



HEARING IN TECHNICOLOR



MINDSET SHIFTS within a
**MULTICULTURAL
CONGREGATION**

MARK HEARN

WITH DARCY WILEY

Hearn is not just writing about racial reconciliation and diversity in the church; he is living it! I have been in his church, and it is incredibly encouraging to see the powerful and colorful work of God there. Read this book. Do this book.

John Avant, president, Life Action Ministry and
author of *Yes Changes Everything*, *Revival Revived*, *If God
Were Real*, *Authentic Power* and *The Passion Promise*

Pastor Hearn has his finger on the pulse of this community. He sees and hears the needs of a diverse group of people and works to understand and appreciate the perspectives of many.

Dr. Erin Hahn, principal,
B. B. Harris Elementary School, Duluth, Georgia

Intentionality. Without this, churches in the West are going to inevitably drift the way that our culture is meandering toward its own echo chambers. This will effectively render the church impotent and irrelevant to reaching our neighborhoods and cities for Christ. Allow my friend Mark to guide you along a journey to *bear in technicolor*—postured in a way where you and your church can be used by God for the reconciliation of all things.

Daniel Im, pastor, Beulah Alliance Church, Edmonton,
Alberta, podcaster and author of several books, most recently
*You Are What You Do: And Six Other Lies
about Work, Life, and Love*

In a country and a world where the church is still one of the most ethnically segregated communities, it is refreshing to read the story of a worshipping community continuing to do diverse work and share what they are learning on the journey. The intentional move from monocultural to multicultural work, life, and ministry

is not easy, but it is some of the best work we may ever do. Mark Hearn's storytelling provides insight and encouragement for anyone looking for courage to begin the journey toward healthy, diverse ministry.

Nikki Lerner, culture coach,
coleader, Multicultural Worship Leaders Network, and
coauthor of *Worship Together: In Your Church as in Heaven*

The ministry and writing of Mark Hearn are insightful and challenging for the church in North America to live missionally by becoming more like our neighborhoods. Dr. Hearn challenges churches not to retreat from transitioning neighborhoods of diversity but to go forward with a kingdom mindset to share the Good News of Jesus' love. His ministry at First Baptist Duluth has been an example that has inspired the transformation of our church in Marietta, Georgia, to become a family of many cultures and generations living the gospel in real relationships.

Dr. Michael Lewis, lead pastor
Roswell Street Baptist Church, Marietta, Georgia

Hearing in Technicolor is a must-read to impact our communities for the Savior Jesus Christ. In a generation filled with voices and noises distracting believers, this book is a clear beacon to refocus the community of Jesus to the needy and diverse community around us.

Rev. Fouad Masri, founder,
Crescent Project in Nashville, Tennessee

This is the finest book that I have read about the intentionality and sensitivity to be an ecclesiastical multiethnic community of faith. Pastor Mark Hearn's sequel to *Technicolor* is compelling,

educative, and timely. The book is an essential treatise for all mission-minded pastors passionate about breaking through cultural barriers. If you only read one book on the art of hearing the voices of different cultures and ministering to their needs in the hope of winning them to Christ . . . read this one.

Rev. Dr. John Ojewole, lead pastor, Agape International Church and Ministries, a multiethnic faith community in Antioch, California

This book is a must-read for those of us pastoring multicultural churches as well as for all who long to see their churches look more like heaven. Mark Hearn and Darcy Wiley give practical steps to help us make previous identities secondary to God's greater gospel story.

Jimmy Scroggins, lead pastor, Family Church, West Palm Beach, Florida, and coauthor of *Full Circle Parenting* and *Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations*

There are times when you come across a book and just know that what the author says is exactly what you've been trying to understand, embrace, and express. Mark Hearn has masterfully done it in a way that is based on current realities, backed by facts and real examples. This dynamic book is for people who want to be used by God to love all people and just don't know how to go about doing it. He who has an ear, let him hear. Read this book; it can be life-changing for you and your ministry.

Dr. Kenneth Tan, senior consultant, Leadership Development at Baptist State Convention of North Carolina

In his book *Hearing in Technicolor*, Mark Hearn shares his decade-long journey into multicultural ministry. This book is an

expansion of his previous book *Technicolor*, inviting the twenty-first-century church into a deeper level of spirituality embracing the colorful voices of the church. This is a practical resource for ministry for both pastors and lay congregational leaders.

Dr. Chakravarthy Zadda, senior pastor, First Baptist Church Waukesha, Wisconsin, and member of the Interfaith Commission Baptist World Alliance

I appreciate Dr. Hearn's accomplishment. He has reflected the essence of how to be the church in a practical, dynamic way in this multicultural generation. From his heart he describes the experiences and interpersonal relationships present in a multicultural church. A beautiful picture of what it will be like when we live forever with the Lord.

Rev. Hugo Villegas, pastor, El Buen Baptist Church and Hispanic missionary for Scott County Baptist Association, Mississippi

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MARK HEARN

WITH DARCY WILEY

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May the next generation of the church lovingly embrace the beautiful diversity of our country and prove that spiritual unity is a mighty evangelistic force. Lovingly dedicated to my grandchildren:

Alex

Daniel

Tianya

William

Anna Kate

Layne

Andie

Lindy

Keri Jo

Darcy

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Foreword

Hearing in *Technicolor* is moving us in the right direction!

You don't have to look very far to realize that our communities are changing. The nations are literally being brought into our own backyards. The opportunity to fulfill the Great Commission is more tangible than it has ever been. This should excite Great Commission churches! Can you imagine having a church that reflects its surrounding community? Picture walking into church on a Sunday morning and seeing different ethnic groups, hearing the different languages, and it's all in your own church. As the world around us continues to change and diversify, it is imperative that our church leaders find a new way of doing ministry. The numbers of declining and dying churches in America are staggering, but it doesn't have to be that way!

Pastor Mark is succeeding in an area where many are struggling. First Baptist Duluth is reaching and leading a multicultural community. When I first met Mark, it was obvious that God's hand was on him. I don't know if you have ever met someone and thought, "Something is different about that person," but that is exactly what I thought about Mark. When I watched him from afar, he was charismatic, engaging, and treated each person with the same value and respect. His heart for all people was evident.

I continued to follow him from a distance and realized that God is using him to do something very special.

When you read this book, you will see a man whose biblical convictions and theological view are the driving force for all that he is doing. He is not trying to lead a trend or tokenize his church. The movement he is leading was birthed out of a God-conviction. As you read through this book, it will be easy to see that it is flooded with stories that have the fingerprints of God all over them.

Mark Hearn is a trailblazer in his ministry approach and perspective. He gets it! As you read *Hearing in Technicolor*, you will quickly and clearly see that Mark is doing something unique in his ministry context. The stories are saturated with God-moments, and his approach to a multicultural ministry is one that should be studied by many.

If you are living in a community that has rapid growth in diversification and want to know how to reach the community without losing your church, then this is the book for you. You will read about his journey of taking a declining monoethnic church to a growing multiethnic church.

Mark offers deep theological insights and translates them into everyday practical applications. He shows what it looks like not only to preach the Great Commission but, most important, to live it out. He has written this book in a way that informs, inspires, and ignites a passion to have a heart for the nations, just as Christ intended for us to have.

As a young pastor, I have found myself in a situation similar to the one Mark walked into, a congregation that was monoethnic and didn't match the city around it. Being someone who is

currently leading a church that reflects my community, I can wholeheartedly support the mission, vision, and direction of this book. Whether you're pastoring a thriving church or a dying church, I believe this book can take your church to another level of gospel impact.

Hearing in Technicolor should be taught in seminaries across our country and used to prepare our future pastors and church planters to reach our world for Jesus. It's a must-read for any church leader.

Through this book, may God ignite a deep conviction and passion in you, equipping you to reach the nations in your backyard.

Dr. Noe Garcia, head pastor
North Phoenix Baptist Church

INTRODUCTION



Hearing in Technicolor

During the night Paul had a vision in which a Macedonian man was standing and pleading with him, "Cross over to Macedonia and help us!" (Acts 16:9)

A vision without the ability to execute it is called hallucinating! Every God-given vision will result in being fulfilled; every man-conceived vision will be a dead end. (Ike Reighard)

In 2017, I published the account of our church's journey from a monolithic congregation to a wonderful multicultural community of faith. When I moved to First Baptist Duluth in Georgia, the church was predominantly White, nestled in the suburbs of Atlanta. Now, it is a congregation of more than forty-five nationalities. We titled the first book, *Technicolor*, based on an illustration in the book's introduction related to the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*. In the 1939 film, Dorothy, a farm girl from Kansas, finds herself transported to the beautiful new land of Oz. I have

likened my experience of moving from the Midwestern state of Indiana to the culturally diverse area of Duluth, Georgia, in 2010 to that vibrant scene from the classic movie. The cinematic use of black-and-white film in the beginning of the story in Kansas is vividly changed when Dorothy opens the farmhouse door and sees a whole new world in Technicolor.

The Wizard of Oz was one of the earliest films to use the new cutting-edge colorization technique known as Technicolor. The movie's great success brought this pioneer process into the mainstream of film production. Movies throughout the '40s, '50s, and early '60s were now brought to the public in this new aesthetically pleasing format. This revolutionary way of creating pictures was not without its critics. As is the case in any arena of progress, change is often questioned and debated before it is eventually adopted and accepted. The producers of *The Wizard of Oz* may not have discovered this technology, but they were important pioneers in this new, colorful way of producing art on the screen.

In the past few years, I have become enamored with all things Technicolor. I pay close attention to any book, article, movie, documentary, or any other media source that includes the word in its title or description. Because of this newfound awareness, I discovered an intriguing TED Talk entitled "Hearing in Technicolor." My obvious curiosity was immediately piqued as I learned about a neurological condition known as synesthesia, the blending of two or more senses. With various types of synesthesia, the sound of a passing car may suddenly bring you the taste of cherry, or the touch of a cotton blanket may trigger the sound of falling rain. The word *synesthesia* is derived from the word *synthesis*. In synesthesia, senses are interconnected. I was amazed to

learn that an estimated 4 percent of the population report having this remarkable condition.

One specific type of synesthesia is chromesthesia, a blending of sounds with colors or visualizations. In her TED Talk, Alexandra Hasenpflug, a millennial artist from Winnipeg, Canada, detailed her experience with chromesthesia. As she reflected on her childhood experience growing up with this “odd” ability, she revealed that she was once too embarrassed to tell anyone about it. Now, as she shares her story with the worldwide audience of the internet, the acclaimed artist claims chromesthesia as her superpower. Chromesthesia is allowing this young lady to literally *hear in technicolor*.¹

There is some debate as to whether this condition is hereditary. Looking through her family tree, Alexandra could not find one relative known to have chromesthesia. Once, Hasenpflug’s mother asked her to accompany her to the estate sale of her recently deceased Aunt Lillian. Alexandra learned that, like herself, her late aunt was also an artist. Her grieving uncle offered to show Alexandra some of her aunt’s works. One particular piece spoke to Alexandra. Aunt Lillian had painted a beautiful kaleidoscope canvas that had the appearance of prisms of colors. Within the symmetric shapes she could see silhouettes of people. Alexandra showed the painting to her TED Talk audience and challenged them, “Can you see faces in the painting? Anybody?” As people examined the picture, faces appeared as if deliberately concealed by the artist in a puzzle-like fashion. Alexandra claimed that she not only could detect the faces, but she could hear them. This episode caused Alexandra to wonder at the probability that her Aunt Lillian may also have had chromesthesia.

One particular story in the New Testament mirrors this encounter. It's the story of the apostle Paul's vision to go to the Macedonians. In Acts 16:9–10, the writer says, "During the night Paul had a vision in which a Macedonian man was standing and pleading with him, 'Cross over to Macedonia and help us!' After he had seen the vision, we immediately made efforts to set out for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

Paul's vision contained not just an audible reception, but also the sight of a Macedonian man, and as Paul received it, it was accompanied by a strong sense of movement in his spirit. This call captivated the apostle's heart and changed the trajectory of the early missionary movement. In a way, as God gifted the apostle with the sights and sounds and spiritual perception of this very specific invitation, Paul was *hearing in technicolor*.

Technicolor Voices Are Audible

First, Paul recognized the voice as coming from a specific individual from a specific place. The apostle's calling was not due to a demographic study or a denominational mandate. When Paul had this vision to go to Macedonia, he did not have a vision of a map of Macedonia or a mob of Macedonians crying out in mass, "Come to Macedonia!" He saw a man, an individual person from Macedonia. In my pastoral experience, I have found it's easy to say no to a map or a mob, but it's just about impossible to say no when an individual is looking you in the eye and saying, "I need help."

It's overwhelming to think that if we lined up all of the people who do not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, that line would

be approximately 750,000 miles long, could wrap around the earth thirty times, and is growing at a rate of 20 miles a day. Our call, however, is never about statistics, but about souls. It is always personal. There is a traditional Zulu greeting that says, “I see you.” The person greeted responds: “I am here.” There are people across this planet who exist in obscurity awaiting someone to say to them, “I see you.”

The apostle began reasoning with the voice of the man who was standing and pleading. Do you hear the desperate cries of those who do not know Jesus as Lord today? Missionary Greg Livingston told of speaking at a large mission’s conference at an American megachurch in 1979 in the midst of the Iran hostage crisis. Fifty-two Americans were being held hostage in the United States Embassy for 444 days from November 4, 1979, through January 20, 1981. Greg stood before four thousand people at the conference and asked the question: “How many of you prayed for the fifty-two Americans held hostage in Iran today?” All four thousand responded with hands up. There was total unanimity in praying for the release of the hostages in Iran. The missionary proceeded to ask a second question: “How many of you prayed for the 42 million Iranians who are under captive to their spiritual lostness and need to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?” Four people were brave enough to raise their hands . . . four out of four thousand! Greg Livingstone concluded that “the American church claims to be missionary in our efforts but sometimes we close the door to those that are most needing the gospel.” In the forty years since 1980, there have been more Muslims in Iran who have become believers in the Lord Jesus Christ than the previous thousand years combined. It all began when people heard the

technicolor voices pleading for a people group that are without Jesus Christ.

Paul immediately responded to the voice. The Macedonian's request was "Come and help us." Americans today often suffer from what some people refer to as compassion fatigue. We have become expectant of organizations bombarding us with a litany of needs. And for the most part, these are all good things being done by good people representing good organizations: the Heart Association, the Cancer Society, and even the Girl Scouts. I know I have bought cookies that didn't fit in my diet and excused it by saying, "I am supporting a good cause!" We have heard so many people say, "Come and help us," that our hearts no longer respond to the call.

The Bible says, "If anyone has this world's goods and sees a fellow believer in need but withholds compassion from him—how does God's love reside in him?" (1 John 3:17). The phrase "withholds compassion" is translated "shutteth up his bowels of compassion" in the King James Version Bible. Some want to avoid that verse in the older English version. No one wants to talk about "bowels." However, in the first century it was commonly believed that the bowels were the place where one's emotions resided. When one felt compassion for someone, they would hurt for them, and often that hurt would be likened to an ache in the stomach, or the "bowels of compassion." Unfortunately, many today no longer feel so deeply. We see people and their needs, but we no longer empathize with them!

Technicolor Voices Are Affecting

Acts 16:10 says, “After he had seen the vision, we immediately made efforts to set out for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” The vision moved them to action! They immediately knew where to go and what to do! I read recently that 87 percent of Americans who own running shoes don’t ever go running. Nothing is more indicting against the church than the fact that we possess the spiritual truth that all people need to hear, and yet choose not to share it. The spiritual needs of our community should move us.

These voices should not only move us but should also motivate us. Paul concluded that “God had called us to preach the gospel to them” (Acts 16:10). The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5:24, “He who calls you is faithful; he will do it.” In 2010 at our mayor’s State of the City Address, I learned that there are fifty-seven languages spoken at our local high school. Immediately, I sensed in my spirit that our church was called to take the gospel to ALL those people groups. The question is not, *if* God calls you. The question is, *when* God calls, will you do what he asks? When God called Isaiah the prophet, he recorded his response: “I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said: ‘Here am I. Send me!’” (Isa. 6:8 NASB).

The technicolor voice of the man from Macedonia moved and motivated the apostle Paul to answer like Isaiah did. Ultimately, this voice mandated the apostle to act. Paul concluded that “God had called us to preach the gospel to them” (Acts 16:10). The reason for them to go to Macedonia was not to culturize them. The reason for them to go to Macedonia was to evangelize them. The entire intent was to take the gospel to a people who had never

heard it. We must never forget that our primary task is to preach and spread the gospel.

When my first book, *Technicolor*, was published, I began receiving correspondence from across the country, primarily from church leaders desiring to learn how to effectively reach a multicultural community. One out-of-the-ordinary contact came as a Facebook message from a seventeen-year-old in Pennsylvania who was reading my book. First, I was greatly impressed that a seventeen-year-old would be reading my book. I was even more impressed that he wanted to engage me with questions about the content. I wanted to avail myself to this potential “next generation” leader and offered to answer his inquiries. Obviously, this young man had a heart for evangelism and was trying to reconcile what he was reading with his current philosophy of ministry. He asked: “Shouldn’t we be more concerned with evangelizing the nations rather than assimilating them into our culture?” I kindly responded: “Have you read the entire book?” The young man admitted that he had not finished the book but was very enamored with its premise. I encouraged him to complete the entirety of the book and offered a response to his question: “We are open to all people and all cultures not so we can brag about how many flags we have collected or how many languages are spoken in our church. On any given Sunday at First Baptist Duluth we may have people present from a Hindu, Muslim, or a Buddhist background—or even from an atheistic background. These people are hearing about Jesus Christ—some for the very first time. We do what we do for one primary purpose, to tell the world about Jesus Christ. That is the mandate of the church!”

Technicolor Voices Are Altering

The encounter with the man from Macedonia altered Paul's direction in ministry. There are three clear results when one begins to hear in technicolor. First, hearing in technicolor will create unity. In Acts 16, Paul found a group of women who gathered at the river for the purpose of prayer. What is the impetus that creates the desire for people to gather at your church? I am often asked the secret of creating a church where Africans and Asians, Islanders and indigenous locals, Latinos and legacy members, and millennials and mature senior adults worship together. What creates this incredible atmosphere of unity? Every culture and every generation need the message of Jesus Christ! First Baptist Duluth honors international cultures so that we may invite people from those cultures to join us in the ultimate celebration of Christ. No matter one's cultural background, our desire is to meet at the cross and to become fellow followers of Jesus.

Hearing in technicolor will also create opportunity. The story in Acts indicates that among the ladies gathered for prayer, Lydia "opened her heart to pay attention" (Acts 16:14 ESV). Answering the technicolor call created a gospel encounter with everlasting results. The goal of the church is not to see how many worship songs we can sing in different languages. The goal for any church is for people to come to Jesus Christ. Following the direction of the technicolor voice created an open door of opportunity. Gospel conversations happen when one is attentive and responsive to the inviting voices of technicolor.

Paul's encounter with a Macedonian man teaches us that technicolor voices create multiplication in discipleship. After Lydia became a believer, she invited Paul to come to her house

to visit with her friends who had never heard about Jesus Christ! Whenever someone comes to Christ, they are connected to a score of others who need to hear the gospel message. The law of multiplication is mind blowing. If one adds $2 + 2 + 2 \dots 20$ times, you get a sum of 40. However, if one multiplies $2 \times 2 \times 2 \dots 20$ times, the sum is more than 2 million. If every church member would take the attitude of Lydia to examine their circle of friends and acquaintances who need to hear about Jesus Christ and then invite them to hear the good news of Jesus, that line of people who need to know Jesus would begin to shorten, no longer stretching for hundreds of thousands of miles.

Having piqued my attention with new information about chromesthesia, I began to do additional research about the phenomenon. I found a second TED Talk by a teenager with chromesthesia named Annie Dickinson. She says everyone's voice has an accompanying color for her. As she gets to know the person better, sometimes the color associated with that person will change. A deepening of understanding about a person's likes, dislikes, and values will at times change the hue of that person's corresponding color. Annie concludes her TED Talk challenging listeners to experience diversity and perceive the colors of our society. "We must learn to listen with an open mind and hear the voices of those around us," she said.² It is not enough to say, "I see you." It is vital to advance to, "I hear you." The apostle Paul not only saw a man from Macedonia; he also *heard* him. He heard his heart and knew that he needed Jesus Christ. As a pastor, my desire is to lead my church not only to see the diversity of our community but to hear the heart of the people around us. And

as our understanding of these new friends deepens, it will change the way we interact with them.

This book is a way to help us listen closely and learn from those technicolor voices. My wonderful collaborator, Darcy Wiley, has interviewed more than thirty church members and ministry partners, listening to their voices and deepening our understanding of the transition that has happened in their individual lives. My previous book chronicled what happened in our church during the period of transition to a multicultural community of faith. However, this second book exists to discuss the heart change, spiritual challenges, and altered mindsets from the perspective of the people who experienced them. I believe a deepened understanding of their stories will change the way we view the technicolor process.

There are three sections to the book: Legacies, Languages, and Leaders. First, we will tell you the story of our church's transformation from the perspective of our legacy members. These are the longest-tenured people at First Baptist Duluth. Often, leaders ask: "How did you get senior adults on board for a change this substantial?" Many are surprised to learn that some of our eldest members were our greatest champions for change once they understood the reason for the change and how the change would make the church more effective in reaching our community.

The second section highlights the perspective of our language members. Some of the megachurches in our area are technically "multicultural" churches. Dr. Michael O. Emerson defines a multicultural church as having 20 percent attendance from a non-majority culture group. By definition, these megachurches fit that criteria. However, for the most part, the diversity in these congregations is

comprised of second- and third-generation immigrants. Many of them have little connection with their native language, and their only connection to their culture is through their parents or grandparents. At First Baptist Duluth, most of our international members are first-generation immigrants. Many of them are learning English or trying to increase their proficiency in the language. They are intimately tied to their native culture, and some profoundly miss their homeland. For many of these people, First Baptist Duluth is their first experience outside of their culture-centric or language-centric church. This section explores the factors that would motivate a first-generation immigrant to step outside of their comfort zone and become a part of a multicultural movement.

The final section of the book communicates the perspective of church leaders, community leaders, and denominational leaders. Part of the First Baptist Duluth story includes the development of a staff team that shares the heartbeat to reach our local community with the gospel and supports the changes necessary to become a multicultural congregation. The uncommon nature of our church has garnered the attention of the leaders of the community. And denominational leaders have sought information on how to replicate this type of transformational church ministry in other areas of diverse populations.

The interview process has revealed a distinctive pathway to change for each of these groups, leading them to adopt a technicolor view of ministry. There are nine steps to technicolor thinking. Every group's path is unique, yet they arrive at the same conclusion. The following pages will reveal the pattern of mindset shifts necessary to accomplish a united ministry that embraces every nation, tribe, and tongue within your community. My prayer

as you read this book is that you will have your ears tuned to better hear the cry of your own “man of Macedonia” and lead others to travel this path to unity in diversity.

SECTION ONE



Legacies

Observation | Apprehension | Exhortation

Repetition | Realization | Integration

Stabilization | Appreciation | Multiplication

CHAPTER ONE



A Compelling Reason

Observation / Apprehension / Exhortation

Remember the days of old; consider the years of past generations. Ask your father, and he will tell you, your elders, and they will teach you. (Deuteronomy 32:7)

When we want to know God's will, there are three things which always concur: the inward impulse, the Word of God, and the trend of circumstances. Never act until these three things agree. (F. B. Meyer)

One of the great joys of pastoring a multicultural church is learning the diverse traditions that our people adhere to from their homeland. When Pastor Abioye Tela brought his family from Nigeria to Atlanta in June of 2017 to begin his doctorate degree and ministry internship with our multicultural congregation, a contingency from our church welcomed them at the

airport. We had strategically thought about what our new neighbors might like to eat for their first meal in America. Our sizable group decided to stop at Kentucky Fried Chicken for dinner before making the hour trip from the airport to Duluth. After all, chicken is the universal food! (One year, I had actually eaten Kentucky Fried Chicken in four different countries!) Abioye told our staff that the difference between Americans and Africans is that Americans eat rice with their chicken and Africans eat chicken with their rice.

The Telas would be living at our home for their first two weeks in the country. The church had secured an apartment for them, but it would not be available until the first of the month. We entered our driveway and welcomed our African friends as our houseguests. Due to the length of their travel, the entire family was off to bed rather quickly. But the next morning, as Glenda and I announced that breakfast was served and that our guests could come whenever they were ready, Pastor Abioye and his wife Joke's (pronounced Joe-Kay) young children, Aanu and Anjola, bounced down the stairs like typical five- and seven-year-olds. Immediately, Pastor Abioye appeared with Joke and instructed the children in their native Yoruba. Before I knew it, the children were lying at our feet with their faces to the ground, totally prostrate before Glenda and me. Abioye and Joke then walked toward us and each bowed down and touched our feet. Abioye explained that it is the custom in his country to honor one's elders in such a way. This display of homage is not saved for special ceremonies but is carried out daily in their home culture. Age is of such value in their background that "elder" would be defined as anyone older than yourself, even if only by one day.

As I encouraged the Telas to return to their feet, I told them that this would not be expected by elder people in their new location. However, the heart behind the gesture has formed a lasting impression on me.

I was taught by my parents the biblical principle of respect for my elders. During my nearly forty years of pastoral ministry and in every aspect of my life, I have attempted to honor this admonition. Now, I am becoming one of the “elders.” At times, people overlook or dismiss the aged population in a community, but I have seen God work in a great way among my church’s longest-tenured members. The first section of this book is to share the incredible story of transition among this group that I commonly refer to as our legacy members. Every person in this group has been at the church for a minimum of twenty years. These amazing people have offered wisdom, perspective, and stability in the midst of a dramatically changing environment.

When I get the opportunity to share our church’s technicolor story in conferences or consultation settings, the one question that always arises is: “How did you keep your senior adults engaged during the transition?” Many are surprised to learn that this remarkable generation, rich in leadership capacity and experience, are among the captains of change in our church. However, this group has lived long enough to know that not ALL change is good. And change for the sake of change is not something you’ll see them seeking out. But this generation is looking for compelling reasons that warrant change. This is their discovery of those compelling reasons.

Step One: Observation

One would have to be living in a bubble not to recognize the national change that has happened in America. We are living in an increasingly diverse society. Demographer William Frey reports that there is unprecedented ethnic and cultural change that is transforming the United States. Frey estimates that, according to current growth patterns, the United States will be “majority-minority” by the year 2050 (meaning that no one group will comprise 50 percent of the population). The fastest growth rates in minority groups are with Asians (102%), Hispanics (121%), and those that identify with two or more ethnicities (191%). Frey refers to these three groups as the “new minorities” that are reshaping the face of America.³ In the 2010 census, Duluth had already arrived at “majority-minority” status. Duluth Mayor Nancy Harris realizes that our county is a generation ahead of the national curve. “The way Gwinnett County looks now is the way the entire United States is predicted to look by the year 2050,”⁴ Harris says. When speaking to other government leaders, Harris notices an increasing interest in how our city is handling diversity, promoting unity, and creating workable solutions.

The changing demographic of America has resulted in churches that lack stability. Church growth expert Thom Rainer says, “Several thousand churches are closing each year. The pace will accelerate unless our congregations make some dramatic changes.”⁵ What changes need to be made to stop this statistical slide? Rainer says that one such change is for the church to adequately reflect the ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic makeup of the community. Churches where the members drive in from

neighboring areas likely know little about the spiritual needs of the church's community.

Our legacy members have not only seen national change but have experienced nearby change in the city of Atlanta. In 1966, there were 166 Southern Baptist churches inside the Atlanta perimeter. Of those 166, there are only 31 churches that still exist today. In the '70s, '80s, and '90s, inner city neighborhoods changed, and many White church members moved to the suburbs in predominantly homogeneous communities. As church members moved to the outskirts, many left their inner-city church pews empty, leaving the remaining members with the responsibility of keeping up the building, programs, and local ministries with depleted tithes and offerings. Some churches kept their suburban attendees but eventually felt the pull to move to the areas that their current membership now called home. The historic First Baptist Church of Atlanta is one of those, relocating from their church facilities in the heart of the city to their current site just outside the perimeter in 1997. Bell South Corporation bought the downtown property with the thought of preserving it as a cultural center housing the city's symphony orchestra, but talks came to nothing and they ended up leveling the historic structure to put an office building in its place.

Wilbur Brooks remembers growing up as a small-town Georgia boy hungry for God's Word. Week after week he'd turn the knob on his radio ever so slightly to tune in to a favorite broadcast out of Baptist Tabernacle in downtown Atlanta. Soon, a familiar voice would come through the fabric-covered speakers, and the rich, resonant tone of Morgan Blake's voice would hit the airwaves. Morgan was a men's Bible teacher at the Baptist

Tabernacle and hosted a businessmen's Bible study in downtown Atlanta that regularly attracted more than one hundred key leaders of the city. Wilbur turned up the volume on the radio and sat down to open his Bible and be discipled through the ministry of this long-established church that burgeoned with more than three thousand members in the 1950s. Wilbur grew in his faith through the thriving outreach of that Atlanta church. But sadly, he would, one day, turn the dial to that same place on the radio and hear nothing but static.

By the 1980s, the "white flight" phenomenon had whittled the Baptist Tabernacle down to five hundred members. The changes left the church with dwindling resources that forced it to discontinue its wide-reaching programs in the congregation and the community. In 1994, the church went from decline to death when the mere one hundred remaining members voted to sell the building to House of Blues and cease to exist as a congregation. Today, the historic building is owned by another live performance and venue operating company. Wilbur is now in his nineties and is the only remaining World War II veteran at First Baptist Duluth. He is still active in our church and teaches the eldest senior adult Sunday school class. His class represents decades of wisdom from legacy members' life with Christ. "The Baptist Tabernacle is now a nightclub. That's what happens when you don't reflect the community," Wilbur laments. "I have seen things change in downtown Atlanta, and if we want to maintain our church here, we're going to have to change, and we're going to have to see our congregation reflect the same makeup as the community."

Our legacy members had not only observed national change and lived through the nearby change of the city of Atlanta, but

they were now being confronted with the personal nature of neighborhood change. First Baptist Duluth reaped the benefit of the evacuating Baptists from downtown churches. Urban Atlanta's pattern of church decline had brought rising attendance to churches in many of the surrounding municipalities, including ours. By the mid-'90s, First Baptist Duluth was being recognized as one of the fastest-growing churches in the suburbs. One of the church's longest-tenured staff members, Keith Murdock, came to serve in 1997 during the zenith of growth for the fellowship. Pastor Keith was brought to Duluth to render expertise in establishing two worship services and two Sunday schools in order to accommodate the rapid growth. The senior pastor at the time, Dave Parker, had come to Duluth after long-term service as a missionary in Zambia with the International Mission Board. Members of First Baptist Duluth easily caught his vision for international and local missions and gave more than \$500,000 a year to mission causes. The church was also engaged in funding church planting in Atlanta and around the world with gifts of \$80,000 a year. First Baptist Duluth was a healthy, vibrant, catalytic church in the suburbs. Growing numbers indicated a thriving church. Yet no one realized just how delicate the statistics were under the surface.

The population of the county continued to grow, but all of a sudden, the church itself stalled in its numbers, dropping eighty to ninety people a year in attendance. The church leadership hadn't changed. The church programming that had previously met the needs of the membership had continued. But observation of the sanctuary and classrooms left an eerie sense of loss, as if half the people were out of town on vacation every week.

Perplexed, Senior Pastor Dave Parker asked Keith to form a task force to figure out the cause behind these unexpected changes.

No one understood it at the time, but the church's health was entirely dependent upon the migration patterns of the White middle-class majority that made up the congregation. The young families who had moved to Duluth for its attractive schools and neighborhoods were now getting eyes for towns to the north where they could get larger, newer, and nicer houses. The starter homes they left behind were beginning to be occupied by people from a variety of different ethnicities. International interest in the area had surged after Atlanta hosted the 1996 Olympics. Duluth was about to become one of the most rapidly diversifying areas of the country.

First Baptist Duluth, a missional church with a heart for ministry, was now itself losing numbers. The church sought out a consultant from the denomination to lead them in ascertaining next steps in their new normal. One day, the consultant brought in a stack of charts and graphs and a laptop with some fancy demographic software that enabled him to compare and contrast the characteristics of the people inside the church with the people living in the surrounding radius of the neighborhoods. Keith remembers the tension in the room when the demographer said, "You're in the exact wrong place to be. The people who are easy for you to reach have moved north of you. Nobody who is easy for you to reach lives around you." This conclusion was based upon the "homogeneous unit principle" that postulates that people are more likely to attend a church where they do not have to cross a racial, linguistic, or class barrier. In other words, the prospect of maintaining a ministry presence in Duluth would require the

difficult task of learning how to share the gospel across these barriers. Things were changing. The trend in church decline had not stopped with urban Atlanta. Our community grew in numbers while many long-established churches declined. The consultant warned, “I know of no other church with your kind of demographics that survived. The only question that you must ask yourself is not *if* you’re going to move, but *when* you are going to move. Your members are already leaving . . .”

The seismic demographic shift had reached the suburbs. Tom Jones, a retired Southern Baptist missionary to Kenya, relocated to the Duluth area. The Joneses purchased their home in 1997 while on an extended furlough. They went back to the mission field and then later returned to their chosen retirement spot in 2006. Upon his return, he observed the incredible change that had taken place in less than a decade. “Our house was located in a cul-de-sac with a total of fifteen homes. When we bought the house in 1997, the entire neighborhood was Anglo. When we returned in 2006, only five of the fifteen homes were occupied by Anglo families. The houses on both sides of ours were occupied by families from India. (Interestingly, our daughter and son-in-law were serving as missionaries in India at the time.) Across the street was an African American family. There were also several Korean families among us. I asked myself the question: ‘What is the local church going to do to reach this community?’”

Not only had the demographic shift reached our suburban neighborhoods, but so had the trend of church closings. Each year, additional fellowships would close their doors or sell their facilities to another congregation. Some relocated, others merely ceased to exist. First Baptist Duluth leaders observed this trend

move up the Interstate 85 corridor into the northern suburbs like a plague. Life-and-death choices were now affecting our nearest neighboring churches. One of First Baptist Duluth's longest-tenured members is Charles Summerour, who has been affiliated with the church the entirety of his seventy years of life. Charles is a local historian who has observed, firsthand, the changes in the community and in the church. Charles said, "Look at the history of this area. You start south of us and there is church closing after church closing. And I'm not talking about just any churches, but 'First' Baptist Churches! Until the church just six miles from our church closed . . ." This trend of church closure seemed to be headed directly toward us.

Founded in 1886, our church was well over a hundred years old at the time these community changes began taking place. We had a lot to lose. Many of our members had been born in the community, raised in the church, and had married and raised their own families here. When the congregation had outgrown its small stone sanctuary in the center of town in the late '70s, Charles Summerour's grandfather-in-law sold the church a large piece of property to begin construction on our current church building. This was a tight-knit community. Generations of families have invested their lives in the discipleship and ministry of First Baptist Duluth. Now the supposed experts were telling the congregation they had to move the church out of Duluth in order to survive. What would First Baptist Duluth be without Duluth? And, what would Duluth be without First Baptist Duluth?

In the midst of the pressure to move and forfeit ministry in the community that had been the church's home since its inception, Pastor Dave Parker publicly stated, "We're staying. We're

not moving. We're not running." Be that as it may, Parker was getting ready to retire from pastoring and return to the mission field. While he vocalized the decision to stay in the midst of an ever-changing Duluth, it would be up to the people left behind to determine next steps. First Chronicles 12:32 (NIV) sheds light on a group of King David's supporters in a time of uncertainty, "from Issachar, men who understood the times and knew what Israel should do—200 chiefs, with all their relatives under their command." Staff member Keith says that in one way, the church leaders and members felt like the sons of Issachar—they understood the times. But they were missing the last half of the equation. They didn't know what to do. For churches living through demographic changes like the one in Duluth, the only model up to that point was "stay and die out." Now that the decision had been made to stay in place, First Baptist Duluth had to decide if they were going to accept the typical fate of dying or step up and do something different. They didn't know what to do, but doing nothing was not an option.

When I arrived as pastor of First Baptist Duluth in 2010, I admit I did not know exactly what to do. In my previous book, *Technicolor*, I share my experience of moving to Duluth from a homogeneous Midwestern community. When we unloaded our belongings into our new home, my wife, Glenda, and I set out to meet our neighbors. Next door was a delightful cross-cultural couple, a Malaysian husband and a Vietnamese wife. On the other side of our house was a family from India. Our neighbors behind us were from Korea. Across the street from us was a young family from Zimbabwe. At the end of our street was an oral surgeon from Puerto Rico, and across the street from them was

a multigenerational family from Nigeria. In short, the predominantly White congregation that I now served looked nothing like the neighborhood where I now lived!

One of the Sunday school classes had a dinner to welcome me as the newly arriving pastor. The class teacher hosted the gathering in his home. He quieted the crowd to say the blessing and offer a word of welcome to my wife and me. The most memorable part of this evening was him asking me before we prayed, “What can we do for you to make your ministry here successful?” I replied, “Allow me the opportunity to fail.” There were no models or step-by-step task lists for a transition like this. We began trying things, building on what we already had. In our “on-the-job training,” we’ve made our share of discoveries of what works well and what doesn’t work well in our situation. I hope these lessons and insights can be a gift to churches across the nation to fill in the second half of the sons-of-Issachar equation. You understand the times; now here’s a way to do something with that knowledge.

Step Two: Apprehension

It’s not a surprise that the situation we found ourselves in brought a great deal of uncertainty. As members observed the reality of what had happened to many churches like ours, they were faced with the fear of death. One of our legacy members, Leland Strange, a pragmatic businessman, studied the decline of the Atlanta churches and said, “Based upon the previous trajectory of First Baptist Duluth, given the size of the building, the fixed expenses, and the dwindling congregation, I estimated that we would not survive more than ten to fifteen years doing what

we were doing before.” Many of our long-tenured members were extremely concerned about the viability of their church. Was First Baptist Duluth headed toward the same fate as neighboring congregations? Were the health issues of the church a reversible trend? Or was the demise of the church a forgone conclusion?

It may surprise you that fear of death is a lousy motivational tool. Writer Alan Deutschman has an enlightening article titled “Change or Die” (later expanded and published into a book by the same title). Deutschman reports that when ten people are confronted with the prospects that they must change their behavior in order to survive (e.g., stop smoking, eat less salt, exercise daily), nine of them will choose NOT to change. They value their current preferences in life over cultivating a long, healthy life.⁶ Just as people refuse to change to avoid physical death, I have observed some churches that are unwilling to change in order to avoid the church’s death. As strange as it seems, the fear of death alone will seldom change the direction of a congregation headed toward demise.

It seems that, for some, even more powerful than the fear of death is the fear of something different. College professor and motivational speaker Scott Mautz points out that “change” elicits a natural discomfort in our lives. We fear things that are different because of the uncertainty that they bring. Podcaster Tim Ferris claims, “People would rather be unhappy than uncertain.” Neuroscience research has indicated that “uncertainty” registers in the brain in the same manner as “error” does. Therefore, things that are different are physiologically perceived as wrong.⁷

Senior adults knew about the demographic changes in the community. They could hear other languages spoken in the

grocery aisles and see unfamiliar lettering on signs for local businesses or for language-centric churches. But since Duluth is dotted with a plethora of churches specifically started by and for a particular culture or language group, many legacy members questioned why we would need to reach out to our international neighbors. In the nicest voice possible with sincere curiosity, those senior adults would ask: “Why don’t those people go to their *own* church?” If there was a church specifically designed to meet their needs located down the street, why did we need to get involved? It may be hard for some who are naturally less resistant to imagine that these legacy members cared about the souls and lives of all people, but it is true. Though they had a heart for seeing all nations know the love of Christ, they had never considered that *they* might actually be the ones to share the gospel or disciple others who didn’t look like them. In their eyes, only a missionary specially trained for cross-cultural ministry or a person native to one of those other cultures could be equipped for walking alongside these new international neighbors.

Retired missionary Tom Jones summarized it this way: “Old folks, like I am now, often resist change. They just want stability. Anything that disrupts their lives is a problem for them.” If we were to interview the senior adults and ask if they agree with the way our church is reaching our community, they would know the politically correct response is “yes.” That is in keeping with the things they’ve been taught from Scripture and even their own sense of hospitality and etiquette. But then there’s the heart response that comes through in the facial expression, mannerisms, or interactions. There is discomfort there, and discomfort

often acts out as rigidity. So, how do you get a group of people who are innately resistant to change to try something different?

There are many layers to the apprehension that our legacy members felt toward the changes around us, but we weren't going to get anywhere by telling them what to think. We had to help them discover and navigate the issues themselves and arrive at their own God-inspired conclusion. Hypothetically, if one of our members were to garner the courage to share Christ with an immigrant in the community and see that person become a new believer, it's hard to picture those legacy members maintaining their segregated tone and proclaiming, "You can't come to my church. You've got to go to worship with your kind of people." None of our people would openly propagate such an idea. As people began to ask their questions aloud and hear their own thoughts in contrast to the mission of the church, the options became clear. Did we really want to reach our community, or in our desire for familiarity and comfort did we want to die out, leaving ministry undone in Duluth?

The fear of the church's death and the fear of something different were joined by the final piece of the fear triangle. For our legacy members, there was a fear of dissipation. As the tight-knit community of Duluth was now becoming home to a new wave of immigrants who had not grown up in the culture, long-tenured residents were feeling as if they were "losing control" of their community and their church. Virginia Jones, who has lived in Duluth since 1976, says, "I loved the way it was in the '60s and '70s and '80s. Not that I was against the new people, because I really love all people, but it broke my heart to see some of the changes."

One of the most difficult transitions within our congregation had to do with the changes in our worship music. This is as much a generational issue as it is a cultural issue, and many churches across the United States struggle to find a way to connect both the young and the old through the musical styles used in the worship service. Many of our senior adults feared that we'd lose the formal beauty of our choir and orchestra. Contemporary music style was enough of a stretch for them, so when we began to incorporate music with other languages, many of our senior adults didn't feel at home anymore.

Virginia recalls how we began to incorporate elements from other cultures into our church services and activities, like a traditional fan dance from South Korea. She and some of her friends feared that the traditions they once held dear from the church's past were now being forgotten and replaced by these unfamiliar traditions. They felt that deference always seemed to be in favor of the newcomers. In essence, they feared that they were being overlooked. Virginia said, "In the beginning, I was very against it because it seemed like we were changing over and giving in to them. My main objection was that I thought we were changing our church more to their culture and thus losing some of our American culture."

While these legacy members would stand against obvious instances of racism and injustice, and they considered themselves to be caring and compassionate people, they were still uncomfortable with the changing atmosphere around them. They were largely unfamiliar with other cultures, and a lack of familiarity can often feel like fear. Lindsay Lapole, a retired executive of the Salvation Army who served us as a deacon, Sunday school

teacher, and longtime chairman of the stewardship committee, says, “We have to come nose to nose with how prejudiced we are. It’s not prejudice in the traditional sense. It looks more like being set in our ways.” Lindsay says this shows up in the seemingly harmless form of personal preference. We may be uncomfortable with different ways of greeting each other and may not know how to conduct ourselves in the awkward silences or misspeaks between languages. We may not appreciate the aromas that come from another culture’s home cooking, or we may not be familiar with the smell of certain health and beauty products as we hug or shake a hand. Suddenly, all the things that our members could once do without thinking now came with uncertainty, second-guesses, and self-consciousness.

As our legacy members stepped into this feeling of unfamiliarity, one of the things that helped most was to bring their attention back to familiar things that unite us. It was vital that we focused together on the things we will never leave behind that, in turn, give us a reason to step forward. The key component that has galvanized our legacy members in overcoming these fears is the always familiar Great Commission: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). There are no Great Commission exemptions. We know God has strategically placed us in this community. The community has rapidly diversified and changed. Therefore, God in His abundant wisdom must want us to reach a diverse community.

Virginia Jones shares how she overcame her own apprehensions: “I would now say that as our neighbors are changing, we want them to come to our church. We need to accept them. We

need to welcome them. We need to be able to witness to them. Our witness is what is most important. We do not ever want to turn people away.” The familiar thing that guided our legacy members through uncertainty and apprehension was simply and consistently bringing their attention back to the things they already knew to be true.

Step Three: Exhortation

Good theology creates unity. I regularly preach on the theme of Christ’s call to minister to the nations. However, with the legacy members, it was less about *teaching* them these biblical admonitions and more about *reminding* them. Legacy members have a wealth of biblical knowledge and spiritual insight to offer in this discussion. Paying closer attention to God’s Word, our existing members began to see that our church in these times was in a unique position to demonstrate the love and power of God in a spectacular way. Why are we here, if not to reach the people within our local community? Lindsay Lapole explains: “You have to have a biblical perspective of what church is about. It is broader than just ‘Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.’ You must at some point dig into the scriptural understanding personally. At some point, one must separate cultural preferences from biblical truth.”

With the Great Commission as our driving force, we began to ask: “What would Christ have us do?” As we consciously established Scripture as our instruction for how to move forward, our members began to make connections between what we were seeing in our everyday ministry and the wisdom God had already

equipped us with in His Word. As particular situations would arise, whether with the changes around us or the conflict in our hearts and between the different ways of thinking among us, our senior adults would recall a biblical teaching that addressed the need. The prayer of Jesus in John 17 explains that our unity in the midst of diversity is a testimony of God's power to the world. As we studied this passage together, one legacy member said succinctly, "Good theology creates unity." God's Word was giving us anthems to guide us through the work set before us.

It was rewarding to watch people, after personal introspection, embrace ministries that promoted multicultural interaction. Wilbur Brooks, who teaches Sunday school to the eldest group of senior adults, described the transformation among his peers: "I have seen some who resisted the change at first. Now, they are sold on the program. I think the shift came when they read their Bible and they could see this is what God is wanting us to do." Wilbur alluded to the calling in Acts 1:8 that we should be witnesses "to the ends of the earth." This incredible leader among the legacy members is constantly reminding people that this path to becoming a church that reflects and includes our international community is actually just a group of God's people being obedient to the calling to be a New Testament church.

But this model of the New Testament church has for too many years been overshadowed by faulty ways of thinking in the Baptist denomination. For decades, church strategists were locked in on the concept of the homogeneous church: Anglos with Anglos, Hispanics with Hispanics, Koreans with Koreans, and so on and so forth. Retired missionary Tom Jones observed that this methodology is not at all in line with the model of the

New Testament church. He points out that the first indication of a cross-cultural church is the church of Jerusalem in Acts 6. The reason for the selection of the first deacons was to heal a rift in this multicultural fellowship. Turn the pages to go a few chapters forward in Acts and you'll read the names of Antioch church leaders from five different nationalities who sent Paul out on his first missionary journey. The early church described in the Bible was clearly founded as a multicultural fellowship.

Knowing that the Scriptures clearly teach a calling to multicultural work, some legacy members were also asking: "What does my conscience say?" Not all of our members were as apprehensive about the cultural changes around us that would soon be seen in our church. Some of them have had extensive exposure to people from different cultural backgrounds. Some have been involved in advocating for even more daunting changes in their past.

As a college student in the 1960s, Leland Strange was a member of a downtown Atlanta church. Desiring to make change from within, Leland showed up with a group from Georgia Tech to help his Black peers find a way inside the building to worship in the Whites-only sanctuary. As he remembers the passion he and his friends had for Atlanta-area integration efforts, he smiles and calls his younger self a rabble-rouser. Whatever the time or place, Leland says, "Every day you just get up and do what you ought to do. We took it upon ourselves to try to find a way to get them into the church, some kind of door where they could get in." But church leaders barred the doors that friends like Leland had hoped to open. Onlookers shouted as leaders escorted the young Black men down the steps and ushered them off the property.

The message was clear to the young Black men and their friends who stood for their biblical and civil right to worship in the same places as the majority population: *you're not welcome*. In solidarity with his peers of another color, Leland reached through the linked arms of the white deacons, cheerfully shook the hand of a Black student, and said, "I'm glad you're here." Leland felt the pushback immediately as the white men blocked Leland and began to pummel him with their fists. Later, he and half a dozen friends sat down to chat with the pastor of the church, a man who had also held the highest office in the convention. While the pastor's heart seemed soft to the integration efforts of the day, his issue was his deacons, old Southern folks who wouldn't budge on their prejudices. Leland believes if it hadn't been for that peer pressure, the pastor would have opened the doors once and for all. I guess compared to the hardened hearts and fists of those deacons in the 1960s, facing the fears and frustrations of church members during our community transition hasn't felt so difficult for Leland! At various times in his life, Leland has found himself as a go-between, bridging two ways of thinking.

It's important to have people like Leland in a congregation that is dealing with change. For him, this bridging involved a lot of what he calls "Waffle House meetings." In these meetings, Leland would spend time sitting with friends who were trying to make sense of the changes in the community and the future of their church. Both in his younger years and in recent times, Leland has used his voice to help others see the biblical and civil importance of being a good neighbor. "You need some mediation. You need some folks who will understand both sides." Like Leland, several of our senior adults with more exposure and

experience with other cultures have stepped in to be a bridge between their hesitant peers and the way God has opened for us to move forward.

The legacy members rediscovered the biblical principles of ministering to “all people.” Many of them consulted their conscience and found a compelling voice reiterating the “right thing to do.” After asking, “What does Christ say?” and “What does my conscience say?” Now, they were beginning to ask: “What does common sense say to do?” First Baptist Duluth is a historically mission-minded church that now finds itself in the midst of one of the most diverse communities in America. We believe with all our heart the calling of the Great Commission to take the gospel to “all nations” (Matt. 28:19). And here the nations have become our very own neighbors. Common sense says we need to keep our legacy of ministry alive in this very spot on the map and we do so by including our neighbors.

At those Waffle House meetings, Leland would empathize with his friends’ apprehensions, saying that he missed the old style of music, too. But then, he would bring the conversation around to the higher purpose: “But it’s not about me. It’s not about you. It’s about God. Now what can we do to keep this church in place fifty years from now? It’s not just about the people who were here before or are here right now. It’s about what’s going to serve God over the long haul. We want to see the church survive and meet the needs of our local community.”

Many of those friends accepted that call to a new way of being the church and are watching as God, even in their twilight years, works in them in a whole new way. Together, we have observed the changing dynamics in the community around our church, we

have begun to work through apprehensions within our church, and we have committed ourselves once again to depending on Scripture as a filter for everything we face. Together, we are coming to see that these challenges before us are actually an opportunity to perform in our own community the ministry we have always prioritized in the world.

In a 2011 State of the City Address, the mayor of pastor and author Mark Hearn's city said there were fifty-seven languages spoken at the local high school.

**Hearn left asking himself,
How should our church
respond?**

This question led to a movement that brought First Baptist Duluth to reflecting its surrounding community. This journey was captured in Pastor Hearn's first book, *Technicolor: Inspiring Your Church to Embrace Multicultural Ministry*.

Now, nearly five years after *Technicolor*, members of his congregation discuss the joys, struggles, and triumphs of being a part of a multiethnic church—providing a glimpse of the nature of a church that reflects its community.

MARK HEARN has been a pastor for more than forty years. Since 2010, he has served as the senior pastor at First Baptist Church in Duluth, Georgia, one of the most diverse counties in America. During his tenure, the church has transformed from a monolithic Anglo-American congregation to a cross-cultural community of faith with members from forty-seven different countries. He also serves as the coaching director of Homogeneous Church Transitions for the Mosaic Global Network. Pastor Mark holds degrees from Carson Newman College, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Luther Rice Seminary. Mark and his wife Glenda are the parents of four grown daughters and are proud grandparents.

DARCY WILEY is a writer, teacher, and spiritual director whose work explores emotional, spiritual, and cultural health. As cowriter of *The Yes Effect: Accepting God's Invitation to Transform the World Around You*, Darcy worked with the founder of the 10/40 Window Movement to share testimonies of God's restoration work in communities all over the globe. She is a friend of immigrants and has a heart for comforting and empowering people who've been oppressed. She lives and serves in the Indianapolis area where she and her husband are raising three high-energy kids to be curious and compassionate citizens of the world. Visit Darcy online at darcywiley.com.

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