

## **Skills for bridging cultures in multicultural ministry**

### Listening skills: verbal (ears) and non-verbal (eyes and heart)

Silence in some cultures does not indicate consent. Looking someone straight in their eyes may be understood as confrontational. Listening with one's eyes and heart is as important as listening to the spoken word with our ears. Be cautioned that words are used differently in different cultures.

### Understanding the spectrum (diversity) of personalities within each culture

Do not assume that cultures are monochromatic. Within ethnic groups and cultures there are differences of language dialects, regional characteristics, social classes, tribal loyalties, and understanding of church. Do not assume that you know everything about a culture. Ethnic Chinese from Singapore are different from Taiwanese Chinese.

### Celebrate and respect differences among cultures

The differences among cultures bring richness to the life and ministry of the church and the community. See differences as bridges rather than barriers. Each culture contributes to the wholeness of our humanity. Personal spirituality may be practiced differently in each culture but that does not make one expression superior to the other.

### Be open and willing to deal with "the other" (open to seeing the Christ)

Openness rather than judgment is our approach to the stranger. The Bible is filled with stories of people finding God in the other. Do not allow untested assumptions create rigidity in one's approach to the other. Be authentic as you receive the other. We are as strange to others as others seem to us.

### Be ready risk takers in order to build bridges to other cultures and peoples.

Be willing to "respect the dignity of every human being" should make us willing to build bridges. Establishing relationships in Christ is risky. Tasting strange foods is risky for us. Christ says, "Fear not", as we enter into new relationships with others in mission and ministry.