**Steps Toward**

**A Multicultural, Multiracial, Antiracist Church**

***The material for this document is largely drawn from the texts listed below.***

**Against All Odds:**

**The Struggle for Racial Integration in Religious Organizations**

**Christerson, Edwards and Emerson: 2005  
\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**United by Faith:**

**The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer**

**to the Problem of Race**

**De Young, Emerson, Yancey, and Kim: 2003**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**One Body, One Spirit:**

**Principles of Successful Multicultural Churches**

**George Yancey: 2003**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church:**

**Mandate, Commitments, and**

**Practices of a Diverse Congregation**

**Mark DeYmaz: 2007**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

March 28, 2008

Herbert A. Perkins:

[hperkins@asdic-alliance.org](mailto:hperkins@asdic-alliance.org)

and

Margery K. Otto

[motto@asdic-alliance.org](mailto:motto@asdic-alliance.org)

ASDIC: [www.cherokeeparkunited.org](http://www.cherokeeparkunited.org)

ASDIC office phone: 651-224-2728

***ASDIC***

***Antiracism Study Dialogue***

***Circles***



*Fostering wholeness*

*Spinning webs of relationship*

*Untangling knots of oppression*

This document has been prepared for *Building a Multicultural, Diverse Congregation*, a workshop presented at United Theological Seminary, March 28, 2008.

This document, *Steps Toward A Multicultural, Multiracial, Antiracist Church*, is for educational purposes only. It is not for sale. It is given to workshop participants at the cost of printing.

The authors listed on the cover sheet, Christerson, Edwards and Emerson: 2005; De Young, Emerson, Yancey, and Kim: 2003, George Yancey: 2003; and Mark DeYmaz: 2007 retain all their copyrights. We, Perkins and Otto, claim copyright only for the arrangement of the content and our own original material given in this document.

Some parts of the original texts have been modified (word usage, titles, ordering of ideas). In keeping with larger purpose of informing participants of what such terms as multicultural, multiracial, antiracist mean, we have added our own material and modified that of the text identified above. Sections B2, C3, C4, D3, and D4 are our own original material unless otherwise noted.

We encourage workshop participants to read the original texts listed on the cover sheet.

Herbert and Margery

ASDIC

March 21, 2008

**A. Principles of Successful Multicultural Churches**

*Outline:*

* *Inclusive Worship (A.1.)*
* *An Overarching Goal (A.2.)*
* *Intentionality (A.3.)*
* *Location (A.4.)*

**A.1. Inclusive worship: Cultural elements of more than one racial group.**

Inclusive worship symbolizes acceptance—

1. An inclusive worship style signals to visitors and members of the church that the church is not dominated by one culture.
2. Inclusive worship communicates respect of other cultures.
3. Inclusive worship incorporates worship style elements from racial groups that ministry wishes to reach.
4. “Inclusive worship” refers to the many outward visible or audible acts of worship included in public worship:

* Forms, ceremonies, liturgies, orders of service and various ingredients in the assembly which make up congregational worship.
* Organization of the service, the style of preaching used by the pastor, and the customs of the church.

1. The challenge for multicultural churches is to find a balance of different worship styles that will enable these churches to attract members of different racial groups.
2. It becomes important to incorporate inclusive worship leaders into multicultural churches so that they can develop a worship style that is welcoming to members of various racial cultures.
3. Multiracial/multicultural diversity can be in a number of areas: raw numbers, worship style, leadership, or organizational practices. Examples include:

* Incorporating music from the edge group’s culture,
* Increasing racial diversity in staff,
* Accommodating different attitudes and understandings of time,
* Creating a multicultural environment through church décor,
* Instituting children’s programs addressing the identity needs of young people who are members of the edge group.

**A.2. Overarching goal: Being multicultural as a primary focus of the church, or a higher religious or ethical goal that directly connects with the church having a multicultural identity.**

1. Goals ought to be important transcendent concerns.
2. Goals ought to connect to the church’s theological tradition.
3. Goals make the work toward a racially integrated congregation integral to realizing the church’s mission and goals.
4. Goals integral to the church’s mission make it easier for the leaders of the church to encourage members to put forth efforts to create a multicultural ministry and to address racist dynamics with the church.
5. Without clear and compelling overarching goals connected to the importance of having a racially integrated congregation, a multiracial church is unlikely to develop.

**A.3. Intentionality: Deliberate steps to produce and maintain a multicultural atmosphere and interactions. Entails:**

1. Explicitly articulating theological justifications for multiculturalism, which are more likely to promote dialogue about racial and cultural issues.
2. Creating of structures within the church that allow people of different races to meet together and to get to know one another across racial groups.
3. Providing for real conversation between racial groups on the difficult and important topics of racism and racial alienation.
4. Engaging in worship styles reflective of the racio-ethnic groups in the immediate community.

**A.4. Location of church:**

1. Allows for having access to members of different races.
2. Facilitates or limits prospects for multiculturalism.
3. Variables:

* Stable, integrated, multiracial community
* Transitional community
* Mono-cultural community

**B. Models of Multicultural Churches**

*Outline:*

* *Assimilationist (B.1.)*
* *Cosmopolitan: Multicultural-Antiracist (B.2.)*
* *Pluralist Multiethnic (B.3.)*
* *Integrated Multiethnic-Multicultural (B.4.)*

B.1. Assimilationist:

One racial group is dominant in the congregation, in that their power and racial culture is imposed on church culture as a whole.

* The way the congregation functions is not significantly changed by the presence of members from different racial groups.

B.2. Cosmopolitan: Multicultural-Antiracist:

Open to the world, celebrates world cultures, adopts an appreciative, progressive, universalist worldview regarding other cultures and peoples.

1. Seeks to be an ally to other cultural and racial communities by educating itself regarding their cultures and social concerns.
2. Acknowledges that the history and legacy of white American racism is most deeply directed toward the descendants of enslaved Africans (U.S. Blacks) and Native Americans; and so, above all, directs its efforts at racial reconciliation toward these two groups while also seeking reconciliation with others oppressed by white racism.
3. Acts to advance justice by aligning its own interests and cause with theirs.
4. Acts to be in active relationship and communication with such other communities in a consciously antiracist manner.
5. Shares resources and ministries with them for mutual benefit.
6. Evidences its commitment as an ally through such interactive activities as out-reach ministries (tutoring, homework assistance, and community youth programs), shared political efforts, world music, church décor, world cultural celebrations, partnership in ministry, shared space, relationship building, ongoing communication, and participation in community events.

Remains open and inviting of multiculturalism and multi-ethnic/multi-racial community.

B.3. Pluralist Multiethnic:

While official committees may be multiracial, the informal social networks still remain segregated by race.

1. Physical integration has occurred in the sense that members of different racial groups choose to gather in the same church and at the same worship service.
2. Members do not move beyond coexistence to real integration of social networks.
3. The pluralist congregation often incorporates elements of the different racial cultures into the life of its congregation (music, sermon styles).

B.4. Integrated Multiethnic-Multicultural:

A transformed multicultural context, a new hybrid culture is expressed in a cultural amalgam, a unified collective identity.

1. No longer the old culture with certain accommodations made for members of different racio-cultural groups.
2. No longer just a mosaic with pieces of separate and distinct cultures.
3. Reflects not only aspects of the cultures represented by congregation members, but reflects a new, distinctive, unique culture that draws from but is not synonymous with existing traditional cultures.
4. The challenge for new people is finding rootedness, connection and friendships. For them the church needs to become a vital location for establishing friendships, connecting with social networks, and gaining a sense of belonging.

**C. Transforming or Revitalizing a Mono-Cultural Church**

*Outline:*

* *Role of Leadership in Transforming a Homogeneous Church (C.1.)*
  + *Alignment of Vision with Expressed Mission, Values and Policies*
  + *Creating a Diverse Staff*
  + *Cultural Competency in Congregational Life*
* *Transformational Leadership (C.2.)*
* *Attention to Culture (C.3.)*
  + *Culture*
  + *Ethnocentrism*
  + *Cultural Competence*
  + *Intercultural Person*
  + *Multicultural / Multiethnic*
* *Breaking the Silence on Race and Racism (C.4.)*
  + *Multiculturalism requires antiracism*
  + *Attention to racial dynamics and systemic racism*
* *Congregational Dynamics in the Transformation and Revitalization of the Homogeneous Congregation (C.3.)*

**C.1. Role of Leadership in Transforming a Homogeneous Church:**

* Leaders should move their congregations ahead in incremental steps. Indeed, they will not want to split an existing church in the name of unity. They need to remain prayerful, purposeful, and patient throughout the entire journey of discovering and empowering diverse leadership.
* The process of transforming a historically white congregation into a multicultural or multi-ethnic church requires transformational leaders to take intentional steps. A good first step is to gather information concerning the changing demographics of the community.

C.1. (a) Alignment of Vision with Expressed Mission, Values, and Policies:

* + 1. Leaders must provide clarity of vision anchored in the denomination’s pronouncements about social and racial justice and multiculturalism as well as within the mission and vision statement of the congregation. Such must be developed if none exists.
    2. Leaders must provide a theological and ethical foundation for advocating for a multicultural, multiracial, antiracist church. In this they communicate Christ’s vision for the Church, seeking to have that vision guide and govern the decisions that shape the future of the congregation.

1. Leaders need to specify in writing the core values and policies that would define the church’s decision to make the change.
2. Leaders should develop a written document that clearly articulates the purpose of embracing a vision for multi-cultural or multi-ethnic identity. Addressing the issue openly and honestly from the pulpit will go a long way toward winning the hearts and minds of the people.
3. The entire leadership team—pastoral staff, staff assistants, lay leadership, elders, deacons, and church governing body (i.e., Council or Session)—must be committed to the multi-cultural or multi-ethnic vision if it is to succeed.
4. For the church transformation to succeed, there can be no hint of inconsistency, self-positioning, or diversion from the vision if it is to take root and inspire change in the established church.

C.1. (b) Creating a Diverse Staff**:**

Diversity needs to be sought in all levels of leadership: clergy, elders, deacons, committees.

1. In the context of a multicultural congregation, racial identity as a Person of Color is an additional asset for a given leadership position.
2. Multiracial leadership is important because the members of different racial groups need to feel represented.
3. Many people of color fear they will lose their culture if they attend a multiracial church. Having members of their race in positions of power helps assuage this fear and increases the probability that they will have their contributions and concerns recognized.
4. Ethnic/racial groups who experience significant levels of racial hostility and are among the most alienated in society need assurances that their concerns will be heard in the church.
5. Any attempt to reach out to a group that is especially alienated or marginalized should include a member of that group within the leadership structure of the church.
6. Leaders should look for ethnic leaders of color who are firmly in line with the congregation’s theological orientation.
7. Involvement of ethnic leaders of color must be strategically designed in order to communicate that minority ethnic leaders have roles and responsibilities equal to that of the rest of the staff.

viii. Ethnic diversity among the church staff provides for cross-cultural exposure and this empowers every member of the pastoral staff to minister more effectively to the entire church body. It provides everyone with the opportunity to develop cross-cultural relationships and to pursue and achieve cross-cultural competence.

ix. Leaders will recognize that one of the most effective ways to inspire the development of cross-cultural relationships within the congregation is to model them as a staff.

C.1. (c) Cultural Competency in Congregational Life

1. The willingness to invest one’s heart, time, and energy in learning about culture differences plays an important part in navigating the inevitable misunderstandings that surface when diverse peoples come together to pursue unity.
2. Studying different cultures is quite different from walking together as one with people from different cultures. Most concerns can be addressed through relationships of transparency and trust, leading to adjustments in approach or programming. However, other cultural differences run deep through culture and hold potential for conflict.
3. Differences may surface in styles of worship, music and songs, public prayer, leadership expectations, childcare, communication styles, and decision making.
4. Encourage members to spend time with one another outside of Sunday mornings or in small groups focused on a lesson.
5. Leaders should work hard to ensure that language is not a barrier that keeps people from coming to or remaining involved in the church.

* In part, this means that emerging ethnic fellowships should be allowed to conduct supple­mental worship services in their own language; in some multi-ethnic contexts, this means that within the common service prayers and scriptural readings may be said in a language other than the dominant ethnic group’s language.
* It may also mean providing core church documents in the language of the various ethnic groups in the congregation, so that all may be inspired to embrace the vision and mission of the congregation.

1. Leaders need to provide a baseline for interracial communication and cooperation. This means taking the time to define written policies and positions on the front end. This means establishing norms for interaction, decision making, and conflict resolution.

* Doing so will allow for the expectation that stated values and policies will govern (1) inter­actions and that these may be evoked when conflict arises; (2) a common vocabulary to talk about the issues; and (3) the evolving of common values, aspirations, and perspectives—a reference point from which to work in the future and to deal with unexpected challenges as they arise.
* Written guidelines and policies also ensure that people are treated impartially, while the leadership exercises sensitivity and care in meeting the varying ministry needs of each ethnic group in the congregation.

1. Committing to a spirit of inclusion requires transformational leaders to set the tone and to follow through with tangible signs for those in the minority. These must not feel as though they are an afterthought; rather, they must truly be an integral part of the entire church family.

**C.2. Transformational Leadership**

* 1. Transformational leaders must already have had a history of living integrated, multi-racial lives.
  2. Surround yourself with individuals of diverse background, inviting them not simply to follow but also to guide you on the journey.
  3. There is a special need for church leadership to pursue cross-cultural competency and to maintain mutual respect for one another in seeking to understand and resolve differences.
  4. Remember that “my way” is only “a way” and not necessarily “the way” things should be done .
  5. Re-examine everything you have previously learned, experienced, or assumed in order to avoid the unintentional creation of barriers.
  6. Recognize and celebrate the unique credibility of your message and ministry as a multicultural, multiracial church.
  7. Ask new members for honest feedback concerning how they perceive the church’s claim to be inclusive or to be reaching out to all people.
  8. Remain committed to doing whatever it takes to cultivate an atmosphere in which every person will be represented and celebrated.
  9. Cultivate and maintain relationships across all ethnic groups whose inclusion is sought, in order to gather open and honest feedback concerning the various ethnic perspectives.
  10. Personal, relational, and leadership skills uniquely suited for a multicultural church include:
* Sensitivity to different needs.
* Patience.
* Ability to empower others.
* Ability to relate to those of different races.
* Intercultural communication skills
* Adaptability:
  + Ability to learn the cultures of new members and to blend cultures to create a new cultural reality.
  + Attending to new issues that diversity brings to the church.

**C. 3. Attention to Culture**

* A church community must understand itself to be a multicultural community.
* It must be able to identify how culture and diversity are manifested (and could be more manifest) in all aspects of congregational life.
* A church community must strive for multicultural consciousness.

C.3.a. Culture

1. Culture refers to integrated system of standards for interpreting human experience and generating appropriate social behavior, for “what making sense,” for understanding what is or could be, for producing emotional responses, for determining how things are to be done and by who whom, and for decision making shared by a collection of people.
2. Cultural issues of concern:

* Tending to see cultural practices of the new groups (edge groups) as inferior or not “belonging” in the church
* Discouraging the introduction of new foods
* Opposing changes proposed or made in worship to meet the needs of the edge group people
* Discounting the ability of edge group leaders to lead or communicate new revelations about God
* Pigeon-holing and restricting edge group leaders to “diversity” leadership roles.

C.3.b. Ethnocentrism:

* 1. Ethnocentrism is a primary barrier to multicultural consciousness and a church becoming a multicultural community.
  2. Ethnocentrism refers to taking one’s own cultural standards
     + as a universal standard (irrespective to cultural context),
     + as being innately superior (more valid, adequate, or moral) to other cultural standards,
     + as the proper norm for judging the values, beliefs, feeling responses and behaviors of all peoples.
  3. Ethnocentrism easily leads to ethnic domination—the belief that, by virtue of one’s ethnic superiority, one’s ethnic group perspective ought to have the ruling, controlling, and the deciding voice in crucial issues and in general church culture.
  4. Ethnocentrism may be countered by challenging the norms legitimizing ethnocentrism, by the learning of intercultural communication skills, and by becoming culturally competent.

C.3.c. Cultural Competence:

1. Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, organization, or person and enable that system, organization, or person to work effectively in cross-cultural situations (T.L. Cross 1989).
2. Competence implies having the capacity to function effectively.
3. A culturally-competent church acknowledges and incorporates at all organizational levels the importance of culture, the assessment of cross-cultural relations, vigilance toward the dynamics that result from cultural differences, the expansion of cultural knowledge and the adaptation of services to meet culturally unique needs. (T.L. Cross 1989. http://www.dshs.wa.gov/CA/pubs/manuals\_ICWAppA\_7.asp).

C.3.d. Intercultural Person:

1. Is characterized as situational in relationship to others (asking, How is the relationship defined by the situation? Given the situation, how am I expected to act?) and in connection to cultural contexts and is ever in the process of reformulating or re-evaluating his or her cultural conceptions in the face of diverse contexts and situations (asking, How does this situation/cultural context define the relationship and mutual expectations?).
2. Maintains indefinite, flexible, open boundaries of self while respecting the coherence, integrity, inherent validity, and logic of every cultural system.
3. Recognizes the subjective constraints on identity, behavior and personal place imposed by cultural systems and one’s particular enculturation.
4. Relates to others through a multicultural consciousness involving empathic understanding and listening.
   * + *Empathy***:** Crossing differences by the self-conscious effort to share and accurately to comprehend the presumed consciousness of another, while remaining aware of the cultural limitations, personal subjectivity, and imaginative nature of one’s own perception, understanding and evaluation, with constant attention to how structures of dominance are influencing these perceptions, understandings and evaluations.
     + *Empathetic approaches to understanding***:** Attempts to identify how the other person’s socio-cultural background may influence how he/she will encode experience and how it will influence how he/she will perceive or decode messages from someone with a different socio-cultural background. Attempts to identify the language, imagery, communicative style, and behaviors conducive to mutual understanding.
     + *Empathetic listening***:** Involves attempting to check out one’s interpretations with the other person, taking responsibility for one’s own meanings and responses, and recognizing that one’s value system is the source of one’s evaluations. Non-evaluative, and attempts to understand despite differences.

C.3.e. Multicultural / Multiethnic:

* + - 1. Multiculturalism recognizes the diversity of cultures and worldviews and their validity as ways of valuing, perceiving, and organizing human life.
      2. In espousing multiculturalism, people express appreciation for cultural products—unique creations of hand, mind and spirit, originating in various ethnic groups around the world. There is a sense that these cultural expressions are human products that enrich all peoples.
      3. In espousing multiculturalism, a congregation attempts to move away from ethnocentrism, mono-culturalism, and exclusivism.
      4. Multicultural not synonymous with multiethnic:
      * Being multicultural means recognizing, respecting, and being completed by the diversity of world cultures.
      * Mono-cultural congregations can be multicultural through espousal of multiculturalism.
      * Multiethnic congregations may or not be multicultural.
      1. Multiculturalism is open to cultural diversity in all of its forms. It is complemented, informed, and sustained through intercultural relations and communication.
      2. Multiculturalism must be more than the “show” of diverse cultural expressions in décor and style.
* A multicultural congregation will be characterized by a “cosmopolitan” culture and by people who are truly “intercultural persons.”

**C. 4. Breaking the Silence on Race and Racism**

C.4.a. Multiculturalism Requires Antiracism:

1. Racism is a significant barrier to becoming either a multicultural or   
   multiracial congregation.
2. Removing interpersonal, cultural, and institutional racism is an on-going struggle within the congregation.
3. Prejudice regarding interracial intimacy is especially challenging.

* People with children of near-dating age tend to leave the congregation to avoid the possibility of interracial dating.

1. Deep seated racial prejudice remains hidden until it is challenged:
2. Racism will not disappear simply because a congregation has become multiracial or displays an appreciation for cultural diversity.
3. Racism is the cultural legacy of all peoples socialized in the United States—all have been “raced” in consciousness, emotions, and predispositions.
4. Breaking the silence of race and racism requires the creation and formalizing of conventions to engage in sustained, ongoing dialogue about race (critical self-interrogation, dialogue circles, adult forum series, book studies, sermons) and conventions to air and resolve conflict arising out of differing cultural values and perspectives (quarterly “cross-talk” based on an incident or case study).
5. Antiracism needs to be posited as a value:

(Lawrence A. Blum 1992, in Applied Ethics: A Multicultural Approach, pp. 5-8, 4th ed, 2006: D4h)

* The value of antiracism involves countering an evil and not just promoting a good.
* Acting on this value means noticing, confronting, opposing, and working toward the elimination of manifestations of racism.
* Particular moral abilities and traits of character are required for activities of opposition that are not required merely for the promotion of a good goal.
* Antiracism does presuppose the positive value of racial justice; hence, the positive element is implicitly contained in the value of antiracism.

ix) Antiracism as a value defined:

(Lawrence A. Blum 1992, in Applied Ethics: A Multicultural Approach, pp. 5-8, 4th ed, 2006: D4i)

Antiracism as a value involves striving to be without racist attitudes oneself as well as being prepared to work against both racist attitudes in others and racial injustice in society more generally.

x) Three components of antiracism as a value:

(Lawrence A. Blum 1992, in Applied Ethics: A Multicultural Approach, pp. 5-8, 4th ed, 2006: D4j)

(1) Nonracist moral consciousness—avoiding racism in one’s own actions and attitudes

(2) Understanding of racism—learning to perceive racism and when it is occurring:

* Learning the psychological dynamics of racism
* Learning the historical dynamics of racism—forms of racism and movements against racism
* Understanding the role of individuals in sustaining or resisting racist institutions, patterns and systems

(3) Opposition to racism—accepting responsibility concerning manifestations of racism in other persons and in the society more generally.

C.4.b. Attention to Racial Dynamics and Systemic Racism:

A multi-cultural or multi-ethnic church needs to engage in on-going learning about the systemic and structural nature of racism.

1. Leadership teaches and preaches what racism is and what the church must do in response:
   * + *Systemic racism* refers to race-based system of hierarchical interaction, principally concerning the creation, development, and maintenance of privilege, economic wealth, and sociopolitical power in defense of the interests of the dominant racial group and its elites.
     + In the Unites States, systemic racism includes a diverse assortment of racist practices; the unjustly gained economic and political power of whites (theft of land from American Indians and enslavement of Africans); the continuing resource inequalities; and the racist ideologies, attitudes, and institutions created preserve white advantages and power.(Feagin *Racist America*, 2000: 6).
2. The pervasiveness of racism is acknowledged:

* The United States has been racialized since the time of its formation and remains deeply racialized today.
* The evil of racism exists within every part of our society.
* We call racism evil because it is a fundamental disregard for the well-being of the other.
* The failure to transcend the self to encompass the other as being identified with one’s self in a common humanity results in self-misunderstanding and distortion.
* Racism distorts who we are and who we are called to be as a human: we exist in, and for, relationship.
* In these distortions, racism destroys the basis for God’s reign on earth.

1. Racism is addressed through antiracism education:

* Antiracism work is internal work that leads to an understanding of why external work is necessary and that, in turn, contributes to an understanding of what kind of external work is necessary.
* Antiracism work is directed toward undoing the system of oppression and domination created to advantage whites over other ethnic/racial groups.
* The work of antiracism is both the dismantling of internal and external structures of unearned racial privilege and it is about building community, reconstructing humanity, and creating bonds of affection and mutuality.
* We cannot speak of antiracism outside of the context of recognizing and addressing racial oppression and domination and the relational breach it causes.
* The word antiracism exists in a universe of action.
* To say the word suggests a sense of taking action against racism—action against oppression and domination.

**C.5. Congregational Dynamics in the Transformation and Revitalization of the Homogeneous Congregation**

* 1. In revitalization, bridging divisions of expectations will remain an ongoing challenge. But leaders must remain committed to doing whatever it takes to cultivate an atmosphere in which every person will be represented and celebrated.
  2. In revitalization, it will be the majority group that will be called upon initially to sacrifice the most.
  3. As it is the majority who held the power and control in the past and continues to hold it in the present, members of the majority group are the ones who will have to determine whether to share or release it.
  4. Within the process of revitalization, the majority may not feel appreciated. Find ways to keep them engaged such as involving them in mentoring emerging leaders among the new members.
  5. It is vital, then, that reformers cultivate and maintain relationships with those in the minority in order to gather open and honest feedback concerning their perspectives.
  6. As new members join the church, particularly people of color, the development of cross-cultural relationships become more challenging for the majority ethnic group because there are already social bonds in place among them.
  7. Either the established majority will initiate bridging the gap with newcomers, or ethnic-based subgroups will begin to develop.

**D. Challenges and Obstacles to the Formation and Maintenance**

**of a Multicultural, Antiracist Church**

*Outline:*

* *Lack of commitment to the goal of being a multicultural or multiethnic church (D.1.)*
* *Leadership challenges (D.2.)*
* *The challenges of antiracism within multicultural models (D.3.)*
* *Racist power dynamics (D.4.)*

**D.1. Lack of commitment to the goal of being a multicultural or multiethnic church:**

1. A church that does not aim to become multicultural almost never does.
2. Those that become multiracial often revert to being uniracial. A number of sociological factors are involved in this pattern—such as:
3. Need for symbolic boundaries and social solidarity—exclusionary table fellowship, class and racial markers, exclusionary relational networks,.
4. Similarity principles—people are most comfortable with those with whom they share style, form, and perspectives.
5. Status quo bias—dominance, control, norm sanctity.

All these constantly drive religious congregations to be racially homogeneous.

**D. 2. Leadership challenges:**

1. Leaders will fail in forming a multicultural church if they are not thoroughly convinced that being multicultural is God’s plan.

* Leaders will fail if they are motivated instead by some politically correct or “in” concept, or by guilt.

1. Leaders must be committed to learning all they can about multicultural and multiracial ministry.
2. Leaders must have a passion for becoming multicultural and multiracial.

**D. 3 The challenges of antiracism within multicultural models:**

All models of multicultural churches are deeply impacted by the racial hierarchy of our society.

* 1. Most multiracial churches do not have significant membership of African-Americans born in the United States or Native Americans (according to the Lilly-funded research reported by Yancey).
  2. Despite the powerful theology and over-arching goals of multiculturalism, racial reconciliation often is not extended toward these two groups of peoples against whom the history and legacy of white racism is most deeply directed in our country.
  3. Racial reconciliation is offered at the expense of Blackness and Indian-ness:
* Whites evidence deep discomfort toward aspects of past and contemporary American history and cultural practices that make contemporary racism visible—especially racism in the church.
* Cultural traditions and religious forms most unlike Euro-American forms bring discomfort to, and disapproval from, Whites.
* There exists an understood (but usually unstated) cultural mandate for People of Color to assimilate to Whiteness.
* There exists an understood (but usually unstated) cultural mandate for People of Color to conform to the “model minority” rubric.
* White society, including white ecclesiastical structures, encourages the “model minority” rubric:
* White support is extended to certain multiracial groups on the condition that those groups do not adopt an identity associated with Blackness or Redness or strongly align themselves with the racial struggles of the African-American and Native peoples.

d) The effect of the white mandate to be assimilated, to be a “model minority” is to create powerful forms of racism within a multicultural or multiracial congregation in a way that directly contravenes the theology and over-arching goals desired by a multicultural congregation.

e) To remain true to its purpose and vision, a multicultural church must most deeply direct its efforts at racial reconciliation toward the descendants of enslaved Africans (U.S. Blacks) and Native Americans, while also seeking reconciliation with others oppressed by white racism.

**D.4. Racist power dynamics:**

Unless intentionally studied and transformed, racist patterns of interaction will undermine a church’s efforts to be multicultural or multiethnic. Examples include:

* 1. The dominant group holds nearly all the positions of leadership within the congregation.
  2. Decisions on leadership appointments are based on the dominant group’s cultural criteria, such as particular notions of spiritual maturity or particular forms of education.
  3. If leadership, worship and organizational practices reflect the styles and preferences of the group that is dominant, edge members feel the costs of membership more acutely.
  4. Whites remain accustomed to being in control in social contexts, to having their norms and values accepted without challenge, and to living in, establishing, and reproducing social spaces that accommodate their preferences, culture and superior status.
  5. Whites are not necessarily aware of their privileged status, nor are they aware how their own actions are perpetuating it. This prompts the withdrawal of People of Color.