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Globalization and its Effects on the Expansion of the Church:

Doing and Being Church Among Immigrant in the USA

Abstract

At any given time, three percent of the world's population is on the move. These migrants travel across regions and continents due to various push and pull factors, and do so with their systems of belief. With approximately 106 million of the 232 million global migrants being Christian, churches in the twenty-first century recognize that the church continues to expand not as it crosses new frontiers to new lands, but as it crosses personal boundaries to include all people. As the number of Western Christians decline, so will their influence in global missions. Consequently, it will become necessary for people living in diaspora to be in Christian ministry to, through, and beyond the diaspora. This paper discusses the need to create Kingdom communities among immigrants in the United States of America (USA) by being intentional about understanding immigrants so as to include them in an existing congregation, or by planting new congregations with, for, and by immigrants. It also seeks to identify the type of church or community that might be successful in helping immigrants to connect in meaningful ways to God and God's people.

Keywords: Immigration, Christian Immigrants, Religious Observance, Church Expansion, Theology of Immigration

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Introduction

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.” As humankind has borne witness to this Truth they have sought to make it known, not only because of their experience with the True and Living God, but also because they have been commanded to do so. In the Christian Scriptures, all four gospel writers record the mandate given by Jesus Christ to those who follow Him, to make all people disciples of Him, commonly referred to as the Great Commission (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:45-47, Acts 1:6-8; John 20:21).

For centuries, Christians have taken this call to duty seriously, giving all that they are and all that they have, to the process of travelling to distant lands, entering cultures, and sharing the gospel for the task of making disciples of Jesus Christ. The fact that in the year 2015 Christians comprise the largest sector of the world’s religious adherents, and have contributed in substantial ways to liberal democracy throughout the world, is a testimony to the hard work that they have done (Woodberry 2012:245). Devout Christians have always sought to be faithful to their understandings of the Gospel in carrying out their mission—making converts, proselytes, and/or disciples (Walls 2004: 5)—and expanding the church, even though some of their methods turned out to be an embarrassment to the Faith (Bosch 2011: 374).

This paper is an attempt to show that the Church continues to expand, not as it crosses new frontiers to new lands but as it crosses personal boundaries to include all people. It discusses how to create Kingdom communities among immigrants in the United States of America (U.S.) whether by being intentional about including immigrants in an existing congregation, or by planting new congregations with, for, and by immigrants. It also seeks to identify the type of church or community that might be successful in helping immigrants to connect in meaningful ways to God and God’s people. First a context is set for why churches should reach out to immigrants in a theology of immigration and of church planting.

A Brief Theology of Immigration

All human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and as such are of sacred worth. This is a central truth that emerges throughout the scriptures (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1-3; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Jam. 3:9). Defining all human beings in terms of the *imago Dei*, provides a more humane approach to the discussion about the human boundaries in which people live (Groody 2012:301), as it sets the

conversation within the framework of the mystery of human life interconnected with the mystery of God. Migrant people, created in the *imago Dei*, who live in the tension of the pull to development and the push from suffering, are not social and political problems. Rather they are human beings deserving of just treatment like any other person. As God has entrusted all humanity with God's creation, how we live into that trust within differing human boundaries is the task at hand.

That we are from different places, and that people are on the move, is neither a mistake nor a deviation from God's plan for humankind. Christopher Wright sets the context well when he states:

God created nations as part of the diverse plan of creation as the Apostle Paul reminds us in Acts 17:26 "From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live." The inhabitants of the new creation are not portrayed as a homogenized mass or as a single global culture. Rather they will display the continuing glorious diversity of the human race through history: People of every tribe and language and people and nation will bring their wealth and their praises into the city of God (Rev. 7:9; 21:24-26). The image we might prefer for the Bible's portrait of the nations is not a melting pot (in which all differences are blended together into a single alloy) but a salad bowl (in which all ingredients preserve their distinctive color, texture, and taste). The new creation will preserve the rich diversity of the original creation, but purged of the sin-laden effects of the Fall. (Wright 2006:456)

As borders are more porous, people move from everywhere to everywhere taking their cultures, worldviews, and faith with them. They now exist in a state of liminality with the constant balancing acts of not being fully present in any place. It is in this state, that many immigrants become more open to faith communities, particularly those which are helpful with the adjustments to life in a new place (McMahan 2011:6-8). It is here that the Bible speaks loudly about the Christian response to the immigrant.

Christians are to show hospitality to the strangers in our midst by not only doing for the other, but also being with the other (Campese 2012:29), and living in such a way that their lives call attention to the God whom they serve. Integral to the hospitality shown by Christian hosts, is the consciousness that God is at work in the lives of people, whether they concur or not. As a result, hosts should also be receptive to hearing how God has been working in the lives of males and females wherever their natal land might be. Christians from everywhere

need to share with other Christians everywhere how they are coming to know God within their contexts. Goheen calls this “the attractive life of a contrast people” (2011:40-42). When strangers come to our midst, they should be treated the way God intended all human life to be lived. That is, with an orientation toward God’s redemptive goal, and against the idolatry that pollutes and cripples human life.

In this ‘contrasting’ way of life, rich and poor will have the opportunity to thrive, as each person will be protected and be given the opportunity to provide for himself or herself and family. This way of being was to be molded into the very essence of how God’s people lived when Yahweh specifically forbid the permanent sale of land (Lev. 25:23-24). This enabled the Lord, the landowner, to govern the tenants. Other laws made further provision for social and economic justice: gleaning laws meant a part of the harvest was left for the poor (Leviticus 19:9); tithing laws provided for the Levites and the poor (Deut. 26:12); and wage laws govern timely pay for workers (Deut. 24:14). Thus, the law demands justice as it provides the environment in which all are cared for, and no one can take advantage of the other by gaining an unfair edge. However, the law extends also to mercy and the benevolent care of the weak and vulnerable: “There shall be no poor among you” (Deut. 15:4). The responsibility of each Israelite to care for the oppressed, the hungry, prisoners, the blind, the bowed down, foreigners, the fatherless, and widows is predicated on God’s special concern for those at risk of being exploited (Psa. 146).

In extrapolating this for life today when people do own land permanently, and cultural and personal life is no longer centered around the temple, Christians are still called to mind the well being of others, regardless of the structures in which they find themselves. They are to become advocates for the welfare of humankind and particularly for the defenseless, and speak out against systems that further exploit and oppress the vulnerable and weak. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus speaks of the Great Judgment when “all the nations” (verse 32) will be gathered to give an account of how they handled what had been entrusted to them. In welcoming the stranger and showing hospitality there was the great reward of a life well lived. I posit that this reward does not begin when one dies, it begins in the act of being welcoming.

Showing wholehearted hospitality to strangers and welcoming them as brothers and sisters, emanates the character of Christ. This calls for very intentional Christian living, as there is a great deal of humility that goes with helping others while preserving their dignity. Kevin Vanhoozer points out “though the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, humility is its continuation (Vanhoozer 2006:124). If Christians are to make disciples of Jesus Christ, helping them to come to a fuller

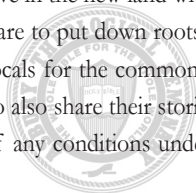
relationship with Christ regardless of where they are on the journey, then Christians must communicate in ways that do not contradict the essence of the message of the Gospel. The words of Paul to the Philippians (chapter 2:3-4) seem most apropos, “do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.” Therefore whatever is done to welcome the immigrant, should not be done with any selfish or ulterior motive.

In the sense of the Christian living the cruciform life, each Christian asserting the vertical dimension, should remember that he or she belongs to Christ and is also an alien in this world. As Andrew Walls puts it, we are pilgrims on this journey, and none of us really belongs to the things of this world (Walls 1996:54). Taking the horizontal dimension, each Christian is called to love and care for one another. So in a sense there should never be an immigrant who is a victim of xenophobia, since God shows no partiality in giving love to the native as well as to the newcomer. God loves the stranger and blesses them, as readers are reminded in Deuteronomy 10:17-19, and Isaiah 19:24-25.

All people, and especially immigrants, need to know of the hope of a redeemed life where they will not be enslaved to the gods of the day, but rather experience the freedom which comes with taking the talents they have been given to earn money, and use it for the glory of God (Mat. 25:14-30). As people move across national borders in search of a better life (Pohl 2003:3), do they know that God would want them to behave in ways that improve the common good, and not just the good of their own families?

With all that should be done to show hospitality to the stranger, does God expect anything of the immigrant? Jeremiah delivered the word from the Lord to the exiles in a foreign land, in chapter 29 verses 4-7 and it serves well today. They were instructed to “build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”

Immigrants are to live in the new land without fear and with the mindset that they belong there. They are to put down roots and integrate with the people, and work together with the locals for the common good of the people and place where they reside. They are to also share their stories of the work of God in their lives. There is no mention of any conditions under which they should withdraw



from this directive. Since the laws of Israel also provided for the outsider, it seems as long as they did not try to usurp Yahweh's authority, they were more than welcome (Goheen 2011:42). Paul iterates in Ephesians 2:19, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. Integration, cohesion, and working for the common good while maintaining one's identity in Christ is what God would expect of the immigrant today.

A Brief Theology of Church Planting

The church is a creation of the Spirit of God as evidenced by the scriptures in the Book of Acts (Cole 2005:10). As such there is only one apostolic church with one Founder and Head, Jesus Christ (Lawson 1986:143). Therefore it is a universal, corporate organism where its members function as the Body of Christ. It is to be attuned to the work of God in the lives of all human beings no matter where they are located, bearing in mind that human diversity is not an afterthought of God, but part of God's created order for the world. To belong to the church is to belong to all others who are, ever were, or ever will be in the church (1Cor. 10:17).

As Jesus instituted the church as a means of carrying on His work in the world, the church remains universal in its mission. Hence, the church is *glocal* in its nature, in that it is as much global as it is local, in its essence, theologizing, and missional calling (Van Engen 2006: 157), and as such they are caring, teaching, nurturing communities, intent on making Christ's name and power known. Church planting is "that ministry which through evangelism and discipleship establishes reproducing kingdom communities of believers in Jesus Christ, who are committed to fulfilling biblical purposes under local spiritual leaders" (Ott and Wilson 2010: 157). This is as fluid as the work of Paul recorded in the New Testament. As he referred to his work in 1Corinthians 3:6-7 as planting churches, so it continues to be replicated throughout history.

The fact the Lord builds the church and that we have become a church which spans continents, centuries, and the grave, and extends to heaven itself, means that we are not involved in church creation when we plant churches (McPhee 2014). Church planting is about enlisting, equipping and encouraging local, visible communities of the Lord's one universal church. It is an organism, and as such it will exhibit movement dynamics not only inside itself but also beyond itself; so it will naturally be involved in multiplication (Keller 2012: 355).

In the work of sharing the Gospel across new frontiers there was a shift from emphasis on church-centered mission to mission-centered church (Bosch 2011: 379). Consequently, church expansion became rooted in a renewed understanding of the *missio Dei*: that the Triune God is both a sending and a sent God, mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. Therefore it is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church (Bosch: 398-402). The church is then only partaker in its expansion. The call to fulfill the Great Commission is done with the cognition that it is The Triune God who has the ultimate responsibility for the outcome for the purpose of God's glory. Accordingly, no church planting should be done from a position of power but rather out of obedience to God with love for God's people everywhere. In the age of globalization and urbanization, where one fifth of the world's population is on the move (UN Secretary General 2014), the church continues to expand, not as it crosses new frontiers to new lands, but as it crosses personal boundaries to include all people wherever they are located.

Under the Spirit's direction, the church in every place has the two-fold task of building up the Body of Christ (edification) and proclaiming the gospel (evangelization), both in the service of the *missio Dei*. Each church's specific call (ministry vision) is discerned (revealed) by the Spirit as the church seeks God's direction. Since the body has been birthed by God, its members are to be submitted to God in every activity, dedicated to God's purpose (McPhee 2014). So since God creates the church and all people, and diversity is not an afterthought, how then should the church treat those who do not yet belong? Is the church not also given the task of helping those who do not yet know Christ to come into a loving relationship with Him?

A Brief Overview of General Immigration to the USA

Borders are now more porous than ever. With cheaper and faster transportation to almost everywhere in the world, global telecommunications, and the World Wide Web, there is greater ease of movement of the world's peoples. The International Organization for Migration estimates that more than 214 million people are migrating around the world, this means that three out of every 100 people around the world are living away from their homelands. This includes approximately 37 million migrants who are forcibly uprooted and made to flee to seek safety, known as refugees. Of this 37 million, 11 million refugees flee outside their countries, and 16 million are internally displaced. Most remarkable and not included in the previous numbers, are the approximately 12 million persons who

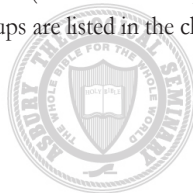
are classified as stateless, that is, they have no place in this world to call home (International Organization for Migration 2015).

So vast and fluid are the numbers of people moving to and from every region of the world that statisticians differ on the actual numbers. According to the United Nations Secretary General:

Globally, there were 232 million international migrants in 2013, with the largest numbers residing in Europe (72 million) and Asia (71 million). While international migration between continents receives significant attention, most international migrants move over smaller distances. Whereas Northern America and Oceania draw most of their international migrants from other regions, the majority of migrants in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean reside in the region in which they were born.

While the proportion of international migrants in the world's population has remained relatively constant at about 3 percent for the past two decades, the number of international migrants continued to grow by 10.8 million between 2010 and 2013. The largest gains were in Asia and Europe, with an increase of over 3 million in each region over that period. In that same time period, the international migrant stock in Northern America grew primarily as a result of migration from Central America, from East and South-East Asia and from the Caribbean. In South America, much of the increase in the number of international migrants was fueled by migrants born in other countries of South America. In Oceania, the increase in migrant stock was driven primarily by migration from Northern Europe and from East and South-East Asia (UN Secretary General 2014: 2-4).

The United Nations defines international migrants as persons who stay outside their usual country of residence for at least one year. The United States broadens its definition of immigrants as persons who did not have U.S. citizenship at birth. This population includes naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugees and asylees, persons on temporary visas such as students and certain types of employees, or persons who have no authorization to stay and legally work in U.S. society (Zong and Batalova 2015). There are immigrants in the U.S. from over 180 different countries and territories (United States Department of Homeland Security 2014: 17-20). The top 10 groups are listed in the chart below.



Top 10 Largest Immigrant Groups in 2013

Country	Percentage of total US Immigrant Population	Language Skills	Education/Job Skills
Mexico	28.0	Limited English proficiency	Lower educational attainment/ service occupations
India	4.9	Fluent with English	Highly educated and highly skilled
China	4.4	Limited English proficiency	Highly educated and skilled
Philippines	4.5	Limited English proficiency	Highly educated and skilled
Vietnam	3.1	Limited English proficiency	Less educated/ service occupations
El Salvador	3.0	Very limited English proficiency	Lower educational attainment/ service occupations
Cuba	2.8	Very limited English proficiency	Lower educational attainment/ office, sales occupations
Korea	2.6	Limited English proficiency	Highly educated/ professional skills
Dominican Republic	2.4	Limited English proficiency	Lower educational attainment/ service occupations
Guatemala	2.2	Very limited English proficiency	Lower educational attainment/ service occupations

In 2013, approximately 41.3 million immigrants lived in the United States, an all-time high for a nation historically built on immigration. The United States remains a popular destination attracting about 20 percent of the world's international migrants, even as it represents less than 5 percent of the global population. Immigrants accounted for 13 percent of the total 316 million U.S. residents; adding the U.S.-born children (of all ages) of immigrants means that approximately 80 million people, or one-quarter of the overall U.S. population, is either of the first or second generation (Migration Policy Institute 2015).

The Trend of Religious Observance among Immigrants

Around the world, Christians comprise almost half of the world's 214 million migrants with approximately 106 million residing for greater than a year outside the country of their birth. Muslims make up the second largest with 60 million or 27%, Hindus at nearly 11 million with 5% and Buddhists with 7 million at 3%. There are more than 3.6 million Jewish migrants living around the world with nearly 2%. Adherents of all other faiths—including Sikhs, Jains, Taoists, Chinese folk religions, African traditional religions and many smaller groups—collectively account for an estimated 9 million migrants at 4% (Pew Research Center's Religion and Public Life Project 2015).

Christianity is the most prevalent religion among immigrants to the U.S. constituting 61% of all legal permanent residents in 2012 (Womald 2013). This number represents a decrease over previous years, a fate also shared with Buddhists at 6%. On the other hand, the percentages of Muslims and Hindus have increased to 10% and 7% respectively. The number of religiously unaffiliated (atheist, agnostic, or nothing in particular) has remained stable at 14%. The demographics demonstrate the full spectrum of people on the E-0 to E-3 evangelism scale, all located within a typical metropolitan U.S. neighborhood (Winter et al 1999: 64).

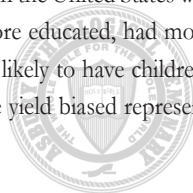
Transcultural sharing poses different challenges between diverse groups and single minority populations. Diversity is a word that is used loosely as an indicator of growing minority populations. However the true measurement of diversity is the probability that two, randomly-selected people living in the same community will not be of the same race. Therefore, places that have a high single-minority population have a correspondingly low level of diversity. Places in which the population is evenly divided between several racial groups are considered the most diverse (Broward County Planning Division). Planting churches among these groups are very different endeavors, but it is not an impossible task.

Recognizing this challenge, the framework for the field of Diaspora Missiology was introduced by Enoch Wan, emphasizing the threefold ministry 'to', 'through', and 'beyond' people in diaspora (Lausanne Movement 2010). This is commendable as an intentional move to tend to the spiritual needs of people who live outside of all that is familiar to them, ministering with an understanding that all people already have systems of belief. As they look to find strength in their belief systems in order to deal with all the push and pull factors which led to their move in the first place (Connor 2014: 77), many have brought their unique expressions of faith and have much to teach natives about living with profound Christian faith (Herppich 2012: 199). Just as with any other form of ministry, connections are engendered by listening, and thereby fostering transcultural relationships.

Wan purports some reasons why diaspora missions is of increasing importance (Wan 2011: 13-14). He noted that as the decline in Western Christianity persists, so will personnel and financial resources, which in turn decreases the impact of Western Christians on global missions. Consequently, diaspora people have been and will increasingly be, the primary vehicle of missions in the Twenty-first Century. Additionally, being on the move, people in transition are more receptive to spiritual matters such as spiritual conversations and involvement in global missions. Rather than assume a defeated posture, the Church should actively engage in tasks to: impart a missional sense to believers who are on the move; equip and mobilize diaspora Christians; provide pastoral care for family members of the diaspora who stay behind in the home country; partner with related organizations in building networks for outreach to the diaspora; and nurture the spiritual growth of the diaspora for outreach ministry in host countries and beyond.

The organizational model of religion in the U.S. is uniquely positioned to assist immigrants in finding jobs, advancing their careers, or simply helping with their cultural adjustments, by accessing the easily attained information on immigrants to the U.S. (Connor 2014: 73) and developing ministries accordingly. Churches can be conduits of hope both spiritually and physically. Immigrants, who attended worship regardless of religious adherence, were on the whole less likely to be depressed or have poor mental health compared with immigrants who do not. By contrast, involvement in ethnic associations or sports leagues was not associated with the same lower incidence of depression-like symptoms. This indicates that religious attendance seems to have a unique impact on the mental health of immigrants (Connor 2014: 78).

Massey and Espinoza in an analysis of the New Immigrant Survey examined the religious beliefs and practices of new legal immigrants to the United States (Massey and Espinoza 2011: 1386-1387). They found that overall, Christian immigrants are more Catholic, more Orthodox, and less Protestant than American Christians, while those who were Protestant were more likely to be evangelical. Additionally the detailed analysis of reported church attendance at places of origin and in the United States suggest that immigration is a disruptive event that alienates immigrants from religious practice rather than “theologizing” them. Furthermore, those who join congregations in the United States were more observant both before and after emigration, were more educated, had more cumulative experience in the United States, and were more likely to have children present in the household and be homeowners and therefore yield biased representations of all adherents to any faith.



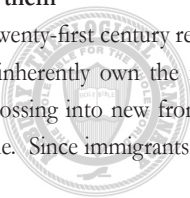
Research supports that practicing religious faith and belonging to a worshipping congregation is beneficial to migrants, particularly if they are minorities (Reid-Salmon 2008: 108). On one hand, religious identity can shape immigrant economic success, by offering social capital, networking for employment, and a safe space for newcomers to learn how people behave in the local culture (Wan and Casey 2014: 52 and Connor 2014: 77). Additionally, as their religious practices change to mimic more of the culture around them, there is a potential bridge for immigrant integration. For example, Hindus in India do not have education programs for their children, nor are they particularly keen on weekly worship attendance. However, when they practice their faith in the U.S. they incorporate the practice which is parallel to the popular Protestant worship in their new locality. In this way, these Hindus can join in the conversations at work around worship attendance.

As Connor says, “a faith that moves with migrants can move all the way around the world. But that faith never remains quite the same after the move”(2014: 67). In the world of a migrant where almost everything changes, parents are generally eager hold at least one thing constant and that is to instill their religious values and traditions in their children (Connor 2014: 96). A good marker of whether an immigrant’s faith is transferred is the measure of religious change from the immigrant generation to the second generation. Religious switching among immigrants is uncommon (Connor 2014: 67), even though the practice may be different; the identity usually remains the same. However over time the trend is for immigrants to adapt their religious practices to become more like the general public around them (Connor 2014: 118).

On the contrary, among adult children of immigrants religious switching is more common, with 25% of children raised Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist no longer belonging to the same group, and among those with no religion 40% have switched (Connor 2014: 98). The most common directions of switch in the United States are either toward no religious affiliation, or Protestant Christianity. Religious observation is fluid, with faith becoming deeper for some immigrant children while less important for others (Connor: 119).

Challenges of Immigrants with the Nature of Current Church Congregations, and How to do Church with them

As churches in the twenty-first century recognize their calling to practice the Great Commission, they inherently own the fact that in a globalized world the church expands, not by crossing into new frontiers, but by crossing personal boundaries to include all people. Since immigrants move with their faith and their



varieties of expressions of it, that scenario is no different from the varieties found in local congregations and large denominations. Expressing Christian hospitality will look differently among the varieties of peoples who are our neighbors. How does the church allow immigrant newcomers to cross into its boundaries? How will the church love immigrants enough for them to allow the church to cross into their personal boundaries? What will being the church look like in the face of people with starkly differing worldviews living among each other? How does the church respond to people who do not equate material wealth with personhood? What do churches think about the Christian message they espouse to immigrants, when even in the face of multiethnic congregations, they insist on being monocultural rather than multicultural? Though newcomers desire to worship with existing congregations, they often find it difficult. The onslaught of images and innuendos of who they should be send clear messages that who they are is not good enough. Echoes of ‘if you don’t like it go back to your country’, often greet these people who are simply trying to sing the Lord’s song in a strange land.

Consequently, migrants constantly negotiate their identities in their new homelands. Publicly, immigrants must play the role assigned to them by their employer and follow the general cultural norms, or risk constant friction. Privately, people can be themselves. Therefore immigrants learn to use an identity according to the social situation (Wan and Casey 2014: 62). With formal pleasantries being exchanged, the fact that immigrants are just playing along might be missed. They might be mistaken for someone who has integrated into the church; all the while they are struggling to understand the messages being sent. This can lead to deep misunderstandings and can cause conflict to build.

How could the church best be intentional in showing hospitality to immigrants, so they too can come to a fuller knowledge of God, and grow more into the persons God has created them to be? How can the church help those who are already Christian to express their faith in the context of an existing worshipping community? Will the Jerusalem Council have to decide again that they do not have to be circumcised in order to join the flock (Acts 15:1-21)? Or will the church be flexible enough to allow people to pursue faith in different styles in their midst? Immigrants are not simply passive recipients of a Christianity passed down to them, many have a vibrant faith of their own. If they have experienced the faithfulness and mercy of God in their times of transition, then any form of Christianity which does not allow for full expressions of the God they know will be less than adequate (Herppich 2012: 202).

With greater awareness, there can be greater accommodation of “the other”. What is sure is that doing church in the U.S. as it has always been done will

continue to yield the current results: declining participation in all Christian churches, including Evangelicals and Catholics (Pew Research Center's Religion and Public Life Project 2015: America's Changing Religious Landscape). If Christians are not moved by love for immigrants, they could be moved by self-preservation of their churches/ denominations. According to Reggie McNeal, when the gathered church is too focused on programs, it leaves people who cannot conform to its rhythms behind (2011: 28). The economic situations of immigrants often leave them with work schedules that coincide with regularly scheduled congregational activities. He suggests adapting the style of missional communities, in which the rhythm flows with the lives of the people who gather, according to their missional affinity. Rather than a weekly cycle, these communities may choose to have a monthly cycle, and the agenda varies according to the people present. There is no obligation to go through any prescribed set of activities, as people are the program (McNeal 2011:29). In these settings, immigrants will be able to express their stories within the context of a caring community. It is there also, in the context of a loving environment, hermeneutical differences that could be sorted through.

Furthermore, reaching immigrants will require more than a cursory understanding of them. It would be necessary to find representatives from that people group and learn as much as one can about them through ethnographic research. Getting involved in their lives and cultural activities, through participant observation, is also another winsome way to learn more about the people with whom we intend to do ministry (Wan and Casey 2014: 63-65). The church planter must understand how the newcomers view life, how they identify themselves, and how they express their culture in their diaspora setting. There are also basic questionnaires to assist with the process of verifying their levels of orality, and also of assessing their worldviews. Gathering this information in a time of time of mutual sharing would also help the immigrant learn how the locals learn and think, and how they see the world. This would communicate mutual respect and go a long way in helping them feel a sense of belonging. For ownership of any ministry with immigrants, the church planter must develop indigenous leaders, and contextualize the ministry, recognizing that both natives and immigrants are already influencing each other beyond the church walls, and each has much to offer the other.

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity (Psalm 133:1). The diversity in the kingdom of God is an opportunity for personal and collective growth as members of the Body of Christ. As globalization shrinks national borders, and people continue to move in search of a better life, Christians have increasing opportunities to give and receive that with which they have been blessed. Showing genuine hospitality to people, meeting them where they are both

physically, and spiritually, and humbly taking on the posture of learning from them, is what a kingdom community would look like.

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