



LONDON 2025 ICCT GATHERING



REPORT AND REFLECTIONS FOR
INTERCULTURAL LEARNING JOURNEY



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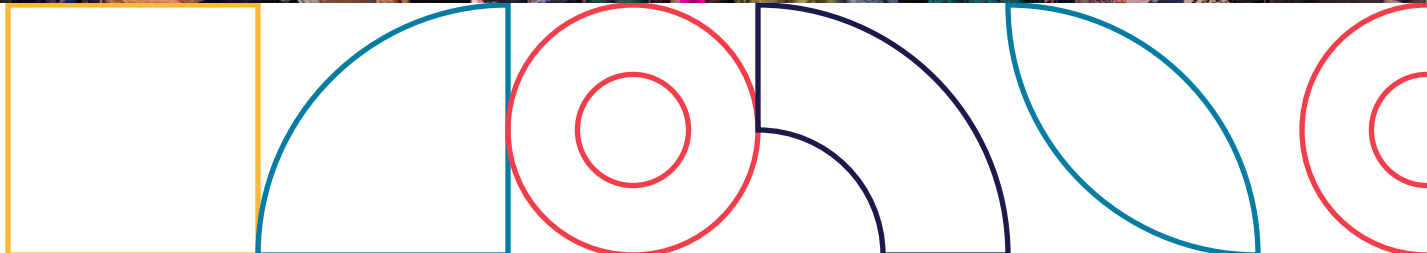
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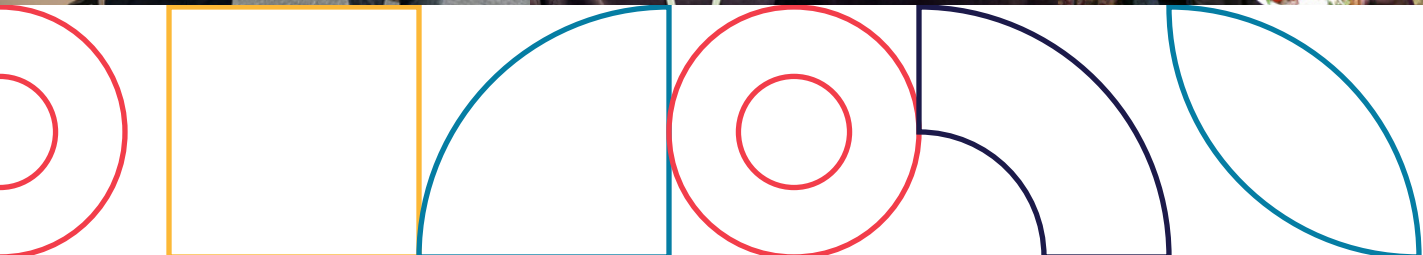
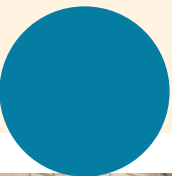
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Special thanks and acknowledgements

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Session one: the church and the call to intercultural unity

Prof Paul Williams, Revd Joe Kapolyo, Revd Dr Israel Olofinjana, Dr Mija Wi, Canon Victor Darlington, Natalie Williams, Dr Raj Saha and Nigel Langford

Session two: intercultural competence for ministry

Revd Osoba Otaigbe, Revd Dr Sabrina Jones, Quek Lee Si, Alex Brito, Samuel Luak, Raj Saha, Toby Beresford, Tani Omideyi, Revd Victoria Lawrence and Rosie Hopley

Session three: intercultural mission: a call to embrace, engage, and act by sharing Jesus

Andy Frost, Girma Bishaw, Laura Dixon, Wien Fung, Wagih Abdelmassih and Zhaleh Gharehbaghlou

Session four: a symphony of nations: united in worship

Les Moir, *Songs2Serve Collective*, Anu Omideyi, *Movement in Worship*, Muyiwa Olarewaju, Dave King, Ursula Lai, Rani Joshi, Fola Adesakin, David Vincent, Sam Blake, Elaine Patience, Martin Neil

Session five: intergenerational leadership – ‘mind the gap’

Dr Lisa Adjei, Les Isaac, James So, Damilola Makinde, Jess Dubock, Laura Firth, Hugh Osgood, Kristin Stevenson, Ivy Chan, Ofure Otaigbe, O’Neil Dennis, *Magnet*: Pastor Larry, Osas, and Emmanuel

Part two: city transformation

Nigel Langford, Tani Omideyi, Roger Sutton, Tania Bright, Osai Ojigho, Gareth Davies and Mark Cowling

Part three: Roundtable

All roundtable attendees

Special thanks to Sharon Nugent, Revd Joe Kapolyo, Andy Frost, Mark Cowling, Les Moir, Nicole Lewis and Caroline Khoo-Millar for their post-gathering notes and hosting

INTRODUCTION

The London 2025 ICCT Gathering has come and gone, but the impact and the memories remain with us. This event was not just a moment in time but a catalyst for a movement for transformation in our churches and cities. It was an extraordinary time of learning, worship, and dialogue, bringing together diverse voices united in the vision of intercultural church leadership and community engagement.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the contributors, speakers, and participants who made this gathering so meaningful. Your insights, experiences, and willingness to engage in deep conversations have left an indelible mark. A special thanks to those who took notes, capturing the wisdom shared during our sessions. Your work has provided a valuable resource that we will continue to be a significant reference as we move forward in building more culturally inclusive, dynamic, and transformative church communities.

This material is organized into three parts.

Part One is divided into six sessions: Intercultural Theology, Intercultural Competence for Ministry, Intercultural Mission, Intercultural Worship, and Intergenerational Leadership. These sessions cover the core themes presented during ICCTG.

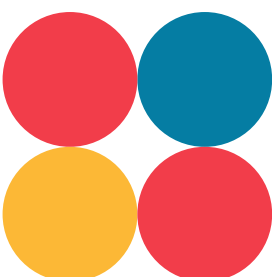
Part Two focuses on City Transformation.

Part Three captures key insights and conversations from the Roundtable discussions.

Each session includes contributions and reflection questions to help you engage more deeply with the content.

Osoba Otaigbe

Osoba Otaigbe
Convener



THE FINEST ACT OF LOVE: LEARNING TO SEE OTHERS BEYOND THE SURFACE

At the heart of human connection lies one simple yet profound truth: seeing others – not just in a superficial sense, but truly recognising their inner beauty, goodness, and worth. During a powerful session, Osoba opened with a thought-provoking quote that ‘*cultural diversity is a gift from God that needs to be celebrated and not feared*’ and a quote from Anthony De Mello:

“ *it is a sobering thought that the finest act of love you can perform is not an act of service but an act of contemplation, of seeing. When you serve people, you help, support, comfort, and alleviate pain. When you see them in their inner beauty and goodness, you transform and create.*”

This statement challenges conventional ideas of love and service. While helping and supporting others is important, the greatest impact comes not just from what we do for others but from how we see them because that determines the value we place on them.

LEARNING TO SEE BEYOND THE SURFACE

So often, we judge others based on first impressions, stereotypes, or external characteristics. We categorise people by their background, appearance, or the labels society has placed on them. But true transformation – both in individuals and in communities – begins when we see beyond these surface-level distinctions.

To truly see others means:

- recognising their struggles and strengths
- appreciating their culture and personal experiences
- understanding their unique contributions to the world.

This is especially important when engaging with those from culturally different or marginalised backgrounds. Many people live in communities where they feel unseen, unheard, and undervalued. By taking the time to truly see them, we restore dignity and worth.

THE IMPACT OF OUR BACKGROUNDS AND PERCEPTIONS

How do our own backgrounds shape the way we see others?

Each of us carries unconscious biases – shaped by our upbringing, experiences, and social environment. These biases can unintentionally affect the way we interact with people who are different from us. Some key questions to consider:

- Do I automatically assume things about someone based on their race, accent, or social status?
- Am I open to learning from others, or do I hold tightly to my perspectives?
- How do I react when I encounter cultural traditions that are different from my own?



Osoba's challenge was simple but profound: we must be willing to 'unlearn, learn, and relearn' together. If we want to grow in love and understanding, we must be intentional about expanding our perspectives.

- Unlearn – challenge the biases and assumptions we've inherited.
- Learn – listen to the voices of those different from us. Be curious and open-hearted.
- Relearn – continually adapt and reshape our understanding based on new experiences and insights.

This is particularly crucial in an intercultural church and world, where people from different backgrounds must work, worship, and live together. Learning to function interculturally means more than just coexisting – it means building genuine relationships based on mutual respect, empathy, and shared experiences.

THE POWER OF WORKING INTERCULTURALLY

When we truly see each other, we move from division to unity. Intercultural relationships break down barriers, heal wounds, and create space for transformation. They challenge us to:

- celebrate diversity rather than fear it
- recognise the value in different perspectives
- create a culture where everyone feels included and empowered.

At its core, this message is about loving as Christ loves – not just through acts of service, but through the way we perceive and honour others. When we laugh together, cry together, and do life together, we build something far greater than service – we build community.

FINAL THOUGHTS: A CALL TO SEE WITH NEW EYES

This session left a clear and urgent challenge: Are we truly seeing those around us? Not just in passing, but deeply and meaningfully? Are we willing to let go of our preconceived ideas and learn to embrace people as they are?

If we take up this challenge, our churches, communities, and workplaces can become places of genuine transformation – where people feel truly seen, valued, and loved.

The finest act of love isn't just in what we do, but in how we see. Let's see each other with new eyes and build a world where every person's worth is recognised.





PART ONE

SESSION ONE:

Intercultural theology: the church and the call to intercultural unity

This session explores how cultural, social, and historical contexts influence and shape theological understanding. According to Joe Kalpoyo, the theology track addressed two major themes. First, it challenged the presumed objectivity, superiority, and normativity of Western theology, arguing that the distinction between “theology” and “contextual theologies” is both misleading and harmful—serving to exclude and, at times, oppress. The track urged academic institutions to discard such terminology, asserting that all theology is inherently contextual. Second, it encouraged every culture to explore its own context to uncover “divine deposits” of grace—unique, God-given insights that can deepen the understanding of Scripture and allow the gospel to be expressed in ways that resonate locally, rather than through borrowed, often colonial, frameworks.

- How do we, as the Church, embrace true unity in diversity?
- How do we move beyond historical divides, cultural misunderstandings, and theological barriers to reflect the multi-faceted beauty of the Kingdom of God?

At the heart of the ICCT Gathering, diverse leading voices from across the church engaged in a conversation about city transformation, intercultural theology, and the gospel’s unifying power. Speakers including Revd Dr Israel Olofinjana, Prof Paul Williams, Revd Joe Kapolyo, Dr Raj Saha, Dr MiJa Wi, Natalie Williams and Canon Victor Darlington explored what it truly means to live out God’s agenda in a world marked by difference.

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THE GOSPEL

Prof Paul Williams began by emphasising that the gospel is transformative. However, instead of embracing diversity as a God-given strength, society – and even the church – has often experienced difference as a source of division. Yet, Scripture paints a different vision:

- 1 Corinthians 12 – the body of Christ is made up of many different parts, each playing a vital role.
- Ephesians 2 – Jesus has broken down the dividing walls between people, bringing true unity.
- Revelation 7 – a vision of heaven where people from every tribe, tongue, and nation worship together.

The early church fathers spoke of three key principles (in Greek words) that should shape our work together:

- *perichoresis* – mutual interdependence (a divine dance of relationship)
- *hypostasis* – equality, not sameness – God makes room for us to be fully ourselves
- *koinonia* – love, communion, and deep friendship.

These principles remind us that relational unity is at the very heart of the life of God. Jesus Himself prayed in John 17 that we would be one in Him through the Father. This unity is not about conformity but about deep connection and love.

A THEOLOGY THAT EMBRACES INTERCULTURAL REALITY

Rev'd Dr Israel Olofinjana posed a challenging question: should theology be singular or plural?

He reminded us that:

- the trinitarian God is united in diversity
- God speaks in different ways – in Hebrew in the Old Testament, and in multiple languages on the Day of Pentecost
- theology must engage the questions people are asking today.

For too long, European theology has been treated as the standard, while African, Asian, and Latin American theologies have been considered ‘contextual’ or secondary. But, in reality, all theology is contextual – it is shaped by the cultural, historical, and social realities of the people engaging with it.

Dr Olofinjana highlighted how Western theology rationalised the Bible and then exported this framework to other cultures, often rejecting local expressions of faith. This legacy has led to significant tensions.

- Before European missionaries arrived, African societies already had a deep sense of God, but did not understand Jesus. The largest concentration of Christians today is in Africa, yet



African Christianity is often dismissed in European settings.

- Regarding the question of British and English identity, it is important to address deep cultural concerns, and the potential for rediscovering the non-power-based roots of Celtic Christianity.

So, what can we learn from African/Caribbean, Celtic, Asian, Hispanic and European Christianity? Can these traditions inform a more inclusive, intercultural theology that reflects the richness of God's kingdom?

THE CHURCH AS AN INTERCONNECTED BODY

Dr Raj Saha took a biological approach to explaining unity, using the metaphor of the human body:

- Our body parts are different, yet all work together in harmony.
- The immune system protects the body, just as unity in diversity protects the church.
- The blood in our bodies is a 'superhighway', connecting every part – just as we, the church, are connected by the blood of Christ.

He concluded that cultural diversity is not a problem to solve but a gift to harness. In embracing diversity, the church mirrors the power of God's creation – just as the body heals and adapts, the church can heal, restore, and transform society.

WHO GETS TO ASK THE QUESTIONS?

The panel discussion took this conversation further:

- Who decides which interpretation of the Bible is valid?
- Should we accept multiple interpretations, or must there be one correct way to read Scripture?
- How do social and cultural experiences shape the way we understand the Bible?

Dr MiJa Wi emphasised that Western theology has historically held the dominant voice, while non-Western interpretations have been dismissed as 'contextual'. But in reality, all interpretations are contextual! Constructing theology on the centrality of Christ is most important.

Natalie Williams challenged the church to become more accessible to people from working-class backgrounds. In the UK, the majority of the population identifies as working class, yet most churches are middle-class spaces. She asked:

- Can working-class people ask theological questions without feeling excluded?
- In Acts 4:13, Peter and John were unschooled, ordinary men – can we learn from those who haven't gone through formal theological training?

Canon Victor Darlington added that we must not allow our church structures to become obstacles. Faith should unite us, not make people



feel alienated. Joe Kapolyo built on this by emphasising that God has placed deposits of grace within every culture. Instead of trying to reshape people into one dominant model of Christianity, we must discover and celebrate the ways God is already working within diverse communities.

THE CHALLENGE AHEAD: A NEW THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE

Prof Paul Williams closed with a sobering challenge:


- Western theology has been dominant for too long – this has led to narrow and fear-driven reactions.
- A new wave of intercultural theological dialogue is desperately needed.
- This must be rooted in Christ rather than in historical power structures.

The church cannot afford to remain stuck in old patterns. Instead, we must:

- recognise the beauty of theological diversity – it is a gift, not a threat
- learn from every culture – not just European traditions, but also African, Asian, and Latin American perspectives
- engage the questions people are asking today – especially about race, culture, identity, and justice.

FINAL THOUGHTS: A CHURCH TRANSFORMED BY LOVE AND UNITY

At its core, this conversation was about the church becoming what Jesus prayed for in John 17:

 *That they may all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me.'*

(John 17:21)

This is not unity that erases difference – it is unity that embraces difference as a divine gift.

The church must become a place of radical hospitality, where people from every background are not just invited but are valued, heard, and empowered.

As we move forward, let's commit to:

- building true relational unity, not just structural unity
- honouring diverse theological perspectives
- seeing each culture as an expression of God's creativity
- engaging in deep, meaningful conversations about race, justice, and theology.

If we do this, we will not just be a church that talks about transformation – we will become a church that embodies it. The world is watching. Let's show them what true, Christ-centered unity looks like.





SESSION TWO:

Intercultural competence for ministry

In a world where cultures intertwine more than ever before, intercultural competence has become an essential skill – not just for global leaders and businesses but for the church itself. The church is called to be a place of radical hospitality, a family where people from all backgrounds find belonging. But how do we move beyond mere coexistence to genuine connection, understanding, and collaboration?

This session, led by Osoba Otaigbe, explored the importance of seeing, understanding, relating to, and interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds. The discussion challenged participants to examine their own biases, recognise the gift of cultural diversity, and learn practical ways to engage meaningfully with people from different cultures.

THE HEART OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE: SEEING, UNDERSTANDING, RELATING, INTERACTING

Osoba began by defining intercultural competence as the ability to see, understand, relate to, and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. At its core, this means:

- listening well – genuinely hearing others, rather than assuming we already understand
- adapting behaviour – learning to communicate in ways that honour different cultural norms
- recognising blind spots – acknowledging our own biases and being open to correction.

‘Cultural diversity is a gift from God.’ Culture matters – it shapes how we see one another, how we serve, worship, pray, and communicate. It also deeply influences how we read and interpret the Bible. Osoba’s book *Building Cultural Intelligence in Church and Ministry* examines research by Mark Powell that highlights this reality. In the study, Christians from the USA, Russia, and Tanzania were asked why the prodigal son ended up in the pigsty. Americans largely responded that he squandered his money. Russians said it was because of a famine in the land. Tanzanians believed it was because no one helped him or invited him in. These varied interpretations reflect the cultural lenses through which people engage with Scripture.

Looking at Luke 15:13–15, each of these responses has some truth: the son did squander his wealth, there was indeed a famine, and he was left without support. But none of the interpretations capture the full picture alone. Americans, shaped by an individualistic, capitalist society, emphasised personal responsibility. Russians, shaped by a history of devastating famines, focused on external circumstances. Tanzanians, from a collectivist culture rooted in the spirit of *ubuntu* – ‘I am because we are’ – highlighted the lack of communal care. Each response reveals how culture filters what we notice, how we interpret events, and where we place blame. This shows the danger of relying on a single cultural perspective when reading Scripture, reminding us that no one culture holds the complete truth.

The key takeaway? There is no single way to interpret life, faith, or even Scripture. The danger of a single story means we must engage multiple perspectives to see the fuller picture of God’s truth.

‘We are made to complete each other, not compete with each other.’

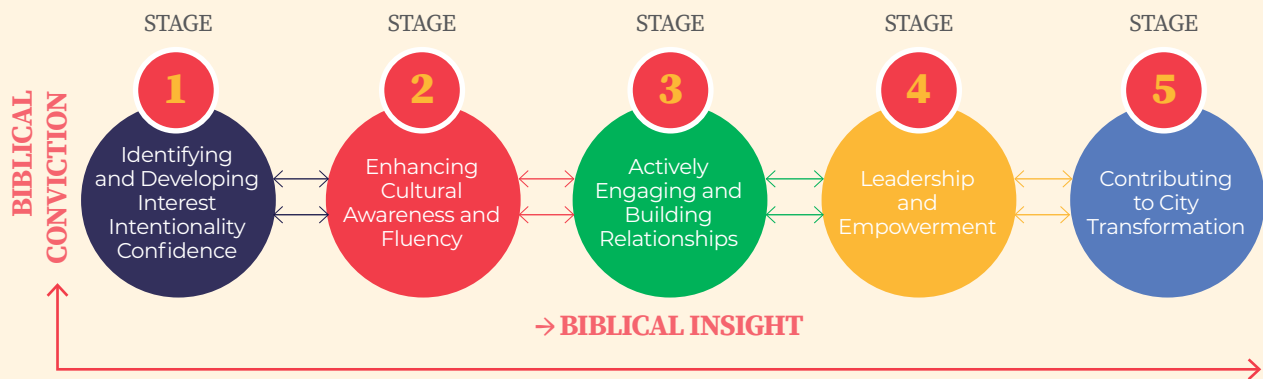
A FIVE-STAGE JOURNEY TO INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Osoba outlined a five-stage model to help individuals and churches grow in intercultural competence: identifying interest, competence, and intentionality for cross-cultural interactions; enhancing cultural awareness and fluency; actively engaging and building relationships across cultures; leadership and empowerment across cultures; city transformation (see diagram). This

journey moves from unawareness of cultural differences to active engagement in intercultural relationships and ministry. Each stage requires humility, intentional learning, and practical action. The goal is not simply to tolerate diversity but to celebrate it as an essential part of God’s design.

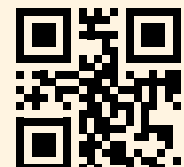


Intercultural Church and City Transformation Learning Journey



Ready to Transform?

Use this toolkit and embark on our Intercultural Church and City Transformation Journey. Simply scan the code to get started!





INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE PANEL DISCUSSION

Osoba chaired an insightful discussion with Dr Sabrina Jones, Quek Lee Si, and Alex Brito, who shared practical wisdom on overcoming cultural biases and building stronger relationships.

Key takeaways from the panel:

- Dr Sabrina: our natural tendency is to be tribal – to surround ourselves with people who are like us. To grow, we must acknowledge this bias and challenge ourselves to step beyond comfort zones.
- Quek Lee: history has often seen people try to ‘conquer’ other cultures, imposing their way of life on others. True intercultural relationships require humility and a willingness to embrace, not dominate.
- Alex: while it’s good to appreciate our cultures, we must be careful not to make them superior. Our identity should be gospel-centric rather than culture-centric.

A powerful story: learning from a different cultural perspective

Alex shared a personal experience about a Japanese guest who visited his home wearing a mask. Initially, Alex felt offended, assuming the guest was afraid of getting sick at his home. But when the guest explained that he himself was feeling unwell and was wearing the mask to protect Alex, it completely changed Alex’s perspective.



Cultural misunderstandings happen all the time, but taking the time to ask, listen, and learn can lead to mutual respect and deeper relationships. Overcoming prejudice is an ongoing process that begins with ourselves. Are we exalting culture, or are we exalting the Holy Spirit? (Acts 2:1-8)

The digital church: the next frontier of intercultural competence

Toby Beresford took the conversation in a new direction, exploring how technology is shaping social cultures and what this means for the church.

- We all use technology, but are we aware of the cultural shifts it creates?
- People today belong to different 'digital nations', spending significant time in online spaces.
- Churches must see themselves as 'digital missionaries', engaging with people in these spaces.

Exciting innovations in digital ministry:

- Minecraft Church – a church plant within the gaming world, engaging young people where they are.
- Odiham Bible Project – reimagining the Bible in digital contexts, making it more accessible for today's generation.

How can we practice digital listening to understand the digital nations our congregations inhabit?

The church must learn not only how to use digital tools but also how to listen and engage authentically in digital spaces.

Cultural and social inclusion: supporting families and people with disabilities

Victoria Lawrence shared an important perspective on inclusion within intercultural spaces, focusing on families with children with additional needs.

- 10.8 million people in the UK live with disabilities.
- Neurodiverse neurodiverse children are often excluded, not just from society but also from church spaces.
- Jesus should be accessible to everyone!

She challenged churches to reimagine their spaces, programmes, and attitudes to ensure that all children, regardless of ability, can experience the love of Christ fully.

Moving forward: the call to intercultural growth

This session left participants with a powerful challenge:

- Intercultural competence is not just a skill – it's a calling.
- It's about more than knowledge – it's about action.
- It's about choosing humility, listening well, and stepping beyond comfort zones.
-

In a rapidly globalising world, the church must become a true reflection of God's kingdom – a place where every culture, every background, and every person is seen, valued, and empowered.

If we see people as God sees them...

If we learn from each other rather than judge...

If we build bridges instead of walls...

...we will not just talk about unity – we will live it.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

- How do I currently see and interact with people from different cultures?
- Where do I have blind spots, and how can I learn from others?
- What practical steps can I take to build stronger intercultural relationships in my church and community?
- How can my church become more culturally inclusive and welcoming – both in person and online?

The journey toward intercultural competence starts with us. Let's commit to walking it well.

INTERCULTURAL CHURCH: MANAGING CONFLICT WORKSHOP

Conflict is an inevitable part of any community, and intercultural churches, by their very nature, bring together diverse backgrounds, traditions, and perspectives. The ICCT managing conflict workshop provided a space to explore the complexities of conflict in intercultural church settings and offered practical strategies for fostering reconciliation and unity. Led by experienced facilitators, the workshop delved into unspoken cultural differences, the messiness of ministry, and the importance of hospitality, justice, and advocacy in conflict resolution.

Understanding the iceberg: the unspoken 'landmarks' of culture

Osoba Otaigbe introduced the concept of the cultural iceberg, explaining that while language, customs, and traditions are visible, much of culture operates beneath the surface. These unspoken norms – attitudes toward authority, communication styles, and approaches to conflict resolution – often create tensions in intercultural church communities. The challenge is to recognise these differences without assigning a value of 'right' or 'wrong'. Instead, leaders must take time to understand their congregations deeply, appreciating that diverse cultural perspectives shape how people engage in church life.

- How can churches create spaces for open discussions about cultural assumptions?
- What are some unseen cultural norms in your church that may impact relationships and conflict?

The messiness of intercultural ministry: finding unity in diversity

Sabrina highlighted that intercultural ministry is inherently messy but also deeply rewarding. Drawing from Psalm 133, she reminded participants that unity among believers is precious and essential for the church's witness. However, unity does not mean uniformity. The beauty of an intercultural church lies in embracing differences while working toward mutual understanding. Churches must acknowledge that conflict is not necessarily destructive – it can be an opportunity for growth when handled well. Creating a culture where conflict can be addressed honestly and respectfully helps foster deeper relationships and spiritual maturity.

- How can we ensure that unity in our churches does not lead to cultural assimilation but rather to genuine mutual appreciation?
- What structures can we put in place to handle conflicts in a healthy, biblical manner?

Reconciliation and Justice: a holistic approach to conflict resolution

Rosie Hopley, Chair of Reconcile Church, emphasised that addressing conflict requires more than just good conversations – it involves active steps toward reconciliation, justice, and healing. Many



conflicts in churches stem from historical or systemic injustices, and addressing these tensions requires both relational healing and structural change.

Churches often focus on personal reconciliation without tackling the underlying issues of power dynamics, representation, and social justice. Advocacy must go hand in hand with healing conversations to ensure lasting change. This means:

- training leaders in reconciliation and conflict mediation
- providing spaces for difficult conversations that allow for truth-telling and lament
- committing to justice as part of the gospel message – ensuring that marginalised voices are heard and valued.

How can churches integrate justice and reconciliation in their conflict resolution efforts? Are there unresolved conflicts in your church that need intentional healing conversations?

Building relationships through hospitality: the power of eating together

Tani Omideyi shared a simple yet profound truth: much can be achieved by eating together. Sharing meals is a universal act of hospitality that breaks down barriers and builds relationships. In many cultures, food is not just about sustenance – it is about belonging and connection.

Churches can use shared meals as a tool for conflict prevention and reconciliation, encouraging people from different backgrounds to engage in meaningful conversations in informal settings. By fostering a culture of hospitality, churches can create safe spaces for dialogue and mutual understanding.

- How can churches use hospitality as a means of fostering reconciliation?
- What cultural traditions around food and gathering can be integrated into church life to build relationships?

Gospel vs. church culture: differentiating between the two

One of the major takeaways from the workshop was the need to differentiate between the gospel and church culture. Too often, churches impose cultural expectations that are not rooted in biblical teaching but rather in traditions that may exclude or alienate others.

Participants were encouraged to regularly review the culture of their churches, asking questions such as:

- Are our church traditions creating unnecessary barriers to inclusion?
- Are we prioritising comfort and familiarity over genuine intercultural integration?



- How can we ensure that the core message of the gospel is not overshadowed by cultural preferences?

Moving forward: steps for conflict transformation in intercultural churches

The managing conflict workshop reinforced that conflict, when approached with humility and wisdom, can lead to growth, deeper unity, and stronger communities. Here are some practical steps churches can take to navigate conflict in intercultural settings:

- Acknowledge cultural differences – create opportunities for open dialogue about cultural expectations and assumptions within the church.
- Develop mediation teams – equip church leaders and members with training in conflict resolution and reconciliation.
- Encourage a culture of listening – intentionally make space for different voices to be heard, ensuring that all perspectives are valued.
- Integrate hospitality practices – use meals and informal gatherings to strengthen relationships and prevent unnecessary conflicts.
- Commit to justice and advocacy – recognise that some conflicts require more than conversation, they need structural change to address historical injustices.

What are the next steps your church can take to proactively address cultural conflicts? How can you personally contribute to reconciliation efforts in your church?

FINAL THOUGHTS: EMBRACING THE JOURNEY OF RECONCILIATION

Managing conflict in an intercultural church is an ongoing journey that requires patience, humility, and intentionality. By committing to open conversations, justice, and relationship building, churches can become places where differences are not just tolerated but celebrated. As we reflect on the insights from this workshop, let us embrace the challenge of cultivating churches that truly reflect God's kingdom – where reconciliation is at the heart of our worship and where every culture and voice is honoured in the body of Christ.





SESSION THREE:

Intercultural mission: a call to embrace, engage, and act by sharing Jesus

INTRODUCTION: THE CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY OF INTERCULTURAL MISSION

In an increasingly diverse world, the church faces both challenges and opportunities in intercultural mission.

- How do we engage with people from different church cultures as partners in the mission of God?
- How can we ensure that the gospel transcends cultural barriers rather than being shaped by them?

This session, featuring Girma Bishaw and Andy Frost, addressed these pressing questions. The discussions and panel conversations that followed encouraged deep reflection and practical action – challenging the church to see diversity not as a threat but as a gift that can enrich our collective witness.

THE SYRO-PHOENICIAN WOMAN: WHO DO WE IDENTIFY WITH?

Girma Bishaw began with the story of Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24–30), asking a crucial question: who do we identify with in this story?

In the account, Jesus initially refuses to heal the woman's daughter, stating that 'it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs'. Her response, 'Even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs', demonstrated remarkable faith, humility, and perseverance. Jesus honoured her faith, healing her daughter instantly.

Key reflections from this story:

- Often, we see ourselves as Jesus or as the disciples, deciding who gets to be included in God's mission.
- However, Girma challenged us to see ourselves as 'all in the camp of the dogs' – equally dependent on God's mercy. There is no hierarchy in the kingdom!
- If we truly believe in unity in diversity, we must embrace this truth and act on it in our mission work.

THE FEAR OF DIVERSITY AND THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN BRIDGING DIVIDES

Girma acknowledged that diversity has become a detested word in some circles. Many see it as a Trojan horse – a strategy used by those who seek to destroy traditional culture. This fear of losing cultural identity can create deep resistance, impacting both the wider society and the church's cross-cultural mission.

Can the church be part of the solution, helping to build true intercultural communities?

Rather than shying away from these tensions, the church must step into them with love and wisdom. Mission is not about erasing cultural distinctions but about bringing people together under Christ – united in faith, not uniformity.

MISSION BEGINS WITH REVELATION: BECOMING CURIOUS, INTENTIONAL, AND RELATIONAL

Andy Frost emphasised that all mission flows from a revelation. We cannot engage in true mission until we have seen and understood what God is doing.

How do we do this mission?

- **Become more curious**
 - Jesus approached different people in different ways, adapting His approach to their needs and cultural contexts.

- In Acts 17, Paul was curious, engaging with the Athenians on their own terms and asking questions before preaching the gospel.
 - The church must develop a posture of curiosity rather than assuming we already have all the answers.
- Engage the four tensions of mission
Andy highlighted four tensions that often define mission:
 - Words or actions? (Do we focus more on preaching or social justice?)
 - Person or message first? (Do we engage people relationally or go straight to evangelism?)
 - Personal role or corporate activity? (Is mission primarily an individual calling or a collective effort?)
 - A moment or a journey? (Is salvation about a single decision or an ongoing process of discipleship?)

Rather than seeing these as either/or dilemmas, Andy encouraged a both/and approach – adapting to the context and seeking the Holy Spirit’s leading in every situation.
 - Be intentional in relationships
 - Jesus sent out the 72 disciples with a specific method (Luke 10).
 - They were instructed to eat and drink first – to build relationships before sharing the gospel.
 - The church must recover this relational approach by engaging with people in their daily lives rather than expecting them to come to us.



INTERCULTURAL MISSION IN PRACTICE: LEARNING FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

The intercultural mission panel discussion, chaired by Andy Frost, brought together voices from different backgrounds to share insights and experiences.

Key takeaways from the panel:

- Lauren Dixon: Jesus noticed people.
- Do we notice those who are different from us? Or do we only engage with those who feel familiar and comfortable?
- Intercultural mission requires risk-taking – stepping out of our comfort zones to truly see and engage with others.
- Wagih Abdelmassih: Many Muslims are open to learning about Jesus.
- Friendship and relationships are the most effective pathways for sharing faith.
- The church must move beyond stereotypes and engage with genuine hospitality.
- Girma Bishaw: *'Let's love Britain together.'* (From an Ethiopian perspective)
- He suggested hosting dinners and discussions with white Christian leaders.
- One simple but powerful approach: 'Thank them for bringing the gospel to Africa.'

- This act of gratitude can build bridges and open doors for honest conversations about mission and diversity.
- Zhaleh Gharehbaghlou:
- St. Barnabas Church has seen a significant increase in Iranian Christians.
- *'We can reach people with our love language, which is Christ.'*
- 1 Corinthians 13:13 – faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love.
- The language of love transcends cultural barriers, allowing people to experience the gospel in ways that resonate with them.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF INTERCULTURAL MISSION

This session left attendees with a call to action:

- Reframe diversity as a gift, not a threat.
 - Rather than seeing multiculturalism as a problem, embrace intercultural mission as an opportunity.
 - The church should lead the way in demonstrating what unity in diversity looks like.
- Adopt a posture of curiosity and relationship.
 - Ask questions, listen well, and build trust before sharing the gospel.
 - Recognise the cultural biases that shape our approach to mission.
- Be intentional and relational in mission.
 - Like the disciples in Luke 10, start by building relationships before sharing the gospel.
 - Mission happens over meals, in friendships, and in everyday interactions.
- Celebrate and learn from different cultural perspectives.
 - Whether from European, Hispanic, African, Middle Eastern, or Asian Christian communities, we all have something to offer.
 - Intercultural mission is not about Western Christians taking the gospel elsewhere –it's about partnering with the global church to see God's kingdom come.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

- Who do we identify with in the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman?
- How do we approach mission in a diverse world?
 - Are we willing to listen, learn, and embrace intercultural relationships for the sake of the gospel?

The church's future is intercultural – and we must step into it with faith, humility, and love.







SESSION FOUR:

Reflections on a symphony of nations: united in worship at the icct gathering

The 2024 ICCT Gathering was not just an event but a transformative experience – an encounter with the beauty of God’s diverse kingdom. As we reflect on the worship, the expressions of faith, and the unity displayed, we are reminded that the church is a global family, called to worship in spirit and truth, embracing the richness of our varied cultural backgrounds. Prayers was central to the gathering with Rani Joshi, Fola Adesakin, David Vincent and Ursula Lai leading.

A MULTICULTURAL TAPESTRY OF WORSHIP

The powerful multilingual worship led by *Songs2Serve* allowed us to witness firsthand how language is no barrier to praise. Singing in different tongues, we experienced a glimpse of heaven’s worship, as described in Revelation 7:9.

- How does worship in different languages impact your personal experience?
- In what ways can we integrate multicultural worship into our own churches and communities?

WORSHIP BEYOND WORDS: DANCE AND MOVEMENT

Movement in Worship reminded us that worship is more than words – it involves our entire being. The idea of dance as ‘devotion in motion’ was a powerful invitation to engage our bodies in worship.

- How comfortable are we with expressing worship through movement?
- How can we encourage more diverse expressions of worship in our gatherings?

THE POWER OF RHYTHM AND STORYTELLING

Martin Neil’s drumming and storytelling about the West African talking drum emphasised that music is a universal language, capable of conveying deep meaning. His insights challenged us to consider how rhythm and sound can connect us beyond spoken language.

- How does music serve as a tool for storytelling in worship?
- What unique cultural musical expressions can we incorporate into our worship settings?

A GLOBAL SOUNDSCAPE OF PRAISE

The diversity of musical contributions – from African rhythms to Indian melodies – enriched the gathering, showing us that worship is as varied as the nations that make up the church. The blend of different musical traditions created a space where all felt included.

- How does hearing different cultural styles in worship expand our understanding of God?
- What steps can we take to be more inclusive of different musical traditions in our congregations?

REMEMBRANCE THROUGH WORSHIP

Elaine Patience’s violin tribute from Auschwitz marked a deeply moving moment, reminding us of music’s role in remembrance and healing. Worship is not only about celebration but also about honouring history and seeking reconciliation.

- How can worship be a tool for remembrance and healing in our communities?
- Are there historical events or stories within our own cultures that could be acknowledged through worship?

UNITY IN WORSHIP: ONE VOICE, ONE CHURCH

As the congregation joined in unified praise, 2 Chronicles 5:13 became a lived reality. Worship became more than a performance – it was a shared act of faith and belonging.

- How does worship help build unity in the church?
- In what ways can we move from being spectators to active participants in multicultural worship?





FINAL THOUGHTS:

Muyiwa Olarewaju described the gathering as *'the epitome of intercultural unity and collaboration'*. This event was a testament that when we come together in worship, we embody the truth that we are one body, united in Christ.

- What is one key takeaway from this experience that you can apply in your worship journey?
 - How can we continue to cultivate a culture of intercultural worship in our daily faith practices?

The ICCT Gathering was more than a moment – it is a movement. As we move forward, may we carry its spirit with us, allowing worship to be a space where all nations, tribes, and tongues glorify God together.





SESSION FIVE:

Intergenerational leadership – 'mind the gap'

Dr Lisa Adjei explored the generational differences that shape how people experience faith and leadership. She highlighted the need for intergenerational leadership teams, where wisdom from older generations meets the fresh perspectives of younger leaders.

Questions for reflection:

- How do different generations experience the world, and how does this shape their faith?
- What questions are young people asking today, and how does the gospel provide meaningful answers?

Drawing from Psalm 78:4–6, Lisa emphasised God's heart for generational unity. Many young people today have grown up in diverse, multicultural environments and are already skilled at crossing barriers of race, age, and denomination. Their adaptability is a gift that the church must embrace. Instead of working in silos, the church must foster collaborative leadership where every generation's voice is heard and valued.

INTERGENERATIONAL PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel discussion was hosted by Ofure Otaigbe. A panel of leaders shared their insights on the importance of building intergenerational bridges within the church and beyond.

- Jess Dubock highlighted that young people face unique challenges and need support rather than quick solutions. She emphasised the importance of valuing young voices, as Jesus' ministry was inclusive of all generations.
- James So spoke about the challenges faced by second-generation immigrants in diaspora churches. Many young people feel disconnected due to cultural differences. He stressed the need for genuine intergenerational leadership rather than simply offering young people a token seat at the table (Acts 6).
- Damilola Makinde reminded us that diversity is at the heart of 1 Corinthians 12. The body of Christ is made up of many different parts, each with a unique role. She challenged leaders to submit their personal preferences to the Holy Spirit, ensuring that unity remains the focus.
- Hugh Osgood encouraged mature believers to be adaptable and open to learning from younger generations. He challenged leaders to sit at the feet of young people and truly listen. Instead of simply passing the baton, he called for a co-leadership approach, recognising that young people bring new ideas and fresh energy to the table.

'MAGNET' FILM DISCUSSION: USING MEDIA TO SPEAK TO YOUNG GENERATIONS

A special session focused on the role of media in shaping young people's perceptions and addressing key societal issues. The discussion centred around the Christian film *Magnet*, which aims to provide hope and guidance for young audiences.



- Pastor Larry spoke about the urgent need for the church to engage with contemporary issues. He urged leaders not to remain on the sidelines but to be active voices in shaping culture.
- Osas (an actor in the film) shared how the film delivers a message of hope, showing that there is always a way out of difficult situations.
- Emmanuel (technical support) pointed to the truth that Jesus' sacrifice is enough – no more blood needs to be shed.
- O'Neil Dennis (Step FWD) celebrated the power of creativity in spreading the gospel. For ten years, Step FWD has been supporting Christian artists, helping them share messages of hope through music and the arts (Romans 12:10).

BRIDGING GENERATIONS: INSIGHTS FROM THE ICCT INTERGENERATIONAL WORKSHOP

The ICCT intergenerational workshop provided a much-needed voice in the intercultural conversation, emphasising the importance of listening to and engaging with young people. The workshop opened with a thought-provoking panel discussion, where attendees heard directly from young voices, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of how intergenerational dialogue can be fostered within churches and organisations. This discussion was not just theoretical but practical, highlighting the real struggles and opportunities that arise when generations learn to listen and collaborate.

From theory to practice: equipping churches for intergenerational engagement

The workshop sought to move beyond abstract discussions into real-world applications. Through a mix of activities, including personal storytelling, video presentations, and interactive exercises, participants gained practical tools to bring intergenerational ministry to life in their own contexts. One of the most significant takeaways was the realisation of how frequently young voices are overlooked and how intentional listening can lead to meaningful transformation within church communities.

One of the key themes emphasised was that young people are not merely the future of the church – they are an integral part of it today. By encouraging intergenerational conversations, churches create spaces where different perspectives shape a shared vision, leading to fresh ideas that challenge and inspire change. More than that, when young people feel heard, they develop a greater sense of belonging and ownership within their faith communities.

- How can churches cultivate a culture where young voices are genuinely valued?
 - What structures or practices currently hinder intergenerational dialogue in church settings?

Creative engagement in action: learning through experience

A standout moment in the workshop came through an interactive activity led by Laura Firth. Each participant received candy and was



asked to dispose of the wrapper in labelled baskets that reflected different aspects of Sunday gatherings they most enjoyed. This simple yet effective exercise demonstrated the power of interactive engagement in ministry. It served as a tangible reminder that creative approaches to conversation can foster deeper understanding between generations and break down barriers of miscommunication.

The use of video presentations further reinforced the importance of intergenerational ministry, offering visual examples of how churches around the world are successfully engaging young people in meaningful ways. Small group discussions allowed participants to share their own experiences, challenges, and best practices, leading to a collaborative exchange of ideas. This format ensured that attendees were not just passive listeners but active contributors in shaping the discussion.

- What creative engagement strategies could be implemented in your own church or community?
- How can interactive exercises be used to build connections between different generations?

Looking ahead: strengthening intergenerational ministry

The workshop was a powerful reminder that resources exist to support churches in their intergenerational engagement. One such resource is the *Growing Faith Foundation*, which provides strategies and tools for churches seeking to cultivate environments where young and old learn from one another. Many attendees shared that they had already begun implementing creative strategies to amplify young voices in their congregations, demonstrating that momentum is building toward stronger intergenerational integration.

However, as many participants noted, one-off discussions are not enough. To create lasting change, churches must develop long-term strategies. Some potential next steps:

- Tailored coaching for churches: providing individual coaching for churches can help address specific intergenerational dynamics, ensuring that each congregation has the tools to navigate its unique challenges and opportunities.
- Follow-up resources and support: establishing follow-up sessions and providing ongoing resources can help churches maintain momentum and refine their intergenerational strategies over time.
- Youth-led initiatives: encouraging young people to lead projects within their churches fosters a greater sense of responsibility and belonging, ensuring that they are not only heard but also actively shaping their faith communities.

How can churches ensure that intergenerational ministry remains a sustained effort rather than a short-lived initiative? What ongoing support structures are needed to empower both young people and church leaders?



A call to action: walking together in faith

The ICCT intergenerational workshop reaffirmed a crucial truth: God is stirring a desire within churches to invest in young people, not just for the sake of the future, but for the vitality of the church today. When generations walk together in faith, they strengthen one another, ensuring that no one is left behind.

By embracing intergenerational dialogue and fostering environments where young voices are heard, the church can become a thriving community of shared wisdom, creativity, and growth. The challenge now is to take the insights gained and put them into action, transforming our churches into places where all generations feel valued, engaged, and empowered to contribute meaningfully to God's mission.

- What is one step your church can take this month to strengthen intergenerational relationships?
- How can you personally contribute to bridging the gap between generations in your faith community?

The conversation does not end here. Let us continue building spaces where wisdom and innovation coexist, where young and old walk together, and where the church remains a dynamic, intergenerational force for transformation in the world.

CONCLUSION: A CALL TO ACTION

This session was a powerful reminder that we are called to be God's temple, bridge the generational gap, and engage with the world around us. Whether through leadership, community involvement, or creative expression, we all have a role to play in bringing hope, renewal, and transformation.

The key takeaways encourage us to:

- live as God's temple, bringing life and renewal wherever we go
- foster intergenerational relationships, learning from one another and leading together
- engage with the pressing issues of today, using creativity, media, and leadership to share God's love with the world

Let us step forward in faith, courage, and unity as we continue this journey together!





PART TWO:

City transformation

CITY TRANSFORMATION: WHAT DOES 'GOOD' LOOK LIKE?

INTRODUCTION

The second day of the ICCT Gathering was a powerful and thought-provoking experience, bringing together voices from different backgrounds to discuss leadership, faith, and community transformation. The speakers and panelists emphasised the importance of recognising our role as God's temple, fostering intergenerational relationships, and engaging with the pressing issues facing today's society. Below is a detailed summary of the key messages shared throughout the day.

NIGEL LANGFORD: THE TEMPLE, PLACE AND LOCATION

Nigel Langford reminded us of our identity as God's temple, referencing Ephesians 2 and 1 Corinthians 3:16. He spoke passionately about how God is constantly on the move, calling His people to bring renewal and transformation to their communities. Drawing from Ezekiel 47:1-12, he painted a picture of the river flowing from the temple, symbolising the life and restoration that comes from God's presence.

Key insights:

- We are God's temple – His presence dwells within us, and we must reflect His character.
- The river of God brings regeneration – just as the water from the temple in Ezekiel's vision brought life, we too are called to bring restoration to our communities.
- Would our absence be noticed? – If we stopped gathering and living out our faith, would our communities feel the impact?
- Jeremiah 29: ambassadors in a foreign land – like the Israelites in Babylon, we are called to be witnesses, bringing peace even in places of uncertainty and confusion.
- Peace is active, not passive – true peace does not settle for the status quo but seeks to bring about God's justice and righteousness.
- Living out faith intentionally – key values include authenticity, generosity, obedience, prayerfulness, and fruitfulness.

CITY TRANSFORMATION: WHAT DOES 'GOOD' LOOK LIKE?

Interview with Roger Sutton and Pastor Tani Omideyi, hosted by Osoba Otaigbe

What does it mean for a city to be transformed? How do we know when real change is happening in our communities? These questions were at the heart of a compelling conversation between Roger Sutton and Pastor Tani Omideyi, who shared their vision for what a truly transformed city looks like.

A city shaped by love and justice

Pastor Tani opened the discussion by painting a vision of transformation rooted in biblical values. For a city to truly flourish, it must be:

- shaped by love – a place where people care for one another, showing kindness and compassion in their daily interactions
- built on peace – a city where conflicts are resolved with wisdom and justice, and communities work together instead of being divided by fear or prejudice
- rooted in love – beyond surface-level actions, transformation comes when love becomes the foundation of how people live, work, and relate to each other
- founded on justice – true change cannot happen without fairness and equity, ensuring that all people, regardless of background, have access to opportunities and dignity.

Pastor Tani challenged the audience to envision cities where these values become a lived reality, shaping everything from local governance to neighbourhood interactions.

Believing that change is possible

Roger Sutton continued the conversation by emphasising the importance of believing in transformation. Too often, people become discouraged by the overwhelming challenges facing

modern cities – poverty, violence, discrimination, and division. Yet, as people of faith, we are called to see beyond the present difficulties and imagine what God can do.

‘We have to believe that things can be different,’ Roger declared. *‘If we don’t, we won’t even try to bring change.’* He encouraged communities to start speaking about transformation in practical ways, to turn vision into action, and to create a sense of responsibility for the places where we live.

Facing the realities of our cities

Roger also acknowledged the deep-rooted issues that hold cities back from transformation:

- racism – many communities remain segregated, with systemic inequalities limiting opportunities for certain groups
- sexism – gender disparities persist in workplaces, leadership roles, and societal expectations
- class divides – economic and social divisions continue to create barriers between the privileged and the marginalised.

While these issues may seem overwhelming, Roger encouraged the audience not to give up. He reminded everyone that these problems do not exist in heaven – and as followers of Christ, we are called to reflect God’s kingdom here on earth.

Taking action: love your neighbour

The discussion concluded with a powerful call to action: make a move! Start by loving your neighbour.

Transformation does not begin with grand initiatives or large-scale projects. It starts on the ground, in our streets, schools, workplaces, and homes. Pastor Tani and Roger urged communities to be intentional about building relationships, addressing local injustices, and taking small but meaningful steps toward change.

As the session came to a close, the key takeaway was clear: city transformation starts with us. By believing that change is possible, committing to love and justice, and taking action in our communities, we can help shape cities that reflect God’s kingdom on earth.



CITY TRANSFORMATION PANEL: THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN BRINGING CHANGE

The city transformation panel brought together a diverse group of leaders – Tania Bright, Osai Ojigho, Gareth Davies, and Mark Cowling – to discuss the role of the church and faith-based organisations in shaping cities for the better. The discussion covered barriers in international development, collaboration with local authorities, bible mission, challenges in fostering children, and the church's need to be truly engaged in community spiritual, social and cultural transformation.

Breaking barriers in international development – Osai Ojigho (Christian Aid)

Osai Ojigho, a leader in international development, shed light on the challenges facing organisations working to alleviate poverty and social injustice. She highlighted that many current systems are outdated and need to evolve to address today's complex global issues.

One key issue is representation – who gets a voice in decision-making spaces? Many affected communities do not have a seat at the table when policies and projects are designed for them. Osai stressed, *'Voices need to be heard. But who decides on the voices?'* True transformation happens when those directly impacted are given agency to shape the solutions.

Another challenge is resource limitations. Climate change, economic

instability, and global conflicts mean that aid and development resources are being stretched. Leaders in this field must constantly strategise, adapting to new challenges and finding innovative ways to bring about change.

A particularly bold challenge to the church was the issue of reparations. Osai urged churches not just to talk about justice but to become centres of action and practice. Faith communities should be actively involved in addressing historical injustices and supporting vulnerable communities.

Connecting churches and overcoming the ‘silo effect’ – Mark Cowling

Mark Cowling spoke about the need for collaboration between churches, community groups, and local authorities. Too often, churches operate in isolation, focusing only on their own congregations rather than engaging with the wider city.

His work involves breaking down silos by:

- surveying service providers to understand who is already doing what in the city
- encouraging churches to work with civic and health leaders, building partnerships that benefit the community
- helping the church to recognise its unique role in city transformation – not just providing spiritual guidance but actively working alongside other institutions to meet practical needs.

Mark’s efforts have been well received by civic leaders, who appreciate faith groups as valuable partners. He emphasised that churches must move beyond occasional involvement and commit to long-term, strategic partnerships for meaningful transformation.

Loving and supporting vulnerable children – Tania Bright (*Sure Families: Home for Good*)

Tania Bright brought a heartfelt and urgent challenge to the panel: the church must step up in its role to care for vulnerable children.

In the UK, many children struggle to reach their full potential due to a lack of stable homes and support systems. A particularly pressing issue is the shortage of foster parents, especially for:

- children with disabilities
- black and minority ethnic children (intercultural challenges)
- teenagers, who are often harder to place in foster care.

Tania emphasised that if the church truly operated as Christ calls it to, these issues would not exist at the same level in our communities. She passionately declared, ‘*Love children as Christ would have us*



love them! Be generous with all that we have to give.'

Her message was clear: meeting needs starts with what Christ has already given us. Churches can play a major role in fostering and supporting children, ensuring that no child is left without love and care. She reminded the audience that *'love and attention conquer so much'* – a simple but powerful truth.

Engaging the church beyond occasional involvement – Gareth Davies

Gareth Davies conducted the interview and shared an anecdote that underscored a major issue: churches often remain separate from the community and only engage on rare occasions.

Many churches wait for a crisis or a special event before stepping into community issues. While there is a place for emergency responses, Gareth argued that true city transformation happens when the church is consistently present and engaged – not just showing up when it's convenient.

A call to action: the church as a catalyst for transformation

The panelists collectively delivered a strong call to action for churches and faith leaders:

- Break the silos – work together with local authorities, businesses, and charities.
- Listen to underrepresented voices – ensure that communities in need are part of decision making.
- Be centres of action, not just words – move from conversations about justice to real, practical solutions.
- Support vulnerable children – the church must step up in fostering, mentoring, and providing safe spaces for children in need.
- Engage consistently, not just occasionally – true transformation comes from long-term commitment to cities and communities.

FINAL THOUGHTS

City transformation is not just a dream, it is a responsibility. If the church rises to the challenge, working together and living out the gospel in action, cities can truly become places of love, justice, and peace.





PART THREE:

Conversations from the roundtables

EMBRACING CULTURAL SHIFTS AND INTERGENERATIONAL DYNAMICS

Every culture has authority structures that can make it difficult for older generations to listen to younger voices. Yet, cultural change is accelerating in today's world. This reality underscores the importance of incarnational theology – one that is adaptable and deeply embedded in diverse communities.

Intergenerational shifts in churches must be intentional. While the wisdom of elders remains crucial, younger generations need space to shape and lead. The irony of always asking an older person to pray rather than a young person highlights this power dynamic. Churches must actively nurture the gifts of young people, creating mentorship opportunities that empower them to participate fully.

- How can churches create leadership spaces that empower younger generations while honouring elders?
- What practical steps can be taken to ensure young people feel heard and valued in church settings?

RETHINKING THEOLOGIES AND INTERPRETATIONS

Theology is not singular; it exists in plural forms, influenced by cultural contexts. Many Christian bookstores stock predominantly Western theological perspectives, raising questions about whose voices get published and heard. How do leaders integrate Western theological training with their ethnic backgrounds? How can churches become spaces where diverse theological perspectives flourish rather than being shaped by dominant narratives?

Jesus Himself broke cultural norms, emphasising cultural inclusivity. Intercultural theology requires an openness to learning from different Christian traditions – African, Asian, Latino, Celtic and white working class – each offering rich insights. Leaders must foster spaces for dialogue, ensuring that no single theology overshadows the others.

- How can churches encourage diverse theological discourse without creating division?
- What role does intercultural theology play in addressing contemporary social and spiritual issues?

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Churches are called to be a blessing to their communities. Some have successfully partnered with local councils to establish community centres, demonstrating that the church can be more than a place of worship – it can be an integral part of the neighbourhood. Others have collaborated with

ministries like *Safe Families* to support vulnerable populations.

A shift away from the ‘provider model’ toward community development is essential. Instead of simply offering services, churches should empower communities to lead their own transformation. This approach fosters long-term sustainability and deeper engagement.

- How can churches move from providing services to equipping communities for self-sustained transformation?
- What are some successful examples of churches deeply embedded in their local neighbourhoods?

THE CHALLENGE OF REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP

While many churches speak about being multi-ethnic or intercultural, leadership structures often remain homogenous. Are churches still unconsciously fitting into a Western, middle-class framework? Leadership should reflect the diversity of congregations, ensuring representation across cultures and socio-economic backgrounds.

Churches must also address class intersections. The challenge is to create spaces where every voice is heard, regardless of background.

- What systemic changes are necessary to ensure true representation in church leadership?
- How can churches engage with underrepresented communities to make leadership more culturally inclusive?

ENGAGING THE YOUNGER GENERATION

One of the biggest concerns in churches today is the exodus of young people. Many feel disconnected because the church does not speak their language or address their concerns. To remain relevant, churches must adapt their approaches – using digital evangelism, social media, and innovative ideas like gaming platforms (e.g. Minecraft) to engage young minds.

Additionally, churches should be places where young people feel valued. Instead of expecting them to support existing structures, leaders should invite them to co-create initiatives. Intercultural youth engagement requires listening, adapting, and allowing for innovation.

- How can churches leverage digital spaces to engage younger generations in meaningful ways?
- What shifts in church culture are necessary to retain young people and encourage their active participation?

THE IMPORTANCE OF BELONGING AND COMMUNITY

Intercultural churches operate on the principle that ‘no one belongs, and yet everyone belongs’. This paradoxical truth means creating a culture where differences are acknowledged and celebrated, not

erased. Food, storytelling, and hospitality are powerful tools for building bridges. The simple act of sharing a meal can foster deeper connections and mutual understanding.

Churches must also be mindful of digital spaces. While online worship has expanded accessibility, it presents challenges for fostering deep relationships. The ‘one-another’ aspects of faith – such as encouragement, accountability, and pastoral care – are harder to cultivate virtually.

- How can churches maintain a balance between digital and in-person worship while fostering true community?
- How can intercultural churches use hospitality and storytelling to strengthen belonging?

MOVING FROM ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO ACTION

Transformation does not stop at awareness. Churches must ask:

- What will we do personally?
- What steps can our church take with others?

Being the change requires intentionality – engaging with local needs, forming strategic partnerships, and creating safe spaces for dialogue.

Faith communities are uniquely positioned to challenge toxic theology, embrace diverse interpretations, and promote reconciliation. The concept of ‘deposits of grace’ reframes mission work as a mutual exchange rather than a one-sided endeavour. Instead of merely giving, churches should also learn from the cultures they engage with.

- How can churches actively pursue reconciliation in diverse communities?
- What tangible steps can faith communities take to move from discussion to action?

FINAL THOUGHTS: ROOTEDNESS IN GOD

Ultimately, the church’s mission must remain grounded in the gospel. Whether through local outreach, digital evangelism, or intergenerational discipleship, the goal is to reflect God’s kingdom on earth. The question remains: if your church were no longer in your community, would anyone notice? If the answer is unclear, then it is time to reflect, adapt, and move forward in faith.

- How can we ensure that our churches are making a lasting, meaningful impact in our communities?
- What is one action step you can take today to contribute to the transformation of your church and city?





PARTNERS





**INTERCULTURAL
CHURCH & CITY
TRANSFORMATION**



THEME. **IMAGO DEI: MADE IN THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD. GENESIS 1:26**

Date: 5th February – 6th February 2026

Venue: GoChurch, MediaCity UK, Dallas Court
Salford Quays Manchester M50 2GF

5 minutes walk from MediaCity UK Tram Stop

Hot food is always an essential part of ICCTG. In Leeds 2024, we enjoyed Mediterranean cuisine, and in London 2025, African and Caribbean cooking. In Manchester 2026, we will explore English, Welsh, and Scottish dishes. Come and discover what makes these British culinary delights so enticing! Bring your appetite for both learning and eating together!

Thanks for your continued support

Support the movement: www.icctgathering.net

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A gathering for church, charity and community leaders to grapple with what it means to be an intercultural Church that impacts our towns and cities

The event will draw on theologians, thinkers, practitioners and prophetic voices and will include:

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