

Far East Broadcaster

Paradigm Shift in Pastoring on the Mainland

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CHRIST TO THE WORLD BY RADIO

A fellow researcher on mainland churches once published *The Nine Developmental Trends of Chinese Churches*, pointing out that some house churches have come to light, that the church is still a minority group, that urbanization has profoundly affected church development, with the emergence of diversification in pastoring modes, congregationalist church governance and full time pastoral ministry. Churches go for comprehensive evangelistic social ministries, global outlook, post-denominationalism, and there will be a golden age in theological education. Here I wish to share some of my observations from my connections with mainland pastors. At the moment, turns in pastoring modes on the Mainland are roughly as follows:

From evangelistic growth to emphasis on pastoring

Before, the mainland churches put evangelism on top of all things and enjoyed a rapid growth, even to the point of “births without upbringing”. But now the churches have entered the pastoring stage, with issues of marriage and family, parenting, guarding against cults as well as issues on ethics. Pastors find it inadequate just preaching the gospel of the cross, healing or driving out demons. On their conversion, believers have to face all kinds of questions about life and faith, and need teachers to guide them on their way.

From Bible study to trials in life

Mainland churches stressed more on prayer meetings and home visits in the past, but when urbanization becomes a trend, migrant workers in the city find their children’s education a burden that needs proper address. The pastoring mode will have to embrace generational ministry-couples, women and adolescents become valued by the church. The economic boom resulting from urbanization also turns people materialistic. The education level of the congregation has been raised, more intellectuals joining the church. Pastoring the new generation requires some more thoughts and plans to engage them in church events. As the pulpit faces drastic changes, teaching the Bible truths about marriage, parenting and possessions are just as important.

From Salvation to social services

The 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan was a divide, when churches and believers got more driven to involve themselves in rescue work and the church began to show more concern towards human needs. Loving families of believers took abandoned orphans into their homes. Some churches saw the needs of the disabled and joined in to take care of them. All these actions influenced the pastoring approach of the church which is to practice holistic care.


From Bible understanding to theology

Mainland believers now get more opportunities for training than before. Pastors and ministers accessing theology books published overseas and consulting more translated versions have broadened their minds. And as problems believers face are becoming more complex, they hold higher and more professional expectations of their pastors. Some have also sparked off discussions within churches on thoughts and rationales of various denominations.

From one-way to multi-dimensional

Pastoring in the past was simply sermon-giving. Future pastoring, because of the changes mentioned above, will necessitate the exploration of diversified means on various spectrums apart from the Sunday sermon – teaching (reinforcement of the Sunday School), counseling (believers’ life and family issues) and leading (team coordination and delegation). That definitely suggests multi-dimensional ministries.

From Simon Says to boards of professionals

The churches in the old times normally employed the one-church-one-pastor mode, but now city churches look for expert team-mates who can fit in with their development agenda. Some churches even have a dozen ministers on their team to venture out on different ministries. This is how the city churches are going, the direction meaning generational and group ministries. 





Serving God Together

Silas Ma, Senior Training Officer

The first batch of “The Ways of the Pastors” students has built a strong and intimate relationship after receiving two-year training. They have taken care of one another. Serving God with partners is a blessing. They say it is all the grace of God and He is worthy of their praise.

“Teachers trained up pastors to please God in four aspects: leading, teaching, preaching and counselling. We learned ways to feed the sheep of God, set a good example for them and be a faithful and knowledgeable servant. I have been serving God with His grace during all these years. He gives me strength when I am weak and furnishes me with an ample supply for my needs. I firmly believe that He means everything to me and His grace is enough for me.”

“We were getting more and more open to each other when sharing together. We talked about our churches and prayed for one another with sincere faith. We got contact with and took care of one another while travelling. We have kept in touch using the WeChat after going home and are bound together as a family in God.”

“Leaving home to attend training class is never easy for us. I prayed to God before this trip, ‘Please allow me to learn how to serve You.’ Thank God! I have learnt many precious lessons in this camp.”

“I would love to meet the teachers and classmates of the training again. I was overwhelmed seeing each familiar face, feeling blessed. How come God would love a person with no virtue and ability like me. He has even chosen me to serve Him and take part in the training. All is the grace of God.”


“I studied together with other sisters and brothers in the training camp. We visited and shared experience

with churches in Hong Kong. All people I met had their personal strengths and merits. I was deeply touched by the teachers who taught and modelled for us. All of them have set a very good example for me. I will strive to do my best like what they have done.”

“A few months had passed since I came back from Hong Kong. I could hardly forget the time I spent in Hong Kong. I was physically and mentally drained, being depressed and dispirited. But it was precisely the moment I could discover something new about myself once again. I am so grateful for everything!”

“I was a weak and feeble servant of God. But God is strong. He helps me grow up with the assistance of Liangyou Theological Seminary and my classmates, shaping me to serve Him with His grace.”

“‘Quality learning is outside the classroom.’ One of the classmates once said. I pray to God that I will be encouraged and motivated by His guidance, teachers’ examples and classmates’ testimonies to serve Him in a better way.”

In addition to learning, “The Ways of the Pastors” is a source of strength to the students who are given talents and abilities to continue to serve Him. 





*Footprints of broadcasting
Witnesses of accompany*

Broadcast in my Salon

Sister Zhang, Shanxi Province

In July and August last year, I was introduced to a QQ radio broadcasting the programs of "Manna in the Wilderness" and "Bible Exposition" from 8 to 9 every morning. I could not listen to the whole programs as I needed to work, but I knew they were good. Recently, I have found your programs in a WeChat group and they are released by a church brother. Now I can listen to the programs anywhere and anytime and will not be restricted by broadcast time slots.

Radio Liangyou has been a great help to me. I need God to lead my life in all matters regardless of their importance and so pray to Him every day. Bible verses are always quoted in "Manna in the Wilderness", and they are just like God's messages to help me respond to life's circumstances with extra wisdom. I like both "Throne of Grace" and "Embrace

Each Day" that cover a wide range of subjects and inspire me a lot.

I am running a hair salon in a university campus. It is not easy for the teachers and students to accept a religious belief. I therefore have an idea of allowing them to listen unintentionally to the programs to arouse their curiosity. My favourite programs are broadcast in my hair salon. I share the belief with them when they seek to know more.

Now many people keep asking me questions about the religion. I can only briefly explain what I have known to them as I am a new believer myself. I try listening to various kinds of programs, and then share the touching episodes with others and introduce the programs to them.

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