

Building God's People to Reach Our Neighbours (2)



By Pastor Ivan Leung

In the past year, there have been many unsettling and unhappy events around the world. There were brothers and sisters within the church who have endured sickness that required medical attention and others who have experienced family members passing away, employment difficulties, economic turmoil, and workplace politics. Therefore, when we look back at the upsetting events that have happened around us for this past year, we are reminded, brothers and sisters, by the Bible: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (Hebrews 13:8)

Amidst many changes, we still firmly believe that our God is sovereign, because He is everlasting (Psalm 90:1-2). When we abide in Christ and strive for a deeper life in Him, we can bear good witness, lead a fruitful life, and glorify God in these ever-changing times. Brothers and sisters, no matter how the passing year went by, let us humbly learn always to be thankful in all things and hold a faithful heart that solely trust in our everlasting God as we step into the new year.

The 2010 theme for our church will continue to be "Building God's People to Reach Our Neighbours". The Elders Board emphasized the key point in this theme is "Building People": caring for those yet to believe, nurturing new believers, and training disciples and leaders. Building people is the core value of our church, but more importantly, it is the foundation of Lord Jesus' passion. When we devoted ourselves to the theme last year, God led the pastoral team and elders to brainstorm on the outline of the "Age Shepherding Ministry". When the church puts emphasis on the spiritual growth of people as its main ministry, it will need to highlight the importance of shepherding and pastoral care. Ministries should be people-oriented rather than task-oriented.

Age Shepherding

In 2008, God had already placed the idea of age shepherding into my heart. At that time, I thought: "How can a multi-site church build more people up spiritually?" I prayed and contemplated on the matter for a long time. In July 2009, I began sharing the idea of age shepherding with the pastoral staff and we strongly believe that shepherding the flock is an important calling that Lord Jesus has placed upon the church (John 21: 15-17, Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2). At the same time, growing mature in Christ is also God's desire for each believer's spiritual journey. Therefore, we will follow biblical teachings and make it our duty to shepherd each age group specifically. When we come together to shepherd and build each other up, God will build up our church.

If we have accepted the importance of age shepherding, a critical question arises: "How do we move forward and

implement the age shepherding ministries?" In the past six months, we have passed through different processes step-by-step to contemplate and plan for the age shepherding ministries within our church.

1. On July 22, 2009, I discussed with the pastoral team on the basic definition of shepherding, scope of shepherding, the meaning of age shepherding, and how to strengthen the shepherding ministries in a multi-site church.

2. On September 15, 2009, I shared with the Board of Elders about the message of what age shepherding is and emphasized that elders need to join with the pastoral staff to minister to the different age groups within the church as this is one of the key responsibilities of an elder.

3. On October 17, 2009, in the Staff and Elders Planning Meeting, we discussed the details of age shepherding which included the current status of evangelizing, caring, equipping, and training of people within each ministry and what required improvement. We also discussed the qualifications, responsibilities, and training needed for shepherding leaders.

4. On December 2, 2009, I met with all the Congregation Pastors: Rev. Paul Choy, Rev. Lawrence Yuen, Rev. Peter Choy, Rev. Norman Tong, Rev. Alfred Tsui and Rev. Abe Chan, in order to follow up on the discussion from the Staff and Elders Planning Meeting. An outline was drafted that details the needs of shepherding leaders and the plan to implement age shepherding ministries at each congregation.

Shepherding Leaders

1. Qualifications
 - a. Church membership
 - b. Spiritual maturity
 - c. Prayerful
 - d. Solid biblical knowledge and foundation
 - e. Godly leadership characteristics (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1)
 - f. Emotionally healthy
 - g. Approachable
 - h. Available to people (time-wise)
 - i. Caring
 - j. Good listener
 - k. Compassionate
2. Role and Responsibility
 - a. Shepherding Leader is a lay-leader who devoted himself or herself on caring and shepherding ministry;
 - b. Serving alongside the pastoral team in caring, nurturing and building up the different age groups in each congregation;
 - c. Looking after a certain number of people (to be determined);
 - d. Engaging in prayer with the pastors for the congregation.
3. Selection Process
 - a. Selected by the congregation pastor and reported to the Board of Elders;
 - b. A one year term with an evaluation afterwards to determine eligibility;
 - c. The number of selected candidates depends on the size of each congregation.
4. Accountability
 - a. Each shepherding leader is responsible to the congregation pastor and is to be in constant communication with him;
 - b. Assist the pastoral team in shepherding the different age groups in each congregation;
 - c. Attend training sessions on a regular basis to improve shepherding skills so that the quality of shepherding ministries will be more effective.
5. Training
 - a. Biblical concept of shepherding
 - b. Christ's example of shepherding
 - c. Caring and counselling training courses
 - d. VCAC-LTI courses
 - e. Other appropriate training

Congregation Age Shepherding Ministry Plan

1. Age Shepherding Goals
 - a. The main goal of the ministry is to provide appropriate care and training to different age groups within each congregation;
 - b. This ministry will be the combined efforts of the pastoral team, elders, and shepherding leaders serving as one team.
2. Age Shepherding Methods
 - a. Depending on the background, culture, and language of each congregation, each congregation pastor will identify the unique needs of the different age groups;
 - b. Each congregation pastor can consider utilizing different methods that will be best appropriate for the congregation;
 - c. Methods could include fellowship groups, small groups, Sunday school, visitations, mentorship, discipleship training or VCAC-LTI courses;
 - d. Age shepherding should also take into consideration those who only join us for Sunday service;
 - e. By serving as one team, it is an opportunity also for the pastoral team and congregation to spur each other on and attain spiritual growth.
3. Age Shepherding Resources
 - a. Shepherding leaders will be recruited based on the needs and size of each congregation;
 - b. Each congregation pastor will draft and prepare the appropriate training courses for shepherding leaders;
 - c. In order to best utilize church resources, the training for shepherding leaders will be conducted for congregations that speak the same language.
4. Age Shepherding Structure
 - a. Each congregation pastor will draft an appropriate structure to which age shepherding ministry can be implemented;
 - b. Regardless of the structure, all pastors, elders and shepherding leaders need to devote to regular prayer and evaluation of the structure;

- c. The outline drafted by each congregation pastor is to be presented to Pastor Ivan Leung on Jan 31, 2010 for his review.

The purpose of implementing age shepherding ministries is to hope that everyone who attends VCAC will receive care, training, equipping, and leadership building as they grow from a new believer to a mature spiritual leader. As the church grows in God's will, we, as one, can accomplish God's great commission, extend God's kingdom, and give praise to God. We ask that brothers and sisters continue to pray for your personal spiritual growth and the church's age shepherding ministry.

As we look into the New Year, we are uncertain of the days that lie ahead of us, but we deeply believe that God is in control of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Brothers and sisters, regardless of the good days or bad days in the upcoming year, pray that God will bless us with a peaceful heart. May the prayer below reflect our unwavering trust in the everlasting God.

The Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway
to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all
things right
if I surrender to His Will;
That I may be reasonably happy in
this life
and supremely happy with Him
Forever and ever in the next.
Amen.

--Reinhold Niebuhr 1892-1971