

Volume 2
Number 1
January 2021



天國視野 Kingdom Perspective

Chinese Baptist Fellowship of the United States and Canada

www.cbfascanada.org
Box 1393, Monterey Park, CA. 91754, USA
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Building a Thriving English Ministry in the Chinese Church: Leadership Matters

Dr. Jireh Lin and Rev. Francis Chung

The introductory article in this series concluded with this premise: interpersonal conflict is the primary reason for the failure of the Chinese church to grow and sustain a thriving English ministry. Whatever the cause (pride, spiritual immaturity, or personality differences), this dissonance alongside the existing challenges of culture, language, and generations stunts the growth of the Chinese church in North America.

However, when the church misdiagnoses the problem, questionable decisions are the result and the problem persists. For instance, since culture has been mislabeled as the central problem in the exodus of young Chinese American Christians from the Chinese church, then to solve the issue, the Chinese church finds leaders that match the congregation they are serving. Therefore, the English ministry should have leadership that are second generation Chinese Americans. Has this been the solution? Has this decision grown thriving English ministries or Chinese churches? The fact that we are still discussing the “Silent Exodus” points to the reality that the problem still exists, and our solutions have not worked because we began with faulty assumptions.

***“Pride, bitterness, jealousy, impatience, disagreements
all work against the harmony and growth of the church.”***

I want to demonstrate that the right leaders are key regardless of their cultural background. Leaders that are spiritually mature, humble, and because of these qualities are able to navigate a church with different cultures like the Chinese church. Here is one example:

Dr. Jireh Lin is the Senior Pastor at Frisco Community Bible Church, a Chinese church with Mandarin, Cantonese, and English congregations in Frisco, Texas. He previously served as the English pastor of trilingual Chinese churches in two prior pastorates - Raleigh, NC and Dallas, TX. He shares his experience how a fourth generation Chinese American was able to effectively lead his Board of Deacons and church effectively and well. Read his words with hope and expectancy:

Having served in immigrant Chinese Churches for 30 years, I have come to see that cultural differences can add to the challenges for church leaders but should not be an excuse to separate the generations and result in conflict and disunity. Yes, there is the “Chinese way” or the “American way” of doing things, but after serving in 3 Chinese Churches with 3 congregations: Cantonese, English, and Mandarin, I have observed that the real culprit to division in the church is not cultural, but the sinful hearts of men and women. Pride, bitterness, jealousy, impatience, disagreements all work against the harmony and growth of the church.

Let me share with you an example from our church in Frisco Texas. Last year we completed an addition to our church adding over 30,000 square feet with a gym, children's wing and adult classrooms. As with any building project, there were many requests from different fellowship groups and ministry departments on how to spend the money. This could easily have sown seeds of contention and conflict among the 3 congregations, but our church completed the building on time and on budget without conflict nor broken relationships.

The project was led by the Chairman of the Board of Deacons. He does not speak Mandarin or Cantonese. He retired from a major corporation as a VP and CFO. He managed over 60 billion dollars for the company and had many lawyers working under him. What's more interesting is that his great-grandfather was an immigrant worker from China who helped build the American transcontinental railroad in the 1800s. When it comes to removing cultural barriers, he was a less than ideal candidate since the Board of Deacons is represented by leaders from all 3 language congregations coming as immigrants from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Indonesia. Yet, they all followed his leadership not because he is some hot-shot corporate VP but because he knows and makes the effort to connect and communicate with each member of the board. He led the board with humility and with a keen awareness that the board must serve the pastoral staff and the congregation members. He served with the conviction that the church is one in Christ regardless of our history, cultural background, or upbringing. On the surface, the new chairman would not have been an ideal candidate for the position, but his character and spiritual maturity led him to be an effective servant leader.

“If you want to talk about a generational gap, cultural gap, communication gap, our Board is a perfect example.”

In my 30 years in ministry, I have seen cocky and successful businessmen serve on the Board of Deacons pushing their weight around causing much division in the church. This has not been the case for our Board. If you want to talk about a generational gap, cultural gap, communication gap, our Board is a perfect example. Yet, we experienced unity and joy of service. Why? The characteristics of humility, maturity, grace, forgiveness, accountability, encouragement are lived out and the desire to put others as more important than self became a reality (Phil. 2:3-5). Let us not “derail” the central issue. Culture is not the main problem, but the sinful hearts of people.

In the next article, we hope to introduce a specific resource that churches can use to develop pastoral staffs that highlight strengths, identify relationships that can shore up weaknesses, and provide humble and dynamic leadership that will result in thriving churches!

Jireh Lin was born in Indonesia and grew up in the Chicago area. He studied at Loyola University of Chicago; the University of Illinois at Chicago; Grace Theological Seminary; and Dallas Theological Seminary. Since 1990, he has served as an English pastor at the Raleigh Chinese Christian Church in North Carolina and the Dallas Chinese Bible Church and currently serves as the Senior Pastor and English Pastor at Frisco Community Bible Church. He and Ann have been married for 30 years and have two wonderful daughters, Emily and Janel.



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華人教會如何建立蓬勃發展的英語事工： 領導能力

林以勒牧師博士，鍾惠賢牧師

本系列的導文以這論點作結：人際衝突是華人教會未能蓬勃發展並維持英語事工的主要原因。無論原因是什麼（驕傲，不成熟的靈命，或性格差異），這與文化，語言和代溝等現有的挑戰并存的分歧阻礙了北美華人教會的成長。

然而，當教會對問題作出誤判時，就會帶來值得懷疑的的決定，而問題卻依然存在。例如，文化被錯誤地被視 年輕華裔基督徒離開華人教會的主要問題，那麼華人教會就應尋找與他們所服侍的會眾相匹配的領袖。這就是解決的辦法嗎？這個決定能夠帶來英語事工或華人教會蓬勃發展嗎？我們現在仍要討論“靜默出逃”這一事實，就表明了這問題仍然存在，解決方法沒有奏效，因為我們是始於錯誤的假設。

我想指出，合適的領袖才是關鍵，這無關他們的文化背景。成熟的靈命，謙虛的態度，只有這些特質才能夠處理如華人教會等具有不同文化的教會。這裏有一個例子：

**“驕傲，苦毒，嫉妒，缺乏忍耐，分歧，
皆會破壞教會的和諧與成長。”**

林以勒（Jireh Lin）博士是費斯可基督徒中國教會（Frisco Community Bible Church）的主任牧師。這是一個在德州費斯可市的國，粵，英三語教會。在之前他在北卡羅來納州洛麗市，和得州的達拉斯的兩個服侍中擔任三語教會的英語牧師。他分享作為第四代華裔如何有效地帶領執事會和教會。請你帶著盼望並期待地讀他的話：

在華人移民教會中工作了 30 年，我開始看到文化差異會為教會領袖帶來挑戰，但我們卻不應以此來作為世代分隔，以及所帶來的衝突和分裂的藉口。是的，我們有著“中國的方式”或“美國的方式”來做事情，但在服侍過三個有著三個會眾：粵語，英語，和國語的教會，我發現教會的紛爭的真正罪魁禍首不是文化，而是人的罪心。驕傲，苦毒，嫉妒，缺乏忍耐，分歧，皆會破壞教會的和諧與成長。

讓我從我們德州費斯可市教會裏取一個例子。去年我們完成了包括有體育館，兒童側翼和成人教室，超過 30,000 平方英尺的擴建工程。與任何建築項目一樣，對於資金的運用，有著來自不同團契和事工的很多不同的要求，這很容易播下三個會眾之間的爭執和衝突的種子；但我們的教會卻按時和按預算完成了擴建，而沒有發生衝突或關係破裂。

該項目由執事會主席領導。他不會說國語或粵語。他從一家大公司的副總裁兼首席財務官的職位上退休。他管理這公司超過 600 億元的資產，手下有許多律師為他工作。更有趣的是他的曾祖父是一位來自中國的移民勞工，他在 1800 年幫助建立了橫貫美國大陸的鐵路。說到消除文化障礙，他不是最佳人選，執事會是由三個會眾的領袖所組成的，會眾的成員來自中國，香港，台灣，新加坡和印尼。然而，所有人都跟隨他的帶領，這並不是因為他是出眾的公司副總裁，而是他認識執事會的每一位成員，並努力地與他們聯繫和溝通。他謙虛地領導執事會，並敏銳地意識到執事會必須服務牧師團隊和會眾。在他的服侍中，他堅信不論我們的歷史，文化背景，或是我們的成長有何不同，但教會在基督裡都是合一的。從表面上來看，新的主席不是該職位的理想人選，但他的品格和成熟的靈命使他成為一名有果效的僕人領袖。

如果您想談論代溝，文化差距，溝通差距， 我們的執事會就是一個很好的例子。

在我 30 年的服侍中，我曾看過成功而自大的生意人在執事會作出各樣的要求，在教會中造成很大的分歧。我們的執事會沒有這樣的情況。如果您想談論代溝，文化差距，溝通差距，我們的執事會就是一個很好的例子。然而，我們經歷了服侍中的合一和喜樂。為什麼呢？領袖們活出了謙卑，成熟，恩典，寬恕，負責，和鼓勵，並渴望實踐看別人比自己強的教導（腓立比書 2：3-5）。讓我們不要“離開”問題的核心。文化不是主要問題，人罪惡之心才是。

在下一篇文章中，我們希望為教會介紹一套教材，這教材能幫助牧師們找出他們的強項，和關係中的弱點，並帶來謙卑而有活力的領導才能，使教會能蓬勃發展！

林以勒 (Jireh Lin) 出生於印尼，在芝加哥地區長大。他就讀于芝加哥洛約拉大學；伊利諾伊州大學芝加哥分校；恩典神學院；和達拉斯神學院。自 1990 年以來，他曾任北卡羅來納州洛麗華人基督教會和達拉斯華人聖經教會英文牧師，他現任費斯可基督徒中國教會主任牧師和英文牧師。他和安 (Ann) 已經結婚 30 年了，並育有兩個漂亮的女兒：艾米麗 (Emily) 和珍妮爾 (Janel)。



鐘惠賢牧師是美國加州洛杉磯國語浸信會英語堂事工主任。他亦是美加華人浸信會聯會「英語／下一代事工」團隊成員。