

A New Church Networking for New Generation: A Case Study of the Changjo Presbyterian Church in South Korea

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Abstract

Since the end of the 19th century, Protestant churches in Korea took the lead in the enlightenment movement not only to break down the barriers of gender discrimination but also to enhance education among poor people. In addition, a new social network was formed through diverse churches' organizations to facilitate effective communication between Christians. However, currently the churches do not provide the same vitality as in the past to young Korean Christians who have been influenced by postmodernism. In particular, the conflict between generations and the problem of religious communication reached a serious situation. This study focuses on clarifying the causes of such conflicts and incongruities in the churches, and presenting the solution as we examine a church that has solved this crucial problem.

Key words: Children, CPC, GIWS, Kim, Network, Sunday School

INTRODUCTION

Despite having a short history of about 140 years, Korean Protestant members make up nearly twenty percent of the South Korean population. This is a wonderful phenomenon that cannot be easily found in the rest of the world. However, starting in the second half of 1980, the churches experienced a period of stagnation and were contemplating uncertain future. Above all, the churches' most serious problem is that the faith of parents does not pass on to their children. Children have been receiving faith training and spiritual education at the churches' Sunday schools until they become adults. When the Sunday School students reach adulthood, they are naturally transferred to the senior group, the churches' core group, and become the very resources that can energize the churches. However, most of the Sunday School students in Korean Protestant churches are facing a tragic situation, with only about five percent remaining in the number of students in college and youth departments of the churches (Kim 2015:2). This means that a certain number of them left the churches as they were promoted from kindergarten to elementary school. As they went up from middle school to high school, a certain number of them left the churches again. Finally, when moving from high school to college, very few young people remained in the churches. The churches cannot have hope unless these problems are resolved. In this study, we try to prove that a clue can be found in the example of a church in Mokpo, South Korea that has solved this issue with a new networking called "Generation-

Integrated Worship Service” (GIWS). This worship service does not distinguish between ages or generations, and furthermore, there is no distinction between careers or educational backgrounds or men and women in participating every kind of worship service. The church to be discussed in this study is the Changjo Presbyterian Church (CPC) in South Korea, belonging to the Korean Presbyterian Church of Habdong denomination. The story of Kyung-yun Kim, the 22nd pastor of this church, who has been ministering from 23 December 2003 to the present, occupies the core content of this study. However, due to the fact that the actual integrated worship service is not possible because of the COVID-19 aftermath, it is within the scope of this study until 2018.

THE PROBLEM OF SUNDAY SCHOOL SEPARATION WORSHIP

Sunday school separation worship began in 1780 by Robert Raikes of England (1735-1811) under the name of “Sunday School” (Walker 1985). Raikes rented a woman's kitchen in Gloucester and began his first Sunday education, which was the beginning of today's Sunday School education. In the 18th century, when public education was poor in England, Raikes gathered children to teach the basics of Christianity on a Sunday. This type of Sunday School quickly spread throughout the world, including the United States. Clearly, the churches gave educational opportunities to children who were alienated and poor through various Sunday schools. This was a revolutionary contribution at the time.

The start of Sunday School of the Korean Protestant Church was also very meaningful and efficient. Through the rough years of the Japanese invasion of Korea (1910-1945) and the Korean War (1950-1953), almost all churches established Sunday schools to provide special affection to future Korean generation (Jeong 2019). The Sunday schools of the churches, which gave special attention and help to children suffering from poverty and disease, were a kind of shelter and rest area. Many children visited the churches on their own to enlighten themselves in order to encounter new Western culture. However, since the late 20th century, Korean society has been undergoing a major change. South Korea is no longer a poor backward country. There are so many places for children to spend their time even if it is not a church. In addition, huge changes have occurred in families, which are the basic units of society. In the past, it was mainly for women to take care of their children and household chores when they got married, but now Korean women are engaged in jobs even after marriage and are no longer strictly tied to their families. In particular, the daily life of any city's families is as tense as if they were going to war. Every morning the couple is in a hurry to get to work, and their children are busy preparing for school. Children who have completed public school classes do not return home immediately, but instead enroll in several private academies to take lessons in preparation for future college entrance exams. Parents who left work or children who returned home late at night from the academies are tired and living a difficult life to make enough time for conversation. On Sunday, members of Christian families worship separately depending on their age, and after the service, they go on different paths. The Sunday School students spend time at private academies or with their peers, so they have little time to socialize with their parents. Therefore, as young teenagers grow up, their faith is not becoming more mature, but they are more influenced by the world that is not related to faith. Se-woong Gi has addressed this issue:

When we look at students these days, it is easy to see them dislike thinking and like improvising and stimulating things. Smart phones have also become slow if they do not respond in a second. Music has become a generation of people who are tamed by the rapid-beat, mechanical sounds of music that excites Macho's emotions in the human heartbeat, making it easier to think and decide than to become a person with abundant sensibility and imagination. So, even in the church, a Bible study meeting or a retreat, which is favored by Words, was not popular and there is something not to laugh about, preferring to play games. The most precious Gospel in the world that Jesus mentioned, the value of Heaven, has become worse than the play culture that stimulates human flesh. The biggest problem caused by this is the generation gap. It has become such a generational difference that there is not only the generation gap between parents and children, but even the twins have made a joke that there is a generation gap . . . However, it is the separation worship system that played a decisive role in making the generation gap in the church (Kim 2015:112).

Nevertheless, most churches offer separate worship services. Terry York opposes these individual services and argues for the need for “generational unity worship” as a phenomenon in

which the loss of universal worship and the confusion of worship, encompassing all, can no longer be overlooked (York 2002). Don Sailors calls for the modern church not to follow the differentiated worship, but to efficiently develop the important elements of worship that all generations can offer together--awe, joy, hope, and truth (Sailors 1996). These four elements can be used regardless of age or gender because they are fast, direct penetration into the human senses in the language of the mind. John Westerhoff also states that the limits of distinct worship ignore the community and cosmic matching of the church, and only subordinate worship to regions, countries, and cultures (Westerhoff 2000).

If there is a seniority on the central axis of the church, and the administration and finances of the church are run centered on the elderly, children and teenagers will be reduced to underprivileged groups. This hinders the overall and holistic growth of the church community (Barton 1997). Separation worship also commits a falsehood that parents' right beliefs cannot be passed on. Children's worship, or youth-only worship, maintains a space of special culture-- their own language, praise, habits-- to exclude the spiritual legacy of the parents' generation's experience of faith. Furthermore, if we enter a school or society without learning the reverent worship of the community, it does not show the life of an influential saint, but shows a style of life that does not differ much from the secular world. It is easy to find that students who have fallen back in faith are selfish in school life and cannot live in light and salt in society. In other words, the worryingly large number of Sunday school students have degenerated into simple "religious intellectuals" and are preparing to leave the church whenever they have a chance.

TRANSITION TO GENERATION INTEGRATED WORSHIP SERVICE

To solve the above problems, Pastor Kim first studied the *Old and New Testament Bible* precisely to gain confidence in the GIWS. For example, he thoroughly examined and found that all services, whether family or public worship, were GIWS in the *Old Testament*: the stories of Noah (Ge. 8:20-21), Abraham (Ge. 22), Jacob (Ge. 34-35), Moses (Dt. 31:10-13), Joshua (Jos. 5:10), and Nehemia (Ne. 12:43). Also in the *New Testament* (NT), Jesus did not separate the coming of young children from the elderly, but received them equally (Lk. 18:16, Jn. 6:9). The closer we look at the NT, the more we come to the conclusion that Jesus personally organizes the GIWS, Kim argued (Kim 2015: 40-42).

In addition, Pastor Kim visited the Jewish synagogue in the United States and experienced the integrated worship of the entire Jewish family, and further confirmed that the GIWS between all generations in American Puritan history took place (Kim 2015:71-80, Chung 1996). American Puritans were people of worship. They took a separate time to pray to God alone, to see the Word, and to praise him, but they also devoted themselves to home worship and the church's public worship. Neither children nor servants in the family were exempt from worshipping. These services united generations and united themselves as well. Through the GIWS, they equally believed and experienced the power of the mysterious Word of God regardless of age or status.

As Pastor Kim was convinced in his heart, he first trained professional workers such as assistant pastors and evangelists to work with him so that they could go the same path. Since then, Kim has been able to work as a co-worker through sufficient spiritual fellowship and humble service with lay members who have held important positions, including the elders of the church. And he occasionally held third-generation united worship services for the understanding of the saints who might not bear major changes by being engrossed in the Protestant tradition of the past. Here the third-generation means to include the groups of grandparents-parents-children. And finally, from the first week of 2014, his church's whole congregation has been holding the GIWS to the present. The CPC is one of the largest churches in Mokpo City, with the number of members nearing 1,000, and it was not easy to abolish the time-honored Sunday School system and change it to a structure where all members gather together to worship. However, a network that drastically changed the form of worship has been completed. The important parts of this new network can be divided into four categories.

First, on Sundays, the whole family sits together and worships. In other words, from infants to people of old age, the saints all come to the chapel and worship together. Have the preacher's sermons in a notebook during Sunday worship. At the beginning of the year, children from first grade in elementary school to third grade in high school may be instructed how to write pastor's sermons. On

Sunday, after the morning worship service the saints are to be encouraged to share lunch together with their parents or their spiritual mentors. After this, the saints discuss the Biblical text used by the pastor in the morning service or specific Bible passages given by the pastor for about one hour. After discussing all these issues, the saints and mentors are to attend an afternoon service together.

Second, every generation of children is recommended to participate in all public services such as early morning service and Wednesday service.

Third, the Bible School for children is also operated by integrating all grades. It is held twice a year--summer and winter--and has the character of a faith camp. All programs are tailored to worship; and praise to be sung together is thoroughly prepared in advance, and with offering training also being conducted.

Fourth, special early morning prayers with children such as New Year's Day and Suffering Week of Christ are held; and during this period, the pastor trains the saints by explaining the texts of the Bible that are considered most appropriate at this specific time.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE TRANSITION TO THE NEW WORSHIP NETWORK

Advantages

First, the whole church is enjoying the thrill of worshipping as one. Just as the Samaritan woman in Chapter four of the Gospel of John in *NT* solved her life problem by meeting Jesus and worshipping him, the church members are keenly aware that the fundamental problem of human beings is not money, honor, or power, but a worship issue.

Second, the strengthening of the identity of the CPC members. By implementing the GIWS, the church members have begun to recognize that God's salvation is given to the whole church members who go beyond their families. The church is the body of Christ. A believer is a small branch of Christ that each branch must unite and love to form a church community. As a body of Christ, the CPC has the identity in which infants, children, boys and girls, young and old people all unite together. Although their individuality, character, knowledge, and abilities are different, the saints of the church praise together as a body of Christ, read the Bible together, pray together, listen to sermons together, and participate in the sacrament together (Gal. 3:28). A high school student confessed, getting used to the GIWS: "I feel like I'm a member of this community regardless of generation" (Kim 2015:129).

Third, the succession of history. The CPC is learning the importance and succession of history in this new network of worship. History includes the past, present, and future. The present is now; the past is resurrected when we remember any past events in our memories; the future is a time when we dream of coming. We exist now because there were past generations, and the future has a timelessness that is opaque without the young generation dreaming. Past memories correct the present, and hope for the future makes the present person work vigorously. The same is true of the CPC. Without a senior believer who has devoted himself or herself in the past, there is no CPC today. Therefore, we need to learn the faith and life of history from the elderly people of faith. At the same time, children who are growing up now must have dreams and visions, inheriting the past and present history well. This principle of historical succession has been demonstrated in GIWS of the Bible. The CPC tries to adhere to this principle.

Fourth, the new network of the CPC changes the impossible to possible. Modern education, psychology, and sociology prefer sharing and separation over generational integration. Will elementary school students understand graduate school classes if they replace elementary school learning with graduate-level learning? Scholars majoring in these studies would say it is impossible with one voice. This is a valid word. Sharing by level of education is justified in terms of the breadth and efficiency of understanding of secular education. But should church services be divided based on this formula? The CPC says no. The members of the CPC believe that all saints can worship in the GIWS. The church disagrees with any theory that older saints should worship separately due to physical conditions, lack of concentration and intelligence, or worship separately for physically challenged people or children. Worship does not require a highly intelligent response because of the Word of truth. Unlike general school education, church worship and spiritual education consist of prayer, praise, and the Word. We look at the Scriptures, hear the Word with sermons, and taste the Word with Holy Communion (Chung 2010). Worship that sees, hears, and tastes transforms the realm that intellectual education in the world is impossible.

Fifth, the adult saints are maturing day by day. Through the new network of the worship service,

unexpected environments that have not been experienced in the past have emerged, and will continue to appear in the future, even if there are differences in degree. In these environments, there are cases where the mental burden and concentration decrease when listening to the sermons due to a little noise and discomfort during worship. Thus, overcoming the prosperity and convenience of the past, endurance and long-suffering maturity are required. The adults of the CPC are also required for this maturity, and happily all adult members are receiving this training with joy. Christianity truly shines in tribulation and adversity.

Sixth, the family survives. In the new worship service, where the family members come and go to the church, the bond is further strengthened by eating together at church or praying and singing together. They meet and talk more often than in the past, socializing with love. These fellowships have been further sublimated into family worship, and they believe that the family is a small church and the cradle of the state. In this respect, Elder Seong-gi Jeong has testified:

It is not long since we start the integration worship service, but it is not one or two good things. First of all, our family members come to the church in one car at the same time to worship together, so the time for conversation and fellowship with the children increase, and a family community is formed. . . By seeing and learning the etiquette of adults, [many children] are also getting better at greetings, and it is an opportunity to solve the problem of juveniles' misconduct. By staying with their parents on Sundays, they have been distancing themselves from the play culture of society, so they are gradually acting good. . . . More and more families are participating in family worship, and many [young] students are attending early morning worship (Kim 2015: 123).

In a similar vein, Eun-hee Kwon, a lay woman leader of the church, has evaluated: “My family [members] went to the same church, yet we were scattered in order to worship separately . . . It was always a pity that there was little time or opportunity to talk together . . . I am very welcome and grateful that our church will hold the GIWS this time” (Kim 2015:124).

Seventh, by introducing a surrogate parent system for spiritually young believers, a healthy family can be provided to children, widows, and single people who do not have a family over time.

Eighth, there is a change in the number of church attendees and offerings. Attendance and offerings have increased positively. In the case of kindergarten students, offerings increased due to parents' participation in church services. Also, the attendance rate of the church increased significantly as the children who are just present with their parents have received the attention and love of the mentors.

Ninth, it is a change in the attitude of worship among children. Seeing the worship of adults, children have become much more reverent after emulating the attitude of praise, prayer, and words of adults. This is a sign that children are imitating their parents' faith. Previously, children who cannot sit still for 10-20 minutes are able to still for more than an hour and worship. Since obstruction of worship, such as cell phones, is prohibited in all services, young students themselves worship with a serious attitude of mind.

Complementary points

It is not easy to operate surrogate parents for young children. Since they are not biological parents, caring for children is not easy, and the connection between godparents and children is weak. Those who are in charge of the godparents still lack awareness of their responsibility. In addition, as children attend church with their parents, it is often revealed that the children's schedule is aligned with that of the parents. In some cases, for example, when parents serve as a choir member in the church their children have to worship alone. Children who come to church at the introduction of a friend often fail to settle in the church when their relationship with the friend deteriorates. Therefore, in order for worship based on a new network to take place and reap abundant fruits, it is necessary to intensively study and solve the problems of generations, especially those of children and adolescents. Above all, it is necessary to investigate whether the child's faith is transmitted through parents at home, and at the same time identify the parents of those who belong to the church to select surrogate parents for those without parents. In addition, children should be properly included in the order of worship, such as special praise, so that they are not spectators of the church, but active participants. Furthermore, adults need the wisdom to wait patiently for the worship of young children. Older

people should worship reverently and give the younger generation appropriate lessons with their actual practice instead of words.

In the end, the problems of today's life are largely summarized into two. It is the work of confirming where each individual feels a sense of meaningful belonging and whether they are truly loved (Kim et al. 2021). The sense of belonging and being loved are the two faces of the same coin, and humans cannot enjoy happiness if only one of them is lacking. We believe that the successful ministry of the CPC will produce more fruitful work when solving these two problems wisely both now and in the future.

CONCLUSION

In this study, by revealing the blessings of the GIWS, a direction is suggested for all churches to offer this model. We believe that only this worship can build up churches, keep families healthy, and purify society. Today, the world has entered the Fourth Industrial Revolution and is facing a more impersonal and busy life than in the past. Big computers and robots are constantly doing all the work very quickly in large quantities. At the crossroads of such rapid change, the church can be a proper place where each family can share a table with each other once a week and have in-depth conversations. The CPC has actually experimented with this and is bearing fruit successfully. However, unfortunately, many churches have made the mistake of not meeting their parents at all at the place of worship by making Sunday School worship independent from public adult worship service. This should be corrected as soon as possible. If so, should the Sunday School system be abolished immediately? If a policy of abolition is established for an instant, each local church will become confused. It is necessary to set a goal to provide a GIWS by taking a slow time and in some way related to the worship of the Sunday School with adult worship.

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