THIS IS (NOT) WHO WE ARE

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The church is multicultural! The question is whether or not we live up to our own reality.
Category: Observations

There is a temptation for all Christians to assume that we are *normal* Christians. That is that all Christians more or less look like us, do the same sorts of Christian things as us and have the same central concerns. This is particularly prevalent among Western Christians who, for various historical reasons, have viewed their own experience of Christianity as being the most genuine form of the faith. There is Christianity and there are hyphenated-Christianities such as African, Latin, Asian and other regional or national expressions. In this scheme of things, Christianity is the religion practised by mainly white people of European descent.

We tend to see the church as being composed of people like us, with others added on around the edges.

However, the church is (and always has been) a kaleidoscope of different colours, cultures and languages. We are part of the most multicultural body on the planet. Our family speak thousands of different languages, dress in all sorts of different clothes and do church in more ways than anyone can count. That is who we are!

However, this worldwide, multicultural church exists in local expressions and those local fellowships may well be entirely monocultural. In a situation where people only speak one language and belong to one group, then it is entirely normal for the church to reflect this local reality.

That being said, I've got two caveats. Firstly, even in the most mono-cultural of settings the church should never lose sight of the fact that it is a part of a worldwide multi-cultural body. At the very least, this means praying for and taking an interest in Christians who are not like us. Secondly, the fact that the church *can* exist as a mono-cultural fellowship does not mean that it should. Through the church, God is at work reconciling all things to himself and this includes breaking down the walls of ethnic and cultural hostility. In a multicultural context, the church should be a place of healing and wholeness for the nations.

The last time I wrote something along these lines, there was a comment on the blog saying something to the effect that no one should force a church to become multicultural. That misses the point altogether. The church is multicultural! The question is whether or not we live up to our own reality.