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## Five Guidelines for Cross-Cultural Liturgical Appropriation

Calvin Symposium on Worship

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## Five Guidelines for Cross-cultural Liturgical Appropriation

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Session C16

### ***1) Is the appropriated rite or ritual integral to the structure and performance of liturgy?***

Does the cross-cultural material an insertion into the liturgy that calls attention to itself or does it support the structural integrity of the liturgy? Is the appropriated rite or ritual a sensational anomaly that stands alone or an integral expression that enlarges the community's prayer?

### ***2) Does the cross-cultural rite or ritual give voice to the voiceless or make visible the invisible persons from the community?***

Singing the *estribillo* (refrain) of a Spanish-language hymn in the original language by a majority English-speaking congregation may say more about hospitality to Latinos and Latinas within the community than handshakes by the ushers or words of greeting from the minister. Hearing the Gospel in the majority language of the congregation and in Chinese, for example, may express both a world-wide Christian faith and establish a bond between two very different cultures. Dancing to an African song of joy may not only enliven the entire assembly but also delight any African Christians present.

### ***3) Does the cross-cultural rite or ritual help the assembly pray for the needs of the world?***

Each week the media makes us aware of places in the world where human suffering and injustice is overwhelming. These may be places of war, natural disaster, economic collapse, or political instability. The tendency to feel overwhelmed by these manifestations of estrangement between God and humanity may bring about desires for liturgical insulation among worshippers from the crushing needs of the world. Rites have evolved over time that allow for integral expressions of prayer for the world. If the church neglects to plead before God for the pain of humanity, who will?

### ***4) Does the cross-cultural rite or ritual unify the body of Christ?***

Many cross-cultural opportunities may be so distant in experience that they may not be performed well. Their uniqueness is so dependant upon the context of the sending culture that they may serve only to divide rather than unify believers. Furthermore, performing some rites and rituals by groups from another culture may offend the members of the sending culture unless specific permission is given.

### ***5) Does the use of the appropriated rite or ritual anticipate the eschaton?***

Much is available on an apocalyptic vision of the future. Many Christians from the South find that the book of Revelation articulates an existential reality. As Philip Jenkins notes in *The Next Christendom*, this book "looks like true prophecy on an epic scale, however unpopular or discredited it may be for most Americans or Europeans. In the South, Revelation simply makes sense, in a description of a world ruled by monstrous demonic powers." Though the perspective of many Christians confirms the validity of this view of Revelation because of the state of world events, one may also find hope in its pages.

An eschatological awareness stresses the hope (now and beyond this life) for a time when all will sing and praise God together in unity.