

Case Sharing

From lacking passion to yearning for growth

© Compiled by: Yin Qing

As a continuation of the previous issue of this newsletter, we would like to share another case of how bible teaching supports churches in China. This case highlights the needs of young Christian leaders.

Current situation: Lacking passion and awaiting nurturing

In a church in Eastern region, there are 25 young Christian leaders aged 25-40 (their ministry roles include Sunday school, worship band, prayer meetings, etc.) Though they attend church meetings regularly, they are not keen on in-depth Bible reading, and their spiritual lives remain relatively immature. Their attitudes toward serving the church, teamwork and proper use of individual spiritual gifts lack enthusiasm, much tuning and nurturing are required.

Intervention: Bible teaching catered to the students' situation

In response to the current situation, the church invited an instructor to give training to the young Christian leaders. The instructor put together a three-month training (first quarter of this year) with weekly sessions held on Sunday afternoons, using the "Living Word-Acts of the Apostles" curriculum. The instructor used the bible texts that talk about the early church's establishment, expansion, and ministry, and applied them to the students' contexts. The students were guided to learn and grow both in their personal spiritual life and in church ministry.

Changes Observed: Increased yearning for growth and dedication to ministry

Yearning for truth: After joining the study, changes began to emerge. The young leaders used to read the Bible infrequently, but now they are reading it every day, and they signal other members in the chat group. They have even started writing their own study notes and actively asked pertinent questions in class. An enthusiastic and longing attitude is shown in

every aspect. The learning spirit in the classroom is high. Whenever they noticed that they might have misinterpreted certain bible passages in the past, they would engage in deeper discussions to clarify the issues.

Cherish the learning opportunities: On Sundays, upon finishing service and worship, the students immediately rushed to classes. Despite being exhausted, no one complains because they treasure every opportunity to learn. A Sunday School team initiated a “daily devotions for all members” campaign and proactively inquired how they could learn more about meditation and reflection. In response, the instructor arranged small-group sessions for them once or twice a month to address this topic. The instructor is more than willing to support such a group of eager students in their spiritual journey.

Taking Action: After 3 months’ training, over a dozen individuals began serving in various roles to support the Sunday worship service. They put their commitment into action. In addition, all students joined the visitation team, something that never happened in the past one or two decades. In the first half of this year, the whole team learned to support one another during the visitations, they encouraged one another in their studies and formed “inner groups” of three to four members so as to interact more intimately and provide more solid mutual support.

To summarize the result of this training session that targets the young Christian leaders, the instructor in China said, *“After completing the course, the students are seen actively and willingly engaged in ministry. What they are doing is out of their hearts, they are not seeking personal glory or recognition by others, they are offering themselves as sacrifices to God. Their attitude toward ministry underwent significant change. Most valuable of all, they have established a truth-seeking team with a strong desire for further study, and they are positively influencing one another.”*

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**Postscript:** The instructor told me that she and the church have another round of training planned. They will identify young members who have been baptized but have not yet gotten involved in ministry and invite them to join the upcoming training. May the Lord bless and guide them!

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A burden-free post-90s pastor

© Otto Lui
Associate General Secretary (Ministry)

Pastor Gu was born in the 1990s. I had the opportunity to chat with her over coffee and listen to her joys and sorrows in shepherding college students. Pastor Gu was ordained before she turned 30. Nowadays, urban churches in the Eastern region of China, there is an increasing number of young “post-90s pastors”. We have been saying that the church is aging, there is a shortage of ministers, and those who studied theology overseas are staying abroad instead of returning home. Another side, the emerging phenomenon now is that the number of young pastors who are ready to take the lead is on the rise.

A response to the situation: Young pastors are emerging

For some urban churches in China, the requirement to become an ordained pastor is less stringent than that in Hong Kong. Individuals who have been in ministry for three to four years post seminary training and have proven to be of good conduct may be ordained. These young pastors are often shepherding young people in settings such as university fellowships, worship teams, and even outreach evangelism. Due to physical constraints, it is not possible to have a big congregation gathered in one place; some churches expand by adding new meeting places with smaller congregations (under 100 members) in each location. Therefore, more pastors are required to conduct church meetings, and young individuals like Pastor Gu have more opportunities to lead a church or head up certain ministries.

Pastor Gu is young and energetic. She is a very cheerful third-generation Christian. Being a third-generation Christian does not necessarily make a person more inclined to pursue full-time ministry. Pastor Gu's own calling emerged during her university years. She met the missionary team from the Eastern region of China and befriended peers who share the same faith, though evangelism was largely prohibited on campus. Pastor Gu experienced God's presence during her involvement in campus ministry. Her faith is no longer secondhand; instead, it is personal conviction and a response to the Lord's calling. Upon graduation from university, she went on to receive training to become a pastor.

Pastoral Ministry: Going beyond the confines of a congregation

Unlike many pastors of previous generations who tend to keep everything to oneself and are reluctant to network with other churches, let alone collaborate, Pastor Gu interacted with various ministry teams during her university years. Though she is currently serving in a traditional church, her ministry is beyond her present congregation. She is shepherding the

university students in her own church, and at the same time, she is involved in overseas missions and campus fellowship ministry through networking and collaboration with other churches.

Many university students Pastor Gu encounters are second-, third-, or even fourth-generation believers, but there are also some who became Christians during their college years. Facing an economic downturn, many university students worry about their future. Students who come from financially more stable families may choose to further their studies abroad or adopt a “nothing matters” mentality, preferring to hang out in virtual social platforms rather than interacting with physical individuals. Pastor Gu notices that university students all yearn for genuine relationships. Building connections through interactive activities is essential, but the most important element is “dialogue”. As in previous summers, joining various camps and going on trips are many young people’s regular activities. These trips can include travelling to other cities in China for “short-term mission” or sight-seeing, as well as attending “conferences with special themes”, “retreats”, and worships abroad. A visit to organizations such as CCL is sometimes arranged. All these activities can broaden their horizons.

Providing a shield: Empowering young pastors

How can Pastor Gu make her ministry so diverse in the setting of a traditional church? How can she continue networking and collaborating with other churches?

During our coffee chat, the senior pastor of Pastor Gu was present. This means Pastor Gu’s ministry is not behind anyone’s back but has the support and endorsement of her supervisor. The senior pastor said his responsibility is to “shield” the young staff from drawbacks and make room for them to develop their potential. Young pastors can walk with light feet because their predecessors are carrying the burden for them! By giving them space to grow, the young pastors are empowered to gradually take hold of the baton to lead the church forward.

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

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| <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> |

# We sincerely invite you

To support...

## Walking alongside others requires both heart and time



*Join us in caring for the needs of pastors in China and in supporting their ministries to walk alongside the next generation of leaders.*

### “Support for Evangelists”

Support 40 serving pastors from the Southwestern, Northwestern, Northern and Central-southern regions, etc.

- **Providing living subsidy (approximately USD 615 per person monthly)**
- **Funding required: USD 295,200**

(Seven pastors have expressed to us their needs, hoping to receive support in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of this year.)

*Thank you!*

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~ The above is part of the content of PFC issue389, if you would like to read the full newsletter, please contact us at pfc@ccl.org.hk, thank you! ~

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