

Consultation for Chinese Churches

Saturday, October 27, 2007

Summary of Consultation

Introduction

The Consultation was sponsored by the Bay Area Chinese Churches Research Project, a Program Initiative of ISAAC, the Institute for the Study of Asian American Christianity.

The Consultation was held at the Sunset Church, 3635 Lawton Street, San Francisco, CA. The section on “Issues and Challenges in Local Congregations” facilitated by Rev. Don Ng generated responses from the participants are reflected in this summary.

The Overall Objectives of the Consultation are:

1. The project team share learnings from survey of Chinese churches.
2. The participants share issues and challenges their congregations are currently facing.

Participants

Thirty-five people participated in the consultation representing eleven Chinese churches. A list of participants is available.

Opportunities & Challenges

Storyboard Session

Purpose of This Storyboard Session

1. Identify opportunities (strengths)
2. Identify challenges (concerns)

Non-Purpose of This Session

To show off, compete with other churches

In church groups, the task was to identify as many as possible opportunities (strengths) and challenges (concerns) and print them on index cards. Each church shared publicly the topics on each of their cards and these were posted either as “opportunities” or “challenges.”

During a brief break, the cards were grouped into general topics. Each church regardless of the number of participants from a particular church had 5 dots to identify priorities from the perspective of that church. In other words, a church with one participant has 5 dots just like a church with as many as 7 participants. There was a limit to only placing 2 dots on any single topic.

Opportunities

Topic Cards: “Good News” in Our Church, Things that are Going Well, Ways We are Seeing God’s Blessings

A. Missions—Local & Global (3) [10 dots]

- *Connected to community (2)
- *Community partnership
- *Community awareness
- *Emerging ministries—cross-culture (1)
- *Contextualized gospel (3)
- *Emphasize on sharing gospel—evangelism
- *Local & global missions
- *Community outreach (tai chi)
- *Outreach in Chinatown (1)

B. Leader Development (2) [5]

- *English congregation—surviving without pastor—lay leaders strong
- *Good # of lay leaders
- *Leadership development (2)

C. Age-Group Ministries (4) [4]

- *HUL afterschool program—tutorial
- *Multi-generational
- *All student ministries
- *Family focus and programs
- *SACK—summer children program
- *Senior program
- *Lots of youth
- *Summer children program

D. Fellowship [3]

- *English & Chinese
- *Chinese & English speaking good
- *Four worship services
- *Fellowship
- *Fellowship group for different age group
- *One fellowship doing well
- *Food fellowship doing well
- *Harmony with 3 churches
- *Members working in unity for special events

Other Topics

- *Gospel Coalition (1)
- *Emphasize God's word (rooted)—biblical base (1)
- *Answered prayers (2)
- *Caring (1)

- *Good location
- *Facility
- *Healthy history

- *New pastor
- *Radio broadcast
- *Two weekly & one monthly service—Sundays/Monday
- *Sunday messages
- *English service good

Challenges

Topic cards: Obstacles in Our Way, Things We Want to See Change, What We Are Praying for

A. Spiritual Growth (9) [11]

- *Spiritual growth
- *Spiritual role model
- *Understand and obey God's word
- *Studying the Bible & praying (1)
- *Gospelcentric
- *Lack of process in bringing seekers to maturity
- *Members taking ownership of God's kingdom/church (1)
- *Discernment

B. Leaders & Leadership (3) [10]

- *Passing leadership to next generation
- *Equip lay leaders (1)
- *Transition of leadership—pastoral changes
- *Equipping leaders (3)
- *English & senior pastor (1)
- *Clear sense of procedures (1)
- *Clear intentional (1)

C. Retention & Replenishment (8) [9]

- *Aging congregation
- *Cannot retain young people
- *Dwindling attendance
- *Aging congregation
- *New members
- *More youth
- *Bringing/assimilating college graduates back (1)
- *SSK (outreach to children) is barely sustaining

Other Topics

- *Admission of post-modern tenets (3)
- *Understanding Asian-American mentality (2)

Building Relationships (2) [4]

- *Caring for pastor & family

- *Caring for members
- *Building relationship between Chinese and English ministries (2)
- *Small group involvement
- *Other fellowship group not well

Finances [3]

- *Finances
- *Financial situation

Physical Space (2) [3]

- *Facility
- *Aging building
- *Space (1)
- *Blessing the community
- *Connection with context—locally (mission)
- *Different worship music genre
- *Seekers attend fellowship not worship

Identified Priorities

Under the topics of “Opportunities” and “Challenges,” the following priorities based on the highest number of dots are the following:

Opportunities

A. Missions—Local & Global (3) [10 dots]

B. Leader Development (2) [5]

C. Age-Group Ministries (4) [4]

Challenges

A. Spiritual Growth (9) [11]

B. Leaders & Leadership (3) [10]

C. Retention & Replenishment (8) [9]

In comparing the priorities that emerged from the One-Day Consultation on the Future of Chinese Churches in the Greater Chinatown Area on January 13, 2007, we can see similar outcomes. At both events, “Leader Development,” “Retention of Members” and “Missions” or “Outreach” appeared. Whereas the Jan. 13 event identified “Youth” as a priority, the Oct. 27 event identified “Age-Group Ministries” which are related. The only topic that surfaced on Oct. 27 that did not appear on Jan. 13 is “Spiritual Growth.”

The next step is to continue to compare identified priorities from future consultations scheduled in the East Bay and the South Bay to see similarities and trends. As more similar results are identified, the project may begin to determine overwhelming opportunities and challenges facing Chinese churches in the larger Bay Area.