



ETHNIC BLENDS **MARK DEYMAZ**

Multiethnic Merging

Enfolding a mono-ethnic congregation into a church that is already diverse, or one that desires to become so in the future, is a viable way to build a healthy multiethnic church.

A church pursuing the multiethnic vision benefits from the addition of diverse others, and the merger provides a visible sign of its commitment to ongoing transformation. On the other hand, a mono-ethnic congregation will benefit from additional opportunities for growth and service, including the chance for their children to interact spiritually with others more reflective of their integrated neighborhoods and/or schools they likely attend.

The Merger at Mosaic

At Mosaic, we experienced these and other benefits when we merged with Iglesia Nazareno del Samaritano, a Latino congregation of about 100 people, in August 2008.

At the time of the merger, we brought the two pastors on staff and the church into our facility and redirected money that had paid Iglesia's rent and utilities to these men, whose compensation was sorely lacking. In addition, the former church benefited from our larger facility, existing central services and increased visibility.

For our part, adding a third service with music and preaching in Spanish instantly increased our presence and credibility among first-generation Latinos in our community. Since the merger, the Spanish language service has doubled in size.

"Develop relationships with ethnic leaders, always keeping an eye out for a man or woman of peace whose heart is inclined to your vision."

Toward a Shared Vision

As with any merger, leaders from both churches should take time to develop genuine relationships of transparency and trust. And together they should pursue a measure of cross-cultural competence before any formal enjoinment. In addition, churches pursuing this path should commit to their agreements in writing to avoid any miscommunica-



tion or confusion about future intentions and plans. (To read our agreements, scan the QR code or visit OutreachMagazine.com/mark-deymaz and click on the Merger link.)

Begin Here

For churches with denominational ties, begin by networking with ethnic pastors within your denomination who share your heart and passion to develop a church for all people. Find ways to develop relationships with ethnic leaders, always keeping an eye out for a man or woman of peace whose heart is inclined to your vision.

Regardless of your denominational affiliation, you should also make efforts to introduce yourself to ethnic pastors living close to your church, if for no other reason than to establish cross-cultural friendship, mutual respect and professional ties that can help you meet more diverse people or leaders down the road.

Walking Together

One of the Latino pastors who joined us through the merger shared (in Spanish) at a staff meeting: "In a church where we used to meet, they told us we were welcome. But they made sure to lock the doors of every room in that place before we arrived to worship on Sunday afternoons. But here at Mosaic, every door is open to us!" For the people of Iglesia Nazareno del Samaritano, this was an empowering act of respect and trust. They are now one with us, the people of Mosaic. And I think that makes God smile.

For more information on multiethnic church change, see Page 50.

*Mark DeYmaz is the founding pastor of Mosaic Church of Central Arkansas (MosaicChurch.net) and executive director of the Mosaic Global Network (Mosaic.info). This article was adapted from his book *Ethnic Blends: Mixing Diversity Into Your Local Church* (Zondervan). Join his free weekly teleconference call each Thursday at 4 p.m. EST (1 p.m. PST) for live Q-and-A focused on multiethnic church growth and development (details at Mosaic.info/mosaic-weekly-teleconference).*

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