



A REFLECTION ON THE FIRST COHORT LEARNING JOURNEY OF THE THRIVING IMMIGRANT CONGREGATIONS INITIATIVE (TICI)

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! Psalms 133:1

The Paul G. Hiebert Center for World Christianity and Global Theology
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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TICI LEARNING JOURNEY

The Paul G. Hiebert Center for World Christianity and Global Theology of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School is pleased to have provided the institutional home for the Learning Journey Thriving Immigrant Congregations Initiative. The churches participating in this two-year learning journey focused on inter-generational partnerships.

Through sustained conversations, they have probed how these partnerships are necessary for their present vitality, missional engagement, and their future. The TICI learning journey has given the Hiebert Center the opportunity for partnership with a network of immigrant/ethnic congregations in the United States. The Thriving Immigrant Congregations Initiative is significant for the Hiebert Center because it fits with one of its objectives, namely “to promote research pertaining to the changing landscape of the North American church and the implications of these changes for how North American Christians relate with Christians worldwide.”

Immigrant/Ethnic congregations are the past and the future of the Christian faith in the United States. For the past, one need only consult Timothy L. Smith’s article “Religion and Ethnicity in America” (*The American Historical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 5, December 1978), where he probes the ethnic and immigrant dimensions of Christian congregations. Current immigrant congregations remind us of this link between immigration and the Christian faith in the history of this country. They are not exotic curiosities, or threats, or temporary. They are gifts for the revitalization, the renewal, and the thriving of Christian faith here. As immigrant congregations thrive in the United States, and elsewhere, they contribute to all aspects of congregational life. May your reading of the reflections on the TICI Learning Journey open your eyes, your heart and your mind to the marvelous work of God here in the United States and beyond.



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WHAT IS THE TICI LEARNING JOURNEY?

Why: The Purpose of TICI

The Thriving Immigrant Congregations Initiative (TICI) of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS) aims to enable and equip immigrant churches to develop healthy intergenerational and intercultural relationships within immigrant churches so that they might thrive as spiritual and missional communities of faith.

Who: The Formation of the TICI Learning Community

In 2021, the first cohort TICI learning community was formed with twelve immigrant congregations from the Midwest and the East Coast regions of the U.S. These congregations represent diverse denominational and ethnic backgrounds. Each congregation, then, established a team of five or more participants, consisting of two pastors and three or more lay leaders, representing different language and generational groups within each congregation.

How: Two-Year TICI Learning Journey (2022-23)

Starting in spring of 2022, the TICI learning community gathered twice each year, in the spring and in the fall. Each Learning Community Gathering was a three-day, in-person event that focused on the following themes:

- Healthy intergenerational/intercultural relationships and partnerships (Spring, 2022)
- Healthy congregational culture that promotes intergenerational relationships and partnerships (Fall, 2022)
- Effective intergenerational partnerships in doing God's missions locally and globally (Spring, 2023)
- Moving forward in the intergenerational journey (Fall, 2023)

In addition to participating in these Learning Community Gatherings, each church's TICI team met monthly to plan, implement, and evaluate new activities for its church. These 11 TICI churches also participated in the TICI monthly Zoom prayer gatherings, seeking together our God's guidance and grace as they journeyed together.

Peter Cha, PhD

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TICI FIRST COHORT RESEARCH REPORT

This document summarizes the research findings from the two-year TICI learning journey taken by the eleven churches in the first cohort (2022-23).



Peter Lee, PhD

Background

From the beginning of TICI, we aimed to learn more about the state and direction of immigrant congregations, especially their intergenerational relationship. To do that, we focused on the differences in perspectives between the first and second generations. During this learning journey, we conducted four online surveys with the participants that attempted to record the level of alignment between the current state of the churches and the qualities TICI tried to instill in them. Analyzing the collected survey data resulted in the following findings.

Findings

1. *The eleven churches in the cohort made progress in intergenerational relations.*

Each subsequent survey resulted in higher scores, representing a greater alignment between the participants' assessment of their churches and the intergenerational and missional qualities we sought. There was also some narrowing of scores between the generations, indicating a greater agreement between them. Throughout the journey, the first-generation had a higher level of agreement with the survey statements than the 1.5-generation or the second-generation.

2. *The cohort churches lacked engagement with the surrounding communities.*

In the third and fourth surveys, the participants rated their churches lowest for understanding "particular needs of our 'neighbors' who belong to other ethnic groups" and collaborating across generations/congregations "in local outreach initiatives." The second generation assessed their churches in this area much lower than the first.

3. *Significant gaps existed between various demographic groups in assessing their churches' intergenerational relations and missional impact.*

- By gender – males scored higher in the overall survey than females. Women scored significantly lower than men on intergenerational relationships.

- By age group – the scores got higher with increasing age. The older they were, the more positive their assessment of their church. The gap between the 20s-40s and 60s-70s was largest for addressing intergenerational challenges, collaboration for local outreach, and addressing missional challenges.
- By leadership role – the scores were split between senior leaders (typically older) and other leaders. Elders and senior pastors consistently scored higher across all ten statements, while lead pastors, associate pastors, deacons and other lay leaders consistently scored much lower across all survey statements.

Researcher Observations

1. *The eleven churches were developing a new way of looking at themselves:*

Comparing the four surveys indicates that the gap between generations has been narrowing over time; the overall scores for all generations were on an upward trend. The intergenerational relationship was improving.

2. *The churches were trying to reshape church life while keeping the positives:*

They all seemed to be making changes to the church life that might help them develop intergenerational partnerships without negatively affecting what they held dear.

3. *The churches were wrestling with “unity through diversity”:*

They might need to define the ‘whys’ and ‘hows’ of attaining unity in diversity as they grappled with how to deal with different languages, cultures and styles of ministry, leadership, and communication.

4. *The churches must engage the local context missionally:*

Engaging neighbors who were culturally and ethnically different from them was challenging for these immigrant congregations. Unless immigrant congregations pay closer attention to those in their surrounding communities and make it part of their disciple-making efforts as the first and second-generations work together, their gospel witness and missional impact might remain narrow and limited.

5. *The churches need to build an intercultural church:*

Immigrant congregations are inevitably intercultural. They deal with matters of in-between cultures at all times. Immigrant congregations may be able to develop intergenerational partnerships only if they are missional—if they are mission-focused beyond the boundaries of the church. To do that, they must intentionally become intercultural to extend their reach across cultural boundaries within the church and without.

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ODPC : Serving as a Case Study



TICI Learning Journey Case Study: Open Door Presbyterian Church, Herndon, Virginia

On January 1, 1984, two dozen Korean immigrant families crammed together in the living rooms of two homes. Opening with silent prayer and a hymn in Korean, these families began their first Sunday worship as an immigrant church. The first-generation (FG) leadership took the opportunity at this first service to describe their direction and values as a church. Seeking to uphold its ethnic roots and doctrinal heritage, the church adopted its first and original name, the Korean Orthodox Presbyterian Church (KOPC). So began the story of the church.

Through the faithful ministry of dedicated youth and college pastors, God eventually raised and equipped the emerging second-generation (SG) English-speaking college group. After several years, KOPC moved to its own 200-seat building in

1991 in McLean, VA. It was here that Pastor Paul Kim joined the church as an interim senior pastor and soon became the permanent senior pastor of the FG Korean-speaking congregation and of the entire church. Through the vision and guidance of Pastor Paul Kim, the leadership decided to take their journey as a church together, as two interdependent, intergenerational bodies. In 1998, Pastor John became the SG lead pastor.

In 2000, KOPC began to forge its direction and intergenerational ties through missions. The church – FG and SG together - sent out its first two families to Central Asia and also began creating missions teams consisting of members from the FG, SG, and the youth group (or the third-generation – TG). God seemed to be blessing all these intergenerational missions endeavors.

Then a crucial watershed moment came when the church decided to move to the current campus in Herndon, VA in 2001 together. Up until now, both congregations had grown together (though meeting apart), but the dynamics of the congregations were viewed mostly through the lens of a "model." Much of the interdependent, intergenerational dreams were still unrealized and unmapped. But now, this decision to move would solidify the future and the investment in this relationship. Money would be spent. Long-term commitments would be made. There would be no turning back. As a testimony to God's grace, after the decision was made to move together, the church grew the most - both in number and in health.

Finding itself now in Herndon, a neighborhood where 51% were non-Korean minorities, the church sought to live out its calling to be salt and light. And so, in 2002, under the oversight of Pastor Paul and the FG elders, the church officially adopted its new name, Open Door Presbyterian Church (ODPC).

In 2004, the entire church went through a vision casting process and agreed to adopt their current vision, to be an open door to a life-changing grace. This vision was revolutionary for the church. All the various ministries, congregations, and generations rallied around this banner of God's grace - yet each congregation pursued this vision in their own respective cultural setting and generational context. A few years later in 2006, ODPC developed a definition of the

interdependent, intergenerational model 1:2:1 – one vision, two households, one family.

In April 2009, the SG pledged towards constructing a 500+ seat church building on the Herndon campus, 200 meters away from the FG building. The SG and FG would continue together as one church but would pursue this in different ways and in different settings – 1:2:1!



Pastor Paul Kim (left) and Pastor John Cha(right)

Today, ODPC is a large and growing family with a SG congregation of 500 adults, growing alongside a FG of 2000, and a TG of 700 young children and 400 junior and senior high youth.

Naturally, this story is far from over. Yet, the members and congregations of Open Door are filled with anticipation. Despite the many intergenerational challenges, hurdles, and uncertainties, the congregations trust in God to work through the generations. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of the FG, SG, and TG. He is the God who holds the life and the purpose of the church in His hands.

"The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations." Psalm 33:11



Learning Journey Reflections: Bethel Korean Presbyterian Church

Ellicott City, Maryland

Church Background

Bethel Korean Presbyterian Church was founded in 1979 in Baltimore, Maryland with a prayer group of 7 Korean immigrant families in their homes. In 1988, the church moved to its newly built church in Ellicott City, Maryland. From its humble prayer gathering of the morning worship service of 7 Korean families in April of 1979, it has grown into a congregation of over 2,000 persons. Bethel Church is currently led by the Senior Pastor Rev. Daniel Shinjong Baeq, with two strong congregations, Korean and English congregations, and thriving children's and youth ministries under one roof.

1. What was your TICl journey's most important accomplishment during the past two years?

The most important accomplishment during the past two years is further actualizing the vision of intergenerational collaboration by means of the instruction and encouragement of the TICl leadership and the participating churches. As a church, we see the important gospel value of intergenerational ministry. While it is easy to make plans, it is challenging to carry them out. The TICl journey has been instrumental in forging a path from theory to practice. And experiencing this transition has been our most important accomplishment for the past two years.

2. What might be the most significant gift your church received through your participation in the TICl learning journey?

The most significant gift our church received through our participation in the TICl learning journey is the gift of vision. The TICl leadership cast the vision of intergenerational ministry and did so not merely by telling us but by showing us through practical case studies with Open Door Community church and Mosaic Ministry. What a blessed gift we received so that we might be generous in giving this gift of vision to others.

3. What might be a couple of lessons/insights from this learning journey you would like to share with other immigrant churches?

Be patient. Since intergenerational ministry is challenging, it is important to see the big picture and move patiently. Change often results slower than originally conceived, especially when different cultural contexts are involved. Therefore, it is important to remain steadfast in intergenerational ministry with patience.

Listen well. When interacting with different cultural contexts, it is important to listen well. The temptation is to predominately speak. When this happens, echo-chambers form with little learning. This is often the case between first and second generation when there is little listening. So it is important to intentionally prepare environments that foster spaces for listening. When there is listening between the generations, learning and collaboration can ensue.

4. What is a significant intergenerational challenge/issue your church tried to address during the TICl learning journey?

How did your church and/or TICl team address the challenge? What internal and/or external resources were especially helpful in addressing this challenge?

The significant intergenerational challenge our church tried to address during the TICl journey was fellowship. There is an obvious relational gap that exists between the first and second generations. And this was exacerbated by a building project completed two years ago. Before then, the first and second generations shared the main sanctuary. Therefore, after our respective services, we could greet and converse. However, after the building project, the second generation now worships at one end of the building while the first generation is at the other. So now we don't see each other without intentional steps to bridge the gap.

We addressed this challenge by implementing fellowship activities throughout the year that corresponded to our church vision. These included a dinner with pastors, elders, and deacons over the Christmas season, an intergenerational church wide picnic, and monthly lunches with the first and second-



The TICl Team (From left to right): Elder Andrew Chu, Elder Jonathan Ahn, Esther Baeq, Rev. Dr. Daniel Baeq, Rev. Tony Mershon

generation pastors. The greatest benefit that enabled these activities was the resource of leadership. With the pastors and key elders on board, we were able to guide the flock.

5. What are your team's/church/s next steps in the coming years? How might your team and your church continue your learning journey during the coming years?

Our church's next step in the coming years

is to continue the gospel witness of intergenerational collaboration. This will take root in our annual planning sessions, where we intentionally plan for the year in light of our values with carefully set artifacts. This

requires that our pastors and elders continue to cast the vision for this collaboration. Therefore, we must maintain consistent spaces to discuss this vision and brainstorm creative ways to apply it with our congregation.

Our team and church can continue our learning journey in the coming years by collaborating with like-minded churches in our area. This will prove so helpful with encouragement and accountability. encouragement and accountability.

A Narrative

On May 7th, Bethel held a family picnic. The picnic theme was a “Family of God”. We planned together, shared food together, played together, mingled together, and took pictures together.

Korean Ministry and English Ministry volunteers formed a Planning Committee. Organization, preparation, and implementation required both KM and EM teamwork to mobilize 400+ English Ministry congregational members, 900+ Korean Ministry congregational members, and 300+ Youth and Sunday School children.

One of the fun ideas was to spot a photobooth. Church friends and individuals came to take photos. Some photos were decorated with simple customs, hats, and party wear. There were prizes for the most multigenerational photos and interministerial photos. Many KM and EM elders, friends, and strangers came together to take photos – with small encouragement of prizes but mostly for the joy of coming together. Some even took photos with church members they had never met or interacted with. They were willing to cross their comfort zone and willing to cross their safe boundaries for the Kodak moments. Some KM elderlies were willing to adventure by taking photos with young EM children and realized that we are indeed a family living under one house – the House of God – Bethel. The faces of the strangers laughing, hugging, playing, and living in the House of God became familiar family portraits. We are looking forward to seeing those familiar faces and meeting more strangers at the next family picnic, who are living in the same house – the House of God – Bethel.

This is how God must feel when different faces throughout the nations and among the peoples come together to worship, praise, and help one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. A family portrait in the House of God – Bethel. All the glory and honor to God. Amen!! This was one of the experiences that Bethel initiated ‘intentionally’ as a part of the TICJ Journey. The EM brothers working together with the KM brothers, and the KM brothers working side by side with the EM brothers. The EM sisters serving together with the KM sisters, and the KM sisters sharing with the EM sisters. The EM and the KM members coming together as family of God to worship, to pray, and to praise our Father in heaven through the Holy Spirit to proclaim and rejoice in our Lord, Jesus Christ. Even though our God has blessed us to worship under one roof, sometimes our differences between the generations and the cultures blind our spiritual eyes to honor others and displace our hearts to not realize the blessings of our first generations cultural journey and of our second generations American journey.

What we learned from the TICI Journey is to commit:

- To intentionally reflect our own bias in our hearts
- To intentionally acknowledge that our traditions blind us from seeing God's beauty in others.
- To intentionally reach out to others with a willingness to honor them with the humility of Jesus.
- To accept the differences of the other generation as how God manifests His ways.
- To accept that there is no right or wrong, except for Jesus Christ.
- To acknowledge that we are on a journey – TOGETHER – to build the Kingdom of God.
- And lastly, to intentionally reflect our own bias in our hearts, and acknowledge that change begins with me.



Learning Journey Reflections: Chinese Christian Church of New Jersey

Parsippany, New Jersey

Church Background

Chinese Christian church of New Jersey was started in 1964 when a group of 3 families came together to start a family bible study in North Jersey. Through their faithful outreach to international students from Taiwan and Hong Kong, the church slowly grew and settled in their first location, Pine Brook, New Jersey. As God continued to bless and grow the church, we soon needed to expand and ended up settling in Parsippany, New Jersey in 1990, where we are still to this day. As more people from different languages joined us, we had the opportunity to plant two sister churches, one in Livingston, NJ in 1999 (Livingstone Christian Church), and one in East Hanover in 2001 (Church of Living Grace).

Currently CCCNJ is made up of 3 congregations that each have their own service: Taiwanese, Mandarin and English. The Taiwanese and Mandarin make up the majority of the First Generation while the English Generation is evenly represented by first, second and now third gen congregants. Our leadership is governed by a general assembly of all members who come together to vote on important staff decisions. Beyond the general assembly is a leadership team of Deacons, Elders and Trustees that are members from the congregation and they manage the day to day of the church as well as setting the vision and planning the events

1. What was your TICJ journey's most important accomplishment during the past two years?

Over the past two years participating in the TICJ journey, we were encouraged to find out that we are part of a larger community of immigrant churches, all facing similar intergenerational challenges. Through the sharing and learning from other churches we identified the areas our church did well in and the areas we needed to grow in. Our greatest accomplishment was the steps that we made towards building deeper relationships between the pastors and lay-leaders within our church. Being a church that heavily emphasizes activities and procedure, most meetings were focused on getting things done. From TICJ, we were convicted to build relationships beyond work and ministry. This opened the door to conversations on how we can move forward as a church where the leaders are united and also pursuing growing younger.

2. What might be the most significant gift your church received through your participation in the TICJ learning journey?

The most significant gift we received from TICJ was the overwhelming hospitality and generosity that the TICJ team showed to us. Learning new strategies and hearing from other churches was great, but being given the opportunity to be filled with such overwhelming love and grace was everything for us. As leaders we rarely get time off and when we attend retreats or conferences, it always feels like work. But while participating in TICJ, we felt encouraged and cared for by the monthly prayers, we felt loved and heard

through the discussions and workshops, and we felt like we belonged and received from TICl's team. Above all, we were able to hear from the first and second generation. Being given a voice, especially for second generation leaders, opened the door to communication in a way that wasn't common before.

3. What might be a couple of lessons/insights from this learning journey you would like to share with other immigrant churches?

The first insight to share is the importance of relationships amongst the leadership of the church that goes beyond talking shop. This is not something new, but many times this gets pushed off. Prioritizing the relationship of the leaders is not an extra credit project that can be done when there is enough time, but it should shape the whole of the ministry that you are partners in. Whether this means retreats centered on caring for one another or casual meals, hobbies, or meet-ups that focus on getting to know one another, the goal is learning how to be brothers and sisters in Christ and not just co-workers for Christ.

The second insight to share is making sure that our explicit and implicit theology matches. Our implicit theology should be defined by our explicit theology, but it also requires us to properly exegete the congregation/group that we are reaching out to. Instead of assuming what needs to happen for growth or development in a specific group, take the time to get to know what they actually need, desire, appreciate, or are passionate about. Doing this makes sure that our implicit theology is not just

checking off a box, but intentionally targeted and planned to include and pursue the group we are reaching out to.

4. What is a significant intergenerational challenge/issue your church tried to address during the TICl learning journey? How did your church and/or TICl team address the challenge? What internal and/or external resources were especially helpful in addressing this challenge?

One significant intergenerational challenge that we tried to address was building a relationship between the pastors and lay-elders within the church. The leadership within our church has been growing more varied in its representation of different generations, but most of the time together is spent talking "shop." We attempted to remedy this, taking the examples from other churches, and created opportunities for relationships to be deepened. The pastors attempted to invite the lay-elders and leaders to join them in weekly devotionals and prayer that discussed more about personal life and struggles vs. ministry activities. The intention was to allow for more personal sharing and praying for one another. As we addressed this challenge it was extremely helpful hearing different strategies that other churches have used to tackle this same issue. We especially loved the creative ideas such as: fishing, playing golf or just going on retreats together to rest and be refreshed. Although we haven't taken the steps to implement something on a larger scale, we wanted to first start with the leaders that

determined the spiritual direction of our church and then expand to other leaders within the church.

5. What are your team's/church/s next steps in the coming years? How might your team and your church continue your learning journey during the coming years?

Our church's next steps in the coming years are to widen the net to cast this vision of intergenerational ministry for the whole church. Right now, we have targeted the elders, but the goal is to spread this to the rest of the lay-leadership (deacons, trustees, small group leaders, worship leaders, etc.) and have this trickle down to the rest of our congregation. This will mean leading by example to show the kind of relationships we want to foster and also discipling congregants and leaders to recognize the value and importance of serving, growing and going out into the world and our contexts together. As this is something that our church has talked about in the past, our next steps also include making sure that our implicit theology matches what our explicit theology has been teaching. We will continue to pursue events, activities, teaching and preaching from a place that is intentional towards helping the church "grow younger," while also emphasizing the focus on deep relationship with the Lord and each other.

We hope to continue our learning journey by continuing to participate in different teaching opportunities about intergenerational ministry. As we disciple our

congregants and leaders to pursue this, we have discovered that there are other resources and conferences on top of TIC1 that care deeply about developing the Immigrant churches and intergenerational ministry. We hope to participate in those as well as share ideas and thoughts with other immigrant churches around us and grow together with them.



TIC1 TEAM Jerry Yang (Mandarin Cong. Elder), Lee-Yeh (Deacon), Joseph Wu (Youth Pastor), Paul Shen (English Pastor), John Chang (Taiwanese Pastor)



A Narrative

Throughout the TICl journey there were many significant discussions, questions and challenges that made the journey difficult yet fulfilling. One of the issues we tried to address was the fostering of relationships between the pastors and lay-elders within the church. Although our church sports a unified front, the depth of the interpersonal relationships that goes beyond ministry was quite shallow. We are great at handling issues, responding to emergencies, and meticulously carrying out or planning activities and events for the church; but when it came to caring for one another's personal lives or sharing and praying over each other's spiritual trials and difficulties, there was much to be desired. That being said, this might not have always been the case, but through the course of time, life circumstances and priorities inevitably shift and thus deeper relationships between leaders was placed in a secondary position/assumed.

Recognizing this, the pastors that were part of the TICl team opened the door to deeper communication with the lay elders in our church. Thanks to the effort of the members of pastoral team, the pastors at our church, although each representing a different language or generational congregation, had a deeply prayerful and intentional relationship with one another. The intention was to invite the lay elder into this space where we would dive deeper into each other's lives beyond just figuring out 'what needs to be done to make this or that event successful.'

This however did not come without challenges. Although we learned a lot from different church's experiences and strategies, we were quick to realize that we needed to make sure that our approach was contextualized to our leadership. The first issue we ran into was that our pastoral devotional and prayer happened on a weekday morning. This was convenient and accessible for pastors, but not all the lay-elders were available to participate. Some had jobs that required their full attention and presence, others had different priorities or pre-existing obligations or commitments. Although we were able to foster deeper relationships with some of the lay-elders, we realized that more strategizing will need to be done in the future to be inclusive of the others as well.

The second issue we ran into was realizing that the leadership of our church was not just made up of Elders, but also of Deacons and Trustees. That means that although the Elders may discern and cast the spiritual direction/vision of our church or events (ie: the Explicit theology), a majority of the implicit theology is handled and implemented by other leaders. That means that in order for us to be successful in moving our church towards healthy intergenerational ministry and relationships, we need to be inclusive of the other leaders as well!

The English Pastor, foreseeing this, planned our annual joint board retreat to share all our learnings from TICl as well as give the rest of the leaders an opportunity to experience some of the activities that we did during the TICl meetings (ie: figuring out implicit/explicit theology of our church, discovering our Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria). On top of that we invited a speaker that talked about centered set vs. bounded set ministry. This allowed us to dive deeper into how our explicit theology needs to define our implicit theology and that we need to be intentional about who our events actually target. Lastly, during this retreat, we intentionally invited the spouses/significant others of the leaders so that we could develop our relationship with one another and not just focus on what needs to be done in ministry.

Ultimately this was a great start to conversations that were much needed in our church, and it was introduced in a way that didn't just present it as information, but allowed them to walk with us as we learned more about intergenerational ministry.



Learning Journey Reflections: Chinese Christian Fellowship Church

Wilmette, Illinois

Church Background

CCFC was founded by China Inland Mission in the 1960s with Chinese students from Southeast Asia coming to the United States for higher education. The church rented a three-story building in the northside of Chicago where the top floor was used as dormitories, while the ground floor served as an activity center and a place for Sunday worship. The worship services were in bilingual: Chinese and English. In 1971, the ministry was officially registered as an independent, non-denominational church in the State of Illinois. And in 1976, the church bought a house in Chicago to be used as a church office, a place for youth fellowship and prayer meetings. It also served as our church parsonage. In September 1988, CCFC moved to our own newly constructed building in Wilmette, IL just north of Chicago. In 1990, our church started separate English Worship Services to reach second-generation Chinese Americans. This would later grow into the English Congregation Ministry. In November 2021, the church celebrated its 50th anniversary.

Currently the Chinese Congregation and English Congregation meet at separate times for worship services and have independent Deacon Boards and Elders. Both congregations also have separate budgets but have joint budgets for Missions and Facilities.

1. What was your TICl journey's most important accomplishment during the past two years?

This final TICl report has been a joyful and challenging reflection on God's work in

Chinese Christian Fellowship Church (CCFC) through the Thriving Immigrant Congregations Initiative (TICl). As with many immigrant churches, CCFC's First-Generation (FG) and Second-Generation (SG) congregations have had a history of miscommunication, misunderstanding, and mistrust. Our leadership structure has an independent FG Board and an independent SG Board in which each Board is comprised of their respective pastors, elders, and deacons. While there are several benefits for each congregation in this leadership structure, there have been situations in which leaders from one congregation have made decisions that negatively affect the other congregation - often unintentionally - which adversely impacts the whole church. These leadership difficulties can breed frustration, anger, and even resentment. Over time, this has resulted in further distancing between our two congregations, and cultivates fertile ground for conflict.

But thankfully, TICl has provided healthy opportunities for our FG and SG leaders to reconcile, dialogue, and listen to one another. In recognizing the difficulties of two separate leadership Boards, while still embracing its benefits, our CCFC TICl Team helped to establish a new Pastor-Elder Council (PEC) for our church. The PEC is composed of our FG Pastor, two FG Elders, the SG Pastor, and one SG Elder. The formation of the PEC has been a significant accomplishment for our church as our leaders build toward unity, develop

healthy communication, and deepen Christian fellowship and friendship together. Our PEC gathers monthly with an equal emphasis on ministry matters as well as interpersonal relationships. We have seen and continue to see greater trust, thoughtfulness, and love for one another. An anchor verse for our growing PEC relationship is Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!"

2. What might be the most significant gift your church received through your participation in the TICl learning journey?

Throughout this two-year Learning Journey with TICl and the cohort of 11 churches, we received the gift of time and space to study, observe, reflect, and address the relationship between our FG and SG congregations. Although most of our church leaders would acknowledge that a lack of unity inhibited the growth and outreach of our ministry, we did not have the opportunity or insight to build toward oneness. The TICl Learning Journey provided focused time and space to identify our issues, confront our challenges, and learn from other thriving ministries to crystalize our own ideas on developing practical steps toward unity. Without the intentionality of TICl, our church may have been able to work toward deeper unity, but God used TICl to accelerate the movement toward interdependence and cross-congregational fellowship through strategic times of discussion and space for dialogue. During our Learning Journey

together, our leaders were able to practice the principle of James 1:19 which calls us to be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

3. What might be a couple of lessons/insights from this learning journey you would like to share with other immigrant churches?

As our CCFC TICl Team considered lessons and insights gained from the Learning Journey, each congregation offered a word of encouragement to its counterpart in other immigrant churches. Our FG leaders would like to encourage other FG leaders to listen to the SG leaders more and to develop a desire for unity by trusting the SG to take greater leadership. Though it can be challenging to consider the thoughts or opinions of a younger generation, God is certainly developing healthy leaders and ministry initiatives in the future generations and FG leaders do well to listen gladly to their SG leaders.

Similarly, Our SG leaders would like to encourage other SG leaders to trust the FG leaders more. Unfortunately, SG leaders may assume the worst about the FG leaders' decisions or method of communication, but in faith, and through love, SG leaders should strive to believe the best about their FG leaders. Paul's exhortation in 1 Corinthians 13:7 reminds us to bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things in relationship with one another.

Our leaders would also encourage other immigrant church leaders to take hope knowing that God is working greatly in the immigrant church and drawing us to deeper

unity. Additionally, FG and SG leaders should seek to have fun together, connect on a personal level, embrace compromise on non-essential matters but find agreement on doctrinal and theological matters.

4. What is a significant intergenerational challenge/issue your church tried to address during the TICl learning journey? How did your church and/or TICl team address the challenge? What internal and/or external resources were especially helpful in addressing this challenge?

Because of our independent Leadership Boards, each congregation had previously established separate policies and benefits relating to their respective pastoral staff. This caused some confusion and inconsistency among staff members and especially for the Youth Pastor and any future staff who serve both congregations (i.e. Children's Minister; Missions Pastor). Elders from both congregations saw this as an opportunity for deacons from both congregations to work together in establishing a new CCFC Staff Manual that both Leadership Boards could collaborate and agree upon. A special committee with deacons representing both congregations was led by the elders to prepare a Staff Manual for both congregations. This combined effort strengthened cross-congregational communication, encouraged healthy discussion on generational norms or traditions, and built greater unity among our leaders.

Internally, our committee members were able to share their expectations and experiences while also being challenged to consider other approaches across generations and congregations. Externally, our committee was able to reach out to other immigrant churches as helpful references. This gave us an opportunity to learn from other congregations and interact with other ministries. Although this process had the potential for increased conflict and miscommunication, committee members from both congregations were able to work together and find agreement. This joint collaboration to produce one Staff Policy Manual directly benefits our church's staff and was a process that strengthened our intergenerational partnership.

5. What are your team's/church/s next steps in the coming years? How might your team and your church continue your learning journey during the coming years?

Having established the PEC, we will continue to develop our intergenerational partnership and fellowship among the pastors and elders through monthly meetings. We will focus on both ministry matters, but also focus on friendship and fellowship with one another. These will be accomplished through meals together, retreats, and scheduled outings for fun. As we grow to add more pastors and elders, we hope to maintain this vision of a unified PEC with members who trust one another, love one another, and enjoy time together.

We have also made it a goal to develop friendship and fellowship among our deacons, and so recently, our FG Board and SG Board came together for a fellowship meal - which is the first of what we plan to be an annual event. Because of our leadership structure, the deacons from both congregations rarely have opportunities to connect on a personal level, and this meal allowed us to simply eat, share personal stories facilitated by "ice breaker" questions, and join in a short season of prayer and worship together. Our time together was filled with laughter, meaningful conversations, and joyful engagement. We are looking forward to this annual gathering in years to come.

Additionally, our TICI Team has identified several outreach opportunities both locally and globally. Even within our own church, both congregations have a large number of children and therefore, we have a mission field within our own walls to evangelize and disciple our children. We are also beginning to include members of both congregations to reach out to students on Northwestern University's campus. As we study our local area, we recognize that the neighborhoods surrounding our church have sizable Chinese communities and Jewish communities which are missional opportunities for our two congregations. Also, in surrounding neighborhoods, we have found opportunities to serve refugees and recognize that both congregations can serve families who are immigrating to our country since our FG

members have experienced similar challenges when they first arrived. Finally, we are hoping to continue our learning journey together by encouraging both congregations to serve in short term missions trips overseas - as early as 2024.

Our hope is to continue developing unity within our church family, but also developing a partnership for missions to reach our "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the end of the earth." CCFC is thankful that TICI has helped us crystalize our thoughts to take practical steps toward inward health and outward Gospel reach.



CCFC TICI Team:
Kan Chiu, Ed Chao, Taylor Baird, Jalon Chan, Xiubin Zhang,
Leonardo Go

A Narrative

Chinese Christian Fellowship Church (CCFC) has benefited tremendously from the TICI project. Our church has experienced immediate fruit and identified future opportunities as we reflect on this two-year Learning Journey. It is both joyful and challenging to summarize the significant growth and profound impact that we've gained, but a few highlights stand out.

CCFC was founded by China Inland Mission in the 1960s with Chinese students from Southeast Asia coming to the United States for higher education. The church rented a three-story building in the northside of Chicago where the top floor was used as dormitories, while the ground floor served as an activity center and a place for Sunday worship. The worship services were in bilingual: Chinese and English. In 1971, the ministry was officially registered as an independent, non-denominational church in the State of Illinois. And in 1976, the church bought a house in Chicago to be used as a church office, a place for youth fellowship and prayer meetings. It also served as our church parsonage. In September 1988, CCFC moved to our own newly constructed building in Wilmette, IL just north of Chicago. In 1990, our church started separate English Worship Services to reach second-generation Chinese Americans. This would later grow into the English Congregation Ministry. In November 2021, the church celebrated its 50th anniversary.

However, in the early 2000s, a major conflict arose between the Chinese Congregation and the English Congregation which resulted in the dismissal of the English Congregation Pastor. This left both congregations deeply hurt, upset, and frustrated. A significant number of members from both congregations left the church and feelings of distrust, resentment, and bitterness were taking root and threatening the unity of the church.

In response, the remaining leaders decided to separate the leadership teams so that an independent first-generation (FG) deacon board would be established alongside a second-generation (SG) leadership team. This allowed both congregations to set goals and make decisions that suited their own congregation's needs. And while this congregational autonomy allowed each congregation to grow on its, there was increasing distance and disengagement between the FG and the SG. Each congregation was growing but also growing apart.

Over the next several years, leaders from both congregations recognized the need to pursue reconciliation and healthy interdependence. Pastors, elders and deacons from both congregations agreed that the relationship between FG and SG had significantly frayed, and a change in direction was needed. However, the task was daunting, and the hurt, distrust, and frustration still remained.

So, as the TICI Learning Journey began, there was cautious optimism and excitement as the five person CCFC team began discussing and praying through the concepts that TICI presented. The first gathering in Virginia, visiting Open Door Presbyterian Church (ODPC), provided a Christ-centered, Spirit driven example of healthy interdependence in an immigrant church. The CCFC leaders were inspired and humbled by the work that God accomplished at ODPC and committed to meaningful practices of unity and interdependence. A fond memory from the first gathering in Virginia was an impromptu visit to the National Mall and the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC. The cross-congregational leaders had a fun time exploring the national monuments and joked with one another throughout the afternoon – a previously rare experience between FG and SG leaders.

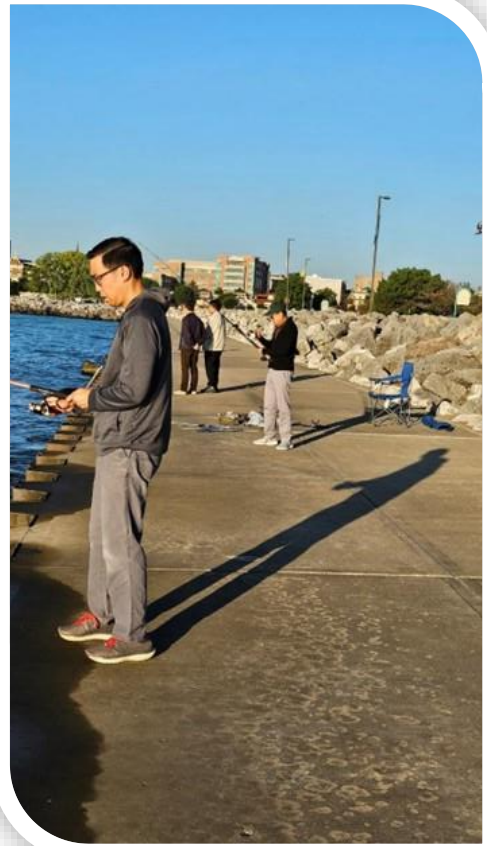
And as the Learning Journey continued, the CCFC leadership team began to have deeper conversations about reconciliation and trust. Past hurts were acknowledged and misunderstandings were addressed, while communication blossomed and trust was reestablished. Honest conversations about how to listen to one another and learn from one another led to healthier Board meetings and more collaborative efforts for Joint Worship Services. Intergenerational fellowship and gatherings have increased, and committees with representatives from both congregations have been formed for important matters related to ministry and whole church initiatives.

But one of the most significant steps that our church has taken is to establish the Pastor-Elder Council (PEC). Due to our recent history, both congregations had independent leadership teams that had very little interaction or communication. This bred misunderstanding and frustration. However, as our church saw the need to commit to deeper unity, there was overwhelming agreement that a unified PEC which represented pastors and elders from both congregations was necessary.

From the outset of this council, there is a commitment to humble listening, gracious communication, and love for one another. The PEC meets every month but the agenda alternates between meeting specifically for ministry matters with meeting specifically for fellowship and relational growth. Every other month, the PEC focuses on shepherding both congregations and setting vision, mission, and direction for the whole church. On the alternate months, the PEC meets primarily to enjoy a meal together and to fellowship.

During the month of September, all five of our PEC members participated in the inaugural PEC retreat. The pastors and elders stayed for a short weekend in Racine, WI and ate meals together, prayed with one another, discussed vision and mission, and even spent a few hours fishing together in the morning. Through the development of the PEC, CCFC has seen incredible fruit even in the past year. God has deepened our love for one another, our trust in each other, and our unity as a church family. The formation and development of the PEC has been a wonderful gift from God to CCFC.

We are exceedingly grateful to TICI and its leadership team for developing and designing a thoughtful, engaging, and practical Learning Journey to strengthen immigrant churches. By God's grace and through the leadership of TICI, we believe the Lord will do even greater things in and through our immigrant churches. Praise be to God!





Learning Journey Reflections: Cornerstone Chinese Church

Villa Park, Illinois

Church Background

Cornerstone Chinese Church is an independent, non-denominational, family-oriented church with 115 years of history in the Chicagoland area. We are a tri-lingual church community that consists of Cantonese, Mandarin and English languages. Formerly known as Chinese Bible Church of Oak Park, we moved our ministry to Villa Park, Illinois in September 2019. We recognize the critical importance of building a biblical foundation and a nurturing ministry for our youth and adults towards the goal of spiritual growth for the whole church family. With the current space, we are able to have three concurrent language services at the same time, including a Children's ministry downstairs. In term of our leadership structure, our one church board is made up of elders, deacons and trustees composed of members from the three congregations. We have a unique blend of cultural heritages and multi-generational membership that love one another in the name of Jesus Christ. Over the years, our church has grown into a multi-cultural community that welcomes all.

1. What was your TICl journey's most important accomplishment during the past two years?

The most significant accomplishment of our TICl journey in the past two years was the cultivation of a culture of mutual understanding and respect between the different generations within our church community. This began internally with our TICl core group by actively focusing on

acknowledging and appreciating the contributions of both first and second generations. This led to an incremental shift in how we proposed church ministry. The focus primarily went from accomplishing ministry goals to focusing on how we can build authentic relationships and interdependent/intergenerational leadership.

Furthermore, the discussions explore misconceptions and generational viewpoints, promoting open conversations about generational misunderstandings. The TICl sessions also emphasized the importance of engaging younger voices in church activities, showcasing a deliberate move to merge diverse viewpoints and foster a more inclusive church environment. Listening conversations were paramount. By engaging in open dialogues, we were able to address concerns specific to each generation and congregation, which in turn helped alleviate misunderstandings and strengthened our church community's bonds.

Understanding and addressing the existing rifts between the first and second generations was pivotal. Only by truly grasping these disparities could we start incorporating new, innovative ideas into our current traditions. One notable example was the introduction of a Modern Pan-Asian Food Truck during our open house, a reflection of our evolving, contemporary tastes. Moreover, the inception of the World Lunch Menu paid homage to our diverse cultural roots, bridging

the generational gap through the universal language of food.

2. What might be the most significant gift your church received through your participation in the TICl learning journey?

The most significant gift our church received through our participation in the TICl learning journey was the deepened sense of unity and mutual understanding across generations. This journey illuminated the often-unaddressed misunderstandings that existed between the different age groups within our congregations. Through open dialogues, shared activities, and purposeful discussions, we fostered an environment where both first and second generations across the varying congregations felt seen, heard, and valued.

In understanding each other, we identified areas of commonality that went beyond the usual unifying factors of Jesus and food. For instance, addressing mental health emerged as a shared concern, bridging the gap between generations and leading to a series of sermons catering to the English Congregation. Shared sports activities, such as badminton, provided another platform for interaction and bonding. Additionally, there was a mutual desire for cooperative fellowship, indicating that at the heart of it all, both generations sought a deeper connection and community within the church, transcending age and cultural differences.

3. What might be a couple of lessons/insights from this learning journey you would like to share with other immigrant churches?

One of the invaluable lessons from our TICl learning journey we'd like to share with other immigrant churches is the significance of embracing incremental change. We strategically integrated TICl learnings into our current ministry initiatives. This was done by ensuring that in the early planning stages, we included all generations and explaining the goal of this action. By laying this foundation, we were able to enhance our already existing fellowship lunch program to include a "World Lunch Menu" that was inclusive of younger generation food choices and provide leadership opportunities to help with planning and logistics. This approach of incrementally implementing solutions ensured that every member felt included and valued in the process.

Furthermore, candid discussions and openness to all ideas allow us to come up with creative ways to have candid discussions and open forums to hear the concerns of the congregations. This included discussions around movies that not only served as an entertaining activity but also illuminated generational perspectives and bridged understanding. By addressing topics like Mental Health and integrating shared sport activities, these activities became a testament to our church's collective spirit and showcased the beauty of blending ideas from different generations.

Lastly, flexibility and adaptability played crucial roles in our journey. When we realized that certain preconceived methods were not as effective, we pivoted our focus towards building authentic relationships and fostering intergenerational leadership. This shift from being rigidly adherent to certain methods to being adaptable based on the church's needs was a testament to our commitment to growth and unity.

4. What is a significant intergenerational challenge/issue your church tried to address during the TICl learning journey? How did your church and/or TICl team address the challenge? What internal and/or external resources were especially helpful in addressing this challenge?

One of the most pressing intergenerational challenges we sought to address during our TICl learning journey was the lack of younger leaders in our ministries. To tackle this challenge, we focused on recruiting diverse leadership that better represented all generations within the church. This was not just about ensuring numerical representation, but about fostering a culture of collaboration between the generations. For example, we involved young leaders, including some in high school, in planning various aspects of our church activities. They contributed ideas for alternative food options to attract younger members, helped coordinate parking and activities during our open house, and even participated in mission trips to El Salvador and Taiwan. The introduction of fresh ideas, such as

organizing a "Badminton Tournament", further encouraged involvement from younger adults. In addition, we are suggesting to the church board to have operational sub committees that recruit young people to be part of these cmtes. that meet regularly. The purpose is to include young people to be part of cmtes., such that when we are trying to find new board members to head up the sub-cmtes. we will have young people that are familiar with the roles and responsibilities of these sub cmtes. and board positions.

The most valuable internal resource in addressing this challenge was the incorporation of new lay representatives from all three congregations into our TICl core group. This not only diversified our perspectives and approaches but also helped champion learnings and ideas across the congregation. By expanding the core group, we were able to share the learnings from the TICl journey more effectively with the larger church community. This broader representation facilitated a smoother implementation of intergenerational initiatives, enhancing the understanding and appreciation of our efforts. We are grateful that TICl allowed us to add new members to our group.

5. What are your team's/church/s next steps in the coming years? How might your team and your church continue your learning journey during the coming years?

In the coming years, our primary focus will be on delving deeper into the TICl learnings and seamlessly integrating them into our existing ministries. We've taken preliminary steps in this direction by adapting our current initiatives and welcoming lay leaders into our core group. Their inclusion has not only diversified our perspectives but has also provided us with invaluable insights into areas of improvement and potential opportunities. As we transition into the next phase of our TICl journey, we aim to collaboratively evaluate and prioritize the domains we want to delve deeper into, as well as identify which aspects to reinforce.

Moreover, to ensure a consistent and comprehensive application of the TICl teachings, we are considering the establishment of a dedicated committee. The entire cmte. has recommitted to serving on the TICl initiative for another two years. This committee's mission will be to embed itself into various ministries, understanding their unique dynamics, and devising strategies to incorporate TICl learnings, particularly around breaking misgivings and mistrust. By focusing on these learnings, we aim to bridge the generational gaps, foster understanding, and build trust among the different age groups within our congregation.

In doing so, we hope to create a sustainable model where the principles of TICl become an intrinsic part of every ministry, ensuring a lasting impact on our intergenerational interactions and understanding.



TICl TEAM From LEFT: Pastor Yoman Man, Mrs. Gina Duffield, Mr. Sam Ou, Mrs. Hannah Ho, Pastor Brian Yang, Mr. Dennis Chau, Mr. Ben Yoder, Pastor Raj Christodoss

A Narrative

During the Covid pandemic, our church stopped serving Chinese lunch on Sundays. When we resumed lunches last year, there was excitement mostly because of the initiative to start a “world lunch menu”, in addition to the Chinese. Even though this initiative had been discussed informally many times prior to the pandemic, the “world lunch menu” came to fruition from the TICI initiatives to build cross-generational ties between the three congregations.

The world lunch menu attempted to bring the second generation (SG) to have lunch with the first generation (FG) at the church building. Over the years, the lunch fellowship served primarily the FG because of the lone option of a Chinese menu. Many of the SG chose to go out to eat with their peers and did not stay for lunch.

With this world lunch menu, they had another option. Last year, it was very popular & well-received by the first and second generations. It was encouraging to see the younger generation excited to serve their choice of world menu options, such as Vietnamese Pho noodles, Kimchi hot dogs, Spaghetti & Meat balls, Shepherd’s pie, Curry dishes, Lasagna, Taco meals, etc. Sometimes, they cooked the meals at home and at other times they ordered from a local restaurant. There was a nominal fee for the lunch which was still cheaper than eating out.

In some world menu orders from restaurants, the church was generous to subsidize the meal in order to serve a new menu option.

In this combined venture, it was great to see FG and SG partnering together to serve lunches for the whole church. Instead of averaging 50 people for lunch, we would sometimes see as many as 90 people in our fellowship hall having lunch together from the three congregations.

To summarize, here are the top benefits from the world lunch menu:

- SG and FG having fellowship over a meal.
- SG and FG serving together to benefit the whole church.
- Relationships being built between SG and FG congregants.
- SG (HS and Young Adults) were given an opportunity to lead a church wide ministry and they excelled in their roles.

This year, we have discovered it’s hard to keep the momentum to have a world lunch option every Sunday. As a result, we have had to resort to having it twice a month. The members have shown greater appreciation for this initiative and our plan is to keep the SG and FG engaged in this vital weekly fellowship.





Learning Journey Reflections: ECWA Chicago

Chicago, Illinois

Church Background

ECWA Chicago is a church that started in 1997 and used the basement of Uptown Baptist Church in the north side of Chicago for seventeen years before acquiring its property in the Gage Park neighborhood in 2015. The church currently has about 60 members in total. The majority are African immigrants representing several nationalities, including Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Belize, Haiti, and the USA. Over 15 different languages are spoken by the church members. We have three generations worshipping together using English, which everyone understands. The Church's current location has a majority African American community to the east and south and a majority Hispanic community to the west and north of the church.

The Church comprises 50%, 40%, and 10% of the first, second and third generations respectively. There are challenges between the first and second generations that we are working on currently. The church is elder led with a senior pastor. We recently elected a second-generation young adult to join the elder's board. That has helped in bridging the communication between the first and second generations.

1. What was your TICl journey's most important accomplishment during the past two years?

We learned how to change our congregational culture, and we started with the value of Relationships. We are building stronger relationships between the first and second generations of the church. Through TICl, we are

better equipped to understand why some of our youth/young adults stopped attending church.

Our team had listening sessions with the first and second generations in the church. As a result, we introduced the following artifacts to strengthen the relationships between the two generations.

- a) Fellowship Time: We extended our fellowship time from 15 to 30 minutes between Sunday school and worship service. We serve Tea/coffee and snacks.
- b) Hot seat. We play this game monthly. An individual volunteers to sit in front of the congregation, and members ask general and personal questions to get to know the person more intimately. This has been an enormous success. We also play Ping-Pong at the church between generations.
- c) Prayers: At least once a month, we have prayer time during the worship service, encouraging 1st and 2nd generations to pair together and pray.
- d) Celebrations: Father's and Mother's Day celebrations have been rejigged and planned intentionally to foster generational relationships. We have 2nd generation help plan and serve in creative ways.
- e) Worship Service. We now have at least two worship services that the youth plan and execute, and in addition, they are featured regularly to read scripture and other activities during our worship services.

2. What might be the most significant gift your church received through your participation in the TICI learning journey?

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- e) Worship Service. We now have at least two worship services that the youth plan and execute, and in addition, they are featured regularly to read scripture and other activities during our worship services

3. What might be a couple of lessons/insights from this learning journey you would like to share with other immigrant churches?

Two critical insights we gained that we would like to share are:

- 1) The issues that our immigrant church is facing are not unique to us. Others face similar issues, and we can learn from the successes and mistakes of others. But we must intentionally sacrifice time and resources, be good listeners, exercise patience, and follow through with every decision made.
- 2) Explicit and implicit theologies. What we communicate explicitly to our congregation must be lived out (implicitly).

4. What is a significant intergenerational challenge/issue your church tried to address during the TICI learning journey? How did your church and/or TICI team address the challenge? What internal and/or external resources were especially helpful in addressing this challenge?

Before embarking on this TICI journey, we assumed that the 2nd generation was okay with the church's plans even though we did not get to consult with them. Less than 5% of our budget was for youth and children's

ministry. We admitted that our focus was on the first generation and no one else. The budget for the youth and children ministries is being increased and given priority.

The TICI \$3,000 grant for our youth initiative was a huge help. TICI has assisted us with a Youth Consultant who evaluated our church youth ministry and made many valuable recommendations that we are implementing.

5. What are your team's/church/s next steps in the coming years? How might your team and your church continue your learning journey during the coming years

Our team has chosen to focus our church on relationships, Welcoming, and Missional values. We anticipate that in the next two to three years, we will still work on these values to strengthen them in our church. Our team will be expanded and continue to meet bi-monthly to work on these values and the artifacts that support them.

We would also like to keep the relationship going with the TICI leadership team and all resources that could be shared with us. We also hope to collaborate with some of the churches we journeyed with as the need arises.



ECWA Chicago TICI Team: L-R Jerry B. Henry B. Binta A. Sunday B. Sam U.

A Narrative

Our TICl journey as a church has been remarkable, and we can confirm that many good things are happening as we implement different strategies and lessons learned so far. We came to this cohort with our most significant need to get our young adults back to church and keep the few left from leaving.

We learned the need to have listening sessions with the two generations separately and later corporately, which we did. We learned from the 2nd generation the following:

- They were not asked for input in the church's major decisions.
- The few times they gave their input, nothing came out of it.
- The church budget catered more for the 1st generation, and very little was allocated to the youth.

Our TICl team and church leadership stepped up and took measures to foster warmer relationships between the two generations. We began with an apology to the 2nd generation. One young adult was elected to the Church's Elders Board.

The youth are now excited and willing to serve. Relationships between the two generations have so warmed up that the youth/young adults planned and worked with the men in the church to celebrate Mother's Day this year in a way we have never done before. They set up the church's fellowship hall like a 5-star restaurant and organized the men to be the chefs while the young adults served as waiters and waitresses. They checked the women in and walked them to their tables, took their orders, and served them with dignity. This experience is still being talked about in the church.





Learning Journey Reflections:

ECWA Maryland

District Heights, Maryland

Church Background

ECWA Church Maryland is in District Heights Maryland. It's a Nigerian immigrant church with a medium size congregation. The church is comprised of first, second, and 1.5 generation members worshipping as an Evangelical Church. Our mode of worship was mostly joint services due to the size of the church with younger 2nd generation children branching to a separate room where they have their own lessons. ECWA church Maryland is part of a much larger congregation comprised of ECWA USA and ECWA International.

1. What was your TICl journey's most important accomplishment during the past two years?

Our church's most important accomplishment during our TICl learning journey was the revival and revitalization of the Youth group (2nd Generation) members of the church. The relationship between the first and second generation which had been breaking down for some years before the pandemic became more apparent and was more distant and isolated. As a result of our participation in this program, our church started to learn the tools necessary to rebuild and mend the relationship between the First and Second generation. Our journey brought about awareness of our plight and the realization that actions needed to be taken and implemented.

We started with communication and dialogue to identify the underlying issues unique to each generation.

To encourage the 2nd generation, we had outings where we took them out to dinner outside of church to allow them to feel free to express themselves and allow them to feel they are a part of the church. Through the listening sessions, more actions were taken to further mend some of the broken relationships between the 1st generation and 2nd generation members. As a result of some the actions and decisions made, the first generation are now being more inclusive through our church programs and activities by inserting the children group into service monthly to give presentations, with the older youth, we have included them in participation in church activities such as reading the bible verses. Programs are now being implemented to develop the 2nd generation members through bible studies and creating more space for them to grow in their faith and membership. Our church had our first Community Day event on August 5th to identify and meet the people and neighbors that lived around the church. We had music, food, games, and teams from both 1st and 2nd generation in participation and working together. Through collaborative efforts between 1st and 2nd generation, the program was a success.

2. What might be the most significant gift your church received through your participation in the TICl learning journey?

Most significant gift received from TICl was the support from the TICl steering committee team, they provided immense support spiritually, mentally, financially, with great accommodation and hospitality. Our church experienced the full support of the TICl steering committee. We felt like we were adequately supported through the leadership, and the blessings from the resources provided through the designated Youth Consultant. Additionally, we benefited from collaboration with other churches on the journey with us.

Through the resources provided to us, listening sessions were held with Youth Consultants who helped identify additional underlying issues. Through the feedback received, we now have additional programs to foster growth and improvement. Through collaboration with other efforts with other churches, our Youth were able to partner with a local church to attend their Youth Winter Retreat to give our 2nd generation Youth exposure to see what was happening in other more developed churches. During the summer of 2023, our High Schoolers were provided with a grant through Lily Foundation to attend a Youth Retreat at Sandy Cove.

3. What might be a couple of lessons/insights from this learning journey you would like to share with other immigrant churches?

A great insight learned from this journey was that the silent exodus was not just limited to our church. We learned that many churches were also facing the same issues and we were not alone on this journey; this was a

comforting lesson for us to know. The journey helped us to understand that this was a generational issue and every church group experienced or is experiencing this issue. Through our learnings, we realized our church needed to change our approach in handling the identified issues. We also realized that each generation had different requirements and needs to foster their spiritual growth, which was an issue we ignored in our church for far too long.

We would like other immigrant churches to know that it is never too late to start rebuilding and repairing broken relationships to create a functioning church just as Jesus Christ intended. Further, we would like to say that the process begins Now and don't wait for tomorrow. The 2nd generation should allow openness and be ready to listen to the concerns of the 1st generation. Another piece of advice is to actively listen to the 1st generation and take notice of their issues and concerns. Be open and ready to listen and learn from each other as each generation has different values. Churches should learn to be more inclusive and not neglect any members or groups in the church because we are joint heirs in the Kingdom.

4. What is a significant intergenerational challenge/issue your church tried to address during the TICl learning journey? How did your church and/or TICl team address the challenge? What internal and/or external resources were especially helpful in addressing this challenge?

A significant intergenerational challenge our church encountered during the TICl journey was in communication. The 1st and 2nd generation did not communicate with one another nor realized that communication was an issue. During this journey the 2nd generation pinpointed that they felt disrespected as no one listened to them. We addressed this issue using the artifact “Listening with Empathy”. We began by holding listening sessions to address the issue. The 1st generation intentionally provided a safe environment that provided a judgement free zone. A safe place that allowed the 2nd generation to feel comfortable speaking about their concerns. A space that allowed positive regard of their feelings and concerns. Once we established a safe environment for the 2nd generation to be heard, we began the work. We began by actively listening. Active listening created trust that allowed trust to be built. We avoided criticizing and held their concerns in high regard. Connections were built through transparency between both the 1st and 2nd generations. Trust was another positive outcome of addressing their concerns. Through the process we gained knowledge of the 2nd generation’s concerns and began to



ECWA Maryland TICl Team:
Kunle Olaitan, Obi Okudoh, Henry Bello, Kemi Williams,
Toyin Adekeye, Rachel Garba

identify ways of problem solving. Increased understanding was another aspect gained during the journey. Utilization of external resources such as reaching out to other churches aided greatly through this journey. We utilized the Youth Resource Consultant provided by the TICl team to mediate our active listening sessions between 1st and 2nd

generations. We also partnered with ODPC church who welcomed the opportunity for our youth to be part of their existing program.

An important discovery that emerged out of our sessions was that each generation blamed the

other as to the reason for the disjointed relationship. Overall, our listening sessions created a positive outcome to begin the collaborative work of rebuilding and restructuring the relationship between both generations.

5. What are your team’s/church/s next steps in the coming years? How might your team and your church continue your learning journey during the coming years?

ECWA Church Maryland’s next step are to continually build on the improved communication and relationships through meetings and gatherings that foster growth. Another way we plan to maintain and increase the growth process is by building connections

with other Churches both nationally and internationally.

We will continue to work on creating a space for the 2nd generation to start having their own worship services and developing their leaders. We will also provide a designated Youth Pastor to further enhance their spiritual growth and have representation among 1st Generation Church leadership. Overall, we plan to continue this journey with willingness to learn, openness, and maintain the relationships with the 2nd generation.

A Narrative

The church has been profoundly impacted through the TICI learning journey in the last two years in a remarkable way. Through participation in the learning journey, the church acquired the tools necessary to identify the underlying issues that were impacting the relationship between first- and second-generation members of the church. The relationship between the first and second generation was segmented, and our second generation were in a pattern where they just endured with us till, they graduated high school and began college. Soon as they began college, they left us and went to other denominations. We realized something had to be done. Through various learning exercises received during the gatherings and monthly meetings with the other churches on the journey with us; we were able to learn from each other and start applying those tools to mend damaged relationship gaps while taking deliberate actions to mend the differences. We identified some key underlying issues just to name a few; being misunderstood, feeling disrespected, not having enough programs to cater to the needs of the generations, lack of spiritual growth, lack of space, and communication.

With the training tools provided to us, our local TICI team identified and adopted Artifact "Listening with Empathy and Good Communication" as being paramount to successfully begin the healing process. We implemented listening sessions and training sessions for both first and second generation. Our second-generation youth were invited to meet outs and eating together with TICI team members to foster a safe environment space where they felt comfortable communicating their issues. Meetings were held online and

The local TICl team also collaborated with a local Church to request inclusion of our second-generation Youth in their next Youth Winter Retreat program. This provided exposure for our second-generation Youth to see how Youth from other churches worshipped. During the summer of 2023, our High Schoolers (second generation) were provided with a grant through Lily Foundation to attend a Youth Retreat at Sandy Cove Maryland. The retreat was a collaborative effort in planning and execution between both first- and second-generation members.

As a result of the retreat many of the second-generation members had a lifetime experience and look forward to more events of such. Through additional collaborative efforts, our church had its first Community Day event on August 5th, 2023. The purpose of the event was to identify and meet the people and neighbors that lived around the church. There was music, food, games, and activities with various teams in active participation from both generations working together. The second-generation members planned the program, and the first-generation members provided the resources required to support the program which turned out to be a great success to the glory of God. Our prayer is that the collaboration efforts between the first and second generation for ECWA Maryland will continue to grow and improve in years to come.

The TICl learning journey and collaboration was one of the most significant things that have ever happened to our church. And we pray that other churches will also benefit from this learning program and that the church of God will continue to grow to fulfill the duty of the "Great Commission". Amen





Learning Journey Reflections: Hebron Presbyterian Church

Prospect Heights, Illinois

Church Background

Hebron Presbyterian Church was established in 1985, beginning with 11 members. Presently, our congregation is located in Prospect Heights, IL 60070. Our local community is characterized by mix of residents, with a demographic breakdown of 60% White, 30% Hispanic, and 10% Asian. Within our church, we have two distinct ministries. The Korean Ministry (KM) attracts approximately 500 attendees every Sunday, offering its own worship services. Meanwhile, the English Ministry (EM) gathers around 130 attendees on Sundays, also hosting its separate worship services. Currently, EM operates under the leadership of the KM, but we are working towards EM's financial independence, with a target date set for 2025.

1. What was your TICI journey's most important accomplishment during the past two years?

Prior to TICI, our KM and EM didn't have the opportunity to truly connect and grow together, although this doesn't imply a strained relationship between us. While our overall relationship was decent, it remained rather surface-level. However, as we embarked on the TICI journey, our team began to develop a deeper understanding of one another. During the flight to ODPC, EM pastors sat alongside a KM elder. On the first gathering, our senior pastor, who used to reside in Virginia, treated the entire team to a special crab dinner. In this intimate setting, we openly shared our testimonies, allowing us to delve into each other's faith journeys. This was an unprecedented occurrence within our church,

as KM and EM had previously been preoccupied with their individual ministries. One of the most significant achievements of our team was the establishment of trust-based relationships between KM and EM TICI leaders.

2. What might be the most significant gift your church received through your participation in the TICI learning journey?

TICI provided a safe space for us to: 1. Foster trust-based relationships between KM and EM TICI members, 2. Plan and Execute ministries together, 3. Struggle and Reflect together, and 4. Envision the future collectively.

LCGs, monthly learning activities, and monthly prayer meetings were well-organized with clear objectives, keeping us accountable. LCGs provided practical theories and a vision of an interdependent church, while monthly activities let us put these concepts into practice. Unlike most conferences, TICI ensured follow-up through these activities. The monthly prayer meetings reminded us of the Holy Spirit's guidance and the support of sister churches praying for our success. We were able to know that we were not alone in this journey. These elements made TICI a valuable journey of exploration and growth. This safe environment is the most significant gift. Without TICI, we could not do any of these.

3. What might be a couple of lessons/insights from this learning journey you would like to share with other immigrant churches?

Doing missions together is a wonderful opportunity or an avenue to strength inter-

generational/-congregational relationships. Our church embarked on a brief mission journey to Peru, where our group spanned from a 13-year-old youngest member to a 78-year-old oldest member. It underscores the significance of unity among the various congregations within our church community. To embark on such a multi-generational and multi-congregational mission trip, a shared commitment from everyone involved is essential. Our hearts must all be aligned with the same purpose and desire to make it a reality.

Also, to forge a partnership between KM and EM in doing outreach ministries, you must be realistic and patient with truly what the potential for the intergenerational model is. Every church will have a different level of success. In the beginning of TICl journey, we had big dreams about what we wanted to do. When we were in Virginia, we were so excited. We thought that we were going to do so many big things together. And as the journey, as the years went on, we realized that it's okay if we only accomplish two things this year. Have a realistic vision and be patient when things do not work as you planned. Trust the process.

The final recommendation is for every congregation to embrace a spirit of collaboration, sharing equal power. Whether you're organizing events, including those important TICl monthly meetings, it's crucial to remain open and adaptable. Instead of adhering to a single group's established approach to intergenerational outreach

ministry, foster a 1-on-1 cooperative spirit and maintain flexibility. Purposefully strive to establish a fair balance of power, ensuring that the voices of all generations and congregations are valued and heard.

4. What is a significant intergenerational challenge/issue your church tried to address during the TICl learning journey? How did your church and/or TICl team address the challenge? What internal and/or external resources were especially helpful in addressing this challenge?

One of the challenges we faced was the stark contrast in communication styles between EM and KM. Often, we found ourselves misunderstanding each other on various matters. A notable example of this was our fundraising events for missions, where there was considerable ambiguity regarding EM's role. Initially, during the event planning phase, we aimed to involve both KM and EM outreach team leaders (not the TICl team). However, this proved to be quite challenging, leading us to decide that these events should primarily be organized by KM, with EM providing support. While the leader of EM missions outreach ministry was present, she wasn't provided with clear instructions either. It was evident that patience was essential among us, as without it, our collective TICl effort could quickly become short-lived and merely a token gesture of collaboration.

However, this communication challenge isn't a recent development. We initially discussed it during our time at the first LCG in

Virginia. What happened this year was, it just uncovered, and it confirmed that these issues are truly issues between the KM and the EM. These issues include a lack of open dialogue, generational differences, and the absence of genuine relationships. As we worked on activities such as fundraising for missions, these challenges became evident. This situation provided us with an opportunity to assess our activities objectively and pinpoint the challenges in the context of real events. Often, we would simply say, "Communication between KM and EM is so poor," without specific examples. However, through events like the 5K missions fundraiser and the 4th of July community gathering, we were able to articulate the nature of our challenges. The TICl journey helped provide context to some of the issues we had already identified, making it easier for us to plan for the future by saying, "Okay, next time we'll do A, B, and C because we've learned from last year."

5. What are your team's/church/s next steps in the coming years? How might your team and your church continue your learning journey during the coming years?

During our TICl journey, a pivotal initiative we've launched is the KM/EM Joint Ministry Committee (JMC). This committee was established to foster our collaborative ministry efforts and address three key requirements: 1. Ensuring adequate budget allocation, 2. Securing the necessary human resources, and 3. Aligning with our shared vision. KM has designated one elder and two deacons to serve

on this committee. Currently, we are in the process of recruiting EM members to join the committee. Our overarching objective is for this collaborative KM/EM JMC, comprising leaders from both KM and EM, to strategize and implement inter-generational and inter-congregational ministries throughout the upcoming year, 2024.

We also aspire to maintain our collaboration with TICl and foster connections with fellow sister churches. Our church is akin to a newborn in terms of intergenerational dynamics. We seek external perspectives and insights. Encouragement and prayers from other churches are essential to us. It is vital that we actively engage with and learn from the experiences and practices of other churches.



Hebron TICl Team:
Joseph Seo, Jonathan Kim, James Ryoo, Chul Sung Lim,
Daniel Song, Jean Choi, Yun Choi, John Kim

A Narrative

The Hebron TICI team had envisioned three intergenerational outreach ministries at the third LCG: a 5K missions fundraising event, a short-term mission trip to Peru, and a community gathering on the 4th of July. These were not entirely new initiatives for Hebron. However, the onset of Pandemic forced Hebron to halt these events until 2023. Traditionally, these outreach ministries had been led primarily by the KM leadership, with EM participating as guests rather than as collaborative hosts. However, in the year under TICI's influence, both EM and KM TICI leaders began to discuss how they could work together to reshape these events.

While the aspiration was to involve leaders from both KM and EM in the joint ministry committee (JMC) for the 5K missions fundraising event, time constraints made it challenging to recruit EM leaders. As a result, KM took the lead in planning this event, which was disheartening for the Hebron TICI team.

The following events, the Peru missions and the 4th of July gathering, caused anxiety within the team due to the previous setbacks. However, there was a glimmer of hope as the Peru missions team turned out to be unexpectedly diverse, spanning generations and backgrounds. The youngest member was 13 years old and the oldest member was 78 years old. There were 2nd Gen. youth group students, their 1st Gen. fathers, 1st Gen. KM adults and 2nd Gen. EM adults. Through a month of preparation, the team grew closer, bonding through activities like learning Spanish praise songs/motions and sharing meals. This experience shifted the team's anxiety to optimism and demonstrated the potential for collaboration.

The 4th of July gathering was a significant event for Hebron, as it opened the church's facilities to the public and served the local community. After the 4th of July community parade, about 400 people gathered at Hebron's parking lot to enjoy free hot dogs, ice cones and bouncy houses. EM took a proactive approach in communicating with KM. Firstly, during the third LCG, EM TICI leaders brought up new ideas what EM can do for the event. One of the ideas was creating a photographer team. Three EM members volunteered for this team. EM outreach ministry leaders also joined a communication room with KM elders, This represents a notable shift resulting from our TICI initiative. Previously, the communication process followed a specific pattern: KM elders made decisions and relayed them to the senior pastor. The senior pastor then disseminated these decisions to EM pastors, who subsequently informed EM leaders about the event. This approach was lengthy and inefficient. However, with the inclusion of EM outreach ministry leaders in the communication channel with KM elders, the process has now become more direct and efficient, marking a significant advancement.

Although Hebron did not execute everything exactly as the TICI team had planned, and the entire church did not transform as desired, there were small victories achieved through the 5K event, Peru missions, and the 4th of July gathering. These victories provided hope and demonstrated the potential for Hebron to work together as an intergenerational family, marking a crucial step forward. Through doing these events, we also gained insights about how an inter-dependent and intergenerational vision is possible: United in the Word, Willingness to be uncomfortable, Common goal to work for.





Learning Journey Reflections: Korean American Presbyterian Church of Queens

Flushing, New York

Church Background

The Korean American Presbyterian Church of Queens (KAPCQ) began in 1974 as an immigrant Korean church in Flushing, NY. Our church will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary this coming February. This current year symbolically, is the year of jubilee for us. For the first four decades, our church was primarily a Korean immigrant church (KM). The English-speaking ministry (EM) began in 1994, comprising primarily of the children of the 1st generation KM members. However, in the past 10-15 years, as the Korean immigrants in Flushing improved their lives, they began to move farther away from Flushing and into communities in Long Island and New Jersey. What was once a vibrant “Korea-town” has now evolved into a vibrant “Chinatown”, as the next wave of Chinese immigrants moved into the city. Our church needed to adapt to the external changes that were happening in our city.

Upon the arrival of our third Senior Pastor, our church began a Chinese-speaking ministry (CM) in 2015, hiring its first ever non-Korean Pastor to shepherd the Chinese ministry. Our church then launched a Russian-speaking ministry (RM) the very next year in 2016 to reach the Russian-speaking population in our community. Our church also began a new building project right across the street that will be the future home of the CM and EM in the coming year. We are now a multi-congregational church, worshipping in 4 languages (Korean, English, Chinese and Russian). Our church is governed by our Session of Elders which comprises of 12 KM Elders and 4 EM Elders.

We pray that God will raise up CM and RM Elders to join the Session in the coming years ahead.

1. What was your TICJ journey's most important accomplishment during the past two years?

Our TICJ journey's most important accomplishment during the past two years was the continuous dialogue we had between our first and second gen members throughout the journey. Our assumption had been that our church is healthy. Our Lead Pastors of the four congregations have a healthy and strong relationship with one another. However, in the conversations and sharing throughout the past two years, we uncovered the reality that there are many inherent biases and underlying assumptions each of the four congregations have of one another. We were able to self-examine the true state of our church through the structured, intentional gatherings where we were able to dialogue and share together. The TICJ journey gave us the open and honest tools and the framework to begin these important discussions.

Prior to the TICJ journey, we did not have many opportunities to come to the table to simply “talk about the state of our church”. Whenever we would meet, it would primarily focus on ministry tasks and responsibilities. However, the TICJ allowed us to have more of a “lunch/dinner” talk to ask each other how we are doing. We were given the platform to come and talk about our church. And through these conversations, we began to implement

strategic action steps to strengthen the intergenerational relationships across the four congregations. Have we found all the solutions to our challenges? No. But we are closer now to work out the challenges and issues together.

2. What might be the most significant gift your church received through your participation in the TICl learning journey?

We received the gift of a new “lens” and insight into what is possible for multi-generational, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic churches of all sizes and what they can accomplish! We were tasked with “seeing” what our church’s unique and particular values and culture were. What artifacts spring up from those unique values we hold, what we may be missing, what may be clouded, what may need cleaning up, what may need to be discarded, etc. These seed ideas garnered from hearing and seeing other churches will help us stay fluid and relevant and humble to ways in which we could improve or add to further God’s ministry work and Kingdom.

One specific example of a gift we received was the gift of collaboration. Of all the values that we strive for in our church, collaboration was a value we recognized that was not being “practiced” among the four congregations. As such, we sought to identify and explore new artifacts that would reflect the value of collaboration within our church.

We focused on the value of collaboration for our annual Joint Family Christmas Worship service. We decided to truly collaborate together to plan, discuss, and carry out the

Joint Christmas service together. The leaders from all four congregations met together to prayerfully discuss how to plan out this service. In the end, we were able to incorporate each of the four congregations into the three Joint services on Christmas Day (8am, 10am, 12pm). The four Lead Pastors of the congregations also preached a four-part drama sermon.

All of our members who attended the Christmas day worship were able to take part in a true Joint worship and they were able to appreciate that we are a multi-congregational and multi-cultural church. We plan to collaborate together for the Christmas worship every year. Although it was very challenging and time consuming to collaborate together in planning and executing the Joint service, it was truly a blessing for us to work together and display the power of the Gospel in bringing different cultures, languages, ethnicities, and congregations together for God's glory.

3. What might be a couple of lessons/insights from this learning journey you would like to share with other immigrant churches?

We have learned throughout this journey that it takes intentionality and dialogue to address the problems and challenges within the church. There exists many inherent biases and underlying assumptions that we have of one another. We need to bring these to light through honest and open communication. Perhaps we need to spend more time understanding and accepting who we are versus what we do. The “being vs doing”. We can do a lot of things as a church and even do

a lot of things together, but we need to understand who we are and why we are doing this. Having more “lunch time” talks rather than ministry planning meetings will help in this endeavor.

As we share and open up to one another, the trust and respect we have towards each other will also grow. The trust is not only in the loyalty and love we have for one another. But it stems from an understanding of each other, to listen and to see from the other person’s perspective. If there is a disagreement, we should approach it as the other person is different from me, rather than they are wrong. We appreciate our TICI consultant’s exhortation, to not use the word “BUT” in our dialogues, rather to use the word “AND” to show that we have heard and understood the other perspective and we would like to add onto their thought as well.

We also recognize that every church is at a different place in the journey. Every church is unique and beautiful in its own way. Our church is not the only church facing intergenerational challenges. Being part of this TICI journey has given us an opportunity to hear and learn from other churches and of course the TICI leadership. It has given us a new lens to see and reflect upon. As a church, we mustn’t be insular and just think we are doing things the best way. We have learned so much from others through this journey and we would encourage other churches to be open to take this journey of learning from others as well.

4. What is a significant intergenerational challenge/issue your church tried to address during the TICI learning journey? How did your church and/or TICI team address the challenge? What internal and/or external resources were especially helpful in addressing this challenge?

As we self-examined the true state of our church, we began to uncover inherent assumptions and biases the FG and SG have of one another. Though on the outside everything may look peachy and rosy, we realized that there are assumptions we have of one another, even amongst our leadership and Elder Board.

One challenge we face as a multi-congregational church is how we define and understand unity. Does unity mean that we are to do everything together all the time? We agreed that is not what defines unity. However, the SG (EM) has felt some pressure from the FG (KM) to be more “present” during church-wide events as a sign of unity. The TICI journey has convicted our SG (EM) that although we have different approaches and strategies in ministry, it is important to the greater church and FG (KM) to see our presence at certain events throughout the year.

As such, our EM made a decision to rejoin the KAPCQ Missions Bazaar that our greater church holds twice a year. In addition to contributing the funds that the EM raised previously during our Missions Golf Fundraiser, our EM also joined in the church Bazaar, making and selling desserts. Although we did

not raise much funds doing that, our presence at the Bazaar truly did encourage the greater church and it brought our four congregations together for an important purpose.

5. What are your team's/church/s next steps in the coming years? How might your team and your church continue your learning journey during the coming years?

Our team's next step is to make a formal proposal to the church to have our TICI team members join the "multi-ethnic" department that already exists at our church. Unfortunately, there has not been much fruit or progress coming forth from this existing department. This department was initially established to foster communication across the four congregations, especially with regard to Joint events and services. However, the meetings have been sparse and decisions have been made individually by each respective congregations.

As such, our TICI team is planning to reach out to the "multi-ethnic" department chair and share the proposal that our TICI team would like to formally join the committee. Through the department, we hope to collaborate on Joint events and initiatives moving forward. We envision this department to oversee, plan, and collaborate on all joint events at our church that impact and involve the four congregations. As the committee formally reports to the Session of Elders and proposes ideas for the greater church, our church leaders will be more engaged to listen, hear and engage in the collaborative, missional work

that we are striving to do together with all four congregations as one church.

We are also planning to set a date for the next Joint Leaders Fellowship Dinner. The leaders fellowship dinner was such a huge success that truly brought our four congregation leaders together in unity and spirit. We are planning to make these leadership gatherings an artifact that will be more frequent and bring the leaders together for fellowship, prayer and key teachings that will align all four of our congregations in specific areas of our church. As we implement this artifact, we pray that God will bring other intergenerational and multicultural groups within our church to also gather to share life, fellowship and pray for one another.



KAPCQ TICI Team:
Jenny Whang, Peter Kim, Seoung Kook Kim, Nathaniel Cha,
Hyelin Kim, Brian Choi

A Narrative

God has given to our church a beautiful and unique vision to be a multi-congregational, multi-cultural, missional church to our community. As wonderful as this vision is, it's come with its share of challenges. There are many challenges an immigrant church faces, both inter-generationally and inter-culturally. But, in our context, we not only have 1st and 2nd generations, but we also have four congregations, each with its own distinct culture, language and inter-generational issues.

I recall during one of the TICl LCGs that the TICl consultant shared that the TICl journey is not meant to be an art gallery where we display all of the beautiful works of art and wondrous accomplishments we're proud of at our churches. Rather, it's to be a place of healing, like a hospital, where churches come for "treatment" in the ailments and hurts they've experienced and are currently facing. If that's the case, my church might be the "sickest" church here in this journey!

As a means to address and treat our "sickness" and the multi-faceted challenges we face as a church, God invited us into this TICl journey 2 years ago. If I were to share one particular event that reflects how our church has grown as an intergenerational family through this TICl journey, it would be the "Leaders Fellowship Dinner" that our TICl team organized last October 2, 2022. With our first strategic action step as a team, we put together a plan to bring our key leaders from each of our four congregations together for the first time with the focus on building genuine relationships and also setting clear steps to continue moving towards a healthy shared future together.

God's vision for our church is to be one family with four households. In reality, we were four households living almost completely separate from one another, rarely having any genuine or real interactions with one another. If we were to truly be one family, we needed to start building relationships with one another. And this had to begin at the leadership level. We asked the question, "how well do our leaders across the four congregations really know one another?" Sure, we would wave hi, smile and greet one another in passing through our church hallways. However, we didn't really know anything significant about each other, about our families, children, careers, dreams and goals.

Our TICl team hosted the leaders fellowship dinner at our Senior Pastor's home. This set the tone of the gathering from a "church-impersonal" to a "home-personal" environment and atmosphere. This intentional gathering put names to faces and instilled a family-feel as we welcomed all the key leaders from each congregation for fellowship, discussion, sharing and vision-casting. We began with a dinner where we intentionally assigned groups comprising of one leader from each of the four congregations to eat, share and get to know one another.

After introducing one another, we asked the groups to discuss what comes to mind when they hear “four congregations, one church” and how they view the current relationships between the four congregations.

After dinner and the time of sharing, we brought everyone together for a brief teaching on different models and types of multicultural churches. I presented three different types of multicultural churches from the book, *United by Faith* by Michael Emerson. Of the three models I shared, (Pluralist, Assimilationist, Integrationist), our Senior Pastor shared that we are striving to be the Integrationist model where the four congregations intersect and partner together in ministry. At present, our four congregations are aligned in our explicit theology. However, it’s the implicit theology that really brings us all together. As such, a new congregational cultural space is needed where we can collaborate and partner together in ministry.

After dinner and the time of sharing, we brought everyone together for a brief teaching on different models and types of multicultural churches. I presented three different types of multicultural churches from the book, *United by Faith* by Michael Emerson. Of the three models I shared, (Pluralist, Assimilationist, Integrationist), our Senior Pastor shared that we are striving to be the Integrationist model where the four congregations intersect and partner together in ministry. At present, our four congregations are aligned in our explicit theology. However, it’s the implicit theology that really brings us all together. As such, a new congregational cultural space is needed where we can collaborate and partner together in ministry.

One of the RM leaders asked what that integrated space looks like. They asked the KM and EM to share this to the CM and RM and they would follow. In response, we replied that we don’t have all the answers! For this is the very reason why we have gathered together to partner together on this journey. And in sharing and praying together, we will be able to discern what those integrated ministry spaces are for our four congregations. For instance, perhaps our KM and EM will be more integrated in our Education Department, while the KM and CM will be more integrated in the worship services. Nonetheless, we need to discover what those integrated spaces are and continue working in the integrated areas that connect all four of our congregations together. In doing so, we pray that God will align us to His will for the shared vision and future together.

The TICI consultant, shared to us the concept called “traditioned innovation” from the book *“Navigating the Future”*. I found this to be very helpful and pertinent to our church and shared this to the leaders. In the concept of “traditioned innovation”, the first generation (KM) leaders/members provide the “traditioned” part of the equation while the second generation (EM) leaders/members might play a larger role in the “innovation” part.

I shared that the second generation (EM, CM, RM) will need to be more proactive in helping the first generation (KM) think of more "innovative" ways to do ministry, especially Joint ministry in the future, while respecting and keeping the "traditions" that have shaped our church's unique history.

After the time of teaching, we took some time to hear from the leaders at the gathering. A CM leader shared that up until this point, they saw the KM as the parents of the other three congregations. But after the dinner fellowship, they shared that perhaps the perspective of the relationship changed from parent-child to more of an "older sibling-younger sibling" relationship. So they shared that now, they can begin seeing the KM as our older brothers and sisters rather than our parents. We can be siblings that can walk the journey together.

A RM leader shared that up until this point, they felt their congregation to be "insignificant" and the least important of the four at our church. But after being invited to the leaders fellowship dinner, they felt "valued", "honored" and "welcomed" to join the table. It's incredible how just a simple invitation to a dinner makes one feel valued and special! We finished the gathering by praying together and praying for one another.

We closed the evening by sharing one final story. Several 2nd generation EM Pastors have asked me why our church is working so hard to stay together. They have seen and experienced themselves the many intergenerational challenges within the immigrant church context. They've expressed to me that it would be far more effective and efficient to go our separate ways and do church independently, apart from the immigrant church and 1st generation. I shared to them what I learned from the TICI consultant. When we are called to serve the Lord, yes, efficiency matters. But there is also a ministry that is costly. When we do a ministry of reconciliation, it can be a powerful witnessing tool for the Gospel.

Unfortunately, in the history of the Korean American church, whenever an EM matures to a certain number of congregants, or attains financial autonomy, or raises up Elders from within their congregation, many EMs leave the immigrant church. The EMs leave because they either do not feel the support from the KM to continue to mature and grow, or they believe that they can carry out God's work more effectively by becoming an independent church, separate from the KM. Many EMs also leave because they do not see a future by staying together with the Korean church. This has been a sad path for many Korean American churches. Once an EM leaves or is pushed out, the Korean church then starts up a new EM in the church, and this unhealthy cycle continues.

We believe that this path is not the only future for the Korean American church. We believe that God has called our church, KAPCQ, to be one church, partnering together as not only a KM and EM, but with a CM and RM as well. We believe that our church can serve as an example and hopefully a model for other immigrant churches to know that it is possible to be a healthy church with a shared future. Through the TICI journey, God has begun to reshape our congregational culture to continue strengthening our current ministries and fostering a hope for this shared future together, that we would serve our surrounding community for God's glory.

We need more positive, healthy examples of immigrant churches, where the 1st and 2nd generations are working intentionally together, partnering together for a healthy shared future. We do not have many positive examples or models for immigrant churches to look to. We need more immigrant churches striving to work together, for the sake of the Gospel, to be witnesses to our communities, and to be an encouragement to the immigrant church. It's not a call for every church, but some churches need to work on intergenerational challenges because there are too few churches doing that.

We are blessed and honored that God has called our church, along with the other cohort churches in this TICI journey to be churches that strive for intergenerational partnership that we may exhibit the power of reconciliation that we see in the Gospel. We are deeply grateful to the TICI leadership team (Dr. Peter Cha, Rev. Joshua Joseph, Dr. Tite Tienou, Dr. Peter Lee, Rev. Kim, Rev. John Cha, Angelica Barahona, Sarah Chang) for walking with us in this exciting journey and for all the wisdom, guidance, teaching, insights, love and care that they bestowed onto us.

We pray that God will continue to strengthen the immigrant church in deepening healthy relationships between the first and second generations. In doing so, we pray that our churches will carry out God's kingdom task beyond our ethnic boundaries in our communities and neighborhoods. We are





Learning Journey Reflections: Lakeview Covenant Church

Northbrook, Illinois

Church Background

Lakeview Covenant Church gathers in Northbrook, IL, worshipping in two languages through three services - 8:00am in Korean, 10:00am in English, and 11:45am again in Korean. The church was once one predominantly Korean English-speaking congregation. The church moved to its current location in Northbrook in 2004 and started renting from a Korean church that met there. In 2011, Lakeview merged with that Korean church, inheriting the building and its denomination (ECC). Our senior pastor then became the pastor of both congregations and ministered in both EC and KC (along with a few other short-term EC staff) until a long-term EC pastor joined the ministry in 2016. Lakeview has always been striving to be one ministry of two languages under one roof, united in the common vision of Transformation N.O.W. (Near to far - One life at a time - Word and Spirit leading the way).

The bicultural compatibility at Lakeview is most pronounced at the leadership level. Both EC and KC have their own Leadership Teams (KCLT and ECLT) that meet separately and together (together forming LVLT) in alternating intervals. In LVLT meetings, ECLT and KCLT each collectively share voting power (they both have 50% of voting power regardless of how many individuals comprise their congregation's team). The pastoral staff also meets separately and together. The goal of these joint meetings is to share information about the whole church and mutual intercession.

1. What was your TICJ journey's most important accomplishment during the past two years?

In reflecting on the past two year's TICJ journey, our team identified two key things that we are grateful for: (1) an increased perspective and (2) a fruitful intergenerational event that was birthed out of our TICJ discussions. First, through TICJ we were able to be in fellowship with other churches walking similar yet very different journeys. Through meeting them we were able to gain perspective on ways that we can still grow and ways that we are particularly blessed. This helped us to have a more grounded perspective on our own journey. Secondly, our TICJ reflections led us to put together a new kind of intergenerational event: the Lakeview Family Prayer Night. In this event we have the opportunity for the whole church body to hear prayer requests of each of our "life stages" from both congregations, and to worship and intercede together as one family. The feedback we have been hearing has indicated to us that it has helped us to grow a greater mutual awareness and concern for one another.

2. What might be the most significant gift your church received through your participation in the TICJ learning journey?

The daily life of the Korean American church tends to be ruled by the tyranny of the urgent. But through our TICJ journey we are thankful to have received the opportunity to reflect and gain insight on the subject of congregational culture. Our journey helped us

to focus on our EC-KC relationship and take steps to go look deeper and wider than before. Our journey with TICl also gave us insight about how God is at work in other churches. This gave us the context in which to understand our own experiences from a much wider angle.

3. What might be a couple of lessons/insights from this learning journey you would like to share with other immigrant churches?

There are three lessons that we've learned that we would like to share. Firstly, we learned to slow down and seek change more incrementally. Entering into the TICl journey can seem overwhelming at first as we turn from engaging in our typical daily ministry to seeing grander visions of unity. But such changes must begin one step at a time.

The second lesson is related to the first - we learned that just as there is always more to be learned and done, there are also already many blessings. No matter where in the journey we are, there will always be things to give thanks for as long as we seek them.

The third lesson we learned is to not be discouraged by ways that our churches might seem behind compared to other churches but rather see other churches as sources of inspiration. Every church is different and there are good things being done in each of them; we should listen to every idea from the other churches but we should not try to be those churches.

4. What is a significant intergenerational challenge/issue your church tried to

address during the TICl learning journey? How did your church and/or TICl team address the challenge? What internal and/or external resources were especially helpful in addressing this challenge?

The overarching issues that we identified and attempted to address during our TICl learning journey was the issue of "siloe'd" ministries. While we share our budget and building, the EC and KC largely ran their own ministries and looked after themselves. And in a few areas where one looks after the other (usually KC looking after the EC - for example, in building maintenance), there was a sense of lack of reciprocity or ignorance, indicating a lack of co-ownership. We began to break down the siloe'd tendencies by focusing on relationship building based on our common commitment to Christ. We wanted to ensure that the unity being built was built on the foundation of the gospel, not on any other superficial tactic. To build relationships, we worked on increasing mutual awareness in the church, most notably embodied in our new Lakeview Family Prayer Night event.

A key asset that we already had that helped us to get started was our leadership structure. Our pastoral staff and our leadership teams (KCLT[Korean Congregation Leadership Team] and ECLT[English Congregation Leadership Team]) both have a rhythm of meeting all together for every other meeting interval. The pastoral staff and leadership teams already knew one another and were mindful of what was happening on the other side of the church.

This initial connection was a key resource that helped us to get things started in bringing people together

5. What are your team's/church/s next steps in the coming years? How might your team and your church continue your learning journey during the coming years?

After these past two years of experiencing and being pushed by TICl, we recognize that intergenerational growth must be an ongoing, intentional process. Therefore, like some of our TICl cohort churches, we are beginning a permanent TICl-type team that will carry on the reflection and work of our initial TICl team. This team will consist of individuals from both KC and EC and will own the vision of a healthy intergenerational church. For now, they will be tasked with carrying the Lakeview Family Prayer Night forward according to the vision we started it with. In addition to this, they will facilitate our other all-church opportunities with an increased mindfulness of intergenerational health. This team will also conduct listening sessions every 2 years so we can keep a pulse check on our progress. This listening session will be modeled after the initial listening session we did at the beginning of our journey.

While the task given to this new team so far is more event-oriented, the goal is to have the team members catch on to a higher vision of growing together as a church. The original TICl team will remain present for now and facilitate this process of becoming more vision-oriented. As the team catches on to the vision, the

original team may fade out, as appropriate. Through this, we hope to continue to communicate with our church the possibility and need for continual growth in unity in Christ.



TICl Team

A Narrative

The beginning of our TICl learning journey was a very exciting time. We all brought in much expectation and hope for how our church would be transformed for the better. Even though our insights and ideas did not always align, it was nonetheless a meaningful place to be because all of those things indicated that we all care and want the same thing, to become a church that enjoys greater unity that is the foundation for greater missional engagement. And being a sizable church of 500-600 members, we thought that there were a plethora of areas that needed improvement and held hope for drastic transformations that would catapult us into a brand new congregational culture of intergenerational unity.

However, the reality of our TICl journey was not a series of drastic culture shifts that turned our church around. We believe that God was at work in our hearts as a church first and foremost. Throughout the first year of our TICl learning journey we were exposed to the process of understanding and shaping congregational culture. Through reflecting on cultural values and artifacts, we were trained to see the things not so evident. But contrary to our desires, this was not such a clear cut process that we could manipulate in order to implement our visions. This became for us a helpful tool to read the culture, not to write a drastically new one. But in the process of these discussions, God was brewing in our church something deeper. While we were attempting to shift the tectonic plates by pushing the mountains, God was at the foundation, giving our church members the desire to see intergenerational unity come to fruition.

As the TICl vision has been taking root first in the hearts of our TICl team members, various conversations had been naturally flowing outwards into the life of the church. And before we knew it, a general mindfulness of the EC-KC relationship had grown. In the meanwhile, God had also been at work in other areas of the church to provide organic opportunities for inter-congregational relationship building, such as in our Monday night pingpong group. These were the platforms wherein a greater heart for the KC-EC relationship had begun to simmer. Through this subtle process, the people of the church began to want to see more of one another.

So rather than try to implement drastic culture-level changes of our own design, we began to value getting together in various spaces. This was a healthy reminder that while the church can be approached as a system of cultures, with all their values and artifacts, it is first a body consisting of God's people. These relationships are powerful and God in his gracious providence works through these relationships to transform his people.

This is how God prepared our church to receive with excitement the Lakeview Family Prayer Night - our effort to anchor our growing unity in our shared commitment to worship Christ and intercede for his kingdom work in every generation within the church. While we have not entered a completely new era of Lakeview, we have indeed turned a new page of growing one step deeper in unity as a church. There are still the exciting and overwhelming opportunities for growth ahead of us and we will continue to seek after God's own heart after our 2 year TICl journey comes to an end. And we will do so in remembrance of and thankfulness for how God led us through these last two years. We will continue on one hand to sharpen our analytical mind in understanding our congregational culture but on the other hand to humbly grow in our love for one another, being eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.





Learning Journey Reflections: Monmouth Community Christian Church

Middletown Township, New Jersey

Church Background

Monmouth Community Christian Church is a mid-size Chinese-American, immigrant church founded 40 years ago by employees of Bell Labs in Middletown, New Jersey. Today, we have three language-specific congregations: Cantonese, English, and Mandarin. Like most Chinese immigrant churches, ours is deeply multi-cultural, being composed of families originally from Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Cultural differences distinguish families from each of these places of origin, so we spend a significant amount of time listening to different cultural groups before we make major decisions. Our pastoral staff currently consists of myself as the English Pastor, a Cantonese Pastor, and a Mandarin Pastor. We share pastoral leadership equally in our church. Our challenges consistently revolve around communication issues and our continual need to cross vast cultural and generational differences to achieve mutual understanding. While these things are also true of most other Chinese American immigrant churches, I think that the leaders of MCCC often demonstrate a rare openness to entering into conversation about cultural and generational differences. In part, this might grow from the deep reflection that occurred after a painful church split within the English Congregation fifteen years ago.

1. What was your TICl journey's most important accomplishment during the past two years?

Our TICl Team believes that our greatest accomplishments during our TICl journey occurred in the areas of improved communication, intentionality, collaboration, and processes for evaluation and improvement.

First, TICl led us toward healthier communication about painful relationship gaps and blocks within our church between the FG and SG. In particular, our six listening sessions and our Board of Overseers retreat, during which we watched segments of Pastor Paul Kim and Pastor John Cha sharing about ODPC's experiences and then discussed MCCC's similar challenges, enabled our church to begin acknowledging real cultural differences among different congregations and generations in a more open and direct way. As lines of communication opened and deepened, a sense of greater trust among our leaders grew.

Second, our TICl Team members feel that there's a temptation for our leaders to react to various situations rather than to lead proactively. TICl has helped us to increase our intentionality as we seek to address relationship gaps and weaknesses in our church. Rather than hoping things will improve on their own, the TICl experience enables us to diagnose various areas in need of improvement and then to take tailored actions to address these weaknesses.

Third, TICl enabled us to experience greater collaboration among our congregations and generations than perhaps

ever before. This collaboration grew out of the need for us to organize and participate in events that involved people of different ages and cultural backgrounds where they could express their hearts within an environment that felt safe (e.g. listening sessions, Board retreat, intergen meals). TICl encouraged the leaders of our three congregations to work more closely together than we have ever before.

Finally, TICl enabled us to develop healthier and more effective processes for evaluation and improvement. These processes span the leadership layers of our church. The listening sessions and intergen meals created space for our people to provide their honest feedback. Our Board (Pastors and Elders) received and digested a significant amount of this feedback, and our Executive Council (Pastors, Elders, and Deacons) received several reports about our TICl journey. We particularly benefited from TICl's reminder about the connection between values and artifacts, which enabled us to take concrete steps based on the results of our evaluations.

2. What might be the most significant gift your church received through your participation in the TICl learning journey?

Through our team discussions we identified several valuable gifts from the TICl journey:

Gift of intentionality – TICl gave us the opportunity to intentionally reflect on and respond to our intergenerational relationships,

leadership health, communication, missional opportunities, and future as a church.

Spiritual companionship and support – We were encouraged by the opportunity to pray, worship, hear stories from, and even commiserate with other churches facing similar challenges. The ODPC story was especially helpful (interdependency model, servant leadership).

“Newness” – 1) new togetherness in relationships, 2) new opportunities to discuss, evaluate, and address weaknesses in our church, 3) new concepts that provide new perspectives (implicit/explicit theologies; cultural values and artifacts), 4) new action steps that arose from our new perspectives (artifacts reflecting freshly articulated values).

Guardrails along a risky path – The structure provided by TICl (clear goals and assignments), the feeling of being part of something larger than our local church through this stretching and growing experience with ten other immigrant churches, and the support provided by wise, caring, and deeply knowledgeable TICl leaders at TEDS gave us a sense of safety and direction, providing guardrails along a risky path, without which we may not have had the courage to attempt opening conversations about painful issues.

TICl leadership team at TEDS – Each of these gifts were made possible by the wise leadership provided by the TICl leaders at TEDS. We benefitted tremendously from the

hard work and sacrifice of this gifted team. Thank you so much!

3. What might be a couple of lessons/insights from this learning journey you would like to share with other immigrant churches?

Immigrant churches have a unique opportunity to glorify God through the complementary partnerships possible between the FG and SG because of their shared faith and commitment to each other. The greatness of the challenges we have in our church (different cultures, languages, generations) magnifies God's glory among us as He unifies us and enables us to see these differences as gifts and opportunities.

You are not alone. Despite various cultural differences among immigrant churches, the tremendous similarities gave us the sense that we're in this together. Because other churches are facing issues similar, or even almost identical, to our own, we can become a source of support for each other.

Intergenerational ministry efforts must be intentional because people naturally tend to socialize with others of a similar age and culture. Intentionality requires prayer, listening, planning, communicating, collaborating, and repeating well-designed artifacts/practices that reflect our values over time.

Identify, strengthen, and celebrate existing initiatives in your church that foster intergenerational cooperation. Some of these existing practices in our church are VBS, mission trips, sporting events, joint choirs, and

the Summer Testimony Series in the youth ministry.

Change must come from the leaders. Church leaders, ministry co-workers, and parents can profoundly influence the intergenerational dynamics of a church by modeling servanthood, humility, respectful attitudes toward one another, and a willingness to communicate (both by listening carefully and speaking respectfully). As they do so, trust will grow among them, and they will model to younger generations healthy patterns of relating. The leaders of ODPC and of TICl at TEDS provide good examples of what this looks like in practice.

Freedom – We were reminded of our need to embrace God's freedom to change things as God leads us to envision new possibilities. This will at times include the freedom to change by discarding ineffective ministry models and behaviors from the past and embracing fresh new ideas that enable us to more faithfully live out God's calling upon our church.

Become an encourager. If we focused only on the challenges within our church and the cultural gaps that still remain, then we would be filled with negativity, discouragement, and pessimism. We've learned that we need to be like Barnabas in Acts: "When he arrived [at the first multi-ethnic church in Antioch] and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts" (Acts 11:23).

Take the long view. TICl helped us to clarify a high-level view of the culture gaps and

dynamics in our church. Rather than taking huge steps or seeking rapid change, though, we needed to be content with taking tiny steps in which the progress was not always clearly evident. There's a sense that we're still at the beginning of a long journey, but that our tiny steps have been moving in the right direction.

Lifelong learning and a Spirit-led "growth mindset" are crucial (Romans 12:2).

4. What is a significant intergenerational challenge/issue your church tried to address during the TICl learning journey? How did your church and/or TICl team address the challenge? What internal and/or external resources were especially helpful in addressing this challenge?

Disconnect between implicit and explicit theologies.

Addressed through teaching: 1) Prof. Peter Cha's teaching on explicit and implicit theologies (TICl Gathering) gave us language to describe what the SG sees as hypocrisy in a way that is less difficult for the FG to hear and understand, 2) Intergenerational Meals – provided space to point out discrepancies between what we say we believe and how we behave, 3) Pastor Nathan's sermon during our yearly joint service (Jan. 2023), 4) Pastor Nathan's yearlong sermon series on the Logic of Authenticity (Luke 18:9-14 defines the terms, Romans 8 unfolds the depth), 5) Board (Pastors and Elders) and spouses retreat (August 2022), 6) Several presentations to our Executive Council (Pastors, Elders, Deacons, Ministry

Coordinators) about what we have been learning through TICl.

Need for deeper, authentic connection and two-way communication between the FG and SG

Addressed through: 1) Intergenerational Meals, 2) joint local mission activity, 3) intentional cross-congregational, cross-generational conversations on communion Sundays (new artifact), 4) Intentional conversations across generations and congregations during our church retreat (August 2023), 5) Summer Testimony Series – Pastor Nathan interviews FG leaders about their life and journey of faith in front of primarily SG youth (ongoing artifact).

Need for intergenerational local mission activities.

Addressed through: 1) Intergenerational service at grand opening of Solutions Health and Pregnancy Center, 2) ongoing efforts to research and engage in intergenerational local outreach. Possible future activities may include hosting an event that brings our local community to our church to honor first-responders, serving at a soup kitchen, and partnering with a local ministry that serves recent refugees.

5. What are your team's/church/s next steps in the coming years? How might your team and your church continue your learning journey during the coming years?

We plan to continue meeting as an MCCC TICl Team with board representation from all three congregations. Initially we plan to

continue focusing on the two main goals of TICI (strengthen intergenerational relationships and reach out more effectively to the community together). With time, we may expand these goals. We see our TICI Team as a catalyst for positive change and deepened intergenerational, inter-congregational relationships in our church.

Our TICI Team senses a burden to cast an expanding Biblical vision of TICI principles, theological perspectives, and artifacts in our church through increased teaching and preaching on intergenerational issues. We hope to diversify the opportunities for this teaching and learning through varied delivery formats, such as workshops, sermons to the FG and SG, and Bible studies at the beginning of co-worker meetings. By doing so, we hope that more of our people will catch the vision for how God desires to raise up healthy intergenerational relationships throughout our church.



MCCC TICI Team:
Ron Lo, Cher Lo, Bonnie Lin, Nathan Hieb, Sherry Cheng,
James Cheng, Not present: Rev. David H

A Narrative

In the fall of 2022, Tim and Michele began attending MCCC after moving from New York City to New Jersey. They had been looking specifically for an intergenerational, Chinese American church where they could attend an English-speaking, SG congregation and where a Mandarin-speaking, FG congregation could minister to Tim's non-Christian parents, who often stayed with them. They quickly became connected to our Young Adult Ministry, became part of the fabric of our English Congregation, and began viewing MCCC as their church home. Tim's parents attended our Mandarin worship services occasionally, but not frequently.

Then, early in 2023, Tim's Mom was diagnosed with advanced cancer. Our church, both FG and SG, quickly mobilized and responded to this devastating news. The English Congregation surrounded and supported Tim, while our FG English Congregation Caring Coordinator, Sherry, and Mandarin Congregation members reached out to Tim's Mom, shared Scripture passages and Christian songs with her, and prayed for her. In early February, as her health rapidly declined, Sherry and I visited Tim's Mom with the family's permission. We carefully explained the good news of Jesus Christ, and how she can join God's family. She spoke no English, and so as I shared of Christ's death and resurrection, and God's invitation to her to receive by faith the eternal life that God offers through Jesus, Sherry translated these simple words of Biblical hope into Mandarin. Through translation, I led her in a simple prayer in which she placed her faith in Jesus Christ. Immediately, her countenance changed as a weight seemed to lift from her and new light shone through her eyes. Her family surrounded her as we baptized her. Many tears were shed as fresh hope mingled with their deep sorrow. In the days to come, she would often say that her only regret was that she did not have more time to learn more about her Savior.

During her funeral in Brooklyn the next month, God again used our church's intentional, intergenerational strengths to bless His people. I planned the funeral, but I knew that I lack the language skills and cultural understanding to minister effectively to the unchurched, FG Brooklyn restaurant workers, who made up the majority of attendees. Pastor Tingpang, who ministers to our Mandarin Congregation, has served extensively among this population, understands their perspectives and needs, and shared about the hope we have in Jesus Christ in a way that was deeply relevant and sensitive to the lives of these new, struggling immigrants.

Our church's TICJ journey enabled us to take steps beyond our pre-existing ministries by bridging the generations more intentionally than ever before, and by presenting a vision of intergenerational ministry that Tim and Michele embraced and valued.

Over the months that followed, Tim and Michele became more deeply involved in our English Congregation and attended the first two intergenerational meals – the first for our board members, their spouses, and young families and young adults, and the second for board members, their spouses, and returning college and grad students. During each meal, we invited participants to reflect on the categories “Grateful” and “Growing.” Through large-group sharing, small-group conversations over dinner, and then sharing our thoughts through posting them on a wall and talking further in the large group, we were able to process the strengths and weaknesses of our intergenerational church together while sharing our frustrations and dreams. Even though Tim and Michele are new to our church, their experiences in immigrant families and at other Chinese churches enabled them to join our conversations and add valuable insights about our strengths and weaknesses.

Second, this summer, our TICI Team organized an intergenerational outreach event to serve our surrounding community while also bringing together FG and SG members of our English, Mandarin, and Cantonese Congregations. We learned that a local Christian ministry, the Solutions Health and Pregnancy Center, needed help during the grand opening of their new facility in a nearby, lower-income neighborhood. We received board support to make this an all-church outreach event.

The Outreach Director of Solutions gave a presentation at our church, sharing with us the history and ministry of Solutions and preparing us for our various roles at the grand opening. Michele attended this presentation and sensed a special burden to become more deeply involved. When she learned that Solutions was looking for a liaison between their ministry and our church, she volunteered to serve in this role. Even though this outreach occurred in the middle of a workday, she and Tim joined in serving, along with seven others from the English Congregation, eleven from the Mandarin Congregation, and two from the Cantonese Congregation. Afterwards, the Outreach Director told us several times: “We don’t know what we would have done without your church.” The following week, this Outreach Director, who had relationships with more than fifty churches in our county, told me that his family had decided to attend our church from now on.

The final snapshot of God using our intentionality in surprising ways occurred after we attempted to implement the feedback we received during our intergenerational meals. Both FG and SG participants had reported a shared desire for additional guided opportunities for intergenerational connection and fellowship. They thought a guided format, similar to what we used for the intergenerational meals, could help our people overcome the usual social scripts we use to communicate across generations. We wanted to move beyond the typical interactions about the surface-level aspects of life and move into deeper sharing about personal life and spiritual matters.

After discussing this, our TICI Team proposed, and our board approved, having intentional conversations over lunch on Communion Sundays (first Sunday of each month). Each month, we now encourage each congregation (Cantonese, English, and Mandarin) to sit with people of a different age, first language, and culture than themselves. We also provide one discussion question for people to use. These simple questions gently nudge our people to connect on a deeper and more personal level by asking things like: What's one way God has blessed you recently? What's one thing you're thankful for this year? What's a challenge you're facing?

During our first intergenerational, inter-congregational lunch conversation, our TICI Team members had particularly fruitful encounters. For example, Bonnie was able to connect with a FG member, Hannah, from our Cantonese Congregation. As Hannah shared specific needs, Bonnie realized that members of the English Congregation could help meet those needs. First, Hannah told Bonnie about an older, single mother who feels shy attending our church because of her marital status. Bonnie was able to tell Hannah about another bilingual single mother in the English Congregation, who could welcome Hannah's friend into our church and help her feel comfortable and accepted. Then, Hannah told Bonnie about her work with French-speaking refugees from Cameroon and how the language gap creates challenges. Bonnie then connected Hannah to one of our other English Congregation members, a French-speaker from Haiti.

These simple snapshots illustrate how God has been using our intentionality to create fresh connections and deepen relationships between our FG and SG, and to enable us to join together in more effective outreach in our community. TICI has helped us live into our pre-existing commitment to be an intergenerational church with greater intentionality that enables us to see what God is doing among us. In particular, TICI has provided guardrails along a risky path through the clear structure of assignments and goals, an encouraging community of other churches traveling the same path, and the support of wise, caring, and deeply knowledgeable leaders at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. We plan to continue building on what TICI has taught us, so that we can more fully embody the generational and cultural diversity, and the deep, relational unity, to which God has called us as the Body of Christ.



Grateful : Sense of family, warm community, place of belonging and acceptance
 Growing: Deeper connection and mutual understanding; opportunities for intentional conversation and relationship building





Learning Journey Reflections: Trinity Grace Church

Highland Park, Illinois

Church Background

Trinity Grace Church is a Chinese heritage church in Highland Park, IL. We were planted by CCUC Chinatown in 1986 as CCUC North. The goal was for the church to be an outreach to the Chinese population living in the northern suburbs of Chicago. In 2009, the church became independent from CCUC Chinatown and we eventually rebranded and became Trinity Grace Church in 2019. The church was renting facility spaces for the first few years, but in 1990 we acquired a property in Highland Park as our own. Then, in 2019 we also launched a church plant to better reach the Chinese community in the Vernon Hills, Buffalo Grove, Libertyville area.

The church is made up of 4 congregations: Cantonese, Mandarin, English, and a Mandarin speaking church plant; and there are currently 2 campuses, the main campus in Highland Park, and a church plant in Long Grove. Similar to many immigrant churches, our non-English language congregations (Cantonese and Mandarin) are made up of mostly first-generation immigrants. The English congregation is mostly second generation and onward. The leadership team consists of an Elder Board (pastors and lay elders with representatives from all congregations) and a Deacon Board (also with representatives from all congregations, which reports to the Elder Board). These two boards oversee matters pertaining to the whole church. Each congregation also has its own ministry team for congregation specific care.

1. What was your TICl journey's most important accomplishment during the past two years?

One of the biggest hurdles to overcome was just the awareness of different intergenerational dynamics. As a church going into the TICl journey, we approached it with a mindset that there might be some minor differences between our congregations but that we, as a whole, were a pretty healthy church and our leaders at the board level were quite good at communicating and understanding one another. During the TICl journey, however, the tools and perspectives brought up let us take a second look at some issues that may have unconsciously been either ignored, or suppressed in the past, all in the name of keeping the peace.

The conversations at the TICl gatherings catalyzed some reconciliation and communication events at the board level of our church. Without the tools and realization of such dynamics, such a conversation between the first and second generation would not even have been possible, let alone taken seriously. There have also been more moments of pause for introspection and asking how decisions affect other congregations outside the decision makers, which we think is a small but vital step in having the culture spread through the church.

2. What might be the most significant gift your church received through your participation in the TICl learning journey?

When we originally formed the TICl cohort, we had chosen members who were representatives of their respective generation/congregations and who were influential in shaping the culture. There was an expectation that working together would bring us into some difficult conversations but one of the surprising outcomes was the sense of fellowship and camaraderie and joy brought about by walking this journey together. The team genuinely enjoys talking to and hanging out with one another. The friendships built within the cohort really gave us a glimpse of what could possibly happen at scale across the church, were this mindset taken up by the church at large.

3. What might be a couple of lessons/insights from this learning journey you would like to share with other immigrant churches?

It might go without saying, but the importance of humility was critical for this journey to be successful. There were many points where pastors (whether senior or associate) and/or ministry leaders needed to set aside the face of honor and admit wrong was done – even if it was unintended. Without a heart of humility, the process could have easily been halted. Humility in the form of an open mind was also necessary when approaching the Learning Community Gatherings. There were many new ideas and perspectives given through different churches' stories and also from the TICl organizers experiences. The unity and friendships within the TICl cohort did not happen spontaneously.

It took work. Without intentionality, of each member to reach out to another, to initiate difficult conversations; the fruit of that work – namely, the closeness of the cohort and our ability to work well together – would not have happened by itself. It is tempting to sit back and let it happen over time, but if there is no intentionality by the leaders, change will not happen.

4. What is a significant intergenerational challenge/issue your church tried to address during the TICl learning journey? How did your church and/or TICl team address the challenge? What internal and/or external resources were especially helpful in addressing this challenge?

Communication between people of different backgrounds, upbringings, and generational experiences was, and still is, difficult. We spent a lot of time listening to others. We found that sometimes we had to stay, not just on a single issue, but a single subpoint of that issue, to make sure everyone in the discussion was on the same page. Due to the different backgrounds of leaders, we often found people talking past each other instead of truly dialoguing.

We needed a few dedicated retreats where we specifically addressed a single issue to intentionally communicate and find understanding. After observing the impact of the online format during the COVID-19 shutdowns, we realize that discussing face to face is a big help. Our leadership retreats and reconciliation meetings were all done at in-

person meetings. TICI provided us the framework of how to communicate across generations gave. This gave us a good launching point to initiate those hard conversations with confidence. Since this challenge is one we are still continuing to address, we are currently seeking advice or workshops from communication experts to guide our leadership in for future conversations.

5. What are your team's/church/s next steps in the coming years? How might your team and your church continue your learning journey during the coming years?

As the TICI journey comes to a close, the Elder Board is setting aside a time on September 30 to review the lessons learned from the TICI cohort and see how it fits into the vision for the church. In the past year, the English congregation has also been exploring their place and role in the church as a whole. These two conversations mean that we are currently at a place of introspection and seeking the guidance of the Spirit for next steps.

These past two years, the role of the cohort at our church has been one of advisory. The team learns at TICI and generates proposals and ideas back to the church leaders for consideration. The hope is that the ideas and perspectives are absorbed and internalized by the church as a whole rather than just the cohort members. One option is to the Elder Board may consider is to have the TICI cohort continue to meet quarterly for up to one more

year. The purpose of the following year would be to provide counsel and give commentary to the Elder Board. They would continue to provide reminders to help the Elder Board fully internalize the lessons of the TICI learning journey. The second option would be for the Elder Board, having grasped the vision of TICI, to run with and steer the church.



Trinity Grace TICI Team:
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A Narrative

Trinity Grace Church is a Chinese heritage church in Highland Park, IL. We were originally planted by CCUC in Chinatown, and many of our governances and leadership structures have remnants of that legacy. The church is made up of 3 languages: Cantonese, Mandarin, and English. All in all, many in the leadership felt that our church culture was very understanding and there were very few unhealthy interactions between the generations. And so, as we went into the learning journey, we expected to learn a few lessons, but God used the opportunity to bring up some blind spots and help us reflect on our church's culture.

One major discovery we made on the journey was how differently we communicated and understood one another between generations. Before joining the TICJ journey, these issues would be brushed aside or ignored, but with multiple generations and congregations in the TICJ cohort, it allowed us to use the tools from the learning journey to analyze our own church. We found that opinions or viewpoints that were communicated by one side were at times misunderstood or completely lost by the other side. For small issues this was easily overlooked but as the small issues piled up and issues with high stakes were also misunderstood, relationships were put in tension.

Soon after the start of the learning journey, the lessons from TICJ were put to a test. Our senior pastor was out of town and there was a neighboring church in crisis that wanted to borrow our church for a prayer meeting. The elders met and agreed to host this church in their time of need and the English congregation volunteered to communicate with and welcome the neighboring church. At the prayer meeting, some members of the first-generation congregation decided to also attend the prayer meeting in support. However, one of them found the format and content of the prayer meeting unsatisfactory and aired out their grievances in an online small group chat. The senior pastor, still out of town but in order to pacify the upset member, ended up publicly apologizing in the small group chat for the actions of the English congregation for mismanaging the neighboring church's prayer meeting and the conversation ended there. The exchange was found by some leaders in the English ministry who were deeply offended that the English congregation and its leaders were "thrown under the bus" in order to pacify a first-generation member. While the senior pastor had not intended to push blame onto the English congregation, the entire series of events brought to the surface the unintended consequences of the communications, important unspoken assumptions that were different, and different cultural perceptions.

In the aftermath, the English pastor brought this issue to the senior pastor when he returned. The senior pastor, seeing the damage and potential further alienation it could cause if unaddressed, decided to hold a gathering with the elder and deacon board to both hear from the English congregation leadership and apologize and seek reconciliation. The TICl cohort had originally planned for a mini-retreat for the boards to get to know each other and build some cross-congregational, cross-generational relationships. But light of this new development, the cohort felt it necessary to pivot and spend time in reconciliation, because if reconciliation could not properly happen, then there was very little chance any trust or caring relationships could be built across generations. This event, while painful to go through, was very necessary to bring to the forefront how our church still needed to grow in our intergenerational dynamics. Thankfully, because of the humility and long-suffering of the church leaders, it ended in a renewed focus towards unity instead of a fracture of the community.

Using the lessons learned from reconciliation, we started paying more attention to communicating well and wanted to create artifacts that would allow us to build relational bridges. It was this direction that spawned our next few artifact ideas. Since relationship building was important for us, we planned a few events that would bring the church leaders and their families together for fellowship and fun. We frequently encountered each other in ministry contexts but we wanted to build memories outside of just working together. We planned a dinner gathering with the families of the leadership teams, we also planned a pickleball tournament between the church boards. Being able to meet with other members in a more casual setting and relate to one another not only as co-workers but as brothers and sisters in Christ opened the door for more deeper and genuine conversations. Having pleasant relationships also brings a friendlier tone to church leadership meetings, since it is hard to assume the worst of someone who you can share a meal and have fun together with.

The relationship bridge-building is by no means the cure to our complex church dynamics, but we do see it as a good first step. Our church is continuing the bridge-building process by seeking more tools and even professional communication experts to help improve our ability to hear and understand one another across generational and congregational gaps. The final goal and hope is that, after the leadership boards have built bridges and started the communication and understanding process, the rest of the congregations, following the example of the leaders, can also experience the cross-congregation/generation relationships that were learned during the TICl journey

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