

25 Years of Multiethnic Church Momentum and What Comes Next

by Mark DeYmaz for *Outreach* magazine (Mar-Apr 2026)

At the turn of the 21st century, when Michael Emerson and Christian Smith published their seminal work, *Divided by Faith*, only 6% of U.S. congregations were considered multiracial, defined as having no one racial group comprising more than 80% of the whole.

So, in 2006, when the Mosaix Global Network first championed the vision of seeing 20% of churches become multiethnic by 2020, it sounded audacious and naïve. How could centuries of racial separation inside the American church possibly give way to such dramatic change in just two decades?

But it did.

The percentage of U.S. congregations today meeting this definition has risen dramatically from 6% to 22%. By Christian tradition, the percentage of churches that are multiethnic has risen as follows:

- Catholic: 17% (1998) to 22% (2024)
- Mainline: 5% (1998) to 17% (2024)
- Evangelical: 7% (1998) to 24% (2024)

As Emerson observed last November, at the 6th national Mosaix Conference, “The first quarter century of the Multiethnic Church Movement produced a demographic miracle... We should shout it from the mountain tops. God is working!”

Emerson’s language is not only factual; it’s doxological.

But now what?

While the American Church has made measurable progress toward demographic diversity, it has not advanced nearly far enough toward equitable power, justice, or unity.

Sociologists such as Emerson and Korie Little find that many diverse congregations avoid addressing difficult racial realities in the name of keeping the peace. In some cases, Emerson notes, “we have dressed up white churches in brown face,” achieving diversity without structural change.

The next quarter century must be different.

If the first 25 years of the 100-year Movement brought initial integration, the next 25 must bring about maturity. Churches meeting demographic percentages will need to get beyond assimilation to accommodation so that people of every color, class, and culture can foster authentic relationships, embrace mutual advocacy, and together engage their

communities at the bridge of Christ's humanity. To do so, we'll need to set aside fear and embrace faith.

Mosaix defines a healthy multiethnic church as one in which people of diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds will themselves to:

- Walk, work, and worship God together as one;
- Recognize, renew, reconcile, and redeem broken relationships;
- Establish equitable systems of responsible authority, leadership, governance, and accountability;
- Advocate and advance justice, mercy, and compassionate work in the community;
- Embrace the tension of sound theological reflection and applicational relevance in an increasingly complex, intersectional society.

I've observed that throughout Church History, entire eras are often summarized in one resonant word. So, if the Lord tarries, and believers 500 years from today look back and ask, "What was the single greatest move of the Holy Spirit in the 21st century that significantly advanced the Gospel and credibility of the Church?" what do you suppose they'll say?

While we can't know for certain, I'm convinced that the word—whatever it is—will point to a century in which Christ-centered believers refused any longer to remain segregated by color, class, or culture, choosing instead to embody one new humanity in local churches throughout the world.

Toward that end, the next audacious Movement goal was set and embraced at the conference. As articulated by Chuck Mingo and Troy Jackson, "By 2050, eleven o'clock on Sunday morning will be known as the most undivided hour of the week."