

ETHNIC BLENDS **MARK DEYMAZ**

## Growing Churches **Just Like Us**

**h**ave you ever wondered why Luke lists the leaders at Antioch not only by name, but also by country of origin?\* Was it not, in part, to imply that a diverse leadership team is best fit to serve a “house of prayer for all the nations”? (Isa. 56:7). Similarly, Paul selects a mixed-race brother to serve and to train at his side (Timothy, Acts 16:1). Such examples should inform the desire to empower diverse leaders in any church for the sake of the Gospel.

But restrictive thinking related to roles and ethnicity within the church is still all too often informed by ignorance, arrogance or, in some cases, outright racism. Many in positions of responsible church leadership remain largely unaware of the ethnocentric conditioning that has long shaped the American psyche. For instance, I know of a predominately white church that hired more than 100 people in eight years to fill significant leadership positions. Yet that church hired only two minorities for ministry roles (a part-time choir director and an administrative assistant). However, it hired many minorities to work on the custodial crew.

Each new pastor would be introduced to the congregation with a similar story: “We are pleased to announce that we have found the best person for the job!” The person was always white and in many other ways reflective of the existing leadership.

“The time has come to change our approach and commit to **empowering ethnically diverse leaders.**”

### **Why does “the best person for the job” always look like us?**

Typically, when a position becomes available in most churches, leaders contact those they know to inquire who they, in turn, might recommend for the job. The people we contact and those we recommend are more often than not people just like us in ethnic, economic and educational background. Consequently, the “best person for the job” ends up looking just like us as well.

### **How can we break this cycle?**

Here are seven things we can do to add diversity in leadership, vocational or volunteer.

- 1. Get informed.** This is about providing a credible witness of God’s love for all people in an increasingly diverse and cynical society.
- 2. Be intentional.** Intentionality is the middle ground between quota and wishful thinking.
- 3. Develop relationships with ethnically and/or economically diverse people.** What can you learn from them?
- 4. Develop relationships with diverse pastors in your city who share your passion for the Lord, your theology, etc.** Who might they recommend to you?
- 5. Ask denominational or network leaders to help you identify and connect with ethnically diverse others.**
- 6. Visit the Mosaix Global Network job board** ([Mosaix.info/resources/job-board](http://Mosaix.info/resources/job-board)) to post a position and express a desire to diversify your staff team.
- 7. Choose people based on the content of their character, qualifications, shared vision and theology,** not simply, condescendingly, the color of their skin.

The time has come to change our approach and commit to empowering ethnically diverse leaders. Let us consider how to extend opportunities to diverse men and women of sound integrity, theological agreement and shared vision, and invite them to join us as partners in proclaiming the love of Christ in and through the local church.

*\* Acts 13:1: Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch (Judean). Elsewhere, Luke identifies the nationality of additional leaders: Barnabus (Cyprian, Acts 4:36) and Saul (of Tarsus, Acts 9:11).*

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