

Feature Column: Alongside Fourth Generation Leaders

The Sandwiched Generation (Part 2)

© Otto Lui
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The present article is a continuation of the last issue of this newsletter in which we shared Zhang's experience; he feels as if he is sandwiched between the different generations. When Zhang interacts with individuals of three generations (the older generation, Zhang's generation, and the younger generation), he notices some striking differences. One of them is their learning approach. This disparity is particularly evident in how they utilize various media for learning and how they perpetuate the church's mission.

Differences in Information Selection and Processing

"We live in a world that is constantly bombarded by waves of new information and demands for globalization. The internet allows instant access to information, we can get to know diverse cultures and values. Our thinking has become more pluralistic and open, and we have many more areas of concern, such as individual freedom, innovation, social responsibility, mental health, etc. These topics were much less discussed, not to say mentioned, by our predecessors. We want to keep ourselves up to date and desire to know how our Christian faith addresses these current issues. In this pursuit, we may cast doubt on our parents' teachings, and at times, contradiction and pressure may arise."

"As for the younger generation, they are natives of the digital world; their exposure to the metaverse and social media far exceeds ours. They receive a far greater volume of information and face many more temptations and challenges. While technological advancements have made them more creative and adaptable, it also means they are more prone to losing the ability to focus and analyze. Finding the appropriate way to shepherd them has become a major challenge for us."

Concerns about Mission Perpetuation

*“The previous generation used a more pragmatic approach to undertake the church mission. They focused on building up families, maintaining stability, and upholding moral standards. More often than not, they strived to demonstrate their faith by living it out so that others could see and imitate, in areas such as work ethics, family responsibilities, Christian disciplines and principles, etc. **What we see in them is that church mission is the foundation of their lives and is the starting point for understanding the world and human relationships.**”*

*“As for our generation, some university students strive to achieve academic excellence, they are willing to assume greater social responsibility, and they hope the next generation can thrive and prosper on more fertile soil. **Not only do we wish to integrate faith into our careers, but also advance and participate in social welfare initiatives, we also want to have a share in maintaining personal mental wellbeing.**”*

*“When it comes to the next generation, we truly need more wisdom to understand how to pass on the values of previous generations and help them discover their own purpose. **As they receive information so quickly, in such vast volume, and with such complexity, they do face struggles to grasp and focus on what truly matters most in their lives.**”*

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From the above sharing, it is evident that young pastors like Zhang, who are sandwiched between generations, face a more diverse and complex environment than their predecessors. Simply talking about faith and obedience is insufficient to help them shepherd the next generation. Even if these pastors recognize the importance of intergenerational mentorship, putting it into practice remains challenging.

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



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Hunan — Addressing the Diverse Needs of the Church

Teacher Guan's Vision: *At present, there is a need to support and nurture Christian workers in every county and township. It is hoped that with the long-term communication, care, and follow-up provided to them, these workers can become a strong and unwavering force in the Hunan churches for the expansion of the gospel.*

You are invited to make provisions for equipping the Hunan Christian workers:

1. Leadership Development and Bible Teaching Training

Target: 15 Christian workers in Hunan Province

Item: Leadership Development, “Living Word” small group studies, and post-travel follow-up

Funding: **USD 4,872**

Project: “Leadership Development Ministry” (Please specify: Hunan)

2. Reference Book — The Bible-CGST Study Edition

Recipients: 160 graduates from seminaries in the Central-Southern region

Item: One copy of *The Bible-CGST Study Edition (Revised Edition in Simplified Script)* per person

Funding: **USD 5,120 (USD 32 per copy, including shipping)**

Project: “Literature Ministry (Resources Giveaway)” (Note: Hunan—The Bible-CGST Study Edition)

3. Living Subsidies for Evangelists

Recipients: 15 Christian workers in Hunan Province (including Pastor Zheng, Pastor Ling and his wife, etc.)

Item: Monthly living subsidy per person and follow-up visits

Funding: **USD 122,400 per year**

Project: “Support for Evangelists” (Please specify: Hunan)

Please join us in supporting the needs of church leaders!

Thank you!



~ The above is part of the content of PFC issue393, if you would like to read the full newsletter,
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