

Feature Column

## Endurance and Courage to Face Challenges

© Otto Lui  
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Continuing from the last issue (Pray for China issue 385) where we shared the difficulties encountered by Pastor Li arising from the wide gap in shepherding needs between the older and younger generation Christians, in this current issue, a similar experience of another co-worker is presented.

During a brief site visit, I was on a car ride with Teacher Jin, he said to me, *"There are not that many older co-workers like you who can understand and accept younger co-workers like me. Co-workers of the older generation do not accept new ideas, and they think we are disobedient if we raise just a little more query, let alone make suggestions to change the status quo of the church. "*

My first reaction was that in the eyes of Teacher Jin, I was already regarded "co-worker of the older generation". He came to this conclusion perhaps because I told him that I had been in full-time ministry for 30 years, so it made sense for him to categorize me as an older generation co-worker in comparison to him who has been serving for a little more than a decade only! Teacher Jin is not yet 40 years old and is a fourth-generation church leader. After obtaining a bachelor's degree, he worked for a while and then studied theology in China. Shortly after graduation, he felt God's calling to him for full-time ministry, so he furthered his education abroad and returned to China after completing two master's degrees in less than five years at the seminary.

### Connect and Share – Learn Urban Mission Together

Upon the recommendation of another co-worker, Teacher Jin sent me an email, and using an instant messaging software, a meeting between us was set up. Later on, when we met for the first time in Hong Kong, we chatted as if we were old acquaintances who already knew each other very well. Teacher Jin not only serves in the church but also teaches at a seminary. He asked me to visit the area where he serves to give a sharing on urban mission with the seminary faculty, students and graduates as target audiences. Initially, I was unable to fit the visit into my schedule, but by the Lord's grace and accommodations made by

various concerned parties, I ended up traveling back and forth between the two cities in 48 hours to participate in a “mini” theological seminar. Teacher Jin, who was in charge of the seminar, told me that urban churches have been facing many changes in recent years, there is a pressing need to learn about urban mission and to look at today's ministry models from a broader perspective. They knew that I had done some research in this area, so I became the only outside speaker for the seminar.

## **Endurance and Courage to Face Challenges – Seek Alternatives**

After the seminar, I had a tea break with Teacher Jin and the seminary co-workers. I got to know how they are facing the challenges.

The urban church has reached a “bottleneck” in its development, and these young co-workers, who have studied abroad and sensed the breadth of the world, are seeing many more possibilities for church development, and they want to broaden the vision of church leaders. However, their students are in a difficult situation in which the church is confined to one city and cannot accommodate the growing congregation. At the same time, these church leaders are finding it increasingly difficult to reach out to young people who often “climb the wall” to get to know the outside world virtually.

Teacher Jin and his co-workers know that there are many viable ways to offer pastoral care, yet not many of them are agreeable to church leaders, to such an extent as to make them feel helpless and powerless. Therefore, whenever an opportunity emerges, such as encountering an outsider like me, they would like to grasp the opportunity to “stimulate” church leaders, with the hope that they would gradually embrace the necessary changes in administering pastoral care and church development more fitting for the present era. Teacher Jin would like church leaders in China to adopt a new mentality that includes endurance and courage to face challenges.

## **Meet Family Needs – Provisions for Children's Further Education**

Teacher Jin has three children. They are in junior high or elementary schools. The oldest child had lived with them abroad for five years, the second and third child were born abroad. When the children returned to China, they were unable to adapt to local schools, so they went to private schools run by the church. As Teacher Jin is serving in a major city church and is teaching in a seminary, his income is higher than other evangelists in the rural areas, he can afford his children's school fees. When I asked him about his future plans, especially for his children, he said that there are not many choices and that they may go abroad for further education. Although at present he is financially incapable of supporting them to go abroad, he believes that the Lord will have a plan.

## Summary

Teacher Jin's family has lived abroad for several years, and although they have encountered many issues that need to be tackled upon their return to China, they are still willingly and faithfully leading the church in China to move forward in the new era. We thank the Lord for their dedication!

Contemporary Church leaders in China can be grouped into the following generations  
(Simple Classification)

<p><u>First Generation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They started serving at the church in China when it was reopened and was in need of a major overhaul</li> <li>• They became Christians before the Cultural Revolution</li> <li>• They received basic training (provided by western mission organizations)</li> <li>• At the beginning of China's reform and opening up, they led the church, tried their best to spread the gospel and plant churches</li> <li>• Now these leaders have either retired or rested in their heavenly home</li> </ul>	<p><u>Second generation (over 60 years old)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They grew up during the Cultural Revolution, had minimal education, and attended churches in rural areas</li> <li>• They started serving at the church in the 1980's</li> <li>• They learned how to preach and nurture the congregation through apprenticeship with older pastors</li> <li>• They witnessed the rapid growth of the church</li> <li>• Most of them have now retired</li> </ul>
<p><u>Third generation (41-60 years old)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They were born in the 1970's and grew up in the city</li> <li>• Most of them have a college degree, some even have a Master of Divinity degree or higher</li> <li>• They have difficulty adapting to the traditional (apprenticeship) mode of training</li> <li>• They are often busy juggling work and academic advancement</li> <li>• They are the current church leaders</li> </ul>	<p><u>Fourth generation (30-40 years old)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of them were born in the 1990s and are mostly the only child in the family</li> <li>• Many of them have travelled or lived abroad or have exposure to foreign churches and access to theological information through social media</li> <li>• They have no experience facing major political campaigns against the church of any kind</li> <li>• They have a strong desire for role models and peer support</li> </ul>

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Providing a full range of support, including:

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- *Online and offline training:* about 300 "Living Word" Bible teaching training sessions and about 120 workplace, family, and church leadership training sessions.

**Funding required: USD 205,128**

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### Supporting 40 pastors serving in Southwestern, Northwestern, Northern and Central Southern regions etc.

- Each of them is provided a monthly living subsidy (average USD 615 per month per pastor).

**Funding required: USD 295,200**

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~ The above is part of the content of PFC issue386, if you would like to read the full newsletter,  
please contact us at [pfc@ccl.org.hk](mailto:pfc@ccl.org.hk), thank you! ~

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