

Vision of Church Planting

A speech at the 50th Anniversary Celebration Dinner
of
Chinese Gospel Church of Toronto

**Rev. Dr. Joshua Lam' s vision of church planting during his time as
Senior Pastor of Chinese Gospel Church of Toronto from 1985 to 1991
On: Sunday 13th October, 2013
At: Century Palace Chinese Restaurant, Markham, Ontario, Canada**

It is my honor to be invited to attend the 50th Anniversary Celebration Dinner of Chinese Gospel Church of Toronto and to share my vision of church planting. My wife and I are very grateful to be here this evening and I am deeply thankful to God.

Upon receiving Albert' s (Mr. Albert Lee, church director) invitation email to join you at this dinner and share briefly my vision of church planting during my time as Senior Pastor at CGC, I gave the invitation much prayerful thoughts. Going back to those years in my memory, I found five words. The five words I found are: "To God Be The Glory!"

With my family, I arrived at CGC in August 1985. The impression I got about the church is that it is a vibrant church.

In 1988, I was sent by the church to Vancouver to attend the CCCOWE (Chinese Coordination Centre of World Evangelism) conference. I returned

with the vision of church planting and began to share the vision with the Board, church leaders, and members.

At that time, the number of worshippers attending both the English and Cantonese worship services just kept increasing. After worship services, some members had to step outside of the church front door to chat on the side walk. (I also made the proposal to install that big white board on the church front wall detailing the time of worship services.)

Soon, the Board assigned me to provide pastoral leadership to two groups of leaders and members to equip them for the launch of the English Agape Gospel Church and the Cantonese Grace Chinese Gospel Church (now Grace Chinese Gospel Church of North York).

As Senior Pastor, I was also given the task to supervise interns, seminary students who are CGC members, including Mike Whittle (now Rev. Mike Whittle, Pastor of Agape Gospel Church), Jim Tam (now Rev. Jim Tam, General Secretary of Showers of Blessing Evangelistic Ministry), Yin Wang, Jeff West, and others.

Agape Gospel Church began its first worship service in April 1989 and Grace Chinese Gospel Church (now Grace Chinese Gospel Church of North York) in May 1990.

On the vision of the Mandarin worship service, I thought that if the return of Hong Kong back to China in 1997 went smoothly, China would probably allow more people to go abroad and some would certainly end up in Toronto and come to our Chinatown church. Thus, I proposed to start a

Mandarin worship service. Demographic change is an important factor on when, where, and how church planting should be done.

Initially, leaders of the Board turned down my first proposal, due to their care and concern for me, worrying that my workload would be too heavy. During that time, I was putting in about 70 hours a week in ministries of all areas. Later, before I proposed the plan the second time, I fasted and prayed in my church office. At the meeting, leaders of the Board gave their nod and assigned me to head up a group with leaders and members mainly from the Cantonese congregation to equip them for the launch of the Mandarin worship service in 12 months. And the Mandarin worship service had its first worship service on March 18, 1990.

In those years of church planting and growth during my time, Board members, church leaders, church members, and myself all labored hard together. Simply put, our hearts beat together in the vision and ministry of church planting. And our Lord Jesus Christ blessed our church abundantly!

In recent years, there is a new demographic change among Asians in the Greater Toronto Area and the vicinities. I believe we are now witnessing another opportunity for church planting. However, a new approach is required.

Dear brothers and sisters, let' s ask ourselves: "Have our new life in Christ truly begun?" If so, we should be passionately sharing the Gospel and getting involved in church planting ministry. Our life is not a computer. We cannot press the Ctrl Alt Delete keys to reboot our life and start all over again when our days are done. John Henry Newman, a clergyman of the Oxford

Movement once said: "Fear not that thy life shall come to an end, but rather fear that it shall never have a beginning!"

I would like to end with a quote from the lyric of the Gospel song *My Tribute*:

"To God be the glory for all the things You have done." Yes indeed, "To God be the glory for all the things He has done for you and me." Amen? Amen! Praise the Lord! Thank you.