

ETHNIC BLENDS **MARK DEYMAZ**

What **Influence** Looks Like

Sometime in the winter of 2002, only 18 months after we had launched Mosaic, the writer of a book on church planting contacted me. Fascinated by the intentionality with which we were developing a church for all people, he asked if he could feature our work in one of the book's chapters despite the fact that we had only 150 or so people attending at the time. Soon after the book's publication, a local magazine in Little Rock, Ark., ran a story highlighting our unique vision. In April 2005, *Christianity Today* published a picture of our gospel choir—all 11 or so members—in a sidebar article discussing our church. The cover of that month's issue read, "All Churches Should Be Multiracial."

The Way It Ought to Be

I share such things not to boast, but only to point out that early interest in our church had nothing to do with large numbers or explosive growth. Rather, it had to do with the collective heart of our people.

That has not changed.

"The pursuit of the multiethnic vision matters to God and to your community."

Any measure of encouragement, influence or significance that Mosaic has had has not occurred because of the size of our ministry, but because of its scope; not because we have attracted great numbers of people, but because our people continue to exercise great faith, courage and sacrifice. They set aside personal preferences to walk, work and worship God together as one, so that the world would know God's love and believe. Indeed, pursuit of a multiethnic and economically diverse congregation is something that even nonbelievers recognize as intrinsically good, "the way church ought to be."

Don't be discouraged, then, or surprised, when seeking to build a healthy multiethnic church, if rapid numerical growth is not something you experience early on or ever. The multiethnic church, as movements go, is in a pioneer

stage. Adoption of the biblical mandate, core commitments and best practices of a diverse congregation may be still 10 years away.

Broader Community Influence

I really like, and have no problem with, a large church setting. I left a church of 5,000 or so to start Mosaic, and would be thrilled to see our church soon advance beyond the 500 to 600 people we engage on Sunday mornings. Yet I've come to realize something even more interesting when comparing the size of a multiethnic church to its potential significance.

When the people of my former homogeneous church leave after Sunday worship, they largely head back to the same neighborhoods and offices, athletic facilities and country clubs, schools and social settings. But when the people of our multiethnic church leave on Sunday, they permeate every quarter of the city. The homeless return to their camps, while other members return to homes in the hood, the barrios, the suburbs and everywhere in between. Many of our immigrant members hold jobs in service industries, while other members run for political office. From hospitals to corporate boardrooms, from working maids to small-business owners, such diversity has carried our message and influence much farther and wider than our size might otherwise suggest.

So regardless of the size of your congregation, know that the pursuit of the multiethnic vision matters to God and to your community. Indeed, it is helping to shape the future of the American church and, therefore, the advance of the Gospel in an increasingly diverse and cynical society.

Mark DeYmaz is the directional leader of Mosaic Church in Little Rock, Ark. (MosaicChurch.net). His book, Ethnic Blends (Zondervan), co-written with Harry Li, was released in April. In addition, Mark heads Mosaix (Mosaix.info) a relational network of multiethnic church pioneers, pastors and planters. Connect with Mark and other leading voices in the multiethnic church movement at the Multi-ethnic Church Conference, hosted by National Outreach Convention and Outreach magazine, Nov. 2-3, 2010, in San Diego, Calif.

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