

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Faith Lee, Mississauga Chinese Alliance Church, Mississauga, ON



Our church is located in Mississauga, Ontario which is part of the Greater Toronto Area. We have 550 adults and 200 teens and children. Unity in diversity is an overriding principle that guides the celebration of multiculturalism in our church. We express it in the following ways:

1 RECOGNIZE DIFFERENCES AND MINISTER TO DIFFERENT GROUPS ACCORDINGLY.

We have four congregations of Cantonese, Mandarin, English Speaking from different cultures, and teens and children led by a pastoral team which includes a Senior Pastor and an assistant pastor for each congregation. Allowing for freedom of style in worship is important. The Mandarin service targets mandarin speaking people

from Mainland China which has its own style of music. The Cantonese service has a worship band on a small scale with no drums. Our English service is led by a Filipino pastor and the service reaches out to Singaporean, Indian, Caucasian and Malaysian people and many of them do not speak Chinese at all. This English worship has a full music band with drums and connects with teens, young adults, some young people married to non-Chinese and adults who prefer English. Our teens and children are predominately English speaking and we try to minister to this young generation in more creative and unique ways as they are crucial to our church life.

We are four congregations, yet we are still under one roof of the church. Occasionally we have combined worship like the combined baptismal service held on Good Friday.

2 MAINTAIN UNITY AS ONE BIG FAMILY UNDER ONE ROOF.

In terms of church policy and organizational structure, all congregations operate under the leadership of the Elder's Board where we try to maintain unity, consistency and a commitment to the bigger vision. However, in terms of worship style and ministry approach, there is freedom to minister to the different churches in different ways.

3 SERVE GOD TOGETHER.

It is important that sometimes we do things together for the glory of God! Our VBS provides many opportunities for over 80 volunteers from Grade 8 to age 88 to serve joyfully and in harmony. Last year, we had many seniors and adults work hard to prepare delicious and nutritious lunches for more than 60 VBS volunteers and 175 children. Thirty teen volunteers served as crew leaders and guided the children to different stations. Adult leaders led various sessions and at the end, everyone, young and old, celebrated all that God accomplished in the lives of kids as they all worked together. We have served God together through the Carnival, church expansion fundraising events like car washes, garage sales, banquets, walkathons and talent nights. Everyone can participate regardless of age and cultural background, and we are drawn together for the good of the church.

Unity in diversity is our goal and our challenge. May God give us the sensitivity and the creativity to effectively minister to the people He created.



The Plan for "Plan to Protect"

We have had a plan as The Christian and Missionary Alliance to protect our children, protect our volunteers and to protect our churches. The time has come to once again look at our plan to see if we need to do a rewrite or a reprint. That's where you come in – we hope that you will plan to help! As you have worked with "Plan to Protect," what has worked for you, what hasn't, how can we address the differing provincial guidelines while making it useful for us as we minister in Canada and do we make our plan workable for churches outside of the Alliance family? This plan will be a two to three year project, but contact us now at cmachildren@hotmail.com.



Making the Multicultural Connect

Catherine Fenn,
Tenth Avenue Alliance Church, Vancouver, BC

My goal in ministering to our kids is to create a place where children feel they belong. I want them to understand that Christianity is relevant to all people – including themselves. Tenth Avenue Alliance Church is a very multi-cultural congregation so the people and images our kids encounter in children's ministries include as many different cultural groups as possible. I make sure that both the leadership team and the curriculum material visually represent different ethnicities.

I also produce Bible stories and scripture response material for the kids to take home each week and always try to illustrate these with people of various nationalities. We have discovered a lot of great public domain clip art available online to help us fulfill this important purpose. As an aside, I also try to appeal to gender and make sure that Bible stories about women and girls are given equal time so that little girls and boys can understand Christianity's relevance to both genders.

I am also quite conscious of the 'white Jesus syndrome'. Many kids' ministry materials often portray Jesus as a brown-haired, blue-eyed, bearded guy from the sixties. I want our kids to know that Jesus was Semitic, and likely looked like their friends of middle Eastern descent. This decision creates difficulties as many children's DVDs and videos of Bible stories portray Jesus stereotypically. So, I use these resources sparingly. If a video does a great job of saying something else that I think is important, I will sometimes go ahead and show it, but in these instances, I stop the video after the first shot of Jesus and explain to the kids how he would have looked.

One time I found a great animated video on the life of Christ where the crowds of people following Jesus looked very Semitic for the most part. When I put it on, I was surprised by the comment of one little girl who said, "Why are the people so ugly?" I realized that her generation is so saturated with the Hollywood idea of beauty that people who look authentic seem strange on screen. We stopped the video as I tried to help them understand that the gospel is a real story, for real people. While fictional stories are important, we do hope that they will be able to put Bible stories in a different part of their hearts and minds than fairy tales and cartoons.

THE NEXT lifesavers

In Matthew 28, we are charged with the responsibility to "Go and make disciples." As I think of that charge, I think not only of all nations, but of all age groups. Children's ministry leaders are to go and make disciples of all children. You may be familiar with our 'Description of a Discipled Child', (www.cmacan.org; [canadian ministries](http://canadianministries.org); [church education ministries](http://churcheducationministries.org); a description of a discipled 12 year old), but we want to become even more familiar with it. As we talk together about winning, building, equipping and multiplying and sending, we want to talk about what that means

for kids and what that means for you in children's ministries.

Our fall issue of Lifesavers will focus on 'Winning'. The description outlines it in this way:

Salvation – Winning where we understand:

- who Jesus is
- the need for repentance
- the need to receive the Saviour
- knows the biblical steps to salvation and assurance of salvation
- has prayed to receive Christ as personal Saviour

What plans, resources, ideas or stories come to mind as you think of winning children to Jesus Christ? This issue will be a winner!



Please send your submissions to: Carol Wiebe - Unionville Alliance Church, 4898 - 16th Ave., Unionville, ON L3R 0K6
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(Please send ideas before September 30th so that we can include them in our Fall 2005 issue of Lifesavers.)
Lifesavers subscriptions are available! Contact Canadian Ministries at the National Ministry Centre (416-674-7878, ext 230).

MAY 2005 LIFESAVERS

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Multicultural Kids

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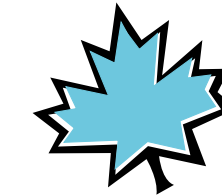
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It's one of the qualities that makes Canada, Canada – our multiculturalism. That is one of the reasons I enjoy living in the Greater Toronto Area where my son is the only Caucasian boy in the day care he attends two days a week! We have a growing diversity in our Alliance Churches, so let's celebrate together the mosaic of God's children and learn about how God is reaching kids of every nationality above the 49th parallel!

Multiculturalism - A Glimpse of Heaven

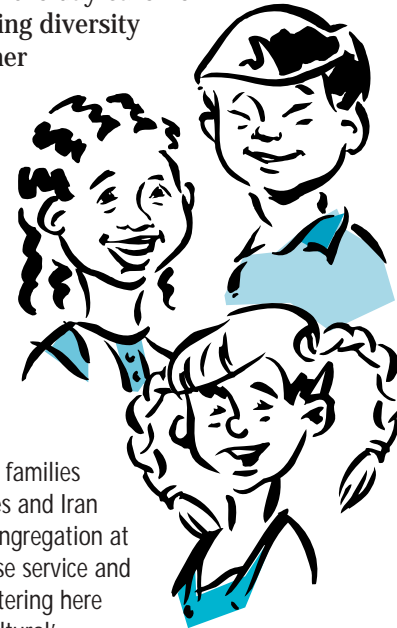
Wendy Anderson, Westwood Alliance Church, Coquitlam, BC

My husband and I minister in a multicultural congregation to families from China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Iran as well as from Canada. We are part of a larger Chinese congregation at Westwood and run two children's programs – one during the Cantonese service and one during the English/Multicultural service. Since we have been ministering here for only a year, we continue to discover what it means to be a 'multicultural' congregation. We've discovered it to be enriching, challenging and full of ministry opportunities.

Being multicultural in make-up means our congregation has a certain 'global awareness'. When the Tsunami hit on December 26, we were 'connected' to the tragedy through one of our Indonesian families. It was a relief to hear that their extended family was safe, but the scars to their home country were made more real to us here through stories they'd heard via friends and relations overseas. In response to the disaster, our children's ministry raised money for relief work.

With families from all over the globe, our children or their parents are frequently traveling to and from far flung destinations. A death in the family means a parent or family may have to leave for their homeland quite

(Continued inside)



OUR VISION, OUR PRIORITY

"The purpose of the National Children's Networking Team of the National Church Education Committee is to affirm and promote the importance and value of reaching and discipling children, and to inspire local Christian and Missionary Alliance Churches to enhance the quality of their ministries to children.

This purpose will be accomplished by utilizing communication tools, resource information and personnel, as well as assisting the networking of individuals involved in children's ministries."



OUR VISION AND OUR PRIORITY IS TO:

- Disciple children's ministry leaders, *who will*
- Disciple children's ministry volunteers, *who will*
- Disciple children.