



Moving into the neighbourhood

Cross-Cultural Ministry Conference 2023

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Worship and dwelling in the word

Opening worship



Pastor Matt Huckel taught us a number of psalms and songs where the refrain was sung in a language other than English.

One example is **Father God I wonder** by Kate Miner and Ian Smale, where Matt changed the refrain 'I will sing your praises' to:

***Hen-d' yiliak kadeet,
Hen-d' yiliak kadeet,
Hen-d' yiliak kadeet, forever more,
Hen-d' yiliak kadeet,
Hen-d' yiliak kadeet,
Hen-d' yiliak kadeet, forever more.***

yan de ji liak ke diit ('I will sing your praises' in Nuer)

Here's a version of *Father God I wonder*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xdGX1WWRuQ>

Dwelling in the word

The conference dwelt in Luke 10:1–12, led by Kathy Matuschka (day one).



We dwelt in Acts 10:1–18, led by Pastor David Schmidt (day two).

The Spirit was active as we heard from God's word via our partners and the Spirit.

A cross-cultural vision for the LCANZ

A vision for a missional LCANZ

Craig shared a vision for local mission for the LCANZ and asked for feedback on the draft vision.

The vision statement included:

We believe that:

- The Lord is stretching out his hands to the people of Australia and New Zealand and wants a relationship with each one.
- God is watching over the movement of people who are coming from afar and is choosing to bless them.
- God is inviting us to join him in this great endeavour and he will help us as we seek to express his love to those we live among.
- We are all different and each of us has something meaningful to offer.
- *LOVE COMES TO LIFE when God's people grow in his grace and go out into their world with his love.*

We see a Lutheran body of believers who:

- Bless the people around them because God blesses us.
- Start conversations with strangers, remembering their names.
- Listen without agenda and bring their concerns to the Lord in prayer.
- Live out the wisdom and kindness of God in the civic world in which each of us are placed.

Challenges and implications



Tania challenged us, that in accepting the vision, there are a number of implications.

She presented the following challenges:

To leaders:

- Release members to move out into the neighbourhood.
- Be permission givers.
- Be risk takers and learn from the experiences.

To all:

- Make time and space in your life for getting to know your neighbour and neighbourhood.
- This time and space need not be an extra obligation. Live life in the ordinary.
- The Spirit provides opportunities, so LISTEN.

Tania shared the video 'Let me tell you about my church' as an example of Christians loving their neighbourhood: <https://vimeo.com/341277528> (3:24).

A truly welcoming congregation

Partners in ministry

We watched the Partners in Ministry video 'Welcoming': [Welcoming — Partners In Ministry](#).

In the video, research was presented that indicated that for a congregation of 100 worshippers, the average church receives approximately 3 visitors each week. Most come on a normal Sunday. The month of the year that you are most likely to get first time visitors is January.

Research on why people leave a church indicates the primary reason is they move out of the area. The next most significant reason is that the person's only connection with the church is attendance on a Sunday.

The video encouraged us to:

- Be intentional in our welcome.
- Be authentic in our welcome.
- Lift expectations of the welcome that the congregation provides.

A key question to consider:

- What is the pathway from first attendance to regular attendance?

When does the pathway begin?

- The door?
- The carpark?

For 90%, the pathway has already begun with the church's website. Your website is the start of the welcoming process.

Suggestion: Look at your website from the point of view of the visitor.

The most visited webpages are 'Meet the pastor' and 'Meet the team' pages.

Try a google search by putting in the name of your town and the word 'church' and see what comes up.

Raise and train a welcome team.

Share stories of what it is like to be a first time visitor.

What happens in the first ten minutes after the worship service ends.

Encourage 'pew missionaries' who make conversation with first time visitors.

Key moments are:

10 mins before worship

10 mins after

Of the 150 people who may visit a congregation in a year (a cong of 100 worshippers), 100 will be 'well-churched'. About 1/3 are 'unchurched' and are nervous.

Therefore, have seats at the back of your church.

What happens in the thirty-six hours after the service?

Importance of follow-up. If contacted within 36 hours, 85% will return next week.

If the person contacting is the pastor the stats may be halved!

There is enormous power in volunteer follow up.

Who's responsibility is it to welcome new people to your church?

Yes, it's everyone.

71% said its extremely important to be friendly.

Key concept – multiplicity of contact points

Why do first time visitors chose not to return? (in rank order)

1. Having to stand up and greet one another in the worship
2. Unfriendly church members

How successfully were you made to feel welcome (in rank order)

1. An attender spoke to me
2. The pastor spoke to me

Volunteers have the power to make your church a welcoming environment.

Ask how many members have invited a friend in the next 12 months.

How likely is it that a friend or contact will accept a invitation to attend your church?

56% will accept an invitation or give serious consideration.

Be authentic in your welcome.

Panel – welcoming congregations – led by Erin Grainger and Kathy Matushka

Panellists – Pastor Nich Kitchen, Barb Mattiske, Dr Steve Little, Pastor Steve Schultz, Yong Bong Cho, Pastor Tommi Vuorinen

Nich spoke of his multi-ethnic church (Mountainside, Auckland) and the importance of learning the names of the people from ethnicities other than their own. He also mentioned that it's taken five years to have a leadership team that reflects the ethnicity of the congregation. Now the challenge is to give the immigrant leaders a voice (to get them to a place where they truly have a voice in the church community).



Steve Little – the Shepparton is a congregation who is 80% Afrialian (African-Australian). Steve spoke of the spontaneous nature of the congregation including in its welcome. It was a decision of the Shepparton community that they would not have a separate Swahili service and a separate English service, but combined worship. This was an important decision that considered the needs of second and third generation attenders.

Barb – The Glynde SA congregation has many services on Sunday and the church community meet together frequently during the week as well, which they also call worship. Barb emphasised the importance of smiling and the importance of writing down notes to recall the names and stories that have been shared; to honour and love the people who walk into your space; and to value conversations (they invested in a good coffee machine to take time over conversations).



Steve Schultz shared that intentionality is important; and that we need to get over our fear of the visitor. Steve emphasised the importance of the whole community in their welcome.

Yong Bong is South Korean and emigrated to South Australia. Yong found a warm welcome from a Lutheran church that was welcoming to the stranger and the immigrant and was intentional. Yong is starting a prayer ministry. Yong

has a vision to plant a Korean congregation in Brisbane, and St Andrew's Brisbane is performing the role of a sending congregation.

Tommi was warmly welcomed at St Andrew's (English is Tommi's third language). St Andrew's is intentional about its welcome. St Andrew's, despite being a traditional congregation, have a diversity statement, and don't wish to exclude. The church council worked on the statement for over a year. Tommi shared that it was important that Yong Bong and Giselle first became active members of St Andrew's. Now it's become St Andrew's ministry to the Korean people (and not simply that of Yong Bong).

We heard some wonderful stories, including the time that a Muslim couple entered the Mountainside Auckland Lutheran church and hesitated because they didn't know the 'rules'. Someone brought them in, and after the service, several people spoke with them, however, when they announced they were Muslim, anxiety increased and the pastor was called for. The pastor didn't give in to the request for help when the anxiety 'hit the roof', and this turned out the best for the situation as the members were able to confront their fears.

Walk a mile in the shoes of ...

Tamils, with Maha and Michelle

We were:
Excited to hear Maha's journey to Christ

Blessed to hear Maha praying in Tamil



Koreans, with Yong Bong



We were:
Excited to hear of Yong Bong's desire to plant a Korean church

Hope-filled for the Korean prayer ministry

Chinese, with Pastor Jing, Pastor Tim and Pastor Brian



We were:

Encouraged to hear of plans to integrate the second generation ABCs (Australian born Chinese)

Amazed as the contextualization of culture that was shared when taking a secular festival and giving it Christian meaning

Congolese and South Sudanese, with Adam and Pastor James



We were:

Humbled to hear of the long and difficult journey from the Congo and South Sudan to Australia

Delighted to hear of their work in Geelong and in Shepparton

Finnish, with Bishop Mark and Pastor Tommi



We were:
Delighted to hear of
the rich history of
Finnish Lutherans in
Australia

Amused by Pastor
Tommi's move from a
conservative Finnish
pastor to a radical
Australian pastor in one
24-hour flight to
Australia

Many panelists commented that they were surprised by the extent of multicultural Australia and New Zealand.

Building rapport with Muslim background people: Tea, Time and Trust

(not Booze, BBQs and Banter – which may be a title for 'Building rapport with Anglos')

Tea

Understand who muslims are – image bearers (made in the image of God); and the lost

Our presenter (name withheld for security reasons) suggested some resources such as:

The Friendship First course by Steve Bell – <https://friendshipfirst.org/>

The text *Changing Lanes, Crossing Cultures: Equipping Christians & Churches for ministry in a culturally diverse society*, by Andrew Schachtel, Choon-Hwa Lim & Michael K Wilson

Perspectives course <https://perspectives.org.au/>

The autobiography *Seeking Allah: finding Jesus* by Nabeel Qureshi

Our presenter dispelled the following stereotypes:

- All muslims are Arabs.
- All muslims are terrorists.
- All muslims won't come to Christ.

Muslims in Australia

Are often born into a muslim family

Their culture and religion are intertwined

They might attend the Friday prayers at the mosque, but unlikely to pray five times per day

Are very concerned about the values of Australian society

Understanding their culture is key.

1 Corinthians 9:20–23: 'To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews ...'

Time

Our presented posed the question, 'Is God going after the lost sheep via mass migration?'

Muslims are looking for friendship and to be loved – love for the stranger and those feeling isolated.

The Ark Lutheran Church, in Salisbury South Australia, and Hope Arabic Church put on a free Iftar meal (the meal that breaks the fast of Ramadan).

We have a unique opportunity to spend time with Muslims in Australian.

Time allows trust to be built.

Create space in our lives for spontaneous social events.

This may involve some sacrifice.

Its important to be truly present. Take the first step.

As The Ark Lutheran congregation is being encouraged to move out into the neighbourhood; they are ensuring they are present at community events.

Trust

Two keys:

1. Relationships – people are not projects, so love them.
2. Hospitality – visit them and invite them to our homes.

And trust God – trust that God will give us the words, and trust that God goes before us.

May we ask God for someone with which to drink tea?

How are LCA congregations responding to a multicultural Australia?

Overview

Net overseas migration will hit an all-time high of 400,000 this financial year.

The fastest growing cities in Australia are:

1. Rockbank – Mount Cottrell (western Melbourne)
2. Mickleham – Yorokey (northern Melbourne)
3. Pimpama (southern Brisbane/northern Gold Coast)
4. Riverstone – Marsden Park (western Sydney)

Melbourne will overtake Sydney as the nation's most populous city by 2026.

NCLS

295 Lutheran congregations completed the survey 2021–2022 National Church Life Survey (7426 forms).

Lutherans value (top four):

1. Holy Communion
2. Preaching
3. Traditional worship
4. Contemporary worship

12th – reaching those that don't attend church

13th – valuing social and cultural diversity

How would Jesus complete the NCLS?

Top future priorities for Lutherans in Australia:

1. Worship services that are nurturing
2. Building a sense of community
3. Spiritual growth
4. Ministry to children and youth

David spoke of four quadrants:

Close community (close family & friendships)	Creativity
Good structures (good governance & leadership)	Accountability (follow through)

He shared that our Lutheran congregations tend to sit in the quadrants of close community and good structures.

Challenge: What one or two things will I do in the following week/month that will have a positive impact on the community? And report back at the next church meeting.

New openness to spirituality in our younger generations. Not to religion. But to deeper and significant and profound questions that the gospel answers.

People tend to say yes to being invited to church if asked.

There is an appetite for clear vision for our church and support for new initiatives. 'God is on the move and sending people to us.'

The impact of multicultural church models

Across generations – Rev Meewon Yang and Charlene Delos Santos



Victoria's cultural diversity:

What percentage of Victoria's total population speaks a language other than English at home?

32.8%

What % of Victoria's total population were born overseas?

30%

What % of Victoria's population were born overseas or had a least one parent who was born overseas?

51.5%

In the Baptist Union of Victoria (BUV), 41% of congregations are LOTE (language other than English) or CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) congregations, accounting for 65% of members. There are 33 languages in the BUV.

A biblical mandate

1. A vision of cultural difference (Genesis 11 – Tower of Babel)
2. Intercultural relationships appear in the traditions of hospitality – Abraham and Sarah welcoming strangers (angels)
3. Jesus challenged monocultural systems to become more inclusive towards others
4. The kingdom of God as being profoundly inclusive
 - a. The risen Jesus as a stranger
 - b. The Syrophenician woman
5. Jews and Gentiles being united in love – Galatians 3:27,28:
 - a. 'for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus'
6. Hospitality of God – hospitality to the stranger
7. Interaction with others (Miroslav Volf) – challenged to consider how we embrace and exclude

The Four Models of Multicultural Church is from Meewon's master's thesis, 'Ways of Being a Multicultural Church', 2012. Her thesis can be found here:

<https://repository.divinity.edu.au/divinityserver/api/core/bitstreams/0c8c82ed-5ea0-4254-8eed-fb4275248119/content>

1. Monocultural: a biological family
2. Friendship: a shared house
3. Partnership: an intercultural engagement
4. Integrated: a blended family

Second generation

Born in Australia, with their parents as immigrants (the 'in-betweens')

Tensions – 'be more xxx' (Filipino) and 'be more Western'

Some second gen responses –

1. We find refuge with others who are also in between cultures (with other second gens)
2. Being chameleon – learning how to code switch, depending on our contexts
3. Internalised racism ('I don't want to be Filipino')
4. Seeing own culture or Western culture as inferior/superior

Monocultural model – a biological family

- One ethnic group
- Strong incentives to practice faith within the circle
- New migrants (support one another especially for refugee communities)
- Belonging
- Continuing cultural identity
- Centred in ethnic origin
- Look to own leaders for inspiration

- Limited energy ...

Impact on second gen

Participating in their family's culture and language

Connection to family's homeland

Language barriers

Disengagement with church

Uncertain about connecting ...

High expectation from first gens

Friendship model – a shared house

- Separate identity
 - Each church retains its own structure
 - Without commitment
- Buildings are shared making for better stewardship
- Anglo-church seeking out or adopting
- Some kind of intercultural relationship
 - Collegial relationship
 - Alongside rather than interact with each other
 - Maintain autonomy

Impact on second gen

Similar to monocultural

Partnership model – an intercultural engagement

- Equal ownership and missional purposes
- A visible unit in diversity. Ephesians 2:11–22 Peter and Cornelius in Acts
- LOTE churches to retain their own language and culture
 - Worship is still separate
 - One team
- Constitution, finance and admin are genuinely shared
- Separate, yet envision a future together (eg Sunday school and youth group together)
- Pastoral care directed towards helping people negotiate the relationship between cultures and boundary crossing (eg grandparent project)

Impact on second gen

Access to joint children and youth ministries

Leadership development

See faith practices through other lenses and cultures

Broader network of Christians

Friendship with others

Being bridge builders

Integrated model – a blended family

- Made up of diverse ethnic people and diversity of cultures
 - Ensuring they influence the life and structure of the church

- Although there is a common language – English – the church has lots of visual and spoken commitments to multiculturalism
- Affirms the different cultural values and practices
- Intentional inclusiveness, justice and racial reconciliation, leadership and contextualisation of worship and the Word
- Inclusive to all
- Respect and acceptance of various cultural practices and customs
- Hospitality is a way of inclusion
- Intentionality

Impact on second gen

Potential for higher engagements

Diversity of faith

Broader network of Christians

Development of intercultural skills

Modelling of a diverse leadership

Second gens as bridge builders

Analysis: strengths and challenges

Tables were asked to discuss:

- One thing that stood out from the assigned model?
- What are the strengths and challenges of that model?

Meewon and Charlene recommended further reading/information from:

- Mark Yettica-Paulson <https://www.supernativeunlimited.com/inter-cultural-framework/>
- Eric H.F. Law, 'The Wolf Shall Dwell With the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community, Chalice Press, 1993

Crossing over into the neighbourhood

Moving from good intentions to action

Craig linked us back to the conference theme and 'vision statement' from our first session.

A vision of God at work around us and a call for us to join him out among unbelievers.

We talked about the gravitational pull of *Churchland* (our familiar social and cultural world) and the psychological shift to join the neighbourhood with our hearts and not just our bodies.

Craig encouraged us to shift our focus and ask new questions – questions like 'Lord, what are you doing here in this shop/street/interaction?'

Our call to mission is finding out what Jesus is doing and joining in.

In John 1:14, we have Jesus taking on human form to dwell among us. We discussed how our first contact with unbelievers is impacted by how well we relate as humans and as trust grows we have more opportunity to share the gospel.

The final workshop was an exercise for delegates to share (at tables) the ways they build rapport with their neighbours.

Cooking skills and practices



When faced with a multitude of hungry people, Jesus says to the disciples, 'You give them something to eat' (Matthew 14:16).

What are the ways that you can engage people?

The table task was a discussion of:

- What are the personal practices of your life that help you engage with strangers and win them as friends?
- If the base ingredient of every meal is a 'heart to bless'

- What does this ingredient look like and how do we get hold of it?

Table ideas on developing connections:

Table 1

Share food.

Be blessed to be a blessing.

Listen.

Take the opportunities.

Be generous.

Take the church to the people.

Find ways that churches can work together.

Work intergenerationally.



Table 2

Build relationships.
 Be real and who you are.
 Smile with your eyes.
 Be truthful.
 Listen more than speak.

Base ingredients: the gospel of Jesus Christ; God is in the moments. Love people for their own sake and not just to get them into church.

Table 3

Nurture your own heart.
 Spend time in the word.
 Approach others with a prayerful posture.
 Be genuine.
 Be generous and humble.
 When passing a blessing we are passing Christ's blessing to others.
 Trust that the word is working.
 Ask questions.
 Make the most of the opportunities where people gather.
 Put yourself in these gathering places.
 Look for connection.
 Listen deeply.



Table 4

Be curious in a friendly way.
 Ask questions, eg 'What are you doing on the weekend?'.
 Enable opportunities to hear their story and share your story.
 Be a bridge to others, introducing them to others.
 Use the 15 minute window opportunity (eg in a taxi) when you may say something like 'Praise the Lord' or 'Bless you'.
 Use sport events (to be out among people).

Table 5

Be aware of the introverts (and the extroverts).
 Be intentional about engagement.
 Pray (start with prayer).
 Listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.
 Thank those who wouldn't ordinarily receive a thank you.

Base ingredients: Love and openness. Being intentional to share God and ourselves each day.



Table 6

Ask about their families.
Compliment people and be grateful when people help us (or serve us).
Pray for a prompting for the Holy Spirit.
Ask good questions.
Say hello and thank people for even the simple things they do.
Love the unloveable.
Take time to listen.
Create safe spaces.

Base ingredients: Remember that people are created by God and love them without judgement.

Table 7

Walk around the neighbourhood and create opportunities for incidental conversations.
Walk the dog, which enables connection.
Be vulnerable.
Use humour and your smile.
Communicate that you are in the moment and have time.
Remember people's names.
Use music.
Ask for help or offer to help.

Base ingredients: Authenticity and love.



Table 8

Run (jog) with people.
Be intentional, considering their lives.
Acknowledge people in their jobs that you pass by.
Be prepared to make the first approach and when people respond, you may be able to go deeper.

Measuring our effectiveness

How can we measure the effectiveness of our connections with unbelievers? (How do we know if our food is tasty?) Craig challenged us to note how often unbelievers share their heart concerns with you. It's a sign they are starting to trust you.

CRISP – Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot

Tania shared the promotional video on the government's CRISP program
<https://refugeesponsorship.org.au/what-we-do/crisp/>





Thank you

Thank you to the many people who presented, shared on a panel, sung, led worship, led as we dwelled in the word, contributed to table discussions and agreed to wear those funny hair nets and spectacular chef's hats.

A special thank you to our MC Brett, our organisers Tania, Craig and Erin, our PowerPoint and logistics guru Olivia, and the Committee for Cross-Cultural Ministry for making it all possible.

See you in the neighbourhood!