**TIPS FOR BECOMING A RACIALLY DIVERSE FAITH COMMUNITY**

**Acknowledge the problem.**If your church is one of the many that’s not racially diverse (more than 80 percent of your congregation is a single race), acknowledge the problem and start talking about it openly with the people in your church. *Be willing to engage in tough conversations.* The more you confront racial issues, the less awkward they’ll become to discuss.

**Assess the personal histories and current attitudes of your church’s leaders toward diversity.**Hold meetings in which your church’s staff and volunteers can honestly discuss how their past experiences have shaped their current beliefs about diversity. What prejudices might they have developed that are preventing them from pursuing diversity? What ideas do they have about changing your church to become more diverse? Ask your church’s leaders to commit to making church diversity a top priority and goal.

**Pray for God’s help.**Ask God to motivate your church’s leaders to pursue diversity, to attract people of diverse races from your community to visit your church, and to make them feel welcome enough to join your church. Pray for God to help everyone in your church see others as God sees them, created in God’s divine image, beautiful and beloved by the same God you serve.

**Focus on the universal Gospel that unites us in our diversity.**Ask yourselves a tough question: *“Is your church primarily focused on preserving the culture of some people or presenting the Gospel to all people?”* Realize that the practice of segregating people denies the unity that all Christians have in Christ. For your church to be true to the Gospel’s message, it must welcome all people with equal love and enthusiasm. It’s not faithful to talk about sharing the Gospel in faraway places when we refuse to worship with people who live right in our church’s neighborhood. When your church is true to the Gospel, there will be unity among diverse people in your congregation.

**Drive innovation in your church by inviting people of many different races to serve on staff, as volunteers and in leadership positions.**A racially diverse group of church leaders brings a wealth of different experiences and perspectives to your church, which will naturally lead to innovative ideas for your church’s ministry work.

**Show diversity in your church’s communications materials.**Your church’s website and printed materials should include photos of people of different races to reflect your commitment to racial diversity. Display biblical art, especially images of Jesus, from different cultural backgrounds (Jesus *was* Middle Eastern and Jewish, after all!) Doing so will help all people feel welcome to visit and participate in your church.

**Partner with multicultural organizations in your church’s area to minister to your local community. Learn from these organizations about community issues and the work they’re doing to address them. Ask how you can partner with them and share resources. *Note: Be mindful NOT to enter these new relationships with an attitude of superior knowledge, resources or faith. Listen without judgment to experiences and perspectives different from yours.* With these organizations, ask yourself, “What is God up to here?” Commit yourselves to becoming advocates for the people in your community, helping everyone participate in full and healthy living.**

**Choose people of other races for prayer partners and accountability relationships.**Encourage your church’s leaders to enter into prayer partnerships and accountability relationships with people from different races whenever possible. Doing so will give you valuable perspectives to help you look at your ministries in fresh ways. If done well, these will also evolve into meaningful friendships!

**Worship in diverse ways.**During your church’s worship services, use various musical styles, preaching and litanies that appeal to people of different racial backgrounds. Pray in ways that give people the opportunity to approach God differently than they have done. Doing so can lead to people encountering God in fresh ways.

**Teach and preach about diversity.**Try to educate your congregation about the importance of racial diversity by making it the focus in sermons and curricula for groups such as adult forums, Sunday school and youth groups several times each year. Include some Bible verses that encourage diversity. Also, work with pastors of other races to swap or share pulpits during weekend worship services.

**Create diverse small groups.**Include people of different races in your church’s small groups to help people within your congregation develop interracial friendships and learn from each other.

**Be patient.**Since racial problems are complex, it takes time to solve them. Keep praying and working, and in time you’ll see people’s perspectives change, which will then change their actions – which will then change your church into a racially diverse congregation that reflects God’s intentions for all people to worship together.