



DIVERSITY

CHURCH PRACTICES SERIES

DECEMBER 2022



WELCOME

Over the last few years serving as GTA Regional Director in the Western Ontario District, it became clear that there were some common challenges facing church leaders in the Greater Toronto Area.

As a result, we decided to develop The Church Practices Series to assist our leaders in addressing these challenges in their unique context.

In the following few pages, you will find links to interviews with those with an academic perspective on these challenges and those who have personally worked to address them. In addition, you will find links to resources and a curated summary of what we have seen in our research.

We hope this package helps spark conversation as we work together to see our region impacted for God.

Joel Spiridigliozzi with Jonathan Gallo



INTERVIEWS

WATCH / LISTEN HERE: <https://vimeo.com/778912014/a9052ad4f9>



Rev. Timothy Tang
Director
Tim Centre, Tyndale University



Dorthy Pang
Assistant Director
Tim Centre, Tyndale University



Harold Gutierrez
Director of Intercultural and
Indigenous Ministries,
BC District

DIVERSITY

In the New Testament, we are given a picture of the church that is diverse. It's made of people from all "tribes and tongues" (Revelation 5), "male and female" from every socio-economic class (Galatians 3:26), every age group (1 Timothy 4, 5), and every past that Jesus is changing (1 Corinthians 6:1). As leaders we are tasked with the challenge of leading communities that reflect this ideal.

As our city continues to evolve and immigration continues to increase, we must be prepared to meet the challenge of reaching new people with the gospel and integrating new Canadians who are mature believers into our local churches. Here are a few key considerations that we must keep in mind.

ASSESSMENT

It's important to assess the levels of diversity in our churches and compare it to the communities that we serve. How many nations do our congregations represent? Do our staff, members, leaders and volunteers reflect the diversity represented by our church and local community?

<https://www.ureachtoronto.ca> can help you assess your area of Toronto.
<https://www.p4n.ca> is a list of least people groups in your neighbourhood.

SELF-AWARENESS

We're all affected by our culture. Our formative years shape our norms, values, priorities, preferences, expectations, and behaviors. How we communicate, teach, worship, create, and lead is what we see as normal. As we become aware of our cultural shaping, we will be able to see ourselves better and better appreciate the people we serve in our community and our churches. This takes time and considerable effort.

The TIM centre in Toronto <https://www.tyndale.ca/tim> has several assessments for individuals and teams to help with the journey of becoming aware and moving forward.

LEARNING

We must approach diversity, in the same way a missionary moving into a new context seeks to understand and reach the community in which they find themselves. We must seek to know as we seek to be understood. Cross-cultural understanding requires listening, reading, and time. Resources such as The Culture Map by Erin Meyer help us expand our knowledge of ourselves and other cultures.



HONOURING THE PAST

As we build diverse churches, we need to honour founding and long-time members of our churches. Many have sacrificed hard work, time, and finances over the years. As a result, our churches are places where people have memories of great experiences with God and where life events have been experienced. Babies have been dedicated, children educated, showers and weddings celebrated, and funerals commemorated.

MOVING FORWARD

Change management requires intentional slow movement that can take years toward the desired goal. It requires conversations, building consensus, and making unpopular decisions. However, helping our people find common values that both founding and new members share in laying down individual preferences can help move a church forward. These include “solving a community problem, reaching the lost, building a church our kids/grandkids want to attend, leaving a legacy, etc.”

EMPOWERMENT

It is not enough to simply celebrate the number of nations our churches represent. Our staff teams, boards, and church leaders must reflect our communities' diverse nature. Different voices bring different perspectives and preferences to the table. Therefore, influence at the leadership level is essential to building diversity in our churches.

EXPERIENCES

Diversity is not something you can simply hire for, like one would hire a youth or children's pastor for a particular ministry. Diversity needs to be embraced and reflected in different practices. It can be reflected in diverse teaching styles, worship experiences, prayer events, groups, discipleship, and more.

VISION

Building churches that are diverse takes skill. It takes plenty of grace, understanding, conversations, and prayer. However, the opportunity and blessing of building diversity in our churches are found in a reflection that mirrors the heaven we preach about and look forward to.

Have a story or experience that you would like to share? Section meetings are a perfect place to debrief. We would also love to hear from you and help pass on what you have learned.

