

CHURCH & CITY
TRANSFORMATION

INTERCULTURAL



GATHER
MOVEMENT



REVIEW



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Message from Osoba Otaigbe

THE HOST, INTERCULTURAL CHURCH AND CITY TRANSFORMATION

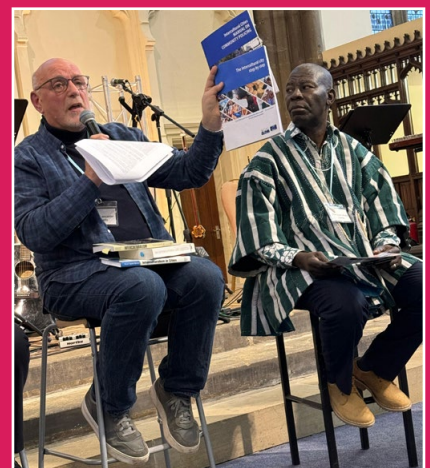
I have always been deeply passionate about fostering intercultural unity within the church and working towards the transformation of our cities. This passion stems from my life journey, where I developed a profound appreciation for the beauty of cultural diversity and unity. I find immense joy in embracing and celebrating our differences, as they bring a unique richness to our lives and communities.

I am glad to introduce our inaugural publication, which focuses on the report and findings from the roundtable conversation in Leeds; it also contains articles of some of the contributors during the event. Thanks to Revd Joe Kalpooyo, Revd (Dr) Israel Olofinjana, Paul Lancaster, Les Moir, and Laura Palmer and an interview with Revd Chi Wai Wu for their contributions to this first publication. Thanks to Kay Grieves for proofreading this review. This publication hopefully will be biannual, which aims to provide stories and information about the Intercultural Church and City Transformation Learning Journey which in turn we hope will help missions and churches bridge cultural gaps and foster unity among diverse communities.

This is a platform for individuals who are passionate about creating opportunities for cross-cultural understanding. We believe in breaking down barriers and empowering the next generation of leaders who will drive positive change in their communities and beyond. Inside, you will find insightful articles, inspiring stories, and practical resources to support your own transformative journey. Whether you are interested in learning about different cultures, engaging in meaningful conversations, or seeking guidance on leadership development, this publication is here to provide you with the knowledge and inspiration you need. Join us on this exciting path towards building bridges, breaking down barriers, and empowering future leaders.

Osoba Otaigbe

Osoba is the author of 'Building Cultural Intelligence in Church and Ministry'. He works for Bible Society and Gather Movement. Host of the Intercultural Church and City Transformation Conversation and Experience.





Reports and Findings

FROM OUR INTERCULTURAL CHURCH AND CITY TRANSFORMATION ROUNDTABLE CONVERSATION IN LEEDS

In January we hosted a gathering on Intercultural church and city transformation in Leeds. The event showcased the reality of an intercultural church by incorporating different languages in worship and emphasising cultural diversity. Over 150 Christian key leaders from diverse backgrounds attended to explore how churches can work better interculturally. The vision of an intercultural church is based on Revelation 7:9, where people from various backgrounds will one day come together to worship in harmony.

Before the Leeds event, I facilitated many small groups conversations in cities across England in January. The two big questions we were exploring were ‘What would an intercultural church look like in our cities?’ ‘What impact can we make if we work together?’ In answering these questions we looked at ‘what is’, ‘what could be’ and ‘what will be’. In one of the cities an Asian senior pastor said “I have been in this city for a while I have not been invited to a meeting like this before.” In another meeting, a senior pastor from the Caribbean said “the very fact we are all in this room talking for such a long time and no one has walked out, that is a big success. Many years ago when we tried to have a conversation people walked out of the meeting”.

The biblical case was made for an intercultural church in our Leeds gathering. Using a problem tree, we asked participants to discuss **“Why most churches and unity movements are not actively engaging in intercultural church and mission despite the Biblical teachings advocating for it?”** We delved into identifying the root causes of this problem, its effects and opportunities.

After carefully analyzing the roundtable notes and discussions, I generated numerous ideas, suggestions, issues, challenges, and opportunities listed by participants during the conference. It took me several weeks to thoroughly review and categorize these points under appropriate titles that encompass their content. Below is some of the feedback.



1. LACK OF VISION

Without a vision for cultural diversity, church unity falters. Rediscovering our place in God's family, valuing diversity, and embracing biblical teachings fosters inclusion and understanding. Church leaders and members should actively engage with diverse cultures, breaking barriers to create a community reflecting God's love and unity.

2. LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Language barriers pose challenges for diverse communities, but with patience and respect, they can be overcome. Incorporating translations in worship fosters inclusivity, as seen in our Leeds gathering where diverse bands facilitated united worship in various languages.

3. CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

In a diverse church, cultural differences extend beyond visible aspects like singing and dressing to include invisible ones like time management and communication styles. Understanding and navigating these differences requires patience, open-mindedness, and cultural intelligence. Creating an inclusive environment involves promoting communication, cultural awareness, and collaboration to embrace the richness of cultural diversity.

4. FEAR AND IGNORANCE

Fear and ignorance can hinder meaningful interactions and foster barriers. However, intercultural churches offer opportunities for learning, growth, and empathy, serving as bridges between communities. Intercultural churches witness love, acceptance, and unity amidst diversity, creating vibrant and enriching communities through embracing cultural diversity and inclusivity.

5. PREJUDICE AND BIAS

Prejudice and bias lead to discrimination and exclusion. However, an intercultural church offers opportunities for education, inclusivity, dialogue, advocacy, and empowerment. By promoting awareness, creating an equitable environment, fostering dialogue, and advocating for social justice, an intercultural church can overcome these challenges.

6. POWER DYNAMICS AND LEADERSHIP

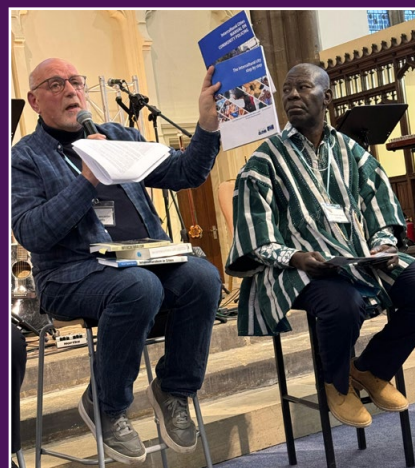
In church leadership, attitudes towards authority and decision-making vary across cultures, leading to potential misunderstandings. Power imbalances can marginalise cultural groups within the church. Understanding low power distance and high power distance—and how different cultures interact with them is important. Equipping and empowering individuals from diverse backgrounds for leadership positions is essential for inclusivity and success.

7. TRADITION AND STATUS QUO

Tradition may exclude individuals from different cultural backgrounds, while the status quo perpetuates power imbalances. However, there are opportunities for intercultural churches to address these challenges. These opportunities include critical reflection on traditions and the status quo, adapting and innovating traditions to be more inclusive, facilitating intergenerational dialogue, prioritising diverse leadership, and investing in training.

8. LACK OF COMMUNICATION AND UNDERSTANDING

In intercultural churches, challenges like misinterpretation and misunderstanding exist alongside opportunities for increased awareness and relationship building, effective communication techniques such as, cultural sensitivity training, and creating spaces for dialogue are crucial for addressing these challenges and embracing opportunities.





The second big question we explored at the conference was **‘What can we do together to make a significant impact for the kingdom?’**

GROUP 1: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITY

- Pray together
- Eat together
- Share meals together
- Host social church gatherings
- Host intentional feasts and gatherings
- Organize cultural nights or one meal-a-month events
- Foster a sense of belonging, joy, and empowerment
- Make time to connect and be intentional in building relationships
- Foster a willingness to embrace other church traditions

GROUP 2: CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND UNDERSTANDING

- Embrace discomfort and openness
- Create space to listen to each other
- Support and encourage each other on the intercultural journey
- Focus on education and learning about different cultures
- Invest time in learning about each other’s cultures through food, dance, etc.
- Learn from one another and help Christians understand the biblical basis for intercultural church
- Cultivate curiosity about different things and be open to change in attitude
- Foster self-awareness and make friends from different cultures
- Share buildings and resources to foster collaboration
- Facilitate learning conversations and community development
- Provide language classes to promote understanding and communication



GROUP 3: UNITY AND MISSION

- Work together on what the city needs
- Be seen to be together
- Engage in continuous conversation
- Practice small acts of kindness with intentionality
- Arrange visits to different cultural communities
- Host intercultural events like cultural nights
- Engage in cross-cultural communication workshops
- Extend personal invitations to individuals from different cultural backgrounds
- Get involved in intercultural programs and initiatives
- Overcome fear of the unfamiliar and develop leaders from different backgrounds
- Network and equip the next generation
- Foster a sense of fullness in the body of the church
- Incorporate gospel music/worship to embrace diverse expressions of faith
- Be mission-oriented and take ownership of intercultural initiatives
- Distribute Bibles and engage in cross-cultural missions
- Seek examples of successful intercultural churches for inspiration
- Prioritize cross-cultural mission and intermingling of relationships

GROUP 4: ATTITUDES AND MINDSET

- Be more welcoming and understanding as we are all at different stages
- Ensure the church's vision aligns with multiculturalism
- Cultivate humility and compassion
- Learn to receive from others
- Promote diversity in teams and care for individuals with patience and food
- Encourage bridge builders and foster collaboration
- Pray together for unity and intercultural harmony
- Find ways to bring different values of intercultural churches together without one dominating

Gathered, analysed and written by Osoba Otaigbe





A mission to see and hear the worship and sound of heaven on earth

My dream and desire is to see and hear the worship and sound of heaven on earth as it is in heaven. In Revelation 7 we read about the great congregation worshipping before the throne, people from every tribe, language and nation crying out in a loud voice 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb'.

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we say Lord let your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, and so our prayer is that we will experience the worship of heaven on earth. Not having to wait until we get to heaven! I often ask God to let me hear and be part of curating the sound of heaven.

Supported by the Word and Worship Trust I have had the privilege of visiting several nations encouraging songwriters to write their own songs, in their own languages, singing about what God is doing where they are, as well as coordinating cross-cultural collaborations, seeing worship increase in every continent. We have learned that people sing their own songs the loudest and are discovering unexpected songs from unexpected places. We have also encouraged the use of indigenous sounds and instruments which are essential for the every tribe tongue and nation sound to be complete - the sound of heaven touching earth. Each international ingredient is essential. We need and are calling the nations to bring your sound to the symphony of heaven. Every nation bringing its own songs and sound to the worshipping Church.

There is a beautiful picture at Pentecost, when people were gathered in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven. The spirit-filled worshippers began to worship on the streets. The people were attracted by the sound and the closer they came to the sound, each nation could hear their own heart language in the sound.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if our worship teams were intercultural, singing songs from different nations as well as in different languages and that when others heard their sound, they were attracted by it and could hear their own heart language in the sound and songs. At Pentecost this led to the question 'what must we do to be saved?' and 3000 people gave their lives to God.

A taste of God's kingdom coming on earth as it is heaven. Do it again Lord!

Les Moir



LES MOIR

Les Moir has been involved in Christian/Gospel music for 40 years working as a record producer, bass player and A&R Manager with Integrity Music. He has worked with key worship leaders including Graham Kendrick, Sinach, Matt Redman, Israel Houghton, Tim Hughes, London Community Gospel Choir and more recently with Pastor Paul Adefarasin with The Experience event in Lagos. Les currently heads up the Word & Worship Trust which has a heart to develop and amplify the worship of the nations. Les has been committed to connecting the cultures in worship with a desire to see and hear every tribe, tongue and nation worshipping together on earth as it is in heaven. Les is married to Judith, and they are based in Eastbourne, East Sussex.

Biblical basis of multicultural worship

INTRODUCTION

My favourite Church historian and missiologist, Andrew Walls once said:

1. Christian history indicates that the searching fundamental scholarship arises naturally out of the exercise of Christian mission and especially from its cross-cultural expression.
2. What happens there [Africa, Asia and Latin America] will determine what the Christianity of the 21st and 22nd centuries will be like... The quality of African and Asian theological scholarship, therefore, will not only be vital for Africans and Asians and Latin Americans; it will help to determine the shape and quality of world Christianity.
3. In a word, if Africa, Asia and Latin America do not develop a proper capacity for leadership in theological studies, there will for practical purposes be no theological studies anywhere that will be worth caring about.
4. I will come back to these quotes if time allows. Bringing diverse homogenous cultures to work harmoniously together socially (such as intertribal or interracial marriages), politically, educationally and even religiously is not an easy matter and yet it is vital for the transformation of the Church, the city and the nation.

THREE MODELS OF WORKING INTERCULTURALLY

There are three models of working interculturally:

1. The first one is monocultural or the homogenous unit principle, i.e. one people with 'common interests', 'common locality', 'common social system', one language and one culture, no barriers to cross.
2. The second I refer to as the Colonial model - power principle where the dominant group, in my experience, western culture(s), determines the rules and enforces them upon all the 'subject peoples.' This is the most prevalent mode of cooperation interculturally. In sub-Saharan Africa last century, even when we used local languages for communication, all the prayers, orders of service and hymns were translated from the colonial lingua franca. This is still the case today in most of Africa and in this country. Many churches open wide their doors and arms and welcome people from all over the world. However, the terms and conditions of co-existence are that the incomers must accept and engage with the Church on the basis of the culture of the dominant group in the community. This model oftentimes reverts to tokenism in terms of asking the incomers to utter prayers in the diverse languages they represent and the use of 'exotic' songs in foreign languages.
3. The third model I refer to as inter or multicultural principle - underlying this principle is the clear understanding and acceptance that every culture has in it 'deposits of divine grace'. In every culture, there are deposits of grace [deposited by the God of all grace] what Jefferson Labala calls



JOE KALPOYO



incarnational symbols. These are ordinary every day features of any culture which can be used as pathways to unlock a people's understanding of the truth of God in the Bible. The ultimate revelation of God is the Living Word; the man Jesus of Nazareth. God chose the human form (Philippians 2:6-11) to reveal the mysterious triune being. Incarnational symbolism is the use of the ordinary as a bridge or bridges to reveal or introduce a people to something which would otherwise remain a mystery. This requires getting to grips with the cultures, of the incomers and using that knowledge in relationships, worship and Bible teaching. Clearly, this is what we should all aspire to.

THE EPHESIAN MOMENT

In relation to literature in general, others have argued that imperialism is undoubtedly a most potent and dominant influence 'in the economic, political and military relations [and for our purposes I would add theological] by which the less economically developed are subjected to the more economically developed'. Yet the cultures of the southern peoples, indeed cultures of all people, are full of deposits of divine grace, what Jefferson Labala calls 'evidences of the presence of the Almighty God'. These deposits of divine grace need to be explored with appropriate sensitivity, exposed and laid bare, taking care to remove any centuries old accretions that might reflect traditional sinful practices of the particular culture, preserving that which has abiding value, judged in relation to the word of God, and then deploying it in the service of diverse theologies that will reflect the vast spread of humanity on earth and lead to genuine manifestations of the Christian faith throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America. This is an integral part of the mission of the Church. These processes are vital in order to achieve what Andrew Walls calls 'the Ephesian moment'; the achievement of an all-encompassing theological mosaic, anchored in the word of God, 'built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ as the chief cornerstone, a theological mosaic that includes the vast diversity of human cultures. Walls continues:

'Only in Christ does completion, fullness, dwell. And Christ's completion ... comes from all humanity, from the translation of the life of Jesus into the life ways of all the world's cultures and subcultures through history.'



BIBLICAL BASIS FOR INTERCULTURAL COOPERATION? WHY SHOULD WE DO IT?

There are many texts of scripture we can appeal including the following:

1. Genesis 1:26-27 God created us all in his image.
2. In Genesis 12:1-3 God promises to bless all the families of the world through Abraham.
3. Isaiah 19:23-25 Assyria, Egypt and Israel join together in worshipping the Lord and in 56:6-7 cf. Mark 11:15-17, his house shall be called the house of prayer for all nations.
4. In Daniel 7:14, all peoples, nations and languages are to worship the Son of man.
5. Two references from Matthew: 13:31-32 and 28:16-20. In the former, the peoples of the world come and find welcome, shelter and succour in the shade of the God of Israel. In the latter, the disciples are to go to all the nations and make disciples, i.e. bring to the obedience of faith their decision-making processes and their cultures.
6. This is worked out in Acts 13:1 and 15:1-21
7. Romans 16:3-16
8. Colossians 3:11
9. In Revelation 7:9-12 we have that glorious choir of hundreds of thousands from all nations, languages and tribes in unison worshipping the Lord.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Local churches, particularly those with large groups of people representing diverse diaspora origins and interests, have a great opportunity to begin the process of engaging with other people's cultures and incorporating them into the culture of the church in such a way that we might achieve the 'Antiochian effect' (Acts 11:26) where the outsiders, the non-believers, sit up and notice that Christ has made a huge difference to the way these people relate to, and embrace, each other and each other's cultures.
2. The payoff, in transformational terms, is incalculable. As Andrew Walls says, Christian history indicates that new energies and disciplines will be released to transform the Church, the city and the nations.



Gospel Implication for Developing Intercultural Churches: Welcoming, Belonging and Integration

British evangelical identity is rooted in a certain understanding of the gospel as good news of Jesus as redeeming humanity from sin. Not taking away from this understanding of the gospel, but in a contested polarised society as multicultural Britain, what has the gospel got to say about how we develop a radical inclusive church that addresses the sin of racism? How can the intercultural practices of welcome, belonging and integration empower our churches to treat strangers in our society well? In this article I address a contextual understanding of the gospel and its implications for creating a counter-cultural community of hospitality.

Our word 'gospel' comes from the ancient Greek religious concept of a sacrifice, in a form of thanksgiving offering to the gods, for receiving good news. This idea was taken over by the Roman imperial cult of Octavius Caesar who was given the divine title of Augustus (Majesty) because he was seen as both man and saviour-god. The August one ushered in Pax-Romana, that is, Roman peace to end wars therefore announcers and writers of the day talked about offerings being made to celebrate this good news that Caesar Augustus has ushered in. It is this notion of good news about the peace achievements of Caesar Augustus that the gospel writers took and imbued with new counter cultural meaning that it is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus that saves humanity from sin that is the good news. The evangelist writers understanding of the gospel was also shaped by the Old Testament context of the word to mean heralding Yahweh's universal victory over the world and his kingly rule with his enthronement.

The gospel should therefore be counter-cultural transforming personal lives, culture and structures. The gospel addresses sin because other gods like Caesar should not be the centre of our existence and worship. The gospel is polemical because it is counter cultural speaking against the dominant culture of the day. It is also a worldview because it was seeking to replace the roman cult worship. The gospel therefore transforms personal lives, speaks into culture and challenges worldview. The counter-cultural narrative of the gospel means that we need to develop radical inclusive communities in a multi-ethnic, multicultural polarised Britain therefore how can we begin to do that?



**REV. DR ISRAEL
OLUWOLE
OLOFINJANA (PHD)**

Revd Dr Israel is the Director of the One People Commission of the Evangelical Alliance. He is an ordained and accredited Baptist minister and has led two multi-ethnic Baptist churches and an independent charismatic church. He is the founding director of the Centre for Missionaries from the Majority World, a mission network initiative that provides cross-cultural training to reverse missionaries in Britain. Israel is an Honorary Research Fellow at the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education in Birmingham and is on the Advisory Group on Race and Theology of the Society for the Study of Theology (SST).



Before the death of George Floyd, there were many conversations about the need for British churches to go the extra mile in tackling racism in our churches. Many leaders of colour felt ignored to the extent that some have given up altogether in calling us to action. Since the death of George Floyd there has been a renewed interest in talking and addressing racism in our churches, church structures and organisations. Perhaps, a way to begin to address racism in our churches is to recognise welcoming is not enough and therefore create a process that leads from welcoming, to belonging to integration. What would this look like? Welcoming is that first step in our hospitality and should never be treated as the end result. Welcoming is intentionally creating spaces and contexts for new people to feel comfortable in our fellowship. Welcoming therefore goes beyond offering tea and biscuit to someone on a Sunday morning, it is ensuring that the new people feel comfortable in our church. Belonging is much deeper, as it goes beyond the introduction of welcome to again intentionally creating spaces and contexts for new people to begin to express who they are in order to feel they can belong. If welcoming is about comfort, belonging is about identity. Do migrants, asylum seekers and refugees feel they can honestly share some of their struggles in our churches or do they feel they will be stereotyped, judged or misunderstood? Can people of colour in our churches express the racism that they face both at church and society in our house groups? Creating a sense of belonging sometimes disrupts our comfort because we are not seeking to assimilate new people, we are seeking to understand where they are coming from.

Finally, is working towards achieving integration where new people in our church do not feel any more like a stranger but an important part of our fellowship. They feel integral to what is going on in the life of the church because they have been welcomed, they feel they belong because they can share about some of their struggles and joy, and lastly, they can contribute and share in the dynamics of the church. Let us be encouraged to welcome and integrate people into our churches intentionally creating a radical inclusive community.





The Leeds story of an emerging intercultural city mission movement

The story began around 24 years ago (2000) when a small group of leaders representing black and white churches in the city came together to reconcile any historic differences, including initial rejection, and to discover how there could be a greater unity and credibility in our mission within the city. A new level of relationship was established after meeting for nearly two years and there was a public act of reconciliation at a city-wide outreach event.

Although this was good, the question arose – where do we go from here? We began to realise that there were many other nationalities newly arriving in the city and they were beginning to form their own congregations. I began researching these and soon discovered over forty different nationalities, but with no wider connection to mission involvements in the city. We felt we must not make the same mistake again but be welcoming, recognising the gifts they bring and to intentionally work together in city-wide mission initiatives.

How could this happen? The answer came through the Global Day of Prayer movement. It was felt that this could bring people of many nationalities together within the city so an internationally diverse planning team was formed -contacts were made and invitations given. The first gathering was amazing, held at the largest black-led church in the city (incidentally in same district where I was born!) with 30 plus nationalities attending, many in cultural dress, international flags displayed etc. There was prayer focus on different nations represented and young people and children involved in leading prayers too. What we didn't realise was this was to continue for over 20 years and is still the most diverse intercultural prayer gathering held every year.

There was a real sense of momentum building not just through the event but in new found relationships too. I began to sense that this strength of our unity in diversity needed somehow to be seen in the city. An opportunity came 'out of the blue' when I was asked by someone working for the Council if I could organise an event celebrating 800 years of Leeds being granted a royal charter. Rather than looking back it was asked if an event could be organised that represented the diversity within the city now. A meeting was arranged and ideas were shared including the displaying of a 20 by 10 metre banner comprising flags of 130 nations in the city. There would be 16 stalls representing different nations with artefacts, snack food and a stage where different nationalities would sing their songs. This would happen in the busiest pedestrianised area in the city. The only date we could have this space was 7/7/7. I felt this date was significant for two reasons. Firstly 7/7/2005 was the date that terrorist bombers set off from Leeds and



PAUL LANCASTER

Paul's background is in secondary school teaching (Religious Studies and History), church planting, leading unity/mission teams in Leeds and other nations. He has travelled widely and been involved in a number of mission projects in Brazil, Poland, Russia, France and other countries in Europe. During the last twenty years he has established an international network in Leeds consisting of many nationalities and ethnic groupings. He founded Hope for the Nations (HFTN), organising Global Day of Prayer gatherings, intercultural festivals, intercultural training and an intercultural mission forum. More recently he has founded Interact (Centre for Intercultural Learning and Action) and in conjunction with Leeds Trinity University he has helped establish an innovative Intercultural Leadership Ambassadors' Project, which has included research and training.

detonated bombs in the London Underground and a public service bus. It seemed God was gathering the nations together within the city since it had become known for young men blowing lives apart. Secondly the number seven biblically represents completeness and the ultimate completeness is seen when every tribe, tongue and nation are gathered around the throne so my thought was let's give the city a taste of heaven. On a personal note, the day before my wife died of cancer she was still conscious and told me that she felt she would die the next day which she reminded me was 7/7- this time 2017. She died in the last hour of 7/7. The city centre event unexpectedly ran for 10 years up until this particular year. There was no doubt that God was at work alongside us as we reached out to the nations in the city. There were hundreds of conversations, sharing the good news of Jesus.

During the establishment of these events we felt we needed an identity and so we became known as Hope for the Nations - a flexible framework rather than an organisation (see website - hopeforthenations.wordpress.com). This has become an umbrella for ongoing activities such as the two events outlined, dialogue, cross-cultural training (including Kairos and Simply mobilising), working with other initiatives such as international student ministry, asylum seekers and refugees, mission amongst least reached ethnicities and intercultural worship with Resonance. More recently a Leeds Intercultural Mission forum has become established which provides the space for networking, supporting one another and seeking together how we can be more effective as an intercultural mission movement.

In the last two years too Leeds has become an Intercultural City and also there have been opportunities to give lectures on intercultural competency at one of the cities' universities.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT?

1. To intentionally address any obstacles that stand in the way of intercultural mission
2. Not to be content with having some intercultural churches in Leeds but working towards a wider vision of an intercultural movement
3. To thoroughly research and build relationships with all the different nationalities and ethnicities in the city
4. Having imaginative, creative events that are inclusive and empowering for all cultures
5. The need for understanding and training in intercultural competency
6. Affirming all cross-cultural ministries including those working for social justice for minorities- "not reinventing the wheel"
7. Creating the space for ongoing understanding and dialogue - addressing the challenging issues
8. Always seeking new ways forward and learning from other cities knowing that God works especially alongside us as we are together in unity and diversity.





Interview with Revd David Chi Wai Wu

Question. I like to say thank you for finding time to be with us at the Leeds conference. Please can you share with us your life journey right from China to the UK.

Revd Chi Wai Wu. I was born in Hong Kong and lived there for almost my entire life. I never think about I will have my retirement here in UK.

My parents moved to Hong Kong from Shanghai during 1950. My father worked as a chef in a western restaurant serving US navy coming to Hong Kong for supplies. I am the second son of my family. I have one elder brother, two younger brother and two younger sisters. We are typical working class family.

MY CHRISTIAN CONVERSION

I went to Catholic school nearby and became aware there is one God existing in this world. Sometimes I went to chapel to pray, when I had to face examinations.

I came to faith when I was in Form Five. When I went to City Hall for some cultural activities, it happened the venue was rented for Sunday Service by a Protestant Church. Two old ladies from the church saw me and invited me to come to the service. My first reaction was to decline, saying I was busy, I don't have time to attend. Later on, I went downstairs to visit some painting exhibition.

After a while, when I decided to leave, the old ladies met me again. I could not find any excuses this time, so I went for the service. Since then, I met some Christian friends and continued to attend the church. By God's grace, I came to know Jesus Christ and accept Him as my savior and lord. I was the first in my family to become a Christian. My parents are traditional Chinese worshipping Buddha and other idols.

My church rented a conference room in City Hall for Sunday service. As at that time I did not tell my parents I go to church, all they knew was that I go to City Hall. When I got baptized, my church gave me a Bible with my name and date of baptism. Later my parents found out and rebuked me for my betrayal of ancestor worship and traditional faith.

By God's grace, I continued to grow in my Christian faith. I enjoyed reading Christian literature. I was introduced to books written by John Stott, Francis Schaeffer, Martyn Lloyd-Jones. My academic results couldn't take me to the University. At that time, there were only two universities in Hong Kong, and it was quite difficult to get into.



REVD. DAVID CHI WAI WU

Revd. David Chi Wai Wu an ordained Christian & Missionary Alliance minister from Hong Kong, now lives in Bristol. He had pastored Yuen Kei Alliance Church for 16 years, growing the congregation from 30 to over 1,000 with 3 daughter churches (1984-2000). He served as the general secretary of Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement (2000-2020), an evangelical network providing leadership training, church trend research, pastoral support & social engagement. He worked as convener of Gambling Watch, Christian Care for the Poor, Pastoral Support Group for Umbrella Movement 2014. After moving to UK in 2021, he leads and advocates hybrid model of Hong Kong Christians integrated into local English speaking churches. He supports Community Church to have Cantonese sermon section twice a month. He is a prolific writer and his online articles reaches to 50,000 within two years.

MY CALL INTO MINISTRY

I had to leave school to support my family. My first job worked as baggage facility officer for Jardine Airways. This company handled British Airways and other airlines. After one year service, I was laid off by the company because it had lost the handling rights of some airlines. I got the benefits of staff airline ticket, so I went for a backpacker trip to Europe. I visited Francis Schaeffer and L'Abri in Switzerland in 1977. When I flew to London, I remembered I was denied entry by the Immigration officers. Since I was unemployed that time, the immigration authorities were concerned that I might stay here illegally.

I had many wonderful experiences in my solo journey. During that time, I didn't have Google map nor mobile phone. I was lost in my way when I searched for L'Abri. God kept me and led me, finally I reached the home of someone associated with L'Abri Fellowship.

Then I worked two years in a private yacht owned by a very rich American Jew. The name of the motor yacht was Serendipity. These two years were my first intercultural learning on my job. The captain was from West Germany, the cable officer from UK, the engineers from Yugoslavia, sailors from Japan, kitchen, room service & laundry were from Hong Kong. I served food to the crew, cleaned the toilet and canteen for my first year. My second year I served the senior staff and cleaned their rooms. It is quite an experience to interact with people of different languages and culture.

I remembered the first year I went to Anglican Church in Monte Carlo, Monaco. I attended the Eucharist service, and I actually drank wine from the cup. Before in my home church, I only take grape juice. When I went to First Baptist Church Fort Lauderdale, there was revival happening. These experiences opened my eyes and knowledge of what God was doing in this world.

I worked on the ship mainly for the sake of money. God confronts me whether I am willing to serve Him, not for money, but for His Kingdom and glory. The yacht is quite small inside the ocean, and I find myself insignificant. I ask myself : Where do I invest my life to have eternal values ? I feel God is calling me to church ministry and I have to go to Bible college for my training to be pastor.

PASTORAL MINISTRY IN LOCAL CHURCH

From 1980-84, I went to a Bible college in Hong Kong for four years full time boarding. After graduation, I became a minister in planting Christian & Missionary Alliance Church in new town. When I went there, there were around 30 young people in this new church. Within 5 years, the grew to over 100. In 1996, when we finished our church building project, and changed a Chinese restaurant into a church, we increased our seating capacity and the church grew over 200. Now we have 3 other daughter churches planted and have Sunday attendance over 1,000 in total.

PASTORAL MINISTRY FOR THE CITY

In 2000, God called me out of the local church, I was appointed as the general secretary of Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement, a parachurch mission agency working with different denominations and independent churches. We advocate and launch city-wide joint ministry networks, such as Gambling Watch, Family Alliance, Care for the Poor. I enjoy doing research, teaching Bible and training for pastors and leaders. I am prepared to retire in 2020 after 20 years of busy and fruitful ministry.

PASTORAL MINISTRY IN UK

I moved to Bristol with my wife in 2021 because of the political situation in HK.

One interesting thing I find is that HK sent out 34 professional missionaries working here in 2022. In the same period, at least 30,000 Christians moving and settling here. There are two kinds of mission : intentional and providential. Sometimes intentional mission doesn't work, but God in His wonderful plan works directly through natural disasters, political and economic unrest to bring huge migration of people groups to different parts of the world.

The first year I arrived, I attend a nearby Baptist church. By God's grace, I met a retired couple in the church. It happened they just live opposite to my apartment. They became our local friends and guide us to adjust and integrate into the community. I was introduced to know and visit pastors of other Baptist Churches. Many new immigrants study and learn English at school, but adults don't have much opportunity to speak at work. I took the initiative to organise English Conversation Class in two local churches.

When I got the invitation to launch hybrid service in my second year, I have to give up doing the English class. One local church in Bristol, church leaders found many Hongkongers attending. They saw the needs and contacted me, so we discussed and worked out a hybrid model. We don't want to have a separate Cantonese service, so we arranged to have the Cantonese service only twice a month.



The hybrid service works in this way : 10:30 - 12 noon

1. All age & people of different ethnic groups come together singing, praying. (all in English)
2. Announcement & offering (English)
3. Praying for children & youth (release them to separate classrooms for Sunday School or activities)
4. Praying for Hongkongers (release them to classroom for Cantonese sermon)
5. Hongkongers can choose to stay inside for English sermon or go upstairs for Cantonese sermon
6. All activities ending around 12 noon, children can go back to join with the parents

This model is still under experiment, and recently another church Fishpond Baptist Church also adopts this model. I wish more churches will go for this model in the future.

MY REFLECTIONS

I don't think every church needs to be intercultural, but at least 20-30 % should be intentionally intercultural. Some churches just happen to have different church members of ethnicity attending. I will say that intercultural church can provide the space for mutual learning and growth. We all have our cultural and racial prejudice. Some say that only white people have discrimination against the black, not the Chinese nor Hongkongers. But actually we have our bias and preference.

When we have 10 mature Christians joining a local Chinese or Hongkong church, I am quite sure there will be internal church conflicts such as leadership style, worship style, church programs etc. But 10 mature disciples going to 10 local churches, they will fill the leadership gap and work in partnership with other people. I will say it is a blessing to both parties.

Migrant churches may become exclusive and inward-looking, listening to mono-ethnic voices . Intercultural church is quite different, and we learn how to worship together, how to read and study the Bible through the lens of different cultures, serving in unity. This is the vision for the glorious congregation in His kingdom while we can foretaste this great banquet on earth now.



Working with International Students in Leeds.

Laura Palmer, Mission Mobiliser at Transformations in Leeds.

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I've always believed that international students bring a unique perspective and gifts to the church, and my work with Transformations and studies at All Nations Christian College have only confirmed this. Transformations seeks to transform students to transform nations, including the UK as international students study here. To achieve this, we've focused on moving beyond mere hospitality to creating a culture of mutual learning and contribution between international students and their host churches. When students encounter a diverse leadership team and congregation, they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging and be open to exploring the Christian faith. In turn, this diversity attracts a more diverse congregation, creating a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all.

In Leeds, we've used Intercultural Church Cooking workshops to bring international students together and promote intercultural exchange, using an emerging leadership model. Workshops included a biblical case for intercultural church, personal and collective current church strengths, current situations, and plans for next steps. A highlight of each workshop was a master chef who taught us to cook a traditional dish from their culture. This hands-on cooking experience adds to the fun and symbolizes the collaborative nature of intercultural ministry.

During the workshops, international students identified areas where their churches could improve in terms of intercultural engagement. One suggestion was a collaborative event where musicians and leaders from different churches could learn songs in different languages and how to be more inclusive of international congregants. These ideas were presented to church leaders by the students themselves, who endorsed the vision and provided the necessary resources and support. Empowered by their leaders, the students were able to take the lead and make meaningful progress towards their goals, including through partnering with Transformations, Resonance Band UK and local churches to host "Transforming Worship" day conference.

"Transforming Worship" had a meaningful impact in Leeds and UK, resulting in students introducing songs in different languages to their church worship services and non-Christian students expressing a sense of peace through the music during outreach events. This inspired Christian international students to share their own music, allowing others to experience worship in their native languages for the first time. One partner church has incorporated these songs into their regular services, encouraging congregants to suggest and introduce songs in their own languages. This has created a sense of cultural celebration and appreciation for God's diversity in each service.

The intercultural worship workshops have inspired Christians to form new bands that celebrate diverse languages and traditions. These bands have led worship at special events and hope to tour, including at the Intercultural Church and City Transformation Conference. It was inspiring to hear stories from around the UK and discuss ways to promote intercultural growth in our churches and cities. The partnerships formed at the conference reflected the unity and diversity of the body of Christ. Overall, it was a powerful experience of collaboration and innovation in the service of God's diverse and inclusive kingdom.

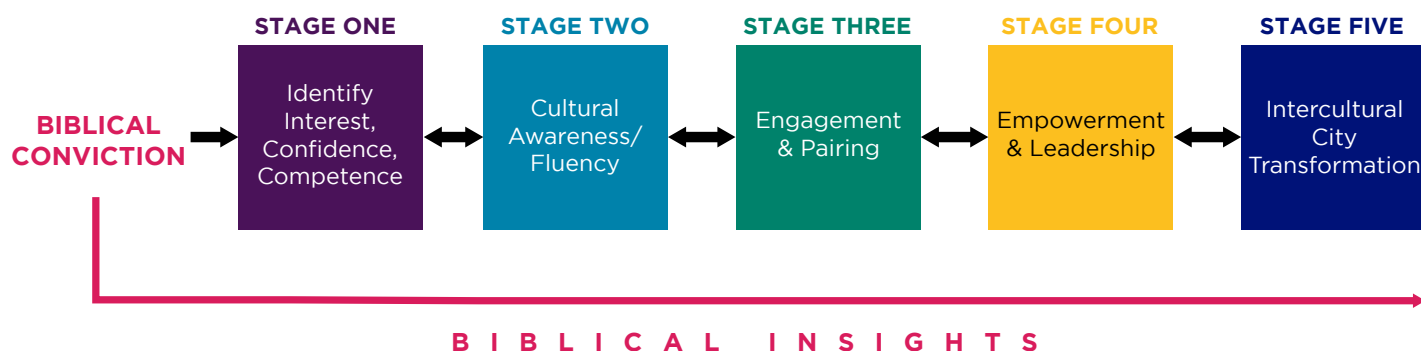


LAURA PALMER

Mission Mobiliser for Transformations Leeds is passionate about seeing churches transformed interculturally through the impact of international students. She has an MA in Multicultural Church in Practice from All Nations Christian College and 7 years experience in international student ministry with Churches and Christian Union's in Leeds. Ask me how cooking workshops and songs from around the world can transform your church!



Intercultural Church and City Transformation Learning Journey



Through conducting discussions in different cities across England and the Leeds event, I have discovered five phases that churches or cities should undertake to achieve successful intercultural collaboration. These phases will facilitate the development of harmony and teamwork within our communities. These stages start with Biblical insight and conviction. I would like to emphasise that these stages are not necessarily linear as they can flow forward or backward.

STAGE ONE: IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING INTEREST, INTENTIONALITY, CONFIDENCE, AND COMPETENCE

This stage involves conducting need analysis through cultural intelligence self-assessment surveys to recognize the importance of engaging with diverse cultures. It focuses on building interest, confidence, and competence in intercultural church and city transformation. In cases where there is no interest or confidence, it suggests making a biblical case for intercultural church and mission.

STAGE TWO: ENHANCING CULTURAL AWARENESS AND FLUENCY

In this stage, the findings from the cultural intelligence self- and team-assessment report conducted in stage one are debriefed. Participants deepen their understanding of different cultures, including their values, beliefs, and practices. They also improve their fluency in navigating intercultural interactions.

STAGE THREE: ACTIVELY ENGAGING AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Stage three emphasizes actively engaging with people from different cultures to foster mutual understanding and respect. It involves creating opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and shared experiences.

STAGE FOUR: LEADERSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT

As participants gain experience in intercultural engagement, coaching is offered to empower them to take on leadership roles. They become advocates for diversity and inclusion, promoting intercultural competence within the church and the wider community.

STAGE FIVE: CONTRIBUTING TO CITY TRANSFORMATION

The final stage aims to bring about positive change in the city or community as a whole. Building upon the foundation of intercultural understanding and collaboration, the church and its members actively contribute to the social, cultural, and spiritual transformation of their communities.

We have developed three pathways to support churches and cities on this journey.

ONE-HOUR ONLINE TASTER SESSIONS

These one-hour sessions introduce the journey towards intercultural church and city transformation. They offer a glimpse into the key concepts, overview and principles involved.

INTENSIVE WORKSHOP

This one-day workshop is designed to delve deeper into the subject matter, debrief intercultural self-assessment report together and facilitate the development of a personalized development plan. Participants will have the opportunity to explore specific challenges and opportunities in their context.

MENTORING AND COACHING

Through mentorship and coaching, leaders will receive guidance and support as they navigate the complexities of intercultural church and city transformation. This journey aims to empower leaders to effectively lead and influence their communities. To learn more about these stages and how you can develop them visit <https://gathermovement.org/intercultural> or email osobaotaigbe@gathermovement.org

INTERCULTURAL CHURCH & CITY TRANSFORMATION

