

# Intergenerational Ministries in Immigrant Churches

Reimagining Relationships and Ministries for the future of North  
American Chinese Churches

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# The Beginning of a Journey together

The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

“I will make you into a great nation,  
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;

and all peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you. (Genesis 12:1-3)



# What does God call us to do?

- Why am I here?
- When things get tough, it's easy to blame one another and grumble.
  - "I come to Canada for the sake of the children."
  - "I had no choice but to follow my parents."
  - "I had no choice but to follow my son."
  - "Do you know how much I sacrificed to come to this place?"
- No matter where we end up, God calls you and me to be a blessing to others. It's important to remember that God has a mission for your life and for the faith community we belong.



# There is a time to be together ...

- So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. (Genesis 12:4-6)



# There is a time to separate ...

- So Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. Is not the whole land before you? Let’s part company. If you go to the left, I’ll go to the right; if you go to the right, I’ll go to the left.” (Genesis 13:8-9)



# Reflections from the Abram/Lot Story

- Find common ground and ways that generations can collaborate and prosper together.
- Be grateful and recognize how others have blessed your lives
- Letting go of self-interest when conflict arises
- Look out for the interest of others even when relationships are broken (Abraham prayed for Sodom and Gomorrah, cf. Gen. 18-19)
- Walk with God and Stand on God's promise (Abram built altar and called on God's name)

# Dealing with Intergenerational and Cross-cultural Conflicts

- Learning to listen to one another without judgmental attitude: CRC learns to show appreciation to ORC leaders and ORC leaders try to put on the shoes of CRC leaders
- Celebrate rather than merely tolerate cultural differences: learn cultural differences and how they contribute to different styles of communication or doing things and the potential of those differences leading to conflict



- Distinguishes between essential and non-essentials – what's worth or not worth fighting
- Learn to take issues not at a personal level
- Submit to one another in Christ
- Cultivates caring and supporting relationships
- Employ storytelling and proverbs in conflict resolutions (e.g. Nathan)
- Admit our blind spots – be a self-reflective person
- Remember our ID as a redemptive community and our mission and calling from God





# Defining our Community Identity

“The sacramental shape of Christian existence between baptism and the Lord’s Supper introduces and instantiates into the world a **politics called church** by which Asians and Asian Americans, Asian Americans and all Race Americans, and generations across generations share a **common life within God’s infinite generosity and eternal accommodation** ... If we begin to see each other not as strangers in competition for limited resources, but as gifts of a gracious God, then we will already have discovered ourselves within a new imagination, on the road to a new and revolutionary future, which worship both signals and embodies.”

~ Jonathan Tran



# Fostering a Redemptive Community: Back to the Basics

- **Baptism**: Entering into new life and a new community **covenanting** with one another (against the consumeristic culture)
- **Communion**: Practicing Forgiveness and Reconciliation
  - A table of memory: Christ's sacrifice relived
  - A table of forgiveness and reconciliation
  - A table of fellowship – I Cor. 10, we are one body of Christ
  - A table of grace – we can't do it on our own
  - A table of hope and anticipation – Christ' victory
  - A table of thanksgiving

# Key Questions to Consider

- What kind of Christian community are we?
- What core values are shared by members of this community?
- What is our common history/story/shared memory?
- What covenant are we making to one another?
- What kind of Gospel do we proclaim by our story?
- What kind of hope do we offer to the world?



# What is the secret recipe for building an intergenerational church?

- Confess Christ as the head of the Church and seek to live out that reality (giving up oneself for the sake of others)
- Recognize the indispensableness of each member in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12)
- Intentionally foster opportunities for intergenerational dialogue, relationship building and ministry partnership



- Avoid stereotypes and assumptions
- Embrace the strength of each other, nurture and empower one another to serve
- Invest in the cultivation of next generation leaders and mentor them
- Remember that we share a common calling and mission (purpose vs. preference): to be a blessing and witness to all nations



- “To be intergenerational, leaders need to be prepared to share the leadership table with people of different “cohort values” and to appreciate the differences that these others will bring ... the challenge of developing an intergenerational way of seeing means getting the right people around a safe table for the conversations to happen ... Intergenerational as a way of seeing is **an act of Christian hospitality ... where we see God in one another and shape a new community because of what we see.**” (*The Church of All Ages*, pp.65, 68-9)

