

Mission in intercultural encounters and spaces
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My proposition is: *The church needs to engage in intercultural mission, because only by involving new perspectives can it become more fully the intercultural church that God intends it to be. Intercultural mission is at least as much about listening and receiving as it is about speaking and giving.*

1. Intercultural mission is what Jesus sent his disciples to do (Matthew 28:16-20). But this commission is often misunderstood in a hegemonial way as Christianizing the world, expecting that new believers should become like us. Careful reading of this text shows that Jesus asks his disciples to go out beyond their own ethnic and cultural limitations to find others who will join them in a learning group (they are all called 'disciples') that seeks to understand the teachings of Jesus and act accordingly.
2. When Jesus sent out his disciples to do mission for the first time (see Luke 10:1-10 and parallels), he sent them poor, vulnerable, and dependent on those they were going to evangelize. Hegemonial mission from a position of power can never be the mission of Christ. This is an ongoing challenge for all churches and mission agencies that still rely on money and political power.
3. Luke 10:1-10 insists twice that the evangelists should "eat what you are offered." In all intercultural encounters, eating the (strange) food one is offered is the clearest sign of one's willingness to really open up to the other. Similarly, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was to enable the disciples to speak a foreign language. Mission in intercultural spaces means that the missionary is willing to be changed deeply by the encounter.
4. Why is intercultural mission important? Not to make the whole world Christian – this is not something that was ever promised in the Bible. Rather, because any (local) church that remains in its own social, ethnic, or cultural bubble is not the kind of community God has in mind. Intercultural mission means that the church becomes an intercultural learning community which is constantly challenged and enriched by new insights into God's will. We can see in the Acts of the Apostles how the early church changed and developed with new people from new backgrounds coming in. Intercultural mission is a mutual learning movement, and a missional community never remains the same.