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If everyone at church looks the same, you might have a problem

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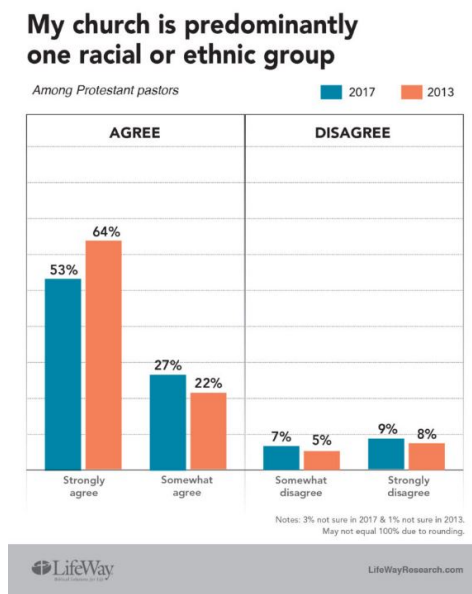
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INVESTIGATING DIVERSITY

Exploring Race, Gender, and Unity in the Adventist Church

FEBRUARY 6, 2019 BY ANAELYS TROCHEZ

If everyone at church looks the same, you might have a problem



Americans tend to be homogeneous beings, clustered in like-communities within the broader culture. However, some experts argue that diverse congregations can benefit their communities.

The issue of church diversity is of particular concern to pastors in areas where the demographics are changing. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about half of the children under 10 in the United States are ethnic minorities, which raises challenges for churches in the future.

Some Protestant pastors are being intentional about multicultural pursuits, but the results have been mixed.

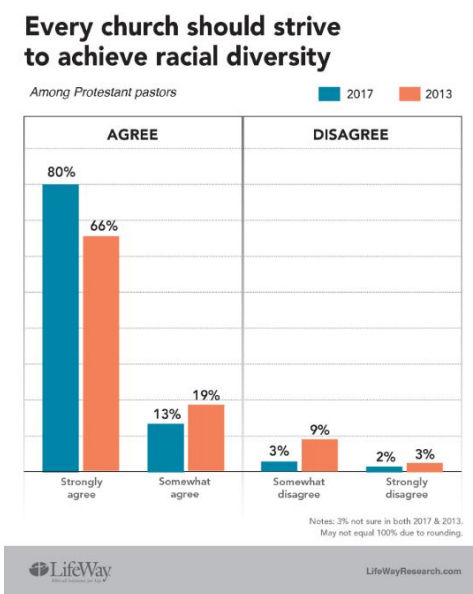
In the fall of 2018, LifeWay Research — a Nashville-based organization — surveyed 1,000 Protestant pastors about racial diversity in their congregations. Researchers then compared the results to a similar survey in 2013.

Here's what they discovered.

A whopping 93 percent of the pastors — 80 percent who strongly agreed — said they believed every church should strive to achieve racial diversity. Yet, 81 percent of pastors reported that their churches consisted predominantly of one racial or ethnic group.

The 81 percent was down from 86 percent reported four years ago, according to information available on the Lifeway Research website.

“Protestant churches are still mostly divided by race, but they’re heading in the right direction,” said the organization’s executive director, Scott McConnell, in an article posted on the website.



Here are some more interesting statistics reported by Lifeway:

- *Pastors in the South (96 percent) were more likely than pastors in other regions to say churches should strive for diversity.*
- *White pastors (94 percent) were more likely to agree with the statement than pastors from other ethnic backgrounds (86 percent).*

- *African-American (88 percent) were less likely than their white counterparts to say that congregations should strive for diversity.*

Similarly, many church members appear to be uncomfortable with the push for diversity. In the Lifeway Research survey, 53 percent of churchgoers disagreed with the statement: “My church needs to become more ethnically diverse.”

Evangelical churchgoers (71 percent) were most likely to say their church is diverse enough. White churchgoers (37 percent) were least likely to say their church should become more diverse. African-Americans (51 percent) and Hispanic-Americans (47 percent) were more likely to say their church needs to be more diverse.

“Pastors want their congregations to be more diverse—because their communities are more diverse,” said McConnell, according to an article on the LifeWay Research website. “But people in the pews aren’t there yet. There are hard cultural divides to overcome.”

 **RESEARCH PROGRESS**

AMERICAN CHURCHES, CULTURE, DIVERSE CONGREGATIONS, DIVERSITY, ETHNICALLY DIVERSE, LIFEWAY RESEARCH