not enough, and experiential programs must continue to expand. It is imperative that this be articulated more clearly than ever before. These efforts must involve members of the human community of all ages in a kind of apprenticeship for living. By focusing on similarities between cultures a greater acceptance of cultural differences can be developed and ethnic prejudice reduced. Programs related to this objective need to be structured so as to develop a feeling of shared identity among all members of our multi-ethnic and multicultural society.<sup>9</sup>

As a nation, Canada has responded with policies of bilingualism (1969), multiculturalism (1971)<sup>10</sup>, the Charter of

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<sup>9</sup> John W. Friesen, *When Cultures Clash* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1985), 17.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau in stating government support for the multicultural policy indicated that "Every ethnic group has the right to preserve and develop its own culture and values within the Canadian context. To say that we have two official languages is not to say that we have two official cultures, and no particular culture is more 'official' than another. A policy of multiculturalism must be a policy for all Canadians. (Canada, House of Commons, pp. 8580-8581)

Rights and Freedoms (1982) and several failed attempts at constitutional reform in an attempt to maintain unity while encouraging diversity.<sup>11</sup> Reginald Bibby at the University of Lethbridge has provided a useful description of the current state of affairs:

Since the 1960's Canada has been encouraging the freedom of groups and individuals without simultaneously laying down cultural expectations. Canada has also been encouraging the expression of viewpoints without simultaneously insisting on the importance of evaluating those viewpoints. During the past thirty years, colorful collages of mosaics have been forming throughout Canadian life. Our expectation has been that fragments of the mosaic will somehow add up to a healthy and cohesive society. It is not at all clear why we should expect such an outcome.<sup>12</sup>

Bibby stated elsewhere:

If there is no subsequent vision, no national goals, no explicit sense of coexisting for some purpose, pluralism becomes an uninspiring end in itself. Rather than

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<sup>11</sup>Other titles addressing this discussion around the current feeling of crisis within Canadian life and culture include *Thinking English Canada* by Philip Resnick, *Canada: Is Anyone Listening?* by Rafe Mair and *Who Killed Canadian History?* by J.L. Granatstein

<sup>12</sup>Reginald W. Bibby, *Mosaic Madness: The Poverty and Potential of Life in Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited, 1990), 10.

coexistence being the foundation that enables a diverse nation to collectively pursue the best kind of existence possible, coexistence degenerates into a national preoccupation. Pluralism ceases to have a cause. The result: mosaic madness.<sup>13</sup>

Janet McLellan and Anthony H. Richmond at the Center for Refugee Studies, York University, Toronto provide an insightful commentary on the present situation when they state:

The debate over multiculturalism within a country such as Canada can be used as a micro example of the tension between global cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization. It reflects the postmodern dialectic of universal/particular, or meta/local discourse. The Canadian example of multiculturalism, with its motto of 'unity in diversity', can be seen as an attempt to structure a collective identity, or national consciousness, through mediation between a multiplicity of diverse ethnic and religious identities and a singular, universalistic, federal orientation.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 104 .

<sup>14</sup> Janet McLellan and Richard H. Anthony, "Multiculturalism in crisis: a postmodern perspective in Canada," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17, no.4 (1994), 671.

The experiment with multiculturalism over the last 25 years has had time to begin to show the weaknesses of the policy and it appears that it is too late to change the directions that have been set by the key institutions (eg. educational, judicial, political and business institutions) influencing daily life. Unable to agree upon a unifying central set of beliefs and national symbols of unity, many Canadians have sought refuge from the increasing fragmentation in their particular ethnic, cultural or religious group. The nation is dividing along linguistic, regional and racial lines as diverse groups compete for resources.

In Canada, however, what originally began with a rhetoric of symbolic rather than institutional manifestations of ethnic distinctiveness has become a struggle over allegiance to particularized ethnic or politically nationalist communities.<sup>15</sup>

Rather than creating a harmonious whole or promoting ethnic equality, multiculturalism may generate emotional struggles between groups, each attempting to acquire a larger share of social resources. Furthermore, in the multicultural

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 673 .

competition for status and recognition, great emphasis is placed on the differences, creating difficulties in defining standards of ethnic equality because the aims and aspirations of different groups are not the same.<sup>16</sup>

Most institutions have had to respond to this shift to multiculturalism either because government legislation has forced them to make changes or economic necessity has caused them to respond in order to maintain and develop consumer constituencies. Educational and other government-funded institutions have had to design programs and structures to meet the expectations of this multiculturalism policy. Business institutions have adjusted to the changing scene and have accommodated the multiculturalism policy when it is expedient to attract more consumers through hiring quotas and product design for those cultural groups that have the resources. Beyond the daily shared work experience and goal of achieving a profit for the institution, there is very little of substance held in common by the employees that builds any sense of lasting community. Attempts to control people's behavior in the public sector through legislative and judicial bodies does not necessarily change their attitudes and practices in their private lives. And so, there is a subliminal racism that

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 673 .

is always below the surface of daily life which occasionally flares out in many communities across the country.

The *REID REPORT* in an article "Tolerance and the Canadian Ethnocultural Mosaic" reports that 70% of Canadians strongly/moderately agree that discrimination against non-whites is a problem. A significant minority of 26% of Canadians agreed that non-whites are poised to ruin what they understand to be the foundation of Canadian society. Nearly six in ten (57%) Canadians agree that it would be best if minority groups made efforts to blend in to be more like other Canadians rather than maintaining the cultural and linguistic traditions which existed in their countries of origin. The article suggests that their findings indicate 32% of Canadians would fall into the moderately/highly intolerant levels of acceptance of racial and ethnic minorities and newcomers to Canada.<sup>17</sup>

Despite all of the problems resulting from pluralism and multiculturalism, Canada at this time provides an excellent context for designing and developing models of the church which can be freed from the encumbrances of the past and can begin to recover a more biblically faithful expression of Christianity.

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<sup>17</sup> Angus Reid Group, "Tolerance and the Canadian Ethnocultural Mosaic," *THE REID REPORT* 8, no.4 (1993), 3-5.

Canada is a relatively young nation state and has always relied on new immigrants to grow the population needed to provide for the nation's needs. There is a prosperity as a resource-exporting country that has been able to accommodate the influx of new peoples without threatening those who are established. However, there is a search for beliefs and values amidst the pluralism of cultural and religious groups that can bring a clearer sense of national identity and purpose.

Many of these immigrants are open to dialogue, new ideas and opportunities to build a place of security and well-being for themselves and their children. The future development of a new generation of churches will require a biblical and theological rationale that can practically address the issues of being a unified community while embracing the diversity of multicultural Canada.

### **Biblical and Theological Foundations**

The perception by some that the pillars of Western society erected during the Enlightenment are weakening is a result of the failure of the modern era for many to provide the answers and framework for dealing with the global problems. This disillusionment with the modern era has led to the emergence of what some call a "postmodern era".



Diogenes Allen of Princeton Theological Seminary summarizes four areas in which the disillusionment with the modern era is evident:

1. It can no longer be claimed as a commonly accepted philosophical and scientific tenet that we live in a self-contained universe. This being true, there is no philosophical and scientific basis for excluding the possibility of God.
2. The modern world has failed to find a basis for morality and society. The quest of the Enlightenment to base morality and society on reason rather than on religion has clearly failed. This approach has left us where each person decides what is right and what is wrong.
3. The belief in inevitable progress spawned by the modern age is now seen to be unfounded. While modern science has improved our world, it has not led to inevitable progress. We still face problems, which seem to have become greater in the modern age - crime, pollution, poverty, racism, and war.
4. The assumption of the Enlightenment that knowledge is inherently good is being questioned. Today we are increasingly aware that new knowledge does not necessarily lead to its beneficial use and may even

lead to abuse.<sup>18</sup>

Merritt Watson, a minister of the Bethany Christian Church in Arapahoe, North Carolina identifies with many Christian scholars and leaders when he suggests a positive outcome to the emergence of postmodern thought.

Taken in a constructive way postmodernism has some important contributions to make to church and ministry. The dividing wall of science and reason, which had placed religion in an altogether separate world, is destroyed. All knowledge, even scientific knowledge, is seen as arising out of a tradition of beliefs. ... Some scientists have increasingly recognized that there is a mystery at the heart of existence. The faith commitments of religion thus can no longer be seen as irrelevant to the modern world. It becomes a matter of which faith commitments one is going to make. This postmodern understanding is encouraging for Christians who have felt that religious beliefs were somehow less valid because they were not scientific.<sup>19</sup>

The setting aside of the modernist agenda has led to a time

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<sup>18</sup> Diogenes Allen, "Christian Values in a Post-Christian Context," *Postmodern Theology*. Frederic B. Burnham, ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1989), 20 - 36.

<sup>19</sup> Merritt Watson, "Reflections On Church And Ministry In A postmodern Era," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 27 (July 1992): 75.

of confusion, ambiguity and, for many, despair. The present generation lives in a relativism with no boundaries parallel to the time of the biblical material found in the Old Testament Book of Judges. Cultural analyst and Director of Trinity Forum centered in Washington, D.C., Os Guinness, describes the dilemma of the current vacuum in western societies:

Where modernism was a manifesto of human self-confidence and self-congratulation, postmodernism is a confession of modesty if not despair. There is no truth; only truths. There is no grand reason; only reasons. There is no privileged civilization (or culture, belief, norms and style); only a multiplicity of cultures, beliefs, norms and styles. There is no universal justice; only interests and the competition of interest. There is no grand narrative of human progress; only countless stories of where people and their cultures are now. There is no simple reality or any grand objectivity of universal detached knowledge; only ceaseless representation of everything in terms of everything else.<sup>20</sup>

The Church (both Catholic and Protestant) has authoritative texts (the Scriptures, apocryphal and encyclical

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<sup>20</sup> Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds* ( London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1994 ), 105.

writings) which were established and have been preserved within community through the centuries. There have always been differences over the authority and understanding of these texts. However, there is a recognition that these texts are foundational for defining essential beliefs and values, which do not need to be restricted to a particular time and culture. These beliefs and values have been discovered and transmitted through time cross-culturally to define the parameters of "a community" that is to be a model for all other communities. Although there will always be a variety of models used to demonstrate Christian community within differing cultural contexts, there are some commonly recognized beliefs influencing these models. The biblical vision of a multicultural society given in Rev.21: 22-27, where all the nations live in harmony with an appreciation of diversity, provides a picture of the hope of these beliefs being fulfilled.

These core beliefs and values have been informed by Scripture, tradition and experience and provide a way of discerning a community-based understanding of the truth being sought by many today. An article written for *The Bridge* presents a summation of the core beliefs and values that inform the topic of this study:

- i) **The Doctrine of Creation** - The unity of the human race is affirmed by Paul as he addressed the audience in multiracial, multicultural and multireligious Athens (Acts 17:26). His approach is an indication of a fundamental belief that we have been created in the image of God (imago dei) and must begin our dialogue at this place of common origin.
- ii) **Creation is Designed with Diversity** - From the beginning God has so designed the created order that there is a continual diversification of a species. Diversity is found in every realm of the natural world. The biblical expectation is that people will simultaneously assert both the unity of the human race and the diversity of expression racially, and culturally (Rev.7:9).
- iii) **The Incarnation: A Divine Model** - God chose to be revealed in human history through a specific culture at a specific time (i.e. Jesus of Nazareth, a first century Jew). Jesus modeled what a perfect servant of God would be like in a particular circumstance. The Christ comes to all cultures as Savior, Judge and Lord. His revelation cannot be fully understood unless his followers from all the nations of the world come together in community and exchange their insights

and experiences. This was the discovery of the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15 when the established cultural customs of the messianic Jewish people in the early church were being presented as the norm for those being converted from non Jewish backgrounds. There was an exchange of ideas and opinions which was representative of the tensions resulting from the diversity of the cultures being attracted by the Christian gospel into the church.

The result that emerged in the Acts council:

- (i) took serious account of existing and at the time traditional ways;
- (ii) related itself firmly to the experienced realities of the present and what God was doing in the present;
- (iii) based itself squarely on the biblical witness; and
- (iv) involved a fresh evaluation of the whole situation based upon the fundamental principles of the gospel.<sup>21</sup>

iv) **Pentecost: The Spirit and Multiculturalism** - On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) the Spirit of God came with power upon those present. As a result, all heard the Gospel in their own language and representatives of every nation under heaven were among the first followers of Christ to establish

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<sup>21</sup> John Nolland, "Acts 15: Discerning The Will of God in Changing Circumstances," *CRUX* ( March 1991 ), 34.

his new community. This public acknowledgement of a common Lord and Savior by a gathering representing the diversity of cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the day was the first expression of the church.

- v) **Redemption Provides the Basis for Unity** - In the biblical material Babel stands at one point in history symbolic of the confusion, which results when humanity pursues goals inconsistent with God's agenda (Gen. 11:1-9) and the cross stands at another point in history symbolic of the reconciliation, which results when humanity accepts God's design for society. Unity is not found in the merit of a particular culture or history, but in a common experience of redemption in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is the story of human scattering, of nations spreading abroad, falling apart and fighting. The New Testament is the story of the divine ingathering of nations into a single international society. In Galatians 3:28 Paul states that while racial, national, social and gender distinctions remain, they no longer divide because all are one in Christ Jesus
- vi) **The Church Gives Expression to the New Humanity** - Ephesians 2:15b -16 provides the foundational statement for the formation of Christian community and the rest of the letter

is the blueprint for the church. To not work toward the model of unity and community outlined throughout the rest of the New Testament would be a denial of the reason for Christ's sacrificial work on the cross.<sup>22</sup>

One of the most influential forces shaping the church in both theology and ministry in the latter half of the twentieth century has been the Church Growth Movement (CGM). The movement has been informed by a number of guiding principles and beliefs that reflect the underpinnings of a modernistic worldview. With intentionality and efficiency the CGM has researched, analyzed and postulated certain theological assumptions that are believed to be universally valid. The fundamental assumption is that numerical growth lies at the heart of the mission of the church and will determine the methodologies to achieve this end.

With growth as the acceptable goal, the proponents of this mission model make several assumptions, which ultimately demonstrate their understanding and definition of the church. These foundational assumptions that give shape and form to the church in mission and faith community are based on a legitimate concern for the unchurched of the world. In trying to discover

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<sup>22</sup> Paul Pearce, "It's Multi-Cultural Ministry for a Multi-Cultural World," *The Bridge (an occasional bulletin about the churches and ministries of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec)*, April 1994.



how to relate the gospel to the modern world the CGM relies heavily on modernistic disciplines such as sociology and anthropology to develop methodologies and insights. The CGM's understanding of God and the church provides a theological rationale for developing homogeneous church communities.

1. God is a searching God who wants to "find" the **ethne** (Greek for - nations or peoples), to be the God of all peoples. What he wants most of all is to incorporate the nations into his church, to see rapidly growing and multiplying churches. God wants his church to grow.
2. Human society is made up of a mosaic of peoples, each homogeneous unit determined by ethnic, linguistic, economic, tribal, and cultural distinctives.
3. Each unit of culture, each tile of mosaic, will be willing to hear and respond to the Gospel at a different time (when it is "ripe" and "receptive"), it will be willing to become Christian for different motives because of a presentation of the Gospel adapted to its cultural mold.
4. If acceptance of the gospel entails crossing some cultural barriers and becoming incorporated into a different homogeneous unit, the person will be reluctant to become a Christian.

5. Thus, for the best results (the most numerical growth) one must take the cultural distinctives of homogeneous units into account and present the Gospel accordingly.<sup>23</sup>

There is widespread agreement among church leaders and missiologists that the CGM has made some helpful insights and has designed some useful tools for attaining numerical growth from their sociological/anthropological analyses. There is at the same time disagreement on the theological integrity of the CGM's approach for a proper understanding of the church. The tension between the "sociological/anthropological" and the "theological" camps centers on the issue of whether the church is a "community of communities" or a "community". Should the church be a plethora of separate homogeneous groupings agreeing to cooperate because of common beliefs and values or should the church be a heterogeneous community agreeing to model the possibility of different people groups being able to live together? The debate is critical for adequately responding to those who are rejecting the modernist worldview and assumptions by proposing a postmodernist approach. They feel that the challenges of postmodern thought to the modern world can also be applied to the church, which has been heavily influenced by

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<sup>23</sup> Charles Van Engen, *The Growth Of The True Church* ( Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1981 ), 358.

modernist assumptions. The critical points of discussion that inform the development of church models that will be truly representative of Christ's message and the early church's mission are presented below:

i) Form - Essence

One of the challenges that postmodernism makes to modernism concerns the integrity of the institutions produced through modernistic influences. The challenge arises out of the observation that many of the institutions (eg. education, health care) end up delivering a service that is at odds with their purpose. The reason for the discrepancy is that many modern institutions have been dominated by a rationalistic mindset more concerned with form than essence. This criticism could also be made of the church. The CGM debate over methodology has raised many questions concerning form and essence. What is the church? How do we go about getting it? How do we know when we have it? Protestant theologian Jurgen Moltmann, at Tübingen, makes the observation that the tension between form and essence has been an ongoing reality of church history when he says:

This tension between the faith of the church and our experience of the church is not just perceived today for

the first time. It has existed from the very beginning, even at the time when the church was formulating the church's creed. The church never existed in a historically demonstrable ideal form, a form in which faith and experience coincided. But this discrepancy constantly kept the hunger for correspondence between the two alive.<sup>24</sup>

For many the contemporary church has lost "the hunger for correspondence between the two" and has become "**form**" obsessed at the cost of losing the "**essence**" intended by Christ. It is inconsistent to separate the methods followed in building a church from the ultimate vision for the church. Roman Catholic theologian Hans Kung's, at Tübingen, observation that, "The real essence of the real church is expressed in historical form."<sup>25</sup> clearly points out the need for the mission activities to be directed towards an end, which represents the intentions of God for humanity. This end must in some way be building a community that has unity with diversity rather than uniformity. David Bosch, a former South African missiologist, summarized the inadequacy of pursuing mission for mission's sake and not moving

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<sup>24</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, trans. by Margaret Kohl ( London: SCM Press, 1977 ), 21.

<sup>25</sup> Hans Kung, *The Church* , trans. by Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden ( New York: Sheen and Ward, 1967 ), 5.

individuals into community that will help them to become more fully the new creatures God has intended when he states that:

It is unthinkable to divorce the Christian life of love and justice from being a disciple. Discipleship involves a commitment to God's reign, to justice and love, and to obedience to the entire will of God. Mission is not narrowed down to an activity of making individuals new creatures, of providing them with "blessed assurance" so that, come what may, they will be "eternally saved" Mission involves, from the beginning and as a matter of course, making new believers sensitive to the needs of others, opening their eyes and hearts to recognize injustice, suffering, oppression, and the plight of those who have fallen by the wayside.<sup>26</sup>

Edmund P. Clowney, an American Presbyterian pastor and professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, provides a helpful summary of the dilemma faced by the contemporary church's reliance upon modernistic disciplines to provide an institutional form consistent with the intended essence.

...if our growing understanding of sociology outstrips our

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<sup>26</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* ( Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991 ), 81.

grasp of biblical theology, we may seek to build Christ's church from the wrong blueprints. Concretely, it is evident that in our efforts to respect sociological structures in evangelism we may unintentionally deny the biblical doctrines of the unity and catholicity of Christ's church. Christ's teachings are an offense to the mind of natural man, and Christ's community is a rebuke to tribalism, ethnocentrism, and prejudice of the world's social orders.<sup>27</sup>

ii) Phenomenon - Creed

Postmodernism has emerged as a result of a conviction that there can be no agreement on the meaning of texts passed on from former generations. The debate is a complex one between postmodern philosophers that Stanley Grenz summarizes:

Meaning is not inherent in a text itself, they argued, but emerges only as the interpreter enters into the dialogue with the text. Consequently, the meaning of a text is dependent on the perspective of the one who enters into dialogue with it, so that there are as many interpretations of a text as readers (readings)... This means that there is no one meaning of the world, no

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 28.

transcendent center to reality as a whole.<sup>28</sup>

The previous discussion on form-essence raises the issue of the relationship between the church of our experience (phenomenon or real) and the church of God's intention (creed or ideal). The church must be seen to be believed and the church must be believed to be seen. The vision that informs the beliefs and actions of believers to establish and maintain a local expression of the church must be defined by the transcendent expectations of God for His church in history. At the same time, the local church must be an expression of real finite human beings living and ministering in this world in a way that is relevant to their situation. God intends for His church to be an expression of a new human community where the social, cultural and gender barriers of the old order are no longer acceptable.

Some contemporary Christian theologians believe that there has never been an expression of this ideal community. They believe that although there is a transcendent vision for the church, our primary concern in this life is to get people into the church so that they will experience the "ideal" throughout eternity. They would hold that the New Testament churches and those of subsequent periods have been 'strikingly monoethnic' and

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<sup>28</sup> Grenz, Star Trek, 26.

were deliberately designed to be this way so that the church would grow. Citing a number of sources David Smith, former British pastor and missionary to Nigeria, challenges this notion in the case of the New Testament experience and postulates a totally different conclusion.

Whereas it was once believed that the early Gentile congregations were drawn largely from one level of Graeco-Roman society, closer study of the evidence suggests that in fact, Christianity broke down social and ethnic barriers and succeeded in holding together a remarkable variety of peoples.<sup>29</sup>

It was this "real" experience of community that made the "ideal" relevant for the first century non-Christian (pre-modern) world as the church began to emerge as a significant people movement.

The impact that the early church made on non-Christians **because of Christian brotherhood across natural barriers** can hardly be overestimated. The abolition of the old separation between Jew and gentile was undoubtedly one of the most amazing accomplishments of the gospel in the first

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<sup>29</sup> David Smith, "The Church Growth Principles of Donald McGavran," *TRANSFORMATION* (April - June 1985), 26.



century. Equally amazing, however, was the breaking down of the class of distinction between master and slave.<sup>30</sup>

In his discussion on the nature of the church and the relationship between the revelation of the Word and the mission of the church Karl Barth stated that:

The community is the human fellowship which in a particular way provisionally forms the natural and historical environment of the man Jesus Christ. Its particularity consists in the fact that by its existence it has a witness to Him in the face of the whole world, to summon the whole world to faith in Him. Its provisional character consists in the fact that in virtue of this office and commission it points beyond itself to the fellowship of all men in face of which it is witness herald.<sup>31</sup>

One of the most significant witnesses the church can bring to the credibility of the gospel is to demonstrate for each generation the correlation between the creeds professed and the communities formed to incarnate these professions. If the church is going to have any witness to those being influenced by

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<sup>30</sup> Wilbert R. Shenk, *Exploring Church Growth* ( Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1983 ), 299.

<sup>31</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. by G.T. Thomson ( Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1958 ), 2.2 .

postmodern thought, then there must be a demonstration that the texts can be applied universally through time and culture and produce communities that consistently show the love of Christ and the pattern of living found in the New Testament. Thus, the texts can be shown to be free of always being bound by particular readers in particular situations.

The Christian text and creed do provide an explanation of the world and history, which has informed individuals and faith communities for two millennia. There certainly has been a diversity of opinions, interpretations and manifestations of the Christian narrative, but there has also been a significant cohesion to the overlying themes of the faith throughout this period as regularly expressed in the annual Christian year and festivals. The celebration of God's coming to be with us at Christmas and the recognition of His sacrifice to restore a broken relationship central to the Easter season are two of these themes.

### iii) Consumerism - Community

There has also been a debate throughout the centuries over the "sinful-holy", "imperfect-perfect" or to use Hans Kung's terms "legitimate-illegitimate" nature of the church as experienced in this world. The church is called to live in the

tension of recognizing the inadequacies of the "what is" while not losing the vision for striving for the "what should be". The problem with the contemporary church for many is that it creates an environment that is comfortable with " what is" rather than challenging people with " what should be". There is a conflict created between the preaching of the Church (**kerygma**-what should be) and the actual expression of the Church (**koinonia**-what is). Lyon's statement that, "If postmodernity means anything, it means the consumer society"<sup>32</sup>, identifies a challenge for the church. To have lasting impact into the next generation, the church will have to be sure of what is being offered to the "consumer". The fads of global consumerism can find their way into the church and the gospel can soon become another rejected product for a cynical postmodern generation, if there has not been a genuine encounter with the living God and his community.

...if it is true that the Christian community shows signs of being co-opted by consumerism, then the problem lies in the sacralizing of self. The god/dess within, from this viewpoint is no god. The Christian gospel bids us first look upward, to a transcendent God who is also incarnate in Jesus, then outward, to our neighbor, that we should

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<sup>32</sup> Lyon, *Postmodernity*, 68.

hear first. Only then will the insistent voice of the sacred self be silenced.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Contemporary Canadian Church**

Mark Noll at Wheaton College describes the current situation facing the church in United States and Canada:

In French-speaking Canada, the Catholic Church's intrinsic authority is only a shadow of what it once was. In the rest of Canada and in the United States, the Protestant mainstream that once dictated cultural values, provided standards for private and public morality, and powerfully shaped the media - that Protestantism is fragmented and culturally feeble.<sup>34</sup>

John Stackhouse at Regent College informs the notion of fragmentation when he describes developments in late twentieth century Protestantism in Canada.

...the dominance of the mainline Protestant churches in many respects broke up; attempts to unify some denominational traditions failed; certain denominations tolerated and even encouraged internal diversity of theology and practice; traditional patterns of alliance

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<sup>33</sup> Lyon, *Jesus in Disneyland*, 25.

<sup>34</sup> Albert J. Menendez, *Church And State In Canada* ( Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1996 ), 72.

were modified as evangelicalism rose to some prominence as a new religious network; and increasing numbers of people identified themselves as having "no religion."<sup>35</sup>

Fragmentation characterized Canadian Protestantism in particular. With what one might call the "final disestablishment" of the old United-Anglican-Presbyterian hegemony, with traditional patterns of church membership eroding, and with sociologists noticing discernible traces of individualistic "pick-and choose" continuing to change in some fundamental ways.<sup>36</sup>

Donald Posterski at World Vision and McMaster Divinity College in summarizing the research and analysis of Reginald Bibby, points out that there is a large number of Canadians who still identify with Christianity and the church even if they are not regularly attending (cultural Christians):

... most Canadians fall into the "cultural Christian" category and the relative number of "unchurched" is low. It is the "cultural Christians" who are subject of Reginald Bibby's analysis of religious fragmentation in

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<sup>35</sup> George A. Rawlyk, *The Canadian Protestant Experience 1760 - 1990* ( Burlington: Welch Publishing Company Inc., 1990 ), 235.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 220 .

Canada. Concerning this group, Bibby writes, Canadians are not attending religious services in numbers comparable with the past. But the overwhelming majority still continue to identify with the historically dominant groups. It has been a major error to equate attendance drop-off with religious disaffiliation. The ties remain strong.<sup>37</sup>

An extensive research poll done by the Angus Reid Group for *Maclean's Magazine* in 1993 revealed a growing and significant evangelical wing of the church. The late George Rawlyk of Queen's University gave a thorough and helpful analysis of the poll:

...when religiosity in Canada is studied from the bottom up using the data recently assembled by Angus Reid, a radically different picture begins to emerge from that projected for decades from the top down. Obviously, any funeral planned for Canadian Christianity or for Canadian evangelicalism is premature. In fact, the evidence suggests that Canadian Protestantism is beginning to look more and more like American Protestantism, and Canadian Catholicism, though largely secularized, is becoming more Protestant and even more evangelical in its style and

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<sup>37</sup> Donald Posterski and Irwin Barker, *Where's A Good Church?* (Winfield: Wood Lake Books Inc., 1993 ), 15.

emphasis. This is indeed something of a religious earthquake. Moreover, further analysis of the data has suggested not only one in six Canadians eighteen or older may be considered to be evangelicals but that a non-inconsequential further number may be regarded as dormant evangelicals - men and women who possess many but not all of the key evangelical characteristics.<sup>38</sup>

Two Canadian writers make some insightful comments concerning evangelicals:

... the evangelical church's history as religious underdogs, coupled with the mission driven nature of their understanding of their ministry, positioned them to advance in the '70's and '80's. From their beginnings in Canada, evangelicals have always had to try harder and to work with a competitive spirit. They were used to their minority status in the culture and unapologetically invited people to come to Christ and enter their folds. Evangelicals also found themselves in touch with an unstated but widespread cultural hunger. The human spirit refused to be downsized to test tubes and the limits of rational-only-reality. The evangelical message to

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<sup>38</sup> George A. Rawlyk, *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour?* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1996 ), 116.

personally experience the forgiveness of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit tapped into the hunger of the age. Responding to streams of United States strategies and conferences championing church growth, evangelicals reached out to win the world. By 1990, it is estimated that on a normal Sunday morning in Canada, there were more people worshipping in evangelical churches than there were in the combined total of the mainline churches.<sup>39</sup>

The prospects for the future of evangelicals in Canada are good if they can adapt to the needs and nuances of the emerging generation and the boomers who are being significantly influenced by postmodern thought. Two writers catch the potential for the future in their commentary of the age. First, Mark Noll reflects on the work of Reginald Bibby:

Reginald Bibby, whose work has done so much to underscore the drift toward self in modern Canada, nonetheless has understood the history of his country. And so, at the end of *Mosaic Madness*, as Bibby ponders possibilities for Canadian society as well as the constitutional impasse, he turns in a traditional direction. At the center of his hope is "religion ... Canada's sleeping giant." If, Bibby

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<sup>39</sup> Donald Posterski and Gary Nelson, *Future Faith Churches* (Winfield: Wood Lake Books Inc., 1997), 53.



asks, religion can be a force for social cohesion and personal renewal in Eastern Europe, the Philippines, South Africa, and scattered locations in South America, why can it not work to the same ends in Canada? It might, he concludes, if religious leaders can speak with boldness to as well as from culture, exploit rather than simply bemoan the media, and, most important, renew the resources of faith to overcome the pall of individualistic relativism.<sup>40</sup>

Merrit Watson presents the challenge the church will face in the future as necessary transitions are made to relate to the future being influenced by postmodern thought:

With new imagination and vision Christians can set themselves to the task of working with the oppressed in the struggle for life and reversing the abuses of the environment. Western interpretations of biblical doctrines which have been the basis for dominance and mastery can be looked with new imagination to understand the mutual, communal, and relational emphases that are there. We can have hope that those who have been ignored and marginalized will find themselves included in the gospel because it

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<sup>40</sup> Mark Noll, "The End of Canadian History," *FIRST THINGS*, no. 22 (April 1992): 36.

embraces and affirms them from within their own context. And we can hope that because of the postmodern way of looking at things real changes will be made in the lives of both the oppressed and the oppressors; that long abuse of the environment will cease as we give attention to the complementary role that is ours in God's creation.<sup>41</sup>

Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall at McGill University has identified some helpful categories for a discussion of how the church can engage today's postmodern world with the timeless truth and experience of the Christian gospel. His approach suggests that there are four human quests that are strongly present in the dominant culture of Canada and the United States today:

... our society longs for something that its performance regularly denies and its operative values frustrate, and second...those who themselves participate in that longing, Christians may engage their society from the perspective of faith and hope.<sup>42</sup>

Hall then goes on to describe the four quests that are common to contemporary western cultures, (1) the quest for moral

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<sup>41</sup> Watson, *Reflections On Church*, 76.

<sup>42</sup> John Douglas Hall, *Christendom And The Future Of Christianity* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1997), 57.

authenticity, (2) the quest for meaningful community, (3) the quest for transcendence and mystery, and (4) the quest for meaning.<sup>43</sup>

(1) The Quest For Moral Authenticity

There has been a loss of acceptable authority sources, which provide the basis for law, ethics and moral development in western societies. This has led to a time of confusion at both private and societal levels. If Christians are able to engage others responding to this dilemma, then there could be a forum for demonstrating the power and integrity of the gospel.

The late Lesslie Newbigin, Anglican Bishop of the Church of South India, missionary and author, is one of those calling for a renewed commitment to the gospel in the face of the current breakdown of morality and meaning.

The truth is that the gospel escapes domestication, retains its proper strangeness, its power to question us, only when we are faithful to its universal, supranational, supracultural nature - faithful not just in words but in action - not just in theological statement but in missionary practice in taking the gospel across the cultural

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 57.

frontiers...<sup>44</sup>

One cannot underestimate the difficulty of achieving this goal of coherence between the words of our message and the action of our churches and ministries. Hall points out that the church's effectiveness will be felt by engaging its world with a candid honesty of dilemma and a certainty that those without an authority source can achieve. He says that:

We know the moral confusion of this world because it is also our confusion. What, it seems to me, we have not yet fully grasped is that this very fact - our own participation in the anguished quest for moral authenticity - constitutes the apologetic point of contact without which we could not begin to reach out to others.

Instead, therefore of retreating into theological and ethical systems that only insulate us from the moral dilemmas of our contemporaries, we Christians must learn how to go to our Scriptures and traditions as bearers and representatives of those existential dilemmas.<sup>45</sup>

If the Canadian church is going to have anything to say to an age of diversity and multiculturalism about community, then

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<sup>44</sup> Don A. Pitman & Ruben L.F. Habito & Terry C. Muck, *Ministry & Theology In Global Perspective* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 336.

<sup>45</sup> Hall, *Christendom*, 59.

there will have to be an authenticity to the "**strangeness**" and difficulty of achieving such a goal of living in genuine loving and caring relationships with those who are not like ourselves.

(2) The Quest For Meaningful Community

Hall summarizes the experience of many today as they approach the church to find meaningful relationships and community:

Our very congregations, which are supposed to be the Christian answer to the human quest for genuine community (**koinonia**) are for many if not most churchgoers un-genuine, not to say artificial. And for those who do not fit the economic, educational, racial, or sexual mold that the churches still project, our congregations even accentuate the failure of community.<sup>46</sup>

There is probably no greater challenge facing Canadian churches today than that of multiculturalism. As a nation, Canada has responded to this quest with a policy of multiculturalism, which is attempting to maintain unity while encouraging diversity. The experiment with multiculturalism over the last 27 years has had time to begin to show the weaknesses of the policy and it appears that it is too late to change the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 60.

directions that have been set by the key institutions influencing daily life.

Most institutions have had to respond to this shift to multiculturalism either because government legislation has forced them to make changes or economic necessity has forced them to act in order to maintain and develop consumer constituencies. Educational and other government funded institutions have had to design programs and structures to meet the expectations of this multiculturalism policy. Unfortunately, the attempts to manage people's behavior in the public sector does not change their attitudes and practices in their private lives.

There is a subliminal racism that occasionally flares up in communities across the country. Business institutions have adjusted to the changing scene and have accommodated the multiculturalism policy when it is expedient to attract more consumers through hiring quotas and product design for those cultural groups that have the resources. Beyond the daily shared work experience and goal of achieving a profit for the institution, there is very little of substance held in common by the employees that builds any sense of lasting community.

Canadian churches have often responded by developing models of church life primarily concerned with church growth in

homogeneous cultural groupings. For the most part these churches have justified staying in homogeneous groupings so that evangelism and establishing immediate support relationships would be more effective. Thus, there are large and growing churches that are failing to address the underlying problems of alienation and racism being felt by the diverse cultural groups in Canada due to the multicultural experiment. Local churches are in the long term contributing to the fragmentation being experienced by many.

One of the notions raised by those who are proposing a postmodern worldview is that there needs to be a community-based understanding of truth. Stanley Grenz is representative of those who are placing an increasing importance on the role of the Christian community for properly interpreting and understanding the revealed truth of the Bible.<sup>47</sup>

Millard Erickson of Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University and Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Portland is intrigued with Grenz's emphasis on the community when he acknowledges that:

There is realization that because of the essential limitations of each individual and the complexity of

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<sup>47</sup> Grenz, Star Trek, 29-30.

knowledge in our present time, theology must be a community endeavor.<sup>48</sup>

However, Erickson challenges Grenz's heavy reliance on the Christian community when he states:

Grenz contends that knowledge is relative to the group or community of which one is a part. That undoubtedly is the basis for rejecting the more radical conclusions of postmodernism. The question, however, is, Why this community rather than another, a non-Christian community? And within the broadly Christian realm, which of the countless subcommunities is the one within which our beliefs are to find their validity?<sup>49</sup>

Even with these differences in how to understand and reach agreement on the truth in community, there is general agreement that there is a role for "the community" to play in this process. To establish a community that will be an attractive and practical alternative for those seeking an experience of community, the contemporary church will have to adopt methods and forms that are more closely aligned to the biblical mandate for a multicultural community. If the church continues to be

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<sup>48</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *The Evangelical Left: encountering postconservative Evangelical theology* ( Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997 ), 55.

<sup>49</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Postmodernizing the faith* ( Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998 ), 100.



influenced by the "consumerism" of the age and presents a gospel to appeal to the current whims of this generation, then the essence being sought by the postmodernist will not be achieved.

Larry McSwain, Associate Professor of Church and Community at Southern Seminary in Louisville states:

One does not expect the new convert to become fully mature at the point of conversion. But for the church to embody into its structures the separations of race, class, language, or sex is to deny the gospel which reconciles. The church is not a unity of one culture, but a unity amid diversity (1 Cor.12:4-11) one body with many members (1 Cor.12:12-13), reconciled individuals who live in peace (Eph.2:11-22). The fullest expression of that reality is the church of multi-cultural persons who worship, serve, and fellowship with each other in the unity of their faith in Christ without the sacrifice of their personal identities.<sup>50</sup>

The dilemma for most postmodernists is that they have trouble agreeing on how to build a community where truth can be discerned. The church has a real possibility to provide a model

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<sup>50</sup> Larry L. McSwain, "A Critical Appraisal Of The Church Growth Movement," *Review and Expositor* (Fall 1980 ), Vol. LXXVII no.4 : 530.

of a community which is representative of the cultural diversity present in today's society.

### (3) The Quest For Transcendence And Mystery

Bishop John Reid presents an insightful analysis of the dilemma being experienced by a spiritually hungry generation.

People today are de-personalized. Ideologies and technology reduce life to what can be seen and measured. In reaction to an impersonal environment, many have pursued some form of spirituality which is intensively subjective. The importance of the internal life is exaggerated and feelings and sensations are analyzed. Whereas other generations looked out to a God who was beyond and outside human life, the search is now for the god within. In Jung's language, the search is for a subterranean god who is within us all. For many people this search has become their form of spirituality. It is a spirituality which might mean paranormal experience, the exploration of depth psychology, an openness to other religions and their meditative techniques or mystical experiences.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>John Reid and Lesslie Newbigin and David Pullinger, *Modern, Postmodern and Christian* ( Carberry: the Handsel Press, 1996 ), 25.

The growing waves of interest in something or someone "out there" who will answer our modern day questions also demonstrates that the current generation has not forsaken the notion of a God who transcends all that we can observe and experience. Movies such as CONTACT, the obsession with UFOs, the increasing number of television programs devoted to spiritual matters and the openness to extraterrestrial life all point to a generation that is not only looking inwardly, but also for an outside reference source.

Christians have a real opportunity to speak to this generation because of the understanding that there can be a personal faith that connects the individual with this transcendent God. God has made himself known and can be known by experience in a personal relationship today. For this experience to move beyond one of many other "experiences" for the individual, the church will have to be a place where one can both be personally affirmed in their own spiritual journey and challenged to appreciate the immediacy of human community as a real and valid expression of the presence of the living God. Stanley Grenz points out the importance of belonging to a community when he says that:

The triune God desires that human beings be brought together into a corporate whole, a fellowship of

reconciliation, which not only reflects God's own eternal reality but actually participates in that reality. Since the New Testament era the focal point of the reconciled society in history has been the church of Jesus Christ, the new covenant people. As that people, we are called to pioneer in the present the community of love and thereby to participate in and reflect the eternal relation of the triune God, the community we will enjoy in the great eschatological fellowship on the renewed earth.<sup>52</sup>

Healthy churches can be the most influential places for the current generation to resolve their spiritual longings. If churches hope to have this role, they will have to be places where there is an honesty and identity with those seeking direction.

Insofar as we allow ourselves as Christians to know, in all honesty, the longing and the dissatisfaction of this contemporary quest for transcendence and mystery, we are also in a position to respond to it out of the riches of the Judeo-Christian tradition, newly revisited with just these experiences in hand. Here and there, Christians are discovering how to discern the transcendent within the

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<sup>52</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 188.

imminent - to see creation itself as mystery. But such discoveries depend upon greater exposure to the bankruptcy of old familiar forms of spirituality than for the most part we have managed in our safe and sedate churches.<sup>53</sup>

#### (4) The Quest For Meaning

The overarching search of all societies that have experienced the malaise of modernity is a search for meaning. Modernity insisted that meaning was built into the historical process as such: whether gradually or in a revolutionary manner, there would be progress toward a conspicuously purposeful existence. This progress was independent of human agency, though it would so to speak employ humanity by liberating the species from ignorance and aligning its potentiality for rational behavior with the patterns of historical destiny. ... The failure of modernity is nothing less than its failure as a system of redemptive meaning.<sup>54</sup>

Some 85% of Canadians say that, in the course of living their lives they find themselves reflecting on three

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<sup>53</sup> Hall, *Christendom*, 62.

<sup>54</sup> John Douglas Hall, *Professing The Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 503.

questions: How did the world come into being? What is the purpose of life? And how can I find real happiness? The people who think they have found the answers to these seemingly universal questions are in the minority; only about 15% to 20% indicate they have been able to lay these three questions to rest.<sup>55</sup>

The current generation of Canadians is searching and open to a wide range of alternatives in a vacuum, which has been created by the malaise, and slow demise of the mainline Protestant denominations. Coincident with this declining influence of the church has been a few decades of economic growth and prosperity. These factors have produced a time of personal and social restlessness as more Canadians have had the time to deal with the more profound questions of existence. The proliferation of alternative religious expressions and literature promoting religious systems different to Christianity indicates this spiritual hunger. Thomas Oden at Drew University observes that the consequences of such a time is prophetic and troubling:

So we live, and will live out the rest of this century, amid

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<sup>55</sup> Reginald W. Bibby, *UNKNOWN GODS: The Ongoing Story Of Religion In Canada* ( Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited, 1993 ), 144.

the decadence of modernity. Decadence comes from the Latin **de** (from) and **cadere** (to fall) - it is a falling away from previous powers, a process of deterioration, a period of decline. If a cadence has a rhythm, decadence has lost its rhythm. It has the same root as **decay**, i.e. to become rotten, to pass gradually from a sound to a deteriorating condition. Something is decaying if it is currently experiencing a precipitous decline of health, a tendency toward dissolution, a wasting away. Modernity is decaying (Karl Mannheim, **Diagnosis Of Our Time**).<sup>56</sup>

Canada is regularly portrayed as one of the most desirable countries in the world for lifestyle and standard of living. Yet, the disenchantment felt across the country and a longing for a more meaningful existence is representative of a rejection of the modernity which has produced our bounty and a rush to a postmodern uncertainty. Reginald Bibby states that,

Canadians are also looking for meaning. That quest, which provides a second indicator of the interest that people have in the spiritual dimension of life, is hardly a new one.

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<sup>56</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *Agenda For Theology After Modernity...What?* ( Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992 ), 81.

What does seem new is the extent to which individuals in the 1990's are publicly engaging in its pursuit. ... In part reacting to excessively technocratic, rational, and materialistic tendencies, sizable numbers of North Americans are being flagrant in their attacks of organized religion and in their flirtations with new religious possibilities. ... Similar signs of spiritual unrest also exist in Canada. Journalist and author Ron Graham spent two years traveling the country attempting to "discover the soul of God's dominion." He concluded that "for all the talk of Canada as a secular and materialist country there seems to be more and more attention to spiritual issues." Says Graham, "All across Canada ... I found religion trying to get back to the Truth."<sup>57</sup>

Canadian Christians have a unique potential to influence a new generation. As a country that has in many ways achieved the dream of progress so foundational to the understanding of modernity, Canada is unresolved and is casting about for a new way of understanding. If the Canadian church can address the "meaning" questions for an emerging postmodern generation, the influence could be felt worldwide as those in the developing

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<sup>57</sup> Bibby, *UNKOWN* , 144.



world discover the emptiness of the myth of progress driving modernity.

If the church can avoid becoming enamored by the "consumer culture" that drives today's agenda and can focus on being faithful to the biblical mandate to proclaim the Kingdom of God, then there is a real hope for a lasting and significant impact. The term "Kingdom of God" is a biblical and theological one to describe the reign or sovereign authority and rule of God over time and space.<sup>58</sup> Millard J. Erickson provides some helpful discussion on the place of the church within the kingdom.

The church is a manifestation of the kingdom or reign of God. It is the form which that reign takes on earth in our time. It is the concrete manifestation of God's sovereign rule in our hearts. ...The kingdom can be found wherever God rules in human hearts. But more than that, it is found wherever his will is done. ...The church is only one manifestation of the kingdom.<sup>59</sup>

The church is called to live in the tension of recognizing the inadequacies of the "**what is**" while not losing the vision for striving for the "**what should be**".

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<sup>58</sup> George E. Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 259-60

<sup>59</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids; Baker Book House, 1985), 1042.

One of the problems with the contemporary church is that it creates an environment that is comfortable with "what is" rather than challenging people with "what should be". To have a lasting impact into the next generation the church will have to be sure of what is being offered to this consumer generation. The fads of global consumerism can find their way into the church and the gospel can soon become another rejected product for a cynical postmodern generation if there has not been a genuine encounter with the living God and his community.

The development and influence of postmodern thought presents a new day of opportunity for the churches in Canada. The ambiguity and uncertainty of being a postmodern nation state has created an environment where the church can credibly re-enter the dialogue as a viable alternative to the chaos of diversity without a center. If Christians can help others to enter an experience of community that is culturally relevant and able to genuinely embrace the diversity of multicultural Canada, then the church will flourish and regain a place of influence at a personal and societal level. This influence will result from a perceived and realized integrity between a faith that meets the quests discussed earlier and a community that is genuinely inclusive of all peoples living in harmony with a solidarity of purpose in serving Jesus and his Kingdom.

## Chapter 4

### Discussion of the Research Findings

#### Introduction

The first part of this chapter will develop a more detailed look at the data collected (appendix II). There will be an analysis of each of the congregations individually with some comparative commentary as insights emerge. A more comprehensive summary defining some of the characteristics that are common to all three will follow. The chapter will end with a fuller discussion on the process and dynamics found through this research project, which are helping these churches move from being established homogeneous congregations to heterogeneous multicultural congregations.

#### Immanuel Baptist Church

There were 16 surveys circulated at Immanuel. 13 (81%) were returned completed, 1 was returned unopened due to someone, who moved, without leaving a forwarding address, and 2 were not returned. The participant profiles provide a representative sample of the congregation:

**Gender**-7 are males,6 are females; **Race and Ethnicity**-7 are white,1 is Chinese,5 are black; **Household Income**-2 earn under \$50,000,2 earn \$50,000-\$75,000,6 earn over \$75,000; **Education**-7 are university educated,2 attended community colleges and 4 are

high school or less; **Employment status**-3 are retired, 3 are part time,7 are full time; **Membership status**- 2 are not members, 2 have been members 2-4 years, 2 have been members 10-19 years and 7 have been members for more than 20 years; **Leadership Service**- Yes 6/No 7. Most of them are committed to private spiritual disciplines and church service, but are less active in outreach and hospitality ministries.

In connecting with the congregation the researcher attended two Sunday worship services, a social evening with about 45 people in attendance, had some coffee/meal times with others and held the focus groups with 6 of the participants. All of these occasions provided opportunities to dialogue with both participants and others from the congregation about the research project. The responses will be discussed for each of the survey sections with an occasional reference to a focus group comment that informs that particular section. There will also be some brief analysis and insights to be more fully developed later in this chapter.

I MY CHURCH AND THE COMMUNITY WHERE IT IS LOCATED- this section shows that the participants as leaders were fairly accurate in their perceptions of the size and makeup of the congregation. 69% (9/13) estimated a Sunday morning worship of 200-400. The average attendance ranges around 275-300. The congregation is clearly in

the mid-size category for Canadian churches. It is important to have an awareness of human resources as this perception affects the feelings held about the effectiveness and stability of the church's ministry. People generally feel good about the current numbers involved at Immanuel, but are struggling with how to keep the church vital and growing.

The survey results show that the church sees itself as a balanced regional commuter church with a solid base in the immediate communities around the church. 93% of the responses indicate 25% or less of those attending church live close enough to walk to church. The majority of people attending the church drive up to 20 minutes with a significant number (approx.35%) driving less than 10 minutes. 69% of the responses indicate 25% or less drive more than 20 minutes.

A recently prepared analysis of the addresses of the 406 households currently on the church's 1999 mailing list shows that 21% live close enough to walk to church , 23% would have to drive 10 minutes or less, 19% would have to drive 20 minutes or less and 37% would have to drive more than 20 minutes.

The participants' analysis is at some variance with the 1999 household analysis in the perception of distance people live from the church. The survey results indicate that about 25% would drive more than 20 minutes to get to the church from their

homes, whereas the 1999 mailing list analysis reports that 37% of those attending require that amount of time to commute.

However, the participants' perceptions that Immanuel is a regionally balanced church is reasonably accurate. The church is regionally balanced by being solidly grounded within the more immediate surrounding communities, which permit people to walk to church or commute within 20 minutes driving time, while attracting a significant portion from distances requiring a driving time of more than 20 minutes to get from home to the church. Those driving more than 20 minutes often tend to be the longstanding members who are essential for the maintenance of the volunteer and financial resources needed to keep the church's ministry viable. One focus group participant describes the church as a drive-to church that is well connected to the immediate neighborhood. For those driving more than 20 minutes to get to Immanuel probably means that their daily lives and homes would not be identified with the immediate communities around the church. They attend Immanuel for reasons other than the desire for having a church based in the community where they live. The focus group sessions revealed that those driving more than 20 minutes to attend Immanuel see their commitment as being grounded in family histories in some cases, but more often in their

appreciation of the style and purpose of the ministries being offered.

The responses indicate that the church is fairly balanced between the 50% of those born in Canada and the rest being both newly arrived immigrants within the last 10 years (25-30%) and those who have lived in Canada more than 10 years (20-25%).

The perceptions around visible minorities are quite well defined. The categories used in the 1996 census materials will be used for this discussion. The brown category description will be used to include Chinese, Middle Eastern and South Asian peoples. The survey responses indicate that the white population (50-60%) slightly outnumbers the black population (35-40%) and the brown population makes up the difference (15-20%).

A 1995 photo directory produced by the church shows 61% white, 28% black and 11% brown. During several 1999 visits to the church the researcher observed that there are increasing numbers of middle-Eastern and Chinese people in attendance at the services and a declining number of those from the white population since 1995. The photo directory does help to confirm that the perceptions of the participants are fairly accurate.

The survey indicates a community profile where whites are 40-45% of the population, blacks are 30-35% and browns are 15-20%. There are some interesting differences when these

observations are compared with the 1996 census tracts for the area. The four census tracts<sup>60</sup> (304.05,304.06,324.02,324.03) with the church at their center contain 19,421 people. There were 1,225 blacks (7%), 8,446 whites (43%) and 9,750 browns (50%).

There is a significant difference in the awareness of black and brown colored people living in the immediately surrounding communities. The survey responses anticipate a much larger black population (30-35% as compared with the census 7%) and a much smaller brown population (15-20% as compared with the census 50%). This has probably resulted from the participants basing their responses on what they experience at the church. They are not in touch with the changes taking place in the surrounding communities. These variances are also influenced by the language factor. Most in the brown category living in the communities around the church have immigrated in the last 10 years from countries where English is not the primary language (China, Middle East, South Asia). If they attend church, they probably attend one where their mother tongue is spoken. This issue of language will be more fully discussed later.

II THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MY CHURCH - this section helps to

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<sup>60</sup> Statistics Canada. *Profile of Census Tracts*. Ottawa: Industry Canada, 1999. 1996 Census of Canada. Catalogue number 95-206-XPB.



clarify the ministry values and emphases characteristic of Immanuel. Immanuel does provide an experience of inclusion and community. There is a positive feeling about the ministries being offered for those who regularly attend and for those living in the immediately surrounding communities. Some of the ministries highlighted in the focus groups included the English as a Second Language groups, the children/youth programs, the Stephen Ministries care groups, the after school homework clubs and a newly developing ministry to international students enrolled at a neighboring Seneca College campus. There was a concern expressed about the needs for ministry to seniors and shut-ins, shut-in moms and immigrant women alone at home. The funding shifts by federal and provincial governments away from community support services is creating a whole new range of needs and opportunities for the church in providing assistance with the daily needs of those living near the church.

The responses to statements dealing with the church being inclusive and a community (1,2,6,7,11,14,15,16,17) show Immanuel as placing a high value on these characteristics and being progressive and intentional in pursuing them.

The dominance of the "agree" to "strongly agree" responses is the pattern for all of the statements except for numbers 14, 15 16 and 17. The disagree responses for number 14, which is

stating the church character is not a place of close unity, is expected as it affirms the responses to all the other statements, which agree that the church is experienced as a community and family.

The participants of the focus groups were helpful in affirming and enhancing the survey responses. A retired black woman, who has been coming to Immanuel for 30 years, said at one of the focus groups that when she first started coming to the church it was primarily white with only a few black people attending. She felt that through the years the church has changed and grown because it is "welcoming and friendly", "accepting of differences", "nurturing and has had helpful sermons", "has a feeling of life" and "is an encouraging place to come to". She feels comfortable bringing non-Christian relatives and friends to church with her. The church was particularly supportive and understanding for her family during a time of personal crisis. She also felt strongly that the teaching and practice of baptism was important to the church.

Another black-middle aged professional man said that the church's diversity and genuine reception of him and his family were significant in their decision to make Immanuel their church. He went on to say that he did not feel that his ethnic background had hindered him in being involved and making a contribution to

the ministries of the church. There was a feeling of healthy respect for one another in the church and any differences that emerged were around the same issues found in any other church (eg. worship and music styles, mission support).

The split response to numbers 15 and 17 dealing with the leadership being representative of the church's diversity and the empowerment and inclusion of newcomers is an insightful observation. The real transition of leadership to the new generation of those attending the church is one of the most critical factors in becoming a genuine multicultural church. Immanuel is well along the way as indicated by the unanimous negative response to question 13 of section IV when asked if the participants had ever felt that ethnic or cultural backgrounds had ever restricted them from certain leadership roles. However, the survey would indicate that there is still need for further development in this area.

A middle-aged Chinese woman told a focus group that "when I go to other churches where everyone is the same, I realize how different this place is!". She also indicated that the church does not only provide a social side of ministry but also has substance in the services, which keeps her coming back. She was "glad to have friends where she comes to worship". She also appreciated the emphasis on the different kinds of music offered

and felt that the various arts (drama, banners etc.) were very important to keeping her family interested in coming to church and involving others.

The range of response to statement 16 is an indicator of one of the primary concerns and ambiguity being felt in multicultural churches. The researcher's observations from his years as pastor at Immanuel, along with the observations from other pastors of multicultural churches, would affirm that the growth in mixed ethnic marriages and mixed ethnic families being attracted to these kind of churches is significant. However, the intermixing of ethnic heritages through marriage and becoming mixed ethnic families is both confusing and at times conflicting for many.

Responses to statements dealing with the church's ministries (3,4,5,8,9,10,12,13,18) show a church that feels good about the current ministries, struggles with the changes needed to stay relevant, is balanced in it's theological understanding between a conversion concern and a personal faith growth concern and has an appreciation of denominational affiliation.

The responses to statement 8 recognize that Immanuel's long history has resulted in a significant number of longstanding members and adherents in the congregation who have always gone to church. The presence of this group of people, who have been a

part of the history of the church, probably creates the ambivalence being felt in the responses to statement 5 concerning the process of change. Immanuel's history would indicate that the pattern of cautiously making changes when necessary is not new.

A longstanding member shared in one of the focus groups that the church had been able to stay together through the changes of the last 20 years because enough of them were able to stay focused on the essentials of being a biblically based ministry. Those who have remained through this time of transition feel good about the emerging multicultural identity of the church, which represents Christ's expectation of the need for accepting and living with one another in a faith community.

Responses to statements dealing with the church's ministries and concern for those outside the church (9,10,13) reflect a definite desire to serve those living near the church (10) with whom they identify (9), and a more cautious commitment to the bigger world scene.

Section IV of the survey has two questions (13,15), which inform these areas of inclusion and community and are helpful to acknowledge here. Immanuel was the only church of the three surveyed where none of the participants have ever felt that their ethnic or cultural backgrounds have restricted them from certain leadership roles. Only one participant indicated that none of

their closest friends regularly attended the church while the rest could identify some of their closest friends as those who regularly attend the church.

III THE VISION OF MY CHURCH - this section shows a church that is anticipating it's future and feels good about it's identity. The responses are mainly in agreement with the statements, which relate to expectations about the future being positive (1,2,12). Number 12 dealing with the church having the financial resources necessary to effectively carry out the ministry is the only response with some ambivalence. This response is probably typical of most churches, but there does not appear to be a crisis feeling around the financial stability of the church. The responses are also mainly in agreement with the statements dealing with the church's identity (4,5,8,9,10) and the validity of that identity to meet the ministry needs for the future (3,6,7,11). There appears to be a recognition that diversity can be a strength if a number of other factors are in place. These other factors include an ownership in the planning for the future, a confidence in the theological and biblical rationales for ministry formation and a recognition that the church's leadership is attempting to embrace and be inclusive of the diversity present within the congregation.

Most of the focus group participants did not feel that being a Baptist church was a negative for the future ministries of Immanuel. One man who did not grow up with a Baptist heritage and has become an active member and leader in the church said that there are other ministry factors that influence people's decisions in selecting a home church. The welcoming capacity of the church, the ministry style and theological position of the church are some of these factors. He felt that changing the denominational name of a church to a more generic non-denominational name detaches it from the historical and doctrinal definition that many people are looking for in deciding on a church to attend.

#### Grandview Calvary Baptist Church

Grandview Calvary's survey responses show a church that is excited about its future but still very much in a process of mustering the resources to feel secure about itself. The church is interesting as a research model because it is a rebuild from a small struggling remnant of a few years ago. The church is like so many urban churches that need to be renewed by a fresh vision for the future.

The focus groups revealed that the church has a wide range of activities throughout the week, which are ministering to people both in the church and from the community. In addition to

regular church programs, other activities include an Open Door program designed for single mothers, an "English as a Second Language" Program, an "Out of The Cold" program for the homeless, and an "East Side Story Club for Children" of the community and a summer kids camp in the community. The church is the meeting place for the largest Alcoholics Anonymous group in Vancouver and works with other agencies like URBAN PROMISE to bring helpful programming to the community. It is heavily committed with the Salisbury Community Society to owning and managing several houses in the community to provide housing for refugees waiting for a decision on their long term status in Canada. There is a significant Hispanic presence within the congregation. The pastor is seen as a key factor in the church's recent developments and is effective in connecting with the community.

There were 16 surveys sent and 11(69%) were returned. The participants are a representative sample of the church:

**Gender**- 7 are male and 4 are female; **Race and Ethnicity**- 7 are white, 2 are South-Asian and 2 are Hispanic; **Household Income**- 2 reported under \$10,000, 7 earn under \$25,000 and 2 earn under \$35,000; **Education**- 2 have high school or less, 2 have community college level, 5 have university level and 1 attended a Bible School; **Employment Status**- 2 are retired, 1 is a full time homemaker, 2 are students, 4 are employed part time and 2 are



employed full time; **Membership Status**- 2 are not members, 1 has been less than a year, 6 have been less than 4 years and 2 have been more than 20 years; **Leadership Service**- 4 yes and 6 no. Most of them are very committed to the personal spiritual disciplines and regular church attendance. When compared to the other two churches of the research project, Grandview Calvary has a much stronger survey participant commitment to outreach and hospitality ministries.

The participants' profiles demonstrate several significant characteristics about the church. The church has a number of educated immigrants and refugees who have not been able to find permanent employment in Canada. The church's membership has a large number who have been members less than 4 years. Several in the focus groups confirmed that the church has small numbers of middle aged members who have been at the church between 5-19 years. Several focus group participants indicated that the church has an increasing number of multicultural households and is attracting other new families looking for that kind of church.

The financial resources of the church are limited by the difficulties for many to find permanent employment. One man who is a longstanding member of over 30 years stated in a focus group that the finances are his main concern. He was excited about the renewal of the church and felt that the next 3-5 years were

critical for building a new financial base to support the church's ministries. He reported that there is a new wave of people with financial resources moving back into the community due to the renewed interest in East Vancouver by developers and city planners. The church will have to be attractive to these new neighbors in order to sustain it's social ministries with the poor.

The researcher had several occasions to connect with the people of the congregation in addition to the 9 participants who attended the focus groups held on two consecutive Sundays before the morning worship service. The researcher was able to observe the Sunday morning activities on these two Sundays and was able to attend one worship service. A sad, but significant event, happened early in the research period when one of the pastors lost her baby son at birth. This event and the funeral service provided some very helpful insights into the quality of caring and the level of community being experienced at Grandview Calvary.

The first section MY CHURCH AND THE COMMUNITY WHERE IT IS LOCATED shows an awareness of the congregation's size of about 130-150 regularly in attendance. This church is a strong community based church with about 30-40% walking to church, 30-40% within a 10 minute drive of the church and the rest

driving more than 10 minutes. A retired man, who has been around the church for a long time, indicated in one of the focus groups that today a lot of people walk to church compared to a few years ago when most drove.

Many of those attending Grandview Calvary are fairly new to Canada. 30-35% of the people attending worship were born in Canada, 30-35% have immigrated within the last 10 years and the rest have immigrated and lived in Canada at least 10 years or more. The white (50%) and the Hispanic (20-25%) populations are the two largest identifiable ethnic groups with a growing population of Chinese people (10%). Small numbers of blacks, Native Indians, South-Asians and Japanese make up the rest of the congregation.

The participants' perceptions of the community surrounding the church indicate that the white (35-40%) the Chinese (25%) and the Hispanic (25%) populations are the largest with the remainder being black, South-Asian and Native Indian. There are some significant differences concerning visible minorities between the survey results and the four 1996 census tracts<sup>61</sup> (050.02,051, 054,056), which have the church at their center. The total

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<sup>61</sup> Statistics Canada. *Profile of Census Tracts*. Ottawa: Industry Canada, 1999. Census of Canada. Catalogue number 95-213-XPB.

population for the four tracts is 29,903 with 12,365 (41%) being visible minorities. The population for the various ethnic/racial groupings show 17,538 (59%) white, 7,630 (26%) Chinese, 1,935 (6.5%) South-Asian, 1,485 (4%) mixed other, 730 (2.5%) Filipino and 2% Hispanic.

The survey responses understated the presence of the white population by 10%, the Chinese population by 15% and overstated the Hispanic population by 23%. It is evident that the participants' perceptions were being informed by their experience within their church, which was not representative of the community. The significant difference for the Hispanic population was probably due to the fact that the Hispanic sector of the congregation was drawn from across the region rather than from the immediate communities. The presence of a Spanish speaking pastor and ministry services brought people from beyond the immediate communities. This is common with many multicultural churches when a particular language ministry and fellowship is offered. This focus on a language based ministry often leads to a church not connecting with their immediate neighbors because there is a busyness in servicing those who are currently attending from the region. This appears to be the case with Grandview Calvary and the Chinese population where 26% of the community is Chinese and 10% of the congregation is Chinese.

There are a number of ways to analyze a variation like this one. In the case of the Chinese population, they often have been much more intentional in developing their own group of ethnic churches and do not choose to attend established Canadian churches. The larger ethnic groups are usually more protective of their own cultural and language distinctives and do not feel the need for integration for the first generation of immigrants. The multicultural churches usually are attractive to those of the second generation who are much more acclimatized to their new cultural context and no longer identify with the first generation ethnic church.

The responses to the second section THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MY CHURCH shows a church very much identified as "a community" trying to connect with the community where it is located. There is an awareness of community and inclusion being positively expressed in the responses to several of the statements (1,2,6,7, 11,14,15,16,17). The dominance of the "agree" to "strongly agree" responses indicates a common perception that the church is together in the goal of being an inclusive community. The responses to question 15 of section IV indicates that all of the participants consider the church to be a place where they can find some of their closest friendships. All of them have some of their closest friends in the church.

The only statement that shows some ambiguity is number 14 dealing with the church feeling like a loosely knit association of individuals and groups. This ambiguity is probably a result of the dynamics and awkwardness being felt during a formative time of building a new community of faith while trying to find enough common ground to accommodate the diversity of the church. A young woman, who works in cross-cultural ministries, felt that the church was struggling with finding a balance between the rational western organization-centered models of the church, which caters to an individual-centered culture, and the more informal passion models of the church of other cultures where the family and feelings are the primary concern. Some of these feelings also are present in the responses to statements 15 and 17 dealing with the church leadership being representative of the congregation and the empowerment and inclusion of newcomers. There is one survey response indicating that ethnic background has restricted that person from certain leadership roles. This one negative response could be significant for the small number of people surveyed.

The survey responses concerning statements dealing with the church's ministries and connections to the outside community (3,4,5,8,9,10,12,13,18) show considerable agreement with a few interesting variations. The church has attracted a new generation of people over the last few years who have come more for the

style of the church and not because they have always gone to church (8) or because it is a Baptist church (3). However, there is not an anti-denominational sentiment being expressed as 73% (8/11) of the participants in section IV, question 16 indicate that it is important for the church to belong to a denomination. Several focus group participants felt the denominational label was not important, but belonging to some larger group that provided some standards, accountability and a feeling of belonging to something bigger than the local church was important.

There is clearly a wide range of response to the level of the church's involvement in the world beyond the established congregation. Several in the focus groups felt that the presence of the Spanish people had influenced the church's decision to be involved with a mission project in Nicaragua. The concern to support mission ministries in the country of origin rather than a denominational mission is fairly common for newly arrived immigrants. In a multicultural church or a homogeneous ethnic church there is increasing difficulty in raising funds for denominational missions that are serving in parts of the world, which are not the home countries of the main ethnic groups.

The statements dealing with the effectiveness of the church's ministries (4,10) show people feel positive about those

ministries and that both those in the church and those in the surrounding community are having their felt needs being met (4). Those ministries are being informed by a theology committed to nurture more than a theology where conversion is the primary emphasis (12,13). There appears to be a healthy balance between social concern and soul care. A man in his mid 20's said in a focus group that he appreciated a church where there is an evangelical emphasis, a leadership committed to a biblical vision and a commitment to work out the faith in practical ways. A former missionary told one of the focus groups that she was drawn to the church because it was the closest that she had found in Canada to what she had experienced overseas where there was a genuine acceptance of others and love of neighbor which was being expressed in natural ways. She went on to say that there was a real desire to be "the presence of God" in that neighborhood. The church is a place where ordinary people are noticed, accepted and appreciated without being polished or mature before becoming involved. A Hispanic man said Grandview Calvary was a place that just didn't talk about the faith but they practiced it.

The section dealing with THE VISION OF MY CHURCH shows a church both feeling good about the present and anticipating the future. Most of the responses to the statements fall within the "agree" to "strongly agree" range. There is a strong sense of



identity around the multicultural model. A woman in one of the focus groups said that we trust the vision and can live with the awkwardness and be relaxed in living with the difficulties of achieving it. The only negative influence for the church and its vision for the future is in the area of financial resources. The responses present an honest and accurate picture of the church from the researcher's experience of it. There are some significant and highly motivated people gathered around the vision for developing Grandview Calvary into a healthy multicultural church. However, there will need to be a better and more secure financial base for the ministry to continue to grow.

#### Trinity Baptist Church

The survey responses for Trinity Baptist show a church facing a time of transition, feeling unsure about the changes and struggling for a clear vision of the future. The ambiguity and uncertainty about the future was increased during the time immediately following the mailing of the surveys due to the resignation of one of the key pastors.

The pastor who resigned, is Chinese in ethnic background. He immigrated as a child with his family and grew up in Canada. He has been very influential in motivating the church to connect with the changing community around it. He was able to be a bridge between the established Canadian people and the newly arrived

Chinese people. As a result, the church over the past few years has begun to address more intentionally the changing demographics of its immediate community which has seen a significant number of newly arrived immigrants arrive from China and the Philippines. Over the years he has felt supported as a pastor in his preaching and outreach ministries. However, there has been a hesitancy in the church to appoint him as the senior pastor following the resignation of the former senior pastor 3 years ago. He has recently accepted a senior pastor's role at another church within the same denomination in the Vancouver area.

The researcher's involvement with the congregation included the focus groups with 10 people attending, attendance during the Sunday morning activities to observe and attend the bilingual worship service, several one on one sessions with either a pastor or a key leader and conversations with a church consultant who was contracted by the church to lead the church through a planning and strategizing process. The day long consultation "**Vision 2000-Trinity Baptist Church**" was held with 70 people from the congregation a month before the surveys were sent out. The report from this session was very helpful in providing an independent source of information to interact with the research project. The consultant's report will be a part of the discussion to follow and referred to as the **Vision 2000 Report**.

The focus groups revealed that the church provides a wide range of ministry services for both those who regularly attend the church and people from the community. The focus for the church's ministries into the community is the "English As a Second Language" program which weekly attracts about 200 students. There are two ethnic fellowships. There is a Filipino fellowship of 50-60 primarily women who serve as domestic help in the upper income homes of the neighborhood. There is a Mandarin fellowship of 45-50 people, half of whom have been attracted to the church by the ESL ministry. The music ministries are an important part of life at Trinity with three organized choirs and a variety of choral and instrumental groups. The music ministries were seen by many in the focus groups as an important place where newcomers could quickly become involved while learning English. The church operates a full service day care ministry five days of the week and serves 25 children on an ongoing basis. Several focus group participants mentioned the importance of the church's location as an asset and the effectiveness of the church sign on the front lawn, which is visible to one of the busiest traffic routes in Vancouver. The sign is noticed by many in the community because there is a place for a brief message or thoughtful quote that is changed weekly. There were concerns around the church's inability to develop and maintain an effective youth ministry.

There were 16 surveys sent and 15(94%) returned. The participants who responded are fairly representative of the church, which has a large number of newly arrived immigrants who have not yet become leaders within the congregation. **Gender**- 9 are male and 6 are female; **Race and Ethnicity**- 11 are white, 3 are Chinese and 1 is South-Asian; **Household Income**- 1 is under \$15,000, 1 is under \$35,000, 4 are under \$50,000, 4 are under \$75,000, 3 are over \$75,000; **Education**- 1 has high school or less, 5 have community college, 8 have university; **Employment Status**- 4 are retired, 8 are employed full time, 2 are employed part time and 1 is a full time homemaker; **Membership Status**- 6 have been members for more than 20 years, 2 have been members for 10-19 years, 6 for 5-9 years and 1 is not a member; **Leadership Service**- 13 yes and 2 no.

Most of them are highly committed to the personal spiritual disciplines and regular church attendance while only a few are as committed to evangelism and hospitality in their homes.

The participants' profiles show some of the transitional characteristics evident in the current church attendance. There is within the church a significant number of settled, well educated, mainly professional and financially secure people who have been a part of Trinity for more than 10 years.

All of the participants (8) who have been members more than 10 years were born in Canada or have been in Canada for at least 37 years. The 4 males and 4 females are all white in racial backgrounds. The 6 responses from the 5 males and 1 female who have been members less than 10 years show a balance of racial backgrounds (3 white, 2 Chinese and 1 South-Asian). The 1 participant who is not yet a member is a Chinese female who has been in Canada for 20 months. The newer members are beginning to reflect the changing demographics of the congregation, which is a healthy sign of intentional transition.

The responses to the first section MY CHURCH AND THE COMMUNITY WHERE IT IS LOCATED shows Trinity Baptist is a mid-size congregation with a Sunday morning worship attendance of 350-400. These figures were confirmed by the researcher as a result of being involved over a Sunday morning. The church relies on some long-range commuters (10-15%), but is primarily serving those who drive less than 20 minutes (75%). Under 10% walk to church, which indicates that the church is a commuter regional drive-to church. This was reinforced in the focus groups when several of the participants indicated that less than 10% of those attending on Sundays would be from the immediate neighborhood.

The survey responses present a congregation where 20-25% of those attending were born and have lived in Canada all of their

lives. Up to 50% have immigrated to Canada within the last 10 years. The remainder of the congregation has immigrated and lived in Canada more than 10 years. These perceptions are fairly accurate from the researcher's experience of the congregation. The success of the "English as a Second Language" ministries has resulted in a large number (50%) of Chinese and South-Asian people attending on Sunday mornings.

There appears to be a fairly even split (40-45%) between white and Chinese people attending worship. The remaining 10-15% are a mixture of other visible minorities. The group mainly from the Philippines are significant enough in numbers to notice. There is a membership picture wall in the church that would verify these percentages as being fairly accurate based on visual identification. There is also a significant number of mixed ethnic marriages, which is also the marital status of the Chinese Canadian pastor who is married to a woman who is not Chinese.

The participants' perceptions of the people living in the community immediately around the church indicates a fairly even balance between white (40-45%) and Chinese (40-45%) with all the other categories under 10%. There is also some awareness of a growing Filipino population in the community around the church. Trinity appears to be following the pattern of the other two churches of projecting their experiences of the church population

on to the community around the church when indicating their perceptions about who is living in the immediate community. There are some significant differences concerning visible minorities between the survey results and the four census tracts<sup>62</sup> (007,009,010.01,010.02), which have the church at their center. The total population for the four tracts is 25,286 with 10,435 (41%) being visible minorities. The population for the various ethnic/racial groupings show 14,581 (59%) white, 7,135 (28%) Chinese, 7% mixed other, 700 (3%) South-Asian and 795 (3%) Filipino. The survey understated the presence of the white population by 15%, overstated the Chinese population by 15% and was fairly accurate for the other groupings.

The survey responses for the second section THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MY CHURCH reveals that Trinity is a church very much aware of its diversity and the implications of that diversity. The statements dealing with inclusion and community (1,2,6,7,11,14,15,16,17) indicate an affirmation of diversity, a strong awareness of the multicultural flavor of the congregation (2,7), and an openness to receive the newcomers (1).

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<sup>62</sup> Statistics Canada. *Profile of Census Tracts*. Ottawa: Industry Canada, 1999. 1996 Census of Canada. Catalogue number 95-213-XPB.

However, there is a mixed response to statements dealing with integration, empowerment and multicultural marriages (11,14, 16,17). The consultant's observation in the **Vision 2000 Report** provides a helpful summary of the present situation.

... the congregation of Trinity Baptist is friendly, open-minded, and, **quite diverse** in terms of its multiculturalism, its age diversity and its international nature. Currently, this **diversity** is seen as friendly, welcoming, and loving. Open-mindedness characterizes the church. However, in the midst of its caring and accepting, multicultural and international reality, one notices that **there is a sort of " introspection" about " who we are?" , - and about how the church can gain and maintain one(unity). That is - how can Trinity maintain " unity in diversity" ?**

The range of response to statements 11 and 14 indicates that there are some who feel very well connected and a part of a church family and an equal number who do not feel that their church experience has yet led them to feel that there is a strong sense of belonging. Trinity's responses to question 15 in section IV of the survey asking how many of the participant's closest friends regularly attend the church also indicates that people either feel they belong or they don't belong. 20% said none of their closest friends attend the church and 53% said most of



their closest friends attend the church. The other two churches (Immanuel and Grandview Calvary) did not have this kind of difference being expressed in responding to this question. The responses present the church as a coalition of people groups moving towards being a community or family, but this end has not yet been reached. Thus, there are mixed experiences by the newcomers around the issue of belonging and empowerment.

However, statements 4 and 6 indicate that people feel good about the caring quality of the relationships and that the individual's felt needs are being met by the ministries of the church. A Chinese woman who is a significant leader in the church told one of the focus groups that the desire to learn English was a strong motivator for people to come initially to the church and that finding friends was essential to the staying and becoming involved. She felt that Trinity was a welcoming place and in recent years was being more intentional about the deepening of relationships for friendships to develop. The night before the focus session she had organized a new event for women to come together. She reported that about 75 women from all ages and ethnic groups of the church had attended, which was indicative of the desire to deepen relationships.

The response to statement 15 indicates a fairly strong agreement concerning the church's leadership being representative

of the church's diversity. However, there was one response indicating that ethnic background did restrict that person from certain leadership roles. This one negative response could be significant for the small number of people surveyed. The consultant's report from the **Vision 2000** event lists **the need for a paradigm shift at the board level** as one of the four priorities identified by the congregation. In explaining the shift that was needed the consultant indicated that the board members would need to reorient their thinking about how to implement the church's mission, develop "communication", and make appropriate changes in the administrative and organizational structure.

The uncertainty around the support for multicultural marriages is stronger at Trinity than the other two churches. This probably is a result of the fact that Trinity has not had either the intentionality of Grandview Calvary in being multicultural or the experience of time that Immanuel has had to accommodate the changes multiculturalism brings to cultural and family expectations. However, it was insightful to observe that about 20% of the families whose pictures are posted on the membership wall in the church were mixed ethnic marriage families. This percentage was also visually confirmed for those attending the Sunday worship services.

The survey also indicates a mixed response about the church's ministries (3,4,5,8,9,10,12,13,18). There is a feeling that the church's ministries are meeting people's felt needs (4) and that people are not attending out a sense of duty or tradition (8). One young Chinese mother told a focus group that the church's children's programs were being very helpful to her family and was one of the main reasons why they continue to attend. The overwhelming response in the focus groups to the priority need for the near future was in the area of youth ministries. **The need for strengthening youth ministries** is listed as one of the top four priorities for the church in the **Vision 2000 Report**. One middle-aged mother who has been a long time active member and has four teenage/young adult children told one of the focus groups of her frustration with the church in being able to serve the youth.

This difficulty of establishing effective youth ministries in multicultural churches is common. Often the youth ministry is the most vulnerable and stressful area for immigrant families. It is the place where they are culturally threatened as an ethnic home and face increased pressure from the teen children to make adjustments. It is a topic that needs to be further researched and developed.

There is a fairly wide range of response to statement 5 dealing with the process of change. It appears from the responses to statements 5 and 17 that there are those who are having troubles feeling empowered or included by the long time members (17). These long-time members are the carriers of the church's history and traditions and may be the ones creating the feelings for some that it is difficult to bring about the necessary changes for the church to remain effective (5). At the present time there are occasions and ministries being shared which are helping a new generation of leaders to emerge from those who are fairly new to the church. This hesitation to enfold new untested leadership is a normal dynamic for a church in the early stages of transition from a traditional church to a more multicultural model where communication is more complicated.

There is some ambivalence about denominational identity at this time in the church (3) which is also reinforced by the response to question 16 in section IV. In contrast to the other churches (Immanuel-77%, Grandview Calvary-73%) only 64% (9/14) of the participants feel that it is important to belong to a denomination. 4 of the 5 negative responses were from people who have been a member less than 10 years and 3 have been resident in Canada less than 10 years. Those who are new to the church are identifying with the congregation and not a denominational group.

This observation is probably confirmed in the response to statement 13 where the church seems to be more identified with the local mission rather than with other mission and denominational agencies. **The need to "tune" into The Baptist Union of Western Canada** was among the top ten needs listed in the consultant's report.

There is also a wide range of response as to how people feel the church's ministries are serving the immediately surrounding community (9,10). There is general agreement that the church's ministries are provided with a concern for those living near the church (10). However, there is a significant enough difference of agreement on whether the church is different in customs and cultural backgrounds to those living near the church (9) to indicate some transitional confusion being experienced at this time in the church. Is the church really changing in culture and customs to accommodate the newcomers in the community or is it simply hosting people who are different in background without much concern for long term change? There was a feeling in the focus groups that the current response to the ESL programs has created an unusual focus on this ministry at the cost of some other critical social ministries. One middle-aged woman commented on the needs in the community being felt by single mothers on welfare and most of them were white women who had grown up in

Canada. A longtime member pointed that in all the changes taking place, the church must not forget ministries for the established and faithful seniors, both in the church and living in the immediate community. Another focus group participant pointed that there are many lonely Asian women in the immediate community who are in need of finding a place to connect and they may not initially come to a church to find needed relationships.

The church appears to be fairly balanced theologically between the need for conversion and the nurturing of faith (12,18). A number in the focus groups reinforced the importance of the gospel as the unifying force for mission and building community. A longtime supporter of Trinity said that he doesn't mind driving from a distance because the Bible was being made known and "it's not what's nearest to me but dearest to me that counts!". An older woman who teaches in the ESL program said that while "language is a factor, the major language is the language of the gospel".

The survey responses for section III THE VISION OF MY CHURCH indicates that the church currently feels positive about its ministry (2,3,9,10) and financial stability (12), but also has a degree of anxiety about it's future with 33% somewhat disagreeing with the statement (1) that there is a sense of excitement about the church's future. There is some discomfort

with the cultural diversity of the church (4,6), but the overwhelming response is favorable to the current multicultural reality of the congregation. The **Vision 2000 Report** lists a clear summary of the need to address this anxiety about the future as one of the top four priorities.

**The need to take a new look at the "diversity" of the congregation(s)**

-in terms of future planning it must not be assumed that the current "diversity" currently enjoyed will automatically carry on. Consideration of the multi-social, multicultural and international character of the church must be given a clear priority in future planning activity, taking into account "shyness", language difficulties, Cantonese needs, place of women in leadership, and youth ministries.

There are some clear expressions of need being expressed for a regular evaluation and planning process (7) and for some forum where the biblical and theological implications for ministry can be discussed (8). The level of disagreement being felt around statements 7 & 8 signals that the church is still in a vision formation stage where people are feeling that there needs to be a more informed consensus with a solid rationale before moving into the future. The **Vision 2000 Report** provides an

insightful summary statement. The consultant reports that his findings

...reveals a basic unified experience in regard to Trinity's overall ministry. However, there is a thread of concern bubbling beneath the surface of a sense of "isolation" on the part of some. While the church is "caring", "friendly", and "harmonious", nevertheless, there are some who feel they do not "belong". This could be a result of the church's greatest weakness, "communication". Many are asking the board ("leadership") to address this concern.

The responses indicate that there is some lack of agreement on the church's passion for those who live in the immediate community (11). However, there seems to be a fairly strong agreement around the church's identity as different from other churches in the community. This may indicate that Trinity is a "come to" church rather than a "go to" church. A "come to" church follows more of a consumer model which offers programs and invites people to come and participate in them. A "go to" church is one that goes into the community and is known for its involvement in the community (Grandview Calvary). These connections with the community eventually bring people and



resources from the broader community to help develop the ministries that are needed in that particular community.

### **Characteristics Identified**

After reviewing the surveys of all three churches, there are several characteristics that can be identified as important to the multicultural model. These characteristics address in one way or another the various barriers that prevent churches from embracing more intentionally the multicultural model. These barriers emerge out of theological, sociological and personal biases that result in a congregation not achieving their potential due to attitudinal and systemic inflexibility.

- 1) There needs to be a shared vision based on a clear biblical understanding of God's expectation that faith communities should represent the diversity of cultures.

A young man attending one of the Grandview Calvary focus groups reflecting on his house group said that he often struggled with being with people he would not normally choose to spend his time with. But, he believed that this awkwardness of finding Christian community with others was God's way of doing things and he was learning a great deal about himself. This conviction was commonly expressed by those attending the focus groups.

The surveys indicate that Grandview Calvary, which is 10

years into forming and implementing a multicultural vision and Immanuel, which is 20-25 years into the process, are much more agreed about their churches being committed to regularly discussing the theological and biblical implications of important decisions than Trinity, which is in the early stages of the process (Survey section III, statement 8). Established churches tend to operate with a number of theological and ministry convictions that are part of their particular local historical and sociological understanding of themselves. These churches will need either to affirm regularly these core convictions or be revising them as they face the new sociological realities of a changing world, if they hope to remain effective in ministry. The commitment to regular discussion of these core convictions will probably not change the essential theological beliefs of the church, but it may bring a newer understanding and development for these beliefs in light of the new circumstances, as was often the case in the New Testament (eg. Acts 15). The clarification, ownership and refinement of an overall vision for being a multicultural church will regularly need to be reinforced and biblically informed, if it is going to transition through the early awkward years and ongoing transitions in pastoral leadership.

People need to believe that they are part of a ministry that is meeting their own needs and is also making a contribution to the lives of others. Many also want to be a part of something that is new and challenging. The healthy multicultural church experience can provide a place where all of these personal needs and ambitions can be met. The problem for many churches is not in location or initially having the resources to be a multicultural church. The problem is in having the motivation to become one. If people are going to sustain a vision over a number of years, then their church needs to reinforce constantly the rationale and benefits of pursuing such a goal.

2) There needs to be an intentional commitment to ministries with those living in the immediate communities around the church.

This commitment keeps the church fresh with the new and changing people groups who are becoming their neighbors and helps to prevent one group from becoming the dominant group in the church. All three churches are agreed that their church has a real passion for those who are living in the immediate community. Their commitments to their communities have resulted in these churches struggling with the issues of being a community with diversity. The result of this commitment to serve the diversity of the immediate community is that a church begins to develop an identity of relevance focussed on the mission of the church

rather than an identity of maintenance focussed on the tradition of the church. This commitment is also appealing to others who will commute to be involved in something they feel is representative of their daily experience. The surveys show (section III, statements 3,4&6) that these three churches are very much in agreement with the value of their diversity and indicate that growth is happening because of the cultural and ethnic diversity found within their congregations. The focus groups clarified that those who commute from outside the immediate community are being drawn by the vision and model of the church and not because of a particular ministry style or pastoral personality. One of the key characteristics of these churches is the passion felt by many for an effective ministry with their neighbors, which may or may not result in permanent growth. People are committed to a vision that is genuine and bigger than their own personal preferences. It is a vision influenced more by theology than sociology, by a concern to serve than a concern to grow with others just like themselves.

An intentional review of the demographics of both the church and the community around the church on a regular basis should be done to stay in touch with the community and assure that the church is not relying totally on an aging membership that no longer lives in the community. The availability of new

census data every five years provides a good rationale for the periodic review. The rebuilding of Grandview Calvary was necessary because the previous decades of ministry did not produce enough involvement from those living around the church to keep it healthy.

The strategy of Grandview Calvary to develop partnerships with other ministries and community agencies has proven to be a wise and effective way of growing with limited resources. As a consequence, Grandview Calvary is better known in the immediate community around the church as a caring place than the other two churches. This observation does not mean that the other two churches are not caring places, but they do not have the networks into the community like Grandview Calvary.

The perceptions of all three churches are somewhat out of touch with the most recent changes in visible minorities that have evolved in their neighborhoods over the last 10 years. However, their commitments to ministries in the community are helping them to be aware of some of the changes and all three are committed to an ongoing process of evaluation and planning (section III, statement 7) to accommodate these changes.

3) There is an awkwardness around cultural expectations and language that is a reality of church experience.

The mixing of peoples from different cultural backgrounds is complicated and requires both patience and time. The barriers to communication due to language, variations in worship style, the differences in theological emphases and the expectations around family life and children's behaviors are only a few of the issues that create an awkwardness of relationship for many people.

Each of these three churches are handling the language differences in a number of ways. Immanuel uses English in the main weekly worship service and has a number of language fellowships that meet at other times to worship using their own particular mother tongue (Romanian, Farsi and Tamil). There is over time a transition of people from the language fellowships to the English service. There are some other shared activities throughout the year around seasonal celebrations in the Christian calendar (Christmas, Pentecost and Easter), fellowship meals and other special activities where the different groups meet together.

Grandview Calvary uses English and Spanish in their main worship service and integrate the different ethnic groups through the shared ministries of the church and home groups. There are

Spanish speaking elders who work with the pastoral staff to facilitate teaching and counseling ministries.

Trinity holds one service using English with translation for Mandarin speaking people, and one service using English only. Their shared ministry around the "English as a Second Language" ministry along with occasional church social events provide the opportunities for interaction and integration. Several people in the focus groups commented on the awkwardness of different languages and cultural expectations. A Chinese woman wrote in her survey response for Trinity that although people want the church to be an English-speaking church, there needs to be Bible studies offered in the mother tongue so that immigrants can learn the necessary information.

The range of agreement by all three churches that their particular church feels like a loosely knit association of individuals and groups (section II, statement 14) is an indicator of the awkwardness being felt. There needs to be a commitment by the pastors and key leaders to meet regularly to assure good communication, agreement on expectations and resolution of disagreements.

There are a number of individual challenges for those involved in multicultural churches. There is the personal energy required to seek out those from other cultural backgrounds who

require more time to get to know and understand. There is the anxiety around imposing cultural expectations on someone else that will be offensive or harmful to their understanding of Christianity. There is the struggle to find enough in common with someone from another culture to sustain a relationship over a long enough period of time and shared experience to develop a feeling of trust and friendship.

4) There needs to be a commitment to building consensus out of a coalition of different cultural groups so that one cultural group does not dominate or control the ministries of the church.

With the arrival of new cultural groups a church eventually realizes that the tensions being felt around the different customs and expectations of each group can be a place for dialogue and not division. This was the experience of the early church as recorded in Acts 6:1-6 and Acts 15. It is interesting to note that the survey responses concerning the difficulty of change because of the church's history and tradition (section II, statement 5) indicate that Trinity and Immanuel as two established congregations in transition face more tension than Grandview Calvary, which has been rebuilding around a recently defined vision. All three churches show a range of agreement and disagreement in responding to the statements dealing with



leadership boards being representative (section II, statement 15) and the empowerment and inclusion of the newcomers (section II, statement 17).

Both Grandview Calvary and Immanuel appear to be more intentional than Trinity (section II, statements 7&8) to an ongoing evaluation and planning process and to a regular discussion of the biblical and theological implications of important decisions. This probably results from their experience of becoming a multicultural church over a longer period of time than Trinity. Immanuel appears to be further developed than the other two churches in having a church that feels like one large family (section II, statement 11) rather than a loosely knit association of individuals and groups (section II, statement 14).

A feeling of anxiety begins to affect the ministry effectiveness in a multicultural church when the church begins to feel an imbalance in numbers or control of one cultural group over another. There needs to be a constant awareness of the need for inclusion and balance in managing the ministry. There needs to be a commitment within the congregation to be moving from a feeling of toleration by the established members for the newly arrived people of different color and culture to an experience of integration for these new people.

5) The concern for being an effective community is more important than being an efficient organization.

There were several comments made in the focus groups about the struggles of helping people feel involved in significant ways in the life of the church. The democratic governance models and "majority rules" approach common to Baptist congregational polity were mentioned as sometimes being a problem for those from a background where a consensus making approach to making decisions was followed. Some cultures feel that the solidarity of the group is more important than just having a majority of the group in agreement about a decision before proceeding. There are differences of understanding about authority, process and communication between those from extended family models of cultural backgrounds of organization and those from western organizational models built around a number of individuals working through a process of debate and procedure to decide by a vote of the majority to proceed leaving the minority feeling unresolved.

Some of the ambiguity being felt in all three churches around the leadership being representative and the empowerment and inclusion of newcomers is indicative of an area of ministry that is still unresolved and in process. Those who are newly arrived into these churches feel insecure or confused about the

inherited governance model and those who have been established in the church are often impatient with those who will not adjust and fit in.

- 6) The pastors and church leaders must be representative of the congregation and are essential to framing, implementing and living the vision of the church to be a multicultural community.

The role of the pastors and elected leaders in carrying out the ministries is critical to creating an atmosphere where the multicultural church will flourish. It is evident from the survey responses and the focus groups that in all three churches there is a common desire to be a church that is open to change to meet the increasing diversity of today's Canadian society. There are different issues faced by each church at this stage in their development and there is some projected anxiety about the future (section III, statement 1), but there is in all three situations a positive outlook on the current ministries (section III, statement 2).

There is a recognition in all three churches that the pastoral staff are critical to keeping the vision informed, corrected and vital for the congregation. Only Immanuel has experienced the transition of a number of pastoral staffs since it began to move in the direction of becoming a multicultural

church in the 1970's. Part of the anxiety being expressed by Trinity in the survey and the focus groups is a result of the recent resignation of the Chinese Canadian pastor, who has been a significant force behind the developments that have begun to move the church in the multicultural direction. Grandview Calvary is clearly still early in consolidating a new generation of people into a church that will survive a pastoral transition.

7) The multicultural church defines mission around the local community of faith developing natural links to the immediate community and beyond.

There is a new paradigm of global mission emerging with the recognition that the peoples of the world are moving into Canadian communities. Multicultural churches in particular, no longer feel the urgency to support mission agencies which send missionaries overseas to do what needs to be done in their own neighborhood. There continues to be concerns for relief and development projects and short-term mission trips involving local church people in projects related to their particular congregation. The Grandview Calvary congregation has developed a linkage with a church project in Guatemala through the immigrants from Guatemala who started attending the church. The church occasionally sends local people to Guatemala on short term mission projects. There is also a recognition that mission work

can be very effective with those who have immigrated to Canada and who still have influence with their families and people back in their country of origin. The Toronto Baptist Inter-cultural Services are finding this mission model is working with Somali people living in Toronto who are still connected and influential with relatives and friends back in Somalia.

In all three churches there was a significant range of response between agreement and disagreement over the statement connecting the church's ministries with the world beyond the established congregation (section II, statement 13). Although there continues to be a recognition for some type of denominational affiliation, there appears to be an ambivalence about denominational overseas mission agencies that are not serving in the countries from which the different cultural groups have come to Canada.

8) The multicultural church must be aware of the socio-economic factors that both attract and discourage people from becoming involved.

What is interesting to notice in comparing the two Vancouver churches is that both have the same percentage of white (59%) people in the neighborhood and Grandview Calvary has only 2% less (26%) of Chinese people. Yet, Trinity has 40-45% Chinese attending the church and Grandview Calvary has only 10%. Why

would there be such variations? There are a number of variables between the two congregations. Why is Trinity more attractive to the Chinese people than Grandview Calvary? Could it be that Trinity has a Chinese pastor? Could it be that Trinity is a middle to upper middle income church whereas Grandview Calvary is a lower to lower middle income church. Perhaps both of these factors contribute to this variation at this time. Both churches have the same percentage of 41% of the surrounding community being visible minorities.

## CHAPTER 5

### **Developing a Healthy Multicultural Church**

This section will begin with a discussion of some of the models of Canadian churches currently in the process of becoming more multicultural in their ministries. There will then be a presentation of a continuum for becoming a multicultural church with a description of six types of churches at different stages along that continuum.

#### Models of Canadian Multicultural Churches

Because of the American influence on Canadian ecclesiology, there has been little discussion and few attempts at modeling a multicultural church, which is particularized to the Canadian context. Some of the more common models currently found throughout Canadian cities will usually follow one of the following patterns:<sup>63</sup>

##### 1) Shared Usage of Space Between Separate Congregations

This model has a new congregation renting space or being given space from an established church. If this model is going to move beyond "landlord/tenant" relationships, then there must be a commitment to build community between the groups. This is particularly important with the children and youth who usually

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<sup>63</sup> Pearce, *The Bridge*.

share a common language and cultural experience due to their growing up in Canada. This model is the most commonly found and is usually the place of beginning, but rarely moves beyond a superficial acquaintance between the different groups sharing the space.

## 2) Several Congregations Working Together As A Local Church

This model has several separate congregations working cooperatively locally to facilitate one another in ministry. Moving beyond sharing a facility, they may share Christian Education programs, evangelism initiatives, social care services, promotional costs and other program staff and resources to meet the diverse needs of their community. There is a solidarity of purpose in reaching the diversity of the community for Christ through the particular congregational cultural identity. There is also a commitment to the unity of the church through the various congregations working together as one local church.

## 3) One Congregation with Culturally Distinct Fellowships

This model operates as one congregation with several culturally distinct fellowships (CDF) sharing facilities, staff and leadership structure. The CDFs are designed for the culturally conditioned needs of the local context by responding with appropriate ministries (eg. humanitarian service projects, ESL classes) that help those outside of the "household of faith"



become a part of the Christian family while respecting their particular cultural concerns. Those becoming members through the ministry of the "fellowships" are members of the larger congregation and participate in some of the other programming of that church (particularly the children and youth). Immanuel Baptist is an example of this model. There is only one membership. When those belonging to the various CDFs want to join the church, they become members of Immanuel. Immanuel has several CDFs (Tamil language - Sri Lankan, Farsi language - Iranian and a Romanian language fellowship). The pastoral staff of these CDFs meet regularly with the other pastoral staff to support and coordinate areas of cooperative ministry together (i.e. English as a Second Language classes, seasonal worship services, special occasions of common fellowship). Promotional materials into the surrounding communities are also coordinated for mutual benefit.

#### 4) Heterogeneous Outreach and Mission

This model has a local church establishing and/or helping new churches of a different culture. There is a recognition of the need to be involved with ministry to other cultural and language groups, but the ministry is carried out by someone other than the sponsoring cultural group. The language barrier is often the identifying factor - e.g. North Toronto Chinese Baptist

Church providing the support for the establishment of a Middle Eastern Baptist Church in central Toronto.

#### 5) Mission Model

The Toronto Baptist Inter-cultural Services located in Toronto is working with a model that is for cultural groups not wanting to be seen as either "Canadian" or "Baptist". However, the groups (Somali/mainly Islamic, Indian/mainly Hindu) believe the essential elements of the gospel and Baptist ecclesiology (i.e. congregational/democratic polity). This model provides an umbrella for cultural groups searching for Christ but unsure how to understand and enculturate him into their own cultural expression. This model provides meeting places and times of fellowship where groups from non-Christian backgrounds can be welcomed and informed of Christ for the first time without having to become a part of the established institutional church found in Canada.

#### 6) Homogeneous Outreach and Mission

This model has a local church establishing culturally similar churches in other centers (eg. Chinese with Chinese). In responding to the immediate needs of a newly arrived group of people of similar cultural heritage, a local church will send financial and/or personnel support along with some people to

establish new churches for immigrants from similar ethnic backgrounds in other communities.

#### CONTINUUM FOR BECOMING A MULTICULTURAL CHURCH

Ronice E. Branding in association with International Urban Associates has provided an insightful approach and designed a helpful analysis (see chart below - p. 144) describing churches at six different stages of development. He sets two borders (SEPARATION and COMMUNITY) to present a continuum, which is confined between these two extremes of the human experience of relationships. He suggests that churches can be placed and typed according to their ministry vision and style somewhere between these two borders on a continuum moving from one border to the other. The beginning point for progression towards becoming a multicultural church on a continuum begins with the monocultural "excluding church", which values the separation of the different ethnic and cultural groups and the end point of the continuum being a multicultural "transformed church", which values a community inclusive of all ethnic or cultural groups.<sup>64</sup>

A presentation of the continuum, modified for the purpose

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<sup>64</sup> Ronice E. Branding presented this material at a SCUPE (SEMINARY Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education) workshop entitled "Dismantling Racism In The Church," International Urban Associates, 1993.

of this thesis, and a description for the six different types of churches found along the continuum will follow and be used to facilitate the discussion and interaction with the research findings.

The chart is helpful in visualizing the issues that need to be addressed for a church to determine a present position and a direction for future movement. A fuller discussion of the types of churches will follow some initial commentary on the overall chart and continuum being suggested.

The left border of the chart (SEPARATION) represents the belief that racial and cultural differences are seen as deficits for a church. The apartheid period in South Africa or the pre-civil rights period in the United States produced some churches that would have been positioned close to this border. There would be very little tolerance for a church to be open to anyone who was not from the dominant and acceptable cultural group. The right border (COMMUNITY) represents the ideal presented as the opposite to being separated. The COMMUNITY border represents the belief that racial and cultural differences are seen as assets. Most churches would embrace the ideal and place themselves somewhere on the continuum moving towards it.

As the continuum moves from left to right there a number of dynamics taking place. The line drawn from the top of the

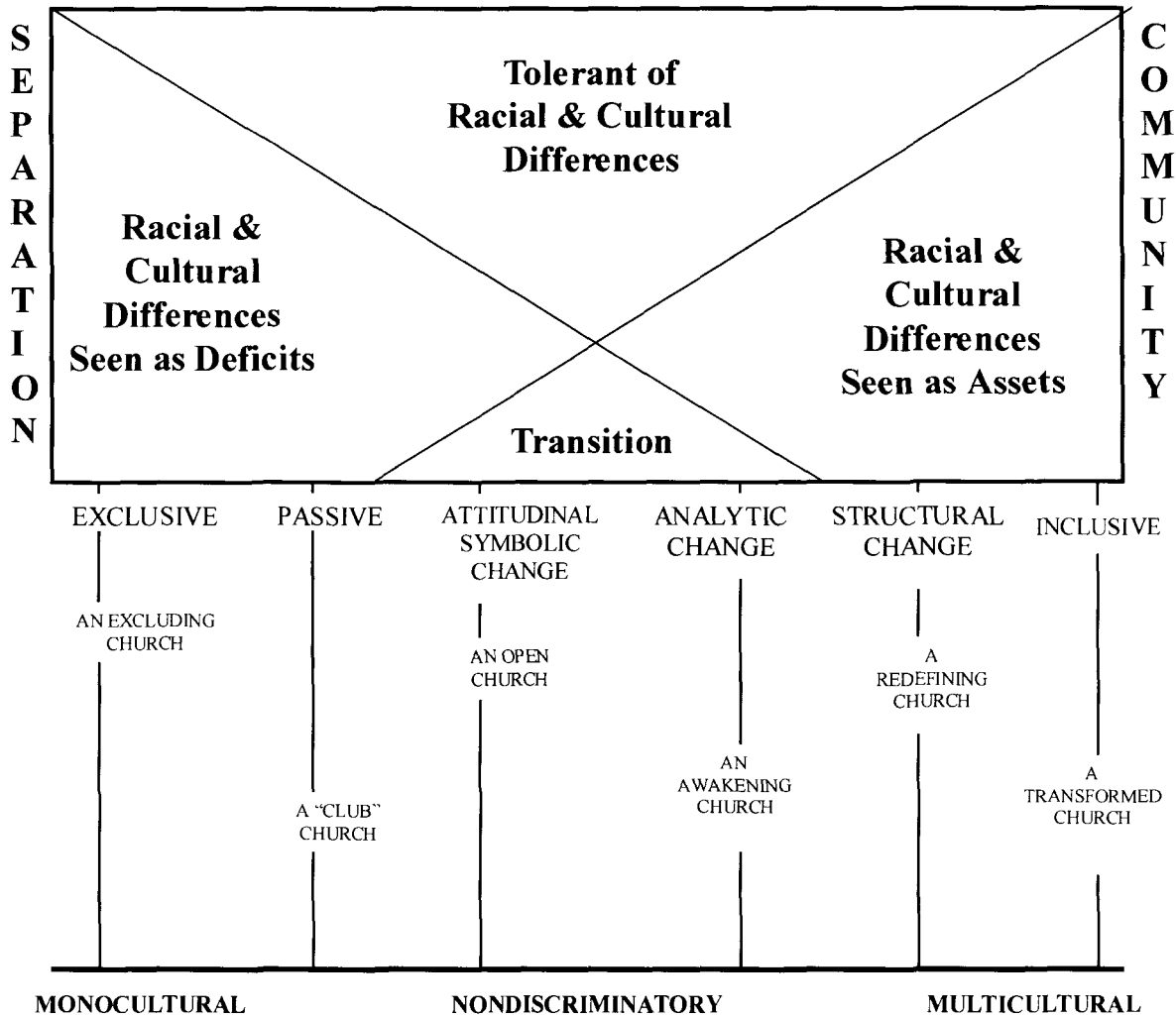
SEPARATION border which represents the strongest belief in separation is terminated at the place on the continuum where a church changes from seeing racial and cultural differences as deficits and begins to see them as assets. The line drawn from top of the COMMUNITY border, which represents the strongest belief in community moves from right to left and is terminated at the place on the continuum where a church changes from seeing racial and cultural differences as assets and begins to see them as deficits.

The two triangles in the chart show that as a church moves away from the SEPARATION border towards the COMMUNITY border and becomes more tolerant of racial and cultural differences there are changes taking place within its character, style and mission. These changes are bringing about a time of TRANSITION where a church is moving from being a monocultural discriminatory church to being a multicultural nondiscriminatory church. The reverse is also true for churches moving from the COMMUNITY border towards the SEPARATION border. The following discussion on the types of churches listed on the lower part of the chart will explain some of the changes taking place.

These changes are described as moving from EXCLUSIVE to INCLUSIVE. Churches moving along the continuum will be

experiencing attitudinal and structural changes that will be redefining their identity and mission.

CONTINUUM ON BECOMING A MULTICULTURAL CHURCH



1) An Excluding Church

This type of church has one ethnic or racial group which enforces the monocultural status quo and dominance of one group and the exclusion of other racial and ethnic people's through

it's teachings, decision making, policies, informal practices and employment. The church values separation as a way of preserving its identity and heritage.

## 2) A Club Church

This type of church maintains the power of privilege for the dominant cultural group through its teachings, decision making, policies and practices and employment. It is tolerant of a limited number of racial and ethnic peoples with "proper" perspective and credentials. This type of church usually does not believe it has a problem and would see itself as a multicultural church.

## 3) An Open Church

This type of church sees itself as committed to inclusion of racial and ethnic peoples, affirming denominational or other pronouncements concerning integration, but often is unaware of customs and ministry practices that are paternalistic and maintain the privilege of the dominant established group. There is a symbolic inclusion of the newly arrived people by recruiting for ministry committees, support office staff or custodial staff "someone of color" who is safe and will not "rock the boat". These types of churches do not see the necessity of changes in their ministry style and practices, policies and decision making to accommodate the newly arriving people.

#### 4) An Awakening Church

This type of church is more sensitive to discriminatory practices and begins to deal with the church's organizational systems and policies to eliminate the inherent advantage of the established dominant cultural group. There is an increased awareness through intentional dialogue and educational programs of the racial and ethnic differences within the congregation. There is an expanding view of the diversity of the church's population and ministry needs for a number of different groups including children, the disabled, the elderly and socially oppressed groups within the community. However, the decision makers still conform to norms and practices derived from the dominant group's world view and maintain control over the primary boards of the church.

#### 5) A Redefining Church

This type of church is not satisfied with just being tolerant and aware of the differences that exist between the different cultural groups. There is agreement that the church does not want to be racist, sexist or discriminatory in any other way when evaluating people's cultural, socio-economic or gender backgrounds and status. It begins to see the benefits of a broader and more diverse racial and cultural perspective in its ministry and mission. It is committed to evaluating all aspects



of church life to insure greater participation and contribution of all the cultural groups present in the church. There is a willingness to recognize the awkwardness of the process to find common ground and become more of a community. There is a recognition of the need to find a shared way of resolving conflict and communication problems. There is an openness to discerning new policies and models for inclusive decision making, mission and ministry.

#### 6) A Transformed Church

This type of church sees diversity as an asset and that the value of inclusion is primary to the church's identity as a community of faith. The church's life reflects contributions and interests of diverse racial, cultural and economic groups in determining its mission, ministry style, policies and practices. There is a concern for full participation by everyone in decisions that shape the church. There is an experience of community and mutual caring that is seen and felt. There is a commitment to confront and dismantle discriminatory practices within the church and broader community. There is a conscious choice to be involved with others in partnering to confront and combat social oppression. Churches that chose to identify actively with the American civil rights movement in the 1960's and 70's and the South African anti-apartheid movement in the

1980's and 90's would be examples of making these conscious choices to confront and combat social oppression.

There needs to be a regular, intentional and honest evaluation of ministry effectiveness for the context by a church in order for that church to become a multicultural church. The shifting demographics of most Canadian communities require that churches become more proactive in guaranteeing a process of evaluation and planning.

A church needs to assess where they would fit on the continuum and whether there is a corporate will to change to move towards becoming a "transformed church". This assessment is not easy and involves a process that will take time and patience. There needs to be an intentionality to preach and teach on biblical themes that will challenge the status quo. People interested in change need to build networks for prayer and dialogue. An atmosphere needs to be created where the ambiguity, awkwardness and conflict of change can be processed properly. If the church chooses to move in that direction, then it will have to decide which approach will work best for their local context and what changes will need to be made to facilitate the desired ends. This initial choice of an approach will be critical for developing future policies and ministries. As the church becomes known in the community for its multicultural identity it will be

sought out by many newly forming groups looking for space to meet and funding to help with the ministries. If the church does not have a clear sense of its approach and desired ends, then there will be continual conflict around decisions concerning which groups will be encouraged to be a part of the church's ministry.

### **Characteristics of a Healthy Multicultural Church**

There will be several ongoing issues that will need to be addressed as a church moves to become more multicultural. This research project has dealt mainly with ministry and vision related matters and provides a list of characteristics for the three research churches as the final section of chapter 5. Other issues that emerge in discussing this topic are racism, the dynamics present in first generation immigrant families and perceptions and concerns about immigration patterns and advantages given to certain people groups arriving into Canada (eg. the Sikh community).

Charles Foster of the Candler School of Theology of Emory University in Atlanta, in his book *Embracing Diversity* provides a number of helpful insights into some of the essential characteristics needed to develop a multicultural church. There is some overlap of the characteristics identified from the three churches involved in this research project, the theological foundations discussed earlier in chapter 4 and Foster's analysis.

The following section will more fully synthesize the research and observations presented earlier in clarifying the essential characteristics needed for a healthy multicultural church.

1) Embracing Differences

Foster develops the importance of the "theology of embrace", which represents the best term he could find that "caught up the interplay of differentiation and intimacy in human communities". He discovered this term in an essay "God's Spirit and God's People in the Social and Cultural Upheavals in Europe" by Miroslav Volf of Fuller Theological Seminary who used it,

to describe a framework for mediating the conflicts among ethnic and religious groups in the Balkans. He observed that the act of embracing always involves two movements on the part of two people or groups - a movement to create "space in myself for the other" and an enclosing movement to communicate that I do not want to be without the other in her or his otherness. To embrace others suggests that we cannot "live authentically without welcoming others - the other gender, other persons, or other cultures" - into the very structure of our being. Volf suggested that we are called to embrace others because we are created to

reflect the fellowship that exists in the triune God.<sup>65</sup>

In all three of the research churches there was an awareness of gaining something from trying to live with the awkwardness that the diversity of multiculturalism brings to congregational life. These churches are realizing the benefits of the "theology of embrace". There is a realization in Trinity and Immanuel, particularly, that their congregations will never be the same again. Each of these congregations are at different stages of working through the transitional dynamics of letting go and embracing the new. However, there is a recognition that there is something significant to be gained in embracing the diversity that keeps them committed to a vision of being a multicultural church. Grandview Calvary has been in a rebuilding mode with a multicultural church model commitment and is thoroughly aware of the benefits of embracing diversity.

Foster goes on to suggest four catalysts to the embracing of cultural, racial, and/or linguistic differences in congregational life.<sup>66</sup>

- i) **Quest for survival** - It takes a long time to transition a church and to build a strong multicultural ministry. The

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<sup>65</sup> Charles Foster, *Embracing Diversity* (Bethesda M.D.: The Alban Institute, 1997), 1.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-12.

process usually begins out of necessity rather choice. It is usually the case that emerging multicultural churches are faced with the changes in their communities and realize that their future will depend on attracting some of these newcomers to maintain their level of ministry activity (Immanuel & Trinity) or to rebuild a church (Grandview Calvary).

ii) **Gospel Commitment** - There needs to be a passion for the **preaching and teaching of the gospel to all who would hear and respond to it.** Multicultural churches will live with ambiguity and awkwardness as long as they can see people coming to a faith in Jesus Christ. The expression of that faith may be different from one cultural group to another, but there needs to be a recognition that the unifying point for living with the diversity is the person of Jesus Christ and the gospel. All three churches researched are strong in this area of commitment to mission and the importance of the conversion and maturation of people as serious followers of Jesus Christ.

iii) **Hospitality** - Multicultural churches are welcoming places where people feel that they are accepted. The churches usually offer ministries (eg. ESL, programs for children and youth, drop in services) requiring church

people to serve community people with no expectation that the newcomer will necessarily stay. In the act of embracing the differences of one another they both are changed and new paths of understanding and communication are discovered. The three churches researched are all discovering this consequence of embracing diversity in locally unique ways. The discussion of the survey responses and focus groups earlier in this chapter conveys the commitments of these churches to welcoming and hosting those from the community who are different. They are all discovering their futures in the hosting of the newcomers who are helping to reinvent their ministries and bring fresh and creative life relevant for today.

iv) **Theological Vision** -

... the embracing of difference ... requires the explicit commitment to becoming a new kind of faith community - one that celebrates the gifts of diversity in the ways the group worships God and serves its neighbors.<sup>67</sup>

There needs to be an open acknowledgement of the subliminal racist attitudes common to all ethnic groups in many Canadian churches. Those attending church need to be

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 12.

constantly challenged with the vision and expectation found in a passage like Galatians 3:26-29, which represents a major thrust of biblical teaching. This passage simply does not allow any place for differentiation and segregation based on race, gender or social status.

The three research churches are all being formed by a theological vision. As discussed earlier they are at different stages of being able to clarify their visions. Nevertheless, there is a recognition in all three of the necessity of theological reflection and understanding for their ministries.

The issues facing first generation immigrant families are not appreciated by many churches and are often misunderstood or ignored. The emergence of second and third generation children, youth and young adults creates all kind of tensions for first generation immigrant homes. These tensions often surface when churches try to incorporate children and youth into established programs. The whole concern for contact with a more liberal and open approach to raising children and youth is often disturbing for more traditional and conservative immigrant families. The children are usually caught between two worlds of parental expectations and the expectations of their peers. There needs to be a new approach for developing and implementing programs for children and youth in multicultural churches.



It is apparent from the amount of media interest and vitality of dialogue in everyday settings, that the growth of the immigrant population in the major cities is a concern for many Canadians. The attitudes about the rights of certain groups to maintain their particular cultural customs (eg. Sikhs and their ceremonial daggers), the increasing loss of religious expression due to a growing pluralism where there is a concern that minorities should not be offended by the practices of the majority (eg. prayer or Christmas carol singing in the schools) and the native land claims debate are only a few examples of the issues in the broader society that flow over into the life of the church and can be unsettling and divisive. These are particularly felt in multicultural churches where there is a heightened awareness of the biases of others in the church. A "theology of embrace" helps people to realize a bigger vision beyond the consumer mindset that is self focussed and committed to a goal of just feeling comfortable that one's personal needs are being met or rights are being protected because their worldview is the right one.

Douglas John Hall's "quest for moral authenticity" and Charles Van Engen's "form-essence" categories discussed in chapter 3 are comparable to Foster's "theology of embrace" in seeking a genuine commitment to the New Testament ideals of

"unity with diversity" that the early church began to discover in those first few decades of mission activity.

As the apostle Paul and other early missionaries took the Christian message into Asia Minor and Europe, there was a surprising response by non-Jewish people to their preaching and healing ministries (Acts 15). A considerable portion of the material in the New Testament is a result of Paul and the other apostles writing and teaching about the purpose and role of the church. In these New Testament writings they clarified how Christians from diverse cultural backgrounds were to treat others different from themselves, as they lived in a community where the old barriers of separation (race, gender and socio-economic status) were no longer acceptable, because of their common experience of salvation in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:28). The letter of James is one example of the New Testament concern for a congruence between what the early Christians were preaching and how they were living in relation with one another. Hall, Van Engen and Foster are all appealing for a genuine, practical demonstration of Christian community that is informed by the Christian gospel and is relevant for today.

This commitment to building community may not be the most efficient way of growing a church, but it is the most effective way for achieving the ultimate goal of being the "whole people of

God". The authenticity of healthy multicultural churches where diversity is embraced as a way of life will be one of the most effective witnesses for the emerging postmodern age where the "apologetic of community" will be listened to and respected by those who are looking for some place to begin to understand and experience the truth.

## 2) Being Community is a Process, not a Program

Foster provides a full discussion on a number of topics that emerged as issues being felt by the three research churches. He portrays the multicultural church as one constantly in a process of becoming something different because it is continuously being challenged to accommodate emerging diversity.

...congregations that begin to take seriously the racial and cultural diversity of the people they serve often challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about what it means to be church. They are confronted with the need to make again - and sometimes over again - decisions about how to gather people into their congregational life and work, about how they understand and practice mission, and about how they will relate to the interplay of cultural perspectives on the gospel and their common life

together.<sup>68</sup>

The negotiating of differences, the complexity of communication, the ambiguity in finding working organizational structures that will accommodate the diversity being felt and the kind of leadership needed are some of the issues common to multicultural churches. These issues were certainly observed in the three research congregations with a degree of intensity not as evident in other more culturally homogeneous churches.

Once again there is some comparison to make between Foster's analysis and the discussion of chapter 3 concerning Hall's "quest for meaningful community" and Van Engen's need for a genuine expression of community to portray the "phenomenon-creed" category he suggests. All three of these churches have some ongoing evaluation process where there is an attempt to assure that there is integrity between their biblical and theological assumptions and the experience of their church. Immanuel and Grandview Calvary are further developed than Trinity in feeling an integration between the desire for community and the experience of community. There needs to be a realization that there is no fixed plan or program to follow for a church to become more genuinely multicultural. The key to succeeding will

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 35.

be found in the trust built in healthy relationships over time that permits an ongoing dialogue and openness to change.

### 3) Leadership Style will be Critical to Success

There needs to be a high degree of trust and an open atmosphere of patience for the multicultural model to succeed. Foster identifies three qualities which need to be present in the leaders of multicultural churches: (1) transformative, (2) anticipatory, and (3) relational.

Foster has observed that healthy multicultural church leaders have the ability to keep a congregation moving in a common direction while absorbing the necessary changes to accommodate the diversity of newly arriving cultural and racial groups.

Primary attention is not given to maintaining the status quo of any one group but to the nurture of change in the congregation for the sake of a new relationship among racially and culturally diverse groups and ultimately God.<sup>69</sup>

Both Trinity and Grandview Calvary are still heavily reliant on their pastoral leadership to clarify and facilitate the vision of the church to become multicultural. Immanuel has

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 117.

experienced several pastoral transitions and has been able to have the vision carried through several decades by a core of established lay leaders who are mature and committed to the model. Hall's "quest for meaning" discussed in chapter 3 is significant for the leadership and congregation to comprehend, if they are going to achieve their goal of being a multicultural community. There needs to be a feeling of mission and purpose beyond simply growing a bigger church for the multicultural church to succeed. People need to have a passion that their efforts are in some way more accurately reflecting God's intentions for His people and the world. People need to feel called to a new day of being God's people, which is primarily committed to care for one another rather than for self alone. The "apologetic of community" that can be realized because of common faith and hope for the future is a clear alternative to the individualism, loneliness and despair of contemporary society. The leaders are critical to both forming and modeling this vision where people can find meaning and bring about personal and corporate transformation through belonging to and serving with the church unified in commitment to Christ and the gospel.

The importance of Hall's "quest for transcendence and mystery" needs to be discussed here. Leaders can create an atmosphere where people **do not** anticipate God's intervention and

the organizational structures are served with their resources to achieve legitimate humanitarian ends. However, leaders can also create an atmosphere where people **do** anticipate God's intervention. There is an openness to flex and change in order to accomplish the mission that people are discerning is necessary to achieve the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. The latter emphasis leads people beyond the limited resources of themselves and their circumstances and produces a corporate synergy that is something new and transformative, while also achieving significant humanitarian ends. This kind of passion for a common goal and experience of the presence of God is critical to holding a diversity of peoples together.

When Foster uses the term "anticipatory" as a desired leadership quality in multicultural ministries, he is referring to the capacity to foresee and be prepared for the issues that will emerge.

Anticipatory leadership is something akin to proactive leadership, in which leaders anticipate questions that might be asked, issues that might be posed, and problems that might occur, and they prepare possible responses.

... Anticipatory leaders as a matter of course see a situation or event from the future rather than from the past. It is an eschatological perspective - one that begins

with the memory of the vision a group or community holds for its future more than with the memory of its history.<sup>70</sup>

There is a special kind of anticipation that is needed in multicultural ministries. The leader not only has to anticipate the significance of organizational implications for developing ministries (i.e. budgets, staffing, facilities), but also has to understand the cross-cultural complexities of communication, perception and implementation of a vision and ministry.

The pastoral leadership in all three of the research churches operates with an informed capacity to anticipate well. Immanuel is the only church which has experienced pastoral transition and relied on the lay leaders to continue the vision of the church. There needs to be enough regular reminders of what the vision is anticipating for the future so that leaders and the church can be concerned about the implications of pursuing the vision. These concerns can be approached intentionally, which results in an atmosphere of anticipating what needs to be done next. This anticipation and preparation for future issues will decrease the anxieties and insecurities that often result in churches not staying effective in ministry.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 119-120.



Thirdly, Foster suggests that a highly relational style is needed for multicultural leadership to succeed. A commitment to personal caring and healthy relationships in a multicultural church is more important than any other factor for church development and growth. Some churches will rely on their preaching ministries, their location, their programs, their history or theological stance to be effective. The multicultural church must rely on a commitment to build relationships of understanding which requires more personal time and energy than a church with one cultural group. The leadership will be essential for modeling quality relationships that move beyond the simple necessities of keeping things organized and together. People need to develop a genuine experience of caring for and enjoyment of one another.

#### 4) Solidarity is More Important than Conformity

*Solidarity* is the term some contemporary theologians have used to describe the dynamics in communities that affirm and embrace incomprehensible differences as gifts to our common life. It is based on the assumption that certain facets of our human experience cannot be caught up in consensus, cannot be experienced mutually, cannot be assimilated into the larger life of the congregation or community, when their members have not suppressed elements

of their cultural (gender, class, etc) identities. Instead, they celebrate the distinctive contributions each person and group brings to their fellowship, worship and study.<sup>71</sup>

This characteristic is the most difficult to achieve and presupposes all the others discussed above before it can begin to be realized. The genuine understanding, embracing and appreciating of other cultural expressions of faith and practice requires incredible patience and commitment by the church for solidarity to be experienced. The three research congregations are all at different levels of development in experiencing solidarity. They are all legitimately struggling with how to respect cultural and language differences while trying practically to do something together in ministry and community. The quest for solidarity is the central characteristic to becoming a multicultural church. There often is a desire to achieve conformity or uniformity where some sense of unity can be realized. However, these are only early stages to achieving solidarity where cultural diversity is embraced and a new way of being together in common purpose is realized. Foster suggests four conditions for developing congregational solidarity.

The first involves the creation of times and places for

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 68.

each racial and cultural group in the congregation to meet and talk among themselves.

The second involves a commitment to take seriously the ideas and experience of others on their own terms - both as individual people and as members of particular racial and cultural groups.

The third condition requires people to suspend their own personal, cultural, and religious ideas and practices to listen for the experience and meanings of others.

The fourth condition involves ... the "mutuality of critique". In congregations embracing cultural and racial diversity, it seems to take years before people move beyond being concerned about hurting each other's feelings to reciprocal candor about expectations and responsibilities, moral and theological strengths, and blind spots.<sup>72</sup>

- 5) The long-term vision must be big enough to live with the present awkwardness of building relationships with strangers.

Quaker author and activist Parker Palmer of the Pendle Hill Community, provides a helpful reminder of the role of strangers for the community of faith when he writes:

The stranger is ... a central figure in biblical stories of

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 68-69.

faith, and for good reason. The religious quest, the spiritual pilgrimage, is always taking us into new lands where we are strange to others and they are strange to us. Faith is a venture into the unknown, into the realms of mystery, away from the safe and comfortable and secure. When we remain in the security of familiar surroundings, we have no need of faith. The very idea of faith suggests a movement away from our earthly securities into the distant, the unsettling, the strange.<sup>73</sup>

There can be a "holy unsettledness" in developing a multicultural church that forces everyone to ground themselves in a healthy dependence on the presence and intervention of God. The openness to listen and look for God in the arrival of strangers causes people to experience the inadequacy of their own resources and rely more on the Holy Spirit and the community of faith.

The role of the stranger in our lives is vital in the context of Christian faith, for the God of faith is one who continually makes all things new. God persistently challenges conventional truth and regularly upsets the world's way of looking at things. It is no accident that

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<sup>73</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life* ( New York: Crossroad, 1983 ), 56-57.

God is so often represented by the stranger, for the truth that God speaks into our lives is very strange indeed. Where the world sees impossibility, God sees potential.<sup>74</sup>

Stephen A. Rhodes who is the pastor of Culmore United Methodist Church, Falls Church, Virginia suggests that one of the benefits of embracing strangers coming into any church is that those who regularly attend are continually being reminded that they are also a pilgrim people who are looking for a place to feel secure and belong. People are challenged to find their resting place in the eternal God and His purposes through the church and not in their own personal and corporate resources.

As all Christians increasingly experience the marginalization and alienation of the church from today's secular society, the coming of strangers can be a reminder that God has always worked out his purposes in wonderful and mysterious ways through a pilgrim people who have not been in positions of power and control.

In developing this point, Rhodes quotes from an essay written by Sang Hyun Lee titled "Called to Be Pilgrims: Towards an Asian-American Theology from the Korean Immigrant Perspective":

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 59.

A pilgrim is willing to leave the security of home and to enter the wilderness of homelessness in order to be open to the higher horizon of the purposes of God. Viewed in the light of this understanding of Christian existence, the religious meaning of our marginality (in the sense of bicultural existence) can only be this: that we are called to appropriate or use our marginal existence as the path of pilgrimage. The life in a wilderness seems to be a training ground for all those who are called to be God's special servants.<sup>75</sup>

The commitment to developing a multicultural church can only be sustained when the vision is being formed out of an awareness that this kind of church is the best model for representing God's ultimate purposes for humanity. In his book *When Tolerance Has No Virtue* S.D. Gaede, provost at Gordon College writes:

It is terribly important that Christians today ... develop a mental image of the church that corresponds to reality.

When we think of the church we must conjure up a picture not of people like ourselves, but of people of all colors

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<sup>75</sup> Stephen A. Rhodes, *Where The Nations Meet: The Church in a Multicultural World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998 ), 218.

and shapes and ages, women and men speaking different tongues, following different customs, practicing different habits, but all worshipping the same Lord. Having such a concept is important because that is the church. It is important because that is the church that Jesus sees. And it's important because that is the church that Christ has called to represent his kingdom on earth. We do ourselves and Jesus a great disservice when we think otherwise. If our image of the church is wrong, we also set ourselves up for poor thinking about the issues of multiculturalism. For regardless of what we conclude about the pros and cons of that particular ideology, we ought to *feel* multicultural in our bones.<sup>76</sup>

This awareness by people of being a part of something which transcends the present experience and is moving to an ultimate goal, which is part of God's plan for history addresses Douglas John Hall's quests for "meaning" and "transcendence and mystery" developed earlier in chapter 3. People may find a legitimate direction for their quests when they encounter an expression of genuine community that is responding to the diversity of their lives. Leslie Newbiggin comments:

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<sup>76</sup> S.D. Gaede, *When Tolerance Is No Virtue* ( Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995 ), 63-64.

The New Testament evidently envisages a goal, one toward which we can make progress ... The eager expectation of a real end is vibrant on almost every page. The Bible ends with the vision of the city of God from which all that is evil will have been excluded and into which all the nations will bring their treasures ...The vision of a real horizon, a real goal toward which we move, is what gives the whole New Testament its most distinctive character, the character of hope which is both alert and patient.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* ( Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989 ), 110.



## CHAPTER 6

### **Integration of Theory, Research and Personal Observations**

It is helpful to return to the CONTINUUM ON BECOMING A MULTICULTURAL CHURCH (p.144) in order to synthesize the range of research and theoretical material presented in this thesis and to draw some conclusions about the three research churches.

Each of these churches are at various stages in the TRANSITION period of becoming healthy multicultural churches. The most prominent characteristics displayed in each of the churches researched provide the rationale for forming an opinion on what "type of church" from the CONTINUUM best describes each church.

The following summary statements for each of the three churches will identify:

- i) where each church could currently be located on the CONTINUUM ON BECOMING A MULTICULTURAL CHURCH
- ii) which of the models of Canadian multicultural churches presented in chapter 5 best exemplifies each church
- iii) how each church demonstrates the characteristics drawn from the conclusion of the research analysis presented at the end of chapter 5
- iv) how the characteristics of healthy multicultural churches identified in chapter 5 arising out of the research findings and the material of Charles Foster

and John Douglas Hall are present in each of the churches.

### Immanuel Baptist Church

Immanuel Baptist is the most progressed of the three churches using the CONTINUUM chart. Immanuel has had the longest period of time to reach the current stage of development and currently could be placed as moving on from being AN AWAKENING CHURCH and moving closer to being A REDFINING CHURCH.

In reviewing the characteristics identified out of the research, Immanuel is strong in a number of them and is developing in others. There is a clear sense that the following are very much a part of the identity and mission of Immanuel:

- 1) There is a shared vision based on a clear biblical understanding of God's expectation that faith communities should represent the diversity of cultures.
- 2) There is an intentional commitment to ministries with those living in the immediate communities around the church.
- 3) There is an openness to deal with the awkwardness resulting from cultural expectations and language in church experience.
- 4) There is an intentional effort to occasionally have pastors and regularly have church leaders who are representative of the congregation and are committed to living the vision of the church to be a multicultural community.

5) There continues to be a concern for developing natural links to the immediate community and beyond.

The other characteristics still needing further development for progress to occur include:

1) The building of a consensus out of a coalition of different Groups, so that one cultural group does not dominate or control the ministries of the church. There is slow but steady movement in facilitating this direction, but it has not yet been reached.

2) The concern for being an effective community needs to be given greater emphasis so that being efficient as an organization does not become the primary concern. The church has made some significant structural changes in the past 10 years in addressing this concern.

Immanuel is attempting to develop the model, described earlier in the thesis, of being one congregation with culturally distinct fellowships. The intentional commitment to host and work primarily with those cultural groups, which are committed to eventual integration into the larger church family, is a strategy that is determined by this model.

The church does have a number of the characteristics necessary for a healthy multicultural church outlined earlier in chapter 5. There is a genuine effort by the church to "embrace

differences". The church people would not be aware of Charles Foster's term "theology of embrace", but they are an example of Foster's position and demonstrate all the four catalysts Foster suggests are necessary for the embracing of cultural, racial and/or linguistic differences in congregational life.

(1) There is not a feeling of desperation about the future, but there is a realistic awareness that survival for the future will depend on how well the church attracts and maintains a new generation of culturally diverse people.

(2) There continues to be a passion for the preaching and teaching of the gospel and a strong sense of purpose in mission.

(3) The church is discovering it's future in the welcoming and hosting of newcomers who are helping to reinvent the ministries by bringing fresh and creative life relevant for today.

(4) The church is being formed by a theological vision that very much informs the practices and policies it develops.

Finally, Immanuel does exemplify a partial understanding and appreciation of John Douglas Hall's four quests. The "quest for moral authenticity" is shown in the commitment by the church people to live with the awkwardness of diversity and uncertainty because they believe there needs to be a congruence between what they believe and how they should live. The "quest for meaningful community" is central to the teaching and pastoral care of the

church and there is a genuine commitment for care and integrity in relationships. The "quest for transcendence and mystery" is felt in the active pietism of the church people who are committed to attending worship services, studying the Bible, praying faithfully for one another and the ministries of the church and witnessing to their friends and families. People believe they are in a relationship with God and that they can help others find this vital supernatural connection. People coming into the church are being helped to find ways to deal with "the quest for meaning". The church people do believe that they have found a meaningful way to make sense of their world and they are interested in telling others about it.

The research and subsequent discussion about Immanuel Baptist would lead to the conclusion that it is certainly moved beyond being AN AWAKENING CHURCH and is well on the way to being A REDEFINING CHURCH on the CONTINUUM.

#### Grandview Calvary Baptist Church

Grandview Calvary is the most difficult church of the three to describe and assign one of the "type of church" categories found on the CONTINUUM chart. Since it is in the early stages of rebuilding, it is still untested over time to know whether it has the strength to sustain its vision and ministry. It is experienced as AN AWAKENING CHURCH and is well on the way to

becoming A REDEFINING CHURCH. There are still a few people who have been active in the church over many years. But, the majority have arrived in the past few years and have been attracted by the vision of A TRANSFORMED CHURCH.

In reviewing the characteristics identified out of the research, Grandview Calvary shows a strength in some of them and a need to develop in others. There is a recognition that the following represent the status of Grandview Calvary:

- (1) There is a shared vision based on a clear biblical understanding of God's expectation that faith communities should represent the diversity of cultures.
- (2) There is an intentional commitment to ministries with those living in the immediate communities around the church.
- (3) There is an openness to deal with the awkwardness resulting from cultural expectations and language in church experience.
- (4) There is a concern for developing natural links to the immediate community and beyond.
- (5) The concern for being an effective community is more important than being an efficient organization.

The concern for Grandview Calvary is that the above characteristics are the result of a high dependency on the ministries of the pastoral staff and a few key leaders. The people are very supportive and as involved as they are able.

However, there are many who need to be mentored and equipped for the various ministries of the church. Grandview Calvary is the most progressed of the three research churches in being inclusive of all the cultural groups for worship services and church ministries. In many ways it looks like A REDEFINING CHURCH.

The characteristics which need to be developed further for the church to feel more secure about itself are:

- (1) There needs to be a stronger consensus out of a coalition of the different groups so that one cultural group does not dominate or control the ministries of the church. There is a will to build this consensus, but there is a struggle to find stability and maturity within the leadership of the different groups.
- (2) Although there have been attempts to have pastors and church leaders who are representative of the congregation, the church has struggled to have continuity over time and feelings of insecurity result in cultural groups when they lose their person in leadership. The church has just recently experienced this restlessness when the Spanish speaking pastor resigned.

Like Immanuel Baptist, Grandview Calvary is attempting to develop the model of being one congregation with culturally distinct fellowships. The Grandview Calvary model is much more blended and inclusive than Immanuel Baptist. There are culturally

distinct fellowships at Grandview Calvary, but they are all integrated into the weekly worship service and house groups.

Much like the discussion above for Immanuel Baptist, Grandview Calvary is also representative of the characteristics necessary for healthy multicultural churches. The church's identity can be described in almost similar ways to Immanuel with the observations of Charles Foster and John Douglas Hall. Grandview Calvary has a much deeper commitment to being community than Immanuel Baptist. This may result from the smaller size of Grandview Calvary and the large number of people who have recently arrived and who have come because they are looking for a place to belong.

The research and subsequent discussion about Grandview Calvary would lead to the conclusion that it is a church intentionally committed to being A TRANSFORMED CHURCH, but is currently somewhere between AN AWAKENING CHURCH and A REDEFINING CHURCH on the CONTINUUM.

#### Trinity Baptist Church

Trinity Baptist Church is not as progressed along the CONTINUUM as the other two churches. Trinity has been experiencing and adjusting to a significant inflow of other cultural groups over the last ten years. The church could be



placed on the CONTINUUM as being a solid OPEN CHURCH with some early signs of moving towards being AN AWAKENING CHURCH.

In reviewing the characteristics identified out of the research, Trinity is not yet as developed as Immanuel and Grandview Calvary. However, there appears to be a growing interest to move in the direction of becoming a more fully developed multicultural church. There is a clear sense that the following are very much a part of the identity and mission of Trinity:

- (1) There is an intentional commitment to ministries with those living in the communities around the church. The development of a very successful "English As A Second Language" ministry has kept Trinity well connected to some of the changes taking place immediately around the church.
- (2) There continues to be a concern for developing natural links to the immediate community and beyond. The observations in point (1) is forcing the church to go through a time of self evaluation and strategic planning to determine how to proceed. The **VISION 2000** material found in the earlier discussion about Trinity is an example of this.

There is a growing awareness by some Trinity leaders of the following characteristics, even if they are still at the conceptual stage:

- (1) There is a desire to refine a clearer shared vision based on a biblical understanding of God's expectation that faith communities should represent the diversity of cultures.
- (2) There is a growing openness to deal with the awkwardness resulting from cultural expectations and language experience. The attempt to establish a bilingual service (Mandarin and English) represents this openness.
- (3) There has been a growing effort to hire pastors and recruit church leaders who are representative of the congregation and are committed to living the vision of the church to be a multicultural community.

The church needs to give greater effort to the following characteristics, if it hopes to move towards becoming AN AWAKENING CHURCH.

- (1) The building of a consensus out of a coalition of different groups so that one cultural group does not dominate or control the ministries of the church. There are early signs of embracing the Mandarin and Filipino groups by the established Anglo-European group, but there is still a need to be more inclusive in the structures and decision-making bodies of the church.
- (2) The concern for being an effective community needs to be given greater emphasis so that being an efficient organization

does not become the primary concern. Trinity has always had strong leaders who have provided good efficient management of the church. There needs to be a movement by the church leadership to be more open to living with the awkwardness of diversity, which is always more ambiguous and less efficient.

Trinity has been trying to develop the model described earlier in the thesis as being one congregation with culturally distinct fellowships, but could end up becoming the model of being several congregations working together as a local church. The resignation of the Chinese Canadian pastor has left the church in a time of ambiguity. There are three distinct cultural groups who have been able to find cohesion around the staff team. The resignation of this key pastor will provide a time for the church to evaluate the depth of their commitment to work together.

Trinity has begun to develop some of the characteristics necessary for a healthy multicultural church outlined earlier in chapter 5. There is an awareness of the differences that the newly arriving cultural groups bring to the church, but there does not appear to be a corporate "embracing of differences" as described earlier around the discussion of Charles Foster's "theology of embrace" material. The four catalysts Foster suggests are necessary for the embracing of cultural, racial

and/or linguistic differences in congregational life are present to varying degrees of development and ownership within the church.

- (1) Although it might be too strong to say that Trinity entered this time of its ministry as a result of a "quest for survival", there clearly is a feeling of necessity to deal with the changing demographics in the community around the church if it hopes to have a vital future.
- (2) The church maintains a commitment to the preaching and teaching of the gospel to all who would hear and respond to it. This passion for the gospel has been central to helping the church stay focussed and unified over the past few years in dealing with the increasing diversity.
- (3) Trinity's strength and hope for the future rests with the welcoming and hospitality ministries of the established church people.
- (4) Although the church is developing a vision that can be embraced by all, there is still a considerable amount of work that needs to be done to reach a corporate commitment to become "a new kind of faith community" which celebrates the gifts of diversity in the ways they worship and serve their neighbors.

Finally, Trinity is struggling honestly with John Douglas Hall's four quests and is being changed in the process. The "quest for moral authenticity" is being demonstrated in the recent **VISION 2000** strategic planning session where church people were asking some hard questions of themselves about the future and how they will find congruence between what they believe and how they should live. The "quest for meaningful community" is a spoken ideal at Trinity and is being experienced by the church people within their particular cultural group. However, there needs to be a stronger commitment to moving beyond cultural groupings if a meaningful experience of community is going to develop within the church as a whole. Trinity is very much the same as the other two churches in responding to the "quest for transcendence and mystery" and the "quest for meaning".

The research and subsequent discussion about Trinity Baptist would lead to the conclusion that it can best be described as AN OPEN CHURCH on the CONTINUUM.

#### **Possible Uses of This Study for Local Churches**

The research and field work carried out while preparing this study has yielded several insights for future use of this material and methodology. There are limited resources for Canadian churches trying to move intentionally towards becoming a multicultural church. In most cases churches are responding with

a trial and error approach, which is driven more by necessity than design. Congregations planning for the next five to ten years and beyond need to be addressing the issues raised in this research if they are going to be effective in ministering to the next generation of Canadians.

There is a growing awareness of the superficiality of a multicultural veneer in Canadian society covering over some deep-rooted feelings of racism. These feelings have resulted from the emergence of cultural ghettos trying to preserve cultural distinctives, and the development of new political power groups whose ideologies stake out particular reactive policies related to immigration and integration of newly arrived immigrants and refugees.

Churches can have a significant contribution to make if they are willing to move beyond their safe and traditional cloistered communities to embrace the newcomers and all the diversity they bring, which can be seen as either as a blessing or a burden. There are a number of actions churches can intentionally take to address their changing situation.

- 1) Provide regular opportunities for the people attending their church to come together to pray and talk with one another about their vision for the church. Periodic Bible studies and preaching series on some of the themes found in chapter 3

will keep the concerns of Christ for his community central to the formation and implementation of an effective vision.

People need to experience the church as a community in process where programs can be helpful for ministry effectiveness, but relationships are the critical component for building the community they are striving to build.

- 2) Begin to work with the new immigrants currently attending the church and listen to them, mentor them and let them know that their contribution is needed for the future development of the church. They need to learn the culture and history of their particular church. They also need to be assured that they will be embraced for the unique contribution they have been brought by God to help with the transition of their church. There needs to be an honesty about the difficulties that will be experienced and the patience and sensitivity they will need to move into the future. One of the lessons being learned by the three research churches is the importance of listening to the newcomer to discover the current ministry needs to be addressed. The development of a congregational profile for the newcomer would be helpful. The materials presented in chapter 3 dealing with the survey, focus groups and congregational analysis provide some examples of how to begin and facilitate the dialogue amongst

the established members and the newcomers. Charles Foster's *Embracing Diversity* also provides many excellent ideas and sample materials to help people talk to each other about their experiences, needs and hopes.

- 3) Challenge the established Canadians to reconsider their commitments to the ministries of the church and their understanding of the changes needed to keep these ministries relevant. This challenge could be a part of an annual review informed every five years by the new census data that keeps them in touch with the changing demographics of their immediate communities. Chapter 5 provides some ways to use the census data to gain an overview of the local church's community.

Affirm the history of the church and find examples from the past where the church has been open to accommodating changes so that the cause of Christ may flourish. James P. Wind of The Alban Institute, has written a very helpful book, *Places of Worship: Exploring Their History*, in which he provides a rationale and methodology for writing a historical review of a church. This review usually provides insights to the present state of a local church and can be helpful for planning for the future.

History represents a means of coming to terms with the



present, developing an awareness of the power of previous influences, the continuities or distinctiveness in current conditions, and the range of future possibilities. Just as memory helps the individual avoid having to repeat the same discoveries, behaviors, and mistakes, historical knowledge helps the individual, group, institution, or community avoid starting from scratch each time an issue needs to be addressed.<sup>78</sup>

- 4) Be honest about the awkwardness and personal feelings that need to be recognized and understood for them to be processed properly. Remind them of the "pilgrim" nature of their journey as individuals and as a group. Help them to find a core of beliefs and values that will provide a common foundation for building a unified community while living with the awkwardness of diversity. The materials of chapter 3 and 6 provide some of the key topics that need to be raised regularly with the congregation.
- 5) Develop networks with other churches committed to becoming multicultural churches. New networks are emerging in most Canadian cities providing conferences and opportunities for

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<sup>78</sup> James P. Wind, *PLACES OF WORSHIP: Exploring Their History* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1990), vii.

sharing resources. Conferences dealing with the multicultural church are beginning to be held occasionally in the larger Canadian cities to develop some of the issues raised in this manuscript.<sup>79</sup> If the material in this research project can be formatted into a handbook for church leaders and pastors, then clusters of local churches could hold their own mini-conferences to deal with their particular local context.

### **Implications For Further Research**

There have been several research topics identified during the writing of this research project that could be suggested for further study. The topic of multicultural churches in Canada is fairly new and has many developing and unresolved issues that need to be addressed. Some of these are:

- 1) The ministry to youth and children in a multicultural church. A common concern for the future generation can be a unifying point in the awkwardness of trying to bring together a new generation of adult immigrants and established Canadians.
- 2) The importance of language for building community. Can people of different language backgrounds find enough in common to stay

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<sup>79</sup> The most recent event was the INTENTIONALLY MULTICULTURAL CHURCHES conference held in Toronto in February 2000 with 340 in attendance from across the country. The conference description clarifies the direction of this new movement beginning to network across Canada "A conference to encourage the development of intention, biblical, ethnically diverse churches reflecting the communities in which we worship". A similar conference was held in Vancouver in June 1999.

together long enough to embrace one another in genuine community?

- 3) The style of leadership needed to develop a multicultural church. What is the profile (eg. values, personality traits, management style), for pastors and leaders in multicultural churches?
- 4) What is the role of socio-economic status for the immigrant in connecting with an established Canadian church? This question emerged in chapter 5 in observing the difference of Chinese involvement between Trinity and Grandview Calvary when the demographics of their communities were the same.
- 5) How does the church recognize and deal with racism at both a private and systemic level? There is an assumption that the policy of multiculturalism will result in a tolerant and open society. Carl James at Sheridan College in Oakville has stated clearly this understanding of this policy,

Basically, the policy of multiculturalism assumes that discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies can be overcome if all Canadians share the same amount of cultural freedom. And, freedom from discrimination "must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions" (House of Commons

Debate, 1971).

In essence, the policy of multiculturalism is premised on a social psychological theory which holds that "the promotion of multiculturalism leads to increased confidence in one's identity, which in turn leads to respect for the identity of others" (Kalin, 1981:132).<sup>80</sup>

However, one does not have to scratch too far below the surface in many Canadian communities and churches to discover subliminal racist attitudes. There needs to be an acknowledgement of the problem before it can be confronted. Many people are not aware of their own attitudes and behaviors, which result in racism being felt by others.

### **Personal Reflections**

The research and preparation of this thesis has confirmed a number of growing convictions and challenged me to think about this issue in some new ways. It is becoming increasingly evident for many established larger city urban churches that there will need to be changes made for any hope of long term survival. Immigration into Canada for the foreseeable future will continue to bring people from many different cultures into local church neighborhoods. These churches either will embrace these newcomers

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<sup>80</sup> Carl James, *Seeing Ourselves: Exploring Race, Ethnicity and Culture* (Oakville: Sheridan College, 1989), 15.

and serve them, or become increasingly irrelevant for a new generation of Canadians.

The three churches researched for this project (Immanuel Baptist, Trinity Baptist and Grandview Calvary Baptist) are typical of many other Baptist churches across the country. Although these three are all Baptist churches, they represent other churches across Canada with similar congregational dynamics, contexts and histories. These three churches are honestly struggling with the changing demographics of their communities. Their stories and profiles demonstrate some of the joys and hardships of becoming more intentionally multicultural in order to accommodate the growing ethnic diversity.

An article in World Vision's publication *CONTEXT*<sup>81</sup> helpfully points out that most of the ethnic diversity currently being experienced by Canadians across the country is occurring mainly in certain regions. Most visible minorities live in Ontario (52.6%), followed by British Columbia (20.7%), Quebec (13.6%) and Alberta (8.4%). The majority of the visible minority population live in the major urban centers (85% of British Columbia's visible minority population live in Vancouver, 80% of Ontario's

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<sup>81</sup> WORLD VISION, "IMMIGRATION and DISCRIMINATION: a CHALLENGE for the CHURCH," *CONTEXT* 7, NO.4 (1998), 5.

visible minority population live in Toronto, 92% of Quebec's visible minority population live in Montreal and Alberta's visible minority population is more evenly distributed - 16% of Calgary's and 14% of Edmonton's populations).

There are still many Canadians outside of major urban areas that have not yet felt the impact of the last 25 years of change. However, the days of Anglo-European dominance in Canada have ended and those communities not yet affected will begin to feel the impact of the changing demographics within the next 20 years. The diversity being felt within the country either will force a fragmentation into cultural ghettos that has been all too common an experience for most of Europe, Great Britain and the Middle Eastern countries, or will develop into a new model of community where diversity can be embraced around a number of common goals and values.

There are many concerns and hopes being experienced within the faith communities of the various religious groups across the country that could provide a reason to encourage the dialogue to understand each other and work towards guaranteeing one another's fundamental human rights for freedom of expression, personal security and well being.

Local churches can have an important role to fill as facilitators of this dialogue if they do not feel insecure and

ambiguous about their own identity and purpose. Churches developed and maintained around a culturally homogeneous concern will have little to contribute to a discussion concerning the building of a unified society where there will continue to be a growing diversity of cultures. Churches developed and maintained around a multicultural concern will be able to show from an "apologetic of community" that there is a way to proceed and will have more credibility. Multicultural churches will be the most viable for the next generation of Canadians who are looking for some place where they will be embraced as human beings facing the questions and difficulties common to the rest of humanity, regardless of cultural conditioning and background.

To build the next generation of churches so that they are effective will require a commitment to recruiting and training leaders who are grounded in the Canadian context and committed to a biblical understanding of life. There will need to be a recognition that mission is both a local and global endeavor. Finally, there will need to be a willingness to embrace the diversity of those who are different from ourselves. The Kingdom of God will become a powerful reality in Canada when local churches are striving to be genuine multicultural Christian communities of faith.

APPENDIX 1

Rev. Paul Pearce  
#201, 20349 – 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue.  
Langley, BC  
V1M 2K5

DATE

Dear Participant:

Let me begin by introducing myself and the research topic to you. I am Rev. Paul Pearce and am the Area Minister for British Columbia for the Baptist Union of Western Canada. I am also currently a student at McMaster Divinity College and am a candidate for the Doctorate of Ministry from McMaster University. Dr. Bill Brackney is my project thesis advisor. Over the past 20 years of being a pastor I have served several churches where the ministries have been changing to meet the needs of a multicultural Canada. This time of change for our communities has created new possibilities and problems for local churches. My research project is entitled "*Characteristics of Emerging Healthy Multicultural Churches*". I am working with three Canadian churches (2 in Vancouver and 1 in Toronto) as case studies. Your church is one of these churches and your church leaders have agreed to help me with this research.

I would appreciate if you along with a pastor and other key leaders in your church could help me with this research project. Enclosed is a survey that I have prepared to assist me in understanding the dynamics at work in the local church as changes are made to meet the needs of their communities. I am planning to summarize my findings from these surveys for your church and meet with you and other participants from your church for a 90 minute focus session to clarify my observations and invite any further comments. I will be audiotaping this focus session so that I may realize the full benefit of the session as I write my findings later. If you or any of the other participants feel uncomfortable with the focus session being audiotaped, I will not tape the session and will rely on my written notes. I will be the only one to have control of the survey responses and they will be destroyed after the project is completed. I may be seeking the advice of an independent professional research consultant to help collate and interpret the data. This person will not be someone who attends or has any other formal association with your church.

Please be assured that your comments and responses will remain confidential. You are free to withdraw at any time if you feel that you no longer want to be participating in this project. I will not be isolating anyone in particular in the focus session. My observations will be broad in nature and not particularized to any one respondent.

As I am facing certain deadlines I would appreciate the return of this survey in the preaddressed stamped envelope to be by \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_. I would like to meet with you and the other participants on \_\_\_\_\_ date and time \_\_\_\_\_ for the focus session. Please let your pastor know if this time is not going to be convenient for you and we may need to find another time. I would like to have you return the survey even if you feel you will not be able to attend the focus session.

Thank you for your time and interest in the project. I am convinced that this research and materials generated from it will be increasingly helpful to our churches and pastors as they plan and implement ministries for our Lord Jesus Christ into the new millennium.

With Gratitude,

Rev. Paul Pearce



## **Multicultural Church Ministry Profile**

## **APPENDIX II**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help your church think about its present life and plan for the future. Simply check the appropriate box or supply the required information as indicated. When answering questions with a limited number of choices, please choose the answer that comes closest to the right answer for you, even if it does not fit perfectly. Unanswered items reduce the usefulness of the results.

Please do not sign your name on the questionnaire. I want to guarantee that your individual answers will be held in strictest confidence. I hope to meet with those from your church (12-15 others plus the pastor) who have responded to this questionnaire and have dialogue about the findings.

If your spouse or other household member receives a questionnaire, then please work independently so that your personal responses are representative of you alone. Please place your completed questionnaire in the pre-addressed envelope provided and mail it to me.

Feel free to share any comments or concerns you have about the questionnaire. Space is provided on the back for that purpose, and for sharing any additional information about your church that you think would be helpful.

Thank you for your cooperation. I hope you enjoy filling out the questionnaire, and that in addition to assisting your church, you may find it a helpful means of reflecting on your faith and the meaning of your church experience.

**Name of your church** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please check with an (X) your preferred response to the survey questions**



3. The following percentages of people attending worship are:

	Under 10%	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	over 75%
White		Im 8 GC 36 Tr 13	Im 46 GC 27 Tr 86	Im 46 GC 36	
Chinese	Im 54 GC 9 Tr 7	Im 39 GC 18 Tr 20	Tr 67	Tr 7	
Hispanic	Im 69 GC 9 Tr 53	Im 15 GC 82	GC 9		
Black	GC 10 Tr 73		Im 100		
South – Asian	Im 69 GC 100 Tr 33	Im 31 Tr 33	Tr 27	Tr 7	
Other	Im 15 GC 73 Tr 33	Im 31 GC 9 Tr 13			

If Other, please indicate the main ethnic background (s)

**Im – Middle East / GC – North American Indian / Tr - Filipino**

4. The following percentages of people living in the community immediately around the church are:

	Under 10%	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	over 75%
White	Im 15 Tr 7	Im 15 GC 95 Tr 33	Im 54 GC 27 Tr 27	Im 8 GC 27 Tr 27	Im 8 Tr 7
Chinese	Im 39 GC 27 Tr 13	Im 39 GC 36 Tr 13	Im 15 GC 36 Tr 60	Im 8 Tr 13	
Hispanic	Im 62 GC 27 Tr 40	Im 8 GC 45 Tr 7	Im 8 GC 27		
Black	Im 15 GC 82 Tr 47	Im 46 GC 9	Im 39		
South – Asian	Im 54 GC 45 Tr 40	Im 15 GC 36 Tr 27	Im 15 GC 9 Tr 7		Im 8
Other	Im 15 GC 36 Tr 13	Im 15 GC 18 Tr 7			

If Other, please indicate the main ethnic background (s)

**Im – Middle East GC – North American Indian Tr - Filipino**

3. Other comments or observations:

## II THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MY CHURCH

In developing and carrying out its ministries, every church will be identified by certain characteristics and values. Listed below are several statements describing some of the more important characteristics of a church's identity and mission. To what extent do you agree or disagree that each statement describes your church? A "don't know" (DK) response is provided, but please use it only when absolutely necessary.

### Agreement That Statement Describes My Church

	Strongly Agree 1	Somewhat Agree 2	Agree 3	Somewhat Disagree 4	Strongly Agree 5	Don't Know (DK)
1. Our church welcomes and integrates newcomers regardless of background	Im 62 GC 64 Tr 67	Im 8 GC 27 Tr 7	Im 31 GC 9 Tr 27			
2. Our church is a community that affirms cultural diversity.	Im 62 GC 91 Tr 60	Im 8 GC 9 Tr 20	Im 31  Tr 20			
3. Our church gives strong expression to its denomination identity and heritage.	Im 8 GC 9 Tr 27	Im 31 GC 18 Tr 40	Im 46 GC 18 Tr 40	Im 8 GC 55 Tr 20		
4. People come to our church because their felt needs are being met by our ministries.	Im 46 GC 45 Tr 33	Im 23 GC 36 Tr 33	Im 15 GC 18 Tr 27	Im 8		
5. Our church history and tradition makes any kind of change difficult	Im 15	Im 15 GC 9 Tr 13	Im 8 GC 9 Tr 33	Im 31 GC 36 Tr 20	Im 8 GC 45 Tr 27	Im 15
6. When people in our church are facing difficulties, they will seek help from others in the church	Im 31 GC 45 Tr 13	Im 23 GC 36 Tr 13	Im 23 GC 18 Tr 67	Im 8	Im 8	Tr 7
7. Our church is a community of people from diverse cultural backgrounds	Im 78 GC 100 Tr 73	Im 8	Im 15  Tr 13	Tr 13		

	Strongly Agree 1	Somewhat Agree 2	Agree 3	Somewhat Disagree 4	Strongly Disagree 5	Don't Know (DK)
8. People come to our church because they have always gone to church		Im 15 Tr 13	Im 31 GC 9	Im 23 GC 73 Tr 47	Im 8 GC 9 Tr 33	Im 15 GC 9
9. Our church is different in customs and cultural backgrounds to those living near the church	GC 9 Tr 13	Im 8 GC 36 Tr 13	Im 8 Tr 13	Im 62 GC 18 Tr 33	Im 15 GC 27 Tr 20	Im 8 GC 9
10. Our church's ministries are provided with a concern for those living near the church	Im 8 GC 64 Tr 20	Im 46 GC 27 Tr 27	Im 23 GC 9 Tr 33	Im 15 Tr 13	Im 8	
11. Our church feels like one large family	Im 15 GC 27 Tr 33	Im 15 GC 27 Tr 20	Im 62 GC 45 Tr 27	Im 8 Tr 20		
12. Our church's approach to individual salvation emphasizes nurture and gradual growth in faith	Im 39 GC 55 Tr 33	Im 8 GC 36 Tr 33	Im 31 GC 9 Tr 20	Im 8 Tr 7		Im 8
13. Our church is primarily oriented to serving the world beyond the established congregation	GC 27 Tr 20	Im 23 GC 9 Tr 7	Im 23 GC 36 Tr 7	Im 31 GC 9 Tr 60	Im 15 GC 18 Tr 7	
14. Our church feels like a loosely knit association of individuals and groups	Im 8 GC 9 Tr 7	GC 8 Tr 7	Im 8 GC 55 Tr 33	Im 46 Tr 33	Im 39 GC 18 Tr 7	
15. The boards, elected officers and paid staff represent the diversity of our church	Im 8 GC 45 Tr 40	Im 39 GC 18 Tr 20	Im 23 GC 18 Tr 27	Im 15 GC 18 Tr 13	Im 15	
16. People in our church would support their children marrying a Christian of different ethnic background	Im 15 GC 45 Tr 7	Im 31 GC 27 Tr 13	Im 23 GC 36 Tr 47	Im 15 Tr 7		Im 15 Tr 27
17. There is a feeling of empowerment and inclusion for the newcomers created by the long time members	Im 15 GC 9	Im 31 GC 55 Tr 20	Im 31 GC 27 Tr 47	Im 8 GC 9 Tr 13	Im 15	Tr 13

18. Our church's approach to individual salvation stresses conversion and born-again experience	Im 8 GC 9 Tr 53	Im 15 GC 27 Tr 13	Im 46 GC 9 Tr 27	Im 15 GC 55 Tr 13	Im 8	Im 8
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### III THE VISION OF MY CHURCH

In order to stay vital and effective in ministry, every church must deal with issue concerning vision, such as ministry goals, congregational identity and potential for the future. Listed below are a number of statements describing such issues. To what extent do you agree or disagree that each statement describes your church? A "Don't Know" (DK) response is provided, but please use it only when absolutely necessary.

#### Agreement That Statement Describes My Church

	Strongly Agree 1	Somewhat Agree 2	Agree 3	Somewhat Disagree 4	Strongly Disagree 5	Don't Know (DK)
1. There is a sense of excitement about the church's future	Im 23 GC 27 Tr 20	Im 15 GC 45 Tr 27	Im 39 GC 18 Tr 13	Im 15 GC 9 Tr 33		Im 8 Tr 7
2. The current outlook of our church people about the church's ministry is positive	Im 15 GC 45 Tr 27	Im 39 GC 27 Tr 20	Im 46 GC 18 Tr 53			
3. People are being attracted to our church because of it's cultural and ethnic diversity	Im 39 GC 45 Tr 27	Im 23 GC 2 Tr 33	Im 30 GC 27 Tr 33	Im 8		
4. Our church is open to living with the tension and ambiguity diversity creates	Im 15 GC 36 Tr 13	Im 15 GC 36 Tr 13	Im 31 GC 18 Tr 33	Im 31 GC 9 Tr 20		Tr 7
5. It is easy to explain how our church differs from other churches in the area	GC 27 Tr 33	Im 23 GC 27 Tr 13	Im 62 GC 27 Tr 40	Im 8		Im 8 GC 18
6. People genuinely affirm and celebrate the ethnic and cultural differences within our church	Im 23 GC 55 Tr 27	Im 39 GC 36 Tr 20	Im 15 GC 9 Tr 40	Im 8 Tr 13		Im 8
7. The church is committed to an ongoing evaluation and planning process	Im 23 GC 45 Tr 7	Im 15 GC 36 Tr 40	Im 39 Tr 27	Im 8 GC 9 Tr 13	Tr 13	Im 15 GC 9

8. The theological and biblical implications of important decisions are regularly discussed	Im 8 GC 9	Im 46 GC 36 Tr 27	Im 31 GC 55 Tr 27	Im 8 Tr 40	Tr 7	Im 8
9. Every person who is interested and capable has an equal opportunity to serve as a key leader	Im 39 GC 45 Tr 20	Im 30 GC 36 Tr 27	Im 23 GC 18 Tr 33	Im 8 Tr 20		
10. People in our church feel that they are growing in their faith and knowledge of Christ	Im 23 GC 27 Tr 20	Im 30 GC 36 Tr 20	Im 39 GC 36 Tr 47	Im 8		
11. Our church has a real passion for those who live in the immediate community	Im 8 GC 64 Tr 7	Im 39 GC 27 Tr 20	Im 23 GC 9 Tr 33	Im 23 Tr 27		Im 8
12. Our church has the financial resources to carry out the ministry effectively	Tr 33	Im 30 Tr 13	Im 23 GC 27 Tr 27	Im 30 GC 55 Tr 13	Im 8 GC 9	GC 9

#### **1V BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT YOURSELF**

This material will be reviewed by only the researcher and will be held in strictest confidence.

1. Age:  
What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_ years
2. Gender:                    **Im 46/GC64/Tr60**                    **Im 54/GC 36/Tr 40**  
What is your gender? \_\_\_\_\_ male                    \_\_\_\_\_ female
3. Race and Ethnicity:  
What is your race or ethnicity?  
White **Im 54/GC 73/Tr 73** Chinese **Im 8/Tr 20** Black **Im 38** Hispanic **GC 18**  
South-Asian **GC 9/Tr 7** Other (please specify below) \_\_\_\_\_

4. How long have you been a resident of Canada? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Income:  
What is your annual approximate household income range (family or single living alone)?

Under \$10,000	<u>GC 18</u>	\$35,000 – 49,999	<u>Im 8/Tr 27</u>
\$10,000 – 14,999	<u>Tr 7</u>	\$50,000 – 74,999	<u>Im 15/Tr 27</u>
\$15,000 – 24,999	<u>GC 64</u>	\$75,000 or more	<u>Im 46/Tr 20</u>
\$25,000 – 34,999	<u>Im 15/GC 18/Tr 7</u>		

6. Educational Background:  
High School graduate or less Im 15/GC 18/Tr 7  
Some post High School education  
Community College Im 15/GC 18/Tr 27 University Im 54/GC 45/Tr 53  
Distance Education \_\_\_\_\_ Other GC 9  
Graduated \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no  
Post Graduate work or degree Im 39/GC 36/Tr 40

7. Occupation:  
What is your present occupation (or what was it before you retired?)

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8. Employment Status:  
Retired Im 23/GC 18/Tr 27  
Full time "homemaker" GC 9/Tr 7 or student GC 18  
Employed part time Im 23/GC 36/Tr 13 Employed full time Im 46/GC 18/Tr 47

9. Number and age of children or dependents:  
How many children or dependents do you have under the age of 20? \_\_\_\_\_ What are their ages? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Home location:  
How long have you lived in this general area? \_\_\_\_\_  
How long does it take you to travel from your home to the church (one way)?

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11. Church attendance and status:  
How long have you been attending this church? \_\_\_\_\_ years  
How long have you been a member of this church?  
Not a member Im 15/GC 18/Tr 7 5 – 9 years Tr 40  
One year or less GC 9 10 – 19 years Im 15/Tr 13  
2 – 4 years Im 15/GC 55 20 or more yrs Im 54/GC 18/Tr 40

12. Congregational Involvement:  
Apart from worship services, about how many hours do you spend in committees, social events, educational and outreach programs of this church in an average month? \_\_\_\_\_ hours per month



13. Leadership roles in the congregation:

Have you ever served as an elected leader or church officer on one of the boards of the church? Im 46/GC 36/Tr 86 yes Im 54/GC 55/Tr 13 no

Have you ever felt that your ethnic or cultural background has restricted you from certain leadership roles? GC 9/Tr 7 yes Im 100/GC 82/Tr 93 no

14. Congregational stewardship:

About how much does your household contribute to this church each year?

Less than \$100	<u>                    </u>	\$1200 – 1799	<u>Im 31/Tr 20</u>
\$100 – 599	<u>Im 8/GC 27/Tr 7</u>	\$1800 – 2399	<u>Im 8/GC 18/Tr 13</u>
\$600 – 1199	<u>Im 8/GC 27</u>	\$2400 or more	<u>Im 39/GC 18/Tr 47</u>

15. Congregational relationships:

How many members of your household and extended family regularly attend this church? \_\_\_\_\_

Among the people you consider your closest friends, how many would you say are regular attenders of this church?

None Im 8/Tr 20 A few Im 39/GC 45 Some Im 15/GC 18/Tr 13 Most Im 31/GC 18/Tr 53  
All or almost all Im 8/GC 9

16. Denominational background:

Have you ever belonged to a church of a different denomination?

Im 23/GC 64/Tr 40 yes Im 77/GC 27/Tr 60 no If yes, which denomination? \_\_\_\_\_

Is it important to you that your church belongs to a denomination?

Im 77/GC 73/Tr 67 yes Im 15/GC 18/Tr 33 no

1. Frequency of religious practices:  
How often do you participate in or do the following activities:

	Daily	Weekly Or more	2-3 times a month	Once a month	Few times a year	Never
Private prayer and mediation	Im 62 GC 73 Tr 67	Im 31 GC 18 Tr 20			Tr 13	
Bible Reading	Im 31 GC 55 Tr 33	Im 46 GC 27 Tr 47	Im 15 Tr 13	GC 9	Tr 7	
Service in the ministries of my church	Im 8 Tr 7	Im 62 GC 64 Tr 67	Im 15 GC 9 Tr 7	Im 8 GC 18 Tr 7	Im 8 Tr 7	
Seek converts and new members	Tr 7	Im 15 GC 9 Tr 13	Im 8 GC 18 Tr 7	GC 9	Im 62 GC 55 Tr 47	Tr 20
Have people from the church into my home	Tr 7	GC 18 Tr 7	Im 23 GC 9 Tr 13	Im 23 GC 18 Tr 7	Im 54 GC 45 Tr 67	

#### V OTHER COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

I would also appreciate any further comments on areas you think should be investigated, questions or reactions you have experienced as you participated and the relevance of this topic for the future of the church in Canada today. We can pursue some of these matters further in a focus group to be held later.

This survey is not to be reproduced in any format without the researcher's permission. In preparing this survey the researcher made reference to Studying Congregations – A New Handbook (edited by Nancy T. Ammerman . . . (et al) and published by Abingdon Press, 1998

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