

■ by Ed McDowell

Diversity and Boards

The issue of diversity and boards is one where there is an opportunity for growth. Most Christian camping boards are 100% white. Many boards are mostly men. Very few boards have genuine diversity. I believe that diversity is critical to the long-term health of Christian camping.

It is important for you to know that I am the father of a multiethnic and multicultural family consisting of five Black and four white kids. My wife and I are white. Our family represents three different countries and four different cultures. All that to say, this is a very personal topic for me.

The opportunities and challenges of diversity are a big part of our family's continuing journey. It is both beautiful and challenging; I have so much to learn still. My life has been changed for the better, traveling closely with people who are very different than me in so many ways.

This creates a critical question for the identification and cultivation of a diverse board: Who are you, as a board member, in a trusted relationship with whose gender, skin or culture is different than yours?

Along the way, a few things have become central to my understanding of how this relates to the challenge and opportunity of developing diversity on boards. I invite you to thoughtfully consider the following:

The most effective boards are built on trusted relationships. Trying to recruit board members any other way is disingenuous to the individual and the board. This creates a critical question for the identification and cultivation of a diverse board: Who are you, as a board member, in a trusted relationship with whose gender, skin or culture is different than yours?

Until board members can answer the diversity question regarding trusted relationships personally, it will never be answered at the board level collectively.

True diversity with unity will take disciplined intentionality over time. There isn't a fast track on this one. The current pain and trauma being lived out because of racism challenges trust and creates suspicion. Boards that are currently only one-dimensional when it comes to diversity will need to be intentional, humbly building trust with others over a long period.

I would offer three simple next steps to help you and your board move forward:

- Ask someone who has different skin, gender or culture than you to sit down and have an honest conversation. Be humble. Be willing to have your viewpoints challenged. Be open to the possibility of unrecognized bias in your own life. Express thanks. This is the beginning of a trusting relationship with the kind of diversity that will bless you more than you can possibly imagine.

The opportunity and challenge at hand

- Bring someone in to the board to give insight, education and guidance on cultivating diversity that is representative of the constituency and community you serve and live among. Receive good guidance and decide on the next steps the board can take to act upon that guidance.
- Nominate and invite someone to serve on the board who you have built a trusted relationship with who has different skin, gender

or culture than you and with whom you share a common passion and commitment to the ministry.



This will take time. It will take intentionality. Parts of this journey will be hard. I know from my own family's journey of the depth and breadth it will add to any camp's effectiveness.

May God lead all of us to a better place that reflects the whole Kingdom of God. ■



Ed McDowell is executive director of Warm Beach Camp and Conference Center and has served as CCCA board chair since January 2014. Ed is a sought-after speaker, teacher and consultant and is known as a skilled mediator. Email him at emcdowell@warmbeach.com.



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