

Life in a Two Congregation Church

Written by Pastor Andrew Tan
Monday, 06 July 2015 20:44

Today is a new beginning for Tree of Life Christian Church. After having enjoyed or endured the bilingual (Mandarin and English) mode of Sunday Worship Service, today is the first Sunday where the Mandarin and the English speaking people will worship in separate congregations.

This is a good change.

People in each congregation can now worship God in the language they are comfortable with.

The length of worship time can now be optimised.

It is also an exciting change.

As the language used is only one, this, hopefully, will encourage us to bring new friends for Sunday Worship as the people now need not endure hearing a language in which they are not most conversant with.

Also, as each congregation now has to shoulder the main bulk of the work, I believe this change will lead to further growth.

The effect is like the division of a biological cell.

After a biological cell is divided into two cells, each individual cell will grow.

The end state is that the two new cells combined will be twice the size of the original cell.

This change, however, also carries with it several big challenges. First, each congregation will now start small. The congregation size will shrink to half the present size. Due to lesser people attending worship service, psychologically, you may feel that the ambience is slightly downcast. Should you feel so, let us remind ourselves that we are here to worship and draw close to God, and to enjoy His presence. God is with us. His children in whom the Holy Spirit dwells are with us. This is God's church with which God bought with His precious Son's blood. Hence, God will be with us and bless us. Let us then not be disheartened by the drop in congregation size. At the same time, I urge each and everyone. This is the time that the church needs you. Be faithful for Sunday Worship Service. Avoid activities that will take you away from Sunday Worship in this church. After all, this day is supposed to be sanctified for God: "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your

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towns. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Exod 20:6).

Second, people in each congregation will see less of each other. Also, future new friends in one congregation will hardly know people in the other congregation. This means that the relationship between people in each congregation might not be as warm as before. When this happens, and it will happen, there will be more chances for conflict. For instance, one congregation may complain about the other for messing up the worship hall (sanctuary). One may complain the other of not vacating the classroom in time. Each congregation might quarrel with the other to safeguard its own interest. I urge you, then, to remember that we are not to safeguard our interests but to safeguard God’s interests. That requires us to be kind and considerate to each other. Speak with kind words and not harsh or rude words. Where there are issues of dispute, where necessary, tell the leadership and allow us to make the final decision. Submit to the leadership and to each other with great humility. Such submission is pleasing to God as it is an act of submission to your Lord and God.