

Discussion Document for UK-Australia Mission Dialogue: Multicultural Mission

Read our book 'Forming Multicultural Partnerships Church Planting in a Divided Society for more information

Dan Yarnell and I (Andy Hardy) thought it would be helpful to raise some research issues pertinent to our UK-Australia mission dialogue sessions in July. These come from our recent book *Forming Multicultural Partnerships, Church Planting in a Divided Society*. We will supply short highlights of some points which we think will be of help in this dialogue.

1. Multicultural society in the west

There is no doubt that the UK, Australia and Europe in general are witnessing migrants entering their nations regularly.

In Australia 26% of residents are migrants. The largest number of migrants living in Australia are from the UK and New Zealand, and there are significant numbers of white English-speaking migrants from South African and the USA. However at present Indian and Chinese migration is occurring at a higher than migration from the UK. The majority of Asian migrants settle in Sydney and Melbourne, although particular suburbs in other capital cities have concentrations of residents from non-Anglo ethnic groups:

(<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0main+features102014#>

<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/immigration-update/australian-migration-trends-2011-12-glance.pdf>)

On top of this, temporary migrants outnumber permanent migrants by three to one. <http://theconversation.com/the-changing-face-of-australian-immigration-14984>

In the UK during this last year (2014 – June 2015) there was a 150% growth over the previous year of Rumanian migrants coming to the UK (i.e. 200,000). This is also true of Bulgarian increases which are at 150% in terms of increase. These are just two of the most recent statistics to note. We feel that it is not necessary to highlight the rapid increase specifically in a large variety of migrants coming to live in the west beyond the two examples, but the UK now for the first time has slightly more than 10% of its population made up of migrants who form the multicultural missional landscape. Some of the key observations are these:

- There are churches being planted consisting of a variety of diasporas which are reaching out to their first generation diasporas
- There are other world faiths forming their own religious communities
- Second generation diasporas face the issue of third culture children and the question of how to help them keep their parent's faith as well as sharing it with others outside their ethnic groups

Questions:

- a) What can we do to develop a multicultural missional forum?
- b) How can we help each other, including our own indigenous populations to keep their faith and share it?
- c) How can we engage in political debate in the public square to help integration of new peoples into western society?

2. Cross-cultural missional leaders and thinkers

During Christendom the west was accustomed to sending missionaries to the rest. The expertise of some of these missionaries, like Newbigin, was their ability to successfully cross cultural boundaries forming bridges so that they could share the gospel with others, and also help these others to become missionaries to their own people. These missionaries also developed cross-cultural skills that enabled them to incarnate among peoples of another culture so that they became effective missional leaders and thinkers who helped bring about change in receiver cultures. We now need to apply these skills to post-Christendom and postmodern people in the west, not just indigenous westerners, but also those who are among us from multiple cultures in their own diasporas.

Questions:

- a) How can we provide apprenticeship model training courses that will help missional leaders from various diasporas in the west, including our own indigenous folks, to become effective cross-cultural missionaries?
- b) How can we establish:
 - i. Multicultural relationships with different ethnic groups, among Christians and non-Christians alike?
 - ii. Multicultural Missional Think Tanks made up of key leaders from various Christian diasporas?
 - iii. Multicultural Missional Forums and Conferences made up of people from a variety of Christian diaspora groups?
 - iv. Publications that are practical to help us all learn from each other regarding effective and affective approaches to sharing the gospel with non-Christian peoples and their diasporas?

3. Issues of practical missional theology to be used in cross-cultural mission

We need to develop far more practical theological missional resources that really help us to train leaders from all diasporas to reach their own peoples now living in the west, as well as helping them to prepare families and their children to be able to live out their Christian lives here.

Questions:

- a) How can we help leaders and teachers to develop their cultural intelligence (CQ) so that they can help their people to understand how to incarnate alongside other groups (see on our chapter on CQ and Livermore's work)?
- b) How can we develop practical theologies that work effectively suited to the different cultural groups and learning styles they belong to? (One size does not fit all (this speaks to the need for flexible resources)
- c) What would teaching materials need to include to reach specific target missional diasporas and their people?

4. Issues of power

We need to realise that western culture values low power distance culture. In other words people do not want politicians etc. to be highly distanced from them, but they want them to be visible and accountable. We want the same in our missional communities. We want our leaders to walk alongside our people in what amounts to a non-hierarchical system of leadership – we all lead together. Older leaders in the west tend to still desire Modernism's hierarchical approach to leadership, but this is seriously out of step with postmodern society and leadership structures. Non-western cultures, such as many African cultures, are based on high power distance cultures, where leaders are expected to have authority to make decisions which people accept and honour without challenging them so often. In churches which are now in the west leaders in this type of power structure are meant to set the rules to follow – the people are meant to be far more distanced from influencing the leader's decisions. Hierarchy is the means of leadership, and there is little influence that those who are not honoured with leadership can have over decisions which a church will accept as God's will.

Questions:

- a) How can low power and high power diasporas meaningfully work with each other?
- b) How can they learn from each other, and what might those lessons be?
- c) How can we build bridges between non-western and western high and low power distance diasporas who are Christians?
- d) What would a SWOT analysis reveal if we used it to evaluate how we might seek to build bridges and partnerships?

5. Issues of Spiritual Applied Theology

- a) How can we discern the missio Dei through our spiritual practices to inform our strategic engagement with other diasporas?
- b) How can we learn from other diasporas spiritualities both in Christian and non-Christian terms?

- c) In what ways can we enrich our spiritual theologies and practices to make them of the most value to discern the missio Trinitatis?

6. The multi-cultural Trinity

- Matthew 28:16-20 sets out what we have terms missio Trinitatis and the metaphor of the multicultural Trinity
- The Trinity invites all peoples and cultures into its family
- All peoples/diasporas participate equally in this community

Questions:

- a) How can we shape our missional communities to become more like intimate family communities who participate in the family of God's perichoretic life cycle?
- b) How can we shape our communities to welcome and invest in peoples from other diasporas?
- c) How can we frame, shape and form missional churches to become multi-ethnic communities that model God's plan to unite all peoples in Christ at the close of the age (Ephesians 1: 9, 10)?

7. The question of nomadic disciples

Like the people of Israel of old the followers of Jesus were and remain nomadic in spirit. In other words in order to follow the Spirit of Jesus' (Acts 16:6-10) on his mission to make disciples of all nations, we need to prepare disciples to become like Christ and to have their characters formed into his likeness. Nomadic disciples are never meant to be static but on the move as the missionary Spirit of the Trinity is moving.

Questions:

- a) How do we seek to make disciples of those who are not from our particular diaspora?
- b) Can the approaches we use in our own diaspora's work with other diasporas?
- c) How do we win, build, equip and multiply disciples and disciplemakers?
- d) In what ways is a Multicultural Trinitarian view of disciplemaking a good approach to how we go about shaping disciples who make disciples?
- e) In other words, how do our missional communities function as supportive families that can make them safe places for God to add new disciples to (Acts 2:42)?